

STUMMIN

SMALL GROUP
LEADER GUIDE

MIDDLE
SCHOOL
FOCUS

LET'S TALK ABOUT... ANXIETY

JANUARY 11, 2023

Week 1 of a 2-week series about Important Conversations

BOTTOM LINE

God can help us walk through anxiety.

SCRIPTURE

Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me.

- Psalm 23:4a NLT

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

- 1 Peter 5:7 NIV

GOALS OF SMALL GROUP

To give students a safe space to acknowledge their anxiety and to encourage them to take healthy, helpful steps to walk through it

>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: In years past, we believed that only some of our students faced anxiety, but current statistics show that anxiety is widespread. So while every student may not experience anxiety in the same way or to the same level, they're all very likely experiencing it in one way or another. Be careful with the language you use as you talk about anxiety this week. You don't want to downplay what your students might be experiencing. Even if you can't relate or understand, their anxiety is very real to them. Remind students that while they may not feel okay now, help is available. There are ways to walk through anxiety. While it may never fully go away for some, God is there with them and will provide what they need. Avoid giving false hope to students that these tools are a formula to solve anxiety forever; instead, they're gifts God gives us to help us navigate life in healthy, helpful ways when we're anxious, stressed, or worried.

>> 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.

DO THIS:

Using iPhones (and sharing as necessary), search for a GIF or emoji that illustrates what anxiety feels like to you. Take turns talking about why you chose that GIF or emoji.

DISCUSS THIS:

- What types of things do middle schoolers feel anxious about?
- What types of things do you get anxious about?
- Does knowing that God is with you when you feel anxious change anything for you? Why or why not?

DO THIS:

Pass out the provided "Statements of Truth" sheets and ask your students to take turns reading each statement out loud.

- Which one of these things feels most helpful for you to remember right now? Why?

DO THIS:

As a group, brainstorm a list of tools that God has given us to help us walk through anxiety.

- Of this list, which tool feels most helpful to you right now?
- Where did you see God in this conversation today?

Pass out the provided "Anxiety Help Kit" for students to take home as a resource for walking through anxiety. Encourage kids to write down any additional ideas from your brainstorming session that they want to remember for later and/or try now.

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>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: Statistics show that the majority of your students are dealing with anxiety in one way or another, and that makes this conversation so important. The goal isn't to promise a quick fix for what they're walking through. It's not to force them to feel okay when they really don't. Instead of focusing on the outcome, focus on the promise that God is with them through their anxiety. It's not about the destination; it's about the God who is with us and equips us with tools to take on anxiety in healthy, helpful ways.

>> 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:

- On a scale of 1 to 10, (1 being never and 10 being daily) how often would you say you experience anxiety?
- In your own words, describe what anxiety feels like to you.
- When you experience anxiety, what's your typical response? How do you choose to cope or deal with it?
- How might your anxiety be getting in the way of experiencing the full life Jesus came to offer us?
- David reminds us it's not best to try to go around the difficult parts of life (the "valleys" - like anxiety); we have to go through them. Share about a "valley" you are currently walking through. How have you experienced God by your side?
- Does knowing God walks with you through difficult things change anything for you? Why or why not?
- What's one healthy step you want to take to walk through your anxiety?
- How has (or how can) God use StuMin and/or our small group to help you walk through anxiety? What do you need from our small group? What can you give to our small group to help others?

TRY THIS:

Using the provided handout, take turns reading out loud the verses of scripture. Encourage students to close their eyes and let the truth of the words wash over and comfort them.

>> AFTER GROUP

Due to the heavy nature of this week's topic, take an extra step this week to remind the students in your group that they are not alone. Send individual text messages encouraging them to reach out to you if they want to talk more or need extra support.