

Diocese of Rapid City

Keeping God's Children Safe

A Safe Faith Environment Newsletter

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Kids Need Good Fruit

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“...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.” - Galatians 5:22-23

There is an age-old debate in the study of child development – that of “nature versus nurture.” Ultimately, the question of whether children are inherently good or whether they are born “savages” who must be tamed, has been addressed with a single conclusion; that children need a combination of warmth and structure in their environment. It is important for our children that they have a peaceful environment in which to grow, that they experience love, joy, gentleness, and goodness in their relationships with adults. It is equally important that they learn the patience, kindness, faithfulness, and self-control necessary for mature, healthy relationships.



Love

Unconditional love is the foundation of a child's sense of self worth and a key component of healthy relationships.

Joy

Being celebrated, believing that one can bring joy into the world, and learning the ability to find joy in the midst of heartache helps children be resilient to adversity.

Peace

Development is hindered by chaos. Children need a peaceful environment in which to thrive and grow. Children learn what they live – better to learn peace than violence and aggression.

Patience

Taking time to think before acting helps adults make better decisions, and helps children learn to delay gratification and tolerate frustration – two key aspects of emotional maturity.

Kindness

People are social creatures. We need each other to live and grow in the world. The opportunity to learn kindness, helps children get their needs met and meet the needs of others.

Goodness

Being good – it's not how we act - it's who we are. Created in God's image, we are all good. Given free will, we sometimes choose bad behavior. Fostering in our children a true sense of their own goodness helps them see the goodness in others.

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**Diocese of Rapid City
Safe Environment
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[www.rapidcitydiocese.
org/WP/safe-environment-home](http://www.rapidcitydiocese.org/WP/safe-environment-home)

***“Wakanyeja”
means ‘sacred gift.’***

*The rich culture of the
Lakota People reminds
us all of our role in the
lives of our children.
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for more on this ...*

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Faithfulness

One of the earliest tasks of development, learning to trust in others, depends on the faithfulness of adults. Faithfulness continues to be an important quality of right relationships throughout our life span.

Gentleness

Children are born fragile – handle with care. If we display gentleness in our relationships with children, they are not only more likely to emerge safe and healthy, but are less likely to learn violence and aggression.

Self-Control

Self-control is a sign of maturity and key for success in the world and in relationships. As adults exhibit and teach self-control, children learn that true control lies within themselves, and has little to do with controlling others.

The task of creating an appropriate balance between the warmth and structure our children need can seem a daunting task. The good news for us is that which Paul first proclaimed to the Galatians. When we center ourselves in Christ and open ourselves to the Holy Spirit, the fruits of our labor will be just what our children need...“love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.”



“Wakanyeja” means sacred gift. A child is a gift from the Creator and represents the future of the Lakota People. They are to be protected and nurtured. Our children are beautiful and precious gifts given to us by Wakantanka (God). We must see in them the future of our People and raise them accordingly; we view them as sacred beings and let no harm come to them. It becomes the parents’ job to keep them safe and bring them up in a good and respectful way.

It is said when the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Woman came she touched a child and in doing so all children became Wakanyeja.

All children are sacred gifts from God, and our future. May we protect them from all harm and use the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our relationships with children, and all people - as God’s Children.

Know the Rules / Right Relationships

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We currently include these two lessons a year in our child/young people’s safe faith environment training. We educate our young people to promote and practice safe environment principles to help them build the knowledge to resist abuse and know what to do when something is not right. We also educate our young people to understand the qualities of right relationships to foster their confidence and positive traits toward a fulfilling life.

Safety is a basic human need. In order for children to develop emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually, their basic needs must be met. For this reason, as well as the genuine love and concern we have for our children as members of our family and Children of God, we must commit ourselves to providing a safe environment in which we can teach our children and foster their spiritual growth.

It is imperative that the environment we provide not only keeps our children free from physical and emotional harm in general, but also decreases the likelihood that they will become victims of abuse. Child abuse, sexual abuse in particular, occurs when an adult with a tendency toward abuse has contact with children in a context where environmental / social inhibitions are compromised and the child’s resistance has been lowered.

The curriculum “Know the Rules” was designed to be a routine part of our education with children, both to promote and model safe environment principles and to build resistance to abuse by teaching our children what to do when something is not right.

It is the goal of the “Right Relationships” curriculum to provide children with direct education about qualities to understand and develop to engage in right relationships and to educate them through teachable moments in our relationships with them. Right relationship qualities enable one to build a positive productive life with confidence, which strengthens the resistance to enticements that lead to hurt and harm.