



STRATEGIES TO HANDLE HARD TOPICS WITH YOUTH

At the Gathering, youth will have tremendous opportunity to learn with and through their Lutheran peers and adult speakers. Whether this be during the day during Bible Study, Sessions or at the Mass Events, you will hear presentations on topics from the lighthearted to the very serious. As an Adult Leader, you are likely to engage with youth who may be struggling with subject matter and who may have questions relevant to what they've heard.

Here are a few strategies to help with your conversations. Remember, your job isn't to fix this, or solve the problem with textbook answers. Instead, focus on keeping the conversation going and bringing them back to God's Word and promises. Youth want to know they aren't alone in their struggles and questions. You are the front line to remind them of the Gospel and that they have your support.

1. Check in with other Adult Leaders in your group regularly. Ask them to keep an eye on kids in their Community Groups and to let you know if they notice any unusual or emotional behavior. Pay attention during Mass Events to how kids are absorbing the topics being addressed. Pray for the youth in your group regularly.
2. If a student is struggling, find a way to get some time with them. (Please do this safely and in line with your risk management procedures.) Listen to what's bothering them/causing them to question and really listen to their answers. Teenagers want to be heard.
3. Ask follow-up and clarifying questions. Choose your words carefully. Phrases like, "tell me more", "have you ever felt that way before", "can you share with me why this has brought up emotion" are good ways to encourage the dialogue and can help you dig deeper into why they are feeling this way.
4. As an adult leader, know that you are not alone. Make sure to utilize the Gathering HelpLine, Care and Crisis Teams as you need. If you run into issues outside of what you can handle as an adult leader, it's important to work to bring in the help you do need.
5. Share the Gospel and the hope of Jesus. This can help diffuse the rawness of the emotion they are feeling in the heat of the moment. If you're able to offer solid Scripture that is relevant to their issue/question, do so. If you don't feel equipped to do that, it's okay! Let the youth know that you will follow up in confidence with another adult leader and get back to them. The main thing is for the youth to feel loved and supported and not alone.



6. Offer to pray with your youth. Thank them for trusting you enough to share raw emotions and ask difficult questions. Often these issues aren't dealt with in one conversation. Tell your youth you will follow up in the near future and follow through. At that time, conversation can continue if necessary.

Pray that God's Kingdom is furthered through the hard topics and tough questions. Thank you for shining the light of Jesus In All Things!