

CLUB SERIES GUIDE

BETTER CHOICES

Dear Campus Life Club Leader - Thank you so much for leading this Club with your students! Below you will find a few important notes and clarifications about what to expect as you move through this series. We also recommend you [review the standards and best practices for the Club RMA](#) found at YFC's Knowledge Base before starting Club.

WHO IS THIS GROUP FOR?

The Better Choices series is a series diving into a variety of choices that middle school students are making or will make. It's important to note that some parents, leaders or even you, may think that some of these topics are too mature for middle school students. But we recommend addressing these topics at the middle school level before they are in a position to make these choices instead of just at the high school level where they have already made the choices. Because some parents feel like these topics are too mature, we would encourage you to communicate to the parents in your community and tell them the topics that you are covering this series. Please see enclosed in the Curriculum folder a Parent Letter Sample with conversations they can have at home.

It is important to know the crowd that you have so we have built this series like a menu so you can pick and choose which topics you think are most beneficial and influential in your students' lives. We trust you to format your calendar year and know your context best. You can pick a few or all of these topics.

TOPICS:

- Pornography
- Relationships
- Screen Time
- Substance Abuse
- Self-Harm, Bullying, Eating Disorders
- Healthy Coping

Great resources to check out for yourself and your leaders:

1. *The Green Room Podcast Episode 9 "Is Porn Really That Bad" with Jamie Ivey*
2. *The Happy Hour Podcast Episode 340 with Tracy Foster*
3. *Global Youth Culture US Report 2021* <https://onehope.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/US-GYC-Report-3.pdf>

FONT DOWNLOAD

To view the word documents, you will need to make sure you have the YFC Steelfish font downloaded! Get it here: <https://yf.cx/steelfish>. We've included PDF versions of the lessons as well!

FEEDBACK

If you enjoyed this series and want to share some feedback, stories of how this impacted your ministry, or have any questions/concerns, please contact us at campuslife@yfc.net.

Dear Parents,

This next month at Campus Life, we will be discussing what we believe to be very important topics for our middle school students to talk about. These topics are relevant in their every day, and one of our goals at Campus Life is to come alongside the home and build these students up to be successful adults. Below outlines a few of the topics we will be discussing and a quick summary of our take on them. We welcome any questions or conversations you might have, so please feel free to reach out to me with the contact information below.

Week 1: Pornography & Sexting

We speak out strongly against pornography and sexting. We will tell students these are wrong, but we mainly want our students to know that adults at Campus Life are available to them to talk about their struggles in these areas, and we will never judge them for what they've done but do our best to walk alongside them to change their future to be struggle free.

At Home Discussion Starters for Pornography & Sexting:

1. What are some of the apps that you hear of other people seeing porn or inappropriate images on?
2. Have you ever been scrolling on your device and accidentally seen pornography? How can you respond well in these moments when it happens again? (*Stress to your student that you're not just going to take away their device for this*)
3. Why do you think middle schoolers seek out porn so often?
4. What do you think might be some of the negative effects of porn?
5. Is there anything that you need from me or that I can do to help you in this area?

We recommend listening to *The Green Room Podcast Episode 9 "Is Porn Really That Bad" with Jamie Ivey*.

Week 2: Relationships

When it comes to dating relationships in Middle School, we believe it is not Campus Life's role to tell students to date or to not to date. We come alongside parents knowing that they are the best person to make this decision for their child. We feel that our role is to support students whether they date or don't and that we can help students to recognize positive characteristics of potential significant others and encourage them to make wise choices in their relationships.

At Home Discussion Starters for Relationships:

1. What do you think the point of dating is in middle school?
2. Why do you think that relationships are so important for middle schoolers?
3. What would the ideal middle school relationship look like?
4. What are you comfortable doing with the person you're dating in middle school?

5. What are some characteristics you want in the person you are going to date?
6. What are some of your characteristics that you think may make others want to date you? What are some things you need to work on to be the best version of you for others to date?

We recommend taking a look at *Global Youth Culture US Report 2021*
<https://onehope.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/US-GYC-Report-3.pdf>

Week 3: Screen Time

At Campus Life, we recognize the significant role that screens play in our students' lives. The average student spends 8 hours a day on screens whether for entertainment (social media, streaming shows, YouTube, etc.), communication (FaceTime) or even for schoolwork. We want students to understand that screens are not inherently bad. But what you use them for can really lead you down a bad path.

At Home Discussion Starters for Screen Time:

1. If you could choose just 3 apps to have on your phone so that you'd feel like you're not left out of things and that help you fit in with the rest of your friends, which three would you choose? Why are those three the most important?
2. What are some boundaries that we can together put up around screen time that would be helpful but not leave you feeling left out or behind?
3. What are some different ways you see the things that your friends watch, listen to or scroll affecting them?
4. Share a time when you said or did something that was influenced by something you watched, saw as you scrolled, listened to etc. Have there been things that you've done just because you saw or listened to something?
5. I know you talked a lot about input-output this week at Campus Life, what are some things that you could input more of in order to output the kind of person you want to be?

We recommend listening to *The Happy Hour Podcast Episode 340 with Tracy Foster*

Week 4:

We care deeply about each of our students and want the absolute best for them! We welcome hard conversations like we've been having and encourage you to have those conversations at home regularly, so they feel normal and not like you are prying for information.

At Home Discussion Starters for Self-Harm/Eating Disorders/Substance Abuse:

1. What is something you love about yourself?
2. Why do you think that middle schoolers deal with self-harm, eating disorders and substance abuse?

3. How do you deal with hard emotions like jealousy, sadness, anger, or anxiety?
What do you need from me during the times that you are?
4. Have you ever been tempted in the areas of self-harm, eating disorders, substance abuse? What was that experience like?
5. What are some of your boundaries around substance abuse - what do you think that middle schoolers can do without it being a big deal? How does that change as you go into high school?

Site Director Name

(555) 555-5555

name@yfc.com

BETTER CHOICES

Q3 BETTER CHOICES: 01 PORNOGRAPHY

PLAYLIST

<https://open.spotify.com/user/campuslife1965>

PURPOSE

It will probably be said by someone close to your Ministry Site that pornography/sexting is too mature of a topic to talk about at the middle school age; however, current stats show that the average age of first exposure is 12 and that by high school, most students will have been exposed or even sought pornography out. We can also be afraid that by talking about these subject that we are "putting ideas in the students' minds" but research has proved that isn't the case.

The purpose of this Club is to open up a typically shame-based conversation to a conversation that isn't based in judgement but helps students know that there are adults that are available to talk about pornography if they are struggling and to help students see what the negative effects of porn use are.

NOTE TO SITE DIRECTOR

We would encourage you to be communicating with parents throughout the year but especially throughout this series. Truth is that some parents will want you to discuss these topics with their student while others won't, and it's good to give them a heads up on the content. We would encourage you to send out or post to social media the letter to the parent explaining why we are having these conversations with some aid for continued discussion at home (see Parent Letter Sample in Curriculum folder).

At Home Discussion Starters for Porn:

1. What are some of the apps that you hear of other people seeing porn or inappropriate images on?
2. Have you ever been scrolling on your device and accidentally seen pornography? How can you respond well in these moments when it happens again? (*Stress to your student that you're not just going to take away their device for this*)

3. Why do you think middle schoolers seek out porn so often?
4. What do you think might be some of the negative effects of porn?
5. Is there anything that you need from me or that I can do to help you in this area?

We would 10/10 recommend listening to *The Green Room Podcast Episode 9 "Is Porn Really That Bad"* with *Jamie Ivey* with your leaders as prep for this week and to post this podcast for parents to have available.

MINISTRY LEADER EMPOWERMENT

Get Ministry Leaders involved:

- Every week of this series, we will kick off with a welcome competition between a leader and a student. Try to get a different leader involved each week
- Have a different leader lead each game while all of the other leaders jump in and play! Students need to see us interacting with them as fun in order to open up to us
- If you have a leader that you knew struggled with pornography, see if they'd be willing to do this wrap-up
- Our ultimate goal would be for every leader to walk out of each Club of this series scheduling an appointment with a different student!

RMA CONNECTION

APPOINTMENTS

Conversations around these topics can be shameful and awkward: Students will be more likely to open up to a trusted leader in a place where not a lot of their peers are so think about meeting in the corner of a coffee shop where the student's back is to the rest of the place so they feel a sense of privacy. Also remember to do more listening than talking in these conversations despite how easy it can go into "fix-it" mode. Coach your leaders to practice not having a shocked face when they hear something, to offer empathy and to stay away from phrases like "are you praying about this" or "that doesn't seem like it's too big" - for kids...it is big!

PREP

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- Solo Cups (Ups & Downs)
- Projection & Sound System for Media
- Mentimeter set-up [Or poster boards]

WELCOME

Welcome to Campus Life! We are starting a new "Better Choices" series today that I am very excited for! Every week we are going to start this series with a friendly little competition between a leader and one of you!

[Consider making a deal like if students win the majority of the challenges at the end of the series, they'll get a pizza/donut party etc.] This week we are going to start with some sit-ups (or push-ups, whichever the leader feels better about) so who thinks that they can do more sit-ups than _____? *(call up one student and the leader that you already discussed this with).* I'm going to set a timer for 30 seconds and whoever can do the most sit-ups/pushups in that time wins this week's welcome! *(Have a leader hold the feet of each person and count)*

TRANSITION

I don't know about you, but I'd always rather do a push up than a pull-up unless it is during this next game so let's bring up _____ to explain this Campus Life classic and all-time favorite!

CROWDBREAKER

GUY/GIRL PULL-UP

DIRECTIONS: In a minute, but not yet, everyone is going to circle up and have a seat. I am going to pick 3 girls and 2 guys to be in the center (for larger groups, increase these numbers but keep them odd). When the music starts, those students are going to run to the circle, stand in front of someone of the opposite gender and point at them. When that person is pointed at, they will get up and then rush to someone else in the circle and do the same. You want to run and point as quickly as possible because when the music stops, whichever gender has the least number of students in the center gets a point. Whichever team gets 6 points first, wins candy!

***Note: If you have a Club with a lot of transgender or nonbinary students, have the teams be grades instead. Call up 3 students from every grade (make sure it's an odd amount) and then the students have to rush to someone not in their grade.

UPS AND DOWNS (Also applicable for small groups)

SUPPLIES NEEDED: Solo Cups (Double or triple the number of students you have for small groups or at least one per student for larger groups)

DIRECTIONS: I am going to split you up into two teams: Team Up will be this half of the room and Team Down will be this side of the room. As you see, leaders are tossing a bunch of cups all over the room: When the music starts, your team will work together to get as many cups facing your direction as possible while the other team is working against you. At the end of 2 minutes, everyone will pause, and leaders will count how many cups of each direction there are: If the majority of them up, then Team Up wins! If the majority are down, Team Down wins. Ready? Go!

SMALL GROUP GAMES

[VIEW SMALL GROUP GAME & ACTIVITY IDEAS HERE](#)

If you are working with smaller groups, we recommend playing **LOOK UP, LOOK DOWN** and **GARGLE GUESS** for this Club. You can access supplies needed and gameplay instructions by utilizing the link above.

VIRTUAL GAMES

[VIEW VIRTUAL GAME IDEAS HERE](#)

If you are working with students in a virtual setting, we recommend playing **LOOK UP, LOOK DOWN** and **FOLLOW THE LEADER** for this Club. You can access supplies needed and gameplay instructions by utilizing the link above.

TRANSITION

All of those games were a lot of back and forth, right? Just when you would get comfortable, you were getting back up or just when you thought you had all of the cups in your zone facing the right direction, someone would come along and flip them. Today we are going to talk about pornography and though a few of you may squirm, pornography can feel like that constant back and forth. You just get home and are checking your feeds for the first time after school and a picture or video that you didn't even seek out pops up; you're just doing your homework when a random guy slides into your DMs and asks for nudes; you're just watching the latest episode of Greys Anatomy (rest in peace) and all of a sudden, there is a major sex scene. Eventually after all of the back and forth, you just kind of give up because you're so exhausted from darting every which way.

MEDIA

Q3 BETTER CHOICES - EMMA'S STORY

DISCUSSION

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) In her video, Emma talks about how she started out not really liking pornography but got hooked over time. Can you think of something that you maybe didn't enjoy when you were a kid but now you do? What do you think changed?
- 2) What stood out to you about Emma's story?

- 3) Do you think that pornography is only found on certain websites that are just for porn? Where else have you heard of people seeing it? (if it is crickets, share examples like snap chat public stories, Instagram ads, certain tv shows that are often sexual etc. and see if they agree with that being porn)
- 4) Why do you think middle schoolers can start seeking out pornography?
- 5) What do you think some of the negative effects of pornography may be? You can even use examples that Emma used during the video.
- 6) What are some things that you could put in place in your life to help prevent pornography from being an issue in your life? (restrictions on your phone, turning off your devices at a certain time at night, not watching certain shows etc.)
- 7) Who are a few adults or even high school students that you feel like you could talk to if pornography became an issue for you/or already is or if you were struggling with other things?

GOING DEEPER

- 1) If you're in the Christian community long enough, you will probably hear the phrase "your body is a temple", what do you think this actually means?
- 2) Why do you think that the Bible talks about staying away from sexual immorality - which includes pornography, sexting, masturbation, having sex before your married etc.?

WRAP UP

Let me start out with this: Ladies, if you like Emma, have heard someone tell you that pornography and masturbation are just "guy issues", THEY ARE WRONG. Pornography and masturbation aren't just guy issues or adult issues or high school student issues. Especially today when most of us have a smart phone that can access the internet and social media constantly, pornography is an EVERYONE issue. You may be sitting there thinking, "If it's an everyone issue, is it really an issue or is it just a part of growing up?". It's an issue, and, in fact, 17 states have called it a health crisis because pornography can affect us in SO MANY negative ways! I also want to start with saying that pornography isn't just found on specific sites - you can find it on snap chat, Instagram, random ads that pop up on the internet, YouTube and TikTok. I would even consider different popular television shows to be pornographic; porn doesn't even have to include pictures or video - there can be books or audio bites that are pornographic.

For the sake of Campus Life, we will define pornography as material that appeals to our sense of sight and hearing and causes the feelings and physical response of arousal. Studies have recently showed that especially in your age group, pornography and masturbation can physically rewire your brain. Truth is, we turn to these things because we like the way they make us feel even if we, like Emma, don't like exactly what we are watching: This is because our brains release dopamine, the happy chemical. Overtime, our brain rewires itself to depend on pornography and masturbation to release this chemical and make us feel happy. Within even a short amount of time, we can become addicted because we no longer know how to feel this way without pornography; we are trapped. That's when pornography can lead to shame, depression, unleashing on people for seemingly no reason and a wide range of relationship issues. Like Emma talked about, pornography can lead us to think differently about dating, the opposite gender and what is and isn't

okay: It can cause us to view other people as objects to make us feel good and not care about what they want in the situation.

Pornography and masturbation just aren't the better choices. The Bible says that "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness" (Matthew 6:22-23). To be blunt, pornography puts darkness into your eyes rather than light and that darkness spreads to your mind - what you think about, your mouth - especially the words that you say to someone that you might be interested in, your actions - what you do with your time and your heart - your emotions and sense of happiness.

Throughout this whole series, we are going to continue to come back to one verse over and over again, "Do not be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2 NIV). Another version drags it out a bit more saying, "Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture (meaning the people around you) that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best in of you and develops well-formed maturity in you" (Romans 12:2 MSG).

I love that last line - God brings out the best in you! This is essentially saying to not just do something because it seems like everyone else is doing it without really thinking about it; instead to focus on the best that God wants for you. Maybe you don't know a whole lot about God, so let me tell you - God wants you to experience all of the joy and peace in the world but not through rewiring your brain to only feel happiness and peace when you are looking at porn and masturbating. God wants you to be good friends and have really good relationships in your life, but porn breaks those things down.

RESPONSE

All of your Campus Life leaders also want the best for you and are here to help you make the better choices. We know for some of you, this may be the first time you've ever heard about porn while others resonated with Emma when she shared how she wasn't able to ever stop herself. We want to give you time this series to debrief what you think and feel so I need everyone to grab their phones or devices and go to www.menti.com and plug in this code _____. This whole thing is anonymous so be as honest as you can, but you'll see six different statements and you just need to slide the slider to the part in the scale between yes and no that you see each statement. If you really agree with a statement, slide it all the way to yes; if you're like eh, maybe, kinda put it somewhere in the middle. **As the leader, play with this ahead of time and make sure you understand it. While you're doing it up front, narrate the results as you see them come in and encourage any student that answers the last question with yes to text or talk to a leader before they leave today so the leader can reach out to them this week.**

*****You'll need to go to www.mentimeter.com, sign up for a FREE account and build a sliding scale that looks like the one below. You'll be able to then access the mentimeter afterwards and see the breakdown of answers.**

This is great information to use for mission support letters, newsletters, donor stories, social media etc. If you don't have the ability to use technology, you can always build a similar graphic with a few of these phrases printed out, tape for the line and give the students post it notes to put where they are.

Go to www.menti.com and use the code 4317 1614

Mentimeter

Better Choices: Porn

No		Yes
	I know students who have sought porn out	
	I know students who have had someone ask them for nudes or have been the one asking for them	
	I have seen pornographic images on my devices without even trying to	
	I look at/read porn at least 3 times a month	
	Sending/Asking for nudes sexting is an issue for me	
	I want to meet with a leader to talk about this	

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SITE DIRECTOR - list any announcements here that you need to communicate to your group before Club concludes!

HEAD'S UP

NEXT WEEK | BETTER CHOICES: RELATIONSHIPS

Next week we'll hit another hot button topic and listen to kids about their dating relationships.

2 WEEKS | BETTER CHOICES: SCREEN TIME

It's no surprise that kids spend too much time on their phones. News flash – adults do too! Leading up to this Club, try to lessen your screen time and fill that space with something else.

BETTER CHOICES

Q3 BETTER CHOICES - RELATIONSHIPS

PLAYLIST

<https://open.spotify.com/user/campuslife1965>

PURPOSE

The point of this Club isn't to tell middle schoolers not to date until they are older; rather to help them think through relationships through the lens of Romans 12:2. We want to preemptively talk through boundaries and help them think through all of the things surrounding relationships so they know how to answer and where they stand when they start feeling all of the things.

NOTE TO SITE DIRECTOR

We would encourage you to be communicating with parents throughout the year but especially throughout this series. Truth is that some parents will want you to discuss these topics with their student while others won't and it's good to give them a heads up on the content. We would encourage you to send out or post to social media the letter to the parent explaining why we are having these conversations with some aid for continued discussion at home (Parent Letter Sample is enclosed in the curriculum folder).

At Home Discussion Starters for Relationships:

1. What do you think the point of dating is in middle school?
2. Why do you think that relationships are so important for middle schoolers?
3. What would the ideal middle school relationship look like?
4. What are you comfortable doing with the person you're dating in middle school?
5. What are some characteristics you want in the person you are going to date?
6. What are some of your characteristics that you think may make others want to date you? What are some things you need to work on to be the best version of you for others to date?

Note: We would also recommend taking a look at *Global Youth Culture US Report 2021*

<https://onehope.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/US-GYC-Report-3.pdf> with your leaders, focusing on the relationships section to catch up on some important stats before this week.

MINISTRY LEADER EMPOWERMENT

Get Ministry Leaders involved:

Every week of this series, we will kick off with a welcome competition between a leader and a student. Try to get a different leader involved each week

- Have a different leader lead each game while all of the other leaders jump in and play! Students need to see us interacting with them as fun in order to open up to us
- If you have a leader that feels passionately about dating (especially if you have any HS student leaders), prep them to lead this wrap up
- Our ultimate goal would be that each ministry leader walks away with an appointment with a different student each week of this series

RMA CONNECTION

APPOINTMENTS

Conversations around these topics can be shameful and awkward: Students will be more likely to open up to a trusted leader in a place where not a lot of their peers are so think about meeting in the corner of a coffee shop where the student's back is to the rest of the place so they feel a sense of privacy. Also remember to do more listening than talking in these conversations despite how easy it can go into "fix-it" mode. Coach your leaders to practice their shocked faces, to offer empathy and to stay away from phrases like "are you praying about this".

PREP

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- Projection & Sound System for Media
- Bell or Something to Pick Up (for Welcome)
- 3+ Hula Hoops
- Post-It Notes & pens for each student during the Response

WELCOME

Welcome to Campus Life! We are continuing our "Better Choices" series today and man, I am telling you- these are some of my favorite conversations all year! Every week we are going to start this series with a friendly

little competition between a leader and one of you! *[Consider making a deal like if students win the majority of the challenges at the end of the series, they'll get a pizza/donut party etc.]* This week we are going to start with trivia so who thinks that they can get more questions right than _____? *(call up one student and the leader that you already discussed this with)*. I'm going to ask a trivia questions and whichever of you ring the bell (or pick up something) first, gets to answer. If they get it wrong, the other person will have a chance to answer. Whoever gets the most out of five wins and is one step further to winning this series!

1. On a traffic light, where is the green light located? [Bottom]
2. What is Captain America's name? [Steve Rogers or Sam Wilson would be accepted]
3. Which hand holds the Statue of Liberty's torch? [Left]
4. How many curves does a standard paperclip have? [Three]
5. What is a group of lions called? [Pride]

CROWDBREAKER

HULA HOOP HOT POTATO

SUPPLIES NEEDED: Hula Hoops

DIRECTIONS: In a minute, but not yet, everyone is going to stand in a circle holding hands with the people next to them. A leader is going to go around and place hula hoops between some of you and when the music starts, you have to work your body through the hoop and pass it to the next person without letting go of the other person's hands. You want to go fast because whoever is touching the hula hoop when the music stops is out! (You can stop when you get down to two people or stop at any time before).

SMALL GROUP GAMES

[VIEW SMALL GROUP GAME & ACTIVITY IDEAS HERE](#)

If you are working with smaller groups, we recommend playing **FAMILY GAME** and **PIN HEAD** for this Club. You can access supplies needed and gameplay instructions by utilizing the link above.

VIRTUAL GAMES

[VIEW VIRTUAL GAME IDEAS HERE](#)

If you are working with students in a virtual setting, we recommend playing **3 IN 5** and **REVERSE CHARADES** for this Club. You can access supplies needed and gameplay instructions by utilizing the link above.

TRANSITION

Man, that hula hoop got passed around so much; TBH, that game reminds me a lot of watching all of you guys date (burn!). Throughout the three years I'll see all of you, I see so many of you getting passed around

and just passing one another around like meaningless hula hoops. Before we start talking about better choices in relationships, here's a comical little video showing a bit of what I'm talking about:

MEDIA

Q3 BETTER CHOICES - IF ADULTS DATED LIKE MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

DISCUSSION

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) What did you think about the video? Are there pieces of it that you are like yup that's true?!
- 2) What would the ideal middle school relationship look like?
- 3) What do you think the point of relationships are in middle school?
- 4) On a scale of 1-10, how important is dating/how much thought space does it take up for you?
- 5) What are the top three characteristics that you want in someone you're looking to date?
- 6) What do you think the top characteristics are that the opposite gender is looking for in someone to date?
- 7) What are some limits you personally feel should happen in middle school relationships?

GOING DEEPER

- 1) What could some consequences be for your future self if you just date whoever and do whatever in middle school?
- 2) Why do you think God gives us some limits to live by within relationships?

WRAP UP

Let's be honest, relationships are really important for many middle schoolers and others won't care about dating or being in a relationship until later. No matter which of these categories you fall in, you're okay: We aren't going to stand up here today and tell you not to date, instead we want you to just make Better Choices in your relationships.

Remember that we are focusing on Romans 12:2, "Don't conform to the patterns of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" meaning to not just make the same choices everyone else does - instead be different because you have thought about what God wants for you. There's a lot to cover in talking about relationships so we are going to break this topic down into three areas where you have to decide to live by the patterns of this world or to make a better choice.

1. Relationships make me feel loved VS. I love myself so relationships are just a bonus

- So much of middle school is filled with drama, loneliness, insecurity and just wanting to feel like you're good enough or loved so it makes a lot of sense why so much of middle school would also be filled with dating even if it is super short-term relationships with the only thing different than a friendship being that your Insta handle now sports their initials and your anniversary date. Being in a relationship in order to feel like you're enough or that you're loved or to even just look less alone or cooler aren't real great reasons to be in a relationship. They are also the reason so many of us can get stuck in this cycle of always dating someone and needing to find a new boyfriend or girlfriend because we only know how to feel love when someone else is available to text us when we are insecure, pump us up for our next big game or give us someone to hang out with on a Friday night. I'd like to challenge you that maybe the better choice in middle school is to take time to figure out how to love yourself. In the Bible, there is a chapter that is often called "the love chapter" because it gives us all of these qualities of love - "love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude." (1 Corinthians 13:4-5 NLT) The Bible is also big on saying that you should love others the way you love yourself but in turn that shows us that we aren't really capable of truly loving others in that patient, kind, not rude or jealous way until we first know how to love ourselves with that kind of love. To put it bluntly, if you are just in a relationship to feel better about yourself, then you're just using that other person instead of actually loving them no matter how many times you say you love them in your good night FaceTimes. I'm not saying you can't have relationships in middle school, I just want to challenge you to spend more time learning how to love yourself than learning how to get someone else to say that they love you. The patterns of this world would say that relationships make you feel loved, but the better choice is loving yourself and letting relationships be a bonus.

2. What happens in middle school stays in middle school VS. What happens in middle school is a staircase for high school and beyond

- I've seen too many middle schoolers treat middle school like it doesn't matter in the grand scheme of things, like you can hold as many hands, send as many nudes, say I love you to as many people, kiss as many people and beyond and it doesn't really matter because, after all, it's just middle school. 1 Corinthians 10:13 challenges this by saying, "I am allowed to do anything but not everything is good for me" (NLT). The patterns of this world would tell you that you can do whatever you want to do in a relationship whether you're in middle school or not, but I want to challenge you to look at it like a staircase. Before you're ever in a relationship or even just catching feelings for someone, you're at the bottom of the staircase: Everything you do with someone once you're in a relationship is like taking a step up - holding hands, saying I love you, sending nudes, kissing, making out and everything else. It's probably true that your first time doing each of those things, it takes a little bit of time but the next relationship, you are way more likely to just pick up from where you left off the last time. You'll rarely go back down the staircase; you'll just gradually and then not so gradually move up the staircase so what you do in middle school plays a big part in where you'll go in relationships as you get older. Even if it's something as simple as turning to relationships to make you feel better, you'll probably continue that pattern when you're older until you take the time to learn how to love yourself. The patterns of this world would tell you that what

happens in middle school stays in middle school, but the better choice would say that middle school is just a staircase.

3. Thinking about boundaries is uncomfortable VS. Boundaries are a necessary part of a relationship

- This is really just an extension of the second point, but it's important enough that I thought it deserved its own number! If you get awkward thinking about boundaries, then you're not ready for a relationship. Let me say that again for the people in the back IF YOU GET AWKWARD THINKING ABOUT BOUNDARIES, THEN YOU'RE NOT READY FOR A RELATIONSHIP. Statistics would show that more and more middle schoolers are going further physically and emotionally than ever before so this point is especially important. Every relationship (even a friendship for that matter) needs to have boundaries- We've already talked about emotional boundaries a little bit when we talked about not letting relationships be your sense of love for yourself but it's also important to think about physical boundaries and you guys are at the perfect age to start thinking about them. Before you're ever in a relationship, you need to know what you're okay with and what is crossing the line for you. You're never going to set a boundary in the heat of the moment when things start moving in a relationship - you're always going to move right up that staircase because things feel good, you feel like this may be the thing that really makes you feel loved or you're maybe even afraid of what the other person will say if you say to stop. Your parents may help you with some boundaries - maybe they say that you are only allowed to go on group dates with your boyfriend or girlfriend or that you're only allowed in family rooms with them and never in your bedroom or that doors have to be left open, etc. But you can't depend on your parents for all of your boundaries. What are you okay with? Maybe you write one set of boundaries for your middle school relationships and make some changes in high school or that your boundaries change the longer you're with someone; maybe it's all the same list but you have to spend some time thinking about boundaries. Are you okay saying I love you? Is there a certain time of night that you stop texting your significant other (Truly nothing good happens after 9pm in a relationship so stopping texting/snapping/dming after 9 is always a good rule)? Are you okay with holding hands? Kissing? We sometimes hear that the Bible only says to not have sex before we are married but more than that, it often says to steer clear of sexual immorality which can mean a lot of things. A good baseline is to draw a boundary around anything that causes those feelings of wanting more for you or the person you're in a relationship with. The patterns of this world would say do whatever you want in the moment, but the better choice is to think through your boundaries ahead of time.

I want to leave you with the why - a lot of times we can see the Bible or God as a long list of things that we shouldn't do but have you ever thought about why? God created relationships and even all of the physical stuff within relationships because he knew the power and goodness that they could have but gave them some boundaries to keep them good. In the same way, God created fire - for warmth, for light, for flames to cook over but gave it some boundaries. Think about it, a fire in a fireplace is great but what if it leaves that fireplace and spreads to the rest of the living room? Then it's a disaster, right? This is why God also put boundaries around relationships - as long as they are for the right reasons and have physical and emotional boundaries,

they can be really good BUT if they get out of that context, then they create disaster for our lives. God puts boundaries around these to protect us. He doesn't just say to keep sex for marriage because he wants to withhold something, but because physical relationships (even things before sex) releases different chemicals that bond us to that person and makes us feel attached to that person even after we break up. God wants to protect us from that heart break. So, don't conform to the patterns of this world but be transformed in the way that you do relationships even as a middle schooler.

RESPONSE

Right now, leaders are coming around to give everyone a post-it note and a pen. On the post-it notes, I want you to write down something that stuck out to you from this wrap up; a question you have or even use this space to think through some of your boundaries going forward in a relationship. For some of you, this wrap up maybe struck a nerve and you want to talk more about it - maybe you're stuck in a cycle of needing a relationship to feel loved; maybe you feel like crap because it doesn't seem like anyone wants to date you; maybe you've already gone further in your boundaries than you'd like in the future or you just want to talk about something totally not on this topic. Also write down your name and phone number on the post-it and a leader will reach out to you to hang out this week. When you're done, just put the post-it notes on the wall by the door.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SITE DIRECTOR - list any announcements here that you need to communicate to your group before Club concludes!

HEAD'S UP

NEXT WEEK | BETTER CHOICES: SCREEN TIME

We all struggle with too much screen time on our phones/laptops/TVs. Come ready to learn together and hold each other accountable!

2 WEEKS | BETTER CHOICES: YOUR BODY

We will look at the different topics of self-harm, eating disorders and substance abuse.

BETTER CHOICES

Q3 BETTER CHOICES - SCREEN TIME

PLAYLIST

<https://open.spotify.com/user/campuslife1965>

PURPOSE

We may be saying something similar every week of this series but the purpose of this week isn't to go to the extreme and tell students to delete all of their social media, give up television and only listen to Christian music; rather we want to present some points for them to consider in order to make better choices about screen time on their own.

NOTE TO SITE DIRECTOR

We would encourage you to be communicating with parents throughout the year but especially throughout this series. Truth is that some parents will want you to discuss these topics with their student while others won't and it's good to give them a heads up on the content. We would encourage you to send out or post to social media the letter to the parent explaining why we are having these conversations with some aid for continued discussion at home (Parent Letter Sample is enclosed in the curriculum folder).

At Home Discussion Starters for Screen time:

1. If you could choose just 3 apps to have on your phone so that you'd feel like you're not left out of things and that help you fit in with the rest of your friends, which three would you choose? Why are those three the most important?
2. What are some boundaries that we can together put up around screen time that would be helpful but not leave you feeling left out or behind?
3. What are some different ways you see the things that your friends watch, listen to or scroll affecting them?

4. Share a time when you said or did something that was influenced by something you watched, saw as you scrolled, listened to etc. Have there been things that you've done just because you saw or listened to something?
5. I know you talked a lot about input-output this week at Campus Life, what are some things that you could input more of in order to output the kind of person you want to be?

NOTE: This podcast is a great one to help you think about screen time and your student: *The Happy Hour Podcast Episode 340 with Tracy Foster*

This would be a great time to host a viewing party for parents/the community of the social media and create some discussion around the film on how the concepts could play out for their teen.

MINISTRY LEADER EMPOWERMENT

Get Ministry Leaders involved:

Every week of this series, we will kick off with a welcome competition between a leader and a student. Try to get a different leader involved each week

- Have a different leader lead each game while all of the other leaders jump in and play! Students need to see us interacting with them as fun in order to open up to us
- If you have a leader that feels passionately about screen time d, prep them to lead this wrap up
- Our ultimate goal would be that each ministry leader walks away with an appointment with a different student each week of this series

RMA CONNECTION

APPOINTMENTS

Conversations around these topics can be shameful and awkward: Students will be more likely to open up to a trusted leader in a place where not a lot of their peers are so think about meeting in the corner of a coffee shop where the student's back is to the rest of the place so they feel a sense of privacy. Also remember to do more listening than talking in these conversations despite how easy it can go into "fix-it" mode. Coach your leaders to practice their shocked faces, to offer empathy and to stay away from phrases like "are you praying about this".

PREP

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- Slides with actions for Welcome Warm-Up or large pieces of paper with the actions written on them
- Candy for winning team of Bedlam
- 5 posterboards/giant post-it notes/paper

- Markers/Writing Utensils

WELCOME

Welcome to another week of the Better Choices series! So far leaders have won ____ of our welcome warm-ups and students, you've won _____. Remember, students if you win more at the end of this series you'll win _____.! This week we are going to start with some quick reverse charades so who thinks that they can be a quicker guesser than ____? (*call up one student and the leader that you already discussed this with*). I'm going to show all of you an action and you are going to have to all act it out without any talking or sound effects and whoever guesses first will get a point. The first person to three points will win this week's warm-up!

Potential Actions:

An elephant has massive diarrhea
A giraffe paints a picture
The baby bit my thumb off
There's a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow
I chugged the milk and then threw up
The rollercoaster broke when I was on it

CROWDBREAKER

BEDLAM

DIRECTIONS: This is probably the craziest game we have in the Campus Life game book but it is one of my faves! We are going to split up into the four corners; leaders are going to go around and help make sure that the groups are pretty close to even. I'm going to call out a movement and your goal is for your entire team to make it to the diagonal corner and sit down first. If you do, you'll get a point and the first team to 5 points wins! *Leader - make sure students know the goal is not to hurt anyone and they are to avoid collisions!*

Potential Movements:

Walk Backwards	Bear Crawl
Hop on One Foot	Skip
Crab Walk	Gallop
Wheelbarrow Race with Partner	Piggy Back with Partner
Army Crawl	Snake Slither

DIGITS

DIRECTIONS: Everyone is going to find a partner. Each person must stand up facing a partner, with their hands behind their backs. They will then hold out any number of fingers of their choice. On the count of three, each partner brings their hands to the front and whoever adds up all digits (their own fingers included) first, wins. The person who loses sits down, while the winner goes on to pair up with another

person who won. Continue this way until you are down to 6-8 and then bring them to the front for everyone to watch. If you don't want an elimination game, then have everyone keep track of their wins and give a prize to whoever has the most after time runs out.

SMALL GROUP GAMES

[VIEW SMALL GROUP GAME & ACTIVITY IDEAS HERE](#)

*** PLAY DIGITS (ABOVE) but instead of breaking up into partners, have your entire small group put their hands behind their backs and on go throw out a number of fingers. The first person to call out the correct number gets to vote someone out. Keep going until one person is left.

If you are working with smaller groups, we recommend playing **ALPHABET POCKETS** and **SILENT ORDER** for this Club. You can access supplies needed and gameplay instructions by utilizing the link above.

VIRTUAL GAMES

[VIEW VIRTUAL GAME IDEAS HERE](#)

*** PLAY DIGITS (ABOVE) just have each member of your Zoom throw up a number of fingers and the first person to correctly count all of them gets to vote someone out of the game. Keep going until there is one winner.

If you are working with students in a virtual setting, we recommend playing **THE COUNT** and **WHAT DO YOU MEME** for this Club. You can access supplies needed and gameplay instructions by utilizing the link above.

TRANSITION

Digits is one of the Campus Life games that I am the absolute worst at because I'm so bad at math - seriously it was always my lowest grade! Though I hate math, today's topic is actually centered in some math that I learned in high school. We used to have to make these tables for equations and make sure that what we input into the equation was equal to what we outputted. Input equals output, my teacher used to dance around and say. The same is true for our bodies and today, we are going to talk about one of the main modes of input into our bodies today: screens. But before we get into how screen time relates to that math concept, let's break up into small groups!

DISCUSSION

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) I'm going to give you a minute to count up all of the screens in your household- video game systems, phones, computers, laptops, iPad, iPod etc. How many screens do you have in your household? Did this number surprise you when you counted?
- 2) If you could only keep one device/screen, which one would you keep? Why?
- 3) How do you think devices and screens have positively affected the world and middle schoolers?
- 4) How do you think devices and screens have negatively affected the world and middle schoolers?
- 5) What do you think that parents/adults don't understand about middle schoolers and devices/screens?
- 6) Do you have any rules either from your parents or yourself on things that you won't watch or music that you won't listen to? Why do you think these are important?

GOING DEEPER

- 1) How do you think things would have been different if bible times had devices and screens?
- 2) Do you think that Jesus would have had social media? What do you think he would watch on Netflix? Do you think he would have preached via lives or TikTok?
- 3) Clearly the Bible doesn't say anything about screen time because they weren't around. Are there parts of the Bible that you think apply to screen time and social media? (Think about idolatry, immorality etc.)

WRAP UP

When I was younger, my little brother was obsessed with this television show called "Dirty Jobs" where this guy went around doing some of the grossest jobs for a few days. It wasn't bad but wasn't good. Suddenly, cuss words started creeping out of my four-year-old brother's mouth even though my family never cussed, and he wasn't around anyone who did. Over time, we determined that Jake was learning these words from watching Dirty Jobs. He didn't know what he was saying or that these words were bad, he just knew that the host said them, and he liked the host, so he started saying them. It's pretty hard to teach a small child to not say those words so we ended up having to force him to stop watching his favorite show for a while until he learned.

We told you earlier that we were going to talk about math and input and output and my little brother's story shows how that concept relates to our own bodies. Your eyes and ears (and taste and touch but we are going to skip those two today) are your main sources of input for your body - what you see and what you hear tells you so much about the world and people around you. What you might not often think about is what you input through your eyes and ears goes straight to your mind and affects your thoughts and whatever is in your mind eventually affects your output or your actions, words etc. In short, what you see and hear will eventually become what you say and do. You've probably heard of the saying, "you are what you eat" but more so, you are what you watch and listen to. You may not always feel like you are in charge of your thoughts, actions or words but you are and paying attention to what you watch and listen to are big ways that you can affect those things for the better or for the worse.

Statistically, students your age spend about eight hours a day or more on a screen. Statistics would also tell you that your generation has higher levels of anxiety and depression than ever before. There are all kinds of studies that show how what you look at on your screens affect your life - social media and constantly seeing the best picture-perfect moments of other's lives negatively affect our self-esteem; violent video games and certain types of music desensitize us to the same kind of violence and make us think things aren't as big of a deal as they are; and hours of mindless bingeing or endlessly scrolling enable us to numb our emotions and feel less motivation.

Romans 12:2, the verse that we've been talking about this whole series says, "Don't conform to the patterns of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds". The patterns of this world would tell you that you have to have social media to be in; that you have to have the latest gaming system so you can play with your friends; that you have to craft a social media brand so others can appreciate you; that you have to watch certain shows or know all the words to certain songs to be cool. But let's spend time this week looking at the second half of that verse "be transformed by the renewing of your minds". One definition of renew means to begin again or to restore. Something that you should know is that when God first created us, he intended only good for us - to only experience good, to only have the best thoughts and to only do what is right. Pretty early on, this thing called sin entered the world and made things less than that - humans no longer had only good thoughts nor did only right. Being transformed by the renewal of our minds means to begin our minds again as God created them to be that our eyes and ears and, in turn our minds are only filled with good not just the things that are popular.

As the input, output concept goes, in order to renew our minds, we have to renew what our eyes and ears take in. It may feel like we have to watch certain things, be on certain apps or listen to certain things, but the truth is all of that is our choice. If we know that something is negatively affecting us, we don't have to take part in it. I'm not saying to never watch TV or be on social media or that you have to only listen to music about Jesus, but how can you use those things to help renew your mind? Maybe it's turning on your screen time settings so your phone goes to sleep at a certain time or making sure you get off your video games at a certain time so that you can get enough sleep. Maybe it's not listening to certain songs that talk about inappropriate topics so that you don't randomly use certain words or talk about certain topics. Maybe it's only following accounts on social media that make you a better person or even adding in some Jesus-centered accounts.

RESPONSE

Maybe you've never really thought about how the things that you watch or listen to affect you. I want to give you a bit of time to think about your life. On the wall, you'll see several poster boards - one that says social media, one that says TV, one that says music and one that says video games. In these next few moments, grab a marker and go to as many of those poster boards that are applicable to you and write one way you can see that it that area of screen time as negatively or positively affected your life. It's okay if there are repeats, I'm sure there will be, just write what is true for you.

On the last poster board, it says "RENEW", I want everyone to spend some time at that board and write down one thing you can do this week to take a step towards renewing your mind instead of just giving into the patterns of screen time.

*For larger groups, this exercise can be difficult. Feel free to split back into smaller groups and do this on pieces of paper that get passed around.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SITE DIRECTOR - list any announcements here that you need to communicate to your group before Club concludes!

HEAD'S UP

NEXT WEEK | BETTER CHOICES: YOUR BODY

We will look at the different topics of self-harm, eating disorders and substance abuse.

BETTER CHOICES

Q3 BETTER CHOICES - YOUR BODY

PLAYLIST

<https://open.spotify.com/user/campuslife1965>

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Club is to illustrate the importance of treating your bodies like they are valued, created for a purpose and are esteemed temples. We are lumping several topics together (self-harm, eating disorders and substance abuse) but please make this Club your own to lean towards the topics that your students need to cover the most.

NOTE TO SITE DIRECTOR

We would encourage you to be communicating with parents throughout the year but especially throughout this series. Truth is that some parents will want you to discuss these topics with their student while others won't and it's good to give them a heads up on the content. We would encourage you to send out or post to social media the letter to the parent explaining why we are having these conversations with some aid for continued discussion at home (Parent Letter Sample enclosed in Curriculum folder).

At Home Discussion Starters for Self-Harm/Eating Disorders/Substance Abuse:

1. What is something you love about yourself?
2. Why do you think that middle schoolers deal with self-harm, eating disorders and substance abuse?
3. How do you deal with hard emotions like jealousy, sadness, anger, or anxiety? What do you need from me during the times that you are?
4. Have you ever been tempted in the areas of self-harm, eating disorders, substance abuse? What was that experience like?
5. What are some of your boundaries around substance abuse- what do you think that middle schoolers can do without it being a big deal? How does that change as you go into high school?

***Note: On the way into Club this morning, students need to take a minute to fill out the survey in the "Media tab". Instruct students as they come in to be the most honest that they can be and to NOT put their names on the survey. Have a folder to collect all of the surveys.

MINISTRY LEADER EMPOWERMENT

Get Ministry Leaders involved:

Every week of this series, we will kick off with a welcome competition between a leader and a student. Try to get a different leader involved each week

- Have a different leader lead each game while all of the other leaders jump in and play! Students need to see us interacting with them as fun in order to open up to us
- If you have a leader that feels passionately about self-harm, eating disorders or substance abuse, prep them to lead this wrap up
- Our ultimate goal would be that each ministry leader walks away with an appointment with a different student each week of this series
- MAKE SURE TO LOOK AT THE FINAL CLUB OF THE SERIES AND GET LEADERS PREPPED FOR THAT

RMA CONNECTION

APPOINTMENTS

Conversations around these topics can be shameful and awkward: Students will be more likely to open up to a trusted leader in a place where not a lot of their peers are so think about meeting in the corner of a coffee shop where the student's back is to the rest of the place so they feel a sense of privacy. Also remember to do more listening than talking in these conversations despite how easy it can go into "fix-it" mode. Coach your leaders to practice not having a shocked face when they hear something, to offer empathy and to stay away from phrases like "are you praying about this" or "that doesn't seem like it's too big" - for kids...it is big!

PREP

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- Pens
- Survey for each student
- Pieces of paper for Response

WELCOME

Welcome to another week of the Better Choices series! So far leaders have won _____ of our welcome warm-ups and students, you've

won ____! Remember, students if you win more at the end of this series you'll win ____! Today, we are going to throw it back with a round of finger fencing against ____ [*leader that you've already communicated with*] so who thinks they can be more agile and get that dub?!

Okay so I need you to stand face to face with your opposite hands out and pointer fingers out. On go, you are going to bend and move trying to not let the other person touch you and be the first to touch them. (If you've never seen finger fencing - aka Star Wars or Light Saber Battle - here's a video to help you know what to do: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8L_6j20als)

CROWDBREAKER

FINGER FENCING

DIRECTIONS: I'm sure some of you are sitting there thinking that you could do better than those two so we are going to give you a chance at finger fencing! Grab a partner, get in your stance and when I say go, have at it! When you lose, sit down and winners need to find another winner and keep playing until we have our ultimate finger fencing champion! If you think you're one of the best, I dare you to duel one of our leaders!

Variation: If you do not want to play an elimination game, you can have everyone stay in the whole time and A) play for fun, B) count how many people they can beat and then trust their honesty, or C) play in Small Groups and have each small group send up their best player for a Small Group tournament challenge where students will root for their representative (if you choose Option C then have a Small Group prize for the winners).

SMALL GROUP GAMES

[VIEW SMALL GROUP GAME & ACTIVITY IDEAS HERE](#)

If you are working with smaller groups, we recommend playing **CHOPSTICK RACE** and **DEFYING GRAVITY** for this Club. You can access supplies needed and gameplay instructions by utilizing the link above.

VIRTUAL GAMES

[VIEW VIRTUAL GAME IDEAS HERE](#)

If you are working with students in a virtual setting, we recommend playing **ONE WORD STORIES** and **WHO DIS** for this Club. You can access supplies needed and gameplay instructions by utilizing the link above.

TRANSITION

To be honest, sometimes our lives feel like we are stuck in the middle of a finger fencing battle with the winner of a strong man competition - all of our moves are simply to try to avoid being poked. We don't have time to get our feet under us to make an offensive move. We are always just reacting to what is happening in our lives and often, when we are just reacting, we aren't putting our best foot forwards. We can feel hopeless, defeated and stuck and those feelings can often lead to some pretty unhealthy habits like self-harm, eating disorders and substance abuse. Now, I don't want to minimize the reasons that one can get caught up in these things or speak for those of you who are struggling with those things, but I'm just giving one reason why we can start to turn these ways.

MEDIA

Right now, your leaders are going to take a minute to pass out a random survey to each of you. Know that you're not necessarily getting your own survey so just hold on to it for a minute. We are then going to all stand up and make a circle. I am going to read one statement at a time and if that statement is checked on your survey, step forward. When I read the next statement, you can step back into the circle. I'm so proud of each of you for being the most honest and we are going to honor that honesty and stay silent the entire time without making any comments or weird looks.

NOTE: Prep your leaders that if there is a question that only one or two students step forward to join them in stepping forward regardless of what is on their card to not create an environment of shame. Statistically, this probably won't be the case, but it could, and we don't want a student to feel alone.

DISCUSSION

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) How did you feel during that exercise? Was there anything that surprised you?
- 2) Do you think that self-harm, eating disorders and substances are big issues for this school?
- 3) What are some reasons that middle school students may turn to self-harm, eating disorders and substances?
- 4) What are some of the consequences or repercussions of being involved in these things in middle school?
- 5) Has there been a time in your life when you had a situation that you just didn't know how to deal with?
- 6) What are some other ways that you could cope with the hard things in life other than turning to these things?

GOING DEEPER

- 1) What do you think it looks like to be a good friend to someone struggling with self-harm, eating disorders or substances?
- 2) When should you get an adult involved if you know someone who is struggling with any of these issues? Who are different adults in your life that you could talk to?

WRAP UP

Statistically, the last year has seen an increase in all of eating disorders, self-harm and substance abuse. 2020 was hard and that rolled right into 2021 - most students were in their houses, maybe even alone more than usual; some were trapped in unhealthy households; most face-to-face connections were ripped away leaving you with just a screen to connect to the wide majority of the people you'd normally see every day. Life was made hard and many students felt like they were just left to their own devices to deal leaving many to experiment with these different things. If you're one of those students who just turned to these things this year or at some other time to deal with life, first, I want you to know that we see you. We aren't judging you; we understand the connections that your brain made between your pain and these ways to cope. We'd love to have deeper conversations with you and help get you help so please reach out.

Even just spending the amount of time that I do with middle schoolers, it can easily feel like everyone is turning to cutting, eating disorders or disordered eating or substance abuse to deal, but I want to remind you of the Bible verse of this series - "Do not conform to the patterns of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Just because these things are fairly easy to get involved in or to turn to when life is hard, doesn't mean that they are the best things for you: don't conform or don't do them just because it feels like others are or even because one of your friends has done these things and it helped take the edge off for them, help them not feel as depressed or feel more liked by others.

The Bible also talks about your body being a temple, "Do you not know that your bodies are temple of the Holy Spirit that lives within you? You are not your own and were bought at a price therefore, honor God with your bodies" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). In Biblical times, the temple was more than just a church, but it was a building of high honor that was deeply protected by the people. That is how we are supposed to view our bodies - deeply holy and honorable structures that need to be protected at the highest cost. Even if the reasoning makes sense to us as to why we should cut, burn, not eat, throw up after we eat, vape, drink, smoke pot (the list goes on), it's undeniable that these things are all destructive to our bodies and not honoring and protective of them.

What are some ways that you can still deal with stress, hard emotions, or pain and honor your bodies instead of harming them? *[This could be a great time to have all of your ministry leaders come up front and give a 30 second snippet on their coping]* Some great ideas include:

- Cook a meal or create a craft - doing something with your hands often gets your head in a better space
- Go for a run, do a work-out or play a sport FOR FUN - moving is key to getting all of the good hormones flowing in your body
- Journal, sit in silence, go for a walk - give yourself a quiet place to talk to God and think so you can get to the bottom of why you feel what you're feeling
- Call a trusted friend, leader or family member - voice how you're feeling and let them remind you of the truth of who you are and what your body is

- Give counseling a try - at some point, all of us would benefit from counseling; just like we would go to the doctor when our body is struggling, counseling helps your mind and heart be the healthiest
- Grab a bath bomb and a face mask and treat yourself when you feel like tearing your body apart

Those are just a few options but there are so many more that you can think of just remember to honor your bodies as the prized and protected and honorable temples that they are as you are coping!

RESPONSE

Eating disorders, self-harm and substance abuse can leave us feeling isolated and alone especially when we should be reaching out. A huge positive way to cope would be reaching out to someone older than you that can hold your emotions and stress and help you see your situation with new eyes; give you advice or just listen but when we are in those desperate moments, it can feel like we have nobody. So today as you leave, I want each of you to write down the names of five older people (preferably adults) that you could turn to in the times that you may be tempted to go down one of these roads or really do any of the things we've talked about in this series.

You are not alone.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SITE DIRECTOR - list any announcements here that you need to communicate to your group before Club concludes!

HEAD'S UP

NEXT WEEK | BETTER CHOICES: YOUR BODY

This series has been heavy on purpose. Middle schoolers deal with so much, but next week, we'll focus on the hope of Jesus in a unique way. We aren't straight up presenting the Gospel, rather letting students in on the hard things of our lives and the difference Jesus

2 WEEKS | NEW SERIES: 34,000

Did you know that there are roughly 34,000 emotions that a single human can express throughout their lifetime? Sometimes it feels like we express those many emotions on a Monday morning. We're entering into a new series talking about some of the deeper emotions that we don't often mention but are very relevant for middle school students. Get ready to have some fun discussion around these different emotions as we continue to work towards deeper Authentic Christ-Sharing Relationships with our students.

BETTER CHOICES: SURVEY

Read each of the points below. If one is true of you, check the box. Don't worry, this survey is anonymous so nobody else will know your answers.

- ☐ I know someone whose parents are divorced
- ☐ I know someone who has had a close family member or friend die
- ☐ I know someone who has had someone close to them put in jail
- ☐ I know a middle schooler who doesn't have a relationship with at least one of their parents
- ☐ I know people that are feeling things that they don't want to talk about
- ☐ Anxiety/Depression are emotions that I have struggled with at some point this year
- ☐ I know a middle schooler who has self-harmed
- ☐ I know a middle schooler who has thought about suicide in the last year
- ☐ I have struggled with self-harm or thinking of suicide in the last year
- ☐ I know a middle schooler that has stories of abuse, addiction or jail in their life
- ☐ Negative things have been said about me online, on social media or behind my back
- ☐ I have said something negative about another middle schooler online, on social media or behind their backs
- ☐ I know someone who has skipped meals, eaten less or thrown up after eating to make themselves feel better
- ☐ I know a middle schooler who vapes/smokes/drinks at least once a month
- ☐ I have had the opportunity to vape/smoke/drink at some point this year
- ☐ I would say I have a problem with self-harm, an eating disorder or substances
- ☐ I lied about at least one of the answers on this sheet

BETTER CHOICES: SURVEY

Read each of the points below. If one is true of you, check the box. Don't worry, this survey is anonymous so nobody else will know your answers.

- ☐ I know someone whose parents are divorced
- ☐ I know someone who has had a close family member or friend die
- ☐ I know someone who has had someone close to them put in jail
- ☐ I know a middle schooler who doesn't have a relationship with at least one of their parents
- ☐ I know people that are feeling things that they don't want to talk about
- ☐ Anxiety/Depression are emotions that I have struggled with at some point this year
- ☐ I know a middle schooler who has self-harmed
- ☐ I know a middle schooler who has thought about suicide in the last year
- ☐ I have struggled with self-harm or thinking of suicide in the last year
- ☐ I know a middle schooler that has stories of abuse, addiction or jail in their life
- ☐ Negative things have been said about me online, on social media or behind my back
- ☐ I have said something negative about another middle schooler online, on social media or behind their backs
- ☐ I know someone who has skipped meals, eaten less or thrown up after eating to make themselves feel better
- ☐ I know a middle schooler who vapes/smokes/drinks at least once a month
- ☐ I have had the opportunity to vape/smoke/drink at some point this year
- ☐ I would say I have a problem with self-harm, an eating disorder or substances
- ☐ I lied about at least one of the answers on this sheet

BETTER CHOICES

Q3 BETTER CHOICES - HEALTHY COPING

PLAYLIST

<https://open.spotify.com/user/campuslife1965>

PURPOSE

This series has been heavy, and it was supposed to feel that way. Middle school students are dealing with so much, but today, we are focusing on the hope of Jesus in a unique way. We aren't straight up presenting the Gospel, rather letting students in on the hard things of our lives and the difference Jesus has made.

NOTE TO SITE DIRECTOR

This week's response is students signing up for an appointment to hear more about Jesus in their life. It is pivotal that all of your leaders are confident at presenting the response to the Gospel in a one-on-one environment so that they can do such in these appointments. If you haven't trained on this recently, make sure to teach them the 5Rs, Roman's Road, Bridge Illustration or another easy way to present it and understand that the Gospel is simply Jesus - who He is and what He's done for us.

NOTE: This wrap-up will probably be a bit longer than usual so plan accordingly with the games and even do the wrap-up/discussion in the middle to ensure you have enough time and then end with a game!

MINISTRY LEADER EMPOWERMENT

Get Ministry Leaders involved:

Every week of this series, we will kick off with a welcome competition between a leader and a student. Try to get a different leader involved each week

- Have a different leader lead each game while all of the other leaders jump in and play! Students need to see us interacting with them as fun in order to open up to us

- If you have a leader that feels passionately about screen time d, prep them to lead this wrap up
- Our ultimate goal would be that each ministry leader walks away with an appointment with a different student each week of this series

RMA CONNECTION

APPOINTMENTS

Conversations around these topics can be shameful and awkward: Students will be more likely to open up to a trusted leader in a place where not a lot of their peers are so think about meeting in the corner of a coffee shop where the student's back is to the rest of the place so they feel a sense of privacy. Also remember to do more listening than talking in these conversations despite how easy it can go into "fix-it" mode. Coach your leaders to practice their shocked faces, to offer empathy and to stay away from phrases like "are you praying about this".

PREP

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- Blender
- Items to Blend
- Clear Cups
- Chairs for leaders during Wrap-Up

WELCOME

Welcome to the last week of the Better Choices series! So far leaders have won ____ of our welcome warm-ups and students, you've won ____ but who will be the ultimate winner this week?! Remember, students if you win more at the end of today, you'll win ____! Today, we are going to get a little gross with a round of BLENDER CHALLENGE. I need one student who is going to face off with ____: You're going to have to be okay with tasting something a little gross and drinking it faster than the other!

BLENDER CHALLENGE

SUPPLIES NEEDED: Blender, items to blend, clear cups

DIRECTIONS: Have leader and student come to the front (put a blender in between them and add some ingredients that normally don't go together). Put in a few ingredients (think Mountain Dew/different sodas, Hershey's syrup - stay away from extreme things like sardines, mayo, etc.). Blend it up, pour into a clear cup, give to each and have the crowd countdown to start. Whoever finishes first wins the challenge!

OH MY LANTA, YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?! _____ WINS THE BETTER CHOICES TOURNAMENT!

CROWDBREAKER

AH-OOH

DIRECTIONS: Everyone puts their head down, extends their arms out, makes spirit fingers and says "Ahhhhhhh..." After about 5-10 seconds of this, the up front leader makes a very loud "OOH!" sound (like a gorilla) and place both their hands on the Head, Shoulders or Hips. Everyone in the crowd also says "OOH!" at a similar time and puts both their hands on their Head, Shoulders or Hips. The student's goal is to NOT MATCH the part of the body that the leader picks. If they match the leader, they must sit down. If they do not match, they continue to the next round. The last student standing wins.

SMALL GROUP GAMES

[VIEW SMALL GROUP GAME & ACTIVITY IDEAS HERE](#)

If you are working with smaller groups, we recommend playing **LICORICE TOWERS** and **DIE MASTERS** for this Club. You can access supplies needed and gameplay instructions by utilizing the link above.

VIRTUAL GAMES

[VIEW VIRTUAL GAME IDEAS HERE](#)

If you are working with students in a virtual setting, we recommend playing **FASTEST FINGER TRIVIA** and **DICE GAME** for this Club. You can access supplies needed and gameplay instructions by utilizing the link above.

TRANSITION

The last few weeks have been filled with some hard conversations and I want to thank you for sitting through those topics that often make us squirm a little. All of the leaders here at Campus Life want you to know that we don't judge you or see you differently if you have gotten involved in any of these topics whether it be pornography, sexting, sex, substance abuse, unhealthy relationships, eating disorders or self-harm. We see you; we love you and we are here for you. As we transition into our wrap-up first this week, please know those things.

WRAP UP

This series we've said Romans 12:2 over and over again, "Don't conform to the patterns of this world but transformed by the renewing of your mind". We've talked a lot of what it looks like to not conform to the patterns of this world, but not as much on the renewing of your mind so today we are going to lean into that.

Here at Campus Life, we believe that the renewing of your mind comes from a relationship with Jesus. God created us to live in a perfect world without poor choices, unhealthy choices, pain, abuse or any of the topics we've talked about this series, but humans messed everything up. The only way to get back to the way God created things to be is through a relationship with Jesus and we would love to share more about that with you one-on-one but this week, we want to **SHOW** you what that has looked like for each of your leaders.

Right now, I need all of your leaders to come up to the front and have a seat. Today, we are going to do interview each of your leaders instead of one of us doing all of the talking. *(For larger teams, plan to have just 3 or 4 of your leaders come up for the interview)*

Questions for the leaders:

1. What was something hard in your life before really having a relationship with Jesus and how did you cope with it? (Highlight the unhealthy things we've talked about in this series, but you could also lean into perfectionism, watching too much TV, etc.)
2. How did you begin a relationship with Jesus? Fill in the blank: Jesus is my _____.
3. Now that you have a relationship with Jesus, how do you avoid falling into the topics we've talked about this series? (It's okay to say that it is still hard and that there are areas where you still mess up)
4. How do you cope with stress, pain and hurt now that you have Jesus?

DISCUSSION

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Which leader did you resonate the most with? Why?
- 2) What has been something hard in your life and how did you handle it?
- 3) What do you think about a relationship with Jesus?
- 4) How do you think a relationship with Jesus could change the way you interact with things like pornography, relationships, substance abuse, bullying, eating disorders and self-harm?
- 5) Fill in the blank: I need Jesus to _____.

GOING DEEPER

- 1) How do you maintain a relationship with Jesus when things get hard in life?
- 2) As someone who loves Jesus, how could you help other friends and peers through the topics we've talked about in this series?

Make sure to end by having your small group students put your number in their phones if they don't have it already so you can follow up with appointments

RESPONSE

Like I said at the beginning, if any of these topics have hit home for you over the last few weeks, and you haven't talked to a leader yet, please do so. Or if everything you heard about Jesus today has you thinking, please reach out so we can share more about him with you. Right now, we are even going to give you some time to do that so pick up your phones. Text any of the leaders here and tell them that you need to talk to them about one of the topics or want to hear more about Jesus. Maybe you're sitting here and none of those topics apply to you, but you know a friend who is struggling, and you need to talk about that, text that. Maybe you're truly sitting here feeling pretty good about everything, that's great. You can still meet with a leader to get to know them better and learn how you could help a friend or guard against these things in the future.

I know some of you have probably had that feeling that you wanted to talk to someone for a while and you've kept putting it off or that you like the idea of Jesus, but you keep pushing it off. Don't push it off any longer. Text your leaders now.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SITE DIRECTOR - list any announcements here that you need to communicate to your group before Club concludes!

HEAD'S UP

NEXT WEEK | NEW SERIES CALLED "34,000"

Did you know that there are roughly 34,000 emotions that a single human can express throughout their lifetime? Sometimes it feels like we express those many emotions on a Monday morning. We're entering into a new series talking about some of the deeper emotions that we don't often mention but are very relevant for middle school students. Get ready to have some fun discussion around these different emotions as we continue to work towards deeper Authentic Christ-Sharing Relationships with our students.