

AFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT

3.0 PSYCHOLOGICAL STRENGTHS AND VIRTUES

3.2 Autonomy and Will

3.2c Self-Care

Self-care is:

- * caring for one's self, body, mind, and soul.
- * providing for one's needs through one's own efforts.
- * helping one's self without dependence on others.
- * having awareness of one's own needs.

Christ expresses it when He says that “when you fast, see to it that you groom your hair and wash your face” (Mt 6:17), is sleeping soundly in the boat (Mt 8:25), goes off to be alone and pray (Mt 14:22-24), tells His disciples to come away to rest awhile (Mk 6:31-32), says that by Mary perfuming His body, she is preparing it for burial (Mk 14:8), accepts an invitation to eat at the Pharisees home and then reclines to eat (Lk 7:36), asks for food “Have you anything here to eat?” (Lk 24:41), rises “from the meal and took off his cloak” (Jn 13:4), picks “up a towel and tied it around himself” (Jn 13:4).

It is important because:

- * self-care is a source of personal pride and supports one's sense of autonomy and worth.
- * with the exception of infants, all persons have some capacity to care for themselves.
- * self-care enables individuals to exercise individual and independent choices that affect them in deeply personal and private ways.
- * there is a natural link between self-care and caring for other aspects of one's life such as one's soul, health, safety, finances, shelter, etc.
- * our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit that God uses (1 Cor 3:16).

One would exhibit it by:

- * dressing and clothing one's self.
- * preparing one's own food and feeding one's self.
- * caring for one's personal hygiene.
- * caring for one's possessions.
- * taking care of one's responsibilities.
- * taking pride in being able to do for one's self.
- * announcing one's accomplishments to others.
- * managing money if age appropriate, such as an allowance or gift money.
- * initiating prayer to God when one is frustrated, sad, or angry.

AUTHOR'S NOTES:

Young children have ever-growing capabilities to care for themselves and their environment. However, they must be given daily opportunities to do so. The more you do for your child, the less your child will want to do for himself. This in turn will affect your child's ability to take care of himself or herself lifelong. Too much “adult help” may also affect your child's attitude about caring for him/herself in the future. Your child may not see “self-care” as a personal value or good thing to do.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT IT

1. For older infants and toddlers, let your child serve and feed him/herself food.
2. For toddlers and especially a child preschool and older, let your child wash, bathe, and groom him/herself daily. Be there to support and guide.
3. For toddlers and especially a child preschool and older, let your child dress him/herself and attempt buttoning, zipping, tying, etc.
4. Let your child help you do laundry, clean up spills and messes, help with dishes, and do other household activities that are needed to support your program. These activities show your child how to begin to take care of him/herself and his or her environment.
5. Let your child take responsibility for cleaning his or her room, taking out the trash, feeding the pet, making his or her bed, dusting and vacuuming, or completing homework assignments without being told.
6. Let your child prepare one meal a week—with your help for a younger child and with your supervision only for an older child.
7. Let your child make simple food choices.
8. Let your child prepare his or her own snacks.
9. Offer two choices for outfits and let your child choose and dress himself or herself.
10. Let your child practice cooking and dressing skills whenever possible (opening umbrellas, putting on boots, etc.).
11. Read stories, tell stories, let your child tell stories, and talk about what your child can do.
12. Invite your child to wear a crucifix on a chain around his/her neck or a crucifix ring as a reminder Jesus is the center of his/her life and as a reminder that “Jesus’ love is expressed in His dying on the cross for my sins”.
13. Let your child manage his or her own money if age appropriate.
14. Teach your child that your child’s body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, with God living in your child (1 Cor. 6:19).
15. Let your child be responsible for your child’s own morning and evening prayers.
16. Let your child pray a blessing prayer before family meals.
17. Let your child pray a prayer of protection in the car before turning on the ignition.
18. Encourage your child to read and write Scripture passages that tell how God cares for His children. For example, (Ex 15:26) “For I, the Lord, am your healer”. Encourage your child to pray this each time your child is sick or injured.
19. Encourage your child to care for him/herself because the human body shares in the dignity of being made in the image of God. For this reason we are all obliged to regard our human body as “good”. We must hold it in honor and care for it since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day (Dan 3: 57-80).
20. Teach your child that he/she is the temple of God. “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?” (1 Cor 6:19-20). For this reason, we are all obliged to regard our human body as “good”. We must hold it in honor and care for it since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day (Dan 3: 57-80)
21. Talk with your child about his/her human body having a spiritual soul. As such, it is just as important to feed the soul with prayer and the Word of God, as it is to feed the body with food and drink. “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual one” (1 Cor 15:44-45).