

SAFE & SEEN



TREEHOUSE



Creating mental health friendly youth ministries

The culture we foster in our ministry determines the level of safety for teens struggling with mental health.

This five-part video series will help your ministry team create a safe environment for any teen, including those struggling with mental health.

DISCUSSION GUIDE **SESSION 1** GRACE FIRST



About TreeHouse

TreeHouse exists to **unleash hope** in teens by empowering Christ-centered leaders to provide grace-based teen mental health support.

Our vision is to turn the tide of teen mental health by empowering the Church to bring living hope to teens in their community.

To learn more about how TreeHouse can help position your ministry as a community leader by offering non-clinical mental health support, visit TreeHouseHope.org/partner.

Let's Connect

TreeHouseHope.org

 @treehousehope

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SESSION 1 DISCUSSION: GRACE FIRST



Review group rules and their purpose:

Confidentiality: What's shared in this group stays in this group.

Respect: Listen without interrupting or judging.

Assume positive intent: Approach others' contributions with grace.

Speak for yourself: Use "I" statements to share your thoughts and experiences.

Practice empathy: Seek to understand others' experiences.

No dumping: Identify ministry growth areas without dwelling on past mistakes.

WATCH VIDEO 1: GRACE FIRST

1. Opening Reflection (5 minutes)

In our Christian communities, we've each carried emotional loads—some light and others heavy—shaped by both the blessings and challenges. Discuss your own experience and begin thinking about what that means for your ministry.

Discussion Question:

- ☆ Think back to your teenage years. What was your experience with safe and unsafe people? What made them safe or unsafe?

Key Verse:

- ☆ Psalm 34:18: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." (NIV)

- ☆ How can this verse guide our approach to teen mental health?

NOTES:

2. Understanding the Crisis (10 minutes)

Mental health challenges are affecting teens at unprecedented levels. As the Church, we are uniquely positioned to offer hope and support. Reflect on how we can step into this vital role.

Barriers to Addressing Mental Health:

- ☆ Why might the Church feel sidelined in the mental health conversation?
- ☆ What common barriers (i.e., stigma, judgment, fear) do teens face when considering opening up about their struggles?

Hope in the Church:

- ☆ Discuss Ana's statement that the Church is uniquely positioned to provide hope. How can this truth guide our response to the mental health crisis?

NOTES:

3. Grace-First Ministry (15 minutes)

Mandy shared that seeing others model grace-based faith would have been life-altering for her. Discuss how we can embody the grace of God in a way that creates safety while also challenging teens to grow.

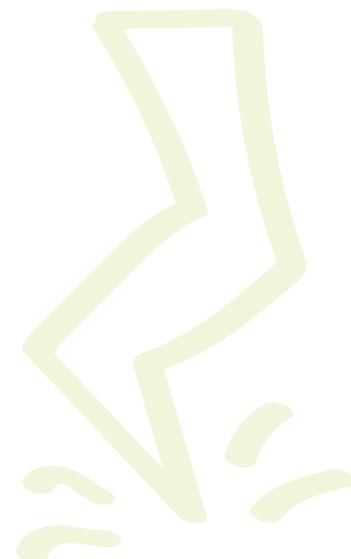
- ☆ How can we show teens that God's love defines their identity, not their behavior or accomplishments?
- ☆ What are some ways we might unintentionally reinforce a performance-driven faith in our ministry?
- ☆ How can we model the grace of God in our interactions with teens to help them feel lovable, capable, and worthwhile?
- ☆ How can we ensure we are discipling the authentic teen and not a performance-driven version of them?
- ☆ What does grace-based faith look like in practice, and how can you model it for your teens?

NOTES:

Possible Action Steps

Discuss these action steps and try to reach consensus on what step you will take next in your ministry.

- ☆ Run a quarterly small group study on identity in Christ.
- ☆ Intentionally plan a youth group teaching schedule that balances teaching on grace and behavior.
- ☆ Invite someone in once a month to share a testimony of experiencing God's grace amongst personal struggles.
- ☆ Run a Bible study for staff and volunteers on identity in Christ, so that everyone can embrace grace-first faith for themselves.
- ☆ Hold an event where teens take a personality assessment (Enneagram, Strengths Finder, etc). Use the event to teach on the components of identity, with identity in Christ being the core.



NOTES:

Closing Reflection & Prayer (5 minutes)

Takeaway:

- ☆ What is one thing you will do differently after today's discussion?

Prayer:

- ☆ Pray for God's wisdom and compassion to guide your ministry as you create safe spaces for teens.



NOTES:

DISCLAIMER

The Safe & Seen series is designed for educational purposes only. It is intended to provide tools and strategies for fostering a safe, supportive, and inclusive ministry environment for teens.

This course does not qualify or license any individual or organization, including the church, to practice mental health care, provide clinical counseling, or diagnose mental health conditions. We expect participants will observe the parameters of their respective roles and educational limits, referring individuals with significant mental health concerns to licensed mental health practitioners.

Mental health concerns or crises? Please reach out to a local mental health professional or seek immediate professional help for yourself or anyone in your ministry.

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Session five references The Relate study (2024). View the full study at relate.younglife.org.