



Safe Environment Education

4th Grade

"He Loves, He Hopes, He Waits" - St. Maria Goretti



Healthy Boundaries

Children in 4th grade seem to be going through a tough time of figuring out the difference between mean behavior and bullying. Bullying behavior is repeated, intentional, and 100% the fault of the person who is showing the mean behavior and not at all the person who is being mistreated. It does not matter what the person looks like, acts like, enjoys, or doesn't enjoy, etc. Everyone has been mistreated at some point and it's not their fault. This is something our children need to know, so that they can hopefully feel a weight lifted from their shoulders that they are not responsible for the mean behavior that is aimed at them. Another thing to add to the conversation is that people who are hurting, sometimes hurt other people. So, the person who is bullying or showing mean behavior could be getting bullied in their own life, or going through something tough that is causing them to lash out. Taking a step back as the victim of the mean behavior and recognizing this can turn the narrative from "It's my fault" to "maybe they are hurting."

When someone is mistreating you, what could you say to them? What is something you could tell yourself when this happens to you?

If this behavior continues and you've tried to tell them to stop, who could you tell to receive help?

Communication

Secrets feel special at this age. It can feel like you are special or set aside. It is good to make sure that your child knows they are special to you. Also, it is good to have a conversation with your children about what a secret is, and how parents and other trusted people should know any secrets someone is trying to get your children to keep.

What are some things you think I feel are special about you?

Why would someone want you to keep a secret? Who should you tell secrets to?

Technology

Maybe YouTube is a dominant force at this age. It's the most popular app with tweens and teens with over 80,000 hours of video content watched every second. There's some beneficial video content. And also some of the most horrible, violent, explicit content you can imagine. Every kid who watches YouTube will see something harmful eventually. So here's the question: is YouTube under control in your home? Do you have Restricted Mode locked in? Are you curious about the videos they like to watch? Does your child know exactly how to handle confusing or explicit content they might encounter?

Do you know what to do with YouTube videos that are scary, uncomfortable, or violent?

How would you handle a violent video that's shared in a group chat with other kids?

Body Awareness

Becoming aware of our bodies and what our body instinctually tells us is very important. If our bodies are telling us that there is something not right, that needs to be explored. We should be talking with our children about how it's normal and common for our bodies to get anxious to protect us, and to listen to what their bodies are saying. Sometimes we may get nervous if we really care about something and want it to go well, but if our bodies are telling us that something is off or someone is making us uncomfortable, we should speak up and say something to either a trusted adult or the person who is making us feel that way.

Has your body ever given you a feeling of being uncomfortable, or that something didn't feel right? Tell me more about that.

What can we do to help you feel more safe when you come to us because you feel unsafe or nervous?

Theology of the Body

The human body includes right from the beginning ... the capacity of expressing love, that love in which the person becomes a gift - and by means of this gift - fulfills the meaning of their being and existence.



Parent Resources



Ninety percent of abuse victims are abused by someone they know. This may be a peer, a relative, a neighbor, a teacher. Sixty percent are acquaintances, teachers, neighbors or community leaders. Thirty percent are by immediate or extended family members. Only ten percent are by strangers. Many victims are concerned their parents will not believe them, especially if it is someone close to the family or in authority. Talking about these issues with your kids will make it much easier for them to approach you if something is not right.

What are signs you might see that indicate your child might be being abused?

- Becoming more reserved around others
- Not wanting to be around someone they used to feel comfortable with
- Hiding themselves from you, becoming more secretive
- Having fits or frustration or anger that come out (outside of their normal personality)

There are things you can do if you suspect that your child is being abused. The first is to have a conversation with your child. Make sure they know they can tell you anything without getting in trouble. Ask them if there is anything that has happened that has them concerned. Reassure them that they are loved and will continue to be loved by you.

Top reasons for children disclosing their abuse are: access to someone they trust, realizing it is not normal, wanting something to be done, expecting to be believed, and being asked. All of these are easier when parents have open communication with their children about these topics. Children that disclose within a month are less likely to have long-term psychological affects

Red flags can be noticed in many different areas. At school or church you may see adults who are only talking with the children and ignore the parents. You don't might also find adults who are buying lots of gifts for your child. Sometimes they may find ways to be alone with your child. They may also give compliments to your child and ignore others. If you see any of these red flags please bring this to the attention of their supervisor.

Technology can be a difficult part of our world to navigate. Even if we grew up with lots of technology, it is now changing at a very rapid pace. As parents you need to be aware of what is out there and how to address the different concerns and pitfalls of these different technologies. This is why we have partnered with Protect Young Eyes. You can find more information at www.protectyouneyes.com

We are here to help you. Beyond Protect Young Eyes, you can find information at protect.diokzoo.org/gorettiproject. Along with this sheet as a guide to talk with your kids, your parish can give you additional lessons to work with your students.

If you suspect that your child or any other child is being abused contact:
Michigan Department of Human Services:
Child and adult protective services intake number:
855-444-3911

Sources:

Statistics on resource page: www.d2l.org

Technology: Chris McKenna @ Protect Young Eyes

Body Awareness and Boundaries: Amy McNamara, LCSW; AM Counseling Services, PLLC