

## **Growing in Love Update: Grade 3**

### **Chapter 1: Together in Love**

**Theme:** Our bodies are good and special.

**Essential:** When talking about body parts, be sure to include the names of private parts. The purpose of including these parts is both to normalize the use of these words, and to help the children recognize that these parts are as special as all other body parts and can be talked about respectfully. Some children may giggle and this is perfectly normal. Let children know that it is okay to giggle because we don't use these words often; however, they are important parts of our body that can and should be talked about respectfully. Handling discussions of body parts and other aspects of human sexuality with frankness, respect, and sensitivity fosters the same respect and open communication in children.

**Vocabulary:** Penis                  Vagina/Vulva                  Breasts                  Buttocks

#### **Lesson:**

We strongly recommend using Supplemental Lessons 1 & 2 on PR pp. 35-38 (T p. 7). If this is not possible, at minimum discuss the physical differences that make boys and girls unique, including the proper names of body parts. Emphasize that using correct terms for these parts shows respect for God's gifts. Bullet #2 under *Resource Center* is also good for discussion.

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### Chapter 2: God Within Us

**Themes:** Forgiveness (p.11); Asking for help with feelings (p.12, 15)

**Essential:** Some of the most sensitive issues of trauma recovery concern the concept of forgiveness, a concept which is at the heart of Catholic tradition. For most trauma victims, however, forgiveness is one of the last issues with which they should deal. This includes children. Victims must have sufficient time and support from others so that their forgiveness is their forgiveness, and not the forced agenda of another. If pushed to forgive before they are truly ready, they may later find themselves in another faith crisis<sup>1</sup>. Children are helped by learning that forgiveness is a process, and that several steps may need to occur before they are ready to forgive.

When children are abused sexually, physically, or emotionally, they often feel two things at once. They may wonder, “Why is this person who loves me and who I love doing something that I know is wrong?” Teaching children to ask for help when they feel mixed up or confused feelings is an important step in identifying and stopping abuse. We must also assist children in creating their own personal “safety net” of people to whom they can turn with questions about concerns and feelings. When problem-solving with children about how to manage feelings of confusion or uncertainty, asking for help should always be one of the best responses.

#### **Lesson:**

1. During Chapter 2 on T pp. 11-15 mention that forgiveness is very important part of our Catholic faith. Ask, “What does forgiveness look like?” The children may come up with a variety of answers that may help you develop a greater understanding of their understanding of this complex concept. There is no right or wrong answer. Guide them towards the conclusion that forgiveness is a process and that it may not happen right away. No one should be forced to forgive before they are ready. If you are finding it hard to forgive, ask your parents, your teacher, or another trusted adult for help and guidance.
2. Throughout your discussion about coping with feelings, be sure to mention that it is important to ask for help when dealing with particularly confusing or mixed-up feelings. Confusing feelings may be a clue to us that something is wrong. Ask students to name adults they can ask for help (this will also be addressed in a later activity). Remember to include calling 911.

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<sup>1</sup> Bringing God’s Presence to Trauma Victims (2005). Church World Service Emergency Response Program. <http://www.cwserp.org/training/Chaplain.pdf>.

3. Do the skit activity under *Enrichment*. Prompt the students who are watching each skit to name the emotions (see below). Consider using the following sample scenarios to get the students started:
- You and your best friend each entered a poster contest and the winner will receive a great prize. You just found out that you won the contest (*excited, happy, sad for your friend, mixed-up*).
  - You had a rough day at school; you did poorly on a spelling test and dropped your tray in the lunchroom. Now you are really looking forward to coming home and watching your favorite show on TV. However, when you arrive home, you find your little brother has just started watching a Barney video. If he watches the video, you'll miss your show (*frustrated, angry*).
  - A babysitter tells you that you can stay up late and watch television, but then he/she turns to a station that you know is supposed to be only for grownups (*curious, excited, confused that someone in a caretaking role would ask you to do something you know is wrong*).

## Growing in Love Update: Grade 3

### Chapter 3: Whole Persons

**Theme:** Touching safety

**Essential:** The ability for a child to say “no” when confronted with inappropriate touch is greatly compromised in situations where the offender is someone they love and trust, as is the case for over 90% of sex offenses. Experts in child development believe that children are developmentally incapable – physically, emotionally, and psychologically – of asserting themselves against an older child or adult who might try to abuse them<sup>2</sup>. From a young age children are taught to “obey” those who are in charge of their care. In addition, many offenders are very skilled at leading children to believe that they were voluntary participants in the abuse. Sadly, victims of abuse often feel shame or guilt that they were somehow responsible for their suffering because they did not say “no” or because they “allowed” someone to touch their private parts. For these reasons, we should be careful to balance the lesson that children have the **right** to say no to ANY kind of touch (versus that they *should* or *must* say no), with the message that this can be very hard to do and is sometimes not safe to do. One helpful rule for children to learn is that older children and adults should not ask kids to keep secrets about touching or looking at body parts. We should also teach students the importance of and how to ask for help.

**Lesson:**

1. Use PR Supplemental Lesson 4 on the subject of *Privacy* (pp. 41-42). For bullet #3, ask children if they have rules in their homes about boundaries and privacy. Be sure to review the following rules about boundaries and privacy:
  - Private parts are kept special (which means that adults and older children should not “play with” their private parts, and that older children and adults do not need help with their private parts). Mention that at this age most children should be able to care for their private parts themselves, including toileting and bathing, without adult assistance.
  - It is okay to say “no” to ANY kind of touch.
  - Don’t touch others who say “no touching.”
  - Older children and adults should not ask kids to keep secrets about touching or looking at body parts
  - When feeling mixed-up or uncertain about something, the best thing to do is to ask for help
2. As a class, read and discuss the first story, “Talking Helps,” (p.7) in No More Secrets for Me by Oralee Wachter. Begin your discussion with the following questions:

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<sup>2</sup> Louiselle, C. & Gaulin, D. (2000). *Care for Kids Early Childhood Sexuality and Abuse Prevention Program*. Ontario, Canada: Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark District Health Unit.

- Can you think of times when someone you know has touched you in a way you don't like? (*This might include hitting, pinching, kissing, etc.*)
  - How do you feel when that happens?
  - How could you tell that person that you don't like what they're doing?
  - If you feel you can't tell the person directly, what else could you do?
3. As mentioned above, be careful with terms such as "say no" and "do not allow" touching of private parts, which can lead children to feel that they are to blame for their abuse. Reframe these concepts in positive ways by letting children know that it is *okay* to say no to any kind of touch, but that it can be hard, and that sometimes we may not be certain whether or not a particular touch is okay or wrong.
  4. Support system activity: Have children create a mobile with pictures and/or drawings representing trusted adults they can ask for help. Make sure that each child has at least 3 or 4 adults they can trust on their list. In addition to family members, options may include a favorite teacher, a favorite neighbor, a pastor, a coach. Feel free to be creative and modify this activity. Discuss as a group the many possible options for help. Be sure to include 911.

## Growing in Love Update: Grade 3

### Chapter 5: Loving Choices

**Theme:** Limits to authority

**Essential:** Sadly, some caregivers interpret and use biblical scripture wrongly to justify abuse. “Honor your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12) is one example of a passage that children may be led to interpret as absolute. Children, however, need to know that they are created with rights of their own – one of them being the right to say no to touch. Obeying authority never means having to accept or go along with something that you know is wrong.

**Vocabulary:** Authority      obedience      loyalty      trust

#### **Lesson:**

1. Discuss the meaning of legitimate authority during the discussion on T p. 29. Use this exercise as an example: If I told you to take all of that paint over there and pour it on the floor (or something equally absurd), would you do it? (*No*). If your babysitter ordered you to eat all 26 cookies in the cookie jar, would you do it? (*No*) If, at the end of a school day, a grownup said that your parent has asked them to drive you home; this person looked familiar, but you didn't really know him/her. Would it be a good idea to go with them? (*No*) If your parent told you to go outside in the snow without any shoes on, would you do it? Why not? (*You might think they weren't feeling well for giving such poor advice, so it would be a good idea to seek some help*).
2. Explain that sometimes it is okay to question or say “no” to what is being asked of you. If you feel uncomfortable with a request but also feel weird about saying “no,” try to think of an excuse to help you stall long enough get to another adult and ask for help. Something as simple as “No, thanks,” or “I’m not feeling well – maybe later” can also work well. There are many adults around you who can and want to help. Note also that feeling rushed or pressured to make a decision may be a sign that something is wrong.

## Growing in Love Update: Grade 3

### Chapter 7: People Who Trust

**Theme(s):** 1) Asking for help; 2) When bad things happen to good people

**Essential:** 1) Sexual abuse would not exist without secrecy. Sexual behavior with a child is not only illegal, but something that is considered taboo in our society. As a result, most people, including victims, don't talk about it. Sometimes it seems easier to try to believe that it doesn't/didn't happen and move on. In fact, evidence suggests that only one in ten victims of abuse ever tells anyone. There are many reasons why children don't tell, including:

- Some don't understand that they have been abused
- Some may feel they are to blame
- Some are ashamed
- Some feel that they will not be believed
- Some don't know how to tell or don't have the words to use
- Some children try to tell, but we don't recognize their cries for help

Children are much more likely to experience a healthy recovery from abuse if their stories are heard and if they feel believed and supported following their disclosure. Most children are comfortable asking for help; if we encourage children to ask for help when they feel confused or mixed up about things, including touch, we may be able to remove the secrecy surrounding abusive situations. We must ensure that our children have a network of adults with whom they feel comfortable asking sensitive questions. We must also ensure that they are equipped with the language and communication skills necessary to be able to ask for help.

2) Under *Background* the question "Why do bad things happen?" is asked. The text provides the explanation that many times suffering is a result of free will and a wrong choice. Children must ALWAYS be reminded that children are not developmentally able to consent to sexual activity, and that child abuse is NEVER the fault of the child (this is true even if the child did not/could not say "no.")

#### **Lesson:**

1. Provide a gentle reminder of the previous lesson (Chapter 5) in which limits to trust were discussed. Again, while we need to trust people in our families, this does not mean having to go along with something that you know is wrong, or having to keep secrets that you suspect may be wrong to keep.
2. Remind students of the helpful adults they listed in the activity in Chapter 3.

## **Family Resource**

### **Growing in Love: Grade 3**

#### **Lesson 1 – Our Bodies are Good and Special**

When talking about body parts, be sure to include the names of private parts. The purpose of including these parts is both to normalize the use of these words, and to help the children recognize that these parts are as special as all other body parts and can be talked about respectfully. Private body parts are not dirty and shameful. Some children may giggle or squirm at first mention of words such as “penis” and “vagina” and this is perfectly normal. Let children know that it is okay to giggle because we don’t use these words often; however, they are important parts of our body that can and should be talked about respectfully. Handling discussions of body parts and other aspects of human sexuality with frankness, respect, and sensitivity fosters the same respect and open communication in children.

#### **Lesson Summary**

- Boys and girls are physically different.
- Using the correct terms for these parts shows respect for God’s gifts.

#### **Home Activity**

When teaching young children about body parts include the names of private parts, such as breasts, vulva, vagina, penis, and buttocks. If your family uses other names for private parts, when given an opportunity share with them the “names for the parts a doctor would use.” By showing your child that you can say these words without shame or embarrassment, you’ll be teaching them that they, too, can talk openly about these words without shame or embarrassment. Note that some children, upon first learning the words, may joke, act silly, and use the words at inappropriate times. If this should happen, calmly remind your child that we only talk about private parts with respect, and in certain places and situations.

## **Family Resource**

### **Growing in Love: Grade 3**

#### **Lesson 2 – Forgiveness/ Asking for Help with Feelings**

Forgiveness is a concept at the heart of Catholic tradition. For most victims of interpersonal trauma such as abuse, however, forgiveness is one of the last issues with which they should deal. This includes children. Victims must have sufficient time and support from others so that their forgiveness is their forgiveness, and not the forced agenda of another. As adults we must be careful to validate and not dismiss children's complicated feelings towards trusted adults who abuse them. If pushed to forgive before they are truly ready, they may later find themselves in another faith crisis<sup>3</sup>. Children are helped by learning that forgiveness is a process, and that several steps may need to occur before they are ready to forgive.

When children are abused sexually, physically, or emotionally, they often feel two things at once. They may wonder, "Why is this person who loves me and who I love doing something that I know is wrong?" Teaching children to ask for help when they feel mixed up or confused feelings is an important step in identifying and stopping abuse. We must also assist children in creating their own personal "safety net" of people to whom they can turn with questions about feelings. Asking trusted adults for help about feelings should become automatic for kids. This important communication skill is also instrumental in building the child's support network and reducing the risk of abuse. When problem-solving with children about how to manage feelings, asking for help should always be one of the best responses.

#### **Lesson Summary**

- The children discuss their thoughts on what forgiveness means.
- Different examples help children see that forgiveness can be easy at times and very hard at times.
- If you are finding it hard to forgive, ask a trusted adult for help and guidance.
- When you have confused or uncertain feelings, ask a trusted adult for help.

#### **Home Activity**

Whenever your child has an "I'm sorry" or an "I forgive you" moment, try to stop and talk about how easy or hard it was to apologize or to forgive. Explain that talking about the particular situation can help the healing process. If he/she can't talk directly to the person involved, remind your child that he/she can go to a trusted adult to discuss the situation.

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<sup>3</sup> Bringing God's Presence to Trauma Victims (2005). Church World Service Emergency Response Program. <http://www.cwserp.org/training/Chaplain.pdf>.

## Family Resource

### Growing in Love: Grade 3

#### Lesson 3 – Touching Safety

The ability for a child to say “no” to inappropriate touch is difficult in situations where the offender is someone they love and trust, as is the case for over 90% of sex offenses. Experts in child development believe that children are developmentally incapable – physically, emotionally, and psychologically – of asserting themselves against an older child or adult who might try to abuse them<sup>4</sup>. From a young age children are taught to “obey” those who are in charge of their care. In addition, many offenders are very skilled at leading children to believe that they were voluntary participants in the abuse. Sadly, victims of abuse often feel shame or guilt that they were somehow responsible because they did not say “no” or because they “allowed” someone to touch their private parts. For these reasons, we should be careful to balance the lesson that children have the **right** to say no to ANY kind of touch (versus that they *should* or *must* say no), with the message that this can be very hard to do and is sometimes not safe to do. One helpful rule for children to learn is that touching should NEVER be a secret. It is also important to know who and how to ask for help.

#### Lesson Summary

- Private parts are kept special (which means that adults and older children should not “play with” their private parts, and that older children and adults do not need help with their private parts). At this age most children should be able to care for their private parts themselves, including toileting and bathing, without adult assistance.
- It is **okay** to say no to ANY kind of touch.
- Don’t touch others who say “no touching.”
- Touching is never a secret.
- When feeling mixed-up or uncertain about something, the best thing to do is to ask for help from a trusted adult.

#### Home Activity

Review with your child the lessons they learned in class. Reading a book with your child about touch or feelings can also be helpful (see *Recommended Resources*). Whenever you find that your child is having difficulty doing something or understanding, remind him/her that he/she can ask for help. Mention that the child can come to you or to another trusted adult to get help with tough questions, confused feelings, or difficult activities. Make sure that your child can list at least 3 or 4 people that they feel comfortable asking for help about a personal problem.

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<sup>4</sup> Louiselle, C. & Gaulin, D. (2000). *Care for Kids Early Childhood Sexuality and Abuse Prevention Program*. Ontario, Canada: Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark District Health Unit.

## **Family Resource**

### **Growing in Love: Grade 3**

#### **Lesson 5 – Limits to Authority**

Sadly, some adults use their position of authority as a means to justify abuse. Children, however, need to know that they are created with rights of their own – one of them being the right to say no to touch. Obeying authority never means that a child must accept or go along with something that they know or suspect is wrong.

#### **Lesson Summary**

- Sometimes it is okay to question or say no to what is being asked of you.
- When you do feel uncomfortable with a request from authority, go to one of your trusted adults to discuss your concerns.

#### **Home Activity**

Discuss with your child what it means to obey. Ask your child to name different people in their life whom they would consider to be an “authority figure.” Ask if there might ever be a situation in which an authority figure asks or orders them to do something that they really shouldn’t do (*Yes, if they ask me to do something that I know is wrong, such as to keep a secret about my body or touch*). Help your child understand that while most grownups mean well and can be trusted, grownups can make mistakes and have problems, just like kids (such as touching problems). Create a “plan” with your child for what to do if an authority figure asks them to do something that is wrong. Be sure to let them know that it is okay to say no, but that this can be hard to do.

## **Family Resource**

### **Growing in Love: Grade 3**

#### **Lesson 7 – Asking for Help/ When Bad Things Happen to Good People**

1) Sexual abuse would not exist without secrecy. Sexual behavior with a child is not only illegal, but something that is considered taboo in our society. As a result, most people, including victims, don't talk about it. Sometimes it seems easier to try to believe that it doesn't/didn't happen and move on. In fact, evidence suggests that only one in ten victims of abuse ever tells anyone. Some reasons why children don't tell include:

- Some don't understand that they have been abused
- Some may feel they are to blame
- Some are ashamed or embarrassed
- Some feel that they will not be believed
- Some don't know how to tell or don't have the words to use

Children are much more likely to experience a healthy recovery from abuse if their stories are heard and if they feel believed and supported. If we teach children to ask for help when they feel confused or mixed up about privacy or touch, abuse will less likely be a secret. We must be sure that our children have a network of adults with whom they feel comfortable asking sensitive questions and that they have the language and skills necessary to be able to ask for help.

2) The textbook asks the question "Why do bad things happen?," later providing the explanation that many times suffering is a result of free will and a wrong choice. While offenders often use tactics to convince children that they were willing participants, please note that children lack the social, emotional, and intellectual maturity to consent to sexual activity. We must help children understand that some grownups and older kids have problems respecting body privacy. Abuse is never a child's fault, even if they did not or could not say "no."

#### **Lesson Summary**

- Obeying authority does not mean having to go along with something that we know is wrong.
- We don't have to keep secrets that we suspect are wrong to keep.
- It is important to go to a trusted adult for help when we have mixed up feelings.

#### **Home Activity**

When you suspect that your child feels uncertain about something, help them express those feelings with words. When the child shares, listen first and then ask what the child thinks he/she should do about the problem. Then you might ask if the child would like to hear what you think about the matter. Similarly, the next time you feel confused or uncertain, verbalize your mixed feelings in front of your child. Example: "I'm happy you have a good friend who wants to invite you to a sleepover, but I'm also worried that I've never met her parents, and she lives so far away." Children learn how to communicate from their parents. A child who expresses thoughts and feelings through words rather than through actions is more likely to let you know – with words - when something is wrong.