

LEADER PREP

GOAL OF GROUP TONIGHT

Tonight, we're going to be walking through God's perspective of depression and anxiety. If nothing else happens tonight, your students should walk away knowing that Jesus and your group are safe places where they can be real about their struggles.

Leader tip: If you have a chatty group, look for the questions with two asterisks next to them to prioritize your time!*

THINK ABOUT THIS

Many students deal with anxiety and depression. In fact, the average American teenager exhibits the same level of anxiety as the average psychiatric patient in the 1950s. We live in an age of anxiety.

Remember: groups are a place we want to be real and share openly. *Before you start, find space to acknowledge that middle schoolers today deal with anxieties you likely didn't face, or at least in the same way.* In fact, you can share it with them if you want, and it can go a long way to just acknowledge that with them.

PLEASE NOTE: If you have a student struggling with thoughts of suicide, please let a student ministry staff member know right away.

COMING UP: Two things: No Catalyst next week! We'll see you again on Sunday, December 2. Also: sign up to serve at Christmas with your group! Students will be serving at all campuses to greet and welcome guests. Sign up at tpcc.org/Christmas for the student-specific positions.

CONVERSATION GUIDE

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust questions and activities as you need to. Remember: this is a conversation and an opportunity for you to create a space for students to share. Choose what you think would best support your group to that goal.

BREAK DOWN BARRIERS: ICEBREAKER

Just for fun, ask: If you were your school's principal what's the first thing you would do?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY: TEE IT UP

What did you think about the statistics about how much more anxiety teenagers face today than they did even 20 years ago? Do you think this is true? If so, why?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Have a student who helps make the Thanksgiving meal at their house read 1 Kings 19:3-7. Fear, stress, and being alone can all play major roles in our anxiety.
 - ****We don't have details as to how Elijah got to this low of a place, but what he's experiencing is real. He feels afraid, stressed, and he's alone. When you feel afraid or stressed, what do you turn to?**
 - What do you notice from this story? What can you apply to your own life?
- 2) Ask students to volunteer to read Proverbs 12:25.
 - What stands out to you from this passage?
 - ****Have you ever experienced this—being really worn down by anxiety and had someone lift you up with an encouraging word?**
 - Is God asking you to encourage someone tonight in this group? Is there anything you want to share to encourage someone here?
 - ****Leader tip: If you feel like it's the right time, ask students to spend some time just encouraging each other. Sometimes an encouraging word from someone can make all the difference.**
- 3) Have a student who has already decorated for Christmas at home read Philippians 4:8 and 1 Peter 5:7. Sometimes when our minds are full of worry, it can help to replace our thoughts with things of God and what's true of him.
 - Spend some time naming some of the things you worry about, and together come up with some truths from God to remember when those thoughts come up. (Example: When you think, "I'm too ____ (ugly, fat, dumb)" remember Psalm 139:14.

WRAP IT UP

As you close out your group time tonight, read 1 Peter 5:7 out loud, and commit to memorize it together.

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

Ask students to share one thing they can be praying for as it relates to this topic, and close out your group time by praying for your students.