

Our Sacred Bodies

By Marissa Widdison
Church Magazines

If we don't teach our children about the eternal importance of bodies, the world will eagerly step in and mis-educate our children for us.

In 1 Corinthians 6:19, the Apostle Paul teaches that our bodies are sacred: "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" This is not what the world teaches. Instead, confusing messages swirl around our children, raising questions and creating doubts.

What is the perfect body size?

What are the right clothes to wear?

What should I use my body for?

Here are a few ideas for helping children appreciate their bodies as amazing instruments for good.

Bodies Are Gifts


Bodies come in different shapes, colors, sizes, and ability levels. Perhaps the most valuable message we can communicate to our children is that *every* body is a precious blessing. Gaining a physical body is an important part of the plan of happiness—after all, our soul is made up of our spirit and our body! (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:15). As Paul taught, our bodies are temples for the Holy Ghost.

Children, like adults, may be frustrated by how their body looks or acts. That's OK. Help your child understand that even imperfect bodies allow us to learn and grow. We can set an example of focusing on the good things our bodies can do instead of worrying too much about how our body looks or comparing our body to others. Someday, each one of us will be resurrected, and our bodies will "be restored to their proper and perfect frame" (Alma 40:23).

Caring for Bodies

The healthy habits children develop will bless them for the rest of their lives. As parents, we have a significant influence over the food they eat, their physical activities, their hygiene habits, and other ways they care for their bodies. In addition to encouraging them to be healthy, we can create a family environment that models these good decisions. This includes having open and shame-free discussions about sexual intimacy and what changes to expect in their body as they grow up. (For help holding age-appropriate conversations, check out *A Parent's Guide* on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.)



A stylized illustration of a hand holding a heart. The hand is brown with white outlines, and the heart is red with white outlines. The background is light blue with white splatters. The hand is positioned at the top left, with the heart in the center. The hand is holding the heart, and the heart is glowing with white lines around it. The hand is also holding a small red heart in the palm. The hand is also holding a small red heart in the palm. The hand is also holding a small red heart in the palm.

Preventing Abuse

Sadly, about one in four people worldwide are abused as children.¹ We can work to protect and empower our children. We can teach them to say “no” to things they are uncomfortable with, and that if someone hurts them, they should ask for help—and keep asking until they are safe. We can teach them accurate words for body parts, holding emotionally safe conversations about questions they have, and encourage them to pay attention to the Spirit. (See “Protecting Children” in the April 2019 *Ensign*.)

There are many harmful messages in the media about bodies. What are our children reading, watching, and listening to? As we teach our kids to identify and avoid harmful media, they will be better able to discern between truths and lies. (See “Growing a Healthy Technology Garden” from the April 2017 *Ensign*.)

Being Kind

Do we ever make unkind remarks about a person’s body—including our own? If so, we are setting a harmful example for our young ones. Instead, we can make a habit of expressing gratitude for the things our bodies *can* do. We can model kind comments, including complimenting people on actions and attributes instead of only appearances.

Finally, other people may treat their bodies in ways we are taught to avoid. As we tell our children to stay away from tattoos, piercings, and immodest clothing, let’s make sure we are also teaching them to be kind. While we might not agree with the choices people make, we should always treat others with love and respect. ■

NOTE

1. See World Health Organization, “Violence and Injury Prevention,” www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/child.

FOR CHILDREN

Included in this month’s *Friend*:

- “Your Body Is a Temple” (page 24)
- “Done with Swim Team!” (page 36)
- “For Parents of Little Ones” (inside back cover)
- “My Body” (page FJ1)
- “Amelia’s Growing Body” (page FJ2)

For other resources, visit lessonhelps.ChurchofJesusChrist.org and click on the topic “Bodies.”

FOR TEENS

Included in this month’s *New Era*:

- “Your Body: A Magnificent Gift to Cherish,” by President Russell M. Nelson (page 2)
- “Some Things We Don’t Share” (photo sharing has its limits; page 16)
- “Vaping, Coffee, Tea, and Marijuana” (page 28)
- “What I Learned from Having to Lose Weight for My Mission” (page 34)
- “What Is the Law of Chastity?” (page 36)

For other resources, visit youth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.