



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?

Communication

It is good to set up from a very early age the idea of a open and honest communication with parents. Starting in kindergarten kids can start to grapple with the idea of truth and lies, and start to understand better what it means to not tell the truth. They are also very motivated by not disappointing their parents and teachers. Now is the time to let them know you will always love them even if they do something wrong and it is always best to tell the truth.

Do you understand the difference between a truth and a lie? Explain for me.

I will always love you even if you make a bad choice, can we agree that you will always tell me the truth even if it means you had made a bad choice?

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!)

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



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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

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Child and adult protective services intake number:
855-444-3911

Sources:

Statistics on resource page: www.d2l.org

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



Safe Environment Education

1st Grade



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Healthy Boundaries

It is good for 1st graders to understand their own comfort levels. Conversations with your children could include making them aware that they can say no to an adult if they do not like what the adult is doing. Giving children the words and the encouragement to speak when they are uncomfortable is very important. For example, "please stop. I don't like that."

What are some words that you could use when you feel uncomfortable?

How can you say no to an adult that is doing something you do not like?

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?

Technology

Early childhood exposures to explicit content are uniquely traumatizing to young children. Some go as far as calling them "adverse childhood experiences," which increases the likelihood of a child having certain negative outcomes as an adult. Your router is the most important digital device for preventing these early exposures. A good router with solid parental controls prevents harmful content from being accessed either intentionally or accidentally. If you're unsure what to do with the router in your home, then read our blog post, "The Ultimate Guide to Understanding Routers" at protectyoungeyes.com.

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

Body Awareness

Children need to have awareness of their bodies. It's important to have discussions with them about appropriate uses of their body, and what is appropriate touch. Along with respecting their own bodies, they need to be respectful of other people and their bodies.

How can we respect our own bodies? How about other people's bodies?

What can you do if someone touches you in a way you don't like?

Theology of the Body

The human body bore in itself, in the mystery of creation, an unquestionable sign of the image of God.



Parent Resources



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2nd Grade

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Healthy Boundaries

At this age, it would be appropriate to talk with your children about who you feel (as their guardians) are “trusted adults”- there are a lot of people who you might consider friends and family, but it would be important for your children to know who to report something to if there was something they felt uncomfortable with.

Who are two people you could talk to if you ever felt uncomfortable?

When someone does something you don't feel comfortable with, what is something you could say to them?

Communication

Second graders are at the stage where they are understanding the difference between what is right and wrong. They often have a difficulty at this age admitting when something goes wrong, or when they make a bad choice. This can make it difficult for them to speak to their parents when they think something wrong is being done. It is good to work on communicating with second graders about choices, and help them understand that you are there for them to help them get through bad choices and experiences.

What are some ways that you can tell us when you feel like a bad choice has been made?

How do you think I would react if you told me something that you did wrong?

Technology

They won't be behind. That's right! If your child doesn't have ANY technology until well into high school, they won't be behind! Is that a relief? The idea that kids using smartphones or social media is inevitable is one of big tech's biggest lies. Your child won't have a worse job. They won't get worse grades. Oh, but something will happen. They'll be left out. Left out of confusion. Left out of distortion. Left out of explicit content. Left out of toxic comparisons. Left out of anxiety. Left out of inadequate social skills. Left out of cyberbullying. Yes, there's a chance they might be left out of a lot of things. And you know what? They'll thank you later.

Do you know the difference between a good website and a bad website? Can you give me some examples of both?

Other than mom or dad, who are 2-3 other people you could tell if you ever saw something online that wasn't good?

Body Awareness

By this age, children should know the difference between good touch and bad touch. As their guardians, it's important to define what is good touch and bad touch, and who is allowed/not allowed to touch them, especially in their private areas. For example, the parents (or guardians) when the child needs help bathing, or doctors/medical staff with parents/guardians in the room. If anyone touches them that should not be, they should be taught what to do and who to tell.

Who are the only people who are allowed to touch your private areas, and when is it ok?

If anyone touches you and you are uncomfortable, who should you tell?

Theology of the Body

We ought to be moved to choose the good not simply through a cold and gritty decision driven by our intellect or our will, but also by our heart. - Jason Evert Theology of the Body in One Hour



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Safe Environment Education

3rd Grade

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Healthy Boundaries

When it comes to 3rd grade, children typically know they have to ask before leaving the classroom or ask before they take something. Just like they should ask to borrow something, they should be taught to ask permission before touching someone. For example- asking for a hug before just giving one. They should be taught appropriate ways of asking permission, because this is something that they should not only ask for themselves but ask of others as well. Children should not be forced to give hugs, kisses, etc. to anyone, even family. Help them set this boundary if they feel uncomfortable speaking up at first.

What could you say to someone before giving them a hug or high five?

If someone does something without asking, what could you say to them to let them know you don't like that?

Body Awareness

Children of this age should know the anatomically correct terms for their private areas. If you are scared or uncomfortable talking about it, then the children will feed off that and think it's something to avoid. Using the terms correctly will also help if someone touches them inappropriately and they report it, then the adults they go to will know exactly what they are talking about and be able to tell the parents immediately. Our bodies are gifts from God, and therefore should be treated as the gift they are. When our bodies are mistreated, it is important to know the proper way to speak about the mistreatment so as to restore the gift.

Why is it important to know the names of our body parts?

How are our bodies a gift?

Technology

Does your son or daughter have a friend who has different digital rules? Maybe rules that are a little looser? Since it only takes one graphic image to traumatize a child, I want your kids prepared for battle. One way we can do that is to give them a simple phrase. Tell them that if their friend ever wants to show them something on a tablet, phone, or computer, instruct your child to ask, "What do you want to show me?" And, let your child know that they aren't to look unless they're satisfied with the response. This little pause and response can act as a powerful defense against life-altering content.

What would you do if a friend tried to show you something on a screen that you knew wasn't good?

I'm going to my bedroom and close the door. I want you to pretend that you just saw something on a tablet or Chromebook that bothers you. Come knock on my door and tell me what happened. Can we practice?

Communication

Building up communication skills with your child will make it easier to make sure that they will communicate with you when they are uncomfortable. Having simple conversations with your child daily will assist with this. However, you also need to have conversations about difficult things so they know they can talk to you about difficult topics.

What are some things you are uncomfortable talking about?

Who are you comfortable talking about difficult things with?

Theology of the Body

Christ manifests the love with which he has love the church by giving himself for her. That love is an image and above all a model of the love which the husband should show to his wife in marriage, when the two are subject to each other "out of reverence for Christ".



Parent Resources



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Safe Environment Education

4th Grade

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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



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Safe Environment Education

5th Grade



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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.



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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



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

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Safe Environment Education

7th Grade

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



Healthy Boundaries

Children would benefit from having conversations about friendships, and who they associate with. We tend to be remembered for those we usually hang out with. If someone we hang out with tends to make bad choices, even if we are usually making good choices, we can be guilty by association. Setting the healthy boundary with friendships is very important especially as our children near high school. We want to help our children know that they should surround themselves with friends who will help them be better versions of themselves and to be kind. If they are surrounded by these types of people, they are more likely to make better choices and live happier lives because they aren't just trying to fit in or feeling like they have to impress others.

When you feel your friends are making poor choices, what is something you could do to make sure you don't make the same mistakes? How does that feel for you?

Who are the people you feel help build you up and help you want to be better and make better choices? How do you feel when you are around them?

Communication

This is often a confusing age for children. There are a lot of hormone changes, physical changes and lot of input from technology, friends, songs and television. It is good to have open communication with your child during this time of their lives. Beyond these questions, talking to your kids about sex, porn, puberty, etc. is good at this age.

Do you know that you can talk to me about anything?

Sometimes there are things that are difficult to talk about, can we determine some words to use when you want to but are uncomfortable?

Technology

By this age, I want kids finishing your sentences and rolling their eyes because you remind them of certain things so often. "Honey, there's nothing you could see on a device that would change the way I feel about you. Bring it to me. I will still love you and I won't freak out." Whatever it is that you want them to hear often, make sure they hear it often. Be more persistent and consistent than the algorithms in their lives.

Is there any part of being online that I haven't done a good job talking about?

What's one thing about technology that you wish every adult understood better?

Body Awareness

As our children are growing and developing it would be important as the most influential role models in their lives, to help give them an opportunity to see their bodies for what they can do, and not for what they look like. Establishing a healthy body image is very important as they are trying to figure out their role in this world. We as their parents want them to feel confident about their bodies, and not go looking for validation from others especially the opposite sex on what they "should" look like.

What are some things you feel you are capable of doing? What are some ways you've noticed your body being strong and healthy?

Looking around you at your age, based on how people dress or present themselves, do you feel people are confident in their body image or seeking validation from others?

Theology of the Body

Self-control is not needed because the body is evil - the truth is just the opposite. The body should be controlled with honor because it is worthy of honor.



Parent Resources



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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



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