

LEADING A SMALL GROUP

Small group time is some of the most important time that will take place during the retreat. It is a chance for young people to share with one another their thoughts, feelings, what God is doing in their hearts. By listening and loving them during this time, you incarnate the love of Christ and reinforce all other aspects of the retreat.

ROLE OF THE SMALL GROUP LEADER

- “To convert somebody, go and take them by the hand and guide them.” St. Thomas Aquinas. You are there to walk with teens and guide them closer to Jesus.
- To model availability and authenticity.
- To serve.
- To facilitate a conversation – a conversation where you are doing the majority of listening.

PURPOSE OF SMALL GROUPS

- To help participants process their experience.
- To answer their questions.
- To share parts of your testimony.
- To pray with the participants.

SMALL GROUP LOGISTICS

- Find a quiet place to meet with minimal distractions.
- Make sure that everyone is sitting on the same level and looking at each other.
- Small Groups should not be mixed gender. This will allow for greater intimacy and more directed conversations coming out of the men’s/women’s sessions.
- Small groups should be around 6 people in size. With larger groups, comfort and intimacy can be lost.
- If possible, try to your best to avoid assigning best friends or cliques to the same small group.

DISCUSSION-LEADING TIPS

- Begin with prayer. Model it in first small group and ask others in subsequent.
- Learn names and spend time just getting to know the teens. They won’t care how much we know until they know how much we care.
- If it’s the first or second small group for the weekend, play an ice breaker game or ask some icebreaker questions.
- Start every small group with asking them if they have any comments/questions from the talk – anything that they didn’t understand,
- Use open-ended question and allow people to respond honestly with judgment.
- Be patient and don’t fear silence. They may be processing.
- Keep speech positive. No negative humor.
- Don’t allow one person to monopolize the discussion.

- If someone derails the conversation, kindly say “Thank you so much for sharing! Let’s talk more about this later today!”
- Don’t allow interruptions.
- Do not correct in front of everyone.
- If someone does not seem to want to talk in the small group, try engaging them one on one.

OTHER THOUGHTS

- Don’t have an agenda. Have an open heart and let God lead.
- Small group is for them to speak and for you to listen. Do not preach or teach during this time.
- Don’t worry. Don’t be afraid. God’s chosen you for this.
- Don’t move on from a fruitful conversation.
- Make the most of each small group meeting.
- Everyone is encouraged to share, no one has to.
- Be honest and authentic – we are on this journey together.
- Do not break the privacy or confidentiality of another member. Let the small group know that everything is confidential unless something that could be harmful to them or someone else is shared.
 - If someone shares about something harmful or is in imminent danger to themselves or another, tell the group leader. The group leader will then take any necessary next steps per diocesan safe environment policy.