



Catholic Safe Environment Curriculum for High School

2014/2015

Doctrinal Connection (CCC 2441)

2441 “An increased sense of God and increased self-awareness are fundamental to any *full development of human society*.... It makes for growth in respect for cultural identities and openness to the transcendent.”

Youth Code of Conduct (DSJ, OPVCA)

Awareness of the Youth Code of Conduct for the Diocese of San Jose, is essential in promoting appropriate relationships among teen peers and those who are in positions of teen leadership.

1. Every youth is expected to act in a Christ-like manner
2. Every youth is expected to be respectful.
3. Every youth is expected to cooperate with classmates, teachers, peers, and adults.
4. Every youth is expected to communicate in an appropriate manner.
5. Every youth is expected to respect the personal boundaries and property of others.
6. Every youth is expected to promote and support a safe, fun, healthy environment.
7. Every youth is expected to report and inform adults in charge of any kind of abuse or harassment in real life or on line.
8. No youth will tolerate abuse of any kind.

Appropriate Relationships

Appropriate relationships among teen peers can be very different from appropriate relationships between a teen leader and a participating group member. Establishing appropriate relationships is key in maintaining a safe, fun, healthy environment on campus or while volunteering.

1. Boundaries – maintain distance between you and another person. Be aware of other people and their comfort level of your personal space. Some peers have a larger “bubble of space” than others. When you are in a position of leadership, personal space should be of the utmost importance to protect yourself and others. Personal space is also important when protecting oneself. If another person, peer or adult, is violating your personal space or information, tell them to stop. Tell another adult what is going on. Teens need to trust their instincts, that “Gut Feeling,” and tell if someone is not maintaining appropriate boundaries.
2. “Friending” – In the digital age and accepting that most teens are social media users, it is important to maintain appropriate relationships on line as well as in real life. Only “friend” people you know in real life. Refuse friend requests from children or teens that you volunteer with. Keep your friends limited to the people that you want to be involved with your personal business.

Awareness of Surroundings

Teens need to constantly be aware of their surroundings in real life and while enjoying time on line. Complacency is not an option. Heightened awareness of surroundings can be the difference between a risky situation and a fatal situation. Teens need to be assured that their own vigilance in being aware of their surroundings is essential for keeping themselves and others safe.

1. Parking lots – Remind teens to “scope out” a parking lot before parking their car or walking back out to their car. Parking near lights, close to doors, and next to other cars can be a safer spot. Teens should be aware of any passengers or drivers in the surrounding cars. Teens should be scanning under their car for any suspicious activity. Remind teens that they can always ask the store for an escort to their car if it is late or dark. Tell the teens to always trust their instincts. It is far better to be over cautious.

2. Buildings – It may occur that a teen will be the first or the last person to leave a room or building. It is important to let teens know that this situation needs to have their attention more than a crowded building or room. Inform the teens to take out their ear buds so they can listen for any odd noises or other footsteps. Inform teens that if they are using their phone, keep looking up every few seconds to scan the area. Inform teens that if they suspect danger, trust their instincts, leave the area, stay in well-lit areas, or in your car.
3. Personal or Peer Attitude – Part of a teens surroundings includes their friends. It is important for teens to understand the attitudes of their friends, so if there is a change, it can be addressed. A personal attitude or peer attitude can change when a crisis occurs in their situations. Many times teens have little crisis that are handled within minutes or even days and do not have any lasting effects. But, in some cases, teens turn to self injury to deal with the pain of a crisis or situation. Self injury can be anywhere from drug use, alcohol consumption, cutting, hair pulling, eating disorders, social media posts about hurting themselves or others, and suicide. Teens can play an important role in helping themselves or their peers when they are aware of an attitude change. Teens need to feel they are supported when they inform adults of a personal or peer problem.

Ability to Inform

Teens are a unique group of people who often know exactly what is going on, far more so than the adults in their lives. We all have to encourage teens to tell adults what is really happening. Many times teens will not want to inform adults when they need or help or a friend is in crisis. Teens are afraid of getting in trouble, afraid their peers will be angry with them, afraid that the situation will get worse and not better, and afraid of the unknown. Adults have to support a teen who informs them of any situation, personal or peer related. Teens have to feel the safety and security of adults in order for a teen to trust them.

1. When to inform – Teens need to know that informing an adult of any concern, personal or peer related, can make a difference. Anytime a teen feels that they, or another person, need some help, they need to inform. Anytime a teen feels unsafe, they need to inform. Anytime a teen feels they have been violated, they need to inform. Anytime a teen feels they need support, they need to inform. Anytime a teen feels an instinct that something is not right, they need to inform.
2. Whom to inform – Adults are the ones who can offer support, safety, and security to a teen who is in need of help. Adults surround teens at school, in the community, at home. Trusted, safe adults are those adults who follow the rules of society, avoid “tricking” teens into risky situations, avoid being the “secret keeper” of the teens, are fair to everyone, and who genuinely care for the well being of everyone.

3. How to inform – “Just sayin’” has become a very popular term in teen lingo. But, it is as easy as just saying what happened, where it happened, who was involved, how it made you feel. Sometimes teens need to be encouraged to talk it out and sometimes teens just blurt out information. Either way, it is being addressed and that is what needs to happen to keep teens safe. Teens can also utilize the “report” button on social media, picture sharing, and gaming sites to report any disturbing language or images.

Role Modeling

Teens are role models. Children look up to teenagers and will model their behavior after their “favorite” teen. Teens are an important part of child safety as well. Teens need to be aware that their verbal language, tone of voice, body posture, actions, and social media posts are being watched by kids and adults. Judgments are being made on the type of person they are based on interactions or observations. Teens need to be reminded that there is never a second opportunity for a first impression. When teens are engaged in social activities or community events, they need to be on heightened alert of how they are speaking and acting. We want adults to say “wow, I want my kid to be just like that teen!”