

CALLED TO PROTECT FOR YOUTH

Description of the Program

Called to Protect for Youth is the first comprehensive program specifically designed to teach middle school and high school aged youths how to protect themselves from child molesters. Research shows that child molesters use the same methods time after time, and the more youth know about how molesters operate, the safer they become.

Meet Katie and Szucceed

Katie and Szucceed, two young adults, host the three-part video series. Their inviting manner puts kids at ease and presents the content in a non-threatening and educationally sound manner.



Katie and Szucceed teach youth how to recognize their boundaries, how to respond if someone tries to violate their boundaries, and what to do if someone is sexually abusing them or someone they know.

Part One

In Part One, Katie and Szucceed describe the three types of boundaries: physical, emotional and behavioral. Then, they show interviews with child molesters who describe the methods they used to violate young people's boundaries. Next they show interviews with kids who tell how their own boundaries were violated.

The sanctity and dignity of human life

As Catholics, we believe that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God. Each of us is sacred and our lives - body, mind and soul - should be treated with respect. **Called to Protect for Youth** gives our young people practical tools, in language and medium they can understand to realize this fundamental teaching of our faith.

Part Two

Once young people learn how to recognize their boundaries, they need to know what to do if someone tries to violate them. In Part Two of **Called to Protect for Youth**, four youngsters join Katie and Szucceed to show a variety of ways middle school and high school students can respond to boundary violations. Each of the youngsters portrays a different personality type - shy, funny, spunky, and wholesome - so everyone watching learns methods that will work for them.



Part Three

For some children, sexual abuse has already happened, or maybe it's still happening. And they haven't told anyone. They're living with the secret, trying to pretend that it doesn't bother them.

Katie and Szucceed show interviews with young people who have been molested explaining why it was so difficult for them to tell.

They also show interviews with child molesters who describe the methods they used to keep children from telling. Lastly, they bring back their four young friends to demonstrate the words young people can use to tell their parents or a trusted adult if someone is abusing them or someone they know.

What can parents do to reinforce the message?

First, talk to your children about their physical, emotional, and behavioral boundaries. Find out what they learned in the program.

Physical boundaries are defined by

- Who can touch you.
- How much they can touch you.
- Where they can touch you.

Emotional boundaries are defined by

- How close you feel to a person.
- How much time you spend with a person.
- What information you share with a person.

Behavioral boundaries are defined by

- What you will do.
- What you won't do.

Second, pay attention to someone who crosses your child's physical, emotional or behavioral boundaries.

Physical boundary violations mean touching too much or touching in ways most adults would not touch a child. Some examples are:

- Roughhousing or wrestling.
- Tickling.
- Accidentally touching inappropriately.
- Too many hugs or hugs with too much body contact.

Emotional boundary violations mean treating the relationship with a child as if it were a romantic or intimate adult relationship. Some examples are:

- Spending too much time with a minor.
- Calling too much.
- E-mailing too much.
- Getting involved in too many of the child's activities.
- Acting too possessive.

Behavioral boundary violations mean involving a child in activities that his or her parents would not allow the child to do. Some examples are:

- Ridiculing the beliefs of a minor's parents.
- Allowing a minor to do things against the wishes of parents.
- Offering minors cigarettes, alcohol or drugs.
- Allowing minors to look at pornography.
- Allowing minors to visit inappropriate Internet sites.
- Giving gifts to a minor without the parents' permission.
- Asking a minor to keep secrets from his or her parents.

Third, be aware that fears about being in trouble or disappointing parents can keep young people from telling. Let your children know they can tell you anything and you will always love them.

Where can I find more information?

The Diocese of Austin provides Basic and Refresher workshops for parents and other adults as part of the Ethics and Integrity in Ministry program. Go to www.austindiocese.org and navigate to the EIM Office page for complete EIM compliance information.

What should I do if I learn of abuse or boundary violations?

The Diocese of Austin is committed to preventing harm from happening to any of our children or vulnerable adults. If you are aware of sexual or physical abuse and/or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult, state law requires you to report that information to local law enforcement or the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Additionally, if the suspected abuse is by clergy or an employee or volunteer of any diocesan parish, school or agency, a Notice of Concern should be submitted to the diocesan Ethics and Integrity in Ministry Office. Reports may be made anonymously if verifiable.

www.txabusehotline.org/
www.austindiocese.org/

How to talk with TEENS about preventing sexual abuse

Talking with teens about sexual abuse starts with forming and maintaining strong, consistent communication with your teen, but for many parents, transitioning from being a nurturing care-giver for young children and a being a nurturing confidante for a teen can be rough. It is very common for parents to feel confused about how much information to share with teens, where to draw the line with teens about what they share, and how to guide behavior through communication without treating the teen like a young child. At times, parents may underestimate just how valuable a trusted adviser can be to a teen or a young adult and not recognize how important their role still is in the decision-making of their teen. To protect teens from sexual abuse, start with strong, open communication.

Laying the Groundwork for Strong Communication with Teens

- 1. Don't let other people convince you that having teenaged children will inevitably be a negative experience.** Just like the people who speak negatively about having children in the first place, the nay-sayers against teens will not hesitate to paint a bleak picture of the challenges we face as our children become young adults. But remember that parent expectations have an enormous impact on outcomes for children, and that doesn't end when they turn 13. Teens need to know that we believe in them and expect the best for them. www.child-encyclopedia.com/parenting-skills/according-experts/can-changing-parental-knowledge-dysfunctional-expectations-and
- 2. Start listening carefully, communicating and giving your full attention to your child before he or she is a teen.** Starting too late is a common problem. It's much easier to establish strong patterns of communication when children are young than to "break in" once they begin to be more focused on peer relationships. While children are young, begin asking plenty of questions about how they spend their time when they are away from you. When you pick up your child from school or an activity, find out who was there, what they talked about, what was the most fun activity, what they ate, and if anything surprising happened. Children become accustomed to sharing information about themselves and enjoy the experience of having your full attention while they tell their stories. As time goes on, and your children get older, they are more likely to continue sharing information if talking with you has become a habit and you already share interests and ideas.
- 3. Shift your communication patterns as children get older.** It should come as no surprise that teens do not always take kindly to friendly advice and direction. Even though it's painful for many parents to have helpful suggestions rebuffed, when young people figure things out for themselves can actually a positive part of adolescent development. After all, we are striving to raise healthy, independent adults, not just grown up children! Two shifts in advisory and direction communication that can help are 1) asking a teen what he or she is planning to do to address a problem before offering advice or suggestions, and 2) waiting to be asked before offering guidance. These shifts show respect and confidence in the teen's abilities to make good choices. Although every child is different, if a young person is going to be prepared to make decisions by the time he or she is 18 years old and has the legal authority to operate independently, our role in the process of decision-making should decrease incrementally over time.

- 4. If you didn't start when your teen was young, it's not impossible though to build something new...it just takes time.** An honest conversation about your desire to change things is a good place to start. One possibility is to find out your teen's favorite TV show, online personality, music, books or other interests. Without judging, ask what draws your teen to the interest and ask your teen to share it with you. Then start from episode one, listen to music or the podcast – be in the moment - and share some of his or her world. Remember, this is getting to know your teen, NOT a “teaching moment” so relax the parenting role enough to learn about your teen's interests and perspectives and find a safe place to spend time together.

- 5. If you want your teen to share information with you, you have to willing to share too. By the time children become teens, they have learned that information sharing is a reciprocal process and a matter of trust.** Think about it, would we really want our children to share all their information with another person who reveals nothing of themselves? Normally we would say that mutual sharing is the healthier path. So it's up to us as parents to trust teens with more honest disclosure about our joys and challenges than we would when they were younger children. Does this mean they need to know all there is to know or that they should hear about every wrong decision we ever made or every problem that we face? No. It doesn't. Teens still need security and they are not there to be our support system, but chances are that a 15 year old in a family that is dealing with serious challenges is already aware of the nature and gravity of those challenges, so open communication may be more reassuring than secrecy.

- 6. Get a clear understanding of the physiology of the teen brain.** You will be glad you did – because suddenly feelings and behaviors start to make sense! The most comprehensive and applicable summary I have come across was published by National Geographic and here's the link: ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2011/10/teenage-brains/dobbs-text. You may find it is easier to be less judgmental when you know the reasons your teen is so different from 5 year olds and being less judgmental can help a great deal with communication. Once you've finished the National Geographic article, try sharing it with your teen so that he or she can develop a greater understanding of the impulses, changing worldview and cognitive processes of the teen years.

Above all, don't give up on your teen even if he or she acts as though you are not needed. Teens still need support, stability, and someone who cares for them – that means staying involved!

Talking about Healthy Relationships

The second building block for talking with teens about sexual abuse, is helping teens recognize both healthy and unhealthy friendships and dating relationships. Along with strong family relationships, positive patterns in friendships and early dating relationships are important building blocks for healthy relationships in adulthood. When we establish supportive, healthy interactions with our friends of both genders, we are laying the groundwork for how we expect to be treated and how we expect to treat others for whom we care and are close. Helping teens recognize and maintain healthy friendships is also helps protect them from harm. **Hint:** Sometimes it's better to simply give your teen the information and let him or her decide which relationships are healthy and which ones may be unhealthy.

What are the signs of healthy friendships?

- We both like each other similarly.
- We share common interests and experiences together.
- My friend has other friends.
- My friend welcomes new friends to spend time with us.
- My friend treats other people with dignity and respect.
- I can count on my friend keep his or her word.
- My friend stands up for me.
- My friend is there for me in good times and bad.
- My friend encourages me to do the right thing.
- My friend tells the truth.
- My friend has my best interests at heart.

Truly healthy relationships have most, if not all of the characteristics listed above. If your friendship does not have these qualities, check the section below for the characteristics of an unhealthy friendship.

What are the signs of an unhealthy friendships?

- Does my friend sometimes try to hurt me emotionally?
- Does my friend make unrealistic demands on my time?
- Does my friend try to control me?
- Do I spend time worrying about this person or my relationship?
- Does my friend tell me who to spend time with?
- Does it seem like my friend takes more than s/he gives?
- Does my friend ever threaten or intimidate me?
- Does my friend ever give me a gift and expect something in return?
- Does my friend sometimes talk behind my back?
- Does my friend want me to do things that will get me in trouble?
- Do I feel guilty or afraid when I spend time with my friend?

If you have checked two of the boxes, this relationship has the potential to be unhealthy. If you have checked three or more boxes, the relationship has characteristics of a destructive, controlling or unhealthy relationship.

Even when a young person recognizes that he or she has become involved in an unhealthy or controlling friendship, it is sometimes easy to think it is not important to deal with the problem. The trouble is that from unhealthy friendships, we can begin to set patterns that have implications for future friendships, dating relationships and long-term commitments. One option is to encourage the friend to change. Sometimes that works, but when it does not work, it is vital to realize that by accepting the unhealthy pattern, we are not doing the friend any favors. In fact, when we stay in an unhealthy relationship, we are actually encouraging our friend to continue his or her own negative pattern or behavior.

Talking about Dangers

Both online and in real life, teens face dangers from adults and other young people who could harm them through manipulation, blackmail or physical assault. Developmentally, however, they may be inclined more toward solving their own problems than they were as young children. In most ways, this is a healthy and positive stage of development, but it can also be very frightening for parents to know that their teen may be dealing with dangerous problems and still not seek help from adults. Unfortunately, we often find that teens are more willing to deal with the demands of a blackmailer online than they are to tell their parents that they are in danger. Keep the following points in mind as you talk with your teen about sexual abuse and other dangers:

- * Stay honest at all times about real dangers. This is not the time to hide your concerns. Whenever possible share the original source of the information so that the information is not just coming from you.
- * Emphasize that if teens have already made mistakes or done something they regret, they can still come to you and it won't change how you feel about them.
- * Carefully consider whether you will impose negative consequences when your teen voluntarily discloses mistakes. Most serious mistakes come with their own natural consequences and you don't want to accidentally punish your teen for being honest and trusting you.
- * Never stop nurturing your teen even when you feel frustrated and angry. Nurturing during early teen years facilitates brain development, aids the maturation process, and helps limit the natural risk-taking behaviors of this developmental phase.
- * Share direct resources teens can use themselves if they just don't feel comfortable coming to you. Two examples are the **Crisis Text Line** and the **CyberTipLine**. Note that these are support resources and do not fulfill mandatory reporting requirements for suspected or known abuse.

<p>Crisis Text Line serves anyone, in any type of crisis, providing access to free, 24/7 support and information via the medium people already use and trust: text. Here's how it works: Text START to 741741 from anywhere in the USA, anytime, about any type of crisis.</p>	<p>CyberTipLine is the 911 of the internet. Teens can call or email directly on the website. Parents do not have to be involved in reporting. Hotline will also directly advise teens about specific problems or concerns.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.CyberTipLine.com 1-800-THE-LOST</p>
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Online Safety Resources

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children encourages adults to be honest with children and teens about the risks in communicating with people they do not know online, as well as the risks involved in posting personal, explicit or private information to people they do know.

Netsmartz is an online resource to teach children and young people about the dangers and how to stay safe online.

Go to www.netsmartz.org

Other Resources Regarding Online Safety

www.missingkids.com/home

www.netsmartz.org/Parents

www.usccb.org/about/communications/social-media-guidelines.cfm

www.faihandsafety.org/

www.cymsource.org/resources/documents/TechnologyGuidelinesNov2010.pdf

Teachers, youth ministers, parents or teens...

ANYONE

can email or call to get help from the Cybertipline.

Share the site with children and young people!

www.CyberTipLine.com

1-800-THE-LOST