

Safe Environment  
Curriculum  
for  
Children and Youth

September 2004

Diocese of Green Bay  
Total Catholic Education

## **BACKGROUND AND TEACHING OBJECTIVES**

**The Diocese of Green Bay has requested that Catholic schools devote the equivalent of three (3) classes per year to this issue. Since religious education students attend public schools where this topic is mandated, the Diocese requests these programs devote the equivalent of one (1) class to these topics.**

**The Diocese asks that teaching objectives incorporate the following ten guidelines. Examine current lessons to review where these guidelines may already fit into the curriculum.**

- ❖ Each human being is created in the image and likeness of God. Our bodies are sacred and holy.
- ❖ We are blessed with families and loving communities to help us grow.
- ❖ We must differentiate between safe, unsafe, and unwanted touch.
- ❖ Because each person is made in the image of God, each person must be treated with dignity and respect. This respect includes respectful privacy of our own bodies.
- ❖ The God-given gift of choice has consequences.
- ❖ Some actions or behaviors are wrong or sinful. Behavior or actions that harm self or others physically, psychologically, or spirituality are wrong.
- ❖ We must differentiate between good and bad play and avoid keeping secrets.
- ❖ Each of us experiences good and bad human relationships and friendships.
- ❖ Children/youth/vulnerable adults must be provided with basic information to enable them to be safe and protected by the adults in their lives. The task of keeping children safe is shared by families, extended families, their neighborhood and community, and their school and church.
- ❖ Children/youth/vulnerable adults must identify a number of trusted adults to go to for help.

### **Note:**

Lesson plans for grades K-6 have been adapted from several agency resources, from the Diocese of Mobile, Alabama, and the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry.

The plans for the middle and high school level are to be taken from the book *Creating Safe and Sacred Places* by Gerard J. McGlone, SJ, PhD and Mary Shrader available from St. Mary's Press.

**SAMPLE MEMO FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

**Keeping Children Safe**

Reports of violent crime are a daily news item. We have become all too familiar with stories of physical and sexual abuse. More and more these crimes involve children as victims. Once a problem rarely discussed, child sexual abuse is now a prominent concern and one that the Catholic Church takes very seriously. At this critical time in the church, we are presented with an opportunity to educate ourselves and our children in order to prevent future incidents of abuse.

As part of the Church's commitment to keep children safe, we are planning sessions for children which will help children remain safe because they are aware of their own body, have designated someone they feel safe with and can trust to tell, and that they can receive help without feeling guilt or shame if they do tell.

A program of ½ - 1 hour long will be held the following days and times. All parents are welcome to attend.

Gr. K-2	_____
Gr. 3-5	_____
Gr. 6-8	_____
Gr. 9-12	_____

As members of this parish community, we feel that we can be partners with parents in giving children information so they can tell someone if they are harmed or in danger of being harmed and can assist in their own self-protection. Together we minimize the risk of all child abuse, especially child sexual abuse.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this program or its contents please feel free to contact: \_\_\_\_\_ (name)  
at \_\_\_\_\_ (phone and/or e-mail).

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

As parents there is no way we can completely protect our children from sexual abuse but there are some ways we can lessen the chance it could occur. Unfortunately, just teaching our children not to talk to strangers or unusual people will not be enough. In fact approximately 85% of sexual offenders are known to the child and 50% are parent figures. Here are some tips compiled from various sources on how to prevent child sexual abuse:

- \* Tell children that if someone tries to touch their bodies in a way that makes them feel "funny", "bad", or "unsafe" to say no and then go tell an adult they trust.
- \* Talk to children every day about their contacts with other people. Ask them about their feelings. This helps to encourage your children to feel comfortable talking to you about anything.
- \* Do not teach your children blind obedience to adults. Don't teach children to do everything a baby-sitter or teacher tells them. Instead teach them that most adults are good people to be respected but that they should listen to their own hearts; tell them that it's OK to say no to an adult if they want the child to do something they know is wrong.
- \* Teach your children the correct names for their body parts, as well as any nicknames you might use. Take away the embarrassment children have about talking about "private parts".
- \* Teach children the difference between safe touches and unsafe touches. Explain to them that while it is OK for a doctor to touch their stomach to see what's wrong, it is not OK for Mr. Jones to touch them in their pants.
- \* Teach your children not to keep secrets from you and don't encourage secret keeping in your family. Tell your children that they can always tell you anything no matter what anyone tells them.
- \* Play "what if " games with your children. Create frightening and confusing situations and ask children what they would do in these situations, for example ask, "What would you do if someone wanted you to play undressing games?" Make sure you balance these games with questions about safe touches.

**Goal: To help children realize that each person is a special person in the eyes of God, that they deserve to be loved and cared for, and that they can help themselves stay safe from abuse, especially child sexual abuse.**

**Materials needed:**

- ✓ Prayer (found below as well as on the reverse side of the “Keeping Safe Home-Work Sheet” handout).
- ✓ Pictures of safety signs (such as a STOP sign) from posters, magazines, and coloring books.
- ✓ Safe Touch craft project. Copy the circle with the line through it on red paper (Stop/No) and the circle with the hand/heart on green paper (Go/Yes).
- ✓ TIP: Cut out the circle signs for younger children handout before class time.
- ✓ Scissors, markers, glue, and craft sticks.
- ✓ ½ sheet coloring page handout
- ✓ in class review sheet handout
- ✓ Keeping Safe Home-Work Sheet handout

**Welcome and Prayer**

Invite children to close their eyes and listen carefully as you read this prayer:

Dear Jesus,  
When you walked this earth, you showed that you love little children.  
We know that you love us as your own children.  
It is hard for us to hear that some people do not treat children the way you did and hurt children by their words and actions.  
Help us to learn how to protect ourselves, and others, from harm.  
Help us to forgive those who have harmed children in the past.  
Bless all those who teach us and work to keep us safe. Amen.

**Steps to follow:**

1. Discuss what children already know about safety. Show them teaching pictures of safety signs. Discuss how each of the signs helps us to be safe. Tell the children that today we will make some safety signs of our own and will learn some ideas on how to be safe.
2. Instruct children to make Stop and Go signs. Glue the red (Stop) circle and the green (Go) circle on opposite sides of a wooden stick.
3. When they are finished making their signs, play a safety game with them. Give them a number of safe or unsafe situations. They are to hold up the appropriate Stop or Go sign to identify safe or unsafe situations. Here are some examples for you (you may think of others): running down the hallway, chasing a ball down the street, helping a friend carry books up the stairs, letting parents know when

you are going out of the yard, staying close to adults at the mall, looking both ways when crossing the street, avoiding a hot stove).

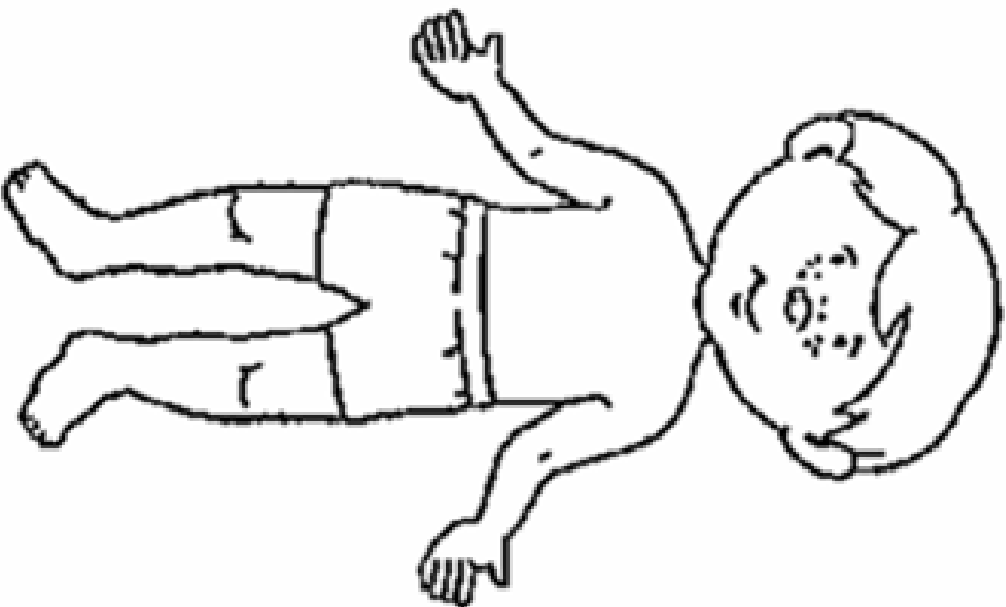
4. Pass out the ½ page coloring sheets by gender. Invite the children to personalize the figures by hair and eye color. As the children color, introduce the idea that bathing suits cover the privates parts of our bodies and may not be touched by others (with the exceptions of hygiene and medical procedures). Touches that help keep us clean and healthy are safe touches. Tell the children that these kind of touches would never be secret touches. Tell the children that should anyone touch their private body parts and tells them to keep it a secret or tells them not tell anyone, these are unsafe touches and unsafe secrets. Unsafe touches and unsafe secrets are always to be reported to adults that will help children.
5. Invite the children to use their safety signs again by offering some additional situations for reinforcement and review: mom or dad hug you, a classmate hits you, a friend shakes your hand, an older person tickles you, a person wants to look at or touch a private part of your body. Offer them some ideas about what to do if they are aware of unsafe touches or secrets: run away, yell loudly, tell someone you trust, etc.
6. Pass out the in-class review worksheet and walk through the first three concepts together. Then ask the children to think about three people that they can go to if they ever have a problem. Assist the children as they fill out the three lines.
7. Send all papers home as well as the Keeping Safe Home-Work Sheet. Ask the children to share their work with their parents and with the help of their parents to write down three names of people BESIDES their parents that can help them keep safe. (parents may have additional ideas the children did not think of during class time). Encourage them, together as a family, to then post this sheet on the refrigerator or a bulletin board so all can review these ideas to help keep them safe.

To be copied on GREEN paper

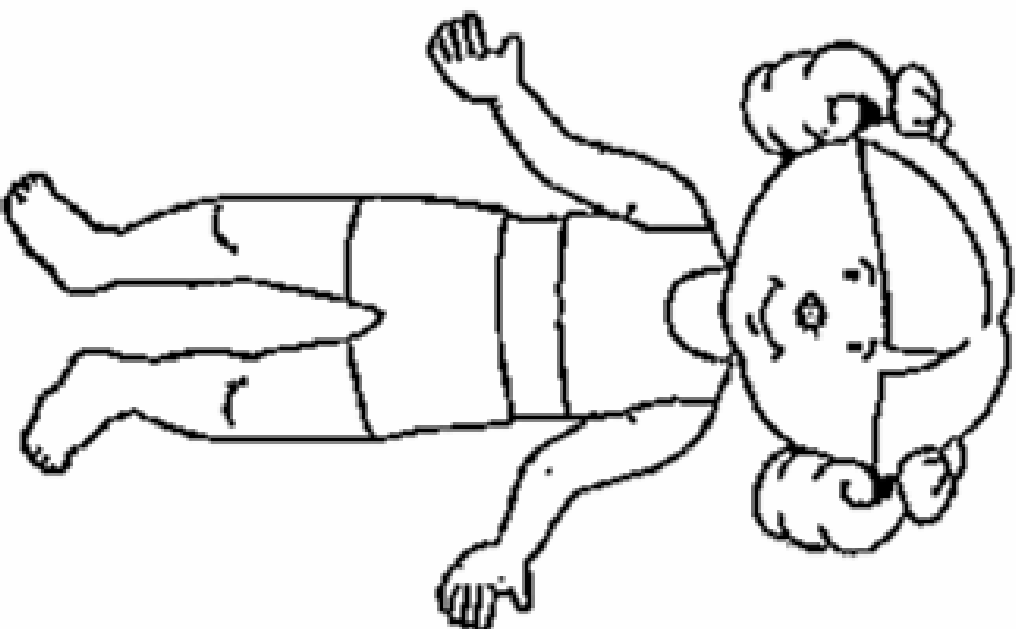


To be copied on RED paper





My bathing suit covers the private parts of my body.



My bathing suit covers the private parts of my body.

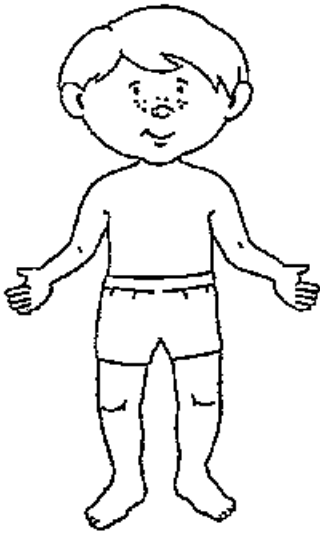
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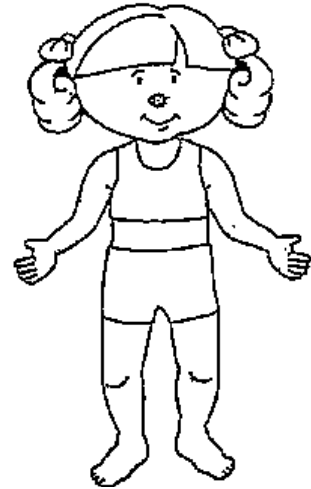
Safe Touch is OK.



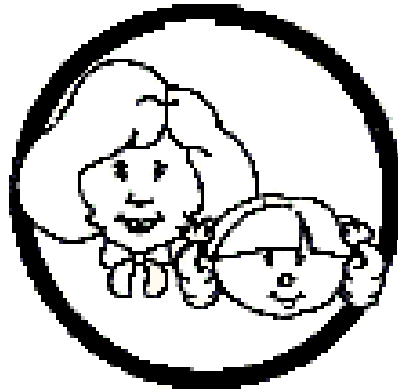
Unsafe Touch is NOT OK.



My Bathing Suit  
Covers the  
Private Parts of  
My Body.



Secrets Can Harm Me.  
I Will Tell My Parents.



Three Other People Who Can Help Me Are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Keeping Safe – Work Sheet

I am God's child!

I must receive and give respect in the ways I talk  
and act and in the ways others treat me

I learn the difference between true friendship and false friendship

My body is private and must be respected

I learn the difference between good play and bad play

I learn the difference between safe touch and unsafe touch

Secrets are not good. Secrets can separate us  
from others and can harm us.

People make good choices and bad choices  
and I learn how to tell the difference.

When someone does something wrong,  
I must tell someone I trust.

**My parents and I name three people I can go to for help  
besides my parents:**

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"See what love the Father has given us,



that we should be called children of God."

1 John 3:1

Dear Jesus,

When you walked this earth, you showed that you love little children.

We know that you love us as your own children.

It is hard for us to hear that some people do not treat children the way you did and hurt children by their words and actions.

Help us to learn how to protect ourselves, and others, from harm.

Help us to forgive those who have harmed children in the past.

Bless all those who teach us and work to keep us safe.

Amen.

**Goal: To help children realize that each person is a special person in the eyes of God, that they deserve to be loved and cared for, and that they can help themselves stay safe from abuse, especially child sexual abuse.**

**Materials Needed:**

- ✓ Scripture Reading and Prayer (found below)
- ✓ “Keeping Safe” Handout with prayer printed on the reverse side
- ✓ pre-prepared Role-play Cards featuring various situations for class discussion
- ✓ “Is Someone Bugging You?” Handout
- ✓ The “Jesus Says” Game
- ✓ “You Are OK” Poster

**Welcome and Prayer**

Scripture Reading:

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew:

Then some children were brought to him so that he might lay his hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” After laying his hands on them, he departed from there (Matthew 19: 13-15).

Prayer:

Side One: When you walked this earth, you showed us that you love little children.  
Side Two: We know that you love us as your own children.  
Side One: It is hard for us to hear that some people do not treat children the way you did and hurt children by their words and actions.  
Side Two: Help us to learn how to protect ourselves, and others, from harm.  
Side One: Help us to forgive those who have harmed children in the past.  
All: Bless all those who teach us and work to keep us safe. Amen.

**Steps to Follow:**

Ask children:

1. Why are we here? (We are here to talk about something that is in the news lately—children being hurt, children being kidnapped, children who have been abused physically and sexually).
2. Who has taught you about being safe so far? (Parents, sisters and brothers and other family members, teachers, coaches, scout leaders).

3. What have you learned about being safe? (Parents and others have given them safety rules... What are some of them)?
4. What does God want for us? (God wants us to make sure that we take care of ourselves because God loves us and cares for us. God wants us to take care of each other by keeping each other safe and by us to do what needs to be done to be the best we can be).

Involve the children in role-playing using the cards that you prepared.

Cards (these are examples; you may think of others):

1. Someone pulls your hair in class
2. Someone older wants to play a secret game and not tell your parents.
3. Someone wants you to look at pictures on the internet that your parents would not approve of.
4. Someone wants to tickle you all the time and you don't like that.
5. Someone older wants to talk with you alone in a bedroom.

Explain the Rules—use their most important voice, stand up straight and tall, have a serious expression on their face, look the person in the eyes, say what they want over and over until they are believed.

Refer to “The DeBug System” handout—Ignore, Move Away, Talk Friendly, Talk Firmly, Get Adult Help.

Ask children to take turns role-playing the situations on the cards.

Discuss with the children how it might feel to be in one of those situations and what they will do in the future if this situation comes up.

Option: To do what we must do requires making good choices. The choices we make affect not only us but other people as well. Play the “Jesus Says” game (similar to a “Simon Says” game). In addition, talk about how it takes courage to make good choices.

Go over the Keeping Safe Handout. You may want to use the less detailed version from the K-2 lesson plan with the younger children and the more detailed version with older children).

Ask them to think about three trusted adult they can go to... List these names on the bottom of the poster, discuss them with parents when they return home, and post their handout along with the You're OK poster in a prominent place at home.

Is someone bugging you?

## TRY THE “DEBUG” SYSTEM

**Five Steps**

**Ignore**

**Move Away**

**Talk Friendly**

**Talk Firmly**

**Get Adult Help**



# **You are OK!**

God has made you unique and special. You are created in God's image and likeness. You deserve respect and you must give respect. Learn the proper names for your body parts and always show respect for your body.

Your body is private and no one has the right to touch your body in a private place or to make you feel weird or uncomfortable.

There is a difference between a secret and a surprise. No adult should require you to keep "secrets." Adults who ask us to keep secrets from our parents, or say that you will be harmed or threatened in any other way are not trustworthy. Sometimes you will be told about a happy surprise or present and that is a good secret.

Adults and older children sometimes trick you so learn to say "no" and run away and tell a trusted adult. For instance, no adult should ask you to get into the car with them, go to a private room with them, or to search for someone or something that is lost, such as a lost puppy. If you do not have permission from your parents or guardian, it is probably not right.

Never get involved with playing harmful games, watching TV or movies or be on the internet when it is not good for you.

Learn the difference between a true friendship or a false friendship. Someone who cares about you will not ask you to do things that are not right or good.

Never be afraid to discuss your fears or questions with a trusted adult.

## The “Jesus Says” Game

<p>JESUS SAYS:</p> <p>Raise your right hand if you want to help your teacher in class.</p>	<p>JESUS SAYS:</p> <p>Knock and it shall be opened unto you.</p>	<p>Shake your head “No” when you dad asks you to do something.</p>	<p>Stick out your tongue</p>
<p>Make a fist.</p>	<p>JESUS SAYS:</p> <p>Carry a heavy thing for someone.</p>	<p>JESUS SAYS:</p> <p>Put your hands over your ears so you can’t hear some gossip. (Pause) Ok, take them down.</p>	<p>Make a face at your neighbor.</p>
<p>JESUS SAYS:</p> <p>Put your hand behind your back to remind you never to take what doesn’t belong to you.</p>	<p>Whisper in your partner’s ear a secret you aren’t supposed to tell.</p>	<p>JESUS SAYS:</p> <p>Give someone a pat on the back for something good he or she did.</p>	<p>JESUS SAYS:</p> <p>Love one another – give someone in your family a hug.</p>
<p>Touch your toes.</p>	<p>Cross your fingers and tell a lie.</p>	<p>Hop on one foot.</p>	<p>JESUS SAYS:</p> <p>Kneel down and say a prayer.</p>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### **KEEPING SAFE**

- We are all created in the image and likeness of God.  
My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.
- Our families and trusted adults and teachers share concern for our safety.
- We learn to differentiate between safe, unsafe and unwanted touch.  
We are called to chastity and we have a responsibility to avoid or immediately report any unwanted or unsafe touch to a parent or trusted adult.
- We show respect for ourselves and others by how we talk, act and live. We must identify respectful and disrespectful language and actions and avoid anyone who fails to respect us. In particular, the areas of our bodies covered by shirt and shorts are private and must not be violated.
- God gives us the gift of free will. All actions and consequences.  
We must learn how to discern the implications of the choices we make every day. When we experience the bad choices of others, we must report the offense and get help.
- The virtue of chastity helps us understand and identify the actions or behaviors, which are wrong or sinful. Children, young adults, and adults must avoid actions or experiences or behaviors which offend against chastity.
- Secrets can be very harmful to us physically, emotionally and spiritually.  
Always question secret play, secret games and determine who the secret may cause great harm.
- There are many different kinds of friendship. Healthy relationships and friendships can help us to understand ourselves, God and others. We often meet false friends who mistreat us or take advantage of our trust and friendship. Poor relationships and false friendships can deeply harm us psychologically, emotionally, spiritually and even physically. People who manipulate or misuse friendship are not friends. We must report any relationship which can be harmful to us.
- Good communication with parents and family members help keep me safe.  
I can also help keep younger siblings and others safe by being observant and concerned.

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## **Scripture Reading:**

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew:

Then some children were brought to him so that he might lay his hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

After laying his hands on them, he departed from there (Matthew 19: 13-15).

## **Prayer:**

**Side One:** When you walked this earth, you showed that you love little children.

*Side Two:* We know that you love us as your own children.

**Side One:** It is hard for us to hear that some people do not treat children the way you did and hurt children by their words and actions.

*Side Two:* Help us to learn how to protect ourselves, and others, from harm.

**Side One:** Help us to forgive those who have harmed children in the past.

ALL: Bless all those who teach us and work to keep us safe. Amen.

**Outcomes:**

- 1. To help young people identify risk factors associated with sexual abuse.**
- 2. The learner will develop a plan for responding to and supporting others in a crisis situation.**
- 3. The learner will be provided with information and tools to identify and steer away from questionable and potentially dangerous situations.**

In addition we include some points found on the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry web site [www.nfcym.org](http://www.nfcym.org):

- Be age appropriate. Talking with middle school six graders will look a whole lot different then talking with high school students.
- Keep your sense of humor . . . but if it is inappropriate, keep it to yourself. Jokes of the gallows humor variety are inevitable. They are also, often, inappropriate.
- Affirm young people for asking their questions, and stating their opinions. Affirm the courage in victims who have come forward. Clergy abuse is a difficult subject . . . . we should recognize their courage.
- When appropriate, review the principles of “safe touch, unsafe touch.”
- The church is larger than the persons in charge of the church. Youth should not be Catholic because they like the priest, or bishop, or the youth minister. Our faith has to go deeper than that, ultimately, if we are going to be able to keep our Catholic faith through the years. This isn't the first church scandal and it won't be the last. The church is bigger than its leaders. We need to help young people to see that their Catholic faith is larger than individual persons or specific crises. The church is ultimately the relationship of our believing community with God across time.

**Materials and Preparation Needed:**

**(Refer to Session Five of Creating Safe and Sacred Places)**

- ✓ **Newsprint or poster board and markers**
- ✓ **Pens or pencils**
- ✓ **A Bible**
- ✓ **Copies of handouts: for each participant**
  - **“Quiz Time” Handout 1, page 62**
  - **“Discussion Starters” Handout 7, page 108**
  - **“Prayer Card” Resource 4, page 109**
- ✓ **Recording of reflective instrumental music and equipment to play it.**
- ✓ **Resource: “Four Steps to Creating a Safe and Sacred Place” copied on cardstock so that each participant will have a copy (Resource 5, page 110)**
- ✓ **On a sheet of newsprint, write the following statements:**
  - **Practice asking questions**

- **Trust your instincts**
- **Be clear about what you want and need**
- **Get involved.**
- ✓ **Ask for a volunteer to proclaim the Scripture passage during the closing prayer.**
- ✓ **Continue to follow the outlined in Session 5 beginning on page 98.**