



Safe Environment Education

6th Grade

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



Healthy Boundaries

If your child is into playing video games or has social media, having a discussion about how often they should or should not be on these would be very important. There are studies that discuss the impacts social media and internet based video games can have on children especially when it comes to friendships and self-esteem. It's easy for children to compare themselves to others, and children tend to be more confident with their words when hiding behind a screen. Please discuss with your child what a healthy amount of time online looks like on these avenues, and what to do if they start to feel overwhelmed or are being mistreated by others online. Please also be aware of all the games or apps your child is on. Setting this kind of boundary is a life skill that will hopefully help them as they grow to discern what is healthy and what is not healthy for their bodies, their minds and their souls. (More in Technology section)

What might be a sign that you have been online too much? How can we help change that?

What should you do if you feel someone is bullying you online or in person?

Communication

Studies show that this is the age a lot of children start to see things that are inappropriate for their age. They often are embarrassed to share this with their parents. They often are starting to be curious about their bodies, and other kids will start having conversations that are beyond their age.

Have you seen or heard anything that makes you uncomfortable?

What are some ways you can let me know if there is something you are confused about and want to talk to me about it?

Technology

Last summer I drove my son to Boy Scout camp where he was going to spend a week with over 300 tweens and teens. It's an awesome week - outdoors, active, but with a lot of guys hanging out, and although I love this, in the digital age, these kinds of interactions can be weaponized if my son hears things he doesn't understand. So, on the way, I reminded him, "Hey pal, you're going to be with hundreds of guys. If you hear something new, when you get home, Google me! Not the tablet. I care about you a lot more than any search engine. And maybe we even look for information together, but Google me first. Deal?" And when I picked him up, I asked him if Google Dad was needed for anything, which earned a little smile. So whether it's camp, a mission trip, or a retreat, make sure they know you're the best search engine for them.

What is the purpose of a search engine? How can a search engine be helpful? How could it hurt you?

If you're doing an image search for a school presentation what would you do if that image search brought up things you shouldn't see?

Body Awareness

Middle school, puberty, social media... This perfect storm of adolescent pressure creates an environment that is pretty chaotic in the young mind. In calming the storm, parents play a significant role in how children see themselves. Sharing your own personal triumphs of your middle school career and helping children understand the natural/confusing/fluidity and fluctuation of puberty can be very helpful for our children. Normalizing the changes their bodies are going through can lighten weight from their shoulders to show them that they are not alone in their feelings.

Have you been noticing your body changing? What questions do you have for me that I might be able to help with?

It is not unusual to have different feelings as your body starts to change. Are there any feelings you want to talk about?

Theology of the Body

The path of self-mastery is not easy, especially for a person who has grown accustomed to giving in to his impulses rather than controlling them. If he perseveres, though, such a person will feel a growing sense of his own dignity.



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.

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

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.protectyoungeyes.com