

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

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