

With safe environment, we consider how we keep all our children, youth and teens safe. Adults are responsible for protecting young people. Young people can be empowered and encouraged to learn ways to avoid unfavorable situations, to stop when feeling unsafe, say “no” and tell a parent or a trusted adult so they can help. To build positive, healthy relationships, we need to develop an understanding of how to create and maintain relationships – with God, with ourselves, and with others.

### Relating in Relationships

When research was being done to look at the larger topic of healthy relationships and unhealthy relationships, there was such a volume of information on the topic. One could develop a whole year’s curriculum, which even then would not cover the life relationships that need to be addressed.

It has been the belief that children should be taught the skills to:

- Get along with others
- Be a friend
- Be part of a social group

People assume that children know how to interact with one another in positive ways, but what actually occurs challenges this belief. The potential for meanness, both in and out of the classroom, is taking on new and more creative forms. Children are much more likely to talk back to their parents, teachers and other adults. These adults seem to tolerate, and implicitly condone, a greater amount of negative behaviors. It follows that students are demonstrating increased aggressiveness, reduced respect for adult authority and insensitivity to the feelings of others.

Research shows that children learn what is considered acceptable social behavior by observing adults, siblings, peers and older schoolmates. . . By the third grade, most students have already developed normative beliefs about how to function in a social environment, and these beliefs guide future behavior.<sup>1</sup>

Healthy relationships are something all parents want for their children. In pre-school, children are taught basic manners, how to be a good friend, and how to play well with others. In elementary grades they learn about bullies. In the middle school, the “talk” about puberty often becomes the priority.

While it is very important to have the discussion about sex, parents should also have “the talk” about love in order to protect children from unhealthy relationships. According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#), one in ten high school students has been purposefully hit, slapped, or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend. By teaching children the key elements to healthy relationships, teens and young adults are more likely to have healthy long-lasting relationships.

According to a report from [Making Caring Common](#), “large numbers of teens and young adults are unprepared for caring, lasting romantic relationships and are anxious about developing them. Yet it appears that parents, educators and other adults often provide young people with little or no guidance in developing these relationships.” Harvard psychologist Richard Weissbourd conducted a survey and found that 70% of the 18-25 year old participants wanted information from their parents about the emotional aspects of romantic relationships, and 65% said they wanted to learn about the emotional aspects of relationships in their sexuality education classes in school. In other words, while most parents, schools, and educators are discussing abstinence, how to avoid pregnancy, and preventing sexually transmitted diseases, kids want more. Children want to know about how to love and be loved. You cannot talk about one without the other.<sup>2</sup>

In the above mentioned study conducted by Harvard psychologist Richard Weissbourd, one teen reported, “All we are taught is how to prevent stuff, how not to get pregnant. We should be discussing the values that should guide you in love and how to really love and respect someone else. And how to be loved by someone else. That’s a lot more important.”<sup>3</sup>

The lack of modeling and conversation in both homes and schools create a void. How is it filled? Do we leave it to media and entertainment? To peers? How do we respond? We, with our faith and scriptures, can help our children and youth in the relationships they form in their lifetime. The Church desires to help guide them, if we give them the resources to use, and model with healthy relationships, including the relationship with our God.

**Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.** ~1 Corinthians 13:4-7

*Reflection for Catechist* ~ Reflect on the relationships in your own life. How can you show the Christ within you to others? What will be your first step? \*With God... \*With yourself... \*With youth \*With others...

<sup>1</sup>The Ophelia Project. *Let’s Be Friends, Elementary Curriculum Gr. 2-3*. 2007. page 3-4. [www.opheliaproject.org](http://www.opheliaproject.org).

<sup>2</sup>Pittman, Robin, MS, CHES. *How to Talk with Kids about Healthy Relationships*. Jan. 16, 2018. Poe Center for Health Education.

<sup>3</sup>Weissbourd, Richard. Ed.D., *For Families: 5 Tips for Guiding Teens and Young Adults in Developing Healthy Romantic Relationships*. Oct. 2018. Harvard Graduate School of Education. <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-families/5-tips-parents-guiding-teens-healthy-romantic-relationships>

## Overview

This lesson is designed for use during a class session in January/February. “Relating in Relationships” looks at ways that our faith can support us in our relationships to work on healthy, positive, and holy relationships rather than unhealthy relationships. God has given us the 10 Commandments to be a guide in our lives. Following them can guide us in building healthy, holy relationships, as well as bring us true happiness. God created each person in His own image; therefore, our dignity is grounded in God and must be respected by all. God tells us to treat each other with respect. As we learn and mature in building healthy relationships with others, we will have many experiences and opportunities to practice our beliefs and faith as we build the relationships we want in our lives. We may need help if we are in an unhealthy relationship where we are being exploited or are not free to express our thoughts, feelings, and actions. An environment of open communication encourages youth to communicate their thoughts and feelings appropriately and seek help from parents and other trusted adults when they feel others are hurting them or pressuring them to break the rules.

**“Love trusts, it sets free, it does not try to control, possess and dominate everything.”**  
 ~ Pope Francis

**“Do not use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.”**  
 - Ephesians 4:29

**Goal:** God created us in His image to live with others in loving and peaceful ways. We do this by having a personal relationship with God, obeying his rules, and treating others with respect and dignity. We build healthy relationships using our gifts and talents in positive, loving ways.

- Session Outline**
- Opening Prayer (2 min)
  - Exploring the concept of self-esteem, feeling good about ourselves and talents (10 min)
  - Why self-esteem matters and How we can work on self-esteem (18min)
  - Activities: “Your Compliment Star”; and “Chain of Compliments” (28 min)
  - Closing Prayer— Our Father (2 min)

**I. Opening Prayer (3 minutes)**

○ God, we praise you for your gifts of creation.  
**With grateful hearts, we praise you God.**  
 We thank you for all our good relationships.  
**With grateful hearts, we praise you God.**  
 We ask you to comfort those who may be alone.  
**With grateful hearts, we ask you God.**  
 We ask you to forgive us when we do not act in loving ways.  
**With grateful hearts, please forgive us, God.**  
 May we each be open to learn more of your love for us in relationships today, God.  
**With grateful hearts, we ask you God.**  
 Amen.

- Session Objectives:**
- God created us each in his image, and we deserve respect and dignity
  - God made us to have healthy relationships with others.
  - Each will recognize their personal talents
  - To understand that a healthy self-esteem is a personal feeling of importance and value
  - Compliments can add to our and others’ self-esteem.
  - If we are in a relationship where we are being exploited or are not free to share our thoughts, feelings and actions with others, we need to get help.

- Supplies**
- Pens or pencils for each; possibly colors
- Activities / Hand Outs** - for each person:  
 Pg. 4 “Your Compliment Star”  
 Pg. 5 “Chain of Compliments”  
 Pg. 6 Parent Page for parents (take home)

**II. What Are God’s Rules?**

*A Reference for the Lesson —*

**Share with the class:** “God gave Moses the 10 Commandments to help guide our lives and how to show our love to God and others. (Exodus 20: 1-17)

We learn more how Jesus wants us to live with others through the Scriptures, at Mass, and through the Sacraments in the Catholic Church.

Resources:  
 Personal Health Series: Self-Esteem. KidsHealth in the Classroom. [https://classroom.kidshealth.org/classroom/prekto2/personal/growing/self\\_esteem.pdf](https://classroom.kidshealth.org/classroom/prekto2/personal/growing/self_esteem.pdf)  
 Information was provided by KidsHealth®, one of the largest resources online for medically reviewed health information written for parents, kids, and teens. For more articles like this, visit KidsHealth.org or TeensHealth.org. © 1995-. The Nemours Foundation/KidsHealth®. All rights reserved.

### III. LESSON: Relating in Relationships

#### Introduction

**Share:** Self-esteem is the “feel good” value you put on yourself. It is knowing that you are important and talented. Healthy self-esteem gives you the courage to try new things and make good choices. It is important to feel good about yourself. Self-esteem is when you learn how to do something well, and you feel proud (good) in that sense of accomplishment.

**Ask:** What kinds of things do you do that make you feel good? How do you feel when people say something nice about you? Does it make you feel happy and important? What kinds of things do they say?

What does God want of us? Does he want us to have good feelings? To help others to feel positive? Is this a way to show our love for God and for others in our families and friends? What did He give us to help us learn how to do what He wants us to do? (the Ten Commandments). He is giving us this guide, knowing it will bring us happiness.

#### Lesson Development

##### Share: Self-Esteem Matters

1. **Self-esteem helps you.** It gives you the courage to try new things. Or make new friends. With self-esteem, you believe in yourself and feel good. You know that good things can happen when you try, and feel proud of what you can do. Self-esteem helps you when things don't go your way. It helps you accept yourself when you make mistakes. If you miss the soccer goal or lose a library book, you don't get too mad at yourself. You just try again. You find a way to do better or ask for help.

2. **Low self-esteem can hurt you.** It makes kids feel unsure. They don't think they can do things well. With low self-esteem, kids might not try. They might not go after their goals. They might be afraid to fail. Low self-esteem makes losing seem worse than it is. It makes mistakes seem bigger than they are. It makes it hard to get over things that don't go well. Instead of trying again, kids with low self-esteem might give up. They do not notice the good things about themselves, and may not feel liked or accepted;

3. **You can build your self-esteem.** Self-esteem can start with things parents say when a child is very young. They may tell a baby, "Look what you can do — you're walking by yourself!" Being told good things makes the baby feel proud and feel good. As you get older, self-esteem can grow as we come to know our self better and use our gifts and talents. Parents, teachers, and others can let you know they see good things in you. Friends can help you feel liked. You can build your own self-esteem too. Notice when you try new things, or when you learn to do something. Did you try a new sport? Did you learn to ride a bike, play a song, or do a math problem? Be happy and proud. You don't have to brag out loud, but you can give yourself a quiet little high-five. Yay, you!

##### Try to Build Your Self-Esteem with these steps:

- **Make a list of what you are good at.** Can you draw or sing? Are you a good reader? Good at a sport? Do you tell a good joke? If you're having trouble with your list, ask a parent or friends to help you with it.
- **Practice the things you do well.** Think of ways you can do some of the things you're good at every day.
- **Turn "I can't" into "I can!"** Does the little voice in your head tell you "I'm no good at this" or "I can't do it"? Or "It's too hard for me"? That's you thinking badly about yourself. Decide to change your mind. Think, "I can give it a try," "I can handle this." Think, "I'll give it my best." Think, "I'll ask someone to help me do this."
- **Try your best.** You can feel good about yourself when you give something a good try. When you try hard, your self-esteem will grow.
- **Spend time with people who love you.** Do things you enjoy with your parents or family. It helps you know you belong. And that builds self-esteem.
- **Pitch in.** Do nice things for family and others. When we do, we do God's will and help our self too, as we go beyond making our self happy. Help with meals, clean up, or feed the pet. When you do kind things, you feel good about yourself. You get to see that what you do means a lot—even to others. What nice things can you do for your friends?

### IV. ACTIVITIES:

1. **Your Compliment Star:** What are you good at doing? Playing a certain game? Making your bed? Making your mom smile? Things that you are good at doing are called your talents. What are your talents? For example, you may be talented in the way you take good care of your pet. Knowing you have a talent or are good at doing something makes you feel good. That good feeling is part of your self-esteem, or the way you feel about yourself. A talent can make you have such good self-esteem that it can give you courage to try new things and to make good choices. See directions on worksheet.

2. **Chain of Compliments:** How can you be a good friend and classmate? How do you feel when you make someone happy or cheer up someone who's sad? Being helpful and friendly to others can make you feel good and can build self-esteem. One way that makes everyone feel good is to tell a classmate or friend something nice about him or her. Those nice words are called a compliment. If you received a compliment, do you think your self-esteem might grow?

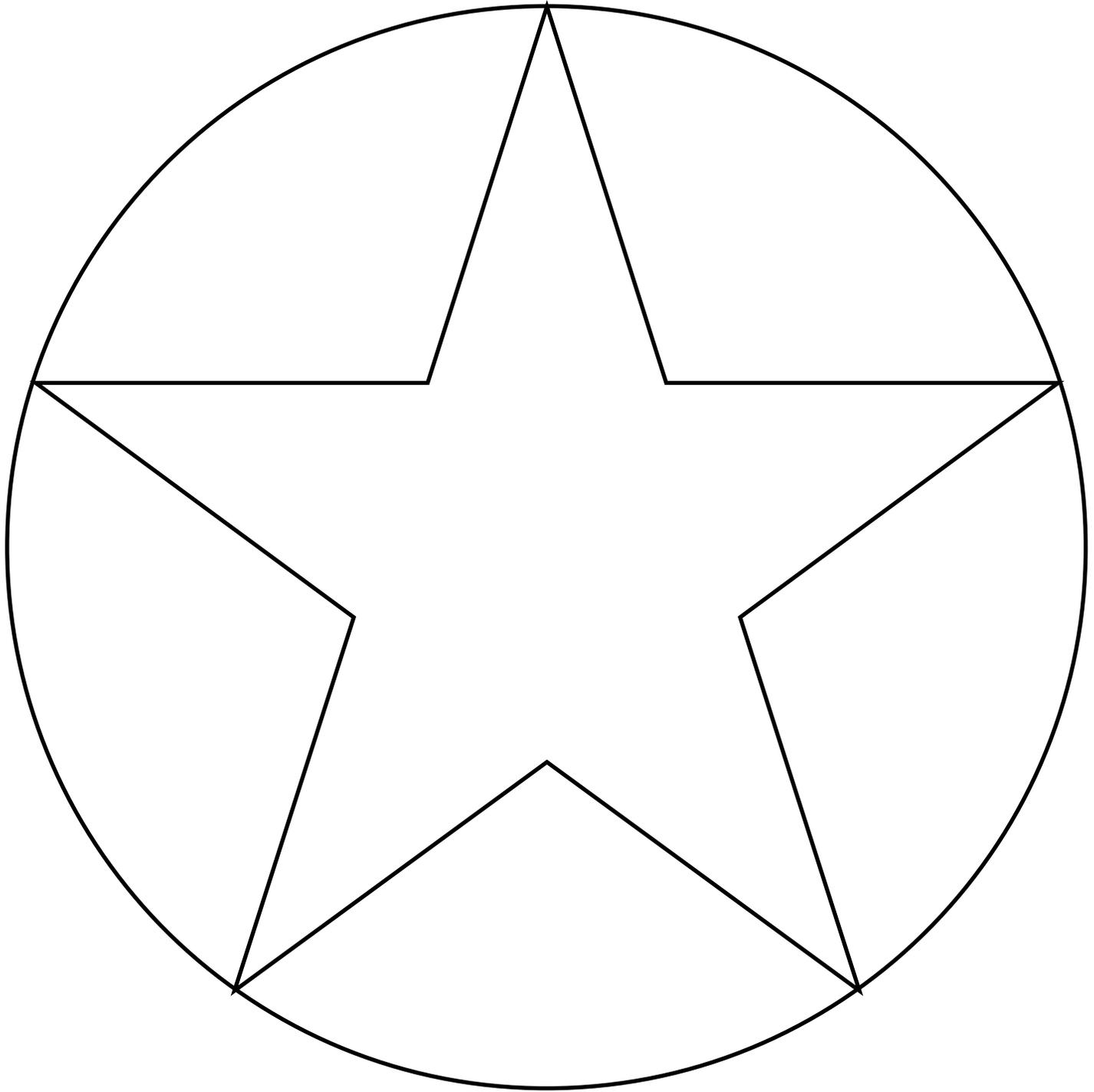
Does God want us to give others compliments? It is always better to speak kind words to others than say unkind words to others around us. If we get angry or upset and say something unkind to another, what can we do? We can apologize and ask for their forgiveness. We can also ask God to forgive us, and to help us be more kind to others in our words and actions.

Make a chain of compliments with your class and get some practice giving and receiving compliments. Read each sentence in the "Chain of Compliments" handout. Each sentence can be a compliment, after you write words and names on the blank spaces to complete the sentence. Fill in the blanks and share your compliments with the class. Be sure to thank the people who compliment you. Then cut out all of the sentences and tape or glue them together in interlocking circles to make a chain.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Give yourself some compliments! Write or draw pictures of 5 things you are good at or love to do in the star.





This week we discussed the Right Relationship concept of Relating in Relationships. We are created in God's image; therefore, we have a divine dignity to be respected by ourselves and others. Parents, the first teachers in the "domestic church" at home, will guide and mentor the child in learning their faith and the world they live in; all of this is involved in our relationships.

As parents, we teach their children to prepare them for adult life. We give lessons on manners, and treating others with respect. We also need to instruct them about relationships—the different types of relationships we all encounter in our lifetime as we grow and mature, and how each may be different. Our faith and values are shared when we visit and have discussions to help guide them to reflect on relationships—what makes it a healthy, loving, and holy relationship rather than an unhealthy relationship where one wants control of the other, or to meet only one's own needs. If we commit to giving the time and attention needed to build these life skills of healthy relationships, based on our faith, would this not change the divorce percentages, and show that cohabitation does not provide the true covenant our Lord wants for his people and their happiness? Our goal, with all working together, is to teach key elements of healthy relationships, so our youth may have healthy, long-lasting relationships.

Healthy relationships differ by the level/type of relationship - acquaintances, relatives, friendships, dating, or intimate relationships. However, some common behaviors that all healthy relationships have and value are:

**SELF KNOWLEDGE** as an individual. They need to find value in who they are; to know their strengths and weaknesses. They need to know they have the power to make choices, and by making good choices for themselves, they in turn find value in who they are. They choose the behavior, and the consequence can be positive or negative. In reading stories, they can look for the cause/effect (consequences) that may be similar or different from theirs.

**PERSONAL BOUNDARIES** are something every person needs to establish to feel safe and secure. They also help protect against sexual and physical abuse. Help your child to identify and articulate their personal values and boundaries, and they are to be respected and reinforced. Do they understand that the other person's boundaries need to be respected as well?

**BALANCE** is another important behavior for youth to learn. It is important to teach your children that it can be healthy to have many friends in many places. They may need help to understand that spending time with one friend does not mean you do not like other friends. Youth may need your help with this issue. Youth need to learn to balance between the relationships and the responsibilities in their lives such as school, chores, other commitments, and other relationships.

**RESPECT** is a must. It is essential for both individuals to be respectful in both communications and actions. We show it by how we treat our self and others. This exhibits acceptance and understanding of each other.

**COMMUNICATION** is essential. When communication is used that is respectful, honest and direct, both parties feel heard and understood. Although all relationships will experience conflict, healthy communication based on understanding will find common ground. When communication is heated, partners may need a "time out" and agree to address the issues at a later, calmer time.

**DIGITAL ABUSE** occurs when a person uses technology devices improperly to harass or harm another person. It opens the door widely to many unhealthy behaviors. They include: constant unwanted calls or texts, harassment/cyberbullying on social media; sexting—pressure to send nude or private pictures or content, using forms of social media to send insults, monitor whereabouts, control other relationships, or to pressure their partner for their passwords to social media sites and emails.

**RESILIENCE** is important when relationships do not work out, or end. They need to be able to recover when valued relationships fall apart. They need healthy coping skills to deal with the disappointments that ending a relationship can cause. As positive role models, parents can provide support and assistance in this area.

These are not the only behaviors for creating healthy relationships; nor is the learning a "one-time" event. The list of behaviors goes on, and the opportunities are endless if we are attentive in our children's lives. Hearing about your child's day and school is a great starting place for conversation. Watching TV programs, and pointing out or asking questions about the relationships being viewed can teach which portray real life and which are acting in telling a good story; current events are good for discussions as well. Listening to your child's view in all they share will give you a picture of how they may handle difficult situations ahead—and where they may need guidance. Youth also assistance in how to create and sustain healthy relationships. Daily youth are bombarded with many unhealthy behavior models from the internet, media, society, and even families and peers. We need to give them tools based in faith and values to reflect on their options and making sound, healthy, holy choices.

Our children can find great guidance on relationships by the growth of their faith life. They need to understand the importance of a healthy, personal relationship with Jesus. Parents encourage this relationship by teaching prayers to their children, family prayer, including the rosary. In time, the relationship builds stronger with personal prayers, through the Mass and sacraments, the Scriptures and the parish family. As they mature in faith, their relationship with our Lord needs to grow deeper through their life.

To view Winter Lessons 2019 for youth: <https://www.rapidcitydiocese.org/safe-environment/young-peoples-safe-faith-environment-program/>

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