



Safe Environment Education

8th Grade

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



Healthy Boundaries

As our children are experiencing their final year of middle school before high school, preparing them for what might be coming is crucial. We obviously will not know everything that they will experience, but things we do know - there may be more children, more behaviors, more things that they haven't seen before. Making sure they know they have a safe and loving place to go if things get confusing, scary, or messy will give them a sturdy foundation for figuring out what choices to make in these moments. Letting them know that if they see something that is weird behavior, or inappropriate behavior to report it. If it doesn't feel right, there is usually a reason for that, and to follow their gut and go to a trusted adult right away.

Have you seen or been around any behaviors so far that didn't feel right to you? What could you do if this happens again?

Who do you feel are people you can trust to make good decisions? Who do you want to associate with?

Technology

Does your child know how to respond to an unsolicited request for nude photos? Too many teens are falling victim to sextortion schemes. Once a nude photo is sent then teens are being extorted for (at times) thousands of dollars. And to prevent this, have you had ridiculously honest conversations with your children about this issue? Saying out loud, "Hey, you're not going to send a picture of your [insert name of part] to a stranger, right?" It sounds ridiculous when you say it but we need to get that honest with this issue so that your child pauses to think.

Do you know what sextortion is? Can you find 2-3 recent news stories about the issue, who it impacts, and what can happen?

Amazing child of mine, if you ever feel pressured to send or say something online, do you know that you can land safely and softly with me?

Body Awareness

For our children to have a positive and healthy awareness of their bodies, we must model what that could look like. When talking about our bodies in front of them it gives them language for how to talk about themselves. We want them to be more focused on respecting and accepting their bodies for what they can do, and we should not complain about any unhappiness or dissatisfaction about what our bodies look like in front of them. Encourage them to talk freely about their feelings about their body in a safe place while also helping them see that they are more than their outward appearance. Help them brainstorm their skills, their personality traits, what their gifts are, instead of focusing on the shape, size or any imperfections of their bodies. When they can see these positive things in themselves, this will hopefully encourage them to look inward rather than looking for outward validation from people who may not have their best interest at heart.

Society has a way of making us feel like we aren't enough, our bodies aren't enough, or that people around us are better or better looking than us. What has been your take on what you've seen around you? What impact does it have on you and your feelings towards your body?

Have there been any conversations or actions in our house that you feel have been helpful or unhelpful in how you see yourself? What can we do to help change or make things better for you?

Communication

Eighth graders can be difficult. They are trying to find their own way and so they push back on your rules, and sometimes your beliefs. Eighth grade children want to become their own people, and find out what their boundaries should be. Starting to discuss what they believe and what is right and wrong can help them feel comfortable discussing things they know you have taught them are wrong, or bad things that happen to them. It is not about changing your rules but being willing to explain them.

What are some rules, household habits, or family dynamic/culture you don't like and why?

What are ways we can discuss concerns that you have?

Theology of the Body

Nothing from the outside makes one filthy, no "material" dirt makes one impure in the moral, that is interior sense. No ablution, not even a ritual nature, is capable in itself of producing moral purity. This has its exclusive source within humans. It comes from the heart.



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