

SESSION 3:
LIFE IN A HURTING WORLD

LOOK INSIDE: SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

BIG IDEA

In this session, students will recognize that at times our feelings of pressure and anxiety become more than we can handle on our own. God designed us to be part of groups and families who care, and at times to expand our circle to professional helpers. Reaching out to God and sharing honestly with others can keep us from facing anxiety alone.

FOR THIS SESSION, YOU'LL NEED:

- A Bible
- A copy of the **Session 3 Look around** student take-home sheet for each student
- **Session 3 Video: *Life in a hurting world*** and a means to play it, if you are using the videos included with this curriculum during your small group time

LEADER TIP

If your small groups meet on different days throughout the week, consider rereading the story in Luke 8:40–56 together (see **Session 3 Look up** material), and ask students to recall what stood out to them 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 3 Video: Life in a hurting 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 your group talked about when you last met. Remind them that relationships can be frustrating at times—but God built us to be part of groups and families, with a culture and heritage that help us to know who we are. And God wants us to have a circle of care we can ask to be with us when we experience good times and bad.

LEADER TIP

Ideas to try: Awareness of—and concerns about—deep anxiety, depression, and suicide can vary greatly among your group. Some may feel they’ve never experienced anxiety or depression at all. For others, suicidal feelings may be a very familiar reality. Many may want to share stories they’ve heard or process the experience of someone at school. While those are important conversations, the aim for this session is for students to think practically about how to reach out when they need to, so steer your conversation in that direction.

While communicating with care, keep your group focused on answering the questions below, and be sensitive to nonverbal cues such as physical or mental withdrawal, 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, or the conversation is getting off topic, here are some alternatives:

- Invite students to pair up and talk through their answers with a friend.
- 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 or on post-it notes that you then read.
- Make sure to 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.

1. **Last week you were challenged to have a conversation with a family member who handles stress or conflict well. Tell us one thing you learned from the person you spoke with. Was it easy or difficult to connect with someone in your family?**
2. **When you get focused on a goal or activity (like school, sports, or applying for college), what worries or pressures make it difficult to “stop in your tracks” and recognize when you need help?**
3. **Why is it hard to ask for help when we’re feeling low?**
4. **During our *Look up* teaching, we heard from [the name of your guest who shared their story]. Tell us something you learned from them, or a question you wish you could ask them.**
5. **What are some of your fears about talking with a trusted adult or professional about your feelings?**

At this point, summarize the boundaries your leader set in **Session 3’s *Look Up*** teaching time. Which pastor(s) or church leader(s) can students call if they need to reach out for help? What are your church or community guidelines regarding leader and student gender, times of day that it’s appropriate to communicate, etc.? Remind them: your leaders care deeply enough about you that they may not be able to promise confidentiality if they are concerned for your safety.

A HOPEFUL WAY TO PRAY

Remind students that the Daily Replay is not only our act of worship to God, but at the same time it’s a habit we can form to help center and focus ourselves. We can use it to help us determine when we need to reach out to God and the people around us.

Pass out the **Session 3 *Look around*** student take-home sheet, and encourage students to look at the section marked “A hopeful 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 giving ourselves an “emotional health check.” 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.**

Before you begin your Daily Replay, take a few moments to practice a “stillness prayer” based on Psalm 46:10. Invite students to sit comfortably and close their eyes, and tell them you are going to allow for about 30 seconds of silence between each phrase. You can count silently to yourself to pace this out evenly, or use a phone timer with the ringer turned off. Use the following phrases in progression, pausing after each one:

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am.

Be still and know.

Be still.

Be.

LEADER TIP

Idea to try: Every young person is going to have their own comfort level when it comes to prayer. Consider the particularities 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:

- Begin by leading the group through a simple breathing exercise. You can use one of your own, or try the following:
“When we breathe slow and deep, we let our bodies and souls know that it is okay to relax and rest in God’s presence. 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.”
- Give students paper and markers, and encourage them to draw or doodle their responses to each prayer prompt.
- 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.

THE DAILY REPLAY

BECOME AWARE OF GOD'S PRESENCE.

Where has God been at work in my life today?

REVIEW THE DAY WITH GRATITUDE.

Which conversations or encouraging words am I thankful for?

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR EMOTIONS.

Is there anything that is making me feel anxious or sad that I can talk with someone about?

FORGIVE, AND ASK FOR FORGIVENESS.

What forgiveness do I need to ask of God so that I can fully experience the gift of peace?

LOOK TOWARD TOMORROW.

What would I like to do differently tomorrow?

GROW YOUR CIRCLE

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

Say: We need to get comfortable talking with our families about how we feel. Sit down with a parent when you go home and talk about who's in your circle. Discuss who *needs to be* in your circle so that you don't have to face your inner struggles alone. And most important, talk about how you both will work together and reach out for help if you ever feel like you're dealing with more than you can handle.

REMEMBER: If you can't talk to a parent, have this conversation with another trusted adult.

Pray as you conclude your time together.