



Child & Teen Safety

Parent Inservice Material

2011-2012

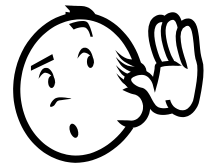


The Church has always affirmed that parents have the duty and the right to be the first and the principal educators of their children. It is an honor and an obligation for the Church to support parents in this awesome task. To this end, this material is offered to assist parents/guardians as they help their children/youth develop personal safety awareness and skills that will help protect their physical and emotional well being.

Talk to your children and teens about personal safety!!

Good communication establishes solid ground to stand on when relationships encounter challenging situations.

What Skills Will Help Strengthen Communication in Our Family?



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State your thoughts/ feelings by saying "I think ..." or "I feel..." while making eye contact.

This will help you to be clear, direct and honest.

Practice what you want to say in your thoughts before you say it.

This will help you to think before you speak.

Evaluate the timing and environment.

Select a time and place that will be good for both of you.

Ask the person to repeat what they heard you say.

This will help you to know if they understand what you truly mean.

Kindly invite the listener to respond.

This will give the other person an opportunity to share his/her thoughts and feelings, creating a genuine dialogue.

L
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Listen with your mind, heart and body.

Pay attention. Resist distracting thoughts. Open your heart. Position yourself at the same eye level. If possible, do not cross your arms or appear "closed off".

Identify the feeling(s) from the context of the speakers' statement(s).

Help speaker identify his/her feelings.

Example: "Was that difficult/frustrating/exciting/challenging/painful/a relief... for you?"

Safeguard periods of silence.

It is tempting to quickly fill periods of silence. Allow the speaker to think about what he/she wants to say next or to simply hear what they have already said.

Tend the conversation by showing that you are following the conversation.

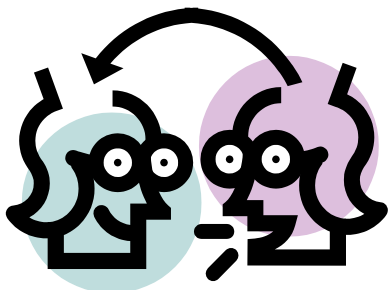
Use appropriate listening sounds, nods, brief statements to let the speaker know you are listening.

Engage. Use reflective listening by restating what you think the person wants you to know.

Paraphrase what you think is the main point(s) the speaker wants to express. Example: "It sounds like you're being pulled in a lot of directions between school, sports, homework, chores and friends. Is this getting stressful for you?"

Never project your own thoughts, feelings, attitudes, opinions, etc. into what the speaker is communicating.

Keep the focus on the speaker. Do not turn their story into your story. Save your story, thoughts and feeling for an appropriate time for you to be the speaker.



Communication Blockers 



COMMUNICATION BLOCKERS

SILENT TREATMENT

The silent treatment allows negative feelings to fester, creating a very uncomfortable environment for a productive conversation to take place.

INTERROGATING

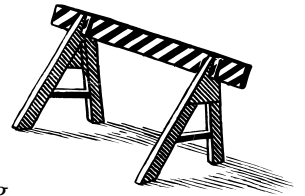
When people are interrogated, they usually become defensive.

PUTTING-DOWN

Put-downs and name-calling hurts, and has a lasting affect.

INTERRUPTING

Interrupting a person when they are speaking indicates that we are not listening.



DOMINATING

When someone is dominating the conversation, they are talking too much and tend to keep turning the focus back to themselves.

INTERPRETING

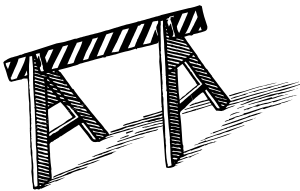
Interpreting projects our own thoughts and feelings on what the person is saying instead of acknowledging what they are truly trying to convey.

ACCUSING

Accusations indicate that a judgment has already been passed.

AVOIDING

Pretending that everything is okay when it really is not.



ADVISING

Giving advice when it has not been requested.

JUDGING

Judging the person's character rather than judging the situation.

YELLING

In many cultures, indicates a loss of self-control



Keeping Children Safe is an Adult Responsibility

What should a parent know when talking to a child about safety?

Speak to your children in manner that is calm and non-threatening. Children do not need to be frightened to get the point across. In fact, fear can thwart the safety message, because fear can be paralyzing to a child.

Speak openly. Children will be less likely to come to you about issues enshrouded in secrecy. If they feel that you are comfortable discussing the subject at hand, they may be more forthcoming.

Do not teach "stranger danger." According to research, people known to children and/or their families actually present a greater danger to children than do strangers. In the majority of cases, the perpetrator is someone the parents or child knows, and that person may be in a position of trust or responsibility to the child and family. We have learned that children do not have the same understanding as an adult of who a stranger is; it is a difficult concept for a child to grasp. It is much more beneficial to help children build the confidence and self-esteem they need to stay as safe as possible in a potentially dangerous situation rather than teaching them to be "on the look out" for a particular type of person.

Practice what you preach. You may think your children understand your message, but until they can incorporate it into their daily lives, it may not be clearly understood. Find opportunities to practice "what if" scenarios.

Teach your children that safety is more important than manners. In other words, it is more important for children to get themselves out of a threatening situation than it is to be polite. They also need to know that it is okay to tell you what happened, and they won't be tattletales.

Don't forget your older children. Children aged 11 to 17 are equally at risk to victimization. At the same time you are giving your older children more freedom, make sure they understand important safety rules as well.



What other advice can you offer parents about talking to kids?

Parents should choose opportunities or "teachable" moments to reinforce safety skills. If an incident occurs in your community and your child asks you about it, speak frankly but with reassurance. Explain to your children that you want to discuss the safety rules with them, so that they will know what to do if they are ever confronted with a difficult situation. Make sure you have "safety nets" in place, so that your children know there is **always** someone who can help them.

from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Diocese of Erie, Office for Protection of Children and Youth

For more information regarding diocesan policies and procedures, please go to

<http://www.eriercd.org/protectyouth.htm> or contact

Mrs. Karen Streett, 814-824-1222 or kstreett@eriercd.org

Your child needs the Internet

The Internet is a wonderful research tool. Reliance on the Internet in schools has grown rapidly- so even if you don't have a computer in the home, chances are very good that your child is online at school (and very likely at friend's houses as well). Online, your child has dozens of encyclopedias at his fingertips, he can call on experts in almost any field for information, he can play, keep in touch with friends, meet new people, and explore ideas and world-views we never dreamed of when we were young.

...but the Internet isn't all good

There is, however, a downside to the Internet. Dropping your children off on-line is as ill advised as dropping them off in a mall unsupervised. There are predators online who would take advantage of your child's innocence and trust. There is a great deal of easily accessed pornography. There are bullies who would harass your child. There are hate-sites, pro-drug sites, and sites that promote any activity you can think of. To take advantage of the Internet without being taken advantage of, your children need two things from you: information and supervision. By working together as a family, you can get the best of what the Internet offers without risking your child's innocence, safety, or your peace of mind. There are risks, but they are minimized when parents take the time to learn about the online world their children are spending time in.

There are a number of **~SIGNS~** that may signal a problem with your online child. You know your child better than anyone else, so don't rely on this as your only guide. Follow your instincts!

- **Screen Switching** - if your child quickly changes screens or turns off the monitor when you come into the room, it is likely they are viewing something they don't want you to see. Be calm and ask them to move so that you can view the screen.
- **Odd Phone Calls** - if your child suddenly begins receiving phone calls from strange adults (or even other children) you may have a problem. Install a caller ID program to determine where the calls are coming from and ask your child to explain them.
- **Odd hours of the night** - if your child is up typing away in the wee hours of the night he may be chatting online. This activity should be reserved for times and places that are supervised.
- **Sudden influx of cash** - if your child suddenly has more cash than can be accounted for, or shows up in unfamiliar clothing or with gifts that you can't explain, know that pedophiles often spend a great deal of money cultivating a relationship with a child.
- **Unusually upset at an Internet interruption** - it is not normal to cry or to be overly upset when the Internet goes down for an hour or two.
- **Withdrawal from family or friends** - pedophiles work very hard to drive a wedge between children and the people who support and care for them. The larger the gap between the child and his family, the easier it is for a predator to create a relationship.



Parenting wired kids can be difficult, especially if you didn't grow up with the same technologies. This website can help!
<http://www.netsmartz.org/Parents>