

## **G. THE PASTORAL RESPONSE OVERVIEW**

### **G.3 COMMON PITFALLS**

With the best of intentions, we still make mistakes. These are some of the common pitfalls to avoid.

**1. ADDRESSING THE CONCERN FROM YOUR OWN PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE**

You are a disciple and an employee of the Catholic Church; all your guidance to students must be grounded in Church wisdom and teachings. The truth of Christ, (contained in Church teaching), is what will benefit students and provide life in abundance.

**2. NOT COMMITTING THE ISSUE TO SERIOUS PRAYER**

Listening to the student and supporting them is important. Further, committing them and their struggles to serious prayer is as important.

**3. TREATING THE ISSUE AS NOT VERY SERIOUS OR IN A CASUAL OR FLIPPANT WAY**

Recognize that what may seem trivial to you is very real and traumatic to them. Reassure them that their situation is manageable, and you will help support them.

**4. UNDER-RESPONDING TO A SITUATION**

What may on the surface seem “innocent” might not be. An offhand comment could be indicative of a larger issue (e.g., the bullying or stereotyping present in crude humour). Be cognizant that you need to address situations in their infancy before they become problematic. Remember that parents expect to have their Catholic values reinforced at school.

**5. LOOKING AT THE STUDENT AS A ‘PROJECT’ TO SOLVE**

Most of the time the student may not be looking for you to “solve their problems,” but really just wants a sympathetic ear to listen to them. The skilled listener allows the student to lead, while paying attention to details in order to respond appropriately.

**6. PROJECTING YOUR OWN HISTORY, ESPECIALLY BRINGING YOUR OWN UNRESOLVED ISSUES INTO THE DYNAMIC**

Recognize the uniqueness of each child and the uniqueness of their situation. It does not help to try to draw parallels to your own life experience, and it risks putting you into a compromising position. Keep your personal story separate from the situation.

- 7. THINKING THAT YOU ARE HAVING NO DIFFERENCE OR NOT GETTING ANYWHERE**  
The student may not give you a lot of feedback or the feedback may seem forced or “phony.” Don’t give up. Keep listening and responding even when the student seems like he/she is not.
  
- 8. TOO MUCH INFORMATION**  
Don’t feel that you have to give the student all the details or provide a complete answer in the belief that otherwise you are not being honest. Giving too much information is counterproductive and confusing.
  
- 9. BEING OVERLY PEDANTIC OR FACTUAL**  
Keep your language simple and accurate. Remember that while facts are easy to share, attitudes and values are more complicated, but much more important.
  
- 10. THINKING THAT DATING AND ISSUES OF SEXUALITY ARE A NORMAL PART OF GROWING UP AND MOSTLY HARMLESS**  
If the student is talking to you, then he/she has concerns or something that he/she doesn’t feel safe or comfortable with. Adolescent sexuality is a much more complex reality today than it used to be, e.g., the complexity arising from issues regarding digital citizenship.
  
- 11. USURPING THE ROLE OF THE PARENT**  
Remember that you are part of a team. *The parents are the primary educators of their child.* Your main role is to support and complement that within the context of the Catholic faith.