

Eighth Grade Safety Formation for Home: Parent Teaching Guide
*(Adapted from the VIRTUS “Empowering God’s Children” Lesson Plans and
Diocese of Des Moines Catholic School Adaption)*

Lesson 1 - “Made in God’s Image: Personal Responsibility and Advocacy”

Parent Goal

Help your child understand:

- They are made in the image and likeness of God and possess God-given dignity.
- Their bodies are gifts from God to be protected, and they have a responsibility to help protect themselves and others.
- Personal boundaries help protect dignity, safety, and well-being.
- The Personal Boundary Safety Rules remain important: Say No, Get Away, Tell a Safe Adult.
- Personal responsibility means being accountable for choices that affect personal safety and the safety of others.
- Advocacy means speaking up for oneself or another person in a way that leads toward what is good and safe.

1. Begin With a Faith Connection

Say: “God created you and every person in his image and likeness. Your body and your life are gifts from God. As you grow older, you have greater responsibility for making choices that protect your dignity and safety and for speaking up when another person needs help.”

2. Watch the VIRTUS Middle School Video (If Available)

Watch the linked together - <https://vimeo.com/1180990140/d8bf069a8f>

Say: “As we watch, listen for the basic rules of personal safety, warning signs that someone may be trying to hurt or pressure a young person, and safety rules that apply when using online tools.”

3. Recap the Video Concepts

Ask your child:

- “What are the basic rules of personal safety?”
- “What are some warning signs that someone may be trying to hurt, pressure, or manipulate a young person?”

- “What safety rules also apply when you are using online tools?”

Guide them toward:

- Know and communicate personal boundaries.
- Say “No” or “Stop” when someone crosses a boundary or makes you feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Get away from the person or situation when possible.
- Tell a safe adult what happened and keep telling until someone listens and helps.
- Use good judgment and personal responsibility when a choice could affect your safety or someone else’s safety.

4. Review the Vocabulary (Parent Scripts Included)

Safe Friends/Adults “Safe friends and adults are people we know will respect us and will not intentionally hurt or confuse us.”

Unsafe Friends/Adults “Unsafe friends or adults put us at risk because they do not respect us, our safety, or our boundaries, or they hurt us.”

Private Body Parts “Private body parts are the parts of the body covered by a swimsuit.”

Safe Touches “Safe touches have a good purpose and are not intended to hurt, scare, or make someone uncomfortable.”

Unsafe Touches “Unsafe touches are inappropriate or hurt, scare, or make someone uncomfortable.”

Special Safe Adults “Some adults, such as a doctor or nurse, may need to see or touch a private body part for the purpose of keeping you clean and healthy.”

Boundaries “Boundaries are limits between your space and another person’s space that help people feel safe, healthy, and respected.”

Personal Responsibility “Personal responsibility means recognizing the choices and actions for which you are accountable.”

Advocate “To advocate means to speak up for yourself or another person in a way that leads toward what is good, safe, and right.”

5. Connect Boundaries, Responsibility, and Advocacy With Being Made in God’s Image

Say: “As you grow, respecting your God-given dignity includes taking personal responsibility for your choices. It also includes recognizing when you or someone else needs help and having the courage to advocate for what is safe and good.”

- “Why is it important to create and maintain personal boundaries?”
- “Which of the three personal safety rules might be difficult to follow when a friend is involved?”
- “What does it mean to respect another person’s boundaries?”
- “How are personal responsibility and advocacy connected?”
- “What are you personally responsible for when it comes to your own safety?”
- “When might being a good friend mean speaking up rather than keeping a secret?”

Remind your child that wanting to be liked never removes the right to say no or seek help. A friend who shares something unsafe and asks for secrecy may need an advocate, not a promise of silence.

6. Review the Personal Boundary Safety Rules

Say No “Use a clear voice when someone tries to touch you, pressure you, or involve you in something that makes you uncomfortable or unsafe.”

Get Away “Move away from the person or situation and toward a safer place or safe people.”

Tell a Safe Adult “Tell a trusted adult what happened. Keep telling until someone listens and helps.”

7. Identify Safe Adults and Practice Advocacy

Say: “Think of two or three safe adults you could turn to if something happened that made you feel unsafe or uncomfortable. Now think about what you could do if a friend came to you with a serious problem and needed help.”

Reinforce that a safe adult should listen, believe the young person, take the concern seriously, and help seek appropriate assistance. Advocacy does not mean handling a dangerous situation alone. It often means bringing the concern to a responsible adult.

8. Activity: Practice Personal Responsibility and Advocacy

Say: “I am going to share two situations in stages. At each point, think of three things you could do to advocate for yourself or your friend and three things you should not do.”

Scenario 1, Part A: Your best friend has recently received a learner’s permit and wants to drive the two of you to a movie on a stormy day. You know your friend has little driving experience.

- What are three things you could do to advocate for yourself and help your friend make a safe choice?
- What are three things you should not do?
- How does personal responsibility apply?

Scenario 1, Part B: Your friend drives anyway, goes through a stop sign, nearly hits another car, then backs into a parked car. Your friend moves to another parking space so “no one will know.”

- What are three responsible things you could do now?
- What should you not do?
- How could advocating for your friend include telling the truth or involving an adult?

Scenario 2, Part A: You learn that a friend has been communicating online with someone who offers expensive gifts in exchange for inappropriate pictures. Your friend asks you to keep it secret. You then begin receiving messages from the same person offering you gifts for pictures.

- What are three things you could do to advocate for yourself and your friend?
- What should you not do?
- Which safe adult should you contact?

Scenario 2, Part B: You tell your parent about the messages and gifts, and the concern is reported to authorities. The next day your friend is angry with you and says the friendship is over.

- How did you advocate for yourself and your friend?
- Even if the friendship is damaged, what do you know about the choice you made?
- Why can doing what is right sometimes be difficult?

9. Close With a Faith Reminder

Say: “God gives you dignity, freedom, and responsibility. Courage sometimes means saying no, telling the truth, or seeking help even when another person may be upset. Being an advocate means using your voice and your choices to protect what is good, safe, and worthy of the dignity God gives every person.”

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Lesson 2 - “Made in God’s Image Online: Reputation, Responsibility, and Safety”

Parent Goal

Help your child understand:

- Their online presence is connected to their real-life reputation.
- What they post and share should reflect the dignity of a child of God and respect the dignity of others.
- Online information can be copied, shared, misunderstood, or removed from its original context.
- Personally Identifiable Information (PII) should be protected.
- Personal responsibility and advocacy become increasingly important as they prepare for high school and encounter new people and situations.
- Thoughtful online choices can protect both personal safety and another person’s reputation.

1. Begin With a Personal Reflection

Give your child a note card or sheet of paper. Let them know this is for honest reflection, not a grade.

Say: “Think about your online persona. If someone looked at what you posted or shared during the last five days, what would they see? Would they recognize you as a child of God? Why or why not?”

Invite your child to share what they are comfortable sharing. Explain that an online persona is the picture of ourselves that other people form from what we post, share, comment on, and interact with online.

2. Connect Faith, Online Identity, and Reputation

Say: “You are a child of God in every part of your life, including online. What you post can say something about your values, your judgment, and how you treat other people. A healthy online presence should be truthful and should respect your dignity and the dignity of others.”

- “If you meet someone new in high school, how might you try to learn more about that person?”
- “How can you know whether the person you meet online is really who they claim to be?”
- “Does your online persona reflect the real you?”

3. Watch the Common Sense Media “Myself” Video (If Available)

Watch the linked together - <https://vimeo.com/1180990140/d8bf069a8f>

Say: “Before we watch, divide your paper into three columns: “I agree with this,” “I have felt this,” and “I am not sure if I agree with this.” As you watch, try to write two ideas in each column.”

4. Family Discussion: Reputation

Reputation “A reputation is the collective regard or public opinion people have about a person. It often develops from behavior, experiences, and what other people say or share.”

- “Where does a person’s reputation come from?”
- “How can online posts influence a person’s reputation?”
- “If someone judged you only by what they saw online, what might they believe about you?”
- “Who might be able to see or receive something you post?”
- “How can a post travel beyond the audience you originally intended?”

5. Activity: How Information Changes When It Is Shared

Say: “Let’s see what can happen when information passes from one person to another. We will use a simple version of the game Telephone.”

Whisper a short, harmless sentence to one person and pass it through several people. Then compare the final version with the original.

- “Why did the message change?”
- “How is this similar to something being reposted, commented on, or shared without context?”
- “What questions should you ask before believing or passing along something you see online?”

Explain that online information can be misunderstood, altered, or shared without the original context. Responsible digital behavior means pausing before believing, commenting on, or resharing something that could harm another person or that person’s reputation.

6. Protect Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

Say: “PII means Personally Identifiable Information. This is information that can identify or locate you. Protecting it is part of being personally responsible for your safety.”

Examples include:

- Legal or full name
- Phone number
- Home address
- City and state
- School name
- Other details that reveal where you are or where you regularly spend time
- “Why should this information be protected?”
- “How could someone without your best interests in mind misuse identifying information?”
- “What should you do if someone online asks for information that your family considers private?”

7. Prepare for Greater Independence

Say: “High school will bring new opportunities, new people, and greater independence. With that freedom comes greater personal responsibility. You can advocate for yourself and others by making careful choices, respecting boundaries, thinking before you post, and involving a safe adult when something is unsafe or too serious to handle alone.”

8. Activity: Work Through Online Reputation Scenarios

Say: “For each situation, identify the problem, who is affected, how reputation or safety is involved, and what responsible next steps should be taken.”

Scenario 1: A new student is shopping with two friends. While they are trying on swimsuits, one friend takes a picture. The student asks that it be deleted and is told that it was. Later, the picture appears online with numerous comments. Then the student receives a message from an unknown person who wants to meet because of the picture.

- What problems or boundary violations are present?
- How could the post affect the student’s reputation and safety?
- Was the friend right to post the picture after being asked to delete it?
- What responsible next steps should each person take?
- When should a safe adult become involved?

Scenario 2: A student waits a long time for a drink at a new coffee shop, and the order is made incorrectly twice. Frustrated, the student posts a critical video outside the shop. The video is quickly shared, and the shop's rating drops significantly. The shop is owned by the parents of another student at school.

- How did the post affect the coffee shop's reputation?
- Was the post a fair and responsible way to address the problem? Why or why not?
- What other choices could the student have made?
- What responsibilities do we have when our online words can affect another person, family, or business?

9. Close With a Faith Reminder

Say: "Our words and actions have consequences, including the things we say and share online. As a child of God, you are called to act with truth, charity, prudence, and respect. Protect your own safety and reputation, and remember that the people affected by your posts also possess God-given dignity."

Parent Follow-Up for the Week

Daily Reinforcement Ideas

- Ask: "Did anything online today affect how you think about someone's reputation?"
- Ask: "Was there a moment today when you had to choose between fitting in and doing what you knew was responsible?"
- Review one privacy setting or piece of identifying information together.
- Talk about how to respond when a friend asks you to keep an unsafe secret.
- Before posting something, practice asking: Is it true? Is it respectful? Is it necessary? Could it harm someone's safety or reputation?
- Remind your child that asking a safe adult for help is an act of good judgment, not weakness.

Family Responsibility and Digital Reputation Rules to Post at Home

- I am made in the image and likeness of God, and so is every person I encounter.
- I take responsibility for choices that affect my safety and the safety of others.
- I speak up and seek help when I or another person may be unsafe.

- I protect personally identifiable information online.
- I think carefully before posting, commenting, or resharing.
- I respect another person's boundaries, privacy, and reputation.
- I do not promise secrecy when someone's safety is at risk.
- I tell a safe adult when a situation becomes unsafe, inappropriate, threatening, or too serious to manage alone.

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