

MATURITY IS MORE THAN PHYSICAL

From Growing in the Way of Love



Teaching the Way of Love

Parenting With the Heart of Christ

For parents whose
children are
approaching puberty.

...in talks with children, suitable advice should always be given regarding... discipline of the senses and the mind, watchfulness and prudence in avoiding occasions of sin, the observance of modesty, moderation in recreation, wholesome pursuits, assiduous prayer and frequent reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. Young people especially should foster devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God".

Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality #71



The physical changes that command so much of our attention during puberty are pre-programmed. The growth and reproductive hormones set the course for the body to move through its development. But what about the changes that are taking place within the child? Are these also pre-programmed? The answer is no. The development of one's character is not automatic, nor is it guaranteed. It requires planning, self-discipline and effort.

Emerging adults are awakened to many new realities that can elicit both excitement as well as concern. For the first time in their life, they ask questions about who they are and what they should do in this world. This is the time for parents to step up their interaction and guidance so that the child receives the best answers to these life forming questions.

In the previous segment, you learned how listening opens the window to your child's invisible world. While listening is vital, it is only one part of the strategy to help your child mature into a responsible adult. A close partner of listening is observation. This involves your ability to watch what your child does and how your child acts.

Why is it important to pay attention to your child's actions? Actions reveal the private life of a person. They are the visible reality of the invisible world that exists within a person. Your child's actions confirm how he or she is maturing beyond the physical changes. They disclose the strength of character that is forming with each passing day.

There are four general observations that help a parent know how a child is maturing on the inside. The first is to watch their children's actions regarding their own dignity. How do they respect themselves? Do they think they are worthwhile and needed? The second is to watch how they act towards others. How do they treat others? Are they courteous and polite? The third is to observe how they handle emotions. Are they in control of their feelings or do they live in constant drama? And finally, parents can observe what type of relationship their children have with God. Do they consider God's commands valid and necessary or do they move through life under their own perceptions of what is good, true and right?

Each of these observations correlates with one of four specific dimensions of maturity: personal, social, emotional and spiritual. Personal maturity involves one's ability to recognize his or her worth and dignity. Social maturity is the capacity to see God's goodness in all persons. Emotional maturity is the capability to know when and how to display feelings in ways that are good and healthy rather than in ways that are harmful or selfish. And, spiritual maturity is the ability to form a lasting relationship with Jesus Christ and the desire to participate in the Family of God.

Maturity is so much more than a physical reality. While the physical changes come first, they are a herald for the underlying transformation that happens within the child. Both the external and the internal dimensions of children's lives require parental attention and guidance. But the internal dimensions are most important because they bring forth a child's capacity to know, love and serve God in this world.

From the DVD (WATCH THE CLIP THAT CORRESPONDS WITH THIS SEGMENT.)

Parents need to attend to the _____ dimensions that exist inside of the child. These dimensions include;

_____ maturity – the awareness and acceptance of who you are created in God’s image.

_____ maturity – recognizing the dignity of others and showing respect

_____ maturity – thinking before acting upon one’s feelings

_____ maturity – development of a deeper relationship with God.

Continue the Discussion

Read and reflect on the following questions and examples.

1. Unconditional love (loving a person regardless of their action) is the basis of self-worth. How easy is it to express love to a person who has just done something that is wrong? Explain.
2. Developing manners and civility is important to social maturity. Give examples of civility (gracious goodness) in your home, at work and in your neighborhood.
3. Emotional maturity is more than dialing down the daily drama of life. It includes the ability to use emotions to motivate right and good actions. Discuss ways that the following emotions can be used for goodness: Fear. Anger. Frustration. Anxiety.
4. Feeling with and for the whole person is empathy. Why is empathy important to the social development of a child? How might empathy decrease the incidence of bullying?
5. Why is a relationship with Jesus Christ and participation in the family of God vital to your child’s internal maturity?

Make a Plan

Assessments of child's maturity

How mature is your child? The table below will help you determine the answer to this question.

There are four sections to this table. Each section contains three scaled items. The behaviors on the left side of each scale indicate immaturity and those on the right indicate maturity.

Read the two behaviors on each scale and determine where on the scale your child would land. Put an "X" on the bold line that runs between the immature and mature behavior.

Once you have placed your mark, explain why you placed your mark where you did. Describe "how you know" your sons/daughters behavior is at this place.

Immature	Recognizes Personal Dignity	Mature
Puts self down	<hr/>	Accepts who they are
<i>How you know...</i>		
Selfish	<hr/>	Selfless
<i>How you know...</i>		
Dependent	<hr/>	Interdependent
<i>How you know...</i>		

Immature	Ability to Get Along with Others	Mature
Blames others, never his or her fault	<hr/>	Accepts consequences, admits mistakes
<i>How you know...</i>		
Needs recognition or reward to serve	<hr/>	Serves without recognition or reward
<i>How you know...</i>		
Avoids conflicts	<hr/>	Faces conflicts
<i>How you know...</i>		

Immature	Emotional Control	Mature
Outbursts, Tantrums	_____	Self Disciplined
<i>How you know...</i>		
Impulsive - acts before thinking	_____	Temperate – can delay gratification, can wait
<i>How you know...</i>		
Sneaky, lies	_____	Honest and open
<i>How you know...</i>		

Immature	Spiritual	Mature
Resists attending Mass, seems bored during Mass	_____	Plans to attend mass weekly, participates
<i>How you know...</i>		
No religious presence in room	_____	Has religious items openly present in room
<i>How you know...</i>		
Has to be reminded to pray or rely on God	_____	Prays to God openly, is reverent
<i>How you know...</i>		

Imprimatur: †Most Rev. William P. Cullahan, OFM Conv.
Bishop of LaCrosse
28 January 2013

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