

KNOWING MY VALUE

GRADES 7-9 – Lesson IV

Goal:

To recognize that God created us out of infinite love, for our true happiness. To gain tools to overcome temptations to sadness, despair and even suicide by learning what real happiness is.

Lesson:

Review the **four different levels of happiness** from Lesson III.

- 1. Physical or material pleasure** (e.g.: ice-cream, nap, sunbathing)
Upside: relatively easy to get (instant gratification)
Downside: good feelings fade fast; constantly looking for the next fix
too much can be addictive/harmful
- 2. Achieving success/being admired** (e.g. winning a game, good grades, being popular)
Upside: pushes us to work harder; accomplish remarkable things
Downside: life can become an endless exhausting competition; success is fleeting,
failure can be discouraging; self-esteem based on comparison is very fragile
- 3. Good beyond Self** (e.g. being a good friend, helping at home, volunteering)
Upside: gives life deeper purpose; a meaningful, lasting contribution to the world
Downside: we can't control other people's reactions; human relations never fully satisfy; we can't solve all the world's problems
- 4. Ultimate Good** (e.g. spiritual fulfillment; relationship with God)
Upside: satisfies the deepest longings of our heart, lasts *forever*
Downside: because spiritual joys are mysterious and not always "emotionally" satisfying, some people miss this level of happiness altogether

Watch:

The Comparison Game

Discussion:

- Which level of happiness is explored in “The Comparison Game”?
- Do you agree that what was depicted in the video is true to life?
- Can you think of a situation where you based your value on how you stack up against others? How did it make you feel?
- How do you break out of the Comparison Game?

Activity: Raise the Happiness Level Activity:

Friends don't let friends miss out on true happiness. Can you help your friends get “unstuck” from Level 1 or Level 2 happiness and stop “playing the game”?

Identify the desires in each of the below scenarios, and to which level(s) of happiness they belong.

Determine why your friend(s) is in crisis or unhappy. Suggest a change of perspective or attitude, or an alternative course of action, that may help them to seek a higher level of happiness.

- 1) Kira is lying in her room scrolling through TikTok. She is kind of bored so she checks the video she posted earlier to see how many views it got. As she re-watches it, she thinks to herself that she looks fat, especially compared to her friend Ashlyn in a video she just posted from the school dance club rehearsal. Ashlyn looks like she is having the time of her life at dance club and it makes Kira feel even worse. Ashlyn didn't respond to Kira's message and no one else from school has texted Kira all day. Kira starts to feel like no one likes her, no one cares about her. She decides to get some ice-cream from the freezer hoping it will cheer her up. It tastes good, but afterwards she feels guilty because she imagines it will make her fatter. She remembers that Ashlyn invited her to join the dance club because they need more dancers for a show they are going to put on at the senior's center. It could be cool, but no - that would be way too embarrassing because Kira isn't a good dancer and doesn't want to be seen wearing tight dance clothes. *How can Kira find more happiness in her life?*

- 2) Basketball is Mario's life. He is the best player in his school and local high schools have all been trying to recruit him for their teams after he finishes 8th grade. At least they were, until Mario got injured. Now he is side-lined for the whole season, and even then, he doesn't know if he'll ever be able to play at the same level again. Mario is devastated. He had counted on a basketball scholarship for college and now it looks like his dreams are over before they've even started. Yesterday, his friend Cameron had the gall to ask Mario for some shooting pointers. Mario is a way better player, but now Cameron will get to be the team captain. It's not fair! *How can Mario ever be happy again?*

- 3) Deisha really, really wants an iPhone. She feels left out because the other girls iMessage each other constantly and make fun of her because her phone can't run the latest apps. Deisha whines constantly to her mom about it, even though she knows it makes her mom feel bad because they can't afford it. Last night she and her mom got in a big argument about it. Now they aren't talking and Deisha is miserable. *What advice would you give Deisha?*

- 4) Liam is a straight-A student. He always gets the highest grades in every subject and is known in school as the "brain". But Liam is anxious all the time. Every time his class gets a test back, he is in agony wondering if Gabriela, another straight-A student, will get a higher score than him. Although he won't be applying for college for several years, he is already terrified that he won't get into his dream school. When he's not studying, he spends all his time doing extracurricular activities that he doesn't even enjoy. He only does it because he thinks they will look good on his college application. If he were to fail to live up to his potential... but no, he can't even think about that...But the pressure is killing him. *What would you tell Liam?*

- 5) Emily is one of the most popular girls at her school. She's smart, pretty and fun to be around. But Emily isn't happy. She wishes she was allowed to stay out every day after school because she hates being at home. Her parents are going through a divorce, and they fight all the time. Emily knows that her little brother Noah cries himself to sleep every night, but she has never talked to him about their parents because it's easier to just pretend it's not happening. A friend at school, Maddie, offered to let Emily try some drugs. Maddie says it numbs the pain and will give Emily an incredible high. Emily is thinking about trying it because nothing else seems to work. Another friend, Josh, keeps inviting Emily to come with him to the youth group at the local parish, but Emily

doesn't see the point. Why would she want to go sing campy songs and listen to boring lectures? Life just stinks. *What do you think would help Emily be happier in this difficult situation?*

Talking about suicide

When a person is experiencing deep emotional pain, he or she may have thoughts of self-harm or suicide. Suicide may seem like the only way to make others understand the depth of their suffering and, ultimately, to end the pain. The source of the pain could be a mental health condition such as anxiety, depression or bipolar disorder, or life circumstances such as bullying, isolation, abuse, sexuality struggles or a family crisis. But every crisis – as serious and painful as it may be – is temporary. Almost every problem has a solution and ultimately the crisis will pass even if the difficult circumstances remain. Unfortunately, when our thinking is distorted by profound suffering, this truth can be hard to recognize. In the last activity, you were able to find simple ways for the characters to find a bit of deeper happiness amid challenging circumstances. The same is true for more serious problems, although relief may take more time and require professional therapy or medication. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. It ends not only the pain, but all the happiness that a person would have experienced when they were able to find meaning and peace again despite the real struggles and hardships of life. There is always hope. Every life is good and no suffering, no matter how painful, can change that. If you have experienced suicidal thoughts or feelings, talk to a friend or trusted adult who can help you see things more clearly and find the path back to happiness.

Resources for Teachers and Parents

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

[ADAPP Suicide Prevention](#). A video training series to help parents and educators prevent suicide among youth.

[New York State Office of Mental Health](#) offers information on suicide prevention, including trainings, workshops, and learning modules.

The [Samaritans NYC](#) offer non-faith-based information on suicide: suicide prevention hotlines and also for “suicide survivors,” those who are left behind to sort through “what happened.”

[Solace House Suicide Prevention Center](#) (two NY locations: Long Island City, Queens; and Yonkers), to prevent suicide and also for suicide bereavement. (718) 482-0001

Suicide can be a challenging topic for everyone, but please remember that help is always available (24/7) for anyone suffering from depression or having thoughts of suicide. For confidential guidance for your child, or anyone:

Call, text, or chat 9-8-8

Similar to 911, the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is a national hotline that connects a caller in a mental health crisis to a trained counselor who can address their immediate needs (and even help connect them to ongoing care if they desire).