



SESSION 1:
LIFE IN AN
ANXIOUS WORLD

LEADER REFLECTION

Be sure to read the “Leaders Start Here**” guide in advance of Session 1. If you haven’t read it yet, set this aside and do it now!*

We all have anxiety.

Saying it out loud can take away some of its power. This week you’ll be introducing anxiety and teaching students how to see it and name it.

Naming is critical because when we ignore our symptoms or feelings of anxiety, the result can be depression or unhealthy habits of coping. However, anxiety doesn’t have to lead us down a dangerous path. In Mark 6:45–51, Mark 4:35–41, and many other stories throughout the Bible, we notice that while God doesn’t usually place the anxiety on people’s shoulders, God is present and stays with them in their most anxious moments. In these two passages, Jesus actually *gets in the boat* and then *stays in the boat* with the anxious disciples.

And here’s more good news: Anxiety can become one of God’s greatest growth tools—changing the way we view ourselves and the world around us—as we ask ourselves two questions:

Where is God at work in the midst of my anxious moments?

What might God—or anxiety—be trying to tell me?

Practice for healthy leadership

This week and throughout this series, make space to practice the Daily Replay you'll be teaching students. There is no substitution for personal experience, especially when it comes to prayer.

The Daily Replay is based on the Ignatian Prayer of Examen, and adapted for teenagers. Find out more about this prayer practice at www.ignatianspirituality.com.

If you find apps helpful to remind and guide you through your own practice of the prayer, search your app store for Ignatian Spirituality's "[Reimagining the Examen](#)," or "[Examen](#)" from FULLER studio.

How to help a student in crisis:

1. If a student is in physical danger or might be a danger to others, let them know that it is your desire and responsibility to help keep them safe. Don't hesitate to call the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline \(1-800-273-8255\)](tel:1-800-273-8255) for advice or 911 in an emergency.
2. Ask the student to practice slow breathing for a few moments to calm down. Try "box breathing," meaning breathing in for 3 counts, holding 3 counts, breathing out 3 counts, and pausing 3 counts.
3. Listen first. Act second. Unless the student is in immediate danger (see #1), don't respond too soon without hearing more about what's going on.
4. Collaborate with the student to identify one or two helpful and doable next steps they can take.
5. Follow up. Don't assume everything has gone smoothly and is resolved. Check in within a few days, and withhold judgment if everything hasn't gone according to plan. Take the student's lead before offering more help. Sometimes listening in a crisis moment is all someone needs to move out of crisis.
6. If a student's crisis is becoming overwhelming, unending, or appears to be worsening, it is probably time for additional help. Work together with the student to identify how they can access more help. A licensed counselor or therapist may be a good next step to consider.

Visit fulleryouthinstitute.org/anxiousworld for more information and practical advice on young people and anxiety.

How you can help your students grow this week:

- If you use texts or social media with students to encourage participation, let them know this series is coming and give them a preview of the week's topic. We've provided premade social media images in the folder of resources for Session 1.
- A few days after your group meeting, you might want to send out a reminder about the Daily Replay and how to practice it.
- Communicate with parents ahead of time about the series and about this week's content. We've provided a suggested parent communication that corresponds to each session, and we've also produced podcast episodes you can share with parents via email, social media, or text.
- Listen to this week's [Faith in an Anxious World Parenting Podcast](#) yourself! Find [Episode 1](#) to hear Kara Powell and Aaron Rosales talk on the themes of this session.

Final prep for this week:

- Read carefully through the script and make any needed adjustments based on your context and timeframe.
- Practice using the slide deck and make any needed changes.
- Watch the video and decide how you'll use it.
- Print enough **Look inside** small group discussion guides for each leader to have one (email it out in advance if possible and ask them to review ahead of time).
- If your students struggle to bring their Bibles to your meetings, print the Bible passage sheets for each small group leader. Find these at the end of each **Look up** session.
- Print enough **Look around** student take-home sheets for each student to have one.
- Check out the "You'll need" list at the start of the **Look up** large group teaching guide and at the top of the **Look inside** small group discussion guide (note they are separate lists).

LOOK UP: LARGE GROUP TEACHING GUIDE

BIG IDEA

In this session, students will understand that anxiety exists and begin to recognize some of its symptoms. Culture, technology, academic achievement, competition, self-comparison—all of these add to the pressure that builds around us and inside of us. When life starts to feel unsteady, we can look up, look inside, and look around to see God at work in the midst of our anxiety.

FOR THIS SESSION, YOU'LL NEED:

- A sheet of blank paper and pen for each student
- Session 1 slides and a way to project them
- Access to a clock or timer
- **Session 1 video: *Life in an anxious world*** and a means to play it, if you are using the videos included with this curriculum during your **Look up** teaching time
- If you're doing small groups during this gathering, be sure to check the "You'll need" list at the top of the **Look inside** small group discussion guide

WHERE IS GOD WHEN I FEEL ANXIOUS?



SLIDE: WHERE IS GOD WHEN I FEEL ANXIOUS?

*If you are using the videos included with this curriculum in your **Look up** teaching time, show **Session 1 video: Life in an anxious world** here to open your teaching session.*

Begin by explaining that for the next four weeks (or the next four times that you gather) we'll be looking at life in our anxious world. As you saw in the video, anxiety is something that exists in the world around us. It's something we ALL experience. And because our anxious feelings can, at times, have the potential to grow and cause a lot of disruption in our lives, anxiety is something that we all need to talk about. Throughout this series we'll be opening up the Bible to watch God at work in anxious stories, learning a spiritual practice that can help us when we're stressed, and building relationships with people we can turn to when we need to talk.

Say: **Let's start by taking a look at a story in the Bible that you might have heard before. But today we're going to look at it from a different perspective.**

Invite a student to read Mark 6:45–51 out loud.



SLIDE: MARK 6:45-51

Right then, Jesus made his disciples get into a boat and go ahead to the other side of the lake, toward Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After saying good-bye to them, Jesus went up onto a mountain to pray. Evening came and the boat was in the middle of the lake, but he was alone on the land. He saw his disciples struggling. They were trying to row forward, but the wind was blowing against them. Very early in the morning, he came to them, walking on the lake. He intended to pass by them. When they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost and they screamed. Seeing him was terrifying to all of them. Just then he spoke to them, "Be encouraged! It's me. Don't be afraid." He got into the boat, and the wind settled down. His disciples were so baffled they were beside themselves.

Ask: **What do you notice that's unusual about Jesus' words or actions?**



SLIDE: WHAT'S UNUSUAL ABOUT JESUS' WORDS OR ACTIONS?

Give students a moment to call out their observations. When they're finished, point out that in this story, Jesus' walk is steady. But when he encounters his disciples, he doesn't walk past and keep going. He stops and gets in the wobbly boat.

JESUS STEPS INTO THE UNSTEADY BOAT.



SLIDE: JESUS STEPS INTO THE UNSTEADY BOAT.

Say: **There are many stories in the Bible where someone shows signs that they're feeling anxious. What examples can you think of?**

Allow students a moment or two to respond. If needed, share a few answers of your own to get them started (*for example: Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Naomi, David, Esther, etc.*)

Say: **Even for the people in today's story, it wasn't the first time these same disciples found themselves in a heated situation. Let's look at a story from a couple of chapters earlier in Mark.**



SLIDE: MARK 4:35-41

Later that day, when evening came, Jesus said to them, "Let's cross over to the other side of the lake." They left the crowd and took him in the boat just as he was. Other boats followed along.

Gale-force winds arose, and waves crashed against the boat so that the boat was swamped. But Jesus was in the rear of the boat, sleeping on a pillow. They woke him up and said, "Teacher, don't you care that we're drowning?"

He got up and gave orders to the wind, and he said to the lake, "Silence! Be still!" The wind settled down and there was a great calm. Jesus asked them, "Why are you frightened? Don't you have faith yet?"

Overcome with awe, they said to each other, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"

MARK 4:35-41

Read the passage out loud. Then compare the story you've just looked at in Mark 6 with Mark 4:35-41. Once again, Jesus is *in* the unsteady boat with his disciples. In both stories, we see Jesus speaking or acting from a place of calm stillness but entering in to the anxious situation of his friends.

Say: **Jesus doesn't leave them alone in their anxiety. He joins them. He's *with* them. What do you notice about their response?**

Students may point out that the disciples didn't really seem to get it. They were in awe, and misunderstood who Jesus was and what he was doing. But in both cases, the water and wind were calmed. Their storms ceased, and now Jesus was with them in their questions and confusion.

WHAT'S MAKING YOUR BOAT FEEL UNSTEADY?



SLIDE: WHAT'S MAKING YOUR BOAT FEEL UNSTEADY LATELY?

Hand out sheets of paper and a pen to each student.

Ask: **What's making your boat feel unsteady lately? Maybe it's school, sports or activities you're involved in, friendships, a relationship, or something at home. On your paper, take two minutes to write as many things you can think of that are causing you to feel stressed out. We won't ask you to share your list with the group if you don't want to, so be honest with yourself. Ready? Set? Go.**

Ever been given a series of quick-fire questions and challenged to answer with the first word that comes to mind? When we're given a very brief window of time to think about a question, sometimes our answers are the most honest. Give students just two minutes to journal, and don't ask them to share their responses with the group at this time. They'll have a chance to open up about what they wish to later in the session.

Say: **We all feel anxious sometimes. That knot in your stomach or nagging fear when you face a challenge is your body's natural response to stress or pressure. Anxiety is a feeling that everyone, at every age, experiences.**

Anxiety can feel like a real problem—and sometimes it is. But here's the important thing to remember: Anxiety exists to tell us something important. Anxiety might be telling us something is wrong or that we're in danger. It might be telling us something about our bodies, our relationships, or about basic needs like food and sleep. The key is that we *learn to listen*.

Point out that in the Mark passages you looked at earlier, Jesus was present in moments when people were feeling most anxious, and showed them a healthier way to respond. As we look at characters throughout the Bible, we can see that while God doesn't usually place the anxiety on people's shoulders, God is present and stays with them in their most anxious moments. Often anxiety seems to be a tool that points people towards growth.

WHAT IS ANXIETY TELLING YOU?

Say: **Look through the list you made earlier. I'm going to put two minutes on the clock once again. This time, look over the stress points you wrote down and ask yourself two questions: *Where is God at work in the midst of your anxiety?* and *What might God—or anxiety—be trying to tell you?***



SLIDE: WHERE IS GOD AT WORK IN THE MIDST OF MY ANXIETY? WHAT MIGHT GOD—OR ANXIETY—BE TRYING TO TELL ME ABOUT ... (2 SLIDES)

- ... MY SCHEDULE AND THE PRESSURE I'M UNDER?
 - ... TIMES WHEN I'M BEYOND MY COMFORT ZONE?
 - ... WHETHER I'M EATING AND SLEEPING ENOUGH?
 - ... WHETHER I'M PUTTING MYSELF IN DANGEROUS SITUATIONS?
-

As you did with the previous question, give just two minutes to answer. Resist the urge to ask students to share their answers out loud. They'll have a chance to open up later in their small group, or with a trusted adult later in the week.

Say: **When anxiety takes control, it can make us feel unsteady. We try different things to make that unsteady feeling go away. These are called "coping strategies." Some coping strategies might numb our feelings—like alcohol, drugs, and self-harm—but cause even more problems.**



SLIDE: COPING STRATEGIES = EVERYTHING WE DO TO TRY TO GET RID OF, REDUCE, OR TOLERATE STRESS.

Can you give an example of a situation you were in where you turned to unhealthy coping strategies to escape an anxious situation? Whether your strategy was one of the three listed above or something else that formed a pattern that was difficult to break, sharing a bit of your own experience can help emphasize the message that we all struggle at times, and we can all overcome our struggles.

Say: **Over time, if we ignore anxiety it can cause other struggles like depression. But the good news is that we can work with anxiety in healthier ways than just ignoring it or numbing it. We don't have to follow it down a dangerous path. There are healthy coping strategies that help us step out of our anxiousness and learn to see it differently.**



SLIDE: ANXIETY DOESN'T HAVE TO TAKE US DOWN A DANGEROUS PATH.

Tell your students about a healthy habit you've formed to help you maintain balance and respond objectively when anxiety shows up in your life. Some examples might include a prayer practice, time in silence, exercising, talking with a friend or mentor, going to therapy—or a combination of those things.

Say: **When we listen to what our anxiety is trying to tell us, we can ...**

- Learn about who we are, what situations make us feel unsteady, and what healthy coping strategies work for us.
- Use our power to make changes when situations in our life cause us to feel tense.
- Recognize where God is present and at work in our rocking boat.
- Practice listening to God so that we can experience peace and share that peace with others.

Kind of like we might cultivate a garden to grow what we want, we can cultivate practices to grow peace in our lives by helping us walk through this anxious world and recognize God at our side—in our unsteady boat.

Say: Think back to the two stories we've read from the Bible in this session. You can even consider other stories about Jesus you've read or heard. Notice Jesus rarely traveled alone. In forming his group, the twelve disciples and the women who traveled with them, he created a close circle who supported one another even long after he was gone.

Over the next few weeks we're going to talk about anxiety and depression, because they are important things for every person to get comfortable talking about. When we start to feel anxious or sad, there are three important things we can do. We can:



SLIDE: LOOK UP. LOOK INSIDE. LOOK AROUND.

LOOK UP. We pause in the midst of our anxious thoughts to look up and seek God's wisdom through the Bible, and talk with others who are walking in faith.

LOOK INSIDE. We think and reflect on where God is at work inside us.

LOOK AROUND. We take a good look at our own anxious world so that we can make peace and share it.

As we *look up* together, I'm going to teach you some steps to build yourself a circle of care like Jesus did—a close circle of friends you can trust and talk to when you're feeling unsteady.

LEADER TIP

The Daily Replay is based on the Ignatian Prayer of Examen, and adapted for teenagers. Find out more about this prayer practice at www.ignatianspirituality.com.

I'm also going to give you some time and some tools to look inward. In small groups we'll explore a prayer called the "Daily Replay"—a simple prayer practice with a few steps you follow every day, or even in those moments where it feels like anxiety is taking over, to help you spot God at work. I'm also going to challenge you to look around you when you go home and when you go to school. Each week you'll get a take-home sheet with some questions and a challenge to try.

If needed, emphasize to students the truth that we get out of life what we put into it. Teenagers aren't always interested in taking home a worksheet or thinking about what they learned in youth group during the weekdays. But if they want to see change in their life, they have to be willing to put in the work. And when it comes to their mental health, the work is certainly worth it.

LEADER TIP

It's a good idea to assume that not every young person has key people in their life they can call upon. Find suggestions on how you can connect every student with a trusted adult in ***How to lead this curriculum***, found in the ***Leaders Start Here*** folder included with this curriculum.

Close in prayer, referring to the image of Jesus in the boat with us, steadying our boat, calming the wind and waves, sticking with us through our anxiety.

*Divide into small groups at this point, or use the **Session 1 Look inside** material whenever your ministry meets in small groups this week.*

SESSION 1:
LIFE IN AN ANXIOUS WORLD

LOOK INSIDE: SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

BIG IDEA

In this session, students will understand that anxiety exists, and begin to recognize some of its symptoms. Culture, technology, academic achievement, competition, self-comparison—all of these add to the pressure that builds around us and inside of us. When life starts to feel unsteady, we can look up, look inside, and look around to see God at work in the midst of our anxiety.

FOR THIS SESSION, YOU’LL NEED:

- A Bible
- A copy of the **Session 1 Look around** student take-home sheet for each student
- Pens or pencils
- **Session 1 Video: *Life in an anxious world*** and a means to play it, if you are using the videos included with this curriculum during your small group time
- Any additional materials needed based on your chosen “ideas to try,” which are offered throughout this session guide

LEADER TIP

Your curriculum includes an additional video, titled ***The Daily Replay***. You can use it in your small groups to inspire and encourage young people as they try this helpful prayer practice.

To begin, explain that when we're feeling anxious we can look up and seek God's help, and we can look inward at what anxiety might be trying to tell us. In our small group for the next few weeks, we want to be a safe space for each person to process what anxiety might be saying to them, and where they can see God at work in their anxious lives and in our anxious world. Review the suggested group boundaries offered in *Tips for meaningful small groups* found in the "Leaders Start Here" folder included with this curriculum.

LEADER TIP

If your small groups meet on different days throughout the week, consider re-reading the story in Mark 6:45–51 together (see **Session 1 Look up** material), and ask students to review what they observed about the story when the group last met.

*If you are using the videos included with this curriculum in your **Look inside** small group time, show **Session 1 Video: Life in an anxious world** here to open your session. Then, use the questions below to help students process and respond to the experiences of other young people shared in the video.*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. **What's your anxiety level like these days? Would you say it's high, low, or somewhere in between?**
2. **Sometimes we're very aware of how we're feeling, but other times our feelings of anxiousness can fly under our radar. I have a list of some of the most common triggers for stress and anxiety in young people. I wonder if anyone in our group would be surprised to find how many of the items on this list align with their own experiences.**

As you read this list of researched anxiety points for teens, ask students to make a mental note how many are pressure points they've experienced personally:

School	Getting into college or deciding what to do after high school
Keeping up with classmates	Pleasing teachers or parents
Family financial concerns	Bullying
Friendships	Relationships
Dating violence	Peer pressure
Illness of a family member	Natural disasters
Stories you hear in the news	Fear for personal safety
Death of a family member or friend	Emotional or physical abuse
Moving	Starting a new school
Big family changes	

Observe whether the members of your group were aware or unaware of the many anxiety and stress points they've experienced in and around themselves.

3. What are some of the physical feelings or symptoms you experience when you feel anxious?
4. Does anyone have a place they go or a strategy they try that helps them calm down those feelings of anxiety?
5. You may not have thought about it this way before, but what do you feel your anxiety might be trying to tell you?

A HELPFUL WAY TO PRAY

Say: **Some of the prayers we say and traditions that we practice as a church are not only acts of worship to God, but are also practices to help center and focus ourselves. In a sense, as we do them we invite God to come and meet us in our own unsteady boat.**

Pass out the **Session 1 Look around** student take-home sheet and encourage students to look at the section marked “A helpful way to pray.” Make sure each person in your group has a pencil or pen.

LEADER TIP

Ideas to try: Every young person is going to have their own comfort level when it comes to prayer. When introducing a new spiritual practice, consider the unique qualities of your group of students, and plan your prayer time according to what is going to be most helpful for them. Here are a few different ways you could guide your students through the Daily Replay for the first time:

- Create a quiet, reflective moment to lead students through the prayer and ask them to write down their responses to each prayer prompt in a journal.
- Use a video liturgy ([FULLER studio offers a series of Examen videos online](#)) to help students embrace and enter into concepts such as *presence*, *gratitude*, or *forgiveness*, and then give them time and a quiet space to work through the prayer themselves.
- If you are limited on time, talk the group through the steps and encourage them to journal as they pray at home.

Explain that you’re going to try a prayer that people have been using for hundreds of years. Some people go through the steps of prayer daily, and others use it to refocus when they feel like life is getting a little out of control. Either way, you can follow the prayer’s five steps any time you want to spend some moments listening to God and aren’t sure how.

The Daily Replay is based on the Ignatian Prayer of Examen, and adapted for teenagers. Find out more about this prayer practice at www.ignatianspirituality.com.

THE DAILY REPLAY

FIRST, BECOME AWARE OF GOD'S PRESENCE.

Lead your students through the following breathing exercise:

Settle your body and mind as you become aware of God's presence.

Sometimes settling our body and mind is really difficult, especially when we have a lot going on. One trick is to focus on our breathing. When we breathe slow and deep, we let our body and souls know that it is ok to relax and rest in God's presence. Sounds simple, right? We all know how to breathe!

It can be a bit strange at first, but learning how to breathe with your belly instead of with your chest can be very helpful. All you have to do is slowly take three seconds to breathe in through your nose, making sure to fill your belly with air . . . and then take three seconds to slowly breathe out through your mouth.

Now, as you continue to breathe deep and slow, take a moment to simply notice God's presence with each breath that you take.

THEN, REVIEW THE DAY WITH GRATITUDE.

What are the good things that have happened today?

What can you give thanks for?

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR EMOTIONS.

What moments have been difficult or tense? Why?

Where is God at work in the midst of your anxious moments?

What might God—or anxiety—be trying to tell you?

FORGIVE, AND ASK FOR FORGIVENESS.

Who are you angry or frustrated with?

Are there things you can forgive and let go of in order to have peace?

What would you like to be forgiven for?

FINALLY, LOOK TOWARD TOMORROW.

How can tomorrow be different?

What would you like to ask God to help you with?

When the prayer is finished, spend a few moments checking in with your students about their experience praying the Daily Replay for the first time. What was difficult, and what was easy? Was anyone surprised by the emotions that came up as they reflected?

LEADER TIP

Idea to try: The Daily Replay prayer can be done anywhere, at any time. Give each student five sticky notes and a pen, and ask them to write one of the prayer steps on each sticky note. As a group, come up with ideas on where students could place their sticky notes (bathroom mirror, bedside lamp, or in the car) to remind them to stop and reflect throughout the day.

GROW YOUR CIRCLE

Invite students to turn their take-home sheet over and notice the section titled “Grow your circle.”

Say: Just as Jesus traveled with his group of disciples, we want you to build yourself a “circle” of trusted adults you can call on whenever you need to talk about how you feel.

Explain that each week their take-home sheet will recommend a conversation they can have with a trusted adult. This can be the same adult weekly, or they can grow a wider net by strengthening their relationship with different people.

Say: Talk with a parent and look over your schedule to see if you can find an hour to meet with someone you trust and have an open conversation. For this week, your challenge is simply to tell that person about your list of things that are making you feel anxious lately. Then ask that person about what makes them anxious, and what helpful practices they’ve learned over the years to listen to and learn from their anxiety. If you feel comfortable, ask them to pray with you.

REMEMBER, this person should be a trusted adult. And be sure to talk with your parents about who you will be meeting with beforehand.

Pray as you conclude your time together.

Right then, Jesus made his disciples get into a boat and go ahead to the other side of the lake, toward Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After saying good-bye to them, Jesus went up onto a mountain to pray. Evening came and the boat was in the middle of the lake, but he was alone on the land. He saw his disciples struggling. They were trying to row forward, but the wind was blowing against them. Very early in the morning, he came to them, walking on the lake. He intended to pass by them. When they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost and they screamed. Seeing him was terrifying to all of them. Just then he spoke to them, "Be encouraged! It's me. Don't be afraid." He got into the boat, and the wind settled down. His disciples were so baffled they were beside themselves.

MARK 6:45-51

SESSION 1: LIFE IN AN ANXIOUS WORLD

LOOK AROUND: STUDENT TAKE-HOME SHEET

Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Put on my yoke, and learn from me. I'm gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves.

—MATTHEW 11:28–29

A HELPFUL WAY TO PRAY

Listening to our anxiety helps us learn about who we are as an individual, what situations make us feel unsteady, and what healthy coping strategies work for us. When we recognize where God is present and at work in our rocking boat and practice listening to God, we can experience peace and share that peace with others.

Try these five steps to help guide you through a simple prayer practice. You can pray quietly in your heart, or write your thoughts down in a journal.

THE DAILY REPLAY

- 1. Become aware of God's presence.** *Find a quiet place, away from distractions. Take several moments to breathe, relax, and invite God to be present with you.*
- 2. Review the day with gratitude.** *What are the good things that have happened today? What can I give thanks for?*
- 3. Pay attention to your emotions.** *What moments throughout my day have been difficult or tense? Where is God at work in the midst of my anxious moments? What might God—or anxiety—be trying to tell me?*
- 4. Forgive, and ask for forgiveness.** *Who am I angry or frustrated with? Are there things I can forgive and let go in order to have peace? What would I like to be forgiven for?*
- 5. Look toward tomorrow.** *How can tomorrow be different? What would I like to ask God to help me with?*

The Daily Replay prayer can be done anywhere, at any time. Try writing each one of the five prayer steps on a sticky note. Then place your sticky notes in places where you'll see them (on your bathroom mirror, next to your bedside lamp, or in the car) to remind you to stop and reflect throughout the day.

GROW YOUR CIRCLE

Practice talking about anxiety

Think of an adult you trust who might be a good person to call on if ever you need someone to talk to. This week, your challenge is to strengthen your relationship with that person and practice talking about how you feel.

Look over your schedule (preferably with a parent) to see if you can find an hour to meet with that person this week. Think about where you might like to meet with them (perhaps at your home, at church, or in a coffee shop). Contact that person and ask them if they would be willing to meet with you this week.

If you're not sure what to say, try this:

"My youth group is learning about how to live a healthy life in an anxious world. We've been challenged to build ourselves a circle of people we can talk with if we ever need to. Because you're someone I trust, I would like to invite you to be a part of my circle. Would you be willing to meet with me this week so that I can practice talking about anxiety and pray about it together?"

REMEMBER: This person should be a trusted adult. And be sure to talk with your parents about who you will be meeting with beforehand.

Four things to do when you meet

1. Talk with your trusted adult about the list of things that are making you feel anxious lately.
2. Ask your trusted adult about what makes them anxious, and what helpful practices they've learned over the years as they listen to and learn from their anxiety.
3. Pray together.
4. Ask your trusted adult if they'd be willing to let you call them if ever you need someone to talk to about how you feel.

I met with _____ [Name] on _____ [Date] at _____ [Location].

Things they said during our meeting that were helpful to me:

Sometimes stress and anxiety can become more than we can handle. Keep this number in your phone or someplace you can find it. If you ever feel like harming yourself, or if you're worried about someone you know, call the lifeline right away. **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK or suicidepreventionlifeline.org**

SESSION 1: LIFE IN AN ANXIOUS WORLD

LOOK AROUND: PARENT GUIDE

Anxiety and loneliness. Two of the most painful crises affecting our young people.

When the same young person experiences both simultaneously, it can be disastrous.

That's why this week we are helping your teenager, and the rest of our students, understand that ignoring our anxiety, or trying to handle it on our own, can result in depression or other unhealthy coping habits.

The good news is that Mark 4:35–41 and Mark 6:45–51 remind us that God enters into—and remains with us in—our most anxious moments. In these two passages, Jesus actually *gets in the boat* and then *stays in the boat* with the anxious disciples.

And here's more good news: Anxiety can become one of God's greatest growth tools—changing the way we view ourselves and the world around us—as we ask ourselves two questions:

Where is God at work in the midst of my anxious moments?

What might God—or anxiety—be trying to tell me?

We can work with anxiety in healthier ways than just ignoring it or trying to numb it. Over the next few weeks, the *Faith in an Anxious World* series will teach your student (and perhaps you!) to cultivate practices that help us walk through this anxious world and recognize God at our side.

HERE'S A CONVERSATION TO HAVE WITH YOUR STUDENT THIS WEEK

In this first session, each student made a list of things they are currently feeling anxious about. Ask your kid if they're up for talking through their list with you. In your conversations with your child, aim to communicate openness and empathy while trying not to judge or solve problems.

HERE'S SOMETHING YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOUR STUDENT AS THEY GROW

Help your teenager think of an adult they (and you) trust who might be a good person to call on if ever they need someone to talk to. Look over your kid's schedule together to see if they can find an hour to meet with that person this week, and agree on an appropriate location. Encourage your child to contact that person and ask them if they would be willing to meet this week, and to be available if they have questions in the future. The student take-home sheet includes some discussion prompts for this meeting.

HERE'S SOMETHING YOU CAN DO TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

Students are exploring the Ignatian Prayer of Examen as a tool to help center themselves and seek God when life feels anxious. We're calling it the "Daily Replay."

You can encourage your student to grow in this practice by walking through these prayer steps together, asking how the practice is helpful or challenging, or using the steps to grow in your own practice of prayer. Even if your child isn't consistently doing the Daily Replay on their own or with you, you can develop your own habit of doing so and share what you're learning with them.

HERE ARE THE FIVE SIMPLE STEPS:

1. **Become aware of God's presence.** *Find a quiet place, away from distractions. Take several moments to breathe, relax, and invite God to be present with you.*
2. **Review the day with gratitude.** *What are the good things that have happened today? What can I give thanks for?*
3. **Pay attention to your emotions.** *What moments throughout my day have been difficult or tense? Where is God at work in the midst of my anxious moments? What might God—or anxiety—be trying to tell me?*
4. **Forgive, and ask for forgiveness.** *Who am I angry or frustrated with? Are there things I can forgive and let go in order to have peace? What would I like to be forgiven for?*
5. **Look toward tomorrow.** *How can tomorrow be different? What would I like to ask God to help me with?*

The Daily Replay is based on the Ignatian Prayer of Examen, and adapted for teenagers. Find out more about this prayer practice at www.ignatianspirituality.com.

If you find apps helpful in reminding and guiding you through your own practice of the prayer, search your app store for Ignatian Spirituality's "[Reimagining the Examen](#)," or "[Examen](#)" from FULLER studio.

HERE ARE MORE TOOLS TO HELP YOUR FAMILY DEVELOP FAITH IN AN ANXIOUS WORLD

When it comes to developing faith in an anxious world, the majority of your most important parenting happens behind the scenes as you stay sharp and alert, ready to support your child with what they need:

- Check out the [Faith in an Anxious World Parenting Podcast: Episode 1](#), available wherever you listen to podcasts.
- Visit fulleryouthinstitute.org/anxiousworld for additional practical advice on how young people can best navigate anxiety.
- Seek professional help from a local counselor or therapist (we will cover this in more depth in the coming weeks).
- Reach out with your questions to a crisis hotline ([National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255](#) or suicidepreventionlifeline.org).