

STUMMIN

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

MIDDLE
SCHOOL
FOCUS

I HAVE QUESTIONS

FEBRUARY 3, 2021

Week 1 of a 3-week series
about questions

How do I deal with
everything?

BOTTOM LINE

You have to feel to move
forward.

SCRIPTURE

*The thought of my suffering
and homelessness is bitter
beyond words. I will never
forget this awful time, as
I grieve over my loss. Yet
I still dare to hope when I
remember this: The faithful
love of the Lord never ends!
His mercies never cease.
Great is his faithfulness;
his mercies begin afresh
each morning.*

- Lamentations 3:19-23 NLT

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students think
critically about how they are
coping, and whether it is
helping or hurting them.

>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: Two things that middle schoolers are still developing in this phase: self-awareness and honest self-expression. Because of this, they may struggle to recognize and acknowledge some of the things they're feeling and the coping mechanisms they're using to deal with them. And if they do see that they're using some unhealthy coping skills, they may not have the words or the courage to open up and express them to you. Be patient as your group processes this week. If your students don't seem to recognize any unhealthy coping skills they're using, that's okay! You're giving them the tools to recognize those as they grow. And more importantly, you're helping them practice the skill of thinking for themselves to develop, consider, and begin to use healthy coping skills that work for them. Remember, some of your students are coping with very difficult realities and circumstances. Be sure to follow up with any student who opens up to you about something they may be going through or using to cope that may need adult intervention.

>> DURING GROUP

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here.

DISCUSS THIS:

- Describe the best day ever.
- Describe the worst day ever.
- Take turns sharing your favorite helpful way to cope. (Note: encourage your group to take notes. This is a great way to add some healthy coping strategies to their toolbox.)
- How could a healthy coping skill become an unhealthy one?
- How does it make you feel to know that God wants to help you with whatever you're going through?
- Who is one person you can talk to that might help you find more helpful ways to cope?

DO THIS:

Reintroduce the Feelings Wheel from last month's series about moods. Point to a feeling on the wheel that students may find difficult to cope with. Ask your group:

- When was the last time you felt this emotion?
- What circumstances caused you to feel this way?
- What did you do about it?
- Can anybody think of any other healthy coping strategies that could help when we feel this feeling?

Complete 5 or more rounds, picking different feeling words each time.

Then, ask your group to take turns using the Feelings Wheel to describe the feeling they felt most often during this past week.

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>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: Students in your group will be on a spectrum of pain and coping experiences. As the leader, be mindful of where every student is and how a question may feel to them. Feel free to adjust the wording, and add or omit questions to fit the needs and personality of your group. Also, be mindful that it is not your job to fix pain for students or convince them to feel anything differently. Simply listen and offer encouragement no matter how they feel. Additionally, as students talk about how they cope, remember that if they are hurting themselves or others—or if someone else is hurting them—you are required to report that to Prince of Peace staff. If a student begins sharing something that you feel shouldn't be shared with the group, ask them if they would be willing to talk more at a different time. Then, be sure to follow through.

>> DURING GROUP

Create meaningful conversations. Adjust the questions as needed and ask thoughtful follow-up questions as the conversation unfolds. Don't feel like you need to answer every question.

DISCUSS THIS:

- What's the worst physical pain you have ever experienced? How did you cope with it?
- We tend to numb non-physical or emotional pain as much as we want to numb physical pain. Have you seen that to be true in your own life?
- What are some ways high-schoolers deal with pain?
- Using the Feelings Wheel: What feelings on here do you most want to numb?
- Everybody has healthy and unhealthy ways of coping with what happens in life. How can someone know if their way of coping is good for them or not? Where is the line?
- Read Lamentations 3:19-23 NLT. How would you define the word lament? What words from the scripture passage describe lament?
- All of us have a tendency to either stay stuck in lament or skip past it completely. Which is more likely for you?
- In the Lamentations scripture we just read, the writer says, "Yet I still dare to hope." Why does it take courage or daring to believe there is hope for things to get better?
- Share about a time you experienced a fresh start.
- What are some ways that this group can help remind each other of healthy ways to cope? How can we be there for one another when we are experiencing difficult emotions?