

Body Changes

SPHE STRANDS:

Myself – Taking care of my body – Growing and changing – Knowing about my body

Myself and Others – Relating to others

Changes in Puberty

- Explain to the children that the conversations that will be taking place are really important. Emphasise that this is a safe place to learn and discuss. Assure them of the need for all to speak and listen respectfully.
- Chat about the changes that occur in boys' and girls' bodies as they go through puberty that the children have already learned about in fourth and fifth classes – changes in genitals, periods, wet dreams.

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Video

Now invite the children to look at the following 'Busy Bodies' videos, one on the changes in boys' bodies and the other about the changes in girls' bodies:

https://www.healthpromotion.ie/health/inner/busy_bodies

After each of the videos ask the children these or similar questions:

- Do you have any questions about what you have learned?
- Was there anything that you want to know more about?
- Where could you find out more or who can you discuss these topics with? Encourage the children to talk to their own parents or older brother/sister or a trusted adult. Show them the link to the 'Busy Bodies' website as a good resource to find further information and so their parents can also see the videos for themselves.

Strongly discourage the children from using the internet to search for this material themselves as they will encounter lots of unsuitable material.

Group Work

Divide the children into small groups (you may consider it helpful if these are single-sex groups) and invite them to come up with three positive things about the physical changes of puberty and three things that they consider problematic or worrying.

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- Girls may be worried about the onset of periods, what they will do if they come on in school or when they are at a friend's house. They may be worried about acne, putting on weight, breast development, etc. It is important to be reassuring, to offer practical advice and to encourage conversations with trusted adults.
- Boys may be worried about having an erection that is noticeable, having a wet-dream when sleeping in a friend's house, physical size, acne, etc. Again it is important to be reassuring, practical and to encourage conversations with trusted adults.

Hand-outs/Letter

It would be a good idea to have a hand-out/letter to give to the children going home from school with links to the Busy Bodies, explaining the topics which have been covered and encouraging conversations at home.

Reflection

Invite the children to sit quietly with their feet on the floor. You may play reflective music if appropriate. Then read the following slowly:

Growing up is exciting. It's a time of many changes. You are slowly turning from a child into an adult. Outside you are beginning to look different but inside you are the same, lovable person.

It's normal to feel a little anxious at times of change. You might find some of the changes surprising and difficult to get used to but everything is happening for a reason and you are still the same wonderful person.

Every adult in the world has gone through the same changes as you: your parents, older brothers and sisters, your aunts and uncles. Remember that it's good to talk about anything that you are a little worried about. It's good to ask a trusted adult if there's something you need to know more about. You are God's wonderful creation and God loves you. You are growing up exactly as he imagined you would. Don't forget to ask God's help when you are worried or afraid and to thank God for making you the fantastic person that you are. Amen.