
Note to the Teacher

Along with pornography, “sexting” is another way people are exploited sexually. Sending or viewing pictures of a sexual nature is a form of pornography and is very harmful in our personal, social, and spiritual development. Pictures or words that describe sexual acts that are sent in texts or instant chats can have devastating effects on everyone involved. We must teach our young people what they can do to prevent sexual exploitation—respecting the dignity of the body and treating themselves and others with care and respect; understanding what it means to objectify another person; not *consenting* to send sexually explicit photos of themselves; seeking help from a parent or trusted adult if they feel pressured to send/view sexually explicit photos; seeking the support of a parent or trusted adult if they think someone else may need help; and speaking out against exploitation. (See also the supplemental material for Theme One, Topic 4 for further information about “sexting,” and the supplemental material for Theme Two, Topic 1 for further information about consent).

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expectation D1.1

Topic 4 begins by exploring the area of sexual attraction and sexual feelings in the context of Christian values. The approach is one that encourages the students to understand that these are wonderful dimensions of sexuality but require self-discipline and patience if they are to reach the goal of becoming fully mature men and women.

As part of the discussion of sexual attraction, there is a feature on homosexuality that explores some of the questions young adolescents may have about their sexual orientation. The purpose of this feature is not to present the moral issues related to homosexual relationships, which is done in Grade 8, but to respond to concerns some students have. The feature also provides a brief discussion of homophobia and the harmful nature of teasing directed at a person’s sexuality. For more information please consult “Church Teaching on Sexual Morality” in Appendix D, p. 291.

▷ Two other sensitive matters are briefly touched on in this topic: masturbation and pornography. Both are presented as challenges in learning how to handle sexual feelings, and both are sinful if they are freely chosen. The approach in this topic, however, recognizes that these are largely related to maturational difficulties at this age. The students are encouraged to understand that both masturbation and pornography lead them into self-centredness and immaturity. In their *Guidelines for Family Life Education*, the Ontario Bishops write:

It is a special duty of Christian educators to lead students gradually from self-preoccupation, self-pity, and immature self-image, which frequently accompany habitual masturbation, to an integrated sexuality seen as a call to reach outward in love. There is a development that should take place in our sexual growth.

You may want to remind the students that since the day they were born, their development has been a process of moving out of themselves and becoming more aware of others. Learning to handle sexual feelings is part of that process.

The topic ends with a letter from a husband to his wife on the occasion of a wedding anniversary. The message of the letter represents the thoughts of a mature man who has learned the value of a lasting commitment to a woman, a marriage, and a family.

Important Words

- *infatuation, homosexuality, heterosexuality, orientation, homophobia, drive, masturbation, pornography*