



the Parent LINK

Religious Education

February 2012

Teen Edition



*St. Alphonsus
Parish*



THE VIEW

- One in five teens says they've purposely injured themselves at some time.
- An estimated one in every 200 teenage girls cuts themselves regularly. Without treatment, this behavior often continues into adulthood.
- In a study, most chronic self-mutilators described their families as "full of anger...in which they were told to always be strong and prevented from expressing their feelings."

OFFER HOPE TO SELF-HARMERS

The problems facing today's young people may not be bigger than what teenagers faced 20 years ago, but they're multiplying. To cope with stress, abuse, broken homes, peer pressure, addictions, depression, and low self-esteem, many teenagers harm themselves through cutting, eating disorders, and engaging in risky behavior.

When life gets tough, there's no help or hope found in paralyzing guilt, rejection, or searching for scapegoats. Instead, it's essential for parents to stick with and accept teenagers, seek help, extend forgiveness, and promote healing.

First, honestly evaluate any signs of self-destructive behavior. Watch for scratches, scars, burns, isolation, fainting, tooth decay, a drastic change in eating habits, or a fixation on perceived physical flaws. Gently but persistently bring the problem to light. Avoid the extremes of blowing up or delicately sidestepping the problem. State the facts while expressing genuine concern. Explain that you'll help your teenager find other ways to work through tough emotions. Work to identify the root cause and sustaining factors, including your current family culture. Then include your teenager as much as possible in an action plan. Work with a trusted physician or counselor, giving your teen some say in the process. This can be the time when teenagers begin walking down the road to freedom, and you can help set them on that course.



A CATHOLIC WAY TO PRAY

One form of prayer that is very common for Catholics is reflective prayer, or, prayer that looks back in order to recognize the presence of God in our everyday experiences because we may have missed him the 1st time around.. St. Ignatius of Loyola suggests the following steps:

1. **Quiet yourself & recall God's presence, thanking God for his love & asking the Spirit for guidance.**
2. **Review your day, thanking God for the various blessings you experienced.**
3. **Review your day again thinking about the opportunities you had to use the gifts God has given you, identifying the times you either did or or didn't.**
4. **Thank God for the ways you grew closer to him.**
5. **Resolve to cooperate with God's grace in the days to come.**

TIPS >>>

Group's Emergency Response Handbook for Parents offers guidelines about how to talk to teenagers who are hurting:

What Not To Say

- **"You're scaring me."** Expressing shock or horror reinforces the belief that teens are isolated, different, and even deserving of the inflicted pain.
- **"If I find you doing this again..."** Self-destructive behavior isn't a character issue. Rules and consequences won't affect emotions, although you can limit negative influences.
- **"You're too skinny."** This brings the focus back to body image and makes weight loss the center of attention.

What To Say

- **"I know you've been hurting yourself."** The only effective way to deal with this problem is to face it head-on. Accusations and demands usually backfire, but a humble, honest explanation of the truth can be a first step to freedom.
- **"Have you noticed any circumstances, events, or patterns that occur before you react this way?"** Upon reflection, teenagers may realize they feel the urge to engage in self-destructive behavior at certain times. Work together to find other means of responding to emotional pain.
- **"Let's get help."** Assure teenagers you love them unconditionally and will walk with them through whatever it takes to find healing.



Rx for Healing

Expert Insights for Parents of Teenagers

By Megan Hutchinson

I've been blessed to come alongside hurting teens for many years and have recognized that they all have one thing in common: something significant is missing deep within. And that something is very basic and is intentionally designed by God. Kids want to be 1.) nurtured patiently, 2.) accepted as they are, and 3.) loved genuinely. If these are absent from teenagers' primary relationships, there inevitably will be pain.

Typically, that pain begins to surface during the adolescent years, when developmental changes are at their peak. And that's where parents and youth workers come in. We're privileged to be part of these kids' lives just when they're hurting the most.

Here's how you can meet their three key needs:

1. Patient Nurture. Be tender and empathic. Come alongside young people and help them grow as if they're a fragile plant in need of gentleness and care. Nurturing is powerful because it validates the very emotion that's gone ignored and subdued in each hurting teen.

2. Unconditional Acceptance. This means welcoming teenagers as they are. Respect who they are as people, not as "kids" who need special treatment. Embrace teenagers regardless of your personal preferences or moral positions...no strings attached.

3. Genuine Love. Be the hands, heart, and mouthpiece of Jesus with kids. See each one as a precious soul cherished and loved by the Creator himself. Consistently show up in their lives with encouragement, belief, and hope for what they cannot see for themselves. Just as Jesus modeled with the woman at the well, love teenagers the way they are, but then refuse to leave them the way they are.

Megan Hutchinson, co-creator of the curriculum *Life Hurts, God Heals*, writes at SimplyYouthMinistry.com.

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

MAINSTREAM MUSIC



FLORENCE + THE MACHINE

Background: This English band consists of singer Florence Welch and a group of collaborators. Their first album was a hit—especially in England—but they're now well known here, too. Their style recalls past alternative acts, such as Kate Bush and Siouxsie and the Banshees, along with modern artists such as Bjök and Fiona Apple. Florence is also known for her unique fashion stylings. Both albums focus on love and especially heartache.

Albums: *Ceremonials* (2011), *Lungs* (2009)

What Florence + the Machine Says: "When you're heartbroken, you're at your most creative. You have to channel all your energies into something else to not think about it. Contentment is a creativity killer, but don't worry. I'm very capable of making myself discontented."

Explore: Both albums are on Spotify. "Shake It Out," the first single from *Ceremonials*, is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbN0nX61rIs

CHRISTIAN MUSIC



KARI JOBE

Background: This 30-year-old worship singer went to #3 on the Billboard Christian chart and #1 on the iTunes Christian chart. Jobe is a refreshing voice in a worship arena usually dominated by men and Hillsong-related women.

Albums: *Where I Find You* (2011), *Kari Jobe* (2009), *Le Canto* (2009)

What Jobe Says: "I was standing in a worship service, and I didn't really care for a song that was playing, and so I was just kind of watching. I felt the Lord saying to me very strongly, 'Does it really matter what song it is?' ... It just makes me remember we are so full of the flesh."

Explore: Listen to Jobe's songs at myspace.com/karijobemusic. An acoustic version of her hit single "We Are" is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=B07iK9uh9qY.

MOVIE

Movie: *Red Tails*

Genre: Action, Drama, War

Rating: PG-13 (for some sequences of war violence)

Synopsis: This WWII drama profiles the famed Tuskegee airmen, black pilots who posted stellar records but had to fight both German pilots and prejudice from their own country.

Our Take: Such films offer great opportunities to talk about prejudices and how we should address them. Plus, teaching teenagers about history is always a good thing.

Movie: *Underworld: Awakening*

Genre: Action, Horror

Rating: Not Yet Rated (Probably R)

Synopsis: After discovering that vampires and werewolves are real, humans try to wipe out both species.

Our Take: This is a decidedly nonsparkly take on vampires, with lots of guns, violence, and bloodshed. I'm not a fan of films that manipulate viewers so they root against humans.

For more media discussions and ideas, go to www.MinistryandMedia.com

VIDEO GAME



Trials Evolution—The follow-up to the smash Xbox Live Arcade game features more motorcycle mayhem. Now, instead of being in warehouses, the crazy courses are indoors, outdoors, and anywhere you can imagine. All 60 tracks were created with the same level editor that comes with the game, so players have hours of creative potential. And there's no violence, other than crashing *hard* when you miss a jump.

Silent Hill HD Collection—The horror titles in this collection all received critical acclaim, but this is *not* something you want your kids playing. It's deeply disturbing, filled with paranoia and unspeakable monsters (including barely dressed nurses) designed to scare players physically and psychologically.

Getting Ready

The days of Lent prepare us to celebrate Easter and welcome new members into the Church. The rites and observances of Lent invite us to strengthen our union with Jesus Christ and to join with him on his journey to Jerusalem, where he was crucified. Throughout Lent the Church constantly proclaims that by dying Jesus brought us new life and taught us how to live as People of God. Through the cross of Christ new life was given to the world.

During Lent we are invited to undertake this journey wholeheartedly through the works of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. We pray for others and ourselves. We give something up. We share our time and ourselves more generously with other people. These traditional Lenten works remind us that denial and struggle—taking up our cross each day—are essential dimensions of living as disciples of Jesus, ultimately bring

new life, and help us prepare for the greatest celebration of the liturgical year, Easter.

Looking for More?

- **Faith First Legacy Edition**
Additional Activities booklet for appropriate age level
- **Faith First Legacy Edition**
Called to Prayer booklet for appropriate age level
- *Garden of Virtues* by Christina Keffler, and Rebecca Donnelly, and illustrated by Suzanne Etman (Ave Maria Press). This trio of moms offers 52 ways of teaching children values that will delight you.
- *Spiritual Intelligence* by Marsha Sinetar (Orbis Books). Helps parents discover, appreciate, and learn from the inner wisdom of their children and the way children bring to life what is best and most fully human in their hearts.

Faith First.com

For more ideas on how your family can live your faith, visit the "Faith First for Families" page at www.FaithFirst.com. Click on "Family Meal Prayer." This week, pray this prayer together before family meals.



Catholic Family Traditions

This is an appropriate time to review the Beatitudes together as a family. You can find this prayer in the "Prayers and Practices" section in the back of your child's book. Choose a time when you can pray this prayer together each day this week.

FIRST RECONCILIATION



CONFIRMATION RETREAT



February



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
CLOW 11:00 5 RE Sessions 8:45-10:15 RE for Deaf 3:15-4:45 	6 RE Sessions 4:30 - 6:00 Tri-Parish Lenten Reflection 7:00	7 1st Communion Parent Mtg 7:00 - 8:00 	8 RE Sessions 6:00 - 7:30	9	10	11
12 RE Sessions 8:45-10:15 RE for Deaf 3:15-4:45 Conf Rite 5:00 7:30 & 9:00 Confirmation Penitential Rite	13 RE Sessions 4:30 - 6:00	14 Valentine's Day 	15 RE Sessions 6:00 - 7:30	16	17	18
19 No Sessions CLOW 11:00	20 Presidents' Day 	21  Palm Burning 8:00am	22  ASH WEDNESDAY No Sessions	LENT BEGINS		25 Young People's Mass - 4th Grade 5:00 
26 RE Sessions 8:45-10:15 Confirmation Rite 11:00 Practice 12:00 Spirit Day 12:45 - 3:30	27 RE Sessions 4:30 - 6:00	28	29 RE Sessions 6:00 - 7:30 Lent Bible Study 7:00			

