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Working on Trust (9): Dealing with peer pressure

How can we equip our children to handle peer pressure in ways that enable them to bring out the best in themselves? Final video in the series “Working on Trust.”

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During the final years before your children start college or university, they are often seeking opportunities for fun with their friends. In some

places, it is typical to close out the last year with a trip somewhere or with a special party. For parents and children alike, these moments can be full of excitement but also tension, depending on the types of activities that they want to engage in. What happens when their friends or even their school propose plans of diversion that contradict your family's values? Facing this question is a challenge, but it can also be a good opportunity for dialogue as well as for growth in healthy independence and true freedom.

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

Questions for dialogue:

- What can I do to understand better how my children think? What role models do my children have? What role models do their friends have? Do I have an open attitude towards my children? Do I try to present my ideas in our conversations in ways that make it easier for them to open up to me?
- Am I aware that I can hurt my children through my lack of trust? Do I accept and praise their positive proposals? Do I ask them about what is motivating their proposals?
- Do I understand and share the hopes and dreams of my children, or am I indifferent to them? Am I aware of the activities that are being organized by their school and what they entail? Do these

plans harmonize with the values that we want to teach our children?

- Faced with a proposal that does not convince us, do we as parents try to propose an alternative? Are we worried about what other people might think if we do this?
- Do we know how to convey to our children, in a kind way, the financial aspect of the plans they want to make? Do we seek alternative plans together with them?

Some suggested action-steps:

- Before speaking with your son or daughter, it is important that the parents have a shared vision about these issues that is reasonable, offering explanations that are consistent with the approach they seek to convey.

- Know your children's expectations. You can do this by talking to them, first and foremost. See how you can make it easy for them to talk to you. Help them reflect on their own ideas, and confront them realistically with their own situation, as well as that of the family.
- It is important to talk about their dreams, their social life, and what they desire. In this context, it is also good to bring up the risks pertinent to certain environments—the abuse of alcohol, drugs, sex—but always from a perspective of dialogue. An approach that is based on imposing authority or that offers examples of extreme situations tends to be less convincing.
- See if you can get involved in the organization of activities at their school. Be creative in

proposing other ways to have fun. You need to know what kind of environment surrounds them at school and the reality of the types of activities being offered there. Try to make these decisions together with your children, resisting peer pressure in its different forms.

Quotes from Sacred Scripture and The Catechism of the Catholic Church for reflection

- “The education of the conscience is a lifelong task. From the earliest years, it awakens the child to the knowledge and practice of the interior law recognized by conscience. Prudent education teaches virtue; it prevents or cures fear, selfishness and pride, resentment arising from guilt, and feelings of complacency, born of human

weakness and faults. The education of the conscience guarantees freedom and engenders peace of heart.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church 1784

- “Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery - the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the "material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones.”³¹ Parents have a grave responsibility to give

good example to their children. By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them: “He who loves his son will not spare the rod. . . . He who disciplines his son will profit by him.” (*Sirach* 30:1-2). “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (*Ephesians* 6:4)

Catechism of the Catholic Church 2223

- “It is incumbent on those who exercise authority to strengthen the values that inspire the confidence of the members of the group and encourage them to put themselves at the service of others. Participation begins with education and culture. “One is entitled to think that the future of humanity is in the

hands of those who are capable of providing the generations to come with reasons for life and optimism." *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1917

Quotes from Pope Francis for reflection

- “In our own day, dominated by stress and rapid technological advances, one of the most important tasks of families is to provide an education in hope. This does not mean preventing children from playing with electronic devices, but rather finding ways to help them develop their critical abilities and not to think that digital speed can apply to everything in life.” (*Amoris laetitiae*, 275).
- “Adolescence is not a pathology that we must combat. It is a normal, natural part of growing up, of the life of our young

people. Where there is life there is movement; where there is movement there are changes, seeking, uncertainty; there is hope, joy and also anguish and desolation. Let us correctly frame our discernment within the foreseeable fundamental processes. There are margins that are necessary to be aware of so as not to be alarmed, not to be careless, nor to be negligent, but to know how to accompany and help [young people] to grow. Not everything is insignificant, but neither does everything have equal importance. For this reason it is important to discern which battles are to be fought and which are not. In this matter it is very helpful to listen to couples with experience, who, although they can never give us a recipe, can help us with their testimony to know this or that

margin or range of behavior.”

Basilica of Saint John Lateran,
19 June 2017

- “Let us offer them broad goals, great challenges, and let us help them to accomplish them, to reach their goals. Let us not leave them on their own. Thus, let us challenge them more than they challenge us. Let us not allow them to receive that “dizzying sensation” from others, who do nothing but put their lives at risk: let us give it to them ourselves; but the right dizziness that satisfies this desire to move, to go forward.”

Basilica of Saint John Lateran,
19 June 2017

Quotes from Saint Josemaria for reflection

- “Parents should find time to spend with their children, to talk with them. They are the

most important thing—more important than business or work or rest. In their conversations, parents should make an effort to listen, to pay attention, to understand, to recognize the fact that their children are sometimes partly right—or even completely right—in some of their rebellious attitudes. At the same time, they should help their children to direct their efforts and to carry out their projects properly, teaching them to consider things and to reason them out. It is not a matter of imposing a line of conduct, but rather of showing the human and supernatural motives for it. In a word, parents have to respect their children's freedom, because there is no real education without personal responsibility, and there is no responsibility without

freedom.” Christ is Passing By,
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- “You need to keep an eye on your children’s freedom according to their age. You shouldn’t treat them all the same. Justice demands that you treat unequal children unequally, but in a way that doesn’t provoke jealousy. They are unequal in age, temperament, health, intellectual abilities... Thus, with your help, they will become equal and love each other a lot and behave well, having their parents’s virtues and being good children of Holy Mary.” During a gathering in Valencia, Spain, 17 November 1972
- “Understand them, find excuses for them. Haven’t you and I done the same to Our Lord, and later returned to him? Let them realize that you are their best

friend, that no one loves them as much as their mother and father. You will see how proud your children are of this.”
During a gathering in Madrid,
18 October 1972

Additional articles and resources:

- eBook “Educating Children in the Family”
- Documentary: "What Faith Means When You're 20"

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