

GRADE 11 - CLASSROOM

COMPASS CHILD PROTECTION CHILDREN'S PROGRAM



PREDATORS AROUND US
Parent Handout

Predators Around Us

Grade 11 - PARENT FOLLOW-UP SESSION

With children who attended the parish/school session

Instructions for the Parents

Your child attended a session on Safe environments themed “Predators Around Us” which refers to dangerous people who look for and exploit children. They learned to identify the characteristics of such predators, and learned strategies to be wise and safe.

The classroom session was intended to open discussions with you, the parents, on dealing with the situation if your child encounters or hears of predators of any type.

You are encouraged, sometime during the coming week, to set aside 30 minutes for a discussion with your child. This packet contains the material you will require to prepare for this discussion as well as step-by-step guide with suggested discussion questions.

Session Overview:

- During the classroom session, the teacher explained to the students that there are both good and bad people around us. It is difficult to know just from the outside who is really good or bad. Sometimes even people who bring presents, talk to them or share secrets with them when they are feeling lonely or depressed could be dangerous.
- The teacher used different stories to help the students understand the meanings of the word ‘predator’.
- It was explained to the teens that sometimes some people with bad intentions may lure teenagers with expensive gifts, friendship or kind words. Once the teen has been lured, they risk being kidnapped, “sold,” or exploited.

- The students looked at stories of children who encountered predators and started trusting them. This presentation was followed by a discussion where the students thought about the following:
 1. How do you think teens can avoid getting lured by predators?
 2. How do you think parents can help their children avoid becoming involved with predators?
 3. What do you think peers and friends can do to help each other **recognize** AND **stay away** from interactions with predators?
 4. What do you think a person can do once they realize that they are in contact with a predator?

You are encouraged to discuss these questions with your teen, not just to determine how much they have understood the session, but also to help you determine how they would react in similar situations.

The students also learned about the grooming process that predators use. They participated in an activity which engaged them in writing 5-6 personal boundaries that would help them stay safe from potential predators. You are encouraged to discuss the significance of these boundaries with your child, and help him/her be equipped with the helpline number in your district/area.

At the end of the session, the class read the Bible Verse Proverbs 23:19, followed by a prayer.

Background Information for Parents

A. Pedophiles

Adults who seek out children and young teens for sex are called predators, pedophiles or molesters. Over 96% of these adults are male (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2011). The molester might use tricks, bribes or threats of force to lure a child into being alone with them. Sexual abuse includes any act ranging from exposing private parts (exhibitionism) to observing another's private parts or sexual activity (voyeurism), touching or rape. The preferred target age is generally whenever the child is starting puberty and beginning to develop.

B. Molestation by Peers

Approximately one-third of sexual abuse happens at the hands of other children or teens. As with adult perpetrators of abuse, there is some kind of authority or power held over the victim even though the perpetrator is also a minor.

Children and teens who molest other children need professional help. They are more likely to respond to treatment as a youth, rather than as an adult who has a longer history of molestation in their child, teen *and* adult years.

C. Signs of Sexual Abuse

A child being abused **may show absolutely no signs of abuse at all**. So, when an adult is told about any of the four kinds of abuse from a child or teen, the adult is morally and, in some states, legally bound to report to the authorities by dialing 911.

Remember that your job is not to act as a judge or juror, it is simply to report *the disclosure or warranted suspicion of abuse whether you believe it or not*.

Hint or indirect message - The child exhibits repetitive fear of being with a particular adult or older child. "I just don't like him anymore."

Seductive or sexual behavior with other children or adults.

Physical symptoms of irritation of genital or anal areas. Girls may have repeated urinary tract infections. Conversely, many children who have been abused have none of these typical signs.

Self-destructive behavior.

Acting younger than normal: bed-wetting, thumb sucking or behaving much younger than their actual age.

Sudden drop in grades or difficulty in school with problematic behavior not exhibited before.

D. Grooming:

In the English language, grooming refers to the act of getting ready. In the context of sexual abuse or child trafficking, grooming refers to the act of an adult "preparing a child for sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking in the future" by building an emotional bond or connection with the child.

How to be alert to potential signs of grooming:

Parents can never be too alert to these signs. Here are some possible visible signs:

- Children start going to unusual, distant and/or deserted places to meet friends
- Begin having older friends – whether male or female
- Suddenly very secretive
- Recent new possessions such as mobile phones, clothes, or other "fancy" accessories
- Access to alcohol or drugs.

E. How online sexual abuse takes place:

- Groomers may convince children to share inappropriate pictures or text on social media
- Children participate in explicit video chats, or use video cams or smartphones
- Groomers may engage children in sexually explicit chats via video chat, or texting known as sexting

Grooming can happen online or offline. Many young people, and even adults, do not recognize when they are being groomed or targeted. Some people may genuinely think they are in a relationship. Sometimes, victims feel shame or guilt and are afraid to seek help.

F. Process or stages of grooming:

Grooming is a slow process during which predators bring their targets or victims into secret sexual relationships. According to forensic psychiatrist Dr. Michael Welner, there are six stages to the process of grooming. These are:

- 1. Targeting the victim:**
Children who do not have strict parental monitoring (their parents do not know where they are and who they are with at all times) are considered easier targets.
- 2. Gaining trust:**
During this process, the predator slowly wins trust and confidence, convincing the victim to keep everything completely secret.
- 3. Filling a need:**
This is when the predator pretends to be concerned or caring, paying constant attention, with phone calls, text messages, possible meetings, and gifts.
- 4. Isolating the intended victim:**
This is done through offers to babysit, coaching, tutoring, etc, ensuring that the victim spends enforced time along with the predator.

5. **Sexualizing the relationship:**

This is when the predator convinces the victim to perceive themselves as mere sexual beings and view their relationship with the predator in a sexual way.

6. **Maintaining control:**

The predator always looks to maintain complete control over their victim. The victim is convinced to believe that they are at fault and fear revealing anything to anyone will isolate and humiliate them. This control by the predator ensures continued secrecy.

PARENT-CHILD DISCUSSION

Given below are thoughts and questions to help supplement and support your discussion with your child on the topic of predators:

1. **Discuss Predators:**

When you heard about predators, and how they try to find and hurt children, what were your reactions? Have you heard about this before?

(Allow your child to share their emotional reactions and thoughts about this topic)

Do you know anyone who's been targeted by a predator?

Do you think a predator has ever tried grooming you?

What would you do if you feel like a predator is interacting with you, or a friend?

2. **Staying safe:**

In this session, your teacher talked about ways to stay safe from predators. Let's look at it a little more. Open your child's activity book and talk about the things that they wrote about under each of the sections under "Solutions" (Page 1).

For each question, read through your child's responses, ask them to elaborate, and add your thoughts on them as needed.

How do you think teens can avoid getting lured or trapped by predators?

How do you think parents can help their children avoid becoming trapped?

How do you think peers and friends can help each other from interactions with predators?

What do you think a victim can do once they realize that they are in contact with a predator?

3. My Personal Safety Boundaries:

Ask your child to read out their personal safety boundaries from the book. Talk about each of the boundaries, and practical ways you can support them. If they are forgetting something important, suggest it to them. Remember, if they have a few important rules to remember, they are more likely to remember and follow it rather than a long list of things that are difficult to follow. Talk about different scenarios that would test their boundaries and how they can tackle such scenarios.

4. End with a Prayer

Pray with your child and ask for God's protection and help in dealing with predators around you that lure and target vulnerable young people in the community. Pray for God's wisdom and strength in helping you handle situations where either your child or someone known to you or your child is targeted by potential predators.