

My Life is In Your Hands

The Catholic Response to Depression, Addiction, and Suicide

Grades 7-9

Goal: Students will learn about depression, addiction and suicide as life issues, from the perspective of faith. They will explore the understanding that God has a plan for each person, and that our responsibility is to respond with respect for ourselves.

Diving into Dignity

Human dignity is **inalienable**. This means dignity cannot be given to us or taken away from us. Sometimes an experience of abuse or neglect can make us feel as if we have lost our dignity. This can lead us to harm ourselves in various ways because we do not believe we have any value. The truth is: no matter what has happened to us, we always possess dignity and worth.

Based on the Human Dignity Curriculum (World Youth Alliance)

Lesson: This lesson touches on sensitive topics that were specifically requested by teachers and administrators who participated in RLW in the past. Clinical depression and mental health problems are serious concerns. This discussion does not seek to solve any medical problems. Rather, it looks at the root cause of much of teen and youth depression and anxiety, which lies in a devalued sense of self and a failure to understand their place in creation. Students who react strongly to this material may need follow-up care. Please follow whatever protocol your school has in place.

Watch: [The Truth about You](#)

Discussion:

Is it hard to believe that we are good and loveable? Why or why not?

What are some of the common lies that teens struggle with? (Fill in the blanks: "I'm not _____ enough." "I'm too ____.")

How do these lies affect us?

When we don't believe that we are good, that we are loved, this can lead to many kinds of problems including self-harm. What are some problems this can cause? What are some forms of self-harm? (drug use, cutting, suicide)

In today's lesson, we'll explore some of these struggles and God's desire to bring us hope in all circumstances. He loves each person. He sees you as good and infinitely valuable. He wants each person to believe this about themselves too.

Activity: Break students into pairs or groups and ask them to do further research on one of these topics (the harm caused and ways to help someone who is struggling):

1. Eating Disorders and Self-Harm
2. Abuse
3. Drug Addiction

Have the students write a skit on their topic. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences. The scripts should describe what led to the negative action (motivation), the negative action itself (problem) and what the person did to overcome the negative action (solution). If time allows, have students present their skits to the class. Ask the class to identify the key factor for each person overcoming his or her negative actions—help of a friend; prayer; parents' influence; health problems; etc. What might have happened had that person not answered positively to the key factor and changed his or her life?

Watch: [Irreplaceable](#)

Discussion:

What events in our lives can make us feel “replaceable”?

How can we remember the truth that we are irreplaceable?

How can we show those around us that they are irreplaceable?

Prayer:

Prayer for Hope

Heavenly Father, I come before you today in need of hope. There are times when I feel helpless. There are times when I feel weak. I pray for hope. I need hope for a better future. I need hope for a better life. I need hope for love and kindness. Father, thank you for sending your Son to bring me life— Life to the fullest; life for eternity. Thank you for allowing me to share in Christ's Resurrection. Christ is alive in me, and His Spirit dwells deeply in my being, even when I cannot see you or even feel your presence. Thank you for making all things possible for those who believe. Thank you for guiding me right now. May I continue to receive guidance and hope from you This hour and every hour. Amen.

Look at a crucifix next time you feel lost or hopeless. Let it remind you of just how much God loves you. And of how much He wishes to help you secure a place in His Heavenly Kingdom for yourself and others! You are so precious to God. God loves you and has a good plan for your life!

Resources for Teachers and Parents

Helpguide.org information on [Teen Depression and Suicide](#). Good resource for parents and educators to understand symptoms and warning signs and know how to help.

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) offers a hotline and online guidance for anyone suffering from depression or having thoughts of suicide.

Lesson adapted from the plans on the Archdiocese of Los Angeles Office of Life, Justice and Peace website