

Safe Environment Education Kindergarten

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



Healthy Boundaries

Kindergarten is a great age to talk about boundaries to develop comfort while 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 open and honest communication between children and parents. By the time children are in kindergarten they can start to grapple with the idea of truth and lies and begin to better understand 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. Does that 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 other people 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 in God from time immemorial and thus to be a sign of it." ~T.O.B. 19:4

Safe Environment Education First Grade

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Healthy Boundaries

It is good for first grade students 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 children for abuse will use secrets to isolate and manipulate kids. It is best for parents to have discussions with their children about what secrets are and when they are appropriate to keep. Building up a relationship where kids understand that secrets between just two people are not good, and that parents should always be able to be a part of a secret shared with others.

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

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

Technology

Children today are surrounded by technology. Even at the young age of first grade it is important to start talking about which websites and social media are allowed to be used in your family. It is essential to discuss the importance of asking permission to go to different sites or to watch new shows. Parents should be modeling the behavior they are expecting as children at this age are learning from observing how others are using technology.

What are some good uses of electronics/technology?

What would be some good limits on use of electronics/technology?

Body Awareness

Children need to have awareness of their bodies. It's important to have discussions with them regarding appropriate uses of their bodies, including where it is appropriate to 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 can we respect other people's bodies?

What can you do if someone touches you in a way that you do not like, or in a place they should not touch?

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." ~T.O.B. 19:4

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

Safe Environment Education Second Grade

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Healthy Boundaries

For the second-grade student it would be appropriate to talk with them about who you feel are trusted adults in their lives. There are likely a lot of people who you might consider friends and family, but it is important that your children know who they should turn to in the event that they had something that was happening that they were 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 grade students are at the age where they are understanding the difference between what is right and wrong. They often have difficulty at this age admitting when something goes wrong, or when they have made a bad choice. This can make it difficult for them to speak to their parents when they think something wrong is being done to them. It is important to work on communicating with second grade children about choices and help them understand that you are there for them to help them get through bad choices and experiences, and that you will love them no matter what.

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

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

Technology

Your children will not be behind. That's right... if your child doesn't have any technology until well into high school, they won't be behind. 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 will not get worse grades. Oh, but something will happen. They will 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 may be left out of a lot of things. They will thank you later.

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

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

Body Awareness

By this age, children should know the difference between good touch and bad touch. As their guardians, it is important to define what is a good touch and a bad touch, who is allowed or not allowed to touch them, especially in their most private areas. For example, the parents/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 Third Grade

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Healthy Boundaries

Children in the third grade typically know that they are expected to ask before leaving the classroom or before they take or use something. In a similar fashion they should be taught to ask before touching someone. For example, asking for a hug before just giving one. These children should be taught appropriate ways of asking permission not only because they should ask for themselves, but also, they should ask and be able to expect the same behavior from others. No one should ever be forced to give hugs, kisses, etc. to anyone including family. Parents can help set these boundaries if the child is uncomfortable speaking up for themselves.

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

If someone does something without asking, what could you say to them to let you know you do not like that?

Communication

Children who have built good communication skills with their parents are much more likely to communicate with them when things are uncomfortable or scary. Having simple conversations with your child daily will nourish that relationship and help them build the confidence to share no matter how hard. It is, however, important to also have difficult conversations so that it is already developed that both easy and hard conversations are welcome and expected between parents and children.

What are some things you are uncomfortable talking about? What makes that difficult to talk about?

Who are you comfortable talking about difficult things with?

Technology

Does your son or daughter have a friend who has different digital rules in their home? Perhaps the friend has rules that are not as strict as you like. It truly only takes one graphic image to traumatize a child; children need to be prepared for battle. One way that we can help them be prepared is to teach them a simple phrase. If their friend ever wants to show them something on a tablet, phone, computer or other electronic device, teach your child to ask, "What do you want to show me?" Let your child know that they are not to look at anything until they are satisfied with the answer, knowing that the content will be safe and acceptable. 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 was not good?

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

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 automatically think that it is something to avoid. Using the proper terminology will also help if someone touches them inappropriately and they report it. This will help the adults that they have reported to 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 that gift. When our bodies are mistreated, it is important to know the proper way to speak about the mistreatment, enabling the restoration of the gift.

Why is it important to know the names of our body parts? How are our bodies a gift?

Theology of the Body

Christ manifests the love with which he has loved 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 out of reverence for Christ.

Safe Environment Education Fourth Grade

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Healthy Boundaries

Fourth grade can be a tough year where children struggle to figure 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. It is never the fault of the person who is being mistreated. Everyone has been mistreated at some point, and that is not their fault, regardless of how they look, act or what they enjoy. Teaching our children this fact can lift a weight from their shoulders so that they understand they are not responsible for the mean behavior of other people. It is important that children learn that often the people who are hurting are the ones who choose to hurt others. They bully and could be being bullied and not know how to react and thus cause them to lash out. This knowledge can help our children better understand these situations.

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 of a fourth-grade child. It can make one feel unique or set aside as someone special. It is important then to be sure to continue conversations with your children about how special they are to you. These conversations bring opportunity to discuss with the child what a secret is, and how parents and other trusted people should know all secrets, especially one that someone is trying to get them to keep from others.

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

YouTube is a dominant force with this age child. It is among the most popular app with tweens and teens recording over 80,000 hours of video content watched every second. Video content can be very beneficial. However, it can also be some of the most horrible, violent, explicit content imaginable. Every kid who watches YouTube will eventually see something harmful. It is important to self-evaluate, is YouTube under control in your home? Is Restricted Mode locked in? Are you curious about the videos children 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 is shared in a group chat with other kids?

Body Awareness

Our bodies will instinctually tell us when something is not right. It is important to help children understand this and to learn to listen to what our bodies are telling us. Learning that our bodies naturally get anxious to protect us will help them learn what is right and wrong when they are away from parents. Sometimes we may feel anxious if we really care about something or want it to go well, but our bodies will also tell us that something or someone is making us uncomfortable. It is essential to help children realize this and then to tell the person to stop or a trusted adult.

Has your body ever given you a feeling of being uncomfortable, or that something didn't feel right?

What can we do to help you be comfortable 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.

Safe Environment Education Fifth Grade

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Healthy Boundaries

Children in the fifth grade sometimes need to be reminded that it is ok to speak up for what doesn't feel right. It is ok to say no and/or to walk away from what is uncomfortable, or to call out friends if they are making bad or unsafe choices. Our culture today can make people feel bad about speaking up. As our children's biggest supporters parents must be the safest place to go when the world is not listening to them. The strength given to children by parents through supportive words becomes their inner voice. This makes it essential that words like "its fine" or "don't worry about it" are not used or they will question themselves and may not say anything when they need to. Children need to feel seen, known and loved at this age. Parents helping them navigate these tough times will assist in this.

Have there been times when you've tried coming to me with a problem and you did not feel like I heard you? Have you ever felt like someone around you wasn't making a good choice? What did you say to them?

Communication

This age students can be commonly seen sneaking around and using lies to trick people. This can be both for fun of getting away with something but also out of concern for making bad choices that become a little more serious at this age. Working intentionally with children to overcome these tendencies and helping them understand that you will always be there for them is important. Helping them to understand that they are a child of God and they are loved by God and by you no matter what is essential at this age.

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

If you ask a group of fifth grade students how many of them have received a phone call or text from someone they did not know, most of their hands would go up. This seems to be universal across all communities. Keeping this in mind, it is essential to help our children to be prepared instead of scared when this happens. Teach them a simple formula of: TELL. BLOCK. DELETE. Make this tangible, teach them through practice. Make it comfortable for them to tell you about these kinds of things while also teaching them what to do.

Have you ever received a text or call from someone you do not know? How should you respond?

If you are in a group chat or in a multi-player game and a friend invites someone you don't know to join the group, what should you do?

Body Awareness

At the fifth-grade level children may start to go through puberty and noticing the opposite sex. Having intentional conversations with them about their bodies continues to be important. At this age, understanding that children know that being attracted to the opposite sex is normal and healthy, but that does not change that 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 of them?

When you have questions about the opposite sex, I am here for you to ask anything, is there anything that you want to ask 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.

Safe Environment Education Sixth Grade

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Healthy Boundaries

Children who are in the sixth grade need boundaries set about how often they are on video games. Studies show that social media and internet-based video games have a deep impact on this age child specifically when it comes to friendships and self-esteem. It can be easy for children to compare themselves to others. When one is hiding behind a screen, children often can be more confident with their words. Discussing with your children a healthy amount of screen time as well as what they should do if they start to feel overwhelmed or mistreated by others online. It is also important to know all of the games and apps that your child is using. These kinds of boundaries set now become a life skill that will help them as they grow older to discern what is healthy and what is not healthy for their body, mind and soul.

***What might be a sign that you have been online too much? What can we change to make that better?
What should you do if you feel someone is bullying you, either online or in person?***

Communication

According to studies, children of this age start to see things that are inappropriate for their age. Often, they feel too embarrassed to share this with their parents. Curiosity about their bodies begins and conversations with other kids beyond their age begin. It is important for parents to remain engaged and continue to work on conversations so that the child feels comfortable talking within the home about these things.

***Have you seen or heard anything that makes you uncomfortable lately?
What are some ways you can let us know if there is something you are confused about and want to talk to us?***

Technology

When children of this age are together with a bunch of other children of around the same age, innocent interactions and questions can be weaponized against them. It is important that they know they can always come to you and ask you about anything, even if they do not know what they are asking about. Teaching that 'Google Parent' is better than the tablet is an important relationship to build. No matter if they are going on a mission trip, camp or retreat, it is essential they know that you are the best search engine for them to turn to.

***What is the purpose of a search engine? How can a search engine be helpful? How could it hurt you?
If you are doing an image search for a school presentation, what would you do if that image search brought up things you should not see?***

Body Awareness

The perfect storm of adolescent pressure could be considered middle school, puberty and social media. This creates a chaotic environment in the young mind. Parents can play a key role in calming the storm and in how children see themselves. Sharing personal triumphs and helping children understand the natural fluctuation of puberty can be very helpful for the child of this age. Normalizing discussions about the changes in their bodies can lighten the weight they may feel, showing them they are not alone in their feelings. They are seen, known and loved by God and by you.

***Have you been noticing your body changing? What questions do you have that I may be able to help with?
It is not unusual to have different feelings as your body starts to change. Are there any feelings you would like 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.

Safe Environment Education Seventh Grade

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Healthy Boundaries

At the seventh-grade level, children benefit from having conversations about friendships and who they associate with. Often, if someone we hang out with tends to make bad choices, even if we usually make good choice, there can be guilt by association. Setting healthy boundaries with friendships is very important especially as children near high school. It is essential that children understand the importance of surrounding themselves with friends who will help them be better versions of themselves and become kind young people. Making good choices is easier when those around them are also making good choices. This can lead to happier lives because they are not just trying to fit in or impress anyone.

When you feel your friends are making poor choices, what is something you could do to make sure you do not make the same mistakes?

Who are the people you feel help build you up to be better and to make good choices?

Communication

Seventh grade can be a confusing age for children. They are dealing with hormone changes, physical changes together with a lot of input from technology, friends and media. Open communication with your child during this time of their life is important no matter how difficult. Beginning conversations about puberty, sex, pornography is helpful at this age.

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

Sometimes there are things that are difficult to talk about, what are some ways we can identify when you are uncomfortable but do want to talk?

Technology

By this age the goal is to have the children able to finish your sentences and rolling their eyes because you have told them things so often. Things like; "honey, there is 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." Make sure that you are persistent and consistent, more so even than the algorithms in their lives.

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

What is the one thing about technology that you wish every adult understood better?

Body Awareness

As children are growing and developing it is important to help give them an opportunity to see their bodies for what they can do, not for what they look like. Parents are the most influential role models and can form this understanding. Parents want children to feel confident about their bodies and not go looking for validation from others in an unhealthy way.

What are some things you feel you are capable of doing? How have you noticed your body being strong and healthy?

Do you feel your friends 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.

Safe Environment Education Eighth Grade

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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 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?

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

Communication

Eighth grade students can be difficult. They are trying to find their own way and so they push back on parental rules, and sometimes even parental 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?

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 come to me and I will help you through it?

Body Awareness

Parents must model what that healthy body image looks 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. 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. 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?

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?

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 ablation, 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.

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