

Teaching Puberty: You Can Do It!

Growth & Development Curriculum Support for Grades 5 and 6

Lesson 6: Sexual Interference/Abuse Prevention

Target Group: Grades 5 and 6
Suggested Time: 60 minutes

Learning Goals:

Today we are learning to:

- review ground rules as a class
- review key information from previous lessons
- practice identifying and naming emotions
- practice identifying how actions can impact how we feel and how our actions can affect others
- clarify appropriate and inappropriate touch/sexual attention
- demonstrate confidence in asking questions
- be aware of other resources that can assist us to learn about puberty
- share our learning with an adult we trust

Suggested Resources:

- BOOST: Child Abuse Prevention & Intervention www.boostforkids.org
- Canadian Centre for Child Protection, Internet Safety Information for children 10 -12 www.cybertip.ca/app/en/internet_safety-for_children
- Kids Help Phone www.kidshelpphone.ca
- Kids in the Know: Child Abuse Prevention Program www.kidsintheknow.ca
- Ontario Child, Youth, and Family Services Act www.children.gov.on.ca
- METRAC: The Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children www.metrac.org

Background for Teachers

Sexual interference/abuse is defined as touching (directly or indirectly, with a body, or with an object) any part of the body of a person under the age of 16 for sexual purposes.

While sexual interference is not always part of puberty programs, it fits well into these lesson plans in a number of ways: it is a crucial topic to discuss for reasons of personal safety, for helping children to identify their feelings, and to help teach and understand boundaries.

Students need to be aware of the importance of respect for their own and other people's boundaries.

There are different types of boundaries that can be crossed:

- emotional boundaries (e.g., using shame, guilt, sarcasm)
- physical boundaries (e.g., continuing to touch or tickle someone who has asked you to stop)
- sexual boundaries (e.g., telling sexual jokes, showing children explicit sexual material)

While this lesson focuses on sexual boundaries and interference, it is important to integrate these concepts continuously with a view of supporting students' mental and emotional health.

It is suggested that teachers review the Ontario Child and Family Services Act as well as their school board's disclosure policies before this lesson.

Activity #1: Introduction

Review your responsibilities under the Ontario Child, Youth, and Family Services Act:

www.children.gov.on.ca.

Review ground rules with class.

Let students know that it is a teacher's responsibility to help students feel safe and to assist them in getting help if they are not. Inform them that if one of them wants to tell you something, perhaps privately, they can do so and you will believe them and take them seriously.

Activity #2: Confusing Emotions

Review Lesson 2, Activity #4, with a focus on confusing emotions.

Additional Information for Activity #2

Talking about 'good touches' and 'bad touches' is not useful, as many touches or feelings are confusing and not as easily categorized. Young people who found some touches from their abusers pleasurable may feel guilty or not report if the language they hear is 'good touch' and 'bad touch'.

- Identifying emotions and feelings can help students to sort out boundaries and safety in various situations.
- Non-verbal communication is important because not everyone's face matches their true emotions.

Activity #3: Jenny's Story

Read "Jenny's Story" to the class as a way to raise awareness of sexual interference/abuse.

** Please note: This story contains sensitive material. It may trigger varying emotions in the students. Change the names (Jenny, Frank) as necessary.*

Teacher Prompts:

- "I want to share with you a story about a girl who had an experience that included those good, bad, and confusing feelings that we talked about."
- "Try to pay attention to Jenny's mixed feelings throughout the story."

Jenny's Story

There was a girl named Jenny who didn't live far from here. She lived with her mom. Jenny and her mom got along well most of the time.

When Jenny was about 10 years old, her mom met Frank and Jenny thought he was great. He was funny too. The best thing was he liked kids.

Frank didn't work regular hours and so he was able to look after Jenny which was a big help to Jenny's mom, because she worked shifts at the hospital.

Sometimes, Frank would pick up Jenny after school and they would go for walks even though she was supposed to be doing her homework. "I'll help you with it later," he would say. "I won't tell your mom." Sometimes he would let her taste his coffee. He even let her puff on his cigarettes. They both laughed when she practically choked. "Don't tell Mom, Frank. She'll kill me."

They liked going to the local pool. After the first couple of times, Frank suggested that they change at home and then go. He said the change rooms weren't very clean.

Frank was a real talker. He would talk to Jenny while they were changing and come wandering into her room.

She was embarrassed at first, but he said he was like family, so it was OK.

But one day he came in and just stared at her. "Jenny, my girl, you are turning into one beautiful woman." Jenny was blushing. She was really embarrassed. He said he thought she was going to be prettier than her mom.

Once, while her mom was out, Frank showed her some pictures on his cell phone. There were pictures of teenagers wearing only their panties. Frank asked which one she thought was most "sexy"? Jenny didn't say anything. Again, she was embarrassed, but at the same time sort of curious.

Another time, he came in while she was changing, tilted up her chin and gave her a little kiss on the lips. Again, she felt flattered, but a little confused. After all, this was her mom's boyfriend.

Then, one day, he came in and kissed her and touched her breast. He said, "I think I'm falling in love with you, Jenny. Better not tell your mom. She'd be so jealous."

Jenny felt a bit sick in her stomach. She said, "Uh... come on, Frank, we'll be late for the pool!"

When she got to the pool, she was still really upset. She found a private spot and called her mom from her cell phone.

"Mom, you've got to come home."

"What's the matter Jenny, are you sick?"

"No, Mom, I just need you to come home."

"Jenny, you know I can't just leave work like that."

"Mom, if it weren't serious, I wouldn't be asking."

"OK, I'll get someone to cover me."

When Jenny's mother came home, Frank went out for cigarettes. Jenny told her mom everything; the homework, the cigarette, the coffee, the pictures, the touch, the first kiss and then, that last one.

Jenny's mom looked shocked and then really sad. She took Jenny in her arms and said, "Honey, I'm glad you told me. You haven't done anything wrong. Frank should have never done that. I need to call the police."

"No, Mom. I don't want to get Frank in trouble."

"Honey, he got himself in trouble."

So she called the police. They listened to Jenny's story. In fact, they taped it. They arrested Frank and checked for him in their police computers. It turns out that he tried this with other kids in two provinces. He managed to slip away every time. Not this time.

Jenny wanted to talk more about what happened, so she went to a group with kids who had the same types of things happen to them. And Jenny's mom went to a parents' group talk about her feelings and to talk with other parents about keeping their kids safe. They both started to feel better.

Referring to the Additional Information below, discuss the story and the following concepts with the class:

Teacher Prompts:

- “What happened in this story?”
- “This is called child sexual abuse. Adults, men or women, are not allowed to touch or look at kids in sexual ways or in ways that make children feel weird or uncomfortable.”
- “Do you think this could happen to anyone?”
- “Does age matter? Or gender? Or culture?”
- “Why do you think Jenny didn’t mention this to her mom earlier?”
- “Some people feel like they can’t tell anyone, sometimes until much later. What might stop someone from speaking up?”

List Student Responses such as:

- confused feelings
- fear of not being believed
- fear of being blamed
- not having a trusted adult to tell
- fear that telling will make the situation worse
- fear of revealing a secret
- fear of upsetting others in the family
- fear of getting someone close to you in trouble

Teacher Prompts:

- “Who might you talk to if you were in a similar situation?”
- “Remember:
 - If something like this happens, it’s not your fault.
 - Tell someone you trust who will be able to help you.
 - It’s never right for people to ask kids to keep secrets that may be harmful to them.
 - Your voice is your best tool in letting others know your boundaries and when you are feeling uneasy.
 - Speaking up can be difficult but it is also very important.
 - Trust your feelings. If it doesn’t feel right, it probably isn’t. This can include things as simple as how close someone sits to you or how they look at you.
 - We need to remember to trust and pay attention to our feelings.”

Write down the Kids Help Phone number and website on the board (1-800-668-6868, www.kidshelpphone.ca). Kids with cell phones or other mobile devices may want to download the Kids Help Phone app: Always There. Remind students that contacting Kids Help Phone is free, confidential, anonymous, and that it can be a safe place to discuss concerns.

Teacher Prompt:

- “Everybody stand up. Put your right hand on your left shoulder. Put your left hand on your right shoulder. Now squeeze to give yourself a hug!”

Additional Information for Activity #3

- Sexual interference/abuse can happen to anyone – regardless of gender, age, orientation, or culture.
- Students need to be aware that this can happen in any kind of family (e.g., two- parent families, single parent families, extended family, foster homes).
- The vast majority of reported sexual interference cases involve a known person, close friend, babysitter, or family member; not strangers.
- If a child discloses interference/abuse, it needs to be investigated and taken seriously. Refer to the Ontario Child, Youth, and Family Services Act (www.children.gov.on.ca), as well as your school board's disclosure policies.
- Review materials from BOOST on appropriate/inappropriate touch (www.boostforkids.org).

Wrap Up for Growth & Development Unit

- Review Key Learning Goals from the unit.
- Encourage students to share their learning with an adult they trust.
- Highlight how similar we all are regardless of gender, culture, genetic differences, orientation, background, and ability.
- Remind students that we are also all unique.
- Remind students that Growth & Development will be discussed again next year.

Adapted with permission from Toronto Public Health (October 2022)



HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

Durham Health Connection Line | 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729
durham.ca/sexualhealth

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

