

Healthy Relationship Concept: Forgiveness

Use with
Lessons:

Forgiveness

Reconciliation

Saying “I’m Sorry”

Sin

Key Concepts:

- God forgives us and wants us to forgive others.
- Forgiveness is an important quality of right relationships.
- Forgiving others does not mean giving others permission to hurt us.
- Being truly sorry means feeling remorse, doing something to make things right, and trying not to sin again.
- God wants us to be safe.
- God wants everyone to know true forgiveness.

“I’m Sorry”

Discussion Grades PreK - 3

God forgives us and asks us to forgive others. When we are sorry for our sins and ask God’s forgiveness God forgives us. And God asks us to do the same for other people. Forgiving others can be hard—but we can pray for God’s help to forgive others like God forgives us.

When we are sorry for something we know that we did something wrong, we feel bad, and we try not to do it again.

- Would you believe someone who took a piece of candy from you, said “I’m sorry,” then grabbed another piece.
- If someone called you a name and they were still laughing when they said “I’m sorry,” would you believe them?

Activities / Games

Forgiveness Chain

Activity Grades 2-4

The ability to forgive others, and to seek reconciliation links us together. Cut out the figures on page 7 and glue their arms into a circle. Write ways you have shown you were sorry, things you have done to not sin again, and ways you have tried to “make things right” on the slips of paper. Cut out the strips and glue them together in a paper chain, linking the two figures together.



When we are truly sorry we do more than say “I’m sorry;” we do something to make things right.

- If we make a big mess, we don’t say, “I’m sorry” and leave it for someone else to clean up—we clean it up.
- If we hurt someone, we say “I’m sorry” and we try to help them.

When God asks us to forgive others that doesn’t mean that we are supposed to let others hurt us.

Tell your parents or another trusted adult:

- If someone is hurting you. (Even if they said “I’m sorry” and you have forgiven them.) **God doesn’t want you to be hurt .**
- If someone keeps doing something after you ask them to stop—or after they say they are sorry. **God wants everyone to learn what forgiveness is all about.**
- If you have done something you feel bad about, you have said “I’m sorry,” you have done something to make it right, you’ve tried not to do it again; and someone still won’t forgive you. **God wants you to be forgiven.**

pened to the relationships represented by the chains? Think of some ways to make things right again. Remind them of the importance of reconciliation and stress to the students that God forgives us for the things we “don’t do” (and should have done) as well as the things we do. Encourage them to tell their parent or a trusted adult if someone is doing something that is “tearing up” their relationship.

Discussion Grades 4-8

Reconciliation

As Catholic Christians we celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation. In the sacrament of reconciliation we repent of our sins and we receive forgiveness. We are also called to repair or reconcile the relationships that were damaged by our sins.

We can think of a sin as something that damages a relationship.

- With God
- With others
- Within ourselves

When we start to look at sins in this way it becomes clear that when we are truly repentant we have some reconciling / “relationship fixing” to do.

How do we fix a relationship? If we have done something to damage a relationship, how do we fix it? First of all, we can always ask for God’s help to make things right. Next, we

need to find a way to communicate our feelings. We need to share with the “other” in the relationship that we know we goofed and we are feeling remorse about it. Often it works well to use an “I-feel” statement to communicate this:

- **I feel** _____

(insert feeling here — for example: sad, bad, awful, really guilty, like pond scum, etc.)

- **About** _____

(admit what you did that you are sorry for.)

- **Because** _____

(say why you feel remorse, e.g. “I know it really hurt your feelings and I didn’t mean to...” “I know that vase from Aunt Ethel was really important to you...”)

- **Please** _____

(Here’s where you ask for forgiveness and find out what you can do to make things right - for example: “Please forgive me.” “Please tell me what to do to make it up to you.” “Please let me replace it.”, etc.)

Finally, we need to put our words into **action**.

- We need to **really listen** when someone tells us what they need to make things right. Sometimes that means trying to see things through their eyes and imagine how they are feeling.
- We need to do our best to **respond** to their request. (If you’re not sure if what they are asking for is a good idea, pray about it and ask a trusted adult for some guidance)
- We need to make good on our promise to **not sin in that way again**.

What if we’re the one who’s hurt? If someone does something to hurt their relationship with us we should try to forgive them. That doesn’t mean that we have to keep getting hurt if they don’t change their behavior. If you are in a hurtful relationship, you may need some help to change things. Talk to your parents or someone else you trust.

Discussion Grades 9-12

Grudges, Accusations, and Control

As Catholic Christians we are called to forgive others as God forgives us. That means that when someone makes a mistake and is heartily sorry, we don’t hold a grudge and we don’t let it define our relationship with them.

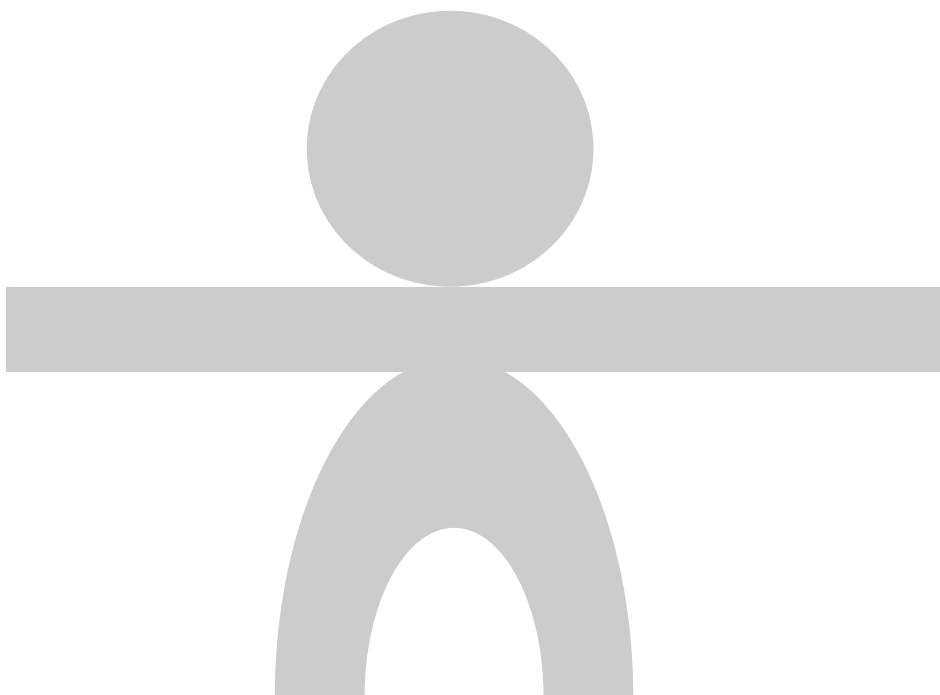
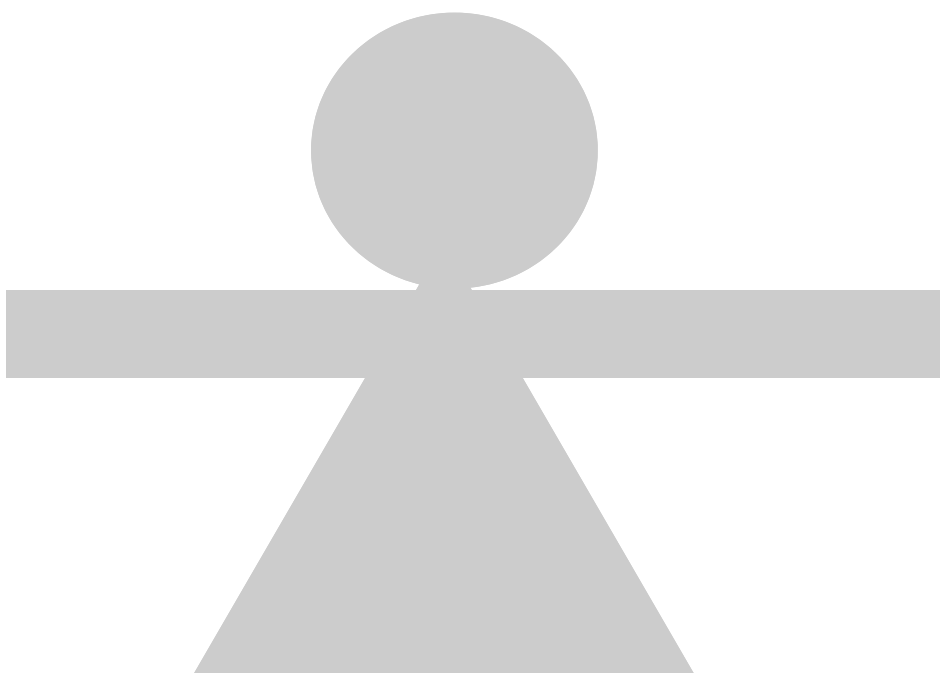
Think about what our lives would be like if God held grudges. What hope would we have if God decided that because we aren’t perfect we can’t be trusted to ever do the right thing. Sometimes we can feel hopeless in our human relationships—when one person or the other just can’t forgive and spends the rest of the relationship accusing the other of wrongdoing, even when the person intended no harm.

Being able and willing to forgive is an important quality of right relationships. You may have experienced a

relationship where a parent, a child, a friend or a dating partner just couldn’t forgive....Ultimately, one person ends up controlling the other’s feelings and behavior by continually bringing up past mistakes, accusing the other of wrong intentions, labeling the other as untrustworthy, and blaming the other for everything that goes wrong. That’s not a right relationship and not the way God wants things to be. Whether the relationship is between parents and children, friends, or dating partners, there needs to be room to make mistakes and to make changes for the better.

Forgiveness does not mean giving up your values, allowing yourself to be hurt, or accepting blame that doesn’t belong to you. If you are

being hurt in a relationship—physically, emotionally, or sexually, seek help. It’s not uncommon for an abuser to act remorseful – to promise to change – to beg for forgiveness after they have been abusive. In fact, it is so common that the “cycle of violence” includes a “honeymoon phase” after abusive incidents in which the abuser often does seem to change and things seem o.k. for a while. Unfortunately, the cycle is hard to break without help and abuse is likely to occur again. Confide in a friend, talk to your parent(s) or tell a trusted adult if someone you care about is hurting you, repeatedly asks you to give up your values, accuses you of things you did not do, or blames you for everything that goes wrong in your relationship.



Forgive.

Say, "I'm sorry."

Don't do the same thing again.

Ask how to make things right.

Fix what's broken.

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Diocese of
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Child
Protection
Office

Activity Keys

Add this to your Resource Binder

Please keep these materials and add them to the resource binder you started last month for your catechists.

If you have ideas for future issues, questions, or feedback on the materials you have received to date. Please contact the Diocesan Child Protection Office at (308) 382-6565 or cpo@gidiocese.org.

Page 4 Grades 4-6 Activity

Saying "I'm Sorry"

If we think of sin as something we've done that damages a relationship with God, with others, within ourselves, then being truly sorry means doing something to recover the relationship. Using an I-feel statement can be a good first step toward fixing the relationship.

Think of some I-feel statements for the following situations:

Example:
I feel very sorry because I was late to school.
I feel sorry because I was late to school.

• Spreading rumors
I feel _____ because _____
I feel _____ because _____

• Leaving someone out
I feel really bad because I was late to school.
I feel _____ because _____

• Telling a lie
I feel terrible because I was late to school.
I feel _____ because _____

• Lashing out in anger
I feel very bad because I was late to school.
I feel _____ because _____

• Other
I feel _____ because _____
I feel _____ because _____

Grades PreK-1 Activity Page 1

Who is Sorry?

Being truly sorry means...

These two children were asked to clear the snow from their front porch. They played in the snow instead. One of them was sorry that they didn't complete their chore. Can you tell which one? How do you know?

These boys didn't help clean up. Which one is doing something to "make things right"?

These two children played in the leaves instead of raking them up as their parents asked. Which one is trying not to sin again?

Showing I'm Sorry.

Circle the ways you can show you are sorry.

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Being truly sorry means



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Showing I'm Sorry.

Circle the ways you can show you are sorry.



Saying "I'm Sorry"

If we think of sin as something we've done that damages a relationship (with God, with others, within ourselves), then being truly sorry means doing something to reconcile the relationship. Using an I-feel statement can be a good first step toward fixing the relationship.

Think of some I-feel statements for the following situations:

Example:

I feel _____ *very sorry* _____
(Insert your feeling here.)

about *taking the remote and changing the channel.*
(Say what you did that you are feeling remorse about.)

because *I know it was your turn to choose the show.*
(Tell why you feel the way you do.)

Please *let me know what to do to make it up to you.*
(Ask the person what you can do to fix things.)

- Leaving someone out

I Feel _____

about _____.

Because _____.

Please _____.

- Telling a lie

I Feel _____

about _____.

Because _____.

Please _____.

- Spreading rumors

I Feel _____

about _____.

because _____.

Please _____.

- Lashing out in anger

I Feel _____

about _____.

because _____.

Please _____.

- Other

I Feel _____

about _____.

because _____.

Please _____.

Cycle of Violence



Generally, battering does not occur constantly, but rather in a cycle. The cycle consists of three phases: the tension building phase, the acute battering incident, and the kindness, contrite, loving behavior (sometimes referred to as the "honeymoon" stage.)

Tension-building Phase: During this phase of the cycle, tension builds in the relationship. There may be verbal, emotional, or physical abuse during this phase. This abuse can increase and escalate in frequency and severity over time. The person being abused may attempt to control the abuse through various coping techniques such as avoidance, placating, or "giving in," but these methods do not work for long, if at all. Once the tension reaches an unbearable level, the acute battering incident occurs.

Acute Battering Incident: This is an uncontrollable discharge of built-up tension; the process has stopped responding to any control. The "trigger" for moving into this phase is rarely the victims behavior; rather it is usually an external stressor or the internal state of the abuser. The type of battering that occurs is usually much more serious and intense than in phase one and the victim may be severely injured.

Honeymoon Phase (apologies, excuses, promises of reform) The abuser realizes they have gone too far. They typically exhibit loving, kind behavior while apologizing and promising that it will never happen again. Both the abuser and the victim want to believe that it won't happen again.

The cycle is then repeated.

A Note to Parents

This week we discussed the Right Relationship concept of forgiveness in the context of our religious education lesson. We discussed how God forgives our sins and calls us to forgive one another.

In younger grades (K-3) we discussed ways to show we are sorry , including apologizing, trying not to sin again, and doing something to make things right . We reminded students that God wants them to be safe, and it was stressed that forgiving others does not mean letting others hurt us. Children were encouraged to tell their parents or another trusted adult:

- If they are being hurt
- If someone “keeps doing something” after they ask them to stop (or after apologizing).
- If someone won’t forgive them.

Older students (grades 4-8) were encouraged to think of sin as something that damages a relationship:

- with God
- with others
- within ourselves

They were encouraged to communicate feelings of remorse and do something to fix the relationship. “I-feel” statements were practiced as a good way to communicate feelings and ask for help in reconciling relationships. They were encouraged to let someone know if they are being hurt in a relationship.

At the high school level we discussed how forgiving others means not holding a grudge and not letting the mistakes of others define our relationship with them. In a relationship, holding grudges and being unwilling to forgive can be a sign of power, control, and ultimately abuse. High school students were reminded that forgiving others does not mean giving up our values, allowing ourselves to be hurt, or accepting blame that does not belong to us. Youth were encouraged to seek help if they are being hurt physically, emotionally, or sexually in a relationship. They were encouraged to confide in a friend, talk to their parents, or tell another trusted adult if they have been hurt – even if the other person acts remorseful – as the cycle of abuse and control is difficult to break without help.

If your child reports concerns about a relationship, there are many resources available through the Diocesan Child Protection Office (308)382-6565 or cpo@gidiocese.org.

***“...be kind to one another, compassionate, and mutually forgiving,
just as God has forgiven you in Christ.” - Ephesians 4:32***