

Offering Support: In Safe & Healthy Ways



Our Mission



*The mission of The Women's Center is to provide **safety**, **shelter**, and **support** to empower all impacted by domestic abuse, sexual assault, child abuse, and trafficking.*

Safety.
Shelter.
Support.



Programs and Services



- Emergency shelter
- Transitional living
- 24-Hour Hotline
- Individual and group counseling
- Life skills programming
- Legal Advocacy
- Community education and violence prevention
- Child abuse prevention

**All programs and services are offered at no cost.
All Genders Welcome.**

Outreach & Education in the Schools



What is our goal with community education in the schools?

Empower students by providing them with the education needed to make healthy and informed decisions.

- Healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Bullying
- Healthy friendships
- Digital safety
- Consent
- Healthy communication/conflict resolution

Holy Apostles Classroom Curriculum

Topics that will be covered:

- Body Safety
- Setting boundaries
- Safety in relationships (with adults, peers, and partners)
- Personal rights (to speak up, to feel safe, to have your boundaries upheld by others, etc.)

Topics Covered Tonight



- **A child's experience of a traumatic event**
 - Definition and examples
 - Common responses (physical, emotional, behavioral)
- **Offering support**
 - Resiliency
 - Common needs and how to address them in healthy, age appropriate ways
- **Talking about difficult topics**
 - Tips on creating a safe space
 - Conversation starters
- **Questions**

A Child's Experience



- A traumatic event is a stressful incident that overwhelms a person's ability to cope and can also result in physical or emotional harm. The person experiencing the distressing event may not know how to respond or may be in denial about the effect the event has had on them. The person will need support and time to recover from the traumatic event.

Examples of a traumatic event can be:

- Bullying
- Divorce
- Abuse
- Witnessing domestic violence
- School Violence
- Loss of a loved one
- Serious Illness
- Neglect
- Community violence

Common Responses



Emotional

- Rise in anxiety
- Depression
- Sudden changes in mood
- Dissociating or feeling numb
- Nightmares
- Denial
- Suicidal thoughts

Physical

- Sleep disturbances
- Symptoms of anxiety (panic attacks, upset stomach, increased heart rate, etc.)
- Change in appetite
- Inability to focus on tasks

Behavioral

- Sudden behavioral changes
- Increased irritability
- Self-harm
- Difficulty maintaining friendships
- Risk taking behaviors
- Reversion behaviors



**Whose part of the
support team?**

**Communication
is key!**

- **Working with the school**
 - Don't ignore what others are seeing
 - Share insight when safe to do so
 - Work as a team to support in and out of school
- **Working with other professionals**
 - Keep everyone informed of changes
 - Be open to new perspectives
 - ✦ Your child may choose to share some things with you and not others or vice versa
- **Others**

How to support your child(ren)

If their feelings of safety have been impacted, help them build it back up!

Safety plan for their physical and emotional safety.

- Talking them through scenarios that might be scary. Help them avoid things that might be potentially triggering, empower them to set boundaries, and highlight the supports that are available to them.
- Help them identify safe adults both in and outside of the home that they can talk to. Be sure to identify each of their roles honestly – especially the roles of mandated reporters.
- Offer them reassurance and reminders of the steps they are taking to be safe.

Keep lines of communication open and honest

Kids are exposed to things whether or not we talk to them about it. When we don't talk, they will try and fill in the gaps themselves, which can perpetuate;

- Misinformation
- unhealthy myths
- feelings of isolation

When we DO talk, we have the opportunity to;

- control how they receive the information
- correct any misinformation
- keep them informed
- break down unhealthy stigmas/myths
- show that we are safe adults.

Tips for Communication with Children



Creating a safe space to talk

- **Believe them**
- **Actively** listen
- Allow for all feelings
- Gently correct misinformation
- Reinforce safe boundaries as needed
- Be empathetic
- Validate their experience

Talking about difficult topics

- Ask them what they already know about the topic and how they learned it
- Ask them what they want to know about it
- Don't use language that shames or belittles.
- Use an age appropriate lens but don't lie. Keep the information truthful
- If you don't know how to answer something say, "I want to give you a good answer to that question, so let me think and I'll get back to you"



Powerful Messages of Support

If your child has experienced something traumatic or scary, it can be hard to know where to start.

Many parents share the fear of not knowing the 'right' thing to say.

But statements that validate and support are always a good place to start.

They can help remind your child that they are loved, heard and safe.

- How can I help?
- I believe you.
 - I AM HERE FOR YOU.
 - You are never alone.
 - ✦ Thank you for telling me.
- It wasn't your fault.
 - You did nothing wrong.
 - You are brave.
 - You are safe.
- I love you.



Resiliency

Resilience: the ability of an individual to cope with adversity and trauma

Kids are naturally resilient! But as parents & caregivers, we can do things to build that and help our kids manage their reactions in healthy ways.

