

GRADE 6 - CLASSROOM

COMPASS CHILD PROTECTION CHILDREN'S PROGRAM



APPROPRIATE ONLINE BEHAVIOR
Parent Handout

Appropriate Online Behavior

Grade 6 – PARENT FOLLOW-UP SESSION

with children who attended the parish/school session

Instruction for the Parents

Your child attended an Internet Safety session which dealt with issues concerning appropriate online behavior.

You are encouraged to, sometime within the next week, please set aside 30 minutes and discuss this material with your child. This packet contains the material you will need for a follow-up discussion and a step-by-step guide for suggestions.

PARENTS: Before you begin the discussion with your child, please go through all the material in this packet. Be prepared to discuss this material in ways that will be appropriate for your child.

Session Overview

The teacher discussed with students how the internet can be used in either good or bad ways and that the decision is up to them how they would like to use it.

With the help of two stories and a few scenarios, the following points were brought across:

- Keep private information private
- Never share passwords.
- Connect with and “befriend” only people known in real life.
- Information posted online is permanent; it lasts forever.
- If in doubt, avoid posting it.
- Only write/post things that everyone can read.

The verse *“Do to others as you want others to do to you”* was discussed in detail, with emphasis on how we should establish

and maintain boundaries while using the Internet to avoid hurting ourselves and others. The students shared what online behavior they would expect from others, and were encouraged to first take the steps by first demonstrating these expectations for others by acting appropriately.

The students participated in an activity and heard a story about the viral nature of the internet: once something is posted, it's hard to take it back or control the damage it may have done.

The most important part of the session involved each student creating their own Internet Policy to help them put the lessons they learned into practice for appropriate online behavior.

The session ended with a reading from Colossians 3: 13-17 and a prayer.

Background Information for Parents:

Pedophilia

It is essential that both you and your child understand dangers that exist on the internet. Some adults use the internet to meet and harm children.

It is important to assure your child that it is never too late to tell you, though the earlier they tell you, the better.

Red flags for parents to seriously get involved in their child's internet communications.:

- *Recent excessive time spent on the internet at night*
- *Evidence of sexually explicit material such as pornographic images on pen drives or any hidden computer folders.*
- *Sudden increase in the number of unknown calls made or received by your child.*
- *A change in attitude towards friends and family*
- *Secrecy and excessive need for privacy especially while using the internet.*

These are all things that parents need to be aware of and the measures a parent must take to protect their child include blocking certain sites that are not safe, checking the web history on devices, and enabling chat histories to be stored, etc. The **best thing that you as a parent can do** is develop an honest, open relationship built on mutual trust so that your child feels confident to approach you.

PARENT - CHILD PROCESS

Following are some thoughts and questions to help supplement your discussion with your child.

1. Discuss be-friending strangers online.

In the classroom session, the teacher shared a story of a girl who befriended a stranger her age who in actuality turned out to be a 50-year-old man with a criminal record. The teacher introduced the reality that one cannot know for certain if people are who they claim to be on the internet and that this poses a huge danger when anyone befriends strangers online. The story stresses the importance of checking with your parents before making decisions to meet anyone!

Ask your child to explain to you why it is important not to befriend strangers on the internet. Then explain the dangers involved and how to avoid them. Talk to your child in detail about being careful of people online. Explain to them that there are people who try to make friends with children or teens online pretending to be their age and even send fake photos.

Discuss the potential danger signals and encourage your child to exercise caution. Explain to your child that if they are considering meeting someone in person, they **MUST** tell you. Ensure them that no matter how much trouble they think they are in, they can approach you to talk about it. And, reinforce by telling them that one way to avoid any such dangers is to only have known contacts on the internet.

Also, emphasize the importance of keeping private information private, warning them that private information or pictures could be used for blackmail.

2. Discuss the virality of the internet.

The teacher discussed in the class, with a story and an activity, how to be cautious about posting information for all to see, because once it is out there, it is extremely difficult to control or take back. The teacher discussed how social networking sites are viral in nature and posting personal feelings or something about any other person would spread within no time (including to strangers) and is dangerous.

The importance of guarding what is shared on the internet was emphasized.

You can ask your child what their opinion is, whether the pictures and posts on their social networking sites should be visible to all or only to friends, or specifically only to close friends and family.

Talk to your teen about how certain information is private, and so are pictures. Help them understand how dangerous it is especially when private pictures and videos go viral. Discuss ways to improve the security settings in your child's networking profiles, etc. For example, in Facebook, help your child look through the security settings for each detail– posts, pictures, who can see their wall and so on. Help them change the settings under each so that they can learn how to filter the audience for their activities and better protect themselves and their contacts.

3. Discuss your child's Internet Policy.

In the class, the teacher helped all the students create their own Internet Policy, their set of commitments and guidelines on how they would like to ensure that they practice appropriate online behavior. These guidelines were to be based on what they took away from the classroom session. They were encouraged to place this in a location where they most commonly use the internet and to share the information with you as well and were

encouraged to choose to be accountable to someone to help make adhering to their decisions more effective.

Ask your child to share their Internet Policy with you and why they chose those commitments. Discuss the importance of holding onto the decisions they have made. Help them understand that being responsible in their internet behavior and appropriate usage means more than just creating the policy but practicing what they have **committed to do, even when no one is watching**. To help them with this, discuss measures that your child can take to ensure this. Talk to them about accountability.

4. End with prayer.

You have discussed some sensitive and important issues with your teen, and have also discussed putting the Internet Policy into practice. Now pray with your teen for God to help them with all of this. Pray for God's protection over them in their internet use and from predators and other dangerous people they may come across on the internet, for God's grace for them to practice appropriate online behavior to others, and to be able to hold onto the new commitments they just made. Thank God for the gift of the internet and pray for wisdom for using it in a way that is profitable and good.