

Fully Alive Grade 7

Grade 7, Theme One

Dear Family,

We are ready to begin the first theme of *Fully Alive*, our Family Life program. Because the partnership of home, church, and school is so important, this letter is written to let you know what we talk about in class and to offer some ideas for your involvement. For more information, please go to www.acbo.on.ca.

About Theme One

The first theme of *Fully Alive*, called “Created and Loved by God,” is like the foundation of a house. Everything else depends on it. In this theme we explore the Christian belief that we are made in God’s image and that God knows and loves each one of us. We are a very special creation. Because of this, we respect and value ourselves and others.

In Theme One we will:

- explore what it means to be a person who is made in God’s image.
- examine self-concept, personality traits, and human emotions.
- learn more about the influence of heredity and environment on individuals.
- explore some of the strengths and limitations that are part of each person and discuss the importance of self-honesty and self-discipline.

Working together at school and at home

- We will be exploring the question — Who am I? — and the meaning of self-concept, what we know about ourselves. You might ask your child about this discussion. As children enter adolescence, the question of identity, who they are and who they will be in the future, becomes very important to them.
- You might ask about three dimensions of personality that were discussed in class: 1) introvert/extravert; 2) emotionally reactive/calm; 3) conscientious/impulsive. What did your child think about these dimensions, and how do they apply to him or her?
- Learning how to handle emotions is a life-long task. Because young adolescents tend to be very self-aware, they often have difficulty dealing with their feelings, a situation that was discussed in class. You may have noticed this emotional unevenness at home. Young adolescence is a life stage that demands a lot of patience from families.
- In class we will examine the influence of heredity, and the students learned about a small number of traits that are the result of just two genes, one from each

parent. Ask your child about these traits, and how they apply to your family.

- We will also examine the influence of the environment, and especially three aspects of the social environment (family, friends, media). Many parents worry about the influence of media, and with good reason. It does take a lot of effort to monitor and restrict what young people are watching, listening to, and doing online, but it is worth it. It is normal for young adolescents to believe that they can monitor themselves, but, in fact, they lack the life experience and maturity to do this without guidance from their families.

Theme One Topics

For we are what God has made us . . .

Ephesians 2:10

In Grade 7, this theme is developed through five topics. The theme begins with a question: Who am I? This question is explored throughout Theme one beginning with a discussion of the meaning self-concept in Topic 1. In the next three topics, the students examine the concept of personality, human emotions, and the influence of heredity and environment. In the final topic, they reflect on the meaning of identity from the perspective of being persons who are created in the image of God. During this theme, four imaginary students are introduced who appear throughout the *Fully Alive* program during Grade 7.

Theme One Virtue

The virtue of patience is featured in the first topic of Theme One. The students are encouraged to understand this virtue as a commitment to the future — to take the necessary time to develop and mature fully, learn to control impulsive actions, and recognize the value of persistence and endurance during this stage of life. This reflection on the virtue of patience is from the student text.

The Virtue of Patience

“... the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” Galations 5:22-23

A *virtue* is a special kind of habit, the habit of doing good. It takes effort and practice to become a virtuous person — learning what is good, making decisions to do what is good, and developing the will power to carry out those decisions.

For Christians, virtues are rooted in our faith in God and our need for grace to become a virtuous person.

Patience is a virtue, one of these special habits. Patient people are able to wait without complaining, deal with difficulties without becoming upset, and to be in charge of their emotions and impulses. The virtue of patience helps you look beyond the present, for example:

- You refrain from pointing out an annoying mannerism of a friend, because you value the friendship.
- You avoid making a quick decision when you are unsure of the future consequences.
- Your mark on a test that you expected to ace was not great. You're disappointed, but you realize you'll have to work harder.

Without patience, you might have harmed your relationship with your friend, made a decision that had a serious negative consequence, or made up your mind that you weren't good at that subject and never would be.

Some young people are anxious to grow up quickly, now, not later. This is where the virtue of patience is needed. Early adolescence is a time for setting goals and persevering to meet them. It is a time for friendship and new interests. It is a time for steady work on the construction project that is you. Patience is a commitment to the future.

Topic 1 — Who am I?

Just say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do.

Epictetus

Summary

This topic introduces two of the four imaginary Grade 7 children. They present portraits of themselves, followed by some descriptions of them from several people who know them well. These descriptions lead to a class discussion of self-concept and self-esteem, and the importance of knowing oneself as part of the process of becoming a mature person.

Main Ideas

- Self-concept is what we think and know about ourselves. No one is born with a self-concept. It is created during a person's life.
- Self-esteem is what we feel about ourselves and how we evaluate ourselves.
- Developing a clear and realistic self-concept is a long project requiring reflection on our life experiences, learning from them, and growth in our understanding of ourselves.

Family Participation

- The four imaginary children who are introduced in Theme One are an important part of the Grade 7 *Fully Alive* program. Here is some background information about them and their families:

Curtis Preston — Curtis lives with his parents, an older brother Len (17), and a younger sister Denise (10). His father is a professional musician and his mother is a high-school teacher. Curtis is generally easy-going, but somewhat lazy, and spends a great deal of time playing electronic games, something that concerns his father. Curtis has a natural talent for music but doesn't practise regularly, which frustrates and disappoints his parents.

Naomi Maihui Nolan — Naomi was born in China and adopted by her Canadian parents when she was a year old. She has three older brothers, Steve (19), Jake (17), and Dave (15), and is especially close to Steve. She is generally even-tempered, reserved with people she doesn't know well, and has become somewhat moody in the last year. Naomi is tall and well developed for her age and is somewhat self-conscious about her weight.

Jim Bernard — Jim lives with his mother during the week, and spends most weekends with his father. His parents divorced when he was 8 years old. His mother remarried and now has a one-year-old daughter with her new husband. Jim's father also married again, and his new wife has two children from a previous marriage. Jim is a quiet person and finds his living arrangements stressful. He has difficulty talking about personal things. His friendship with Curtis is an important relationship in his life.

Corry Angelo — Corry lives with her father, older brother Frank (15), and younger sister Gemma (10). Her mother died 5 years ago, and it has been a difficult time for the family. Corry is small for her age and inclined to be shy. Her father is very protective of Corry and her sister and allows them very little freedom outside the house. Corry is a good student, works hard, and has more responsibilities at home than most students in her class.

- At the end of Theme One, you will find the self-descriptions of Curtis Preston and Naomi Nolan, comments by a few people who know them well, and Curtis's and Naomi's cinquains (five-line poem) about their likes and dislikes. The students will be creating their own cinquains about their likes and dislikes. You might ask your child about the poems she or he wrote.
- **Self-esteem** — In class, the students discussed the meaning of self-esteem, and were encouraged to understand that it does not mean to have an inflated opinion of oneself or to look down on others. Self-esteem is expressed in confidence, a positive attitude toward challenges, and the ability to handle the ups and downs of growing up with a sense of balance.

All children need to know that they are valued, not for their talents and achievements, but for who they are. This can be a difficult message to convey, because it is our responsibility as parents to encourage our children to develop their gifts and do their best in all of the activities. But it is also our responsibility to avoid putting undue pressure on our children and to convey the message that we love and believe in them in times of success and in times of failure.

- **Patience** — The virtue of patience, which the students discussed, is also important for parents. When children begin to leave their childhood behind and move into adolescence, their behaviour and attitudes can be contradictory. On the one hand, they are often sensitive, insecure, and self-conscious. On the other hand, they can be hard on others (friends and family members), quick to point out faults and flaws, and ready to make a

sharp remark when the situation involves someone other than themselves. Many a parent has wondered how they can be so hard on others, and so sensitive at the same time. Inconsistent behaviour is often part of the early years of adolescence, and it takes patience from parents to avoid overreacting to what is a normal part of the long process of growing up.

- At the end of Theme One, you will find a poem, “Alone” that captures a sense of the growing awareness young adolescents have of their identity as persons. You might ask your child about this poem.

Topic 2 — Personality

I want, by understanding myself, to understand others.

I want to be all that I am capable of being.

Katherine Mansfield

Summary

This topic introduces the concept of personality, and describes some dimensions of personality that researchers have identified, for example, the tendency to be outgoing or to be quiet and reflective. The students learn that personality dimensions are not fixed traits, but best described as a tendency toward one end of a dimension or the other.

Main Ideas

- Each person has a unique style of being a person; this style is called personality. Personality is not something we have, but something we are.
- There are many theories about personality. One type of theory describes dimensions of personality. Three of these dimensions are extroversion/introversion; emotionally reactive/calm; and conscientious/impulsive.
- As people grow and develop, their personalities do too.

Family Participation

- In class the students completed a short “Personality Quiz” related to being extroverted or introverted. (They did not have to share their answers, but could if they wanted to.) You might ask about this quiz. What kinds of questions were asked? Was your child surprised by the results?
- **Personality** — At this age, young people often think of personality as if it were the same thing as popularity. Since outgoing children tend to be more popular than those who

are quiet and reserved, they are usually the ones who are described as having “great personalities.” If your child is reserved and inclined to be introverted, it’s good to remind him or her (and yourself) that this situation does change as people reach their late teens and enter early adulthood. The positive qualities associated with being introverted become more appreciated as people mature.

- **Quiet children** — Sometimes parents assume that children who are inclined to be quiet and private are unhappy or worried, but this is not necessarily the case. What is true, however, is that parents may not be as quick to notice when a quiet child is upset as they would with an outgoing child. It takes more careful monitoring and attention to small signs (for example, spending more time alone, difficulty falling asleep) in order to notice that something may be going wrong in the quiet child’s life.

- **Easily upset children** — Some children have a tendency to get upset easily by what seem like small matters. As they grow up, it’s important for parents to help them learn how to handle their feelings without intervening immediately. It’s often best to talk about an incident or situation that upset them after it is over, and discuss some ways that might help them to learn to calm themselves and to recognize when they are overreacting.

- **Strengths and Weaknesses** — Most personality traits have within them both a strength and weakness. People who are impulsive and spontaneous, for example, often have the ability to adapt easily and enjoy whatever is going on without worries. But impulsiveness can also lead to rash decisions that may have negative consequences. People who are inclined to be stubborn often have the ability to persevere in the face of difficulties, which can be a very positive quality. But stubbornness can also lead to self-defeating behaviour — unwillingness to admit when they’re wrong or to change a poor decision. Our role as parents is to help children to develop awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, to let them know that we have faith in them, and to appreciate their “great” personalities.

Topic 3 — Emotions

*As none can see the wind but in its effects on the trees, neither can we see
the emotions but in their effects on the face and body.*

Nathaniel Le Tonnerre

Summary

This topic helps the students understand the role of emotions in human life. They discuss the origin of emotions (in the brain), and learn more about strong emotions, such as fear and anger. They also explore the impact of adolescence on emotions, an impact that often leads to much greater awareness of feelings and self-consciousness.

Main Ideas

- Emotions are the feelings we experience in response to people and events in our lives.
- Emotions are instinctive reactions, not ones we choose. We can control how we respond to our emotions and how we express them.
- We try to express our emotions in a way that is respectful of ourselves and of others.

Family Participation

- At the end of this theme you will find the story about Curtis and his father and their argument about electronic games. You might ask your child about this story.
- **Emotions and adolescence** — Emotional development during adolescence is an uneven process. Many young people experience moods that change quite rapidly. This is confusing and upsetting for them since there's no apparent reason for the way they feel. The same hormones that cause the changes of puberty play a role in the emotional ups and downs of adolescence.

Because young people are often much more aware of their emotions than they were as children, they tend to be self-conscious and are easily upset or embarrassed by others. From an adult's perspective, their emotional reactions sometimes seem to be out of proportion to the situation. Tact and sensitivity to their feelings is important, but beyond this there is not a great deal that parents can do. Sometimes, depending on the child, humour can be helpful. It's also important for parents to keep a sense of perspective and to avoid getting too involved in their young adolescents' changing feelings.

- **Fear and Anger** — An important idea in this topic is that emotions themselves are instinctual reactions to what is going on in our lives, but how we respond to our emotions and express them is under our control. In class, the students discussed two emotions that are difficult to handle: fear and anger. They are basic emotions that are part of our human drive to protect ourselves from danger. What makes them difficult to handle is that they

are often experienced when there is no real danger, but the body reacts as if there were. For example, some people get terrified if they have to stand up in front of others and give a speech. Some people find it difficult to calm down after an argument and want to express their angry feelings in a physical way.

• **Emotional awareness** — An important task for young people during adolescence is to develop awareness, not just of their own emotions, but also those of others; and to develop self-control over how and when to express their emotions. Parents can help them achieve these goals by looking for opportunities to talk about difficult situations (an argument with a friend, a significant disappointment), and listen to what they have to say. Rather than offering them direct advice, it is often helpful to ask questions about what happened, how they responded, what they may wish they had done, or how they might handle a similar situation in the future.

Topic 4 — Heredity and Environment

Know that although in the eternal scheme of things you are small, you are also unique and irreplaceable, as are all your fellow humans everywhere in the world.

Margaret Laurence

Summary

In the previous topics, the students have been learning about several characteristics of persons. In this topic they explore some of the influences that shape these characteristics. They examine the role of the genetic information that is passed on from parents to children and that of the physical and social environments in which people live.

Main Ideas

- The genes we inherit and the physical and social environment in which we live come together and result in unique persons.
- Some of our genetic traits are fixed and others are best described as tendencies and possibilities.
- The physical and social environment in which we live influences us in many ways: self-concept, values, interests, social skills, behaviours, and beliefs.

Family Participation

- In Grades 7 and 8 a new feature, “Ask Sophia,” was introduced in the *Fully Alive* student books. This feature is similar to an advice column like Dear Abby, and features responses to questions that are often asked by young people. In this topic, there is an “Ask Sophia” feature with a question about the influence of media violence on young people. You will find it at the end of this theme.

- **Heredity** — In class the students discussed inherited characteristics like eye colour, height, and body build. They also learned that personality traits and talents are not inherited in the same way as fixed characteristics like blue eyes or curly hair. What is inherited is a tendency to be shy or to be talented at athletics, for example. They may enjoy talking about this subject at home and asking questions about extended family members — grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts and uncles. One of the ways in which families affirm their identity is through family stories about relatives — their gifts, their quirks, their appearance, and their personality traits.

Very few physical traits are the result of only two genes, one from each parent. Cleft chin, dimples, and type of ear lobes are examples. Another example, which was discussed in class, is the position of the thumb when people clasp their hands together. If the left thumb is on top, the person inherited at least one dominant gene from a parent. If the right thumb is on top, the person inherited two recessive genes, one from each parent. Your child may enjoy surveying the members of your family to find how they clasp their hands.

- **Environment (family)** — The influence of the family on children’s development is crucial. Children need encouragement to try a variety of activities and to explore a wide range of interests. At this stage in their development, as young people become more aware of differences in natural talent, some of them become hesitant about trying anything they aren’t “good at.” It’s important for them to know that enjoyment of activities like music, art, dance, and sports doesn’t depend on being a star.

- **Environment (friends)** — The influence of friends becomes very strong during early adolescence. Friends introduce children to new interests, and can have an effect on their attitudes, values, and behaviour. It’s important for parents to be aware of this influence, and to try to monitor its effect on their children. In general, the influence of friends is strongest in areas like styles in clothing and music, and is less powerful on basic values

or long-range goals. For this reason, strong family values, clear expectations, and consistent rules go a long way in keeping young people safe from harmful influences.

• **Environment (media)** —Media, which refers to various methods of communication that reaches a wide audience, for example, television, radio, newspapers, movies, books, the internet, cell phones, and video games, is another aspect of the social environment that the students discussed. In particular, they examined the influence media can have on people's values, and the need to become a thoughtful consumer of media.

It can seem like an overwhelming task to monitor what young adolescents are looking at online, watching on television, what movies are shown at sleep-over parties, and the type of music that is popular within the peer group. But these forms of entertainment do have an impact and children need to be aware of their parents concerns. As with many other issues, refusing to allow children to watch movies or television shows with violent or sexually explicit content, and monitoring what children are exploring on the internet, takes conviction and determination.

• **Ups and Downs of Life** — Children's experience in their environment — at home, with their friends, at school — is a mixture of good and bad, of happiness and sadness, and of triumphs and disappointments. It's easy to rejoice with our children as they celebrate an achievement or recount the high points of an outing with friends.

What is more difficult for parents is to deal with their children's negative experiences — failing a test, the loss of a friend, or unfair treatment at school. We can listen sympathetically, and offer advice, and in certain circumstances, we may decide to intervene. But on many occasions we have to allow them to find their own way of coping with these difficult experiences. At times, they may not confide in us at all, but choose a friend or a teacher instead. When this happens, it's important not to interpret it as a personal rejection or as an indication of lack of trust. Children need other mentors in their lives as well as parents.

Topic 5 — To Be a Person

The first mark of a Christian is a deep reverence for persons as destined for eternity with

God

Michael Ramsey

Summary

This final topic of Theme One continues to focus on the question of identity, but this time from the perspective of faith. The message of this topic is that the full meaning of each person can never be completely grasped. Each person is a unique reflection of God, has extraordinary abilities, and strengths, weaknesses, and faults. Each person is always in need of forgiveness, and each is made in the image of God and is worthy of the deepest respect.

Main Ideas

- We are physical/spiritual persons in are created in the image of God and are loved by God. Our ability to know and to love, our awareness of good and evil, and our freedom are truly Godlike.
- All persons have limitations, experience failures, and at times ignore their conscience and turn away from God. Through Jesus, we can always find the way back to God and discover the peace of forgiveness.
- As persons begin to mature and have greater independence, the habits of self-honesty and self-discipline become more important. They are preparing themselves to be the persons God created them to be.

Family Participation

- **To be a person** — A continuing idea in *Fully Alive* is the dignity and responsibility of being persons created in the image of God. In this last topic of Theme One, the students examine the amazing gift of being made in God's image and the limitations and failures that are also part of each person.
- **The gift of parents** — The greatest gift parents can give to their children is the sure knowledge that they are loved and appreciated, with all of their strengths, weaknesses, potential, and limitations, not only by their parents, but, most of all, by God. This sure knowledge of being loved for who they are gives developing children the confidence to weather with the ups and downs of living and to handle disappointment or failure without giving up.

Another gift parents can offer to their children is the model of their faith and hope in God, which is expressed in participation of the Eucharist and in the sacrament of Reconciliation, sometimes called Penance or Confession. A Catholic school can

contribute to the spiritual growth of children, but cannot replace the influence of the family. In class, the students discussed the limitations and failures of all people, and the need for forgiveness. Just as forgiveness within the family restores relationships, so the Sacrament of Reconciliation restores our relationship with God.

• **For everything there is a season** — At the end of this topic, the student read together a passage from Ecclesiastes (“For everything there is a season”). You will find this scripture passage in the section, *Fully Alive Grade 7 Prayers*. This passage is a reminder that life on earth is made up of happiness and pain, and we must continue to have faith and hope in God through all of our life experiences.

Theme One Resources from the Student Text

Topic 1: These are the descriptions Curtis and Naomi gave of themselves, the comments about them by a few people who know them well, and their poems about what they like and don’t like. The poem, “Alone,” by Jean Little, can also be found here.

Curtis Preston

“Who am I? I hate that question. But if I have to answer it, I guess I’ll say I’m me, Curtis. I have an older brother who is sometimes a jerk, but mostly a good guy, and then there’s the pest, my younger sister. I mostly get along with my parents, but sometimes my dad and I butt heads. I don’t like that, especially because we used to have a lot of fun together, but it just seems to happen.

I play the trumpet, which I can take or leave, and I like sports, especially soccer and hockey. I do okay at school, but it’s not really very interesting. I really, really like gaming. That’s the most fun of anything I do. My friends like it, too. My best friend is Jim. He’s not into gaming as much as I am, but we’re pretty comfortable together. We just fit.

I don’t think too much about the future. I don’t know what I want to do and when I think about pollution or war, or some of the things I hear about, it’s all scary. Why do people let that stuff happen?

Curtis’s Music Teacher: Ms Jones

“Curtis. What can I say about him? He’s got such a gift for music. A natural. If only he’d practise! He loved it when he started last year, but now he’s just coasting. It drives me crazy when I hear the beautiful sounds he can get out of that trumpet even without practising. I’m trying to be patient and wait until he sees his talent. I just hope he doesn’t quit before then.”

Curtis's Friend: Jim Bernard

“Curtis is a great guy and my best friend. I've known him all my life. We used to play ball hockey every day after school. Things aren't so good for me right now, so I love hanging out with Curtis. It's nice not to have to talk. I can just be myself.”

Curtis's Father

“Curtis has changed a lot in the last year. Sometimes I feel as though I don't even know him anymore. He's still got my temper, which is not a good thing, but he's a lot quieter and doesn't let his mom or me get close to him the way he used to. He always wanted to be a musician, like me, but now he almost never plays. It makes me sad, but he's got to figure out his own life. I worry, even though I have a lot of faith in him. But I miss the old Curtis.”

* * *

Naomi Nolan

Who am I? Well, I'm a girl and I'm Chinese. That's pretty obvious. I was born in China near the city of Chendu in Sichuan province. I was about a year old when I was adopted by the Nolans and came to Canada.

I have three older brothers. Steve is 19, and he's great, Jake is 17, and he's okay, and Dave is 15, and he's a big pain. He doesn't get along with anyone in the family right now. My parents are, well, they're my parents. My dad and I both like to cook, especially complicated recipes. My mom and I do stuff together like biking and watching scary movies.

School's okay. I'm an in-between student — not a brain, but not a total loser. I like to read, and I'm good at art, but my spelling is really bad. I'm sort of in between in a lot of ways. I play soccer and basketball — not a star, but not totally hopeless. I have friends — not really popular, but not a total reject. My best friend is Corry. She's quiet compared to me, but I can always make her laugh.

Naomi's Mother

“Naomi's dad and I spent time in China just after we were married, and we always wanted to go back. We finally did, and it was to adopt Naomi. When we saw her for the first time, we fell in love with her. With people she knows well she's very talkative, but she doesn't warm up quickly. It takes time for her to be comfortable. Lately, I see a change in her. She's less open and gets offended more easily.”

Naomi's Brother Steve

“I was 7 when mom and dad came back from China with Naomi. My dad's sister was looking after us, and she helped us make a huge “Welcome home, Naomi” sign. It was a big deal. I've always felt like it's my job to protect her. Maybe it's

because I'm the oldest. I try go easy on her these days because I know she's feeling touchy. Sometimes she talks to me when she's worried about something."

Naomi's Friend: Corry Angelo

"I've been friends with Naomi since fourth grade. That's when I came to St. Anne's school. My mom had died the year before, and everything was so hard. I met Naomi the first day of school, and she was really kind to me. We became good friends, and we still are."

* * *

Curtis's Poems

I really like . . .

Games
Fast, exciting.
Come on, yes!
Master of the world,
Me.

I can't stand . . .

Work
Slow, boring,
Over and over.
When will it stop?
Never.

* * *

Naomi's Poems

I really like . . .

Pasta
Lots, please.
Spaghettini is best
With plenty of sauce.
Slurp!

I can't stand . . .

Teasing
Hurting words
That aren't funny.
You really need to
Stop.

* * *

Alone

I am alone ... and lonely.

My own sadness makes everything around me
more beautiful.

The dusk falls softly,
As simply as a page turning or a bird lighting on the ground.
The sky grows dull rose near the rooftops
And, high above me, a sea-blue-green.
I am caught up in it all – and small.
I search for words. I ache with words I cannot find.

Inside, the phone rings.
“Where’s Kate?” Dad asks.

I am here – but I say nothing.
He calls – but I do not answer.

“She’s not in yet,” he says to someone.
“I’ll tell her you phoned.”

I could go in.

Soon in will be suppertime anyway,
Time for eating and talking and being part of things,
Belonging again to the horrible, boring, nice, funny,
noisy, busy, angry, loving world of people.

I’ll go in when I have to.
In half an hour, I’ll even like it.

Now...
Now I’ll stay out here, hugging my separateness,
my oneness.

I am alone. I am lonely.
I am growing into me.

Jean Little

* * *

Topic 3: This is the story about Curtis and his father and their argument.

Curtis is finding it difficult to handle his emotions, and so is his dad. Curtis's obsession with playing electronic games has caused a lot of tension with his parents, especially his dad. One day, they had a terrible argument.

Dad: "Curtis. Shut that game down. You need to get to bed. I thought we had a rule about that."

Curtis: "I'm so close to the next level. I have to keep going."

Dad: "No, you don't. You want to, but you don't have to. And I say you need to get to bed."

Curtis: "Why do you always complain about my games?"

Dad: "Because they're taking over your life. Nothing else matters. Not school, not music, not your family. It's too much. It needs to stop — no more games."

Curtis: "Don't even think about it. It's my life."

Dad: "Don't raise your voice to me. It's not your life yet. You still live here and are a member of this family. And the rules are the rules."

The next morning, when Curtis went down for breakfast, he found an envelope with his name on it sitting at his place.

Dear Curtis,

I want to apologize for last night. I'm an adult and should have not let things get so hot. How can I ask you to be calm and respectful if I'm not?

I don't want to run your life, Curtis. Just the opposite. I want you to run your life. I want you to grow up to be the wonderful man I know you will be.

I know the games are fun and exciting, but I worry because they take you away from so many other important things in your life. I know it didn't look like it last night, but I love you, and that's why I worry. Please, don't ever forget that.

Here's what I told myself this morning, which might be something for both of us to remember – hang in there. With a sense of humour and a little patience we'll both survive.

See you after school. It's Friday. Maybe we can catch a movie. Love, Dad

Topic 4: This is Sophia's response to a question about the influence of media.

Ask Sophia

My mother thinks TV is a bad influence. She disapproves of just about everything I want to watch. Too much violence! Too much bad language! If I'm watching a show she doesn't like, she keeps shouting, "You're going to rot your brain!" It sort of ruins the fun. She also has a thing about advertising. If I talk about something I want, she says, "I suppose you saw it on TV." I keep telling her that TV is just entertainment, and it doesn't affect me. *Frank*

Dear Frank,

Obviously, your mother isn't a big fan of TV. Why don't you two sit down and figure out a solution. She's not preventing you from watching certain programs, just letting you know what she thinks. Perhaps you could agree on list of programs that she can live with (without negative comments), and a list of those she does not want you to watch.

Does what's on TV influence people? Well, there is absolutely no doubt that television advertising does. Companies wouldn't spend billions of dollars every year if it didn't. The negative part of the influence is that you and everyone else are being encouraged to want more and more stuff, whether you need it or not.

Are violent programs a bad influence? Seeing violence doesn't necessarily make you violent, but it does dull your sense of how horrible violence is in real life. It can also lead you to think that physical force is an acceptable way of solving problems.

As for bad language, the more you hear it, the more likely you are to use it, especially if you're angry or upset. Not a good habit.

Sophia

