

Working on Trust (1): "More than Video Games"

"Working on Trust" is a series of videos intended to help parents in the education of their children. The videos draw upon the teachings of Saint Josemaria, who was passionate about freedom and the educational role of parents.

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Parents face a big challenge today: to learn how to form their children in

freedom. Through common reflection they can help them make good use of this gift, choosing the good and thus leading happy lives. For this to happen, it is key to foster a climate of trust in which children can talk about what enthuses, puzzles and worries them.

The videos in this series suggest topics for conversation between spouses and with other families. Each one is accompanied by a selection of texts for reflection, questions for discussion, and links to further material.

Working on Trust (1): More than Video Games

Educating in freedom and personal technology use. The internet represents one of the most transformational economic and socio-educational advances of

modern times. Much good has come from it, while at the same time the ease of access to so much information, images, games, software, apps, social media, etc. through personal technology creates unique challenges for parents raising children today. Online pornography, excessively violent video games and other addiction-breeding online sites or apps can unfortunately cause serious and permanent damage, especially to minors.

Parents need to be strategic and focused in order to help their children self-moderate in their use of smart phones, tablets, video games and personal computers. In doing so, they develop a healthy sense of self, learn how to have real friends and enjoy enriching activities like reading and sports. Teaching children how to exercise moderation requires a determined effort – one in which both spouses should have a

shared vision. It means giving children good personal example, setting limits at home on their use of devices, as well as building trust with them through thoughtful dialogue and by offering them alternative activities that foster their personal growth and development, e.g., playing outside with friends, playing board games, helping at home with chores, etc.

Below are some questions that can help you get more out of this video, in screenings with your friends, in your school or at your parish.

Questions for dialogue:

— When is the best age to start using personal technology? What is the longest amount of time a child should be allowed to use it daily? Some parents think that a child is ready to have his or her own

personal devices when they show themselves capable of maintaining order in their room. What do you think?

— What is the best way to guide and direct their use of personal technology to make sure they are being enriched instead of becoming addicted? What are some of the best ways to exert limits on children, and what kinds of limits would be appropriate, depending on their age? Some parents make sure their children are never in a closed room with their personal technology and others never let children have devices near them at bedtime. What are some other practical strategies?

— What are the best sites and apps that are both fun and enriching, and that can really help children develop intellectually, culturally and creatively? How can parents make sure this is a positive struggle,

instead of overly-emphasizing the negative aspects? Are there any interesting studies or research that has been done on the topic in order to help orient parents?

- How can parents make it easy for their children to speak with them about questionable sites and images they may encounter online? Are there resources available that can be helpful to initiate these conversations? Think about your best experiences to foster responsible freedom and self-mastery in this area. Are there books, articles, blogs, websites and/or podcasts that have proven helpful to you in this regard?
- Have you considered placing internet filters in your home? On the family cell-phone plan? Do you know how your children are using YouTube? Are there phone apps that can help children and adolescents be

better at self-regulating their use of personal technology? Some suggestions are available [here](#).

Some suggested action-steps:

- Make sure you and your spouse have a shared vision on when and how to help each of your children live temperance with personal technology. Think together about how they spend the hours of a normal day. It might help to plan times for them to be outside, to go on family outings and excursions, as well as other activities at home (playing board games, ping pong, etc.) These can be great occasions to have meaningful conversations with your children.
- Make sure you have clear rules in your home: perhaps no personal technology at the dinner table, leaving the door open when using personal technology, avoiding having

personal technology nearby when going to bed, etc.

— Pray daily for your children, and for their temperance and their sense of personal responsibility. Teach them to pray to the Holy Spirit for enlightenment and for help to make good use of their time. Through your example and your own struggle to be temperate in this area, show them how excessive use of personal technology can harm a person's capacity to empathize well and to have good, healthy relationships. With your actions, demonstrate the importance of paying attention to others to develop interpersonal relationships, vs. spending too much time looking at screens.

— Children should see your efforts to live temperance and self-control with personal technology. Parents need to walk the walk, not just talk the talk. Children should also see in their

parents' eyes unconditional love, and sense that their parents enjoy them and want to spend time with them.

Quotes from Sacred Scripture and *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

"If anyone loves righteousness, [Wisdom's] labors are virtues; for she teaches temperance and prudence, justice, and courage." (*Wisdom* 8:7)

"*Temperance* is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion..." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1809)

"Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant

or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (*1 Corinthians 13:4-7*)

"For the spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline." (*2 Timothy 1:7*)

Quotes from Pope Francis for reflection

"Dear young people, we didn't come into this world to 'vegetate,' to take it easy, to make our lives a comfortable sofa to fall asleep on. No, we came for another reason: to leave a mark....(Jesus is the) Lord of risk ... not the Lord of comfort, security and ease.....Following Jesus demands a good dose of courage, a readiness to trade in the sofa for a pair of walking shoes and to set out on new and

uncharted paths.” (Address to young people at World Youth Day in Poland, June 30, 2016)

“I have to receive the Spirit which brings me the Word with docility. And this docility, by not resisting the Spirit, brings me this way of living. Then to give space for this seed to sprout and grow into this attitude of goodness, meekness, gentleness, peace, charity and self-control. All this shows a Christian attitude.” (Homily, May 9, 2017)

“A family that almost never eats together, or that never speaks at the table, but looks at the television or the smartphone, is hardly a family... When children at the table are attached to the computer or the phone and don’t listen to each other, this is not a family, this is a pensioner.....In family life we learn about togetherness from a young age, which is a very beautiful virtue; the

family teaches us to share, with joy, the blessings of life.” (General Audience, Nov. 11, 2015)

From Saint Josemaria

“The changes that have affected family life in recent years sometimes make mutual understanding difficult and even lead to a breakdown in communication, to what has been called the ‘generation gap.’ How can this be overcome?

"The problem is an old one although perhaps it arises now more frequently or more acutely because of the rapid evolution that characterizes modern society. It is perfectly understandable and natural that young and older people should see things differently. This has always been the case. The surprising thing would be if a teenager were to think just as an adult does. We all felt a tendency to rebel against our elders when we

began to form our own judgement autonomously. But we have come to understand, with the passing of the years, that our parents were right in many things in which they were guided by their experience and their love. That is why it is up to the parents to make the first move. They have already passed through this stage. It is up to them to be very understanding, to have flexibility and good humor, avoiding any possible conflicts simply by being affectionate and farsighted.

"I always advise parents to try to be friends with their children. The parental authority which the rearing of children requires can be perfectly harmonized with friendship, which means putting themselves, in some way, on the same level as their children. Children — even those who seem intractable and unresponsive — always want this closeness, this fraternity, with their parents. It is a

question of trust. Parents should bring up their children in an atmosphere of friendship, never giving the impression that they do not trust them. They should give them freedom and teach them how to use it with personal responsibility. It is better for parents to let themselves 'be fooled' once in a while, because the trust that they have shown will make the children themselves feel ashamed of having abused it — they will correct themselves. On the other hand, if they have no freedom, if they see that no one trusts them, they will always be inclined to deceive their parents.”

Conversations with Msgr. Escrivá,
#100

Additional articles and resources:

- eBook: *New Technologies and Christian Life*

- Smart Phones for Young People: Pros and Cons

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