



L.I.F.E.

Grade 9 - Classroom Parent Material



Learning about L.I.F.E.

Grade 9 - PARENT FOLLOW-UP SESSION

With young people who attended the parish/school session

INSTRUCTION FOR PARENTS:

Your child attended a Safe Environment session at the parish/school today. The classroom session held today was meant to open a discussion with you, the parents, on the sensitive material regarding relationships, both positive and negative. This packet contains the material you will need for this discussion and a step-by-step guide for how to cover it. Sometime within the next week, please set aside a quiet 60 minute period to discuss this material with your child. Then fill out the response sheet and return it with your child or mail it back to the parish/school.

PARENTS: Before you sit down with your child, please read through all of the material in the Parent Packet. Be prepared to discuss the material in ways that will be appropriate for your child.

Session Overview:

- The teacher introduced the young people to the four kinds of relationships represented by the acronym L.I.F.E.: Love, Infatuation, Friendship, and Exploitation. Working in small groups with an adult leader, they discussed the characteristics of each of the four relationships. A follow-up activity relating this distinction to relationships found in movies and TV is included in the take-home packet.
- The teacher talked to the group about teen infatuation relationships, positive and negative, explaining that most high school romances are a combination of and love.
- The teacher introduced the topic of sexual abuse of young people by adults, and explained that they would be discussing this topic in detail with their parents at home.
- The teacher then explained that sexual exploitation can also be found in same teen-to- teen relationships.
- The children were encouraged to create a list of trusted adults in their safety net in order to feel safe.
- The session closed with a reflective reading of the passage on love found in Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

PARENT/TEEN PROCESS:

A. L.I.F.E.: understanding four basic kinds of relationships

1. In the take-home packet you will find the activity book that your child used in class. Page 2 has a chart of the four kinds of relationships.
 - Friendship: Ask your child to explain to you how the words in that section describe the relationships in his group of friends.
 - Love: Use the words in the box to tell your child about your constant efforts to create a loving family.
 - Infatuation: Let your child interview you with these questions:
 - How old were you the first time you fell madly in love?
 - Was the other person also in love with you?
 - What kind of rules did your parents have regarding dating and parties?
 - Who did you talk to about your romantic feelings? parents? friends? older sibling? nobody?
 - What was breaking up like for you?
 - How did you know when **being-in-love** had grown to **real-love** – so much love that you wanted to give your whole life to someone in the sacrament of Matrimony?
 - Exploitation: Have your child explain to you what the various words mean.
2. Under the four paragraphs in the next page, you will find a series of letters (FE, IF, IE, etc.) Most relationships are a mixture of two or more letters: for example the FE means that two people are friends but they often use each other, the IF means that two people are in love but they are also good friends (which is a good description of a high school romance), IE means that two people are in love but they take advantage of each other. Think about the TV shows and movies you have watched as a family. See if you and your child can remember an episode that portrays each set of letters.

B. Teen Infatuation Relationships

We introduced the topic of teen romance by having the teens read some excerpts taken from actual letters written by teens. You will find

the **Letters from Teens** page in the activity book. Ask your child to comment on the letters.

C. Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse -- NOT TAUGHT IN CLASS

Next we connected the teaching on the relationships to the devastating problem of SEXUAL ABUSE, which we called a very serious kind of exploitation. We said that it was important that they know about the sexual abuse of children and teens by adults, and that you, their parents, would be presenting that part of the lesson.

We said:

[We think young people your age should know about sexual abuse for several reasons:

- a) So that you will know how to avoid being abused sexually by anyone.*
- b) So that you will know what to do if you have been or are being sexually abused.*
- c) So that you will know how to help a friend who has been or is being sexually abused.*
- d) So that you will never be a person who abuses others.*
- e) So that you will never falsely accuse someone of sexual abuse.*

Explain the following information to your child. Speak directly and calmly. These are not easy things to talk about, but your child has a right and a need to receive this information. You may wish simply to read this section to your child (or have him/her read it to you).

- What is Pedophilia?
*Pedophilia is a serious psychological problem which causes an adult to be sexually attracted to children or teens and to look for opportunities to do sexual things with them. Adults who abuse children sexually are called *pedophiles*. Some pedophiles are attracted to boys, some to girls, and some to both. Some have the problem all the time, some only when they are drunk or high or when they are under very great stress.*
- Who might be a sexual abuser?
Children are taught at a young age to be aware of strangers who might do bad things to them. But a sexual abuser is most often not

a stranger but someone a child or teen knows and trusts. A sexual abuser might be:

- ☐ **family member:** mother, father, brother or sister
- ☐ **relative:** aunt, uncle, grandparent, cousin
- ☐ **adult leader:** teacher, coach, scout leader, priest, nun
- ☐ **friend:** neighbor, friend of parents, peer, older teen
- ☐ **stranger:** internet user, neighbor, truck driver

- How does a pedophile operate? How do young people get pulled into his/her web?

A pedophile is usually a very slick operator. He/she is always on the lookout for young people he/she can use for sexual pleasure. He is usually not a big bad monster waiting in the bushes to attack you, but acts very kind and friendly. A sexual abuser knows how to gradually prepare you to accept his/her sexual advances. This is called GROOMING. These are some of the things sexual abusers might do to entice a child or young teenager.

- ☐ Try to get you alone
- ☐ Give you alcohol or other drugs
- ☐ Promise to give you presents or privileges
- ☐ Build your trust, also your parents' trust
- ☐ Play on your natural curiosity about sex
- ☐ Show you sexual pictures, movies, videos
- ☐ Take naked or sexual pictures of you
- ☐ Touch you in a sexual way
- ☐ Ask you to touch them in a sexual way
- ☐ Force you to do sexual things
- ☐ Swear you to secrecy
- ☐ Threaten to hurt you or someone else if you tell
- ☐ Blame you; tell you that the sexual abuse is really your fault
- ☐ Try to do it again and again and again

- How would a person *feel* who has been (or is being) sexually abused?

The response of children or adolescents to sexual abuse is often CONFUSION. They may have negative feelings like shame, embarrassment, guilt, hurt, and betrayal. But they might also have some good feelings. Sexual touch is supposed to be a pleasant experience. The abuser may be gentle and seem to be loving.

The victim might believe what the abuser is saying to them, and feel special and loved. Sometimes the victim doesn't realize until much later that they have been lied to and used. This confusion is one of the long-range negative effects of sexual abuse. Later in life, when the person is in a positive loving relationship, the memory of these negative feelings keeps coming back and making it difficult for the person to accept and give real love.

- What does a person who has been (or is being) sexually abused need to know?

Sexual abuse can cause serious traumatic problems in the life of a person who has been abused. Anyone who has been abused--or is being abused--needs to remember these things:

- ☐ God loves you very much, and wants you to be healed of the bad effects of this traumatic experience in your life.
- ☐ You are a good and loveable person. The person who abused you did a bad thing to you, but that did not make you a bad person.
- ☐ It is important that you confide in an adult whom you trust, and talk about the abuse. Those who love you can't help you unless they know what happened. If you tell someone and that person doesn't believe you, keep telling till you find someone who will listen.
- ☐ The sexual abuse is not your fault. An abuser will try to blame you for what happened, but the abuse is the adult's fault, not yours.
- ☐ Sexual abuse is like a serious wound that needs to be healed. The healing might take a long time and much counseling and guidance.
- ☐ If a friend tells you that they are being abused, you *must* find an adult who can help the friend. This is a problem that is much too big for an adolescent to try to solve.

D. Sexual Exploitation of Youth by Other Youth

1. We explained that sexual exploitation can also happen in teen-to-teen relationships. Ask your child to explain the three categories and give you examples of each:
 - Some activity in the world of teens is just plain **exploitation**. One teens uses or abuses another.

- Another category could be called **fun sex**, sex with “friends”, sex, as a “favor”. Both teens are willing, but there is no real love or commitment.
- This category is a possible problem in every romance. What starts out as an honest display of affection *becomes* exploitation. The physical activity in the relationship “goes too far”.

E. Resisting Abuse/Exploitation

(This topic has been discussed in the class; we would like to review this again with your child)

- It is **important to regularly assure children that they will NEVER be blamed for something that happens to them.** In a child’s world everything centers on them so when something happens, they feel responsible. Say for instance, parents get divorced and a parent moves out, the child feels responsible.
 - **Abuse is not the child's fault;** it is the other person who is at fault. Knowing it is the other persons fault may empower the children to speak up.
- **Empowering children to say “no” instills confidence** and hopefully their personal space will be respected. It is also a way of equipping children to identify and resist abuse.
 - **Always remember the Three Big Rules**
 - **SAY NO**
 - **RUN AWAY**
 - **TELL SOMEONE YOU TRUST(until someone listens)**

Parents, you can discuss this additional question with your child:

What will you do if you find out that your friend is/was exploited?

F. Safety Equipment

(This topic has been discussed in the class; we would like to review this again with your child)

Just the way construction workers put on equipment when they go to work (helmets, masks, harness etc), as teens living in this dangerous

world, we need to equip ourselves with tools and strategies to stay safe as we meet people, interact and build relationships.

1. Safe Information

In the class we talked about why some information needs to be safe. Especially when talking to strangers, or in social networking, chat rooms, conversations that may involve strangers, we need to be careful about what information we give away to others.

In the Activity Book, you will find the question we discussed in class, please go over what they have written. Ask your child to explain to you. You may be able to add more ideas.

2. Backups

In the class we talked about, when the child go out to a place that is not their home or their school, (friend's place, party, school trip) what are some guidelines they can follow to make sure they are safe.

In the Activity Book, you will find the question we discussed in class, please go over what they have written. Ask your child to explain to you. You may be able to add more ideas.

3. Safety nets

Sometimes we are not sure if a situation is safe or not. A person may be a good friend, but maybe we feel they are starting to take advantage of us. Sometimes a friend may be calling us to a party, and we are not sure if it will be safe. Sometimes something uncomfortable might have happened, and we are not sure how to react.

This is when we need safety nets.

Safety nets are people who you can contact or call when you have questions, doubts, concerns or fears. They are also people you choose to keep informed of things in your life so that they can guide you and help you if you are making dangerous decisions.

In the Activity Book, you will find the Safety Net your child chose to have, please review what they have written. Parents, assure your child that you encourage them to keep these people informed, even if your own

names are not on the safety net. Please remember that teens often choose to confide in people other than their parents at this stage of life. Parents encourage the child to explain to each of those people about how they chose them to be part of a safety net. Parents, you may also have a direct conversation with each of the people on the safety net if required.

G. Closing prayer and Parent Blessing

1. Ask your child to read the passage on love from 1 Corinthians 13 in the Activity Book.
2. Close your session together with the ancient *Deuteronomy Blessing* in the Activity Book. Put your hand on your child's head or shoulder and pray the blessing for him or her. After the prayer, trace a cross on your child's forehead (with holy water if available).