

PEACE BE WITH YOU

An Edge Issue Night on Stress

EDGE NIGHT AT A GLANCE



Scripture

John 14:27, Matthew 6:34, Psalm 4:8, Matthew 28:20



Catechism

2304, 1468

GOAL

The goal of this Edge Night is to help middle school youth understand they are not alone when they experience stress and overwhelming feelings, to equip them with tools to find help if they need it, and remind them of Jesus' presence and peace.

GATHER

The youth reflect on their most stressful day from the last few months and share about that day. This activity aims to help the youth call to mind the circumstances that led to their stress to help them understand and unpack the teaching.

PROCLAIM

The following are the main teaching points of the Proclaim:

- We are living in surreal situations. It's OK to feel stressed and permit yourself to feel stressed. It is important to recognize that we need to ask for help when feelings become too overwhelming.
- The saints give us encouragement for moving forward in stressful and uncertain times.
- Jesus is always close to us in our stress and overwhelming feelings. He wants to give us peace.

BREAK

The youth will break into small groups to discuss questions regarding overwhelming feelings and stress. This discussion aims for the youth to talk about different

stressors they have had and what they can do in the future when they experience overwhelming feelings.

SEND

The youth are invited to share intentions for themselves or others and the Edge Night ends with a Prayer in Times of Stress. The purpose of this prayer time is for the youth to voice their prayer in a loving and supportive community and to invite Jesus into their overwhelming feelings and stress.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Challenge the youth to pray daily with the Prayer in Times of Stress from the Send and invite their families to pray with them.

Notes: _____

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EDGE NIGHT SET UP

SET UP

Pastoral Note: Due to the sensitive nature of these uncertain times and an increasing number of youth who experience severe stress and overwhelming feelings, communicate with parents before this Edge Night the content, weekly challenge, and any available resources for youth experiencing stress and overwhelming feelings.

Before the Edge Night, gather all of the needed supplies. Set up your meeting space with any necessary measures for social distancing according to your local regulations. To assist the youth in their weekly challenge, email the prayer from the Send to their parents.

SUPPLIES

The following supplies are needed for the Edge Night:

- Paper plates
- Writing utensils
- Slide with clock face for Gather game

ASSIGNMENTS

Use the following list to assign core members to specific tasks:

Set Up: _____, _____, _____

Gather:

- Opening Prayer: _____
- Game: _____

Proclaim: _____

Break: All small group leaders.

Send:

- Closing Prayer: _____
- Weekly Challenge: _____

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EDGE NIGHT OUTLINE

GATHER

Edge Night Introduction (5 min)

Welcome the youth, introduce any youth who are there for the first time, and begin in prayer. Give a brief overview of the topic of the Edge Night, using the following as an example:

We are living in a surreal situation. There is a lot that has been going on in our world with the COVID-19 virus, social unrest, elections, and even more in our daily lives. Some of us have felt strong emotions during the past few months. Some of us have experienced stress and overwhelming feelings. This week at Edge, we are going to take a closer look at those feelings, what to do when those feelings intensify and remember that Jesus is with us and wants to give us peace.

Stressful Day Activity (15 min)

This activity is done in small groups.

1. Hand out paper plates to each youth in the group.
2. Ask the youth to think of the most stressful day they have had in the last few months. Once they do this, instruct the youth to draw a clock face (not a digital one) on their paper plate.
3. Once they have drawn the clock, instruct the youth to fill in what they did for each hour of that most stressful day they thought about. Give the youth five to eight minutes to complete this.
4. After they are finished drawing on their paper plates, instruct the youth to come back to the small group and take turns asking each youth to share about this stressful day and some of their experiences during that day.



Suggestions

It may help to post an image of the clock face for the youth to reference.

PROCLAIM

“Peace Be With You” Proclaim Teaching (10 min)

The teaching can be found on pages 7 to 10. The following are the main points that are covered in the teaching:

- We are living in surreal situations. It's OK to feel stressed and permit yourself to feel stressed. It is important to recognize that we need to ask for help when feelings become too overwhelming.
- The saints give us encouragement for moving forward in stressful and uncertain times.
- Jesus is always close to us in our stress and overwhelming feelings. He wants to give us peace.

BREAK

Small Group Discussion (20 min)

Divide the youth into their small groups. Begin in prayer and then use the following questions to foster a discussion within the small group:

- *Whip Around Question:* When do you feel most carefree?
- Where in our world have you seen examples of people who are stressed?
- When in your life have you seen someone handle stress in a healthy way?
- What is something that has recently caused you to feel stressed?
- What do you find helpful to do when you feel stressed or overwhelmed? Who is one trusted adult you can talk to during these times?
- How do you think having a sense of the peace that Jesus offers to you during these times of stress can help you?
- How can this small group pray for you this week?

Eighth-Grade Adaptations

Use the following questions for a more challenging discussion for eighth-grade youth:

- What makes it difficult to talk to someone when you are struggling, stressed, or experiencing overwhelming feelings?
- When you are stressed or overwhelmed, what are some unhelpful things people say or do? What are some helpful things?
- How can we learn from both the unhelpful and helpful things so we can be a better support to the people in our lives?

SEND

Prayer Activity (15 min)

Remaining in small groups, youth stand in a circle and are invited to share one intention they have for themselves and one intention they have for someone else in their life who might be experiencing stress or overwhelming feelings. Offer up all these intentions to the Lord and end the Edge Night by praying the following Prayer in Times of Stress:

Heavenly Father, please grant me peace of mind and calm my troubled heart. My soul is like a turbulent sea. I can't seem to find my balance so I stumble and worry constantly. Give me the strength and clarity of mind to find my purpose and walk the path you've laid out for me. I trust your love God and know that you will heal this stress. Just as the sun rises each day against the dark of night, please bring me clarity with the light of God. In your name, I pray, Amen.

Weekly Challenge (5 min)

Challenge the youth to pray daily with the Prayer in Times of Stress from the Send and invite their families to pray.

Notes: _____

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EDGE NIGHT PROCLAIM

GETTING STARTED

This teaching is provided to give you an example of how to present this topic in an age-appropriate way, making it relevant to middle school youth.

Pastoral Note: Experiencing stress and overwhelming feelings is a reality that many youth live with daily. Do not trivialize the situations or imply that all levels of stress can be “prayed away.” Make sure the youth are aware of the help and support available from family and licensed professionals.

TEACHING GUIDE

Living in Uncertain Times

Begin by asking a few youth to raise their hands and share what it was like to recall their most stressful day.

- What are some things that make you feel stressed? School? Homework? Sports practice? Family situations? There are a lot of things in your day-to-day life that are stressful. Simply being a middle schooler is stressful — you have school and friends and family and hobbies and homework; it’s a lot to handle. On top of that, this past year has added many other stressors from the global pandemic to the social unrest.
- Sometimes, the stress of life can be overwhelming. When that happens, it can lead to having overwhelming feelings and thoughts. It is certainly normal to experience stress and being overwhelmed, and it’s OK to permit yourself to feel stressed.
- When you feel stressed, there are practical things you can do like: take a walk, listen to music, deep breathing, journal, expressing gratitude by writing down three things you are grateful for, etc. It is important to recognize that when feelings become too overwhelming or interfere with our daily lives, this can be a sign of stress turning into depression and anxiety. If your feelings of stress or worry cause you not to do things you usually would, you must talk to a trusted adult about how you feel to get the help you need.
- Experiencing stress or overwhelming feelings is not something to be embarrassed or ashamed of. It is essential to talk to someone about them. Many people around you love you and want to help you, and many people have gone through a similar experience.

Share a personal experience of stress or overwhelming feelings. Write your thoughts here:

- You are not alone! Jesus reminds us over and over again in Scripture that He would never leave us. During times of stress, Jesus is with us, and these hardships that we endure can become opportunities to trust Jesus more.

Read John 14:27

- Jesus wants to give us His peace in stressful situations. When we invite Jesus to be with us in these moments, it does not magically make our stress go away, but being in Jesus' presence can bring us peace. We can have the peace in knowing that He loves us, that He takes care of us, and that we can trust Him.
- Having Jesus on the journey with us does not eliminate difficult times that bring us stress, but inviting Jesus on the journey with us changes how we experience these difficult moments.
- We see first-hand proof of the difference it can make in our lives to invite Jesus into our stressful or difficult situations in the lives of the saints. The saints show us that while knowing and loving Jesus will not make hard times disappear, knowing and loving Jesus during those hard times can make all the difference and lead us to holiness.

The Saints Before Us

- The saints give us encouragement for moving forward in stressful and uncertain times, and we have some great examples of saints who found ways to invite Christ into their stress and share with us the wisdom that comes with that peace.
- Saint Padre Pio was an Italian priest known for his adoration of charity and love for the people around him. He bore the wounds of Christ, which is called the stigmata and is still something that cannot be explained by science. Saint Padre Pio has many beautiful quotes about times of stress and worry; one of the most famous ones attributed to him is, "pray, hope, and don't worry." He continually reminds us that God is the spirit of peace and will grant us tranquility.
- Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) was a Jewish convert to the Catholic faith; she was a teacher, a public speaker, and a Carmelite nun. She bravely spoke the truth and shared the message of Jesus Christ during WWII and was killed in a concentration camp. Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross was an advocate of God's power at work in our daily lives and difficulties we might face. She is attributed with saying, "Let go of your plans. The first hour of your morning belongs to God. Tackle the day's work that He charges you with, and He will give you the power to accomplish it."

- Saint John Paul II was known for his moving way of speaking, his immersion in prayer, devotion to the blessed mother, and spontaneous cheerfulness. He wrote and spoke much during his time as the pope, and many of his words were filled with the passionate cry to “open wide the doors to Christ, and be not afraid of Him!” He was born into a loving family, but his early life was marked by suffering and loss. His older sister, Olga, died in infancy. By the time Karol was 12, his mother Emelia had died of kidney failure. His older brother, Edmund, had died heroically serving those stricken with scarlet fever. From so many years of hardship and suffering, John Paul II never gave up on his faith and once said,, “what really matters in life is that we are loved by Christ and that we love Him in return. In comparison to the love of Jesus, everything else is secondary. And, without the love of Jesus, everything is useless” (*Address of His Holiness John Paul II During His Visit to the Tomb of St. John Neumann, 1979*).

Share a story and a quote from one of your favorite saints representing the importance of trusting in God in uncertain or stressful situations. Write your thoughts here:

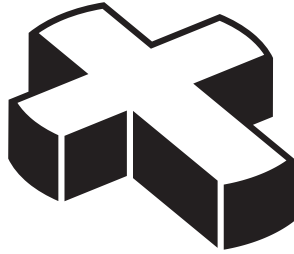
- While these saints are just a few examples, in almost all the saints’ lives, we can be sure to find many different stories of how the power and love of God radically changed their lives and helped them make it through difficult and stressful times.
- Knowing the peace of God does not mean that you will never encounter stress, but rather, in the times that you do, you know that in turning to God, you can find the peace that you are looking for. It may not be the feeling of peace, but you can always find the comfort and certainty of a God who loves you more than you can imagine. He will help you conquer any situation that lays ahead of you.
- Remember, too, that the saints in heaven are here to help us. As you read stories of the saints and you find some who have experienced the same things you are experiencing, you can ask them to pray for you and help you.

Finding Peace

- Peace is something that we all desire and strive for, but it takes work to find and maintain a peaceful heart in hardship and uncertainty.
- Trusting in God and His plans for your life can provide a concrete building block and foundation for living a life of peace. Learning to trust God takes time, it takes prayer, and it takes intentionality in the way we live our lives.
- One of the simplest prayers you can say as you grow in your relationship with Jesus and your trust of Him is simply “Jesus, I trust in you.”
- As your relationship with Jesus grows, as you learn more about Him and who He is, then your trust in Him will grow. And as your trust grows, so will your peace. Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and He wants to give us peace!

- When we look to filling our lives with more peace, there are some practical things we can do and be aware of that can help us along the way: things like getting plenty of sleep, exercising (walking or running), eating healthy, journaling, communicating well with our parents, teachers, and friends, etc.
- Another way that our peace of heart can be significantly affected is through the overuse of technology and social media. For those on social media, you must limit your time on the platforms and be aware of how social media makes you feel. Social media can add a lot of stress to our lives and our relationships if we don't use it well.
- We can all agree that life can be stressful. No matter how good your life is, there will be some things in it that cause you to be a little bit, if not a lot, stressed. It's important to remember that Jesus is always close to us in our stress and overwhelming feelings and He wants to give us peace.
- Even if you cannot feel it or are struggling to believe it, Jesus is with you and loves you more than you could ever imagine. It's not easy to experience stress or overwhelming feelings, but you can be assured that Jesus is with you through it all.

Notes: _____



EDGE

Middle School Ministry

