



FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH

A SAFE ENVIRONMENT LIFE NIGHT

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SAFE ENVIRONMENT,
HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS
LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

CATECHISM

2258
2284-2287
2319

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1:27
Matthew 18:20
Mark 9:42
Galatians 5:14

KEY CONCEPTS

- Every human person has dignity because he or she is God's creation. No action, sin, or abuse can diminish a person's inherent dignity and worth.
- A healthy relationship is defined by a Christ-centered love and respect.
- If a person has suffered from abuse, it is important to talk about it with a trustworthy adult.

GOAL

The goal of this Life Night is to help teenagers realize their dignity and worth as given by God. It will challenge teens to understand what a safe environment is, and why our dignity requires that we work for the safety and respect of everyone.

ABOUT THIS NIGHT

This night begins with a fun opening game that requires teams to work together to perform a scavenger hunt through a local newspaper. After the opening activity the night transitions into the Proclaim, which uses a visual demonstration of self-worth. Then there is a small group activity with different scenarios that the teenagers will discuss; each scenario is modeled after situations teenagers are likely to encounter in their high school

career. There is a list of small group questions to discuss after processing each scenario. The Life Night closes with a prayer for victims of abuse and a challenge for teens to live as agents of God's love in the world.

Pastoral Note: This Life Night is one that almost every diocese requires us to hold in youth ministry. Because of this, check with your diocese to ensure that you are in compliance with all of their standards. There might be specific resources that they want your parish to utilize, and materials that you may need to send home to parents. Be sure to use all proper diocesan forms and permissions before publicizing this night. Visit your diocesan website or talk to the Director of Youth Ministry for your diocese for more information.

Secondly, due to the nature of this topic it would be helpful to have professional counselors and priests available for teens to talk with in case issues arise during the course of the Life Night. If this is not possible, have contact information that teenagers can take with them for counseling services, as well as other resources for teenagers and parents.

PARENTAL NOTICE

This night is about promoting a safe environment and helping ensure teens are not putting themselves or others in a situation where they can hurt or be hurt. The purpose of this night is to help teens become aware of the dignity found in ourselves and others and how we are called to protect that dignity in our relationships. We encourage you to discuss the content of this night with your teens. Some questions to use:

1. What does Sacred Scripture say about the ways that we reflect God's dignity?
2. How are we called to treat others with respect and love as Christ did?

3. What would you do if you heard about a boundary being crossed and possible abuse of a friend?
4. Use the scenarios and discuss what the teens would do in those situations.

ENVIRONMENT

Have pictures/posters or use PowerPoint to highlight different interpersonal relationships that are out in the world (e.g. the relationship between parents and children, business partners, teachers and students). To illustrate these relationships consider using images of a handshake between business associates, teammates, family, teacher and students, coaches and players, etc. Create a banner out of butcher paper with the two great commandments written on it and hang it in the front of the room.

GATHER

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

(5 min)

Welcome all the teens that are at the Life Night for the first time. If you have parents who are attending the night with the teenagers as well, welcome them and have everyone take a minute to introduce themselves to others around them. The youth minister should then lead an opening prayer to begin the Life Night.

NEWSPAPER PUZZLE

(10 min)

Divide the group into teams of five or six teens with one Core Member in each group, and give each group a copy of the SAME newspaper. Ask them to spread the newspaper out in front of each team. Describe a particular advertisement,

article, fact, or picture from the paper. Each group will then have to find it, rip it out, and bring it to the youth minister. The first team to bring it gets a point. Continue doing this for several rounds. The team with the most points will be the winner.

PROCLAIM

“FOR WHAT IT’S WORTH” TEACHING

(15 min)

Note: The Proclaim for this Life Night should be given by the youth minister or another adult who has experience in safe environment education. Be sure to practice and rehearse the talk with the person giving it prior to the Life Night.

Love Thyself – Made in God’s Image & Likeness

- *This teaching will require that you have a \$20 bill or currency of higher value that the teens will recognize and want to have. It will illustrate the worth that every person has, regardless of where they have been.*
- Which of you teens would like this nice crisp \$20 bill in my hand? (Wait for teens to raise their hands then crumple the bill up in your hands.) What about now? I’ve ruined the bill by crumpling it – who still wants it? (Again, teens will raise their hands – as you dump soda or another liquid on the bill.) What about now? The bill is all wet and gross. Does anyone still want this? (*As teens raise their hands again, throw the bill down and stomp on it.*)
- By now you realize that other than burning the dollar bill or ripping it to tiny pieces, most of you still want it. Why? This bill has value. I can crumple it, spit on it, throw it on the floor and step on it, but it still has value. It is worth the same as a brand new bill of the same amount.
- As human beings, we each have value as well. It isn’t a monetary value, though. As Catholics we call this value “human dignity.” Human dignity originates from God and is of God because we are made in God’s own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27).
- Human life is sacred because the human person is the most central and clearest reflection of God among us. Our dignity is not based on any human quality, legal mandate, or individual merit or accomplishment because it comes directly from God.
- Human dignity is inalienable – that means it is an essential part of every human being and is an intrinsic quality that can never be separated from other essential aspects of the human person. No matter how much a person goes through in life, and no matter what they have done, they are still worth the same as everyone else – just like the \$20 bill.
- Human beings are different from other living beings in the world because they are capable of knowing and loving God, unlike other creations. Belief in the dignity of the human person is the foundation of morality. The principle of human

dignity is the foundation of all the Catholic social teaching principles.

Loving Others – the Right Way, the Godly Way

- Jesus taught us about the value of dignity within others by what He taught and how He lived. We need only look into the Gospels to find countless examples of this:
 - The Beatitudes (Matthew 5: 1-12)
 - The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)
 - The Woman at the Well (John 4:4-12)
 - The Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8:2-11)
 - The Passion of Jesus (Matthew 26:14- 27:66)
- While on earth our Lord did not just tell us how to love others perfectly; He also showed us. Jesus gave us an example of the holiest way to love; this love is inscribed upon our souls. We have the capacity to live each day in this kind of love.
- Unfortunately, due to sin, we sometimes choose to ignore this love in our relationships. Instead we choose lust, dependence, and anger. These things are distortions of love. These distortions can become so dominant in our lives that we think they are the real thing and we accept them as “love” when, in reality, they are often the opposite.
- Blessed Pope John Paul II said that the “opposite of love is not hate, it is use.” There are people in this world who live this out. Sometimes they are adults we know and love, strangers we’ve never met, friends, co-workers, or similarly aged-family we are close with.

How to avoid unhealthy relationships and maintain healthy relationships.

- God has planted inside our very hearts a trigger that informs us whether something seems “wrong” or not. We call this our conscience. We may encounter awkward or uncomfortable situations in life. These situations can lead to inappropriate ones. We can use our consciences and boundaries to help prevent ourselves and others from getting in bad situations where they are used or hurt.
- “Boundaries” are the limits that define one person as separate from another. Boundaries promote and preserve personal integrity. Boundaries give each person a clear sense of “self” and a framework for how to function in

relation to others. Boundaries bring order to our lives and empower each of us to determine how others will interact with us.

- If our boundaries are crossed by an adult, peer, or a person whom we trust, we may react to it in different ways. The first thing to remember is that we still have worth and value and we didn't do anything wrong. The second is to talk to an adult you can trust about what happened.

- If you know someone who has had their boundaries violated by another person, or perhaps you have experienced this, these steps are important to follow:

1. Tell an adult.

- a. By doing so you've placed the situation in the hands of someone probably older, wiser, and who knows exactly what to do next.

- b. If someone is telling you what has happened, remember that you're not a counselor; you're a friend or sibling. This means that you've done your job by bringing it to the attention of a professional who can help process the situation way better than you ever could as a teenager.

- c. Keeping the situation a secret is not helping your friend; it is actually hurting them and keeping them from getting help.

2. If it's a friend or sibling telling you something, listen and believe them.

- a. Most people do not make up these kinds of stories. If they do, investigations will lead to the truth. Most teens who share these things with you are looking for someone they trust to help them prevent future abuse.

3. Show that you care

- a. This may be the first time your friend has ever told anyone about their experience. Support them in whatever way is comfortable for both of you – you might tell them you are sorry this happened to them or offer them tissues if they cry. Be present to them and pray with them.

BREAK

SMALL GROUP SITUATION DISCUSSION

(15 min)

The youth minister should break all of the teens into small groups of six to eight teens with one Core Member in each group. If parents are attending this Life Night as part of your diocesan requirement, consider having them stay for additional safe environment information as teens break into small groups. Other ideas for adaptation are found in the "Adapting This Life Night" section. Each small group will receive three situations that they are to review and discuss as a small group. After reading through each scenario, use the set of questions provided to process the situation with the teenagers. The following can be used as possible scenarios and discussion questions for your teens:

Peer to Peer

Maya and Leticia consider themselves best friends. Recently Maya has noticed that Leticia has been losing a lot of weight. She sees Leticia passing on food and has heard her claiming that she is "fat" to other friends. Maya is now very concerned for her friend but is not sure how Leticia will react if she brings up her concern about her body image. What should Maya do?

Boyfriend to Girlfriend

Marcus and Lillian have been going out for about 6 months. Marcus feels like he is really in love with Lillian – she is the prettiest girl he has ever dated and she seems so smart. Marcus often feels nervous that he might lose her to another guy, since she is so pretty and smart. He doesn't think she would ever cheat on him, but he does see her talking with other guys sometimes. It makes him feel so jealous he doesn't know what to do. Marcus tells Lillian that she needs to stop talking with other guys, especially right in front of him! Lillian became upset with him, and they had a huge fight. As they were arguing, Marcus felt so mad that he grabbed her by the arms to get her to listen to him and then threw his cell phone across the room, smashing it to pieces. Marcus promised Lillian it would never happen again. He says it was an accident, and he didn't mean to hurt anyone.

He just couldn't control himself when he was feeling so angry.

Teacher to Student

John is a good student who always enjoys school. He has a history of good grades and is always in good relationships with his teachers. Recently John has felt that his math teacher, Mr. Smith, has been treating him unfairly during class by questioning his performance in a series of tests. In fact, John would go as far to say that Mr. Smith has been personally making fun of him in front of other classmates. John approaches him after school to tell the teacher how he feels. Mr. Smith denies isolating John and teasing him in front of the other students. What should John do?

Discussion Questions:

- Is this relationship healthy or unhealthy? Does it have potential of being turned around the opposite way and how might it happen?
- Name some feelings that this scenario evoked in your group.
- If the relationship is unhealthy, what are some of the warning signs that alert us to the fact?
- If the relationship is healthy, what are some of the signs that show us that?
- Other comments?

SEND

CLOSING CHALLENGE

(10 min)

The youth minister should gather all of the teens back together to close the Life Night. He or she should challenge them to not only remember that they have great dignity and worth, but that those around them also have dignity and worth. He or she should challenge the teens to live as agents of God's love in their world, and to pray for the grace to see others as God sees them. If we want to bring healing to people who are hurting, the best thing we can do is to treat them with love and respect every day.

PRAYER FOR VICTIMS OF ABUSE

(5 min)

If possible, have your parish priest present for the closing prayer of the Life Night. He should remind the teens that they have tremendous worth because they were created and are loved by God. He should let them know that the Church is a place where people can come to be loved, and if anyone has been the victim of abuse, the Church is here to help them find healing.

Close the Life Night with a time of prayer for the healing of victims of abuse. Create prayer cards or project the following prayer for all of the teens to pray together, then close the night by praying a Hail Mary and Ave Maria.

A Prayer for Healing for Victims of Abuse:

*God of endless love,
ever caring, ever strong,
always present, always just:
You gave your only Son
to save us by the blood of his cross.*

*Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind, and spirit
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.*

*Hear our cries as we agonize
over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.
Breathe wisdom into our prayers,
soothe restless hearts with hope,
steady shaken spirits with faith:
Show us the way to justice and wholeness,
enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.*

*Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
heal your people's wounds
and transform our brokenness.
Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace,
so that we may act with justice
and find peace in you.*

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FOLLOWING UP

- Give a handout to every participant and have them share it with their parents. The handout could be about abuse, online awareness, drinking and drugs, or other unhealthy lifestyles. Check the websites below or with your local diocesan offices for more information. Be sure to pass along any other information that is required by your diocese as well.
- You may have teens that reveal that they were abused or who may currently be in abusive relationships during the Life Night. Be sure to follow all mandatory reporting guidelines for your area and perform all necessary follow-up to these situations after the Life Night.

ADAPTING THE LIFE NIGHT

- If your group is smaller, have teens in small groups come up with different relationships that they experience as a high school student. Ask them which are healthy and which are unhealthy. What are some ways that they can become unhealthy?
- If you have parents attending the Life Night as part of your diocesan requirements, consider having a longer presentation for them after the teens break into small groups. Ask your local safe environment coordinator to talk about how parents can be aware of behaviors that indicate their teens may be in unhealthy relationships or may be having struggles with their self-worth. This time can include a question and answer session as well, which will allow parents to discuss the topic and get answers to any questions they may have.

GOING DEEPER

Online Resources:

- Virtus - www.virtus.org
- Shield the Vulnerable - <http://www.shieldthevulnerable.org/default.aspx>
- U.S. Bishops Office of Youth & Child Protection - <http://www.usccb.org/about/child-and-youth-protection/>
- Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People - <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/upload/Charter-for-the-Protection-of-Children-and-Young-People-revised-2011.pdf>

Notes

Ruled area for taking notes, consisting of multiple horizontal dashed lines.