

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 2** EMBRACE MESSY



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

 @treehousehope

SESSION 2 DISCUSSION: EMBRACE MESSY

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 2: EMBRACE MESSY

1. Moving Toward Struggling Teens (10 minutes)

Jesus moved toward those in pain, even in messy situations. Reflect on how we can follow his example by engaging struggling teens with compassion and grace.

- ☆ What feelings do you experience when approaching a messy situation?
- ☆ How can we follow Jesus' example of moving toward struggling teens instead of avoiding them, even when their lives feel messy or overwhelming?
- ☆ What barriers—personal or ministry-related—keep us from engaging with outcast or challenging teens? How can we overcome these?

NOTES:

2. Balancing Grace and Truth (10 minutes)

Jesus addressed the woman's struggles with calm and compassion, balancing grace and truth. Discuss how we can foster this balance in our ministry.

- ☆ Jesus addressed the woman's messy past with calm compassion. How can we balance sitting with teens in their pain while speaking truth in love?
- ☆ What practical steps can we take to separate a teen's worth from their circumstances and ensure they feel loved unconditionally?

NOTES:

3. Seeing the Whole Person (10 minutes)

Mental health struggles can feel all-consuming. Jesus teaches us to see people as whole individuals, not defined by their struggles. Discuss how we help teens see themselves this way.

- ☆ What are some ways to help teens recognize that their identity goes beyond their struggles?
- ☆ How might implementing action steps from the previous session help here?

NOTES:

4. Building Connection Before Addressing Challenges (10 minutes)

Jesus built trust before addressing deeper issues. Building connection first creates a foundation for meaningful conversations. Reflect on how patience and connection can strengthen ministry.

- ☆ Jesus didn't jump straight into the hard parts of the woman's life, but began with an ordinary conversation. How can we build trust and connection with teens before addressing deeper challenges?
- ☆ What role does patience play in ministering to teens with mental health challenges?

NOTES:

5. Impact of Reactions on Vulnerability (5 minutes)

Teens are influenced by how others respond to their vulnerability. Discuss how we can model compassion that builds trust and encourages openness.

- ☆ What steps do you need to take personally to protect teens from an accidental reaction that isn't based in grace and love?
- ☆ How do we ensure our ministry team models compassion and avoids reinforcing stigma when engaging with teens?

NOTES:

Possible Action Steps

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

- ☆ Implement a debrief meeting or call after each program to discuss who might need additional care/follow-up.
- ☆ Implement a regular leader meeting to discuss life and support one another. Recognizing the messiness in our own lives can give us compassion for others.
- ☆ Set a meeting with church leadership to discuss an agreed-upon action plan for challenging situations.
- ☆ Research your local mandated reporting laws and ensure all staff and volunteers understand the necessary procedures.
- ☆ Find a local therapist or counselor to train your staff on best practices for handling complex and emotional situations.

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 embrace teens in messy situations.

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.