

HEALTHY, HAPPY, AND HOLY

AN EDGE ISSUE NIGHT ON SAFE ENVIRONMENT

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AN EDGE ISSUE NIGHT ON SAFE ENVIROMENT EDGE NIGHT OUTLINE

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1:27
Deuteronomy 6:4-5
Isaiah 49:1
John 14:15
Mark 12:31-30

CATECHISM

396

1604

2345

2347

YOUCAT

386

404-406

410

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Butcher Paper
- Washable Markers
- Diocesan Safe Environment Requirements

GOAL

The goal of this night is for the middle school youth to come to a greater understanding of their dignity, worth, and their call to live healthy, happy, and holy lives. This Edge Night is intended to be a part of the Catholic Church's initiative for continuous training and awareness in Safe Environment. This night will give the youth the tools to recognize what constitutes a good, holy friendship and relationship and what does not. It will provide them with guidance and tools so that they can take action if they find themselves or a friend in situations of abuse, bullying, or any other harmful relationships. The youth will understand

that they were created with worth and deserve respect from all people and are called to respect others because all people are children of God and created in his image and likeness (Genesis 1:26).

EDGE NIGHT AT A GLANCE

This night will start off with a huge game of telephone to demonstrate how easily messages can be misinterpreted and retold when it passes through so many people. Then the middle school youth will have an opportunity to sit down as small groups and discuss and brainstorm the qualities of a good friend. There will then be a teaching about the qualities of good friendships

and relationships and what to do when those qualities are not present or when boundaries are violated in their different relationships. During the Break, the youth will discuss in small groups possible scenarios of different relationships, what they would do, and what should be done in each situation. The night will end with a prayer to St. Dominic Savio.

BEFORE THE NIGHT

This Edge Night is one that almost every diocese requires for 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 permission slips before publicizing this night. Visit your diocesan website or talk to the Director of Youth Ministry and/or Director of Safe Environment for your diocese. Please note that this Edge Night is not a replacement for any diocesan programming or affiliated with any specific Safe Environment program. This night is meant to be a guide and framework for bringing middle school youth into the conversation of the importance of Safe Environment.

Due to the nature of this topic, it would be helpful to have professional counselors and priests available to talk to the youth in case issues arise during the course of the Edge Night. If this is not possible, have contact information to give to parents, especially to the parents of the specific youth who are struggling. Remember that the parents should always be involved in any conversation about the safety and well being of their child.

Contact your diocese and invite the Director of Safe Environment to be present during this night.

Before this night meet with your Core Team and review your specific diocesan requirements for Safe Environment. As a Core Team, go through the scenario questions in the Break section and discuss what the appropriate response is and what should be done in each scenario. These will be the correct responses given to the youth in small groups.

ENVIRONMENT

The environment for the night should be simple and comfortable. Bring in beanbag chairs, pillows, couches etc. Create the feeling of a living room with lamps, plants, family pictures, and some wedding photos. The environment should help the youth to feel comfortable and at home.

GATHER

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

(5 min)

Welcome all the middle school youth and gather them into the main meeting room. Introduce any new youth and recognize any birthdays. Then say an opening prayer to begin the session.

REDIAL

(10 min)

Break the middle school youth into small groups of about five to ten and have them sit in a

circle. Essentially the game you will be playing is "Telephone". Have each Core Member keep an eye on the groups and make sure they are following the rules.

Give one person in each small group a piece of paper with a phrase or word on it, for example: *The red house caught on fire, but it didn't burn because it started to rain and the rain was magical.* Start the game of telephone with the person who was given the phrase and have that youth whisper the phrase into the youth's ear sitting to his or her left. They will then whisper the phrase into the ear of the youth next to them; this will continue until the phrase makes it to the last person in the circle. If the youth misunderstands what is whispered to them they can only ask once

for a repeat of the phrase, after that they have to pass it on as best as they can. When you get to the last person in the circle, they have to say the phrase out loud and see how close they are to the original phrase.

Do this once as a small group, then do it again but this time join two small groups together. Then after that have all the youth present sit in a circle and play one big game of "Telephone". It should be harder and harder to keep the phrase correct when you add in more people.

MAKE A FRIEND

(10 min)

In small groups give the youth a giant piece of white butcher paper, big enough for one of them to have their body traced on it. Hand out some washable markers. In each small group have one youth lie down on the butcher paper and have the other small group members trace the outline of their body. Then have the group write down in the outline of the body all of the good characteristics of a friend.

Have each small group introduce their "new friend" and share what they think makes a good friend. If you have time, hang up the paper friends around the room.

PROCLAIM

SCRIPTURE PROCLAMATION

(5 min)

Mark 12:30-31

"HEALTHY, HAPPY, AND HOLY" TEACHING

(15 min)

Relationships with Friends

So how do we live out a happy, healthy, and holy life? The best way to do this is by staying in a relationship with God. Another huge part of living out this life of happiness is to find good friendships. In your small groups, you created the ideal best "friend" and hit on the main points

of what it is to be a good friend. (Insert here the main qualities that were common for the Gather activity of "Making a Friend.") You all know what type of friends you want in your life, and there are really good people out there who are really good friends. Unfortunately, there are a lot of things that can be very hurtful in friendships and things that you should never put up with. If some one you think is your friend treats you badly, they are really not your friend and not worth your time. There are some major things to watch out for that are signs of unhealthy friendships.

One major sign is gossip. Gossip involves telling others information about people that they have no right to know. Gossip is often not about nice things and is not charitable. Gossip tears people down. If you are in a situation where people start gossiping, you don't have to chime in. Either tell them to stop, change the subject, or just walk away. Another thing that tears down friendships and relationships is bullying. It is never okay to make fun of anyone or to tear him or her down verbally or physically. A bully is someone who intentionally harms someone physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. (Often times schools will have "No Bullying" programs, check to see if the local schools do and what assistance they offer.) Another sign of an unhealthy relationship is any violation of chastity. In every circumstance and situation of life we are all called to live out chastity. Chastity is living out our lives in purity. We must live our lives purely in what we say, what we watch, and how we act – especially towards those of the opposite sex (CCC 2347). It is okay at your age to have friends of the opposite sex, but there is no need to rush into dating. This is a time to enjoy your friendships without the pressures of dating.

Relationships with Adults

Along with having healthy and holy relationships with friends it is also important that you have good relationships with the adults in your life. At every stage in our lives we all need someone older than us to mentor us and guide us towards holiness. This is the role that the adults in your life should take, to be guides for you, to love you, and to lead you towards maturity and holiness in a positive way. Unfortunately there are circumstances in life where adults act in inappropriate ways and break boundaries with youth.

God has planted inside our 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, which can become inappropriate. We can use our consciences and boundaries to help prevent others and ourselves from getting into bad situations where we are used or hurt. If an adult ever makes you feel uncomfortable by being too close to you, by touching you in an inappropriate way, by asking you inappropriate questions, or by spending unnecessary one-on-one time with you, these are all signs of unhealthy boundaries with adults. If an adult, peer, or a person whom you trust crosses your boundaries, there are certain steps you must take to make sure it doesn't happen again and to get the help that you need.

Steps Towards Help

If you ever find yourself in a situation where you, or someone you know, is being gossiped about, bullied, or treated in an inappropriate way by their friends or an adult here are some steps to take to get help.

- **Tell An Adult:** In every circumstance, an adult you trust must be notified of what is going on so that they can help you or your friend get out of harmful situations.
- **Don't Hide It:** If you or someone you know is struggling with any issues in their friendships or relationships with adults you cannot keep it a secret.
- **When in Doubt Walk Away:** If there is ever a time where you feel uncomfortable with the way someone is acting towards you, whether it is physically or even in asking personal questions, say no, get away quickly, and tell an adult you trust.

Out of infinite love God created each and every one of us to be loved and to love others. The greatest commandment that God gives us is to love Him and love our neighbors (Mark 12:30-31). Every single human being was created in the image and likeness of God and therefore deserves to be respected and loved (Genesis 1:27). God created you to be in community, to have friends, peers, and adults in your life that help you to grow and become holy people. God wants you to be happy and has an incredible plan for your life! He has

given you everything you need to live your life to the full through Jesus Christ (John 10:10). He wants you to have this life to the full, but it is up to you to pursue it. A huge part of finding this wonderful happy life in Christ comes in always knowing that you have intrinsic dignity and worth. No one has the right to take that away from you. You are a child of God and you are called to live a healthy, happy, and holy life.

BREAK

SMALL GROUP SCENARIO DISCUSSION

(20 min)

Break the teens back into small groups and give them the following scenarios to go through. Have them discuss what they would do. (These scenarios are just suggestions. Check with the Safe Environment material provided by your diocese; there may be more scenarios to choose from or ones that you have to discuss.)

Ben and Melisa have been good friends for a few years. Ben has started texting Melisa really inappropriate things and asking her really personal questions that make her feel uncomfortable. She is worried that if she says anything, Ben will get mad. She doesn't want to lose the friendship, but she also is starting to feel weird about spending time with him alone because of what he has been saying to her. What should Melisa do?

Roy has just joined the school soccer team and loves playing, but he has been noticing that the coach has started paying a lot of attention to him. He gives him special privileges at practice and has offered to spend extra time teaching him one-on-one. At first Roy was really excited because he wanted to improve his game, but when he goes to practice the coach continually pats him on the back, gives him shoulder squeezes, and hugs. Roy starts to feel really weird about it, but can't figure out why. Should he spend one-on-one time with his coach? What should Roy do about this situation?

Maria and Laticia just met in math class, and Laticia was so excited to finally be friends with

Maria who was one of the popular girls. Recently, Laticia has noticed that Maria and her friends have been giggling a lot when she is around. She doesn't think anything of it until one day one of Maria's friends asks Laticia if it was true that she kissed Matt after the basketball game. Laticia had never even talked to Matt and didn't understand why people would think that. She decides not to do anything about it and continues to hang out with Maria, but things start getting worse and more rumors about her are being spread. She doesn't want to think that her new friend Maria would be the one starting the rumors, but most of the signs are pointing to that and the rumors are getting worse. What should Laticia do?

Brian was always the super talkative guy in all of John's classes; he was always happy and really fun to be around. But John has noticed that lately Brian has been missing a lot of school, hasn't been as talkative as he used to be, and has started wearing long sleeves and pants all the time, even when it is hot outside. One day John saw a ton of bruises on Brian's arms and legs when they were changing in gym class. When John asked Brian about it, Brian got really defensive and just said he has been wrestling and doing more sporty stuff and got bruised up and quickly walked away. John isn't too sure that is the truth. After a week or so Brian just seems to be more and more depressed, and John has noticed more bruises. What should John do?

Clare just turned 14 and finally got a Facebook! She started making her profile and putting up pictures. What type of information should she put on her profile? What type of picture should she put up? There have been a lot of people Clare doesn't know sending her friend requests, what should she do?

SEND

WRAP-UP

(10 min)

End the night in a time of prayer. Bring the middle school youth back into a large group. Review the main points of what they should do if they ever feel unclear about a situation or something is happening that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Encourage them to be fearless in standing up for what is right and telling a trusted adult if there is ever a question about something happening to them or a friend! Make it clear again that they have dignity and deserve respect. Remind them that if an adult acts wrongly or improperly towards them, it is not their fault and they should immediately seek help.

Pass out the prayer cards with the prayer to St. Dominic Savio and pray it together as a group. The prayer card can be found on page 44.

Have a few trusted adults, the counselors, and the priest stick around after the Edge Night (if possible) in case there are any youth who need to talk.

SUMMARY CHALLENGE

Challenge your middle school youth to remember for next week what you talked about during this night. If possible, put up these three summary points online or print them out and send them home with the youth. Next week have a prize for any youth that can remember all three of the main points.

- God created us with intrinsic dignity and wants us to be happy and to have good friends.
- Gossip, bullying, and violations of boundaries are not a part of good friendships or relationships.
- If you or a friend are ever in an abusive or uncomfortable situation with an adult, peer, or friend, tell a trusted adult and get help!

TO THE PARENTS OF

This night is about promoting a safe environment and helping ensure that middle school youth are not putting themselves or others in a situation where they can hurt someone or be hurt. The purpose of this night is to help the youth become aware of the dignity we all have and how we are called to protect that dignity in our relationships. We encourage you to discuss the content of this night with your middle school youth.

We talked a lot with your youth about telling adults they trust when there is a bad situation. Sit

down with your youth and talk about the trusted adults in their life and make a list of adults in their life that they can go to when they need help.

Some questions to discuss:

- What does Scripture say about the ways that we reflect God’s dignity?
- How are we called to treat others with respect and love as Christ did?
- What would you do if you heard about a boundary being crossed and possible abuse of a friend?
- Use the scenarios and discuss what the youth would do in those situations. (Provide the parents a copy of the scenarios discussed.)

ADAPTATION IDEAS

- If you have parents attending the Edge Night as part of your diocesan requirements, consider having a longer presentation for them after the youth break into small groups. Ask your local Safe Environment Coordinator to talk about how parents can be aware of behaviors that indicate their youth 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.

Notes

EDGE NIGHT CHECKLIST

CORE PLANNING TEAM:

DATE OF EDGE NIGHT:

ONE MONTH PRIOR TO THE NIGHT:

- Give copies of the Edge Night to each of the members of the planning team. Each person should read the Scripture, Catechism, and *YOUCAT* references as well as review the planning guide before the brainstorming meeting.
- Have the planning team meet for a brainstorming meeting (this should last no longer than 1 hour). The team prays and discusses where the youth are in their faith journey in relation to this topic. Using this planning guide as a starting point, the team adapts the Edge Night to meet the needs of the youth and the parish.
- Assign the person responsible for the following:
 Environment _____
 Before the Night (when needed) _____
 Audio/Visual Needs _____
 Opening Prayer _____
 Scripture Proclamation _____
 Proclaim (discuss with YM) _____
 Summary Challenge _____

TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO EDGE NIGHT:

- Turn in your notes for the Edge Night to the youth minister. Allow the youth minister to give feedback and make necessary changes.
- Create a list of needed supplies and materials. Assign a person to be responsible for collecting and/or purchasing the items needed.
- Discuss with the youth minister who will be giving the Proclaim/witness for the Edge Night. Be sure that this person is given the script and/or teaching. Inform them of any practices, time limits, and/or deadlines.

WEEK OF THE EDGE NIGHT:

- Person giving Proclaim checks in with youth minister.
- Check that all supplies have been obtained/purchased.
- Create/collect items for environment. Have volunteers ready to help if needed.
- Email Core Team an overview of the Edge Night.

DAY OF THE EDGE NIGHT:

- Set up the environment. Make sure the room is clean and presentable.
- If needed, set up audio/visual equipment. Test the video clips to make sure both picture and sound work.
- Pray! Pray for the youth attending the Edge Night. Pray for God's will to be done through the night. Pray over those involved.

EDGE NIGHT EVALUATION

INSTRUCTIONS:

Use the following questions to discuss and evaluate your Edge Night.

1. On a scale of 1-10, how well did this Edge Night accomplish the goal we set? Explain.

2. What was the strongest aspect of this Edge Night?

3. What kind of follow-up do we need to do after this Edge Night?

4. What can we improve for future Edge Nights? How can we accomplish this?

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