

PERSONAL POWER

Dear Parent,

Your child will be participating in the **Safer, Smarter Teens** personal safety curriculum over the next several weeks. The *Safer, Smarter Teens* curriculum was developed by me, Lauren Book, M.S.Ed., in collaboration with a developmental psychologist and career educators, to arm your child with the necessary skills to avoid sexual abuse and exploitation. It is age-appropriate and provides practical strategies to help teens protect themselves without being explicit or frightening.

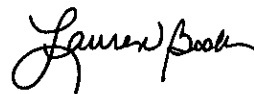
Parents and other responsible adults want to protect children from those who might harm them, but no child can be supervised 24 hours a day. Middle school students by nature want to be more independent and fit in with their peer group. The *Safer, Smarter Teens* curriculum will teach your child ways that he or she can reduce the likelihood of being abused and how to get help if needed.

The curriculum is taught through six lessons that incorporate videos in which I review scenarios involving middle school students that cover our topic areas. The teacher then directs in-class discussions and activities, including small-group work and journal prompts. Information is sent home to you after each lesson to build your background knowledge of the day's topic, to provide you and your child the opportunity to extend the discussion further, and to allow for more individual attention to this important topic. This discussion also helps to keep the lines of communication open between you and your child, which is key to his or her safety. We want teens to recognize that:

- Building self-esteem increases responsible behavior, including assisting others.
- Safe relationships involve a balance of power.
- Setting personal boundaries means they have the right to say "no" to anything and anyone that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- They need to have a few adults they trust whom they can go to whenever a situation makes them feel scared or uncomfortable.
- They can learn to recognize "red flags," such as secrets or threats, that may be warning signs of unsafe situations.

The activities in the *Safer, Smarter Teens* curriculum have been designed to meet existing educational standards while imparting critical personal safety information. If you have any questions about the curriculum, please contact your child's teacher. You can learn more about the curriculum by visiting SaferSmarterTeens.org.

Thank you,



Lauren Book, M.S.Ed.
Founder/CEO, Lauren's Kids

ABOUT LAUREN'S KIDS: *Lauren's Kids* was founded by child abuse survivor, prevention advocate, and elementary school educator Lauren Book. The organization educates adults and children about sexual abuse topics through an in-school curriculum and speaking engagements around the world. The goal of *Lauren's Kids* is to create a world where the sexual abuse and exploitation of children is not tolerated. *Lauren's Kids* is a designated 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

PERSONAL POWER

PARENT LETTER 5: ISOLATION: STAYING SAFE IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD

In the fifth lesson of *Safer, Smarter Teens: Personal Power*, your child learned about safety concerns in our growing virtual world of social media with texting, online gaming, and apps. This lesson features two characters: Jacob and Stephanie. Jacob has friends he only knows online, and Stephanie's parents are out late every night. Lauren noted that it's never been easier to connect with people online. This open communication is great, but it can open up teens to what is known as cyber-grooming, which is the use of technology to groom someone for abuse. Cyber-groomers sometimes pretend to be kids themselves.

Lauren discusses power plays for cyber-safety:

1. Play online games only with people you know.
2. Don't post revealing photos or information about yourself like where you live, go to school, play sports, or other identifying information that someone you don't know could use to find you.
3. Never agree to meet someone you don't know.

Social media is a great communication tool, but we all must use it responsibly. Lauren discussed the dangers of electronically sending messages or photos. What a child may think is funny at the time can quickly get out of hand and become inappropriate. Lauren explained that exchanging revealing photos is called "sexting."

PARENT CONNECTION

Your child is growing up in a cyber world with access to information and people like never before. In today's lesson, both students from the video used positive power plays to stay safe. Continue to talk about potential dangers, as well as appropriate use of technology. Many teens are victimized by cyber-bullying. It is important to keep the lines of communication open between you and your child. Regular family dinnertime can reduce the chances of children becoming victims of cyber-bullying.

TIPS TO FURTHER TODAY'S LESSON

Review the Cyber P.L.A.N. with your child and add additional rules and responsibilities that are important for your family:

P stands for Permission: Students should have permission each time they go online. Protecting passwords for their computer and their phone is important.

L stands for Location: Students should only visit approved Internet locations, websites, or game sites. Students should never enter chat rooms because they NEVER know with whom they are really communicating.

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PERSONAL POWER

PARENT LETTER 6: S.A.F.E.: IT'S OK TO TELL

During the final lesson in the *Safer, Smarter Teens: Personal Power* curriculum, your child watched a video in which Kate stood up for Maddie and helped her get the help she needed by going with her to the school counselor. Standing up for yourself and others may feel risky. Your child may think he or she will lose someone's friendship. A victim of abuse may feel it will be too disruptive to tell. But it's important to keep telling until you are heard and helped. Students learned the concept of S.A.F.E. as a power play to access help: **S**eek help from a trusted **A**dult; **F**ace your fears; and **E**nact your power plays. Lauren provided a recap of the first five lessons, which included:

- Personal Power
- Power Plays
- Red Flags
- Body Boundaries
- Sexual Abuse
- Self-Esteem
- Balance of Power
- Safe vs. Unsafe Relationships
- Guiding Voice
- TFA (Think, Feel, Act)
- Assertiveness
- Grooming
- Isolation
- Unsafe Secrets
- Unsafe Touches
- Disclosure
- A.C.T. (Ask, Care, Tell)
- Sexting
- Cyber-Grooming
- Cyber-Safety Plan
- Accessing Help
- S.A.F.E. (Seek help from a trusted Adult; Face your fears; and Enact your power plays)

PARENT CONNECTION

Today's lesson focused on finding one's personal power and making positive power plays to stand up for and to help a friend. "A.C.T." and "S.A.F.E." are two of our acronyms that encompass our empowerment concepts. Continue talking with your child about what it takes to be a safer, smarter teen.

TIPS TO FURTHER TODAY'S LESSON

Ask your child what was most meaningful to him or her in the curriculum. What concepts were most useful to him or her? Does he or she have any questions or concerns?