

PERSONAL POWER

PARENT LETTER 1: SELF-ESTEEM & PERSONAL POWER

In our first lesson of *Safer, Smarter Teens: Personal Power*, your child met Lauren Book, an educator and advocate who briefly shared her story of childhood abuse to set the stage for a discussion about personal safety. Lauren introduced the concept of positive personal power, which includes power to recognize danger, the power to say “no,” the power to get help, and the power to set personal body boundaries. She defined sexual abuse and gave an overview of the curriculum. A photo montage of middle school students was featured, with taglines describing their personal and family situations, things like, “Not sure he fits in” and “Worried they’re laughing at him.” Many of their stories will be depicted and discussed in the videos to be shown in the next five lessons. Lauren introduced the *Safer, Smarter Teens* theme of “Be the Change” and taking action with our personal power by making positive “power plays.”

PARENT CONNECTION:

This lesson sets the stage for the entire program by introducing the idea that we all have the personal power within us to make choices and decisions that keep us safe. We can use that power to recognize red flags that alert us to unsafe situations involving ourselves or others.

Today’s lesson is important because early adolescence is a challenging time for both children and parents. As children strive to grow up and be independent – an important developmental step – they don’t yet have the emotional maturity or strategies to handle difficult situations they may encounter. Keeping the lines of communication open with your child is an important part of being one of his or her trusted adults to whom he or she can turn. Abusers often target young adolescents because children in this age group are frequently insecure, may be exploring their sexuality, and are moving beyond the constant watch of their parents.

TIPS TO FURTHER TODAY’S LESSON:

Ask your child about the various taglines introduced with the students in the video. Did any look like something he or she has encountered or felt? How did he or she handle and resolve it? Students participated in activities related to building self-esteem. Ask your child to share his or her thoughts on the day’s lesson and the classroom activities that supported it.