



## WEEK TWO: “THE TALK”

*Dr. Karen Poehailos*

*My daughter is turning 11 next month. I know it’s time to have ‘the talk.’ Maybe we should have had it already? But I don’t even know where to start. When my own mother first talked to me about it, she was so nervous she just handed me a book and told me to let her know if I had any questions. I remember being so unsure that I asked my best friends at school what was happening to them.*

*But times are so different now. I have no idea what she’s already heard from her friends, classmates, on social media and the internet. Everything seems to be moving so much faster than when I was her age.*

*I want to do this right. I want her to realize that her body is a gift, and one to be respected and protected. I don’t want her approaching her future with fear. I would like her to respond in awe to the woman she will become and how wonderfully she is made. It’s so much more than just making sure she doesn’t become pregnant as I hear some of my friends with daughters her age discussing.*

*Where do I start? Do I talk to her doctor? Do I look for a book to share with her? Is there a good website?*

*Sincerely,  
A concerned parent*

Does this sound familiar to you? Or do you have equally difficult questions regarding your sons? Do you ever overhear interesting discussions as you’re driving a carpool to a sports practice?

This person above could be any one of my patients over the years who have pulled me aside in the hallway to get my advice or in need of my recommendations on good resources.

There’s bad and good news here. The bad news? I think it is harder for parents in this

generation compared to prior ones. (We thought we had it hard back then, trust me!) The explosion of information accessible through our phones and computers makes it harder for parents to control what information is getting through to our children. Contraception ads appear on television. Even children’s cartoons now can bring up agendas with which you may not agree. You can (and should) try to distance your children from these things for a while, but eventually they will find it. How do you and they walk through this

seeming minefield?

The good news? Is there any? Why, yes, there is. The same God who blesses the love between man and woman from the time of Genesis even up to the present day also loves our children infinitely. No matter how much we love our children, He loves them much more. And yes, they are “called to the joy of love” no less than their parents are! He has left us a roadmap that is brought forward by amazing teachers that have blessed us through the centuries.

The pontificate of St. John Paul II was marked by his Theology of the Body, 129 addresses he delivered during his pontificate that comprise a body of teaching on human sexuality. It speaks of our experience as humans and how to live life in a way that brings true happiness and fulfillment through self-giving. There are resources at many levels to help you unpack this rich treasure of teachings.

Believe it or not, Theology of the Body (TOB) can and does apply to our children as well! Looking at our lives and our fertility through this lens of the body as gift and through self-giving makes the teachings of the Church not just a list of all the “no’s” but rather an amazing “yes!” to God’s plan for us: life as He intended.

So, you’re probably saying to yourself right now, “Sure, nice framework. But I don’t have time to read 129 lectures and how do you propose to bring that to my 11-year-old daughter?” More good news--others have done it for us.

I’d first propose, as with any other subject, that we can’t teach our children what we ourselves don’t understand. This month of

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catechesis will be a great start. Use it as a springboard to explore more. There are great books on Theology of the Body and Church teachings, and yes, great websites too. We’ll provide you with references (on the website at [stauva.org/fertility-family](http://stauva.org/fertility-family)) so you can explore these yourself!

As you see their beauty, sharing them with your children isn’t just another command placed on us by the Church, but a desire to help them see life through this counter-cultural lens. It’s another fulfillment of the

promise we made to raise our children in the Faith at their Baptism. And yes, there are materials that can explain TOB at your children’s level.

Another piece of this is bringing fertility awareness to teens. When young women see the cycle charts and how their monthly hormonal “dance” is reflected in their cycles, and why their moods change during a cycle, they learn to respect their bodies more. They are empowered to ask for that respect from the young men they are dating.

Parents are the first and best educators of their children. Just as the Parish walks alongside us to help us teach our children in Religious Education classes, we are working on plans to help empower you in this journey as well. Among them is offering a “Teen-FEMM” class at the Parish for young women to learn how to chart their cycles. As you’ll see later this month (spoiler alert!), women’s cycles are not just about fertility, but also about health. Stay tuned to learn more about this and other opportunities coming this fall for EDGE and Life Teen.

**NEXT WEEK, PART THREE:  
“A Different Kind of Fruit”.**

**Upcoming FREE Virtual Training:**  
Catholic Teaching on Fertility & FEMM Model Introduction  
Tuesday, July 26th at 7PM.

Register at  
[stauva.org/fertility-family](http://stauva.org/fertility-family)  
to receive Zoom link