



Safe Environment Education

Kindergarten

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



Healthy Boundaries

Kindergarten is a great age to talk about boundaries, like when it comes to comfort with saying things like hello and goodbye. Children should not feel pressured to give anyone hugs and kisses if they are not comfortable with it. Letting them know that they are the boss of their own bodies and giving them the option of giving a high five, a fist bump, or just a wave would be appropriate, kind and respected.

If you don't feel comfortable giving someone a hug, what could you do that would be comfortable for you?

If you feel uncomfortable, who could you get to help you?

Technology

At this age, a child should never be left alone with anything connected to the internet. Parents and caregivers should always be nearby with one eye on everything a child is doing online. This also means using "allow lists" only, preventing kids from browsing in the digital spaces where they like to be: like YouTube Kids or search engines. Only allow them to visit certain spots that you've programmed into the app or device so that they don't accidentally see something life-altering.

If you see something scary or weird online, you'll never be in trouble if you tell me. Sound good?

Let's practice. I want you to pretend you see something online that bothers you. What would you do? (Put it down! Tell someone!)

Communication

Those that groom kids for abuse will use secrets to isolate and manipulate kids. It is best for parents to have discussions with their kids about what secrets are. Building up a relationship where kids understand that secrets between just two people are not good, and that parents should be able to be part of a secret with others.

What are secrets? Who should know secrets that are told?

What should you do if an adult wants you to keep a secret?

Body Awareness

At this age, it's important to discuss with children when it's important to keep their hands, feet, and bodies to themselves, and what that looks like. For example, everyone has an invisible bubble, if we get too close to someone who does not want to be touched, we could pop their invisible bubble. Just like others have a bubble, so do we; if someone is in our space and we don't like it, we might get uncomfortable.

If someone doesn't like us in their space, what is something they might do to show us that?

What is something you could say if someone is in your space and you feel uncomfortable?

Theology of the Body

The body, and it alone, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden since time immemorial in God (God's love for humanity), and thus be a sign of it.



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.protectyoungeyes.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