

# LOOK INSIDE: SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

## BIG IDEA

In this session, students will identify the pressures they feel as members of families, cultures, and peer groups. Relationships can be frustrating at times—but God designed us to be part of groups and families, and to build a circle of care we can ask to be with us when we experience both good times and bad.

## FOR THIS SESSION, YOU’LL NEED:

- A Bible
- A copy of the **Session 2 Look around** student take-home sheet for each student
- Pens or pencils
- **Session 2 Video: *Life in a relational 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

To begin, explain to your students that it’s important for each of us to build ourselves a circle of people we trust, so that when we feel anxious we can rely on them rather than pushing people away. In our small group for the next few weeks, we aim to be a safe space for each person to process what anxiety might be saying to us, and where we can see God at work in our anxious lives and in our anxious world. If necessary, review any group rules or guidelines you have already established with the group, including a standard practice of keeping what’s shared in the circle.

## LEADER TIP

If your small groups meet on different days throughout the week, consider re-reading the story in Luke 5:1–11 together (see **Session 2 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 2 Video: Life in a relational 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

Recap what the group talked about when your small group last met. Remind them that listening to our anxiety helps us learn about:

1. who we are as individuals,
2. what situations make us feel unsteady, and
3. 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.

## LEADER TIP

**Ideas to try:** The role of family in our emotional well-being is an important factor for young people to think about. However, all families experience highs and lows over time. Moves or changes in employment, loss or changes to significant family relationships, health of a family member, or factors that come with heritage and family expectations can all serve to add to the stress or anxiety a young person might be feeling. While navigating these questions, be aware of what you know about your students individually, and be sensitive to nonverbal cues such as physically or mentally withdrawing, shakiness, sweatiness, inability to make eye contact, intense fidgeting, attempts to change or minimize the topic (e.g., nervous joking, distracting, antics). If sharing in a circle doesn't seem best for your group, here are some alternatives:

- Invite students to pair up and talk through their answers with a friend.

## LEADER TIP

- Don't force students to share out loud if they don't wish to. Consider finding a comfortable place for the group to sit and journal their answers.
- Post each question on a whiteboard or large piece of paper, and ask students to write their answers anonymously. You could use post-it notes for this as well.
- Connect a student with a leader or pastor for later follow-up if it seems like they need to talk in a less public environment.
- If your group includes teenagers living in foster care or a group home environment, you may want to adjust some of these questions or be appropriately sensitive to this reality in a way that doesn't alienate those students.

**1. Every family is unique and different. What are some of the things you've observed that makes your family unique? What do you like about these characteristics?**

**2. Share something you know about your family's culture or history. How do you think your cultural background influences the ways your family relates or makes decisions?**

In the same way that families all have their own unique history and culture that affects us, each family tends to have some patterns that can make things get a bit tense!

**3. As you think about the last couple of weeks, name a situation where you could feel the anxiety level rising for your family. Don't just go to that big blowup that might have happened, but think back on the typical day-to-day stuff. Maybe it's around the morning routine, being in the car together, or something else that's unique to your family. What helps in those moments? What makes things worse?**

**4. How do you wish you could handle stressful moments better?**

**5. Think about the family members and friends you trust. Who seems to handle stress well, or communicates in a caring way even though they are tense or frustrated? What do you think you could learn by watching their example?**

**6. What are some of the words or teachings of Jesus that equip us to find new ways of interacting with our family and friends?**

## LEADER TIP

Some students will find it easy to come up with examples. Others will be less familiar with Jesus and his words. If your group is struggling to answer this question, consider looking at Matthew 5:38–42, Luke 17:1–4, or another passage that's been helpful to you together.

# A CONNECTING WAY TO PRAY

**Did anyone try the Daily Replay since we last met? Tell us one thing that was helpful, and one thing that was hard about this prayer practice.**

As a leader, be very encouraging of students' attempts to try the prayer practice. Each step, no matter how small, brings students one step closer to forming the practice and being able to benefit from it.

Remind students that the Daily Replay is not only our act of worship to God, but is a habit we can form to help center and focus ourselves. In a sense, as we pray we invite God to come and meet us in our own unsteady boat.

Pass out the **Session 2 Look around** student take-home sheet, and encourage students to look at the section marked "A connecting way to pray." Make sure each person in your group has a pencil or pen.

Say: **This week we're going to focus the Daily Replay on our relationships. We'll try it together now, but you can also use this as a tool throughout your week. You can follow the prayer's five steps any time you want to spend some time listening to God and aren't sure how.**

## LEADER TIP

**Idea to try:** Every young person is going to have their own comfort level when it comes to prayer. Consider the tendencies of your group of students, and plan your prayer time according to what is going to be the most helpful for them. As you lead your students through the Daily Replay, try choosing a different approach from the one your group used the last time you met:

- 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.
- If students answered their discussion questions in pairs, invite them to pray through the steps together in the same pairs.
- 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.

# THE DAILY REPLAY

## BECOME AWARE OF GOD'S PRESENCE.

*Where has God been at work in my life this week?*

## REVIEW WITH GRATITUDE.

*Whose friendship or expressions of love am I thankful for?*

## PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR EMOTIONS.

*What conversations or moments with others have been emotionally charged this week?*

## FORGIVE, AND ASK FOR FORGIVENESS.

*Where can I make the first move towards creating peace?*

## LOOK TOWARD TOMORROW.

*What interactions with others can I picture going differently tomorrow?*

# 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're working on building ourselves a "circle" of trusted adults we can call on whenever we need to talk about how we feel.**

**This week I want to challenge you to sit down and have a conversation with someone in your family or someone who is like family. Look around you when you go home, and ask yourself: Who in my extended family seems to handle pressure well, or does a good job of communicating and connecting with others? What would I like to learn from that person? You can come up with some questions to ask that person on your own, or there are some ideas on your take-home sheet to help you if needed.**

**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.*