



Safe Environment Education

5th Grade



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

Healthy Boundaries

Children sometimes need to be reminded at this age that it's ok to speak up for what doesn't feel right. It's ok to say no, it's ok to walk away from what/who feels uncomfortable, it's ok to call people out if they are making bad/unsafe choices. Sometimes this society tries to make people feel bad for speaking up and calls them "dramatic", but as our children's biggest supporters we have to be the safe place for them to go if the world is not listening to them. The words we use with them tend to be their inner voice, so if they are told "don't be dramatic" or "I'm sure it's fine, don't worry about it" they will learn that their voice doesn't matter or they may question why they try or question if they are blowing things out of proportion and may not say anything. They want to feel heard and feel safe, and this age, in particular, can be challenging not only for them but for us as their parents, so helping them navigate these decisions will help us all.

Have there been times when you've tried coming to me with a problem and you didn't feel like I heard you? How can I help change that, so you will feel comfortable coming to me in the future?

Have you ever felt like someone around you wasn't making a good choice? What did you say to them? What could you do differently next time to help change the outcome?

Communication

Sneaking around and using lies to trick people can be common at this age. This can both be for the fun of getting away with something, but also out of concern for making bad choices that are a little more serious at this age. Trying to help children to overcome these tendencies and helping them know you will always be there for them is important. Defining them as a child of God, and letting them know you love them no matter what helps this communication.

In what ways do you see my love for you?

**What are some ways that you show love for me?
What would you do if an adult wants you to keep a secret?**

Technology

I recently asked a group of students in grades 3-5, I asked how many of them had received a phone call or text from someone they didn't know. And most of the hands went up! It's the same everywhere I go. So let's help our kids be prepared instead of scared when this happens. TELL. BLOCK. DELETE. Say it again! TELL, BLOCK, DELETE! Practice saying these words and then putting them into practice. Make it tangible! Put the tablet in their hands, walk across the room, and send them a text that says, "Check this out!" and let them practice. TELL - they walk over to you. BLOCK - they know how. And DELETE - remove the text from the device.

Have you ever received a text or call from someone you don't know? How should you respond?

What if you're in a group chat or maybe in a multi-player game and a friend invites someone you don't know to join the group? What would you do?

Body Awareness

Having conversations with our children about their bodies developing is something that hopefully has been ongoing as they grow, but this age is typically when they may start going through puberty and start noticing the opposite sex. Making sure that our children know that being attracted to the opposite sex is normal and healthy but should remember they are made with dignity and deserve to be respected.

Feeling attracted to the opposite sex is normal, what is something you could say about that person that would be respectful?

When you have questions about the opposite sex, I am here for you to ask anything; what is a question you have that I can help answer?

Theology of the Body

The body shows to us the invisible reality of God. God created our bodies in His image so that we may learn about Him from our bodies. If we have a bad image of our own bodies it will be more difficult to understand and love God. We need to find God through others.



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