

**Right Relationship Concept:  
Rules and Boundaries  
(Upper Level)**

**Learning Objectives:**

- To help students realize that each person God made is special and unique.
- To emphasize that because we are made in God’s image, God wants us to respect ourselves and treat each other with respect.
- To emphasize that right relationships are built on trust and help keep us safe.
- To understand that sometimes relationships are not “right” and can be unsafe.
- To appreciate that knowing the rules and boundaries in relationships can help keep us safe.

**Outline:**

- I. Opening Prayer
- II. God Created Human Beings in His Image
- III. God Made Us and Wants Us to Be Safe
- IV. Knowing the Rules and Boundaries of Right Relationships (Core)**
- V. Closing Prayer

**Materials Needed:**

- Whiteboard, chalkboard and chalk or flip chart and markers
- Pens, pencils for class members
- Handouts:
  - Grades 4 – 12: “How to Say ‘No!’”
  - PreK - 6: “What Would You Do?”
  - Grades 7 – 12: “What Would You Do?”
- Activities:
  - “How to Say ‘No!’”: pens or pencils
  - “What Would You Do?”: pens or pencils

**I. Opening Prayer (Psalm 23: 1 – 4a):**

*In the + Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen*

*The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.  
He lets me rest in fields of green grass and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.  
He gives me new strength. He guides me in the right path as he has promised.  
Even if I go through the deepest darkness, I will not be afraid, Lord, for you are with me.*

*In the + Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen*

## **II. God Created Human Beings in His Image**

### **Discussion**

- Review Genesis 1:27. **Say:** *“Created in God’s image, we are truly children of God, favored by our Creator. The dignity of human beings rests on the truth that we are all children of God and are called to live in communion with God and one another. Through baptism we are united with Jesus Christ and become his brother or sister. In union with Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we can really love ourselves and one another.”*

## **III. God Made Us and Wants Us to Be Safe**

### **Discussion**

- **Say:** *“God created us in his image. God loves us and cares for us. God wants us to be safe. God does not want us to be hurt and he does not want us to hurt anyone, but sometimes we get hurt by accident.”*
- **Ask:** *“What are some ways people can get hurt?”* (if students do not respond, prompt with things like: car accidents; horsing around; touching a hot stove, etc.)
- **Say:** *“Sometimes we get hurt because people do not respect us.”*
- **Ask:** *“What are some ways people might hurt each other?”* (if students do not respond prompt with things like hitting; kicking; name calling; etc.) *“People sometimes are hurt when others touch them in ways or places where they should not (like private parts of their body— the parts usually covered by a swimming suit).”* *When we get hurt because people do not respect us, we need to know what to do.”*

## **IV. Knowing the Rules and Boundaries of Right Relationships (Core)**

### **Discussion**

- **Ask:** *“What are some rules for showing each other respect?”* There will be a variety of acceptable answers such as being kind; being helpful; telling the truth; asking others who are not participating in games to join in; sharing; not calling anyone by an unkind name; not fighting, etc.

- **Say:** “We have signs to help us know and keep the rules. For example, we have traffic signs to tell us when and where to stop, we have directional signs to tell us which way to go, we have signs in stores to tell us where products are available. Some signs tell us about potential hazards such as railroad crossing signs, ‘no smoking’ signs, ‘hazardous materials’ signs.”
- **Say:** “There are also boundary ‘signs’ for relationships. In our interactions with other people we need to have clear boundaries.
  - It’s important to realize that certain boundaries should **NEVER** be violated, for example, it’s **never** OK for someone to hurt us physically or treat us disrespectfully but sometimes our physical, emotional, and behavioral boundaries depend on the kind of relationship we have with someone.
  - It might be OK for our parents to give us a big hug and say “I love you” but not OK for other adults.
  - It may be OK for us to spend time alone with a close relative or friend but it might be more usual for us to meet with other people, such as our teacher or youth minister, as part of a group. We may feel uncomfortable or unsafe if someone we don’t know wants to be alone with us.
  - Our feelings may be one indication that a relationship is ‘right’ but sometimes feelings are not the best sign for us to follow. Certain rules apply to right relationships regardless of how we feel.”
- **Ask:** “What are some signs of a right relationship?” Write the answers on the white board or on sheets of paper. Acceptable answers include: treating others with respect; keeping clear boundaries; being inclusive; behaving the same way in public as in private.”
- **Say:** “If these are signs of a right relationship, opposite behavior may be signs of a relationship that is not ‘right’. Not treating others with respect can be demeaning and hurtful. Overstepping personal boundaries may make us feel threatened or vulnerable. Any behavior that makes us feel pressured to break rules, keep secrets, or compromise our values or beliefs is indicative of relationships that are not ‘right’. Here are some warning signs of relationships that are not ‘right’.
  - Older youth or adults who want to spend all of their time with me and kids my age or want all of my attention. This attention may make me feel important, but singling me out to have an ‘exclusive’ relationship is not healthy for them or for me. And they may actually be targeting me to hurt me.
  - Friends or adults who become jealous when I spend time with other people or want to spend time on my own. Everyone likes to have ‘special’ friends but

- *real friends also want us to do things we enjoy with other people. They also respect our need to be alone.*
- *Being physically hurt or threatened or being pressured to expose the private parts of our body or engage in physical contact. **No one** has the right to hurt us or threaten to hurt us. We should **never** feel that we deserve to be hurt.*
- *If we are ever in this situation, we need to let that person know **we want them to stop immediately.***
- ***We need to tell our parents or other trusted adult what happened** so that they can take appropriate action.*
- *Remember you are not responsible for anyone else’s behavior. They are.”*

## Activities

### Grades 4 - 12: “How to Say ‘No!’”

- Give each student a “How to Say ‘No!’” worksheet. **Say:** *“At school we frequently practice fire drills so that we know what to do in case there is a real fire. We can also prepare how to say ‘no’ in case we get into a relationship that makes us feel unsafe, threatened, disrespected or pressured to do things we know we should not do or do not want to do. This worksheet identifies specific tools we can use to get out of that kind of relationship such as giving an excuse or delaying your decision. Imagine you are in a situation you want to get out of. Then describe how you would answer the question using each tool.”* (Students may need help understanding some of the tools. For example, for “Reverse the Pressure”, you might explain *“Let’s say your parents have told you not to drive with your friends in the car. If one of your friends says to you “If you were really my friend, you’d drive me to the mall,” you might respond by saying “If you were really my friend, you wouldn’t want me to get in trouble with my parents.”*)
- Discuss the responses.
- **Say:** *“Sometimes, in spite of us doing the right thing, we can still be hurt. We did not do anything to deserve being hurt. We need to tell trusted adults what happened and keep telling them what happened until they understand how we feel and help us so we are not hurt any more.”*

### Additional Discussion

- **Say:** *“For emergencies, we develop a clear plan and escape routes. We not only have a plan, we practice the plan. Unconsciously, we begin to notice signs to lead us to safety such as fire exits, alarms and extinguishers. These are usually clearly marked so they are easy for us to see.*

*Sometimes we find ourselves in relationships or situations with other people that are not safe. Sometimes the escape plan is not so clear. One reason we do not have a clear escape plan is that the warning signs and the escape route are not*

- *posted for us to see and follow. Often we have not stopped to think about what we would do in such a situation.*
- *Why? Sometimes it is because those things are hard to talk about. Oftentimes it is because we do not think it could happen to us.*
- *But teenagers are more likely to be a victim of sexual abuse than they are to be injured by a fire. Teens are also at greater risk of becoming involved in a violent relationship or becoming addicted to alcohol or drugs. If we have a plan for how to address risky situations, we are more likely to make choices that keep us safe.*
- *Take some time to think about what you would do in different risky situations. Drill yourself so you are ready to act if you need to.”*

#### **Activity**

**Grades 4 - 6:** “What Would You Do?”

**Grades 7 – 12:** “What Would You Do?”

- Give each student a “What Would You Do?” worksheet. **Say:** “*One way to be safe is to have a plan for what to do in different situations. Just as we practice fire drills and other safety plans, we can practice safety plans for relationships. Write what you would do to be safe in the following situations. Then, take this sheet home and share your plans with your parents.*”

#### **V. Closing Prayer**

*In the + Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

*Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in you.*

*In the + Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.*