

Primary Level, Grades K, 1, 2 (ages 5 to 8 years)

Lesson 5: Grooming—Recognizing risky adult behavior—Teacher Planning and Preparation

Getting started with Lesson 5:

Principle: Identify grooming behaviors of potential abusers. Specifically:

- 1) Adults that give gifts without permission and tell the child not to tell anyone about the gift or where they got it, and
- 2) Knowing when to refuse to go where an adult is trying to take you or to refuse to do what an adult asks you to do.

Catechism: Man is obliged to follow the moral law, which urges him “to do what is good and avoid what is evil” (cf. GS 16). This law makes itself heard in his conscience. **#1713**

“To love is to will the good of another.” (cf. *MK 7:21*) All other affections have their source in this first movement of the human heart toward the good. Only the good can be loved. Passions “are evil if love is evil and good if it is good.” **#1766**

Goal: To assist children in recognizing the risky and/or scary behaviors that adults exhibit and teach children how to trust their own instincts and resist the overtures of a potential molester.

Objectives: To give children the ability to begin to identify and define adult behaviors that indicate that the person wants more than friendship in the relationship and to trust their own instincts about what is “okay” and what is “not okay.” The goal for this age group is not to teach them all of the warning signs but to concentrate on two specific areas: 1) an adult who gives gifts without permission and tells the child not to tell and 2) respecting their own instincts when an adult’s request makes them feel uncomfortable or is confusing. The specific learning goals are:

- That children learn to distinguish between a gift given from love and generosity and one that is given as an attempt to trap them in a cycle of secrecy
- That they learn that it is okay to say “no” when they feel uncomfortable or confused by how an older person is acting—even if the older person is someone they love and trust
- That they understand that they should not go with or meet alone with an adult in an isolated or out-of-the-way area where no one else is around.
- That they know they can speak up and tell a trusted adult when someone’s behavior makes them feel uncomfortable or uneasy

Dealing with the primary age: “Activity Is the Key Concept”

Small children have a natural curiosity, a lively and vivid imagination, and are growing less self-centered and becoming more conscious of others. Their attention span is short, approximately 20 minutes. They build on concrete experiences, love to learn, and are highly inquisitive. However, they rely almost entirely on others to define what is good and bad for them.

When establishing the guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate behavior, parents and teachers should make every effort to create an environment where children are free to ask questions. This early experience of honesty and trust will set the stage for each child’s life-long relationships with significant adults. In addition, it will create an

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atmosphere of open inquiry where questions are encouraged. Children will begin to listen to and learn to trust their own instincts, and to begin to learn how to evaluate potentially risky situations.

At this age, children are beginning to differentiate positive and negative aspects of everyday life and are beginning to question the adult's expectation of blind obedience. At the same time they are learning how to respect and care for their own bodies. They are learning about eating properly and about hygiene, as well as beginning to test the limits for activity.

Caregivers need to be open, honest and available to answer questions correctly with language children can understand. This is the time to discuss possible grooming techniques so that children learn to recognize them and stand up for themselves when they are with adults and others whose behavior is questionable.

Vocabulary words:

- Uncomfortable — Experiencing physical discomfort that leaves one ill at ease or uneasy, sometimes causing anxiety.
- Confusing — To cause an inability to think clearly, to make unclear or incomprehensible.¹
- Secrets — Something that is hidden from others or that is known only to one or to a few.²
- Secluded — Kept apart from social contact with other people, hidden from view.³

Supplemental Resource Material for Teachers

The grooming process employed by a child molester is three-pronged. The process may take months, or even years to accomplish but child molesters are patient and willing to wait for what they want.

The three aspects of grooming are physical grooming, psychological grooming, and community grooming. All three are components of the process and they can all occur simultaneously.

Physical grooming involves touch. It can begin with a simple pat on the back or the arm—a completely acceptable way of touching. However, over time the touching becomes more and more intimate until it crosses a line and becomes sexual abuse. Molesters will try to convince the child or parent that the touch was accidental at first. However, as time progresses, the contact becomes increasingly inappropriate, although the child may not realize what is happening.

At the same time the *physical grooming* is progressing, the molester initiates the *psychological grooming* process. This process also begins with acceptable interactions. For example, a molester may talk to children about what they are interested in, which is a valuable technique used by youth ministers and others as they get to know young people in order to develop appropriate ministerial relationships. It is clear that it is important to talk to children on their level. They communicate with children in a way that children understand—a valuable characteristic of good teachers. However, the intentions of the molester are quite different than those of good people engaged in ministry. The child molester will use these activities to begin to include themselves into a child's life and drive a wedge between the child and the parent.

Over time the child molester works to create a sense of dependence in the child by developing this "special" relationship—and the child enjoys it at first but eventually the child experiences feelings of being trapped. During this time, the molester employs many of the techniques listed below to break down the child's resistance and build up his or her dependence. If, at any time, the child threatens to tell, the molester may threaten to harm someone or something that the child loves. The molester may also persuade the child that parents will blame or refuse to

¹ WordNet ® 2.0, © 2003 Princeton University

² The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Copyright © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

³ Id.

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believe the child. These psychological techniques leave the child conflicted, helpless, dependent and, unfortunately, more bonded to the molester.

While applying the physical and psychological grooming methods the molester is also grooming the *community*. The molester is developing relationships with the parents and other adults within the community and convincing them that he or she genuinely cares about children and is looking out for their best interest. Generally, the community comes to associate the molester with having special insight into children and as someone to be trusted. When a child accuses the molester, or when the molester is caught abusing a child, the community may react with outrage, not at the molester, but at the accuser because it seems so inconceivable.

There are behaviors that indicate that someone is a potential risk of harm to children. Through the examination of over 500 cases of child sexual abuse and interviews with many convicted offenders, we have identified some of these specific behavioral indicators⁴ Although none of these warning signs is *proof* that the adult is a child molester, any of these signs warrant an investigation and intervention to stop the behavior.

Some of the warning signs that indicate an individual is a potential risk of harm to children are:

1. *Always wants to be alone with children.* This person discourages other adults from participating while he or she is with children and structures interactions with children at times and in locations that cannot be monitored. The key words here are “always” and “wants.” This is someone who manipulates people and situations to make it appear as if the he or she is merely helping out in difficult situations. The individual works to ensure that the job provides opportunities to be alone with a child.
2. *More excited to be with children than adults.* This person prefers the company of children to that of adults. He or she always offers to stay with the children and gravitates towards groups of children even when other adults are present.
3. *Give gifts to children, often without permission.* The gifts may be as simple as candy or soda that parents won't allow, or as expensive as an MP3 player or expensive shoes. It is inappropriate for any adult to give gifts to children, in turn asking the child to keep the gift a secret—this includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, and others known and trusted by the children and their parents.
4. *Goes overboard touching children—particularly wrestling and tickling them.* Adults who use games and other seemingly harmless activities to get their hands on children in potentially intimate ways are behaving in an inappropriate and risky manner. Regardless of the intention of the interaction, this type of behavior conditions children to accept inappropriate behavior from the adults in their lives and conditions the community to accept this kind of behavior between adults and children. Therefore, children become much more vulnerable to potential child molesters.

Distinguishing between appropriate and inappropriate touch is important because studies show that children thrive with physical contact and affection. Touch that is public, appropriate, and non-sexual—PAN—is good for children and should be encouraged.

5. *Allows a child to engage in activities that parents would not allow.* Obvious behaviors include doing drugs, smoking, or drinking. However, an adult who permits a child to do anything that parents have forbidden is behaving inappropriately. Other activities parents might not permit include video games, certain kinds of music, online chat rooms, movies with a particular rating, junk food, etc. Allowing children to do these things without the permission of the parent reinforces a culture of secrecy between the adult and the child being groomed and drives a wedge between the child and their parent(s) or guardian(s).

⁴ VIRTUS, Protecting God's Children for Adults Manual, page 47

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Child molesters say that children who have had trouble with parents and/or guardians in the past are more vulnerable to victimization. The molesters think that these children are less likely to be believed by parents if they report the abuse. Therefore, this is one of the groups that molesters consider to be most easily accessible.

6. *Think the rules do not apply to them.* This might be as simple as consistently ignoring or violating parish or school policies and procedures. However, these adults also do not think that society's rules apply to them. Remember, they think that it is acceptable to have sex with children. Therefore, this warning sign can manifest itself in many different ways.
7. *Uses bad language, tells dirty jokes, and shows children pornography and other "dirty" media.* Although this is not something other adults are able to observe, this action will often manifest itself in the young child's language and behavior. In addition, educating our children about the inappropriateness of sexually explicit material is important—as well as letting them know that if someone else shows it to them, the child will not be in trouble just for seeing the pictures.

Knowing the warning signs means that we can recognize and act upon the behaviors that indicate a child is or children are at risk. These are the early warning signs of a potentially inappropriate relationship with a child.

Trust is key to the grooming process. Because of that, child molesters learn how to manipulate children and adults into accepting their behavior as "normal," thus convincing others that they are completely trustworthy. Their lives are carefully crafted to appear proper because they know the importance of public perception.

One of the difficulties in dealing with the grooming process is that grooming almost always involves pleasure for the victim. Children want what they want and the molester is willing to give them what they want. The pain and trauma of child sexual abuse disrupts the pleasure but it also confuses the victim. Children don't know what is actually happening or how they should respond. However, the grooming process is complex. There are many warning signs that someone's behavior indicates that they are a potential risk of harm to children. It is unrealistic and unproductive to try to teach young children all these warning signs at once. So, these lessons are designed to focus on two signs to which most children can relate—*gives gifts without permission and asks the children not to tell and removes children from the community environment to meet with them in a secluded area or allows them to do things their parents would not allow.* Concentrating on these two warning signs will reinforce the message from parents and others about the possible danger of suspicious behavior as well as expanding the child's ability to recognize risks that arise and trust their own instincts about those risks and pay attention to their uncomfortable feelings.

Special Teacher Preparation Tool

For a week or two before the first class, begin to notice how gifts are given and received between children in your environment. Pay attention to the adults in your environment—including yourself—and how they use gifts to manage children. Notice who gives gifts, what kind of gifts they (and you) give, and what adults say to children about the gifts that are given. Notice whether there is a different reaction when the gift is small like a piece of candy or when the gift is big like a new jacket, a backpack, or something even larger. In addition to noticing the adult's behavior, pay attention to how the gift giving impacts the child and how the child then relates to the adult. Does the child seem more at ease with an adult who is giving gifts? Is this "ease" making the child more vulnerable? If the child is asked to keep the gift a secret, what is the child's response?

All of this will help the teacher become more conscious of how pervasive gift giving is and how gifts are used to manipulate, please, or at least manage children in our society. You will begin to see how gifts are often used as bargaining chips in our everyday interactions with children and, perhaps, begin to become aware of how the use of gifts to control kids plays into the hands of someone whose interests are quite different from ours.

In addition to paying attention to the role that gift giving plays in our interactions with children, observe the interactions between adults and children and notice when anyone is acting in a way that places an adult or child

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at risk. Also notice risky situations or circumstances that could place children and adults in harm's way. When you notice something that is inappropriate, take appropriate action to intervene. For example, talk with the person involved or their supervisor to make sure that the behavior does in fact change, or simply insert yourself into the situation in such a way that there is no longer an opportunity for the child to be secluded or isolated from others.

Finally, observe your surroundings. Notice places where a molester could seclude a child without being seen.

Also take the following actions:**a. Communicate your concerns**

When we see something that worries us or makes us feel uneasy, it is sometimes difficult to find the "right words" to use when we report our concerns. If you tell someone that you are concerned about his or her behavior, but you are not able to clearly describe the behavior, you are putting the other person in an uncomfortable position and likely, will make him or her angry. Before having such a conversation, think through what you want to communicate. Make sure you can explain to the person:

- Exactly what you saw;
- The reasons you were concerned; and,
- If you are talking directly with the person involved, let the person know why you are bringing this issue to him or her directly, instead of reporting it to a supervisor.

Communicating a concern is not an accusation of wrongdoing. Rather, it is an opportunity to allow someone to see a reflection of how he or she appears to others. By thinking through your communication and being sure about what you want to communicate, you can ensure that your message is clear and unambiguous.

b. Create a context or framework for the conversation.

It is quite likely that the person involved will become offended and/or upset upon hearing that you are concerned about his or her behavior with children. While it is impossible to guarantee that someone will not react in this way, it is possible to minimize the risk of that reaction by creating a framework or context for having the conversation.

Any time you are getting ready to have a serious conversation, it is important to begin by talking about *why* the conversation is necessary. When people understand the reason you bring up an issue is because of your concern for them, they may be able to listen to what you say and understand it as a *contribution* rather than a *condemnation*.

Creating a context or framework for the conversation might include explaining that after participating in a Protecting God's Children® awareness session, you realized how important it is for all of us to monitor our own behavior, as well as the behavior of others around us who interact with children. You might tell the other person that you have made some changes to your own behavior and that you have observed them engaging in certain behaviors that others might interpret as a warning sign ... and that is the reason for having the conversation.

Take the time to establish the framework for the conversation. Let the person know that you are not accusing him or her of anything. Assure the person that you believe he or she has only the best of intentions, and that your fear is that he or she is engaging in certain behaviors without carefully considering, how others may see those behaviors as risky and reach the wrong conclusions. Describe the specific behavior that is questionable and encourage the person to find another way to accomplish the ministry goals by employing more appropriate behavior.

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Let the person know that you are willing to work with them to find a more appropriate way to get the job done. Make sure that he or she knows that you came directly to the individual involved because of respect and a desire to resolve this issue as quickly as possible. Let the adult know that you are committed to both the safety of children and the well-being and safety of the adults who work with them.

c. Invite others to monitor you

Make a commitment to modeling appropriate behavior by letting everyone know that you are inviting them to monitor you and to advise you if they see something inappropriate or questionable in your behavior. One way to introduce this is to make an announcement in a staff meeting. State that you are committed to raising awareness about the warning signs of potential child molesters and sexual abuse. Acknowledge and explain that you recognize that some behaviors—that others had considered risky actions—might have been done unwittingly. Ask others to pay attention when they see you interacting with children and young people and to let you know if anything seems inappropriate so that you can take immediate action to correct any behavior that raises concerns.

This proactive step opens the door for each and every person to achieve greater awareness of the risky behaviors that adults engage in with children and to create an environment of support among teachers and other volunteers. Paying attention to each other is a great way to practice noticing the adults within children's environments and look for the warning signs of potential abusers.

d. Pay attention to the response

Once you have communicated your concern, it is important to notice what happens next. If the person changes his or her behavior and eliminates the risky situations, then you know that this person most likely had no intention to do harm. However, if nothing changes, you must speak to the supervisor or, if you have already communicated with the supervisor, to the next person up the chain of responsibility. One of the primary reasons for communicating concerns is to give the adult whose behavior is risky the opportunity to change. If that does not happen, the adults' intentions are suspect and should be treated as such. It may also be that a supervisor who was advised of the concern did nothing to intervene or correct the situation. Although this does not mean that the person whose behavior is questionable had "bad" intentions, the supervisor's inaction needs to be dealt with by his or her supervisor.

Ultimately it is important to realize that communicating a concern means more than informing someone of questionable behavior. It also means continuing to observe the person and paying attention to the response to the concern. The welfare of our children is the motivating force for all of these actions. When we are observant and can protect children *before* harm occurs, we not only protect the children from trauma, but also from having to experience something that compromises their innocence.

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Lesson 5: Grooming—Recognizing risky adult behavior—Activities and Lesson Content

Activity #1: Giving Gifts Without Permission and Telling the child to keep it secret**Supplies and Preparation:**

Opening video
VCR Player and TV
Pictures for exercise

Downloadable resources are available for the following exercise. There are several possible ways to use these resources to create the exercise. The following are some activity suggestions. Use one of them or create your own unique version of the story:

- Download and print the pictures for the story. If you do not have a color printer, color the pictures and follow the directions for completing the materials for the story exercise. **NOTE:** Additional supplies needed for this option include poster board, cardboard, or a bulletin board on which to mount the pictures.
- Download and print the pictures for the story on transparencies for use on an overhead projector. Follow the directions for completing the materials for the story exercise. When using an overhead projector for the exercise, you can create two versions of each slide—one without the word for the feeling expressed by the face and one with the word on it. This means that you will not need to create some way to cover the word describing the facial expression on the first set of pictures. **NOTE:** Transparency sheets are needed for this option.
- Set up a PowerPoint presentation for the exercise and use a computer and a LCD projector to do the exercise with the children.

Practice with the story so that the exercise flows smoothly

Classroom Discussion:

Create a story area on the floor and have the children all sit together. If the class is too large, have the children sit at desks.

Examples of classroom discussion phrasing are as follows”

“It is really fun to get presents, isn't it? We love birthday parties and Christmas and other times when our parents and members of the family give us special gifts. “

“Sometimes, but not always, gifts come in boxes with wrapping paper and ribbon. What are some examples of gifts that don't come wrapped?”

[NOTE TO TEACHERS: Let the children answer and talk about gifts that come unwrapped such as a puppy dog or food or a surprise trip to the movies or an unexpected stop at the ice cream store.]

“Most gifts are from our parents and family, but sometimes we get gifts from other people. “

“When do we get gifts from people other than our parents and families?”

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[NOTE TO TEACHERS: Let the children talk about this. Guide the discussion so that they see that there are “events” and “special occasions” when they get gifts from people other than parents and family, but for the most part, these are uncommon and in public. The gifts are given in front of others or with the permission of parents.]

“What kind of gifts might we get from people other than our parents?”

[NOTE TO TEACHER: Examples of gifts that children might get from others are birthday gifts at a party, awards at school, party favors for all kinds of parties at friend’s houses and at school, an after school treat at a friend’s house, gifts from grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins at birthdays or Christmas. Have the children think this through and begin to see that there are many times when gift giving is appropriate—but none where it should be a secret.]

“Do people ever give you a gift and tell you that it is a secret?”

“Do you remember when we talked about ‘secrets?’”

Points to make:

- Sometimes people ask us to keep a secret that is really a surprise—like a birthday party or a special treat that someone has planned for the family. Maybe Dad bought Mom a special present for their anniversary and you got to see it.
- Secrets that are really surprises are fun. However, there are other secrets that are just things that you are asked to hide from others like your parents for example.⁵

[NOTE TO TEACHERS: In this discussion, reinforce the message that there are no secrets when it comes to personal and physical safety—and that includes gifts given without the parents’ permission. When a child knows that he or she doesn’t have to keep secrets—and that no matter what the other adult says, the child will not be in trouble for telling—he or she is more likely to reveal boundary violations.]

- It is wrong for an adult or another child to ask a child to keep a gift a secret from his or her parents.
- Remember that one of the ways we know that an adult is safe is that they respect the parents’ rules and they respect your wishes.
- Sometimes “gifts” don’t look like a present. They can come in many forms such as:
 - Giving snacks that parents don’t allow.
 - Letting children play with games parents prohibit.
 - Giving kids the “rest” of the money they need to buy something when they don’t have enough money for it.
 - Buying a child treats.
 - Giving the child something of the adult’s that the child has expressed an interest in having.
- The problem is usually not with the “gift” itself. The problem is when someone gives it to a child and then expects the child to keep the whole thing a secret.

⁵ The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Copyright © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

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“Joey loves chocolate. It is his favorite thing. He just found out that he has been invited to go to a special party where there will be nothing but chocolate to eat. It is a chocolate party! What could be better!”

How does Joey feel?”

(Three faces with different expressions. The correct answer is “excited.”)

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“The best part is that Joey gets to go to the party with his best friend Sam. The only part that Joey doesn't like so well is that Sam's dad is taking them to the party. Joey doesn't always feel like being around Sam's daddy. Joey would rather *his* dad went with them to the chocolate party.

How does Joey feel about Sam's dad going instead of his own dad?”

[NOTE TO TEACHER: Show the children the display of three faces with different expressions. The correct answer is “disappointed.”]

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“Before leaving for the chocolate party, Joey and his mom sit down to talk. She reminds him of the rule about how many treats he can have from a candy store. Joey's family has a special way of letting each child decide which treats he or she wants. Each one has a certain amount of money to spend in the store. Joey and his sister can buy anything they want as a treat—as long as there is enough money to pay for it.

Joey's mom gives him some money to spend and reminds him that he can have all the chocolate his money will buy—but when he runs out of money, no more chocolate. Joey is thinking about what he will choose.

How does Joey feel now?”

[NOTE TO TEACHER: Show the children the display of three faces with different expressions. The correct answer is “thoughtful.”]

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“At the chocolate party there are hundreds and hundreds of different kinds of chocolate. There is a tall fountain—like a water fountain in the park—except it is filled with chocolate instead of water. There are chocolate houses and chocolate clowns. There is brown chocolate and white chocolate and lots of different kinds of little pieces. Some have nuts and some have fruit inside. Some are chocolate covered caramels and others have crunchy insides.

How does Joey feel?”

[NOTE TO TEACHER: Show the children the display of three faces with different expressions. The correct answer is “happy.”]

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“After a while, Joey has eaten several pieces of chocolate and spent almost all of his money. Then he sees the best thing yet—a chocolate train. Joey loves trains and he never saw a chocolate train before. When Joey asks how much the train costs, he realizes that he does not have enough money to buy the chocolate train.

How does Joey feel now?”

[NOTE TO TEACHER: Show the children the display of three faces with different expressions. The correct answer is “sad.”]

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Sam's dad notices that Joey is sad and asks him what's wrong. Joey tells Sam's dad about the chocolate train and that he does not have enough money left to buy the train—and trains are his favorite thing. Sam's dad tells Joey that he will give him the money he needs to buy the train. Joey says that taking money from Sam's dad to buy the train is against the rules. Then Sam's dad tells Joey that it's okay—it will be just their secret. Joey really wants the chocolate train but he knows that his Mom will be upset if he takes money from Sam's dad to buy more chocolate.

How does Joey feel now?

[NOTE TO TEACHER: Show the children the display of three faces with different expressions. The correct answer is “puzzled.”]

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What should Joey do?

[NOTE TO TEACHERS: Give the children an opportunity to work this out by talking through all the issues. Guide the discussion using the points about keeping secrets that hide things from parents and how important it is to follow the rules that Mom and Dad have established.]

Points to Make:

- Remind them, from the earlier lessons, that one of the ways that we know someone is “safe” is that they are people who always respect your wishes and your parent's rules.
- Joey should say “no” to the offer from Sam's dad and let him know that following Mom and Dad's rules is the right thing to do.
- Joey should let Mom and Dad know that he did what was right—even when he did not want to do it. This will let parents know that the message that they are teaching is being received—and it will let them know that Sam's dad may not be the best chaperone for Joey's activities without making a big deal out of the incident.
- Remind your students that parents are the people who care most about their safety and well-being and that letting the parents know that they did the right thing in a difficult situation is cause for celebration.

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Prayer to end the lesson:

Teacher: “God wants us to be safe and healthy. God even gives us a special angel to help look after us. When we feel uncomfortable about the way someone is acting, we can ask our Guardian Angel to help us speak up. So, let’s pray together for our Guardian Angel to look after us and help keep us safe.”

Angel of God,
My guardian dear,
To whom God’s love entrusts me here.
Ever this day be at my side.
To light, to guard,
To rule, to guide.

Amen

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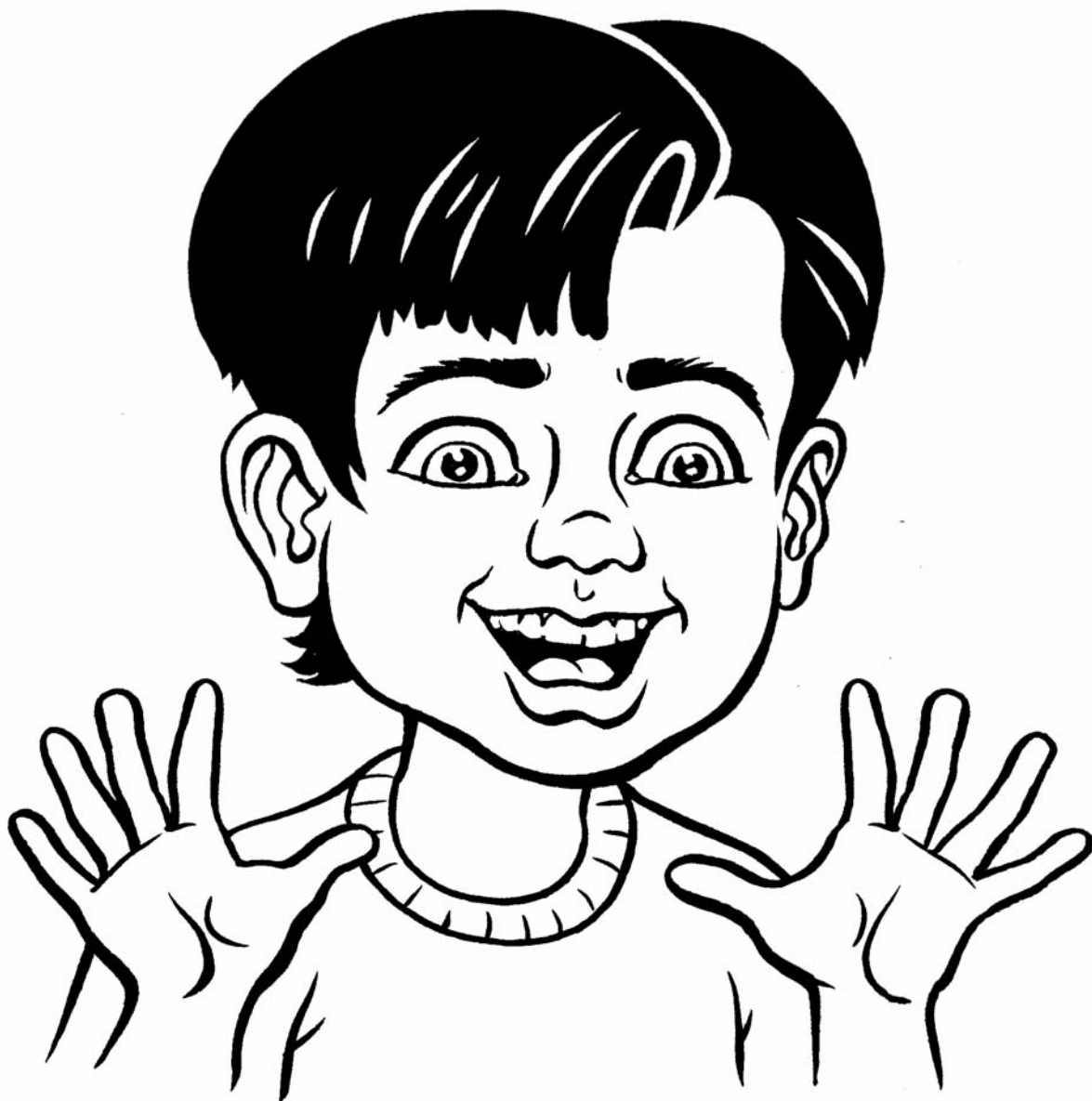
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DISSAPPOINTED

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EXCITED

Lesson 5: Primary Level, Grades K, 1, 2 (ages 5 to 8 years)



HAPPY

Lesson 5: Primary Level, Grades K, 1, 2 (ages 5 to 8 years)



PUZZLED

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SAD

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THOUGHTFUL