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Lesson:

Teaching our Kids Smart
Clothing Choices and

Modesty



BACKGROUND

Dignity refers to the quality of being worthy for honor and respect. It's also about our appearance, our intentions, our personal responsibility, and ultimately the extent to which we **respect** and represent ourselves. In regard to this lesson, we're going to focus on clothing choices that help us have self-respect and feel comfortable and confident.

In the old days people called this "modesty" but we feel this term does not apply to kids now. It implies that a kid's voice and clothing choices should be quiet and subdued. Instead, we want to focus on making smart, context-appropriate clothing choices that will empower them through a combination of self-respect and self-confidence.

Many families have different perspectives of what dignity is *and* isn't. Some look at short-shorts and think "My child is *never* going to wear that!", while other parents are just fine with the trend. The purpose of this lesson is to make sure your child understands how to make clothing choices that are appropriate for different occasions and to help them learn to respect their body and protect it.

PREPARATION

- Read our article, [Modesty and Smart Clothing Choices: Teaching Our Kids to Be Seen for Who They Are.](#)
- Evaluate your family's rules, values, and ethics. How do your values influence the way each of you dress?
- What kind of style does your child choose? Are you okay with this style? Why or why not?
- Evaluate how *you* dress. Does your style influence the way your children choose to dress?
- Think about your position when it comes to dressing with dignity and boys. Do the rules only apply to girls?

OBJECTIVE

Teach your child the importance of respect for ourselves, while also teaching basic **boundaries** for certain occasions. Emphasize that their body is valuable and of worth and that we should care for it and protect it from the elements of nature (sun, cold, etc.)

Teach your child that their clothing can also be a creative way to express their personality--not just the latest trend. Their clothing should help them feel comfortable and confident.

LESSON

Most Americans can easily identify many gaming characters like Mario, Pokemon, PacMan, and Donkey Kong. Since the creation of the Atari console, gaming has become part of our media culture, especially among children and teens. Video games attract many different types of individuals from young children to professionals.



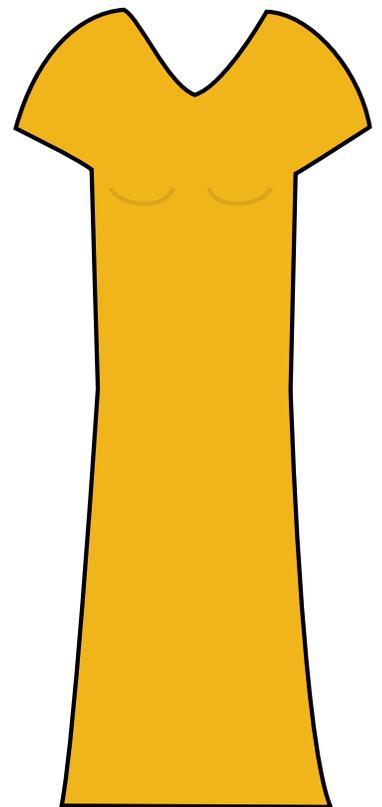
DISCUSSION: Why is dressing with dignity important?

Dressing with Dignity is important because our clothing can express part of who we are. It represents our level of confidence and our feelings of self-worth. We also wear different outfits for different occasions. If we're going to go watch a baseball game, we would probably choose to wear a t-shirt, jeans, slip on sneakers, and a baseball cap. We definitely wouldn't wear a ball gown to a sporting event.

Other occasions may include a play date, a formal performance, a funeral, etc. Each of these have a certain standard of dress. We would feel out of place wearing our ripped jeans and a t-shirt to a funeral. Most people wear neutral formal clothes to a funeral. This shows respect for their loved ones. The same thing goes with a formal performance: we wouldn't want to wear our sports gear! This would distract the audience from the performance. A play date, though, is more flexible. Considering the setting, either a dress or your t-shirt and jeans may be acceptable. As long as you feel comfortable and you know your play date will too, then what you're wearing won't matter too much.

Also, we need to consider the weather. In the winter it's chilly and if we were to expose our skin, we put ourselves at risk for frostbite. And in the summertime, it's important to wear clothing that will help us avoid serious health risks like heat stroke and sunburn.

It's particularly important to think about your clothing choices in terms of what you will actually be doing when wearing the clothes. For example, if you're doing yoga, you need clothing that will stretch with your body



instead of jeans. If you're picking blackberries, you're going to want to wear long sleeves and long pants even if it's 95 degrees out because you need to protect your skin from the sharp, plentiful thorns. If you're skateboarding, you need clothing that accommodates your elbow, knee, and wrist pads. And if you're hiking in the woods or through fields populated with ticks, it's a smart clothing choice to wear long, breathable pants in order to keep them off your legs!

An important point to consider and discuss is the fact that we live in a hyper-sexualized society, one that often objectifies women and their bodies. Unfortunately the type of clothing a girl wears can bring about unwanted attention and/or false assumptions. Unwanted attention and false assumptions from others is NOT the fault or responsibility of the girl and should not be the underlying reason to dress in a certain way. It is necessary to understand how society has objectified women and how paramount it is that we teach our children to respect each other for who we are as individuals. It is imperative that our sons understand the need to respect a woman whether she is wearing a tank top or a turtleneck.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR YOUNGER CHILD

- What made you decide to put on the outfit you are wearing right now?
- What would you wear to the park?
- When might you want to wear a dress?
- What seasons are appropriate for wearing shorts?
- Do you have any clothes now that make you uncomfortable? (Perhaps they are scratchy or it's something your mom likes you to wear, but you don't like it.)

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR OLDER CHILD

- Do your clothes represent who you are?
- Do you ever dress to look like your friends or to please others?
- Why is there a certain "dress standard" for different occasions?
- Do you feel comfortable wearing a dress to the park? Or would you prefer shorts? Why?
- What trends do you like? Which ones don't you like?
- Does your preferred style make you feel good about yourself?

ACTIVITY: FAMILY FASHION SHOW

Instructions:

1. Have each family member pick out several favorite outfits, which would include a daytime outfit, work/school outfit, bathing suit and “special occasion” outfit.
2. Starting with a school/work outfit, have each family member walk down a “runway” (this could be down the hallway, thru the kitchen, living room, etc.) wearing their outfit of choice. Don't forget to choose some music!
3. After the show, be sure to find ways to complement the choices that were made and ask everyone to share why they chose the outfits they did.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS

- How do you feel in this outfit?
- What do you like about it?
- If you could name the type of outfit you are wearing what would it be? (trendy, sporty, “hot”, feminine, mysterious, etc)

Use this opportunity to share your own experiences of clothing choices, personal expression and what dressing with dignity means to you.

Have fun!!

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

- Do you feel content in this outfit?
- Do you think your friends would like your choices? If they didn't how would you feel? Would you change your mind about your choices?
- What kind of clothing would you wear for a hike? Would you wear shorts or longer capris or pants? (Emphasize how capris or pants may be a more practical choice due to bushes on a trail or potential bug bites)
- What clothing would you pick for a day at the beach/pool?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

- What kind of outfit would you wear to a job interview? What would you wear to meet a blind date?

FOLLOW UP

Throughout the following month, discuss your child's clothing choices with them. In the morning, ask these questions to help them recognize and learn whether or not they have made a smart clothing choice for the day ahead of them (Gregoire, 2017):

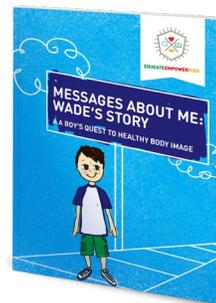
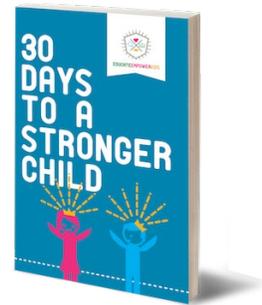
- Who are you dressing for?
- What is the first impression you give?
- Are you approachable, friendly, and open?

At the end of the day, ask your child how they felt about dressing for *themselves* and being appropriate and **wise**.

RELATED DISCUSSIONS

Check out our book, [30 Days to a Stronger Child](#), which covers topics such as Respect, Self-confidence, Body image, and more!

Check out our book, [Messages About Me: Sydney's Story](#), A Girl's Journey to Healthy Body Image. Also, for boys, [Messages About Me: Wade's Story](#), A Boy's Quest for Healthy Body Image. Both of these books discuss the messages kids get from media, friends, and other sources that can often affect body image. They also help kids recognize where we can find true self-worth and to see their bodies for the amazing instruments that they are.



GLOSSARY

Boundaries: A line that marks the limits of an area, the space between you and another person, and the unspoken rules of how you will treat someone and how you expect to be treated.

Dignity: The state or quality of being worthy of honor and respect.

Dressing with Dignity (Also referred to as Modesty): Behavior, manner, or appearance intended to avoid disrespect. Modesty is about being authentic, true to yourself, and feeling empowered inside. These feelings can be reflected through your clothing and behavior choices.

Respect: Admiration for one's self and others.

Wise: Having or showing experience, knowledge, and good judgement.

CITATIONS

Gregoire, S., "Why 'Don't Be a Stumbling Block' is a Really Bad Modesty Message", *To Love, Honor & Vacuum*, (2017), <https://tolovehonorandvacuum.com/2017/06/dont-be-stumbling-block-modesty/>

This Mom Nails Why Teaching Girls To Dress 'Modestly' Is Bullsh*t. (2017, June 10). Retrieved from <https://www.scarymommy.com/beyond-moi-mom-blogger-not-teaching-girls-modest-dress/>