



THE POWER OF *Freedom*

A young adult's guide to physical, emotional
and spiritual freedom and safety

DECEMBER 2019

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FOR THE CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF PERTH





The Power of Freedom

A young adult's guide to physical, emotional and spiritual freedom and safety.

Edited by Andrea Musulin

Based on the Protective Behaviours Program by Peg Flandreau West

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Archbishop's Foreword



Welcome.

In 2016 I established the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth Safeguarding Program as a response to the increasing recognition and occurrence of abuse and violence in relationships and sadly, a growing acceptance among young people and the wider community of such behaviours.

At the very heart of this initiative is our commitment to the principle that all people have an absolute right to physical, psychological and spiritual freedom and safety at all times. The Church, as a Christian institution, should now and into the future be at the forefront of efforts to make this a reality.

Recognising that there is no fool-proof system for the complete prevention of abuse, this resource has been written in the hope that it will increase your personal safety through proactive measures, enabling you to develop a shared understanding of how to best safeguard yourself, be your authentic self, and to develop good practices across the diverse and complex areas in which you live, study, work and socialise.

This resource is just one aspect of the work and commitment of the Safeguarding Office. It complements the work of the more than 230 Safeguarding Officers who work in Catholic rural and metropolitan parishes. By their presence and active engagement in the parishes, Safeguarding Officers seek to ensure that the dignity of all persons is honoured and protected in our Catholic institutions, and that each person's right to absolute safety from any form of abuse, unhealthy relationships or ill-treatment is an absolute priority for us all.

This resource is offered, not only to Catholic young adults, but to all who might find it useful as a practical and informative resource.

In officially launching this valuable and important resource, I wish to express how enormously grateful I am to Ms Andrea Musulin, our Safeguarding Director, and her safeguarding team across the Archdiocese who continue to demonstrate their courage and willingness to play their part in safeguarding.

In particular I wish to acknowledge the work of Barbara Blayney, Safeguarding Program Coordinator and Tom Gourlay, Manager, Campus Ministry, University of Notre Dame, Fremantle Campus, for the partnership and collaboration that has made this resource possible. The commitment they have brought to this task represents the wider commitment of the Catholic Church to safeguarding as an essential dimension of our shared mission.



May we continue our commitment to this vital work, walking together in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd.

+ Timothy Costelloe SDB

Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Catholic Archbishop of Perth

Introduction

Informed by the fundamental belief that everyone has the right to physical and psychological safety at all times, the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth Safeguarding Program in partnership with The University of Notre Dame Australia, bring you this booklet to help you navigate the many choices and challenges of adulthood. It is designed to support your journey through life as you build a deeper understanding of who you are emotionally, physically and spiritually. It also sets out a life skills approach to personal discovery and safety which may assist you.

In this booklet we aim to provide tools to help you navigate unique life experiences, some of which may be difficult. One particular tool is *The Examen Prayer*, from the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). *The Examen Prayer* provides a scaffold that assists in unpacking and understanding our experiences with the help of the Holy Spirit. *The Examen Prayer* follows five simple steps (detailed on page 17).

The early years of your adult life are fun and full of adventure. It is a time when you make lots of friends, many of whom will be friends for life. It is a time too, where we find ourselves in unique situations otherwise unknown to us. This should not be a cause of fear or anxiety, but an opportunity for us to rely on our friends and family in an open and honest (and adult) way. It is important to establish and maintain an atmosphere of trust with those around us. Remember, no one needs to be alone on this journey.



What is the relationship
between freedom and truth?



How can I be my
authentic-self?

Freedom

What makes you, you?

True love requires freedom

Go beyond the superficial and seek
the whole truth of who you are



"You will know the truth, and the
truth will set you free" Jn 8:31

Freedom

Freedom, a basic human right, is one of the most fundamental desires of the human heart.

In today's culture freedom is often understood as the absence of restrictions – “I am free insofar as I can do as I please on any given occasion”. However, the great thinkers of history saw freedom as much greater - the ability to choose the good and to do it. As St Pope John Paul II put it, “freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought” (8 Oct 1985). Our right to feel safe is also very much embedded in our freedom.

We all have the right to feel safe all of the time.

Freedom and Truth

What is the relationship between freedom and truth?

Jesus taught clearly about the relationship between truth and freedom when he taught; “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (Jn 8:32). Knowing the truth about ourselves, our bodies, and how we relate with others gives us a freedom that would otherwise be beyond our grasp. Where do we go to find out this truth about ourselves? We can begin in a few places, but perhaps the best idea is to begin with our own experience. What is it that makes me feel most myself; that makes me feel most human? Who do I find to be most inspiring?

In fact, when we dig down, we find that those people who have lived good, even holy lives tend to be the most instructive to our understanding of the good life. This is true in Catholic teaching. The saints are the most interesting and inspiring people, not because they never fail, or have never sinned, but because they always sought to do better with God's help. In fact, as the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) emphasised, it is Jesus who reveals not only God to us, but also what it means to be fully human (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22).

What is
Freedom?



Consider what it means to be fully human? What makes you, you? How can I be my authentic-self? To go beyond the superficial and seek the whole truth of who we are.

When examining your own freedom, consider:

- What is freedom?
- How can I be free?
- How do I grow in freedom?
- How does my personal safety set me free?
- What does it mean to respect the freedom of others?
- What does it mean to be free from secrecy and shame?

Nothing is so awful that we can't talk with someone about it.

Made for Communion

God did not create us to be alone. In the Scriptures, God made Adam and Eve for each other (Genesis 2:18). While this reference is specifically referring to God's creation of marriage, it also speaks to the fact that humans are called to community. Helping others and allowing ourselves to be helped is an important and essential element of life.

Sometimes you need help but you're not sure how to ask. Other times you might feel not able to ask because of something you did or said. You might feel shame, guilt or worry about the disappointment to others. Asking for help sets you free to be the person you and God want you to be.

You might see asking for help as a sign of weakness, but it takes real courage to reach out and say that you're struggling or you're uncertain about what someone is making or asking you to do. God knows life doesn't always go to plan. Try and remain true to your authentic-self and find the freedom to be the person you want to be.

One example that you may need help with, is an abuse or harassment concern. This can be especially difficult because of the possible coercion, threats, secrets or even the relationship itself may make it difficult to get help.



Living with secrets or shame takes its toll and limits your physical and emotional freedom. The power of shame or secrets can be overwhelming; makes you feel trapped and this preoccupies your thoughts. Setting your secrets free can seem daunting but comes with tangible benefits both mentally and physically. It may open wounds or doors that have been closed for some time, but do not be afraid and do not let this limit your right to freedom. Seek support from someone you trust, and if you are feeling guilty, speak to a priest in the Sacrament of Confession and seek the forgiveness of God. Confession can be a great source of healing, comfort and easing of burden.

Set yourself free - Free to love - Free from harm.



How do I engage in these relationships?
How do these relationships change me,
and how do they change the others
with whom I am in relationship with?



What is the meaning of life?

Who Am I?

Is my life more fulfilled when
I try to live a life of love?

Where do I fit in life?



What makes me, me?



Created in the image
and likeness of God

Who Am I?



What does it mean to be fully human?

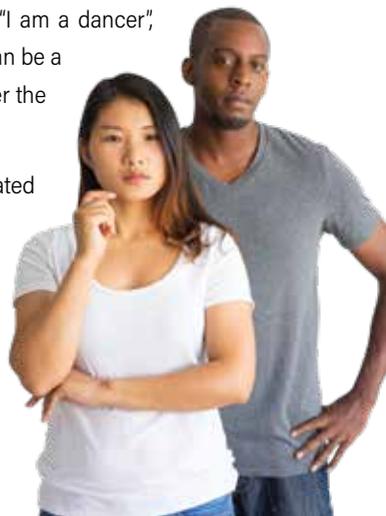
How often do we give ourselves the time to sit and reflect on the deeper questions of life? What is the meaning of life? What does it mean to be a good person, friend, daughter, son, brother, or sister, wife or husband? There are times in life when these questions specifically confront us, such as the death of a loved one, the transition from high school to further study, a new job, the break-up of a relationship, or new love.

Where do I fit in life?

As we mature it is important to keep these questions open, and to honestly seek answers. Seeking answers can be confronting and we may avoid or distract ourselves in a myriad of ways such as hyperactivity (working/studying/socialising), drug and alcohol use, or by distracting ourselves with pornography or technology such as mobiles, Netflix, and social media – these always fail to satisfy us for very long. Alternatively, we can find ourselves uncomfortable with what seems to be an increasing perplexity in life and relationships. In such instances we can be tempted to settle for quick and easy answers, but these too fail to satisfy.

When we are confronted with questions that deal with what it means to exist, we can easily fall into the trap of thinking we are merely the things that we do, or enjoy: "I am a basketball player", "I am a dancer", and "I am a student", "I work for...". These things can be a big part of our personality, but they do not answer the deeper question, 'what does it mean to be me?'

Our Catholic faith teaches us that we were created out of love, by a God who is love, to be loved and to love in return. Does this actually make sense? Is it true? The only way to find out is to see what it is like. Is my life more fulfilled when I try to live a life of love?



Remember: God's love for us does not rely on us. It simply is. And this is the most fundamental defining character of who we are, before we are anything else, we are loved by God. There is nothing you could do that would make God stop loving you - He will always love you.

What makes me, me?

The human person is unique in all creation. God created the human person to be body and soul. This means that we don't simply have a body, but that we are our body, as much as we do not just have a soul, but we are a soul. In essence as human beings we are physical just as much as we are mental and spiritual. This is what makes us whole - our authentic self.

When God became human, He took on a fully human body as Jesus; a man in everything that it means to be a man. This means that no part of your body is "dirty" or "bad" - but it certainly does not negate the fact that there are parts of our body which are private. As with all things that are so personal, we need to know we have the right to feel safe at all times and to show respect for ourselves and others.

Human beings are relational creatures, and these relationships make a significant contribution to who we are. In the book of Genesis, God proclaims "It is not good for man [i.e. the human person] to be alone..." (Gn 2:18). The call to be in community, in communion with others is at the heart of what it is to be a person.

Relationships come in many forms. As we mature our relationships develop in different ways and we are afforded new opportunities to cultivate our own personality. How do I engage in these relationships? How do these relationships change me, and how do they change the others with whom I am in relationship with? Stepping back and reflecting from time to time on how our relationships shape us is a key part of maturing as an adult. Knowing you have control over the choices you make is important.

Remember, who you are today might not be the person you are in five years' time. Even when you may make choices that you realise are wrong or even illegal you still have the right to be treated with dignity and to feel safe. There are always consequences for your choices, but they do not stop God from loving you and should not impinge on your safety.



Further reading:
Christopher West, A Basic Introduction to the Theology of the Body, Ascension Press, 2009



If situations or emotions cause you to react in a way you regret; remember, *God gave all people the right to feel safe at all times.* No one has the right to take your physical, emotional or spiritual safety away.

Created in the image and likeness of God

God created each and every person out of love and in his image. To grow into his likeness, all of us have an innate, God-given dignity. This dignity is something to preserve, not just for others but for ourselves. We should feel safe from any assault against our dignity i.e. physical, mental and spiritual safety.

Everybody deserves to be treated as a person not as an object or a thing. For example, we need to take care of how we view or treat a person in a service profession, like a waiter or a cleaner or even how we view someone we consider sexually attractive.

You may be many things to many people and sometimes are judged or seemingly defined by this, but no matter how others treat or see you, you have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and to be free from harm – physically or emotionally. You have the freedom to be you, no matter where you are and who you are with.





You have choice and control
in the decisions you make

Our feelings and emotions
are a gift from God

Understanding Our Emotions

The Examen Prayer

Flight, Fight, Freeze or Fawn



Understand the movements
of your heart



Acknowledge your feelings and
warning signs. Reach out for help

There is a common spiritual practice of 'examination of conscience'. St Ignatius of Loyola, developed a useful tool called *The Examen* or *The Examen Prayer*. We can examine the movements of our heart – what emotions did I feel throughout the day? What caused these emotions? How did I act in response to them? Where was/is God in all of this? *The Examen* helps us become more self-aware.

The Examen Prayer: in five easy steps

Begin from a posture of *gratitude*: Recall one or two experiences that filled you with hope and happiness.

Ask for the light of the Holy Spirit to see your day *honestly* and fully: Pause for a moment to gain some perspective so that you may recall the whole of your day.

Slowly *review* your day: See the faces of the people you met and the places you have been. Recall things you thought, said, and felt. When did you experience beauty, joy, freedom, generosity? When did your heart grow bigger and lighter? When did you experience anxiety, fear, cynicism, bitterness? When did your heart grow smaller and heavier?

Ask for *forgiveness* for any times of selfishness: Admit where you have fallen short of living as your best self. Place these moments into God's heart.

Look toward tomorrow in *hope* and confidence: Tomorrow offers another chance to live more freely, joyfully, and generously.

Close with a prayer or words of your choosing.

(Adapted from St Louis University office of mission and identity)



Further reading:

Timothy Gallagher,
The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for Our Lives Today, Crossroad Publishing.



The key to an integrated life is being able to recognise our emotions so that we can direct them with our will. Our will needs to govern our emotion, not vice-versa.

When we engage in this kind of reflective practice, we may find that we have suffered physical or emotional abuse, or even that we have inflicted abuse on others. There is always help available – reach out to your network of close friends/family or even the police if you need to.

With one's developing sexuality often comes a variety of emotional experiences that are new or foreign to us. We must remember that our sexuality and the feelings and emotions which are associated with it are a gift from God, and an integral part of human existence. We do not need to run away from or suppress them. Like all other emotions and feelings though, the gift of sexuality and the feelings associated with it must be appropriately directed and not shrouded by coercion, threats or intimidation. Coercion, threats or intimidation takes away our freedom.



The way others behave or deal with their emotions is beyond your control, but being able to understand things from another's perspective is helpful in showing you care and have compassion. It is through our connections with friends, family and God that we find a sense of belonging. These relationships enrich our experience in good times and are sources of strength and encouragement in challenging times. It is helpful to cultivate and maintain a network of friends and a wider community of trusted people when you can turn to if you need to talk about or express your feelings.

Flight, Fight, Freeze, or Fawn

When you are not feeling safe your body signals this as a primary, involuntary response to danger. This is often called the “*fight, flight, freeze or fawn*” response. These signs in situations where you instinctively *fight* back or are aggressive; *flight* - run away; *freeze* - ignore or are struck with panic or *fawn* - you just go along with it, are reactions that can occur in a variety of situations. It could include when you are excited, scared, panicked or when you are confronted with a new situation or problem you have never dealt with before. If you choose to ignore these signals you might find it difficult to get help when you need it. Acknowledging your feelings and warning signs and reaching out for help is a good way to deal with situations that can be confusing or confronting.

Remember, you have **choice and control** in the decisions you make. It is always a good idea to talk to someone you trust about the choices you have made or are considering making, especially if those choices set off your warning signs or make you feel unsafe.

The formula for Safety is:

$$\text{Safety} = \text{Choice} + \text{Control} + \text{Time Limit}$$

So if your choices, control or the time limit are compromised, you should talk to someone about it.

The Examen Prayer again, is a really useful tool here. Not only can it help you come to an understanding of the movements of your heart and your emotions in retrospect, but if you practice this prayer regularly, this reflective practice can become a habit, and allow you to become more and more aware of your internal dispositions in the various circumstances of your life.

What is a healthy relationship?



Sexual harassment is not about mutual attraction

Safety



Safety = Choice + Control + Time Limit

Consent is not assumed but is a clear mutual understanding

God gave all people the right to feel safe at all times

Sexuality goes beyond the physical



Nothing is so awful that we can't talk with someone about it

Safety

Sexuality, Sex, Harassment & Assault

Sexuality encompasses feelings, attractions, behaviours, identity and spirituality. It goes beyond the physical. There can be a lot of pressure placed on you to work this out. It is important to remember God created you out of love. With support from those you trust you can find acceptance and freedom of self.

Relationships, be it with family, friends, girlfriend, boyfriend or work colleagues should be safe and given freely (especially sexual relationships). If there is doubt or unease concerning your freedom or consent in a relationship, or if you are feeling coerced in any way, do not ignore this. Speak with someone you trust from your network of help – a parent, mature friend, priest, mentor safeguarding officer or spiritual director.

A note on consent

Many people these days talk about consent as the only thing necessary in any legitimate sexual encounter. Of course, consent is absolutely important in any sexual relationship and one would of course need to be able to freely consent to any such activity for it to be licit. The problem with this mentality is that legal consent alone is far from enough for any encounter that would be life-giving. Sexual activity should take place within the context of a committed loving relationship – i.e. marriage. Further, the seeking of explicit legal consent will only turn any sexual act into a kind of contractual agreement. Indeed, there is something about romantic relationships, and sex in particular, that seems to shun any such arrangement.



There are countless songs and films which (however unrealistically) portray a heavily romanticised "ideal" first sexual encounter - we want to be swept away by a desire that is too wonderful, too human to be contained in legal consent forms. In these songs and movies, words are often few or missing, and despite the fact that these are perhaps unrealistically romantic, they do capture a deeply human desire – one that takes in our vulnerability, and expresses that essence of human communion that surpasses legality.

Turning sexuality into a contract, with ourselves as the lawyers working out the terms and conditions does not respect the totality of the human and spiritual dimensions of such relationships. Our freedom, safety and the very nature of love revolt against this limited notion of sexuality. It is so much more.

So, no matter how important consent is (and it is massively important), it is never enough on its own.

Consent and coercion are important things to know and understand.

Consent is a fundamental element of freedom. It is not assumed but is a clear mutual understanding regarding permission for something to happen or an agreement to do something. Consent should not merely be a "yes" or "no" but an ongoing conversation that should consider self, others, thoughts, feelings and your future. Consent doesn't have to be verbal. That is why open, honest and respectful discussion is so important.

Legally, sexual consent must be:

- Freely given without force, threat, intimidation, coercion or deceit

Spiritually, sexual consent should be:

- Freely given within the context of faith and marriage
- Freely given with openness to new life

In a sexual encounter simply a "yes" or "no" is the lowest measure for consent. Open, honest and respectful conversation is equally important.

When sexual behaviour is not consensual it is sexual assault. Sexual assault is a crime that encompasses a wide range of offenses against a person.

Does my behaviour constitute abuse?



Seek help:
1800 RESPECT



In Western Australia it is against the law to:

- Engage in sexual activity if you are under 16 years
- Engage in sexual activity with someone who is under 16 years
- Engage in sexual activity with someone under 18 years who is under your care supervision or authority e.g. teacher, doctor, coach, scoutmaster, youth leader
- Engage in sexual activity or touch someone in a sexual way who hasn't given consent
- Force, trick, threaten or pressure someone verbally or physically into taking part in sexual activity
- Have sex with your child, brother or sister including step-children and half-brothers and half-sisters
- Continue to engage in sexual activities with someone who has changed their mind or revoked their consent
- Take advantage of someone who is drunk or drugged
- Intentionally transmit HIV
- Create, send, receive or forward on intimate image via mobile phone of someone under 16 years (nudes or sexting)
- Distribute or share intimate images of any person without consent

Sexual assault is never the victim's fault, however, being sexually assaulted is confronting and can be confusing. It can take some time to process what has happened especially if the perpetrator is someone the victim knows or trusts. It is important to report sexual assault to the police and seek emotional support.

Nothing is so awful that we can't talk with someone about it.

What is
Objectification?



Coercion diminishes freedom and is a deprivation of choice. It is the action or practice of persuading someone to do something by using threats or force. Coercion can also be used to describe persuasion to conform to peer, family or workplace expectations. Remember you have freedom of choice and control and your safety is paramount.

A good process for deciding if you have given consent or have been coerced is to ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I have a choice in this?
- Am I in control of this situation?
- Does what I am doing have a time limit or is this going to end?

The formula for Safety is:

$$\text{Safety} = \text{Choice} + \text{Control} + \text{Time Limit}$$

Unwanted sexual behaviour is not always overt, but can be subtle, suggestive or indirect. Sexual harassment can fall into this category.

Sexual harassment is illegal and may include:

- unwelcomed or unwanted sexual behaviour that can be written, verbal, physical or online that humiliates, offends or intimidates.

Sexual harassment may include:

- unwanted kissing, embracing, patting, pinching, touching, leering, gestures, questions about a person's private or sexual life, smutty jokes, inappropriate phone calls, emails, electronic messaging, offensive noises, or displays of sexually graphic or suggestive material.

Does my behaviour constitute abuse?



Seek help:
1800 RESPECT

Sexual harassment
is not about
mutual attraction.

True love
requires
freedom.

We all have the right to live and work in an environment free from harassment, bullying, intimidation, discrimination, fear and violence. No one deserves or asks to be harassed and it is not something you need to deal with on your own. You can report sexual harassment to your workplace or The Equal Opportunity Commission.

Abuse can manifest in other forms such as physical, emotional psychological or neglectful harm.

Physical assault is a crime that involves the infliction of force, injury or violence against another person.

- Men and women can both be victims.
- Males are more likely to be victimised by a stranger and females by someone they know.
- No matter what the circumstances, it is important to seek legal advice and support if you have been the victim of an assault.

When abuse occurs within a relationship it is called domestic or family violence. Domestic violence is used as a means to control and dominate another person causing fear, physical or emotional harm.

In relationships controlling behaviour sometimes occurs. This is also a form of abuse. Controlling behaviour can creep up in a relationship over time and at first can be mistaken for caring and romantic. If the behaviour changes or increases into unwanted control or coercion or you experience a loss of freedom - this is not love, nor is it a respectful relationship. Seek support if you feel trapped or feel you are 'walking on egg-shells' in a relationship.



Controlling behaviour may include:

- emotional blackmail, for example, "If you really loved me, you would..."
- continuous criticism or put downs
- one day "You are a princess"; the next day "You are %#@! useless"
- isolation from your family and friends
- checking your text messages, emails and social media
- telling you what you can wear, where you can go and who you can spend time with
- threatening to publish private information
- ignoring or refusing to communicate.

Psychological or emotional abuse subjects a person to mental anguish that can cause fear, isolation, deprivation and shame. It is a form of abuse that attempts to control another by playing with emotions. Relationships or new love can be a wonderful experience, but should not come with conditions or compromise your freedom and safety.

God gave all people the right to feel safe at all times.

Healthy relationships give you the freedom to be the person you are meant to be. They are based on mutual respect, honesty and trust. The following chart can help you identify healthy relationships. If you are not sure talk to someone you trust.

Does my
behaviour
constitute
abuse?



Seek help:
1800 RESPECT

Relationships

Healthy	Unhealthy	Abusive
Good communication	Poor communication	Communication is threatening, insulting or demeaning
Mutual Respect	Disrespectful	Disrespects the other's views, feelings, decisions or physical needs
Trust	Not Trusting	One partner checking up on the other all the time and demanding to be told where they are at all times
Honest	Dishonesty – one or both partners tell lies	One partner constantly lies about who they are with or where they have been
Loving	Loving sometimes	Physical aggression or forces the other to do things they don't want to do
Equal control	Trying to take control	One partner tries to dominate, control and isolate the other
Compromise	One partner has to always give in	One partner demands to have their way at all times and tells the other what to do rather than ask what they would like to do
Spending time apart	Not spending time apart	One partner not allowing the other to spend time with their family or friends without them

Abuse is a
community issue



Nothing is so awful that we can't
talk with someone about it

Bystander Behaviour

All of us have the ability to look out
for each other's safety

God gave all people the right
to feel safe at all times

Knowing how and when to act



Active bystanders interrupt harm



Your own safety is essential

Bystander Behaviour



Society tends to view abuse as only between two people or that personal safety is only your responsibility. Abuse is a community issue.

It is important to remember the only person responsible for committing abuse in any form, is the perpetrator. All of us have the ability to look out for each other's safety though – to be an active bystander rather than a passive bystander.

A passive bystander is someone who is there when abuse occurs but does not take part. A passive bystander may not know what to do, be fearful or presumes others will take action. Whereas being an active bystander can make a difference to a situation escalating or happening at all. Knowing how and when to act when you witness abuse or unacceptable behaviour such as sexual harassment is a courageous and powerful thing to do. Active bystanders do not have to be a hero or even stand out from the crowd to make a big difference. Active bystanders interrupt harm. They help those in need by providing immediate support.

To take action as an active bystander may mean:

- Calling for help or calling the police
- Saying something aloud to those around you so the perpetrator hears
- Start a conversation with the victim to disrupt the behaviour
- Reach out – “Is everything OK?”
- Refer the victim to support services

It is not often easy to step in or speak up even when you know it is the right thing to do, but by disrupting potential abuse or doing something even after the event, potentially can be a life-saving experience. Your own safety is essential so do not put yourself at risk and only act within your level of comfort and ability.

Sharing a 'nude' or sexting without consent is illegal

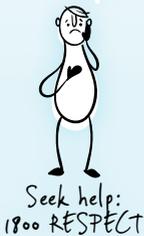


The main problem of porn is not that it shows too much but that it shows too little

Pause before you post

Internet Safety

Does my behaviour constitute abuse?



Safety = Choice + Control + Time Limit

Stay safe online

Everybody has the right to live without online abuse



Nothing is so awful that we can't talk with someone about it

Internet Safety

Now more than ever our use of the internet has huge social and legal implications. As a young adult, when you think you are in control of your internet use and safety, privacy concerns or harm can still occur from either people you know-in the form of cyber abuse, cyberstalking or revenge porn, or from people you don't - such as identity theft. Blogging, social networking, online gaming and online dating are all areas to stop and consider.

The formula for Safety:

$$\text{Safety} = \text{Choice} + \text{Control} + \text{Time Limit}$$

To help you stay safe on the internet:

- *Pause before you post* - Information about your profile including your employer, images of your home address or your car licence plate can identify more than you realise. Be aware of what others can see about you especially when using unsecured WiFi such as free public WiFi
- *Pause before you post* - Is your online use offensive or illegal? Gossip or sharing rumours online - can be very damaging and takes away a person's freedom furthermore the sharing of intimate images can be illegal
- *Watch out for Phishing* - Fake emails that appear legitimate from companies that ask you to confirm your personal information including bank details
- *Keep passwords private and change them regularly* - create passwords that have no personal information and do not reuse them. E.g. 12345 is not a safe password.

Everybody has the right to live without online abuse or the threat of abuse. Responsibility lies with the perpetrator. No one asks for, expects or deserves online abuse.

God gave all people the right to feel safe at all times.

Does my
behaviour
constitute
abuse?



Seek help:
1800 RESPECT



Sexting and nudes

The sending of suggestive or sexual photos, messages or videos usually by a mobile phone is called sexting. It may seem like innocent fun or flirting but can have very serious legal and emotional consequences. Often these images or messages are shared without consent and may even end up on other websites that you did not intend. This is known as image-based abuse.

Image-based abuse

Image-based abuse is the sharing or threatening to share an intimate image without the consent of that person, no matter what their age it is illegal. It is often called "revenge porn", but revenge is not always the reason why people share or threaten to share intimate images of another. Image based abuse is about power and control over another person and is not OK.

It is against the law in Western Australia to:

- Share a nude or intimate image of another person without their consent
- Post a nude or intimate image of another person online without their consent
- Threaten to share an intimate image of another person, even if the image does not exist
- Take an image of women's breasts or cleavage without their consent
- Secretly filming consensual sexual activity
- Photoshop a person's image onto an intimate image and share without their consent.





On impulse sharing an image even in a trusted relationship or amongst friends without consent is image-based abuse. If any of these images are of people under 18 years, it can be classified as receiving or distributing child exploitation material commonly known as child pornography and is against the law. The element of consent is not considered a defence to the crime. Being in possession of, taking or sending sexually explicit photos or videos of a person under 18 years is against the law. This is a very serious crime with serious lifelong consequences. You may risk being put on a sex offender register, losing your job, limited employment opportunities, restricting travel overseas or not being able to do volunteer work. Help is available from the E-safety Commissioner if you are worried about sexting or image-based abuse.

Nothing is so awful that we can't talk with someone about it.

Pornography

Pornography is the representation of people, or sexual behaviour that is erotic or lewd and is designed to arouse. It essentially depicts people's bodies or sexual acts and reduces the body to an object for use.

As a young adult you will be confronted with images or footage that are inappropriate. There are many reasons why these kinds of images can be harmful, not only to the people depicted, but also to those consuming such content. Often people are drawn to pornography out of curiosity, but quickly find themselves giving over their capacity for choice and control.

Common Myths

It doesn't hurt anyone.

The reality is that porn is harmful to both those involved in its production and those who watch it (CCC2354). It is even harmful to those whom the porn user is in relationship with and especially harmful to a person's current or future romantic partner or spouse. Porn distorts and reduces not only the sexual act but the appreciation of the person as being made in the image and likeness of God. It changes the viewer's perspective on the real meaning of love and intimacy. It is not something that is based in reality; it is a misleading fantasy.

It is normal to be attracted to the human body and to desire sexual intimacy; however, pornography trains us to see sexual acts as being all about using another person for our pleasure. People should be treated with love, respect and dignity, not seen as objects to be taken or used for selfish reasons.

Porn is not bad because it shows sexual acts.

Sex is a gift from God and was created to be very good but porn distorts what is meant to be beautiful, safe and fulfilling. It leads the viewer to objectify the person, to see them as just a collection of body parts. Pope Saint John Paul II speaks of sexual objectification, "It reduces the call of the communion of persons, the riches of the deep attractiveness of masculinity and femininity to the mere satisfaction of their sexual need".

Some people believe porn does not change us or influence our conduct. This is like claiming social media and advertising doesn't influence youth culture and trends. With close to 100% of young people encountering porn and many young adults watching it regularly, the effects of porn are really hurting today's young people.

Porn doesn't affect young people's behaviours.

Research shows that porn use can affect people's beliefs and behaviours. Sadly, a lot of porn depicts and normalises violent and aggressive sexual acts. It is almost impossible to see explicit violent sexual acts and to not have it influence your thoughts, perceptions and relationships. Porn gets in your head and can dominate your thoughts. It steals from the way God designed sex - to be experienced as a healthy, loving and life-giving experience in marriage.

Research shows that people who use porn regularly are more likely to:

- Have reduced sexual satisfaction
- Have harmful thoughts about women
- Have unhealthy expectations of sex
- Have behaviours that increase their risk of STIs
- Experience sexual dysfunction in the present and in the future.

The main problem of porn is not that it shows too much but that it shows too little.



Further reading:

Matt Fradd, *The Porn Myth: Exposing the Reality Behind the Fantasy of Pornography*.
Ignatius Press

What is Objectification?



Porn use can be addictive. Once someone has a habit of looking at porn it can be very hard to stop. It works powerfully in the brain and gives the user a “high” much like that which is experienced with other addictive substances (e.g. alcohol, nicotine or drugs). This is one of the reasons why porn is dangerous. It can lead to a destructive habit in a person's life that is really hard to break free from. It can lead to desensitization to sexual images and acts that leave the user always wanting more and not satisfied with real relationships and intimacy.

If you are struggling with porn seek support from your network of help. You are not alone and many good people find this topic difficult.

Consider:

- *Asking God for forgiveness* – when we stuff up (and we all do) it is good to repent and ask God for the grace to start again and do better next time. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a way we can receive God's loving forgiveness and be nourished spiritually by God.
- *Never giving up* – St. Augustine said, “Habit if not resisted soon becomes necessity”. He had struggles of the sexual nature just like everyone does but one of the keys is to never stop trying to do what is right. It is worth the effort; choosing what is right does get easier with practice.



Written by
Paul Nines

Paul is the managing director of Real Talk Australia.

Paul has spoken to tens-of-thousands of young Australians about pornography and shares candidly about his experience with this topic and the awesomeness of God's plan for love, sex and marriage.

realtalkaustralia.com
paulnines.com

Experience the healing and the mercy of Jesus through confession



God gave all people the right to feel safe at all times

Spiritual Help



Nothing is so awful that we can't talk with someone about it

Reach out to other spiritual directors

When we settle for something less than the infinite, we find ourselves in need of forgiveness

Reflect upon your inner-self



Seek help:
1800 RESPECT

Spiritual Help

Confession (also called penance or reconciliation) is one of the seven sacraments of the Church. These are signs, instituted by Jesus, through which He is able to truly give his love to us His followers. The sacrament of confession is truly a gift from God and can be a great source of healing and comfort.

Confession is an opportunity for us to experience something of Christ's salvation which He won for us on the Cross. It is a moment where we can, through the ministry of a priest, confess our sins and shortcomings, and experience the healing and the mercy of Jesus.

When we settle for something less than the infinite, we find ourselves in need of forgiveness. This is why Jesus gave us this gift of the sacrament of reconciliation.

It is always important to remember that whatever you say in confession is between you and God. The priest is bound by what is called the "seal of the confessional" – which basically means that under Church law, the priest is not allowed to disclose what you tell him with anyone at all – and he won't even speak with you about these things outside the sacrament unless you bring it up in that context.

Spiritual guidance by reaching out to other spiritual directors is also an opportunity for healing and support. To reflect upon your inner-self or contemplate the deeper meaning of life in consultation with a spiritual director can be a deeply empowering and grounding experience.



Further reading:
YOUCAT Confession
Book: Introduction
to Confession



Helpful Contacts

In an emergency call Triple Zero (000)

The Safeguarding Program - Catholic Archdiocese of Perth

29 Victoria Square, Perth WA 6000

Phone: (08) 9221 7762

Website: perthcatholic.org.au/
Organisations__Services-
Safeguarding.htm

1800 Respect

A 24-hour counselling, information and referral service for those impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

Phone: 1800 737 732

Beyond Blue

Information and support in mental health.

Phone: 1300 22 4636

Centrecare

Counselling, support, mediation and training services

Phone: 08 9325 6644

Equal Opportunity Commission

Discrimination, sexual harassment, racial harassment and victimisation support.

Phone: 9216 3900

Headspace

Provides early intervention mental health services to 12-25-year-olds.

Phone: 1800 650 890

Website: headspace.org.au

Human Rights Commission

Phone: 1300 656 419

Website: humanrights.gov.au/
complaints_information

Lifeline

24 hours crisis support and suicide prevention service

Phone: 13 11 14

MensLine

A telephone and online counselling service for men with family and relationship concerns.

Phone: 1300 78 99 78

Office of the E-Safety Commissioner

Online safety education, assistance and a complaints service for cyber bullying and illegal online content.

Phone: 1800 880 176

Website: esafety.gov.au

Pregnancy Assistance Inc.

Phone: 08 9328 2929

Sexual Assault Resource Centre

A 24-hour emergency counselling and medical service in metropolitan Perth.

Phone: (08) 6458 1828
or 1800 199 888

St Vincent de Paul Society

Social justice and advocacy

Phone: 1300 794 054

Western Australia Police Force

Police Attendance Phone: 131 444



Helpful Websites

Reach Out Australia

www.reachout.com

ReachOut.com helps under 25's with everyday questions through the tough times. Provides tools young people may need to make life easier.

Love Is Respect

www.loveisrespect.org

This website is a project of the National Domestic Violence Hotline and is designed to empower young people to prevent and end abuse in relationships.

Our Watch

www.ourwatch.org.au

Australian website designed to prevent and educate on violence against women and children.

The Line

www.theline.org.au

An Australian website that looks at relationships, gender, sex, bystander action and technology; how to keep it healthy and respectful for teens, parents and teachers.

Paul Nannes

www.paulnannes.com

Resources and blogs for Catholic young adults including video and audio content.

Chastity

www.catholic.com

Good source of resources and teachings on chastity including a Q&A section

The Dating War

www.thedatingwar.com

Australian based ministry to Catholic young adults on a variety of chastity and relationships topics.

The Porn Effect

www.theporneffect.com

American based Catholic website that covers the basics on pornography very well.

The Chastity Project

www.chastityproject.com

Provides Catholic resources and includes a section on Pornography.

Covenanteyes

www.covenanteyes.com

Offers a holistic approach to internet safety including accountability software.

Your Brain on Porn

www.yourbrainonporn.com

Provides information on the effect porn has on the brain.

Feed the Right Wolf

www.feedtherightwolf.com

Provides a range of strategies to help with a porn habit. This site is overseen by trained counsellors.

Go for Greatness

www.goforgreatness.com

Australian based Christian organisation that provides information and short videos. Also provides Christian counselling information.

Lawstuff

www.lawstuff.org.au

Lawstuff provides legal information to children and young people in Australia.



Safeguarding Office

Provides training in all aspects of safeguarding within the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth. This office also oversees the daily proactive and reactive operations of over 260 parish based Safeguarding Officers.

Provides support, advice and referral for concerns relating to children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Freecall: 1800 072 390

Phone: (08) 9221 7762

Email: safeguarding@perthcatholic.org.au

Website: www.perthcatholic.org.au

The University of Notre Dame Australia

Fremantle Campus Ministry

The Campus Ministry and Chaplaincy teams provide opportunities for students to engage in social events, spiritual formation, prayer, and charitable works. In doing this, we hope to support the spiritual life of the University and allow students of Notre Dame to receive a holistic education.

Phone: (08) 9433 0620

Website: notredame.edu.au/community/Ministry-Chaplaincy