

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

A Parent's Guide

The Archdiocese of Washington is dedicated to promoting and ensuring the protection of all children. You can help your teen build strong, respectful relationships. Start by teaching your son or daughter about healthy relationships. This flier is one in a series of parents' guides produced by the archdiocese to help parents protect and nurture their children.

Archdiocese

Safety Tips

Technology

Relationships

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS ARE THE BEST RELATIONSHIPS

Unfortunately, many teens have relationships that are unhealthy. More than 1 in 10 teens who have been on a date have also been:

- Physically abused (hit, pushed, or slapped) by someone they've gone out with.
- Sexually abused (kissed, touched, or forced to have sex without wanting to) by someone they've dated.



Talking about healthy relationships is a great way to show that you are available to listen and answer questions – so make sure to check in often with your teen. Together, you can agree on clear rules about dating to help keep your teen safe.

TALK TO YOUR TEEN ABOUT WHAT MAKES A RELATIONSHIP HEALTHY

In a healthy relationship:

- Both people feel respected, supported, and valued
- Both partners make decisions together
- Both people have friends and interests outside of the relationship
- The couple settles disagreements with open and honest communication
- There are more good times than bad
- Both people feel like they can trust the other
- Each person respects the other's commitment to family and friends

In an unhealthy relationship:

- One person tries to change the other
- One person makes most or all of the decisions
- One or both people drop friends and interests outside of the relationship
- One or both people yell, threaten, hit, or throw things during arguments
- There are more bad times than good
- One person makes fun of the other's opinions or interests
- One person keeps track of the other all the time by calling or checking in with friends

People in unhealthy relationships may make many excuses to try to explain away the hurtful parts of the relationship. If you see any of these signs, talk to your teen. Dating violence can have long-term effects for both partners – even after the relationship ends. By helping your teen develop the skills for healthy relationships, you can help prevent the long-term effects of dating violence.

Archdiocese of Washington Child and Youth Protection

ENCOURAGING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

HOW TO DISCUSS CHASTITY WITH YOUR TEEN

- **Start a conversation today!** Talking to your child about chastity does not start with “the talk.” It begins with spending time with your child and asking them about their day and life. Do this everyday and **listen to their answers**. A great time to do this is before bed every night.
- Be not afraid. **Pray with and for your child**. Say a prayer before speaking to your child about sexuality and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your discussions. Again **this is not a one time talk**; it is a series of discussions that take into account your child’s thoughts, concerns and questions about sexuality as he or she matures.
- Share with your child that **sex is sacred**. Rarely will your child hear that sex is sacred and holy when expressed in marriage. **Many teens use sex to try to keep relationships together, to overcome loneliness or to simply fit in**. Let your child know that this is not what sex is for and that it will not make difficulties go away but will instead lead to other difficulties.
- **Chastity is not just about avoiding sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy**. While these are important reasons to abstain from sex, these are not the only reasons for abstinence before marriage. The beauty of marriage and family life, and the commitment to one another, will be lost if the reason for abstinence before marriage is simply to avoid pregnancy or disease. **To the best of your ability, share the fullness of the beauty and holiness that sexuality can be when lived out in marriage**.
- **Talk to your child about chastity when they are young**. You know your child’s maturity and questions better than anyone else. These early talks begin with developing virtues and a close



relationship with God. Early lessons in virtue will bear great fruit later. **Children learn best by example and will mirror loving and affectionate relationships**. Teach your child that they have great worth and they were made for love and to love others, and most especially that you love them.

- **Set clear rules in your home**. Children need healthy boundaries and clear guidelines of behavior. As parents, you set the standards (for discipline, dating, modesty, use of media, etc.). Once you set the rules, be consistent in enforcing them.