

KNOWING MY VALUE

GRADES 7-9 - Lesson II (Year III, Day 2)

Goal: Students will learn about addiction as a life issue, from the perspective of faith. They will explore the understanding that God has a plan for each person, and that our responsibility is to respond with respect for ourselves.

Lesson:

“I will praise You because I have been fearfully and wonderfully made”. (Ps 39:14). Our minds and bodies have been entrusted to us by our Creator. We have been given the ability to think, to feel, and to make free choices. God also gave us many amazing things - the “fruits of the earth” - for our nourishment and enjoyment. But using drugs or alcohol is a way that alters or impairs our freedom and ability to think clearly, to get “buzzed” or “high”, is always sinful. In the same way, our sexuality is a gift from God, but abusing it by watching pornography, masturbating or engaging in sexual acts outside of marriage is a failure to steward our minds and bodies (in addition to the harm caused to others). Deliberately choosing to impair our God-given capacities or harm our bodies in any way is a rejection of God’s love for us.

Substance abuse and pornography are some of the most common and destructive addictions today. Addiction alters one’s brain, making a person dependent on a certain substance or behavior. Once addiction develops, the person is no longer free and can find himself making choices contrary to his health and wellbeing, often disregarding others as well. Many times young people can be exposed to drugs or pornography involuntarily or out of curiosity. Unfortunately, especially for those who are particularly susceptible because of genetics or life experiences, this can often lead to addiction. While the brain is still growing and developing, children and teens are especially vulnerable to being caught in the net of addiction.

It is possible to overcome addiction, but it requires help and support and especially the grace of God. Nothing, not even addiction, can completely take away our free will. But making good choices at the beginning will prevent great suffering and help preserve our amazing God-given capacities as human beings so you can be the person God made you to be.

Activity: Have your students study how certain addictive substances or behaviors affect your brain. You might have students break into groups and present their findings to the class.

Here are some good resources that could be helpful

[Drugs and the Brain](#)

[Cannibis - the facts you need to know](#); [Mind Matters: Marijuana](#)

[How Pornography Affects Individuals](#); [How Porn Can Affect the Brain Like a Drug](#)

Watch: [Smith's Story](#)

Discussion:

Why did Smith start using pornography?

What was the moment that changed things for Smith? What helped him overcome his addiction?

What is Smith's message for his generation?

Activity: Disruption

Read a list of 20 words aloud to the class and then ask students to write down as many as they can remember.

Then have several students stand, in pairs, at various points in the room and carry on loud conversations while you read a list of 20 new words to the remainder of the class. Ask students to again write down as many words as they can remember. Compare performance between the two trials.

Mention to the students that, like the disruptive pairs of students, drug use can interfere with normal information transfer and memory.

Activity: Healthy Relaxation

Addictive behaviors often begin as unhealthy ways to cope with stress and anxiety. Use these [scripts](#) to teach students healthier ways to relax.

Activity: How do I see myself in 20 years?

When we become too focused on our day-to-day struggles, disappointments and fears, we can lose sight of the big picture. In 20 years, you will be around 30 years old. What do you hope to be true about your life? What do you think will matter most to you? Which relationships do you expect to endure? What new relationships do you hope to form? Can you think of any things about your life now that you could change in order to better prepare for that future? What are some potential obstacles?

Resources for Teachers and Parents

This lesson is part of the suicide prevention program of the Archdiocese of New York and so we have included some additional resources on the topic for teachers and parents.

[Covenant Eyes](#) is an app that helps break pornography addictions and can also be used by parents to protect children from exposure to dangerous internet content.

Helpguide.org information on [Teen Depression and Suicide](#) and [Anxiety in Children and Teens](#). Valuable resource for parents and educators to understand symptoms and warning signs and know how to help.

[ADAPP Suicide Prevention](#). A video training series to help parents and educators prevent suicide among youth.

[New York State Office of Mental Health](#) offers information on suicide prevention, including trainings, workshops, and learning modules:

The [Samaritans NYC](#) offer non-faith-based information on suicide: suicide prevention hotlines and also for “suicide survivors,” those who are left behind to sort through “what happened,”

[Solace House Suicide Prevention Center](#) (two NY locations: Long Island City, Queens; and Yonkers), to prevent suicide and also for suicide bereavement. (718) 482-0001;

Suicide can be a challenging topic for everyone, but please remember that help is always available (24/7) for anyone suffering from depression or having thoughts of suicide. For confidential guidance for your child, or anyone:

Call, text, or chat 9-8-8

Similar to 911, the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is a national hotline that connects a caller in a mental health crisis to a trained counselor who can address their immediate needs (and even help connect them to ongoing care if they desire).