

Parents First

Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2223)

Church Teaching *Ability and Responsibility*

The Church teaches us that there is a necessary distinction between power and responsibility. At this age level, bullying becomes common among children who have not gained this understanding. Having a particular ability does not always mean that it can or should be used in all times and places. As our children grow and develop, their bodies develop fascinating new abilities. They become, stronger, faster, and more attractive. With these new powers comes the responsibility to use them in accord with God's plan, being good stewards of what we have been given. The use of these powers is not meant to be "arbitrary or destructive" but rather is meant for a specific purpose (CCC 373). One with strength is meant to use it to protect the weak, but abuse of that power may lead to bullying. With regard to our sexuality, we are not called to use these powers to

cause harm and destruction but rather to help us in forming close bonds of friendship and in the transmission of human life. The practice of chastity and self-mastery enable us to be persons of integrity, entering into new friendships that are not self-seeking but rather ones that are a genuine gift of self (CCC 2337-42).



Today
will never come again.
Be a blessing,
be a friend.
Encourage someone,
take time to care,
let your words heal,
and not wound.

Growing in Virtue

The use of power is not meant to be "arbitrary or destructive" but rather is meant for a specific purpose (CCC 373).

Justice is the virtue of right relationship, as your child's body begins to develop, it is good to begin to have the conversation about the difference between responsibility and power. The difference between what I want to do and what I should do. This becomes particularly important as differences between children become more noticeable. For example, some children will mature and grow faster than others. Make certain that your child is aware of bullying and other anti-social behaviors. Make sure your child knows you are willing and

ready to listen to them and talk through any issues they may be having or seeing with their peers. Help them problem solve, don't take over, but support them.

Temperance is the virtue of balance and self-control. As your children begin to head into puberty, they may be prone to swinging emotions and excessive behaviors.

As they enter this stage of life, it is important to help them learn balance in what they eat, the activities that they participate in, and with whom they associate. Help your children turn off their devices and make time for a variety of activities. Help them schedule face-to-face time with peers. Creating a personal schedule will keep them from feeling overwhelmed with school, burnt out by sports or overly isolated.

Culture Alert...

- 70.6% of young people say they have seen bullying in their schools
- When bystanders intervene, bullying stops within 10 seconds, 57% of the time. stopbullying.gov

Guidelines for Answering your Child's Questions

- Ask for more information before answering, (i.e. "Why do you ask?", or "Tell me more.") Your child's response will provide you with insight context and time to think.
- Pause to ask God for the wisdom and grace to provide an appropriate answer.
- Phrase your answer in the context of your family's Catholic values (i.e. "When you are grown and married..." or "As Catholics, we believe...")
- If you don't know the answer, say "That's a great question but I'm not sure of the exact answer. I will look it up and get back to you later today." Make sure to follow up later with an answer.

Examples: What is a period? or What is a tampon /feminine pad?

Know the context of the question (see above guidelines) i.e.: Are they noticing changes in themselves or their peers? Did they hear something on TV or are they just curious? The information your child provides to these questions will help frame your answer in a way that is meaningful to him/her.

Possible Responses:

- "A period, also called a menstrual cycle, is the process by which a female becomes physically capable of having a baby."
- "A girl will get her first period (menstrual cycle) sometime during puberty and will continue having menstrual cycles for the next 30 - 40 years."
- "Each menstrual cycle occurs over a period of about 28 days and has three phases: a buildup of tissue and nutrients in the uterine lining, ovulation and finally menstruation (the shedding of the uterine tissue and lining)."
- "A period is a natural process and is nothing to be afraid or embarrassed about; all girls have a period when their bodies mature."

Practical Suggestions

Though it may seem early, now is the time to start talking about the future. Your child is making friends of their own and is spending more time away from home at a variety of activities. Prepare your child for the challenges that come with this kind of independence by:

- ◆ Providing opportunities to practice being responsible (i.e. prepare an evening meal for the family, help shop for groceries, do their own laundry, etc.)
- ◆ Talk through how to make good decisions, (try the **POP** method—

name the **Problem**, list your **Options**, **Pick** a solution)

- ◆ Continue to monitor their social media and internet activities for their safety. This is a prime age for cyber bullying to begin. Make sure that your child is not the victim **OR** the bully. If you find your child is being the bully, talk to him/her about the consequences of such actions. Children might not even realize the effect their words are having on others. If you find your child is the victim talk to your child, come up with strate-



gies (POP) to help him/her cope with the situation.

- ◆ Remember to prescreen all music, videos and movies.
- ◆ Continue to be vigilant on your part. Model what you expect from your children.
- ◆ Remind them to talk to you about any uncomfortable feelings that enter into their Circle of Grace.

May We Recommend...

Circle of Grace Parenting and Sexuality Handout

[Parenting with Grace: the Catholic Parents' Guide to Raising almost Perfect Kids](#)

By: Gregory and Lisa Popcak

[Beyond the Birds and the Bees: Raising Sexually Whole and Holy Kids](#)

By: Gregory and Lisa Popcak

<http://integrityrestored.com/>
<http://family.archomaha.org/respecting-life/human-sexuality-formation/>

(YouTube videos are recommended for parent viewing only)

YouTube: *Talking to children about their bodies – Jason Evert on Catholic Answers Live*