



Teaching the Way of Love

Parenting With the Heart of Christ

For parents whose
children are
approaching puberty.



Parents must find time to be with their children and take time to talk with them. As a gift and a commitment, children are their most important task... Children are more important than work, entertainment and social position.

Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality #51

Current research confirms what conventional wisdom has always known: a child is greatly influenced by what a parent thinks and says. For more than 35 years, organizations that study youth behavior throughout the U.S. have asked middle and high school youth questions about risk behaviors like drugs, sex outside of marriage, and violence. These organizations have also asked questions about pro-social activities like school success, community service and future planning. The results from these surveys have consistently shown that students who have regular conversations with their parents are more likely to avoid risk behaviors while students who rarely talk with their parents are more likely to engage in risk behaviors.

This secular research confirms the teachings of the Catholic Church that parents are the primary educators of their children. In God's plan, parents are meant to be important and influential to their children. And this significant bond is meant to last for the duration of one's life. Unfortunately, many parents wrongly believe that two things happen during the teen years: their children are influenced more by their peers and that parents no longer have an obligation to influence and guide. Both of these assumptions are unfounded. The fact remains that kids long to share what they are experiencing with their parents throughout their life. They want the security of knowing that their parents will listen and give them moral answers to their questions no matter how old they are.

It is heartbreaking that many parents choose to avoid necessary conversations with their young adults. Instead of capitalizing on the daily opportunities to connect with their children, many parents become

silent or indifferent, letting their children navigate the pitfalls of adolescence alone. The result of either silence or indifference is an increase in risk behavior and family strife. That is why parents have to do all they can to find their voice and talk with their kids.

What type of guidance and direction are youth craving during their middle and high school years? Youth really want their parents to provide direction on matters that mean something to them. In the last segment you learned that youth want to know who they are and why they exist. Both of these questions are related to their ability to connect with others and ultimately with God. Youth want their parents to help them figure out what is genuine and honest, even when the direction is not to their liking. They do not want spin and hype that brings temporary happiness and they may even tolerate having their feelings hurt as long as it means they are being guided towards what is ultimately right and good. They want the truth and they want it framed in morality.

Morality focuses on what is best in any given situation. In fact, morality is the way that parents can steer a conversation towards a decision or action that is based on God's will and commandments rather than emotions. It allows parents to concentrate on what is best for the child in the long run rather than on what might feel good for the moment. It turns the discussion towards what is right rather than to what is possible (what one can get away with). Finally, morality helps parents find their voice so that they can enter into the necessary conversations that should take place during after puberty.

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

Morality is about _____ a good person empowered by love.

The four steps for a necessary conversation include;

1. _____ about the moral issues that they face.
2. _____ (timing, setting, remove distractions, plan of action)
3. _____ (listen and observe, be respectful, focus)
4. _____ (invite feedback and input within 48 hours)

Most of the topics your child will face are related to a proper understanding of _____,
_____ and social justice.

Continue the Discussion

Read and reflect on the following questions and examples.

1. What topics do you think a child may want to discuss with a parent as he or she continues to mature? What topics do parents want to discuss with their children as they mature?
2. Learn – Prepare – Speak up – Follow-up: As you look at these steps, which do you think is the most important? Why?
3. How can a parent stay calm when their child is reluctant or rude during a conversation?
4. How does framing a conversation in morality help you focus on what God wants? And, how does morality take the focus off your past mistakes?
5. Realistically, how long do you think it will take to form your child's heart in the ways of the Lord?

Make a Plan

Preparing for a necessary conversation is the key to a meaningful exchange. The worksheet that follows will help you ready yourself before you speak up and engage in dialogue with your child. We suggest that you use the worksheet for exercise one of the topics from your answer to the first question of the **Continue the Discussion** section. Then, speak up and enter into your first necessary conversation with your child.

<p>Situation: What is my concern? <i>What concern has made this conversation</i></p>	<p>What moral issues relate to this issue? <i>How does your concern involve issues of human dignity, chastity, or social justice?</i></p> <p>Go to www.twl4parents.com for help.</p>
<p>Preparing to Speak Up Timing _____ Setting _____</p> <p>Remember to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• HALTS• Remove Distractions• Be Respectful and calm• Listen and Observe• Stay Focused on Main Points	
<p>Main Points: (Write out your talking points.) <i>Keeping your main points in mind helps you stay on topic – no tangents allowed!</i></p>	
<p>What I Heard <i>After your conversation, write down what you heard</i></p>	<p>What I Observed <i>What non-verbal communication did you observe in your child</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal• Social• Emotional• Spiritual
<p>Follow-Up (within 48 hours if possible) What are they thinking now? What did they misunderstand? What do I need to add?</p> <p><i>After you follow up with your child about the conversation, use this space to take some notes. These notes will help you continue the discussion. Restate your love.</i></p>	

For your convenience, we have put another blank worksheet on the next page. You may copy that worksheet in preparation for additional conversations.

Conversation Worksheet

Situation: What is my concern?

What moral issues relate to this issue?

Preparing to Speak Up

Timing _____

Setting _____

Remember to:

- **HALTS**
- **Remove Distractions**
- **Be Respectful and calm**
- **Listen and Observe**
- **Stay Focused on Main Points**

Go to www.twl4parents.com for help.

Main Points: (Write out your talking points.)

What I Heard

What I Observed

- Personal
- Social
- Emotional
- Spiritual

Follow-Up (within 48 hours if possible)

What are they thinking now?

What did they misunderstand?

What do I need to add?

Restate your love.

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

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