



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE
OF MELBOURNE

Protecting God's Children

Parent Resource:
A Catholic Parent's Guide to
Keeping Their Kids **Safe**



Written by **Andrea Musulin**

FOR THE **CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF PERTH**

Adapted by the **Professional Standards Unit**

FOR THE **CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF MELBOURNE**



Protecting God's Children

Parent Handbook

A CATHOLIC PARENT'S GUIDE TO KEEPING THEIR KIDS SAFE

Using the Protective Behaviours Program

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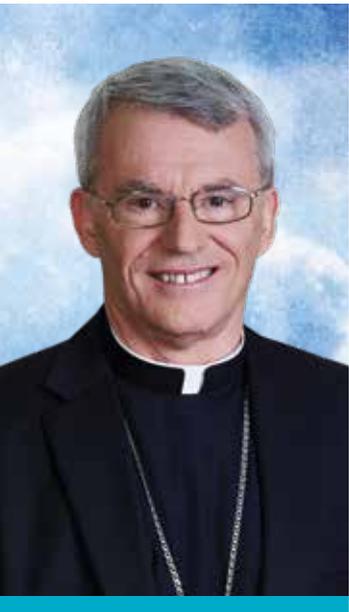
"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."

3 John 1:4



This resource is dedicated to parents who devotedly lay the foundations for their children to grow and flourish in God's love.

Foreword



When I became the Archbishop of Perth in 2012, I made a commitment, to myself and to the Archdiocese, that I would make the safety and well-being of our children and young people my first priority, and that I would respond in a compassionate, sensitive and just way to all those who had suffered sexual abuse by clergy and Church workers under the jurisdiction of my office.

Central to the fulfillment of this commitment has been the establishment here in the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth of our Safeguarding Program. At the very heart of this initiative is our commitment to the principle that children have an absolute right to physical, spiritual and psychological safety at all times, and that the Church, as a Christian institution, should now and into the future be in the forefront of efforts to make this a reality.

This Parent Handbook is just one aspect of the work and commitment of the Safeguarding Office. It complements the work of the more than 200 Safeguarding Officers who work in Catholic rural and metropolitan parishes, ensuring by their presence and active engagement in the parishes, that the dignity of children and young people is honoured and protected in our Catholic institutions, and that their right to absolute safety from any form of abuse or ill-treatment is an absolute priority for us all.

In this regard, it is important to note that while this resource focuses on the prevention of child sexual abuse, the strategies and concepts presented in this Handbook can be applied to almost any unsafe or threatening situation in which a child might find him or herself.

This Parent Handbook is offered, not only to Catholic parents, but to all who might find it useful as a practical and informative resource to help respond to their deeply felt desire and responsibility to be the primary educators and safe-guardians of their children.

In officially launching this valuable and important resource, I wish to express how enormously grateful I am to Ms Andrea Musulin, our Director of Safeguarding Program, her colleagues in the Safeguarding Office and her army of Parish Safeguarding Officers spread right across the Archdiocese, for the professionalism, courage and commitment they bring to this task, which today must be regarded as an absolutely essential dimension of the Church's mission.

My sincerest hope is that this Handbook will prove to be a valuable tool for parents, carers and other concerned adults, as we all seek to make our children safe.

May we continue our commitment to this vital work, walking together in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd.



+ Timothy Costelloe SDB

Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Catholic Archbishop of Perth

Welcome



I have always been struck by a parent's unwavering commitment to keep their child safe from harm. Mary and Joseph, throughout Jesus' life demonstrate their love and concern for him, and come to accept that he must venture into the world to fulfil his mission to restore our relationship with God.

Children today, too, must journey toward their potential to live a fruitful life. As a parent, you play the most vital role as your child's first and most enduring educator – shaping their ability to love, care for others and navigate life's journey. We in the Archdiocese wish to play our part in supporting parents in their role by striving to create safe and spiritually enriching environments for children and seek opportunities within the context of God's love and his teachings to build their confidence.

The Protecting God's Children resource authored by Andrea Musulin for the Archdiocese of Perth and with Archbishop Timothy Costelloe's kind permission, has been adapted to provide a valuable and important resource for parents across the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne. Whilst focused on the prevention of child sexual abuse, this resource supports parents to teach their children a range of skills to better respond to a range of unsafe situations.

In my time as Archbishop of Melbourne, I have had many opportunities to speak with parents and children and know that safety must underpin our ministries with children and that we need to empower children to recognise their right to safety, to act to avoid unsafe situations, to speak up and tell a trusted adult when they feel unsafe. Our willingness to engage in discussion about this important topic, demonstrates to children that "we will listen". Whilst we as adults must accept ultimate responsibility for keeping children safe, teaching personal safety skills plays an important role in protecting God's children.

I commend this resource to you and hope that you will find it useful.

May the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph bless our families and be our model of life and goodness.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Peter A Comensoli". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE
OF MELBOURNE





Introduction to Using this Handbook

This protective behaviours resource for parents is child-focused and informed by a fundamental belief that children have the right to physical and psychological safety at all times. The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne in partnership with parents can play a part in protecting children.

This Parent Handbook has been developed for Catholic parents in the hope that when teaching your children the following *Basket Fillers* you will increase your children's personal safety and their ability to be resilient.

It has also been designed to teach your children to:

- develop a language of safety
- develop emotional intelligence
- develop optimism
- identify unsafe situations
- respond appropriately to unsafe situations
- seek appropriate help in unsafe situations and
- develop problem solving skills.

The keys to successful parenting are not found in complex theories, elaborate over the top family rules, formulas for behaviour or in wrapping your child in cotton wool but rather, as set out in the Bible, they are based on the deepest feelings of love and affection for your children and are demonstrated simply through empathy and understanding.

As the primary educators of your children, developing safety skills begins in the home and in your heart and continues by engaging your children when they feel sad, angry, confused, frustrated, hurt, conflicted, worried or scared. In other words, good parenting involves emotions, yours and your children's. In the presence of God and with reverence, your role as parents in empowering your children in protective behaviours is part of God's plan for love and protection.

“The keys to successful parenting... are based on the deepest feelings of love and affection for your children and are demonstrated simply through empathy and understanding.”

This book is designed to guide you on this journey for years to come. Whilst this handbook has a focus on the prevention of child sexual abuse, it sets out a life skills approach to safety and as such will assist your child in a variety of unsafe, hostile or threatening situations they may find themselves in as they travel through an ever changing and ever challenging world. Schools are important partners providing education to support social emotional learning, respectful relationships and child abuse awareness and prevention.

Until the early 1970s child sexual abuse was thought to be rare. Experts now agree that child sexual abuse has always occurred and continues to occur in families, organisations including faith-based settings, in the community and online.¹ One of the problems is, and has always been, that we do not educate children sufficiently or appropriately on personal safety including sexual safety.

The **Betrayal of Trust Inquiry** and the **Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse** have shown that it is imperative that children participate in personal safety programs outside of the outdated stranger danger message. The vast majority of children who are abused are not abused by strangers but rather by the people they know, love and trust. Teaching your child stranger danger in isolation may not help them if they are being harmed by a family member, friend or other trusted person. This said it is still important to include education on stranger danger as children will also continue to be harmed by people they do not know. However, this should be taught in a wider context such as within a protective behaviours educational process.

To increase your children's safety it is important that you fill your children's baskets of knowledge with a variety of life skills. A precondition to the occurrence of child sexual abuse is *overcoming the child's resistance* and with this in mind this handbook sets out ways in which you, the parent, can fill your children's **Baskets of Knowledge** with Protective Behaviours and Sex Education information. When you increase your child's knowledge you can decrease the opportunities for harm to occur. By using this protective behaviours resource with your child, you will be able to assist them to develop a variety of skills and knowledge which may empower them to play their part in keeping safe. However, it is and will always remain your primary responsibility as the parent to keep your children safe.

It is now time to get to work.



¹ In Australia it is estimated that males had prevalence rates of 1.4 -7.5% for penetrative abuse and 5.2-12% for non-penetrative abuse, while females had prevalence rates of 4.0-12.0% for penetrative abuse and 14-26% for non-penetrative abuse. **Australian Institute of Family Studies, The prevalence of child abuse and neglect. CFCA Resource Sheet – April 2017.**

The 10 Basket Fillers



In order to increase your child's safety it is imperative that we fill their baskets of knowledge with age appropriate and developmentally appropriate information. All children are vulnerable to abuse and particularly sexual abuse because:

- they are powerless
- they trust and depend on adults
- they are taught to obey adults
- young children cannot assess adults' motives
- children may tolerate the most painful abuse to maintain emotionally rewarding relationships and
- anything to do with sex is confusing.

The following Basket Fillers are what we teach children sequentially in order to increase their safety.

- 1. Theme 1: "God gave all children the right to feel safe at all times."**
2. Feelings and Emotional Intelligence
3. Early Warning Signs and the Safety Continuum
- 4. Theme 2: "Nothing is so awful that we can't talk with someone about it."**
5. My Helping Hand
6. My Private Parts
7. Social Distance
8. It's OK to Say NO
9. Secrets
10. God's Design for Sex

Listed on every page you will find a list of recommended picture books – to reinforce the key messages in each section. A complete list of recommended stories is provided in an appendix to accompany this resource.



Theme 1:

“God gave all children the right to feel safe at all times.”

1.

This is where the learning starts. Theme 1 creates the foundation for keeping children safe and as you work through all the Basket Fillers in this handbook, use this theme to guide you and to provide a focus.

It is important that we teach children that when they were born, God made all of them and he was happy with what he had made. Teach your child that God gave every child the right to feel safe at all times by breaking down the words as follows:

God gave all children the right to feel safe at all times



God does not exclude. Jesus said,
“All that the Father gives me will come to me,
and him who comes to me, I will not cast out.”

John 6:37

God

God made them and as such only God gives them this right. Parents and other adults do not give them this right.

All

Teach your child that All means absolutely every child in the whole wide world and that God makes no exception to this rule. Make sure your child understands and identifies that they are included in this. Talk about the fact that even naughty kids, really naughty kids, mean kids, bullies and kids who do rude things are also included in this – reinforcing that there are no exceptions to this rule.

Right

This is a right that God gives them at birth and as such no one can take this away from them. God gives it and only God can take it away when the child goes to heaven. Use the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** (child-friendly version) to further explain what other rights children have such as food, water, education, medical care and love.

Feel safe

Consider what feeling safe looks like, feels like, sounds like. Explore feeling unsafe and how this is different to safe. Ask your child how God lets them know they are feeling safe.

At all times

No matter where you are or who you are with, you have the right to feel safe, always. This never leaves you. It doesn't matter where you are, what you are doing, who you are with or what you are wearing.

SUGGESTED READING: *We Are All Born Free* • *For Every Child*
• *God Made All of Me* • *You Wouldn't Love Me If You Knew*

Explain the difference between this right and other rights they may have using these suggestions or add your own.

RIGHTS	DOES SOMEONE GIVE THIS RIGHT TO YOU?	DO YOU HAVE TO EARN THIS RIGHT?	CAN THIS RIGHT BE TAKEN AWAY FROM YOU?
Pocket money	✓	✓	✓
Pen licence	✓	✓	✓
Ice cream after dinner	✓	✓	✓
A driver's licence	✓	✓	✓
Right to feel safe	✗	✗	✗

When you tell your child you love them, make sure every now and then you also add "and it doesn't matter what you do, there is nothing that you could ever do that would make me stop loving you".

You will need to discuss with your child that rights come with responsibilities. As such the responsibilities attached to the child's right to feel safe and which needs to be discussed with your child are as follows:

1. All other children have this right to feel safe and, therefore, you are responsible for making sure that you do not make other children feel unsafe. God gave ALL children this right to feel safe when they were born.
2. For older children it is advisable that you discuss choices and that, whilst the choices they make may have consequences, such as the removal of game time or a mobile phone, you will always love them.

THEME 1 ACTIVITY:

“God gave all children the right to feel safe at all times.”

- Draw a picture of yourself doing something that makes you feel safe.



- Draw a picture of yourself doing something that makes you feel unsafe.



IDEAS BOX

Make a Theme 1 poster, read the United Nations Declaration of Rights of the Child, make a paper safety link chain naming safe places/people/things, make badges with safety messages, do meditation exercises on safe places/people/things, use old magazines to create a safety collage, make a cardboard safety shield with safety messages on it, decorate a coffee mug or bowl on Theme 1.

Feelings and Emotional Intelligence

2.

It is important for both you and your child to be able to recognise and deal with the vast array of feelings God gave us.

This means it is important for parents to be aware of their children's feelings, encourage them to talk about their feelings and emotions, being sure to validate and acknowledge their feelings at all times. Your child may require empathy, understanding or just someone to listen when expressing their feelings. This in turn will assist children, who learn most lessons about emotions and feelings from their parents, to acknowledge and express their feelings appropriately, to motivate themselves, to read other people's social cues and to cope with life's challenges both the ups and downs. This is called *Emotional Intelligence* and it is paramount in developing resilience in your child.

Avoid telling your child they are 'silly' when feeling scared – instead help them to problem solve the situation so they feel safe again. Help to develop an understanding that people in your family may feel differently in the same situation but that's OK. When God made us he made us all different.

Help your child to name feelings and be sure to include the following feelings: angry, sad, conflicted, hurt, betrayed, confused, guilty, ashamed, nervous, scared and frustrated. Emotional regulation is also important. What we feel on the inside can often be expressed quite differently on the outside.



SUGGESTED READING: *The Way I Feel* • *In My Heart*
• *You Wouldn't Love Me If You Knew* • *When I Feel Angry*

ACTIVITY FOR FEELINGS

- Colour in the unsafe feelings **red** and colour in the safe feelings **green** and if you think any of the feelings can be either safe or unsafe colour these in **orange**.

Happy	Depressed	Nervous	Tired	Curious
Afraid	Frustrated	Relaxed	Unsafe	Concerned
Angry	Energetic	Proud	Hurt	Funny
Confident	Sad	Bored	Mad	Joyful
Ashamed	Scared	Glad	Silly	Disappointed
Jealous	Confident	Confused	Bullied	Pleased
Embarrassed	Shy	Stressed	Thankful	Anxious
Excited	Lonely	Surprised	Worried	Sick
Loved	Annoyed	Optimistic	Shocked	Conflicted
Insulted	Safe	Cheerful	Ignored	Grumpy
Guilty	Lucky	Tired	Merry	Frightened

IDEAS BOX

Play games – Feeling Words Bingo, make play-doh feelings figurines, paint Feelings rocks, make a feelings chart, make your own feeling words ball or feelings sock puppets, feelings regulation exercises – deep breathing, counting backwards, stress balls.

- Read Luke 2:41 about **Jesus in the Temple**. Discuss the feelings experienced by **Mary, Joseph and Jesus**.

Early Warning Signs and the Safety Continuum

3.

These are the feelings we have in our bodies when we are not feeling safe.

To be more specific they are our PRIMARY, INVOLUNTARY RESPONSES TO DANGER which our sympathetic autonomic nervous system is responsible for. Sometimes this is called the fight, flight or freeze response.

Your child will experience early warning signs in a variety of situations including when they are excited, scared or when they have a problem. Most children ignore their early warning signs because they are not in tune with them but this is exactly what you don't want your child to do! By tuning in to their bodies early warning signs, children will be able to have an awareness of when they are not feeling safe and in turn seek help.

Talk to your child about when God made their bodies he designed their bodies so that they would experience different types of early warning signs. Some common early warning signs children may experience include:



MY EARLY WARNING SIGNS

We need to help children identify their own unique early warning signs and teach them to listen to these feelings and talk about them when they feel them in their bodies. Early Warning Signs are different for everyone, but something we all get.

Brain racing away

Hair on neck standing up

Heart beating fast

Sweaty underarms

Butterflies in the tummy

Need to go to the toilet



Dizzy

Sweaty forehead

Crying

Goose bumps

Cannot breathe

Shaking



They are not always bad feelings but alert us to situations where our mind and body are not working together.

We may get them when having fun, doing something scary but fun, having to take a risk or partaking in unsafe situations. This is best explained as a continuum and as such it is called the safety continuum. We need to let children experience life and experiences that have choice, control and time limits.

Safety = Choice + Control + Time Limit

SAFETY CONTINUUM



SAFE

- No early warning signs
- Lots of choice and control

FUN TO FEEL SCARED

- Some early warning signs
- Some choice and control

RISKING ON PURPOSE

- More early warning signs
- Some choice and control

UNSAFE

- Lots of early warning signs
- No choice and control

Use everyday opportunities that arise to discuss early warning signs with children and discuss where on the Safety Continuum they sit. Explain to them they can always talk to you about the choices they have made especially if those choices give them their early warning signs or make them feel unsafe.

SUGGESTED READING:

- *Max's Creepy Crawly Slimy Things*
- *Huge Bag of Worries*
- *Sam's Hats*

ACTIVITY FOR EARLY WARNING SIGNS

- Assuming this was your child's body ask your child to show you where on their body they get their Early Warning Signs.

For very young children they can mark the spots with a red cross. For older children ask them to draw a diagram of their Early Warning Signs such as a butterfly in the tummy. Make sure you discuss each of their Early Warning Signs as they appear and talk about situations they have been in that have given them their Early Warning Signs.



IDEAS BOX

Play games such as Jenga/Shark Attack/Pie Face/Boom Boom Balloon/Jack in the Box. Blow up a balloon until it pops, read classic children's storybooks or watch children's feature films and discuss Early Warning Signs the good character had when they felt unsafe. Blindfold your child and walk them around a room or outside when they cannot see, whilst talking about how they are feeling.



Theme 2: “Nothing is so awful that we can’t talk with someone about it.”

4.

Theme 2 builds on Theme 1 “God gave all children the right to feel safe at all times”. Even though God gives us the right to feel safe, we know that there will be times when we don’t actually feel safe. When your child feels unsafe they need to know that:

Nothing is so awful that we **can’t talk** with **someone** about it

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13



When your child is feeling unsafe, worried or afraid it is important that they speak about how they are feeling and about what or who is making them feel that way. Break down the words for your child as follows:

Nothing

Explain that nothing actually means everything and that there is nothing in the whole wide world that they cannot talk to you about. Suggest everything they do, say and play can be talked about, even if someone tells them they must never talk about it. This will be explored further in Basket Filler 9 – Secrets.

Awful

Describe what awful means and brainstorm some examples of awful. There are a great deal of awful things that happen to children such as bullying, violence, being lost, losing a loved one, parents breaking up, hurting themselves, someone making them look at rude pictures. Use children's feature films or stories such as Bambi, Snow White, Cinderella, Finding Nemo, Cat in the Hat, Beauty and the Beast, Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Pinocchio, Frozen and The Lion King. All of these children's films have something awful happen to the main character that makes them feel unsafe. However, with persistence they overcome the evil or the wicked witch and the story ends with them feeling safe again. The Lion King is a good example in that the very person who should have been looking after Simba (his uncle a family member) is the very person who is trying to harm him. This is a good example of something awful!

Someone

This is someone the child chooses. You do not choose someone for them to talk to. These people are their **helping hand** adults. As you may not know how a particular adult makes your child feel or what a particular adult may be doing with your child (only they will know this), it is imperative that they choose their own helping hand adults. This process in itself is very empowering for children and works towards developing resistance. Basket Filler 5 – My Helping Hand will expand on this concept.

It

Identify what **it** or the problem is. It can be another child, an adult or something another child or adult is making your child see, do or play. It can also be the secret that they have been told to keep. To help in explaining this to your child, use children's feature films or stories to identify what **it** is in the story and how the main character overcame **it**.

It is vital that you always keep the lines of communication open with your child. Take time each day to talk to them about how they are feeling and about things that are important to them. Encourage them to share good news stories as well as troubling news in a non-judgemental way using open ended questions. e.g. "Can you tell me more about that?", "Then what happened?", "What went well today?", "What didn't go so well today?"

Persistence Expectation

It is a fact that children may tell an adult about abuse or a problem and the adult does nothing to help them. It is for this reason that we encourage children to persist with telling adults or their helping hand adults (Basket Filler 5) about it. Teach your child to keep on telling until someone listens, believes them and takes action to help make them feel safe again.

SUGGESTED READING: • *Jasmine's Butterflies* • *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*
• *God gave Elizabeth Grace the Right to Feel Safe*

My Helping Hand

5.

It is important for your child to have people they can talk to when they have questions, when they are feeling unsafe, when they are feeling afraid, when they are hurt or confused.

As such, you will need to assist your child in developing their helping hand which consists of 5 adults that they can speak with when they need to. This is best done using a brainstorm and depending on your child's age you may need to add to the brainstorm. Encourage them to include family members and other adults outside the family such as a teacher, someone at church or a sports coach. Network people need to be someone that will:

- ***listen to your child***
- ***believe your child***
- ***be available and***
- ***be someone that can take action if needed.***

We suggest that once your child has chosen the five people they wish to have on their helping hand that they now send them an invitation. This way it gives you the opportunity to discuss the concepts in this resource with their chosen adults ensuring they are the right fit for your child.

In order to get your child comfortable and practised using their helping hand, encourage your child to use the people on their helping hand to share the good news stories in their life such as an award, their birthday or a special occasion that is coming up. Practising this will increase your child's ability to speak to their network people about the not so good news stories or about the feelings they have.

Teach your child that they must persevere in telling their trusted adults about their concerns until they are listened to and the adults have acted to keep them safe.

SUGGESTED READING:

- *Brave Knight*
- *Wibbly's Network Friends*
- *Jasmine's Butterflies*

*Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find.
Knock and it will be opened to you.*

Matthew 7:7

My Helping Hand



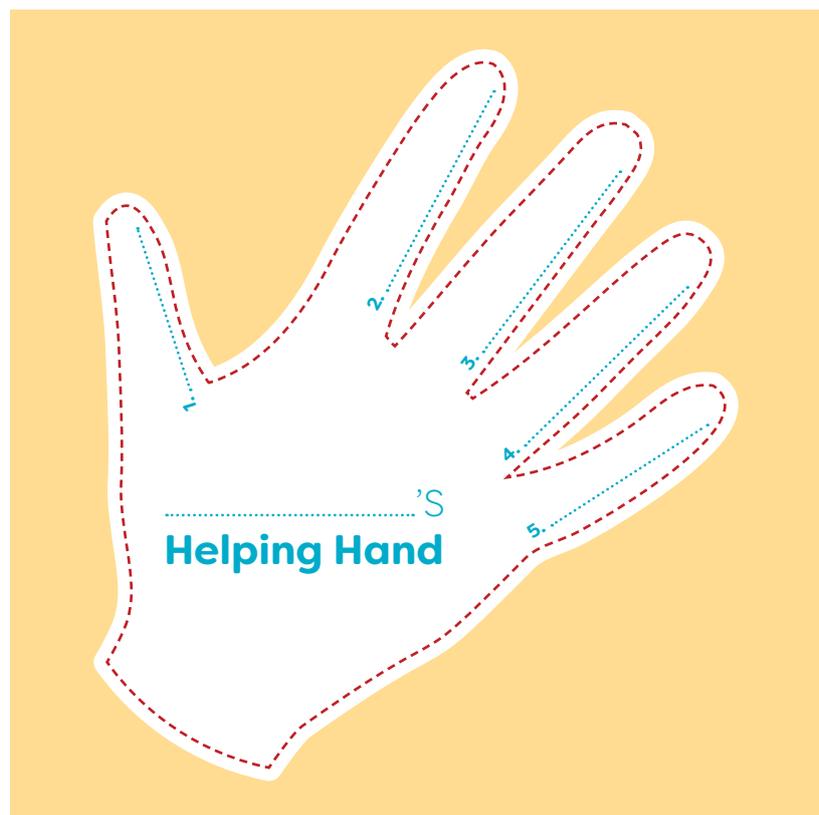
HELPING HAND ACTIVITY

- **Brainstorm with your child all of the adults that they could put on their helping hand.**

Then ask them to insert those names into the fingers. Teach them that if the first person they tell doesn't help them then they need to keep asking the other people on their network. Try and encourage your child to place a professional person on their helping hand such as a teacher, day care staff, doctor, police officer.

The people we choose to put on our helping hand must be A Grown Up:

- 1 Available
- 2 Someone I trust
- 3 Someone who listens and believes me
- 4 Someone who can take action to help me.



IDEAS BOX

Use a hand print and cut out the image to make a network helping hand, practise the skill of problem solving in their everyday life situations using their network hand. Practise with your child phoning someone on their network hand.

HELPING HAND INVITATION

To

I have been learning about personal safety and I now know that “God gave me the Right to Feel Safe at all times”.

There may be times when I don’t feel safe and when I feel like this I would like to come and talk to you. I would like to invite you to be on my helping hand.

Those adults I choose to put on my helping hand should be:

- *Available for me*
- *Someone I trust*
- *Someone who listens and believes me*
- *Someone who can take action to help me.*

For more information you can contact my parents on

.....

If you are unsure what to do you can also find out more about keeping kids safe by phoning the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne Professional Standards Unit on (03) 9926 5621 or via email to psu@cam.org.au

From

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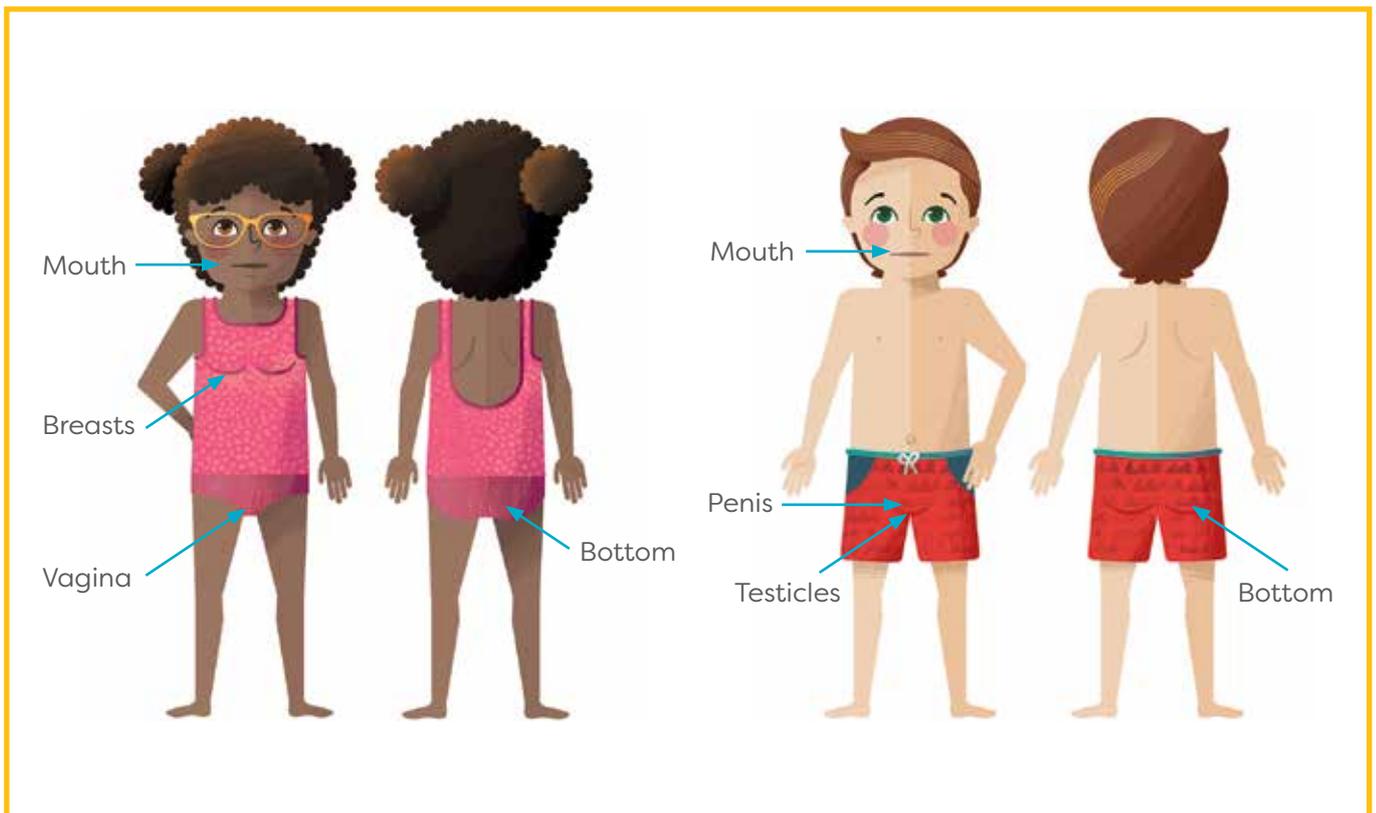
6.

My Private Parts

Explain to your child that they are an amazing and wonderful creation made by God; a special and unique gift that God gave to their parents. Teach them that God made all of them.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. Genesis 1:31

This is where the learning starts about girls' and boys' private parts. Explain to your child some parts of their bodies are for everyone to see while other parts of their bodies, like the ones they cover with their bathers, are NOT for everyone to see. It is very important that you teach your child the correct anatomical names for the private parts of their bodies and encourage them to use these names when referring to these parts of their bodies. You may wish to discuss all the other names children use to label these parts but correct them by teaching them that God named them.



Using the correct terms will make them more at ease and less embarrassed if they need to tell you about a touch that has made them feel uncomfortable. Teaching children the correct anatomical names promotes positive body image, enhances communication with your child and builds self-confidence. It can also lessen the opportunity for harm.

As mentioned above teach your child that we call these parts of their bodies private because they are exactly that, PRIVATE! Explain to your child what PRIVATE means.

Because they are private this means that there are special rules around these parts and as such theirs and other people's (including children and adults) are:

NOT for sharing

NOT for touching

NOT for showing

NOT for keeping secrets

NOT for photos or videos

Other people's are NOT for touching

NOT for playing games

No games should involve the private parts of their body or the keeping of a secret - ever!

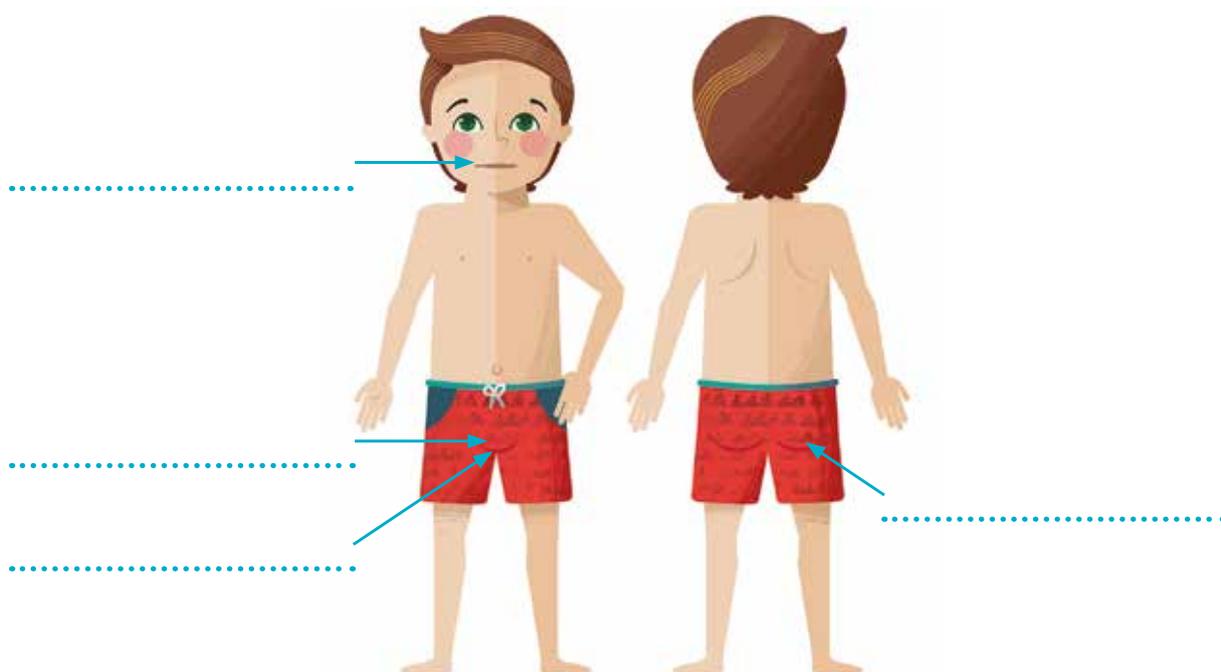
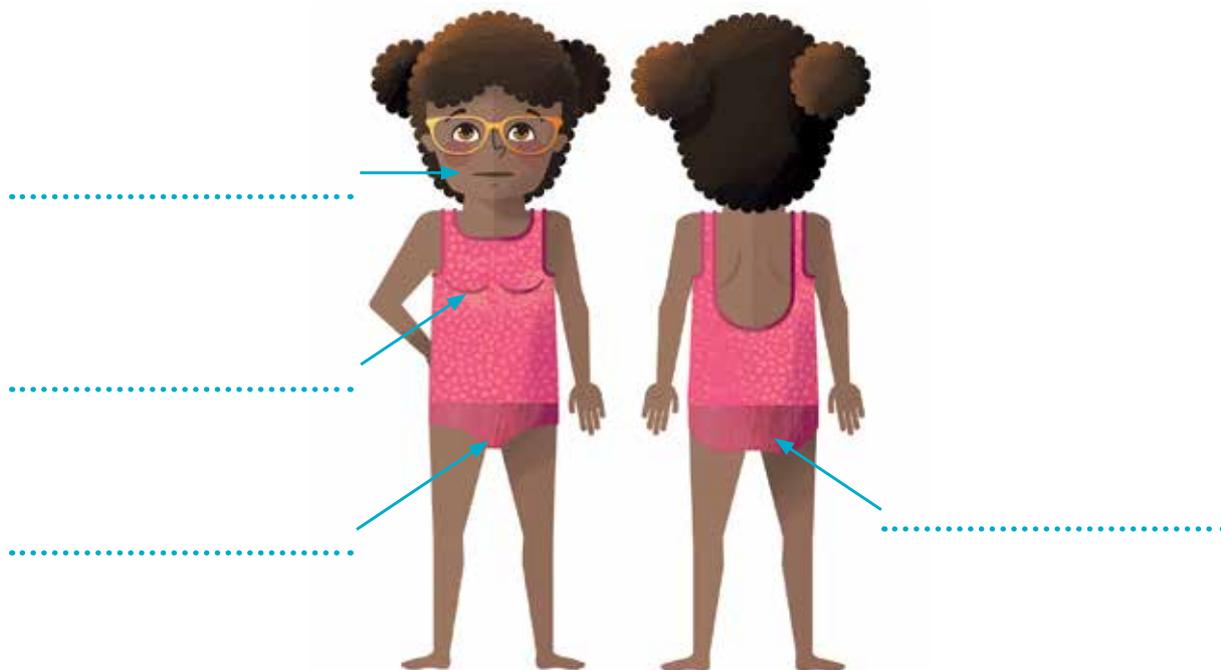
- Read Mark 6:2 about the power of Jesus' hand to heal. Discuss how touch can be a wonderful healing process. Discuss the gifts God gave Jesus to heal. Discuss how God gave them their body to be proud owners of.

SUGGESTED READING:

- *Only For Me*
- *My Body is Special*
- *Those are My Private Parts*
- *Everyone's Got a Bottom*
- *My Underpants Rule!*

PRIVATE PARTS ACTIVITY

- On the diagrams below ask your child to write the correct anatomical names for the girl's and the boy's private parts.





7.

Social Distance

Affection is important and appropriate touches such as hugs can be and should be enjoyed by children.

Discuss this with your child explaining no one should be allowed to touch or kiss them without their permission. It is OK for them to say no to adults even if it is someone they love. Social Distance involves the personal space that surrounds your child's body. We are all born different and children have the right to own their bodies – THEIR BODY THEIR CHOICE!

This is best explained to children using different touch for different people. You may be surprised to find that your child does not like certain people touching them.

BIG KISS RING

Ask your child to identify people (inside and outside family) that they would like to give them a big kiss and a big long lasting cuddle.

HUG AND RELEASE RING

Ask your child to identify people (inside and outside family) that they would like to give them a hug but a hug that doesn't last very long.

THE FIST BUMP RING

Ask your child to identify people (inside and outside family) that they would like to give them a fist bump.

THE HAND SHAKE RING

Ask your child to identify people (inside and outside family) that they would like to give them a hand shake.

THE NOD RING

Ask your child to identify people (inside and outside family) that they would like to give them a nod, a wave or a greeting.

THE EMERGENCY RING

This ring is usually the furthest from your child's body and is kept only for emergencies. It is advisable not to use the words "Stranger Danger" with your child as not all strangers are a danger and in fact a child may need a stranger to render assistance in emergencies. This ring is usually left for strangers or people they don't know who may need to help them in an emergency.

Social Distance Rings

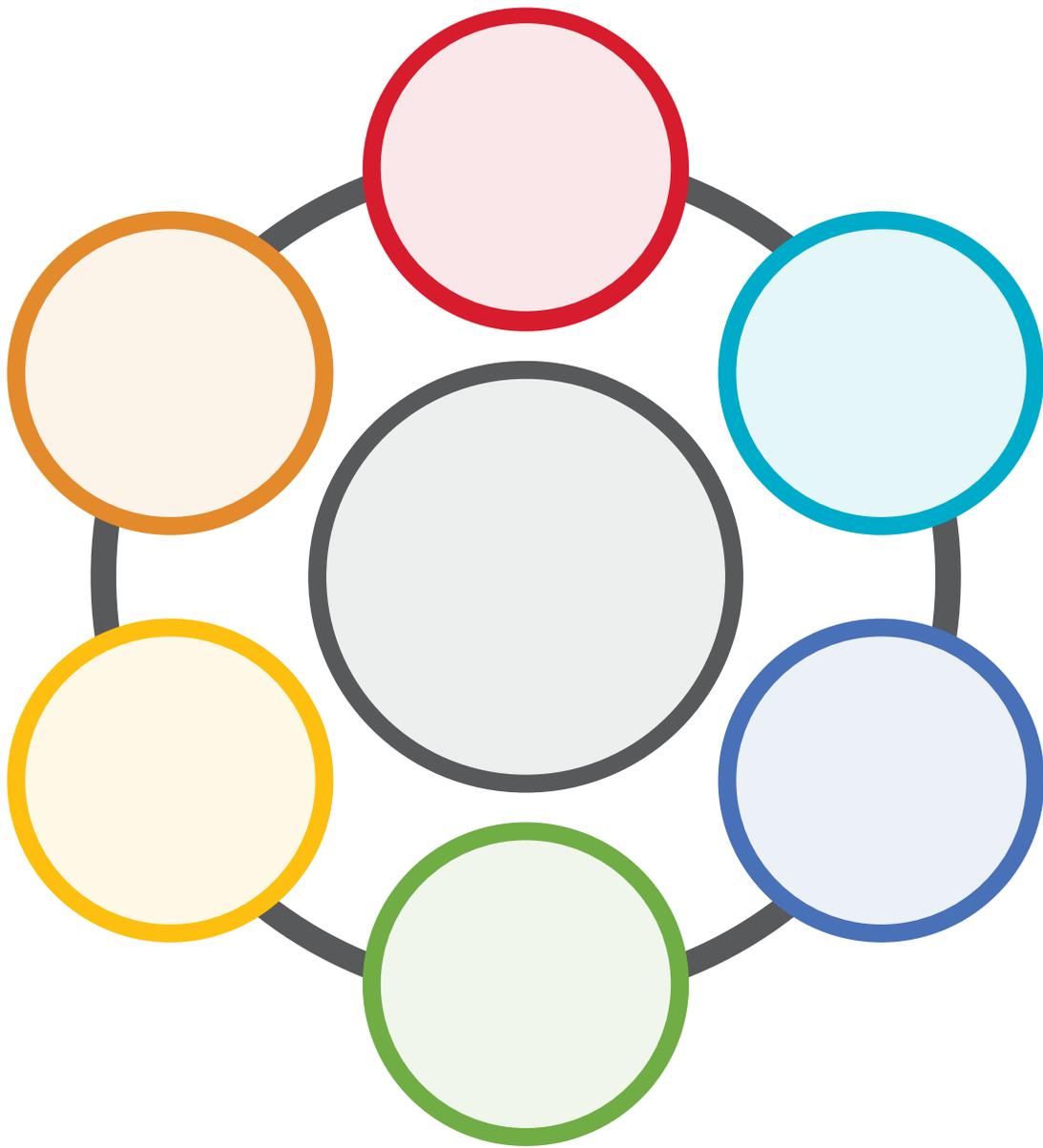


Explain that they are in charge of their Social Distance and personal space which means they are to respect other people's Social Distance and personal space.

SUGGESTED READING:

- *Michael's Bubbles*
- *Uncle Willy's Tickles*
- *Personal Space Camp*

SOCIAL DISTANCE RINGS ACTIVITY



Have your child draw a picture of themselves in the blue ring in the middle or print off a photo of them and place the photo in the blue ring.

Then ask your child to place the names or faces of people in their lives that they would like to give them a:



Ask your child to put a hula hoop on and ask them to raise it up and down their whole body. This defines the personal space around their bodies. Teach them that from their head to their toes they can say what goes!



It's OK to Say NO

8.

Obeying one's parents is a direct command from God.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1). "Honour your father and mother' – which is the first command with a promise – 'so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on earth.'"

It may be challenging for children to learn to obey and honour their parents – for some children, it's harder than others! God's design is for children to learn to honour and obey their parents and other adults and as such we teach our children to do so. We usually do this with a blanket approach and do not single out particular adults that they do not have to obey – maybe you have already done this?

The problem with this is that when an adult, or in some cases the child's parent, harms them sexually or engages them in sexual activity, they will use this terminology to manipulate the child into performing the sexual acts or playing a game with their private parts. This situation would be an emergency and children are allowed to say NO to adults in emergencies.

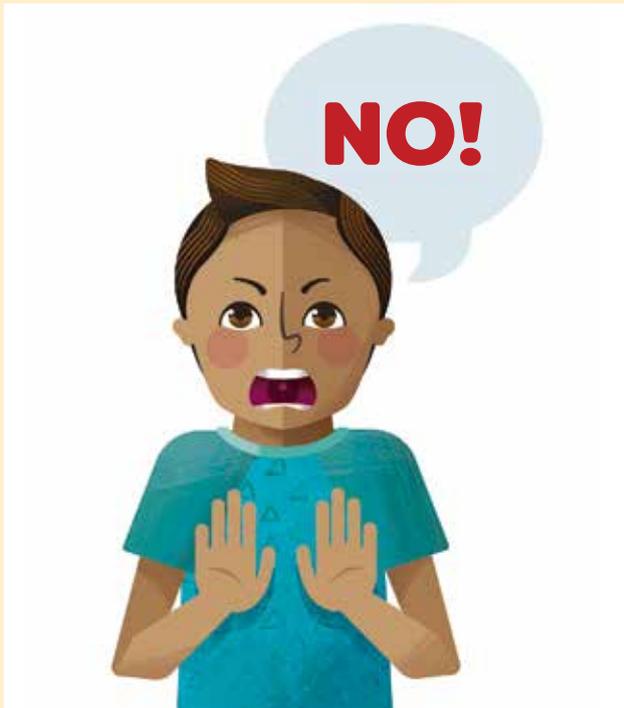
“CHILDREN ARE ALLOWED TO BREAK THE RULES IN AN EMERGENCY!”

Discuss with your child that whilst they have to obey you and other adults in the community, family and friendship circles, and whilst they are expected to obey their teachers and coaches, if any of these adults make them feel unsafe they don't have to obey them. CHILDREN ARE ALLOWED TO BREAK THE RULES IN AN EMERGENCY!

Teach your children that they are the boss of their bodies as explored in Basket Filler 6 – Private Parts. Go on to say that if anyone wants to look at or take photos of their private parts or wants to touch or look at their private parts they should say NO or NO DEAL in a very loud voice with the hand out in front of them. Then they should go to a trusted adult and tell them.

Children are allowed to break the rules in an emergency.

If someone makes you feel unsafe,
that is an emergency and you should:



Say No!



Get away
from the person
and...



Tell someone
on your
Helping Hand.

9.

Secrets

Develop with your children an expectation that secrets can always be shared with an adult they trust.

It can be fun to keep a secret that is good, comfortable or makes you feel safe like a surprise birthday party or a special present you have bought someone. However secrets that give children their early warning signs or make them feel unsafe or uncomfortable should always be shared with someone on their helping hand.

No secret should be kept forever. For older children it is important to explain that bad choices that are kept a secret can always be shared with someone on their helping hand.

Secrets that involve tricks, threats, bribes, lies, shame, guilt, blackmail or have something to do with private parts of the body should always be shared with a trusted adult.

SUGGESTED READING:

- *A Secret Safe to Tell*
- *You Wouldn't Love Me If You Knew*
- *Some Secrets Should Never Be Kept*

*For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light. **Luke 8:17***



SECRETS ACTIVITY

- **Are these secrets safe or unsafe?**

Draw a line to safe or unsafe depending on what the secret is.

SAFE

Where the spare house key is hidden

UNSAFE

SAFE

Someone shows you a rude picture on the internet

UNSAFE

SAFE

Someone steals something and tells you never to tell anyone about it

UNSAFE

SAFE

The surprise present you made at school for mum for Mother's Day

UNSAFE

SAFE

Someone in your family is having a baby and they tell you it's a secret

UNSAFE

SAFE

Someone shows you their private parts and they tell you to keep it a secret

UNSAFE

10.

God's Design for Sex

The sex talk for most parents is a daunting task. Communicating the richness of Catholic teaching on sexuality and sex education in a faithful and effective way can be an overwhelming responsibility.

However, it doesn't have to be. Talking with children about their bodies and sex in a meaningful and age appropriate manner should be part of an ongoing conversation which evolves from early childhood through to adolescence. Conversations with children and the provision of reliable and accurate information models for children that it is OK to ask questions and speak about their concerns and empowers them to make healthy choices (**Raising Children Network**).

In fulfilling this responsibility to your children, you should be guided by the words of Pope Pius XII, spoken to a group of Christian mothers in 1941:

"If imparted by the lips of Christian parents, at the proper time, in the proper measure and with proper precautions, the revelation of the mysterious and marvellous laws of life will be received by them (the children) with reverence and gratitude, and will enlighten their minds with far less danger than if they learned them haphazard from some unpleasant shock, from secret conversations, through information received from oversophisticated companions, or from clandestine reading, the more dangerous and pernicious as secrecy inflames the imagination and troubles the senses. Your words, if they are wise and discreet, will prove a safeguard and a warning in the midst of the temptations and the corruption which surround them, 'because foreseen an arrow comes slowly'!... With the discretion of a mother and a teacher, and thanks to the open-hearted confidence with which you have been able to inspire your children, you will not fail to watch for and to discern the moment in which unspoken questions have occurred to their minds and are troubling their senses. It will then be your duty to your daughters, the father's duty to your sons, carefully and delicately to unveil the truth as far as it appears necessary, to give a prudent, true and Christian answer to those questions and set their minds at rest."

Today, we know that both mothers and fathers play an important role in sharing information and answering their child's questions, irrespective of their child's gender. As a parent, we are able to determine the most appropriate time and our approach to sharing this important information.

In order to assist you in this task we have prepared a suggested reading list including storybooks, which can be found in the attached Protecting God's Children Appendix.

Parents of school aged children can also engage with schools as a key partner and resource, as schools play a complementary role in educating and empowering children in this regard.







Cyber Safety

Digital technology is a rapidly growing and ever changing environment that our children are engaged in. Whilst most parents would agree that there are many benefits of the online world, it can come with exposed risks.

It is important for parents to be involved in their child's online wellbeing and that parents set clear rules which provide guidance and support for respectful internet use.

Open communication as reinforced by Theme 2 "Nothing is so awful that we can't talk with someone about it" is essential for online safety. Explore the internet together and talk about the websites, games and activities they enjoy. Tell them about strategies to deal with online content that gives them their early warning signs, like talking with someone from their helping hand, turning off the screen, or how to block or report people. Seek your child's input and together set age appropriate rules for internet and device use.

“Seek your child’s input and together set age appropriate rules for internet and device use.”

Technology tools can be helpful in online safety in reducing the likelihood of offensive and illegal material such as pornography. Use filters, parental controls, privacy settings and security or anti-virus software.

Clear boundaries are important for establishing responsible and respectful online use and communication. Keep online use in an open place where you can supervise. For devices used in bedrooms consider an 'open-door' policy with the screens facing outwards. For older children, talk to them about 'pausing' before posting, texting and sharing information. Use your previous discussions on Basket Filler 2 – Feelings and Emotional Intelligence, to talk about not upsetting others online, cyber bullying and also talking with someone on their helping hand if they are upset about online communication. Remind them that content can remain online forever and can be shared with others without permission.

The **e-safety Commissioner** has a broad range of resources for parents to help children stay safe online.

RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE

Should your child decide to talk to you about abuse this is no doubt going to be emotionally challenging.

Not only will it be difficult for you, the parent, listening to your child, it will also be difficult for your child to talk about it.

As such be mindful that they may:

- feel confused, scared, guilty, ashamed, sad, angry or powerless
- not understand that person's behaviour may be abusive
- believe they are responsible for the abuse
- want to protect the person responsible - and be frightened for them
- want to protect family or their own reputation
- have been threatened with more harm to themselves or others if they tell someone.

When responding to a disclosure from your child:

- find a quiet place to talk, a space that your child feels comfortable in
- remain calm. This may be difficult under the circumstances. However your child may have been told that if they tell they will make people angry or upset
- assess your child's immediate safety
- reassure your child that telling was the right thing to do and that you believe them
- let your child take their time telling you and be a supportive listener. However, remember it is not a counselling session. Let them talk freely when telling you their story
- let your child know what will happen next
- be truthful, don't promise to keep a secret – you may need to advise the civil authorities such as Victoria Police or Child Protection (Department of Health and Human Services). Be honest and advise your child that you may not be able to keep what they tell you a secret in order to keep them safe
- let the child use their own words. Avoid asking leading questions or closed questions that have a yes or no answer. For example a leading question is "Did your uncle touch you?" versus "Who touched you?" An example of a closed question is "Did she touch you in the toilets?" versus "Tell me what happened when you went to the toilets?"
- if necessary, notify the authorities; Victoria Police or Child Protection (Department of Health and Human Services). Child abuse often leaves children feeling disempowered and lacking control in their own life. Making sure the child or young person is fully aware of each step of the process can make it less intimidating and can help return a sense of power and safety.

If your child discloses to you that he or she has been abused in some way and you feel you need help with managing the disclosure or how you are feeling, make sure you seek professional help and advice with an appropriate service provider. If you feel you need assistance in seeking the appropriate help, please contact the:

Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne Professional Standards Unit on (03) 9926 5621.

Self-care in these situations is vital as your primary role is to support your child and allow for their safety. Resources and support services are available in the Contact Numbers section of this Handbook.

CONTACT NUMBERS

Victoria Police

In an emergency – dial 000

Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCITs)

North-West Metropolitan

Brimbank 9313 3460

Mernda 9216 1310

Fawkner 9355 6100

Wyndham 9216 0566

Melbourne 8690 4056

Southern Metropolitan

Dandenong 8769 2200

Frankston 8770 1000

Bayside 8530 5203

Western Victoria

Ballarat 4372 9095

Bendigo 5444 6752

Colac 5230 0043

Geelong 5246 8101

Horsham 5382 9241

Ararat 5355 1500

Mildura 5036 5980

Swan Hill 5036 1600

Warrnambool 5560 1333

Eastern Victoria

Bairnsdale 5150 2677

Benalla 5760 0230

Box Hill 8892 3292

Knox 9881 7939

Morwell 5120 0351

Wonthaggi 5671 4100

Sale 5142 2200

Seymour 5735 0208

Shepparton 5820 5878

Wangaratta 5723 0848

Wodonga 6049 2600

Child Protection

(Department of Health & Human Services)

North Division Intake 1300 664 977

South Division Intake 1300 655 795

East Division Intake 1300 360 391

West Division (Metropolitan) Intake 1300 664 977

West Division (Rural & Regional) Intake 1800 075 599

After hours Child Protection Emergency Service 13 12 78

Specialist Sexual Assault Counselling and Referral Services

In Victoria, there are a range of specialist sexual assault counselling and referral services that can assist children and young people (and their families) when circumstances become challenging or difficult. Please contact the Professional Standards Unit for further information.

Parentline 13 22 89

State-wide telephone counselling and support service for all parents and carers of children from 0-18 years of age.

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800

Free, private and confidential phone and online counselling service for children and young people aged 5-25.

Office of the E-safety Commissioner www.esafety.gov.au

Online content complaints can be found [here](#).

Professional Standards Unit – Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne 9926 5621

Reports and allegations of abuse involving clergy, employees or volunteers in relation to children, young people or adults.

Professional Standards Unit

The Professional Standards Unit provides advice across the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne to the leadership, clergy, employees and volunteers to ensure that children, young people and adults are safe from all forms of abuse and exploitation and works to support a safeguarding culture within parishes, agencies and entities.

Phone: (03) 9926 5621

Email: psu@cam.org.au

Website: www.melbournecatholic.org/safeguarding