

LEADER REFLECTION

The heart of this week's session is relationships. We all need people in our lives, but people can be hard to deal with. For teenagers, sometimes the people they are closest to can cause the most stress. While you'll touch on friendships here, the hope is to help students see ways their families are probably sources of both anxiety and resilience.

Family systems theory, pioneered by Dr. Murray Bowen, suggests that the family forms an emotional "unit." A person's emotions and behavior aren't entirely independent; they're deeply connected with the behaviors and attitudes they've learned from their family. That's why, when looking at a young person's anxiety, it's important to consider the health of their relationships with those they're closest to. (Learn more about family systems theory at www.thebowencenter.org.)

In general, try to keep discussions in your group about families positive and focused on what's good rather than only what's bad or missing. However, when a student confides about a family relationship that is toxic or dangerous, it's important to help them understand that God wants them to get help and experience hope. Young people should never be counseled to stay in an abusive situation. As you journey through this four-part curriculum, be clear with your team about how to respond when a student shares about abuse or neglect, and know your state's mandatory reporting laws. It's a good idea to keep a list of hotlines students can call and local services they can access if they do not feel safe at home.

Heads up: You likely have a story from your own family you can share. Think ahead about a story that describes a relationship with a family member or friendship that wasn't always as healthy as it is now. What did the person do or say that was challenging or annoying? Why did you stick with that person and relationship? What steps did you both take to help? How is that relationship a blessing to you now? What could your students take away from this story?

Practice for healthy leadership

In addition to reflecting on your own relational story, take time each day this week to continue practicing the Daily Replay on your own. Here are prompts for this week:

1. **Become aware of God's presence.** *Where has God been at work in my life today?*
2. **Review the day with gratitude.** *Whose friendship or expressions of love am I thankful for?*
3. **Pay attention to your emotions.** *What conversations or moments with others have been emotionally charged this week?*
4. **Forgive, and ask for forgiveness.** *Where can I make the first move towards creating peace?*
5. **Look toward tomorrow.** *What interactions with others can I picture going differently tomorrow?*

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)** 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, give them a preview of the week's topic. We've provided premade social media images in the folder of resources for Session 2.
- 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 recommended 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 episode of the [Faith in an Anxious World Parenting Podcast](#) yourself! Find [Episode 2](#) to hear Brad Griffin and Joey Fung discuss the themes of this session.
- Check in with small group leaders to see if any students could benefit from a follow-up conversation this week.

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 found 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).

Looking ahead:

To prepare for Session 3, begin thinking about an adult your group trusts who can share about reaching out to a counselor or therapist for help with their own struggle with anxiety or depression. You will want to meet with this person beforehand to hear their story and how they tell it to be sure it's appropriate for your group. For more framing and for questions you can ask in advance, see the heading "A tale that's closer to home" in the Look up large group teaching guide for Session 3.