

Breakout 2:

Staying Present in the Storm; Supporting Teens Through Crisis, Grief, or Doubt

**Please add personal story here*

Teenagers do not need adults who always have the perfect answers. They need adults who are willing to stay present, listen well, and walk with them toward Christ in the middle of pain, confusion, and doubt.

“Have you ever sat with a teenager and realized you had no idea what to say?”

“Have you ever worried about saying the wrong thing?”

“Have you ever felt helpless watching a teen struggle?”

Most volunteers don’t feel unprepared when ministry is fun.

We feel unprepared when:

a teen loses a parent

someone struggles with anxiety

a student questions God

a teenager admits they feel numb, angry, or hopeless

Those moments can feel overwhelming.

But ministry in difficult moments is not about having perfect answers.

It’s about faithful presence.

Understanding the Reality Teens Are Carrying

Today’s teenagers are carrying enormous weight:

anxiety

loneliness

family instability

academic pressure

identity struggles

social media comparison

fear about the future

Some are silently carrying:

grief

trauma

depression

self-hatred

doubt in God

Many teens are experts at hiding pain.

The funny, outgoing, high-energy teen may be struggling deeply internally.

Sometimes the teenagers who seem the loudest are actually hurting the most.

Your Role as a Volunteer

As a Core member and volunteer, your job is not to:

fix every problem

become a therapist

solve every crisis

Your role is to:

notice

listen

care

support

connect them to help when needed

point them toward Christ

Teenagers heal in environments where they feel:

safe

seen

known

loved

Never underestimate the spiritual impact of simply showing up consistently.

Supporting Teens Through Grief or Crisis

Let's get more practical. I want to provide you with three important ways to support teens through grief or crisis.

One, "Don't Rush to Fix Pain."

When teens are hurting, adults often panic and try to:

explain suffering

force positivity

offer clichés

Examples to avoid:

"Everything happens for a reason."

"At least..."

Better responses would be:

"I'm so sorry."

"That sounds incredibly hard."

"I'm here with you."

"You don't have to go through this alone."

Two, "Presence Matters More Than Perfection."

Teens rarely remember perfect words.

They remember:

who sat with them

who checked in

who listened

who stayed

Jesus often ministered through presence before solutions.

At Lazarus' tomb, Jesus knew resurrection was coming, but He still wept.

The third and last, "Supporting Teens Through Doubt."

Some teens fear, "If I doubt, I'm a bad Catholic."

But questions are not the enemy of faith.

For example,

Thomas doubted.

Job questioned God.

Many saints experienced spiritual desolation.

Remember that there's no need to panic when teens question faith.

If a teen says:

"I don't know if I believe this."

"Why would God allow suffering?"

"The Church feels hypocritical."

Don't immediately shut them down.

Instead encourage curiosity.

You can ask,

"Tell me more about that."

"What led you to feel that way?"

"What's been hardest for you?"

A teenager who feels heard is far more open to truth.

Taking Care of Yourself While Caring for Teens

Supporting hurting teens can feel emotionally heavy.

Remember to take care of yourself in the midst of a crisis.

Don't forget to,

pray regularly

maintain healthy boundaries

remember, you are not the Savior

You are called to walk with teens toward Jesus, not replace Jesus.

Closing

You may never fully realize the impact of:

one conversation

one text

one prayer

one moment of listening

Sometimes ministry looks less like preaching, and instead, more like quietly standing beside someone when they need it most.

In moments of crisis, grief, or doubt, teenagers may forget our advice—but they will remember whether they encountered the love of Christ through us.

Close in prayer.