



President's Reflections

by Dennis Doughty



February 20, 2015

Self-Doubt is a Common Occurrence For Students

Do you remember the first time you had to get up in the classroom to give a speech or make a presentation? Do you remember counting students, hoping against hope, that the teacher would somehow run out of time and you wouldn't have to speak? Some people might call that the "fear factor" or a lack of self-esteem when children shy away from a new or different circumstance. Regardless of the root cause of the fear, it can become almost paralyzing for some students and even adults.

As recently as last week, I had a parent come and express her concerns about her son and his self-doubts in dealing with relationships in school. Please understand that this fear is real and almost every child will experience it in some manner during their school days. Fortunately, there are some things that you can do to help your child through these difficulties.

- Lay a foundation for optimism. Break down difficult tasks into small steps your child can master. Let them see that one success can lead to another.
- Teach problem-solving skills. Brainstorm possible solutions with your child and then find a solution that a child can accomplish within their experiences.
- Work with your child on a "script" when giving a presentation. By writing the words and having the ability to practice giving the speech can go a long way in overcoming fear and self-doubt.
- Never criticize your child but you can criticize their actions. Say, "You didn't pick up your clothes in your bedroom." Not, "You're lazy and messy." The latter statement implies criticism of the character of the child that is even more harmful for the child experiencing difficulties.
- Practice new situations with your child. Role-play how they should act when meeting new people. This practice or "play" can set the groundwork for "real-life" situations.
- Try to avoid making negative comments about yourself when you make a mistake. Statements about yourself like, "I'm so stupid...look what I did", actually models behavior that your attempting to steer your child away from.
- Talk about positive thinking on a regular basis. Quotes, statements, and even books on a positive outlook are extremely helpful for adults and children alike.

We all go through times of self-doubt as adults, remember how difficult it was to face those doubts as a youngster. You can help your child by looking at the positive aspects of their daily routine and point out those things they are doing well. A child who is facing self-doubt needs a positive role model to help them. As a parent, we need to recognize our role in their self and life development because we have the ability to make a positive difference.

Additional reflection:

This past Wednesday, the Norwalk Catholic School celebrated Ash Wednesday together in prayer with all our students. Many families decide to "give up" something to remind them of the ultimate sacrifice Jesus gave for all of us. Many Christians begin a 40 day preparation for Easter called the Lenten Season. We are reminded that sacrifice and prayer are a wonderful way to unify our families in a special way, especially during Lent. It is a time to reflect and improve our prayer life.