

Adults are responsible for mentoring young people. Young people can be empowered and encouraged to learn ways to develop healthy and holy relationships. 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.

Please read this page prior to teaching this lesson.

ATTENTION. Babies have needs that must be met. They express their needs vocally to receive a response. They want attention – to be fed, to be changed, to be moved to a different position, or a different location. They also need to be held, talked to, and have interactions with another human being that cares about them to thrive in this new life and environment. If these needs are not met, the baby will not flourish or reach their full potential; in fact, some may die.

Unknowingly, many learn that when they do certain things, they receive a positive response from the other person. When they cry, they are picked up; they may get food, a smile, verbal interaction, become more comfortable after a diaper change, and able to see other views of their world. We want this interaction with others so much that we do what it takes to get the response we are looking for – noises to bring laughter, crying to get help or assistance – wanting to be noticed. And we will do it repeatedly to see if we get the same responses.

Through childhood, we discover behaviors on both our efforts and the responses we receive for attention may change. We adapt, but still have the goal of getting attention. There are times when one will even do negative actions to get attention, rather than no attention from another. Why is that? Today, we splash messages on billboards for seconds, work for a “like,” a retweet, a notice from others, all for the attention from people we do not know. What relationships do we value? The online ones or with real people in our lives?

No, it is not just the children and youth – it is all of us, including adults. A two-minute observation in any public place, will show the great majority working for attention – whether through a device or even in communicating with the person next to us. This need for constant attention is a human reality, not just an issue of the day. Truth and good always focuses on God—not us. How do we decrease our need for attention, and increase the attention to Jesus Christ?

Once again, our faith gives us answers and helps to guide us on the right course. We are created by our heavenly Father to make a difference in our world- instead of a statement to be noticed. Look at the many miracle

stories Jesus performed in the Bible. After the event, he instructed the healed not to say anything; to two blind men he gave sight and then said, “See that no one knows about this,” (Matt. 9:30). Jesus was not seeking attention; He wanted to make a positive impact in those lives.

Jesus taught a similar message about alms giving to the poor, prayer and fasting (Mt. 6:1-8; 16-18). We do not do it so others see us, proclaim our good deeds, or change our appearance. He tells us to give in secret, pray in secret, and to look no differently, so our Father may reward us. It is not about making one’s self the focus, but making a difference to others with selfless service from our heart.

This tension of wanting attention and recognition, while maintaining a willingness to serve others, plays out in our daily interactions with classmates, co-workers, friends, family and others. The problem occurs when we care more about being noticed and recognized than about helping the few people right in front of us to feel noticed and important. In reflection, when we find we have a problem of wanting to be recognized or in the spotlight, we need to act – motivate yourself toward loving others. As stated in Phil. 2:3-4, “Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vain-glory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others.” Open your hands, walk the steps; seek to make a difference for others. With Christ leading you, in the process you will begin to find new ways forward in your journey.

We are each loved—we are the beloved sons and daughters of our God. We are called to love, to receive from others, and to give our self to others. We are called to participate in the Body of Christ as members of His body here on Earth. We serve Him when we make a sincere gift of self to others. This is how we can bring Christ to others!

“You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”
~ St. Augustine

Reflection for Catechist ~ Reflect on attention in your own life. Is it used for yourself or others? How can you show the Christ within you to others? What is your first step?
*With God... *With yourself... *With youth... *With others...

CHALLENGE: How will you help your group make a change to give attention to others, rather than direct it to them self?

RESOURCES:

Braun, Tyler. *Seek Impact. Not Attention.*; Relevant Magazine. Nov. 2013. <https://relevantmagazine.com/god/seek-impact-not-attention/>

Quigley, Colleen. *Learning Love: Theology of the Body and the Family.* For Your Marriage. 2014. <https://www.foryourmarriage.org/learning-love-theology-of-the-body-and-the-family-part-1-2/>

Overview

This lesson is designed for use during a class session in January/February. "Attention" 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 guide us in building healthy, holy relationships, and bring us true happiness. "God created man in His image; in the image of God he created him" (Gen 1:27). One's dignity is grounded in God and must be respected by all. As we learn and mature in building healthy relationships with others, we will do well to practice our beliefs and faith as we build the relationships we want and seek in our lives.

We may need to reflect on where we are trying to gain attention, as well as who is giving us attention - that sometimes may not be a positive choice. We may need help if we are in an unhealthy relationship where we are being exploited, abused, 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 as they develop their relationships, or when they feel others are hurting them or pressuring them.

Goal: God's image, in which we are created, is "communal" - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A personal relationship with God reveals how to be in relationship with all others. Let us explore what our Faith can teach us about healthy and holy relationships.

"Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets."

- Matthew 7:12

Session Outline

- Opening Prayer (3 min)
- Lesson on Attention: Introduction and development (26 min)
- Activity Worksheet: "Dividing Attention" (16 min)
- Discussion on worksheet (15 min)

Session Objectives:

- Created in God's image, we are meant to give and receive attention from our parents, families and others.
- Right relationships give positive attention rather than negative attention by:
 - * Helping us to attend to others
 - * Paying attention to our gifts and the gifts of others.
 - * Attending to our need to participate in many kinds of relationships.
- It is important to tell a trusted adult who we receive attention from and when the amount or kind of attention we receive is not right.

I. Opening Prayer (3 minutes)

May want to try this as an "echo" prayer by leading each phrase/line, and then have youth repeat it back again with your assistance. OR write on board for all to see. OR make copies of it.

Peace Prayer of Saint Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
 where there is hatred, let me sow love;
 where there is injury, pardon;
 where there is doubt, faith;
 where there is despair, hope;
 where there is darkness, light;
 where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
 to be consoled as to console,
 to be understood as to understand,
 to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
 it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
 and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
 Amen.

II. What Are God's Rules?

A Reference for the Lesson —

Share with the class: "God gave us the 10 Commandments, the Beatitudes, and other guides to help us live our lives faithfully and show our love to God and others.

We learn how Jesus wants us to live with others through the Bible, at Mass, through prayers, the Sacraments, and the Church's Teachings.

Supplies

- Pencils or pens for each person. Colors may be helpful with this sheet.

Activities / Hand Outs - copy for each person:
You are asked to print these 2 pages back/back
 Pg. 5 "Dividing Attention" Worksheet
 Pg. 6 "Notes to Parents" page (to take home)

Some materials created by the Diocese of Grand Island. Used with permission. Additional materials developed by the Diocese of Rapid City.

III. LESSON: Attention

Introduction: (2 minutes).

Share with class: God created us to be with others in relationships, and to be in communion with God, others, and all creation. Attention is an important part of right relationships, as we all need others to spend time with us, to listen to us, and to care for us. Sometimes it feels like no one is paying attention to us, and sometimes when we find someone who does, it is hard not to want to spend all of our time with them. It is important to remember, though, that a right relationship does not demand all of our attention, and does not stand in the way of us benefiting from the attention of others.

Development of Lesson:

1 Our Relationship with God. (7 minutes)

Share: God created each of us and desires to have a relationship with you. We do this intimately through our prayer time with God. In prayer, we are talking to God; hopefully we take some quiet time to allow God to respond to us and share his love for us. He is always with us; we just have to take the time to build a relationship with him. We further develop this relationship by following God's 10 Commandments and Beatitudes, taking part in the Mass, receiving the Sacraments, learning about Jesus through the Bible and what the Catholic Church teaches us about our faith. Just as in our other close relationships, it will take a lifetime to know one another very well!

Ask, giving them time to think and respond:

- ⇒ What are some ways we can develop our relationship with our Lord through prayer? (ideas: use our own words in prayer, not only memorized prayer; rosary; quiet time with our Lord, especially during Adoration times; each night reflect on the day and what went well—thank you, Lord; and what we need to ask forgiveness for—I am sorry, Lord; and what needs we have to bring to him—help me, Lord; and to praise him for all he does—you are awesome, Lord.
- ⇒ What are other ways we can grow in our faith as we grow and change in this stage of life to have our Lord be a stronger part of our life? (ideas: participate in the Mass weekly, receive the sacraments, attend faith formation classes, read the Bible more, look things up in a resource such as the Catechism of the Catholic Church, ask questions of others strong in their faith life).
- ⇒ Remember we do not need to do it alone; seek out a good mentor to help you in your faith journey!

2 Right relationships help us attend to others. (10 min.)

As Catholic Christians we are called to attend to others, to be part of a community in Christ. While a right relationship is focused on the needs of both persons involved, a right relationship also helps both individuals fulfill their call to attend to others. A relationship that demands all of our attention, to the neglect of our other relationships, is not a right relationship. As stated in Phil. 2:3-4, "Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others."

In a right relationships we pay attention to each other's gifts. We all have gifts that we are called to use. In a right relationship, we are attentive to each other's gifts and encourage each other to use those gifts. A relationship that doesn't allow you to develop and use your gifts is not right.

As a group, Ask the question; then Write the answers given on the board so all can see. Brainstorm your list to see how varied it may become!

- ◆ What are gifts that you may have or are developing? (ideas: drawing, playing an instrument, singing, writing, speaking well, researching, using the computer well, connecting people to others for assistance, prayer warrior, organizer, decorating, physically fit, do well with sports)
- ◆ **Look** at your written list. **Discuss:** Can all the "gifts" listed be used to give attention to others positively, and perhaps even help them with theirs? **Discuss;** do any only serve the individual and not able to give positive attention to another?

Comment on all the possibilities to grow, help others, and thank God for these gifts to share!

3 Right relationships attend to our need for many kinds of relationships. (7 min.)

When you think about it, there are very few things we do as Catholic Christians that do not involve relationships. We are called to focus our attention on our relationship with God, to model Christ in our relationships with others, to be members of our church community, to honor our father and mother, to love our neighbors, and to care for the poor and vulnerable. We are social beings and we benefit from participating in many different types of relationships. In those relationships we receive love, guidance, respect, and the opportunity to serve.

Briefly Ask group to share some of the varied relationships they are in with others—some may be as a member of a group or organization. Then **Ask**:

- in all those areas could you model Christ in those relationships?
- Do we? - as food for thought.

A relationship that does not allow us to meet our need for relationships with others is not right.

Share with class: Remember, if your relationships do not provide the attention you need, or include more negative than positive attention; OR

If you are involved in a relationship with someone who:

- Demands all of your attention..
- Stands in the way of you developing /using your gifts...
- Isolates you from relationships with others...

Talk to a trusted adult and share this information.

IV. ACTIVITY Worksheet: “Dividing Attention” (16 min. and 15 min. discussion)

DIRECTIONS: There are directions at the bottom of the page on this worksheet—please **read them out loud** to class to help them understand what to do. (16 min. to work)

After they have worked on the worksheet, then **discuss** with them about the two circles: (15 min.)

ASK:

- ♦ Is the way you sectioned the Present Circle how you are dividing your attention for the areas different from how you divided you time sections in the Should Give circle? Why are they different?
- ♦ What changes would you make in some areas to improve the attention you may need to give others?
- ♦ Are there some areas you perhaps need to decrease the attention you are giving?
- ♦ How do you think the changes may affect your relationships in those areas?
- ♦ Choose one area on your circle that you will start to make a change in the attention you will give to it. How will you start (Step 1)? (Lent is coming soon—maybe this is an idea to work on during that season).

EXTRA: IF there is extra time, you may use the quote below to read to the class, and ask them what it means to them in connection to the lesson presented today. Did they get it?

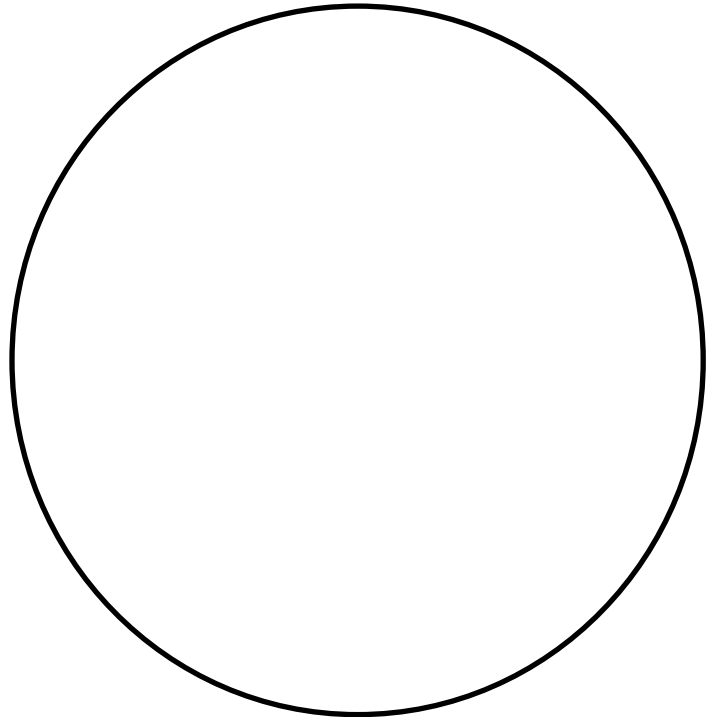
“You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” ~ St. Augustine

V. SUMMARIZE lesson’s key points: Review with class from this lesson-

- God made us to be with Him and others.
- We need attention from our parents, families and others.
- Right relationships offer positive attention rather than negative attention by:
 - * Help us to attend to others
 - * Pay attention to our gifts and the gifts of others.
 - * Attend to our need to participate in many kinds of relationships.
- It is important to tell a trusted adult who we receive attention from and when the amount or kind of attention we receive is not right.

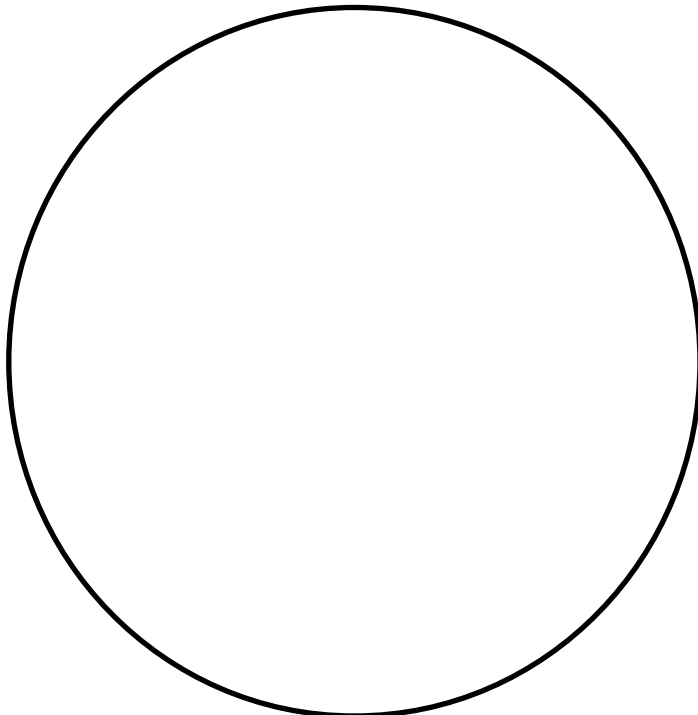
Dividing Attention

Present Amount



- Family
- Friends
- Service to Others
- Other Relationships
- Church
- Prayer
- Boyfriend/Girlfriend

Should Give



- Clubs/Groups
- Sports
- Work
- School
- Screen Time
- Online Friends
- Media
- Music

There's only so much time in a day, right? How do you decide who and what gets your attention? To have right relationships, we need to focus our attention on others; but we also need to pay attention to our gifts, and how we are called to use them. Use the circles above to divide as a pie graph, labelling each section. Show how much of your attention you think you **do give** to each of the above in the circle named "**Present Amount**." Show how much of your attention you think you **should give** to each of the above in the circle named "**Should Give**." Add and include anything missing that deserves your attention; cross out any area that does not apply to you. Is there anyone or anything that demands your attention? ..To the neglect of something else?

A Note to Parents

Attention

This week we discussed the Right Relationship concept of Attention in our faith formation program.

As parents, we are to bring up our children in the faith, so that they may know and love God. One necessary focus is helping our children develop a relationship with God. Through prayer we communicate with our Lord about our daily life with its sufferings and joys. In teaching our children the importance of prayer in our life, we model the importance of giving God attention to develop this intimate relationship. You are encouraged to discuss with each child how he/she gives attention to God as they develop a relationship with Him that will be there all of their life.

Younger grade levels (PreK-2) discussed how God created us to need others and to need attention from adults. When we are very young, most of the attention we get from adults is from our parents, grandparents, or other caregivers. As we get older and are involved in activities and relationships outside our home, we are likely to need and receive attention from other adults (e.g. teachers, coaches, the parents of friends, group leaders, etc.). Students were encouraged to talk to their parents about the adults who spend time with them—the adults who pay attention to them.

Grades 3-5 discussed the concepts of “positive attention” and “negative attention.” They were encouraged to consider positive ways to seek attention, including telling their parents if they need attention. They were instructed to let their parents know who is paying attention to them and to seek help if the attention they are getting is negative.

At the middle school/high school level, students discussed attention as an important quality of right relationships, but also highlighted the value of balancing the attention given to all of the significant relationships in their lives. Right relationships don’t demand all of our attention, but rather, help us attend to all of our relationships and use our gifts to attend to others.

If your child reports concerns about a relationship with an adult or peer, or if you would like more information about right relationships, please contact the Diocese of Rapid City Safe Environment Office (605)343-3541 or cverhey@diorc.org.

Attentive Listening

A good way to show your children that you are paying attention to them is to use active listening skills. We use active listening skills every day without thinking much about it, but when we are trying to give a clear message that our children have our undivided attention, it is useful to make these skills very deliberate actions.

1. When your child starts a conversation with you, put aside other distractions.
2. Make eye contact.
3. Respond to what they are saying by:
 - Nodding your head
 - Saying “uh, huh”
 - Asking a question.
 - Repeating what they said.
 - Making a comment.

Quality Time

You have probably heard it said that *it is not the quantity of time that we spend with our children that is important, but the quality of the time we spend with them that is significant.* In our busy world it can be difficult to find quantities of time to spend together. In addition, the pressure to “multi-task” in most areas of our lives can have an impact on the quality of time we spend with our children. To improve the quality of time we spend with our children, we don’t need to be engaged in any particular activity, achieve any specific goal, or create an image worthy of preserving in a scrapbook or posting on Facebook. We merely need to put aside past stressors, future worries, and competing thoughts; and focus on the here and now of our interaction. Select one of the precious few moments that you have to spend with your children. As you interact, take time to appreciate the feelings of the moment. Notice the details of the experience. Focus on the purpose of your interaction and your desire to give your children unconditional, positive attention.