

## MONTHLY OVERVIEW:

### **Mental Health:**

“A person’s condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being.”

In life we have environments and circumstances, daily stressors, “stuff”, that creates opportunities for us to manage our mental health in a healthy or unhealthy way. This month’s series is to help normalize mental health conversations. Good mental health is the ability to cope with daily life stressors, but sometimes our “stuff” can tend to turn into ways to escape what we’re feeling. We don’t want our students to just manage their symptoms but teach them how to identify the root of the struggle they currently are in. We will be focusing on 3 major topics we feel teens are facing today: comparison, stress, and anxiety.

### **John 16:33**

*“I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”*

# WEEK ONE:

## “Comparison”

God has made each of us unique and special. In this week’s message, we dive deeply into the negative mind trap called “comparison.” It’s safe to agree that comparison is not always negative. But in the lives of our teens, comparison has become nothing but negative. There’s constant pressure to compare ourselves starting with the way we look, dress, and act, even leading into the way we think, the opinions we have, how many things we have accomplished, and the type of faith we have. While the environment has an ongoing and significant impact on our lives, God has already written on our ‘slate’ when He created us. He has given us each a unique personality as well as natural strengths and weaknesses that can all be used for His glory.

Tonight’s message sets our Students up with reminders of WHO God says we are. A huge takeaway piece will be every student, male and female, holding on to the cards they were given that describe the truths they have inside of them because of Jesus.

### **Romans 12:4-8 NLT**

*Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.*

### **John 21:18-22 NIV**

*Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!” Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?” Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.”*

### **Zephaniah 3:17 NLT**

*“For the Lord your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.”*

# WEEK ONE:

## Small Group Questions

### Middle School:

**Icebreaker:** Ask your students about different things they find themselves comparing. From foods, to games, to art, to hobbies and extracurricular activities.

1. Do you have any siblings? Do you ever notice yourself or maybe your parents, maybe even friends, pointing out the similarities and differences you and your brother/sister have?
2. How do you feel when you are compared to someone else?
3. What was one thing you learned about tonight's message on being stuck in a comparison trap?
4. Leaders lead with confidence on this one. It's important our young boys and girls practice this: Name or describe one thing that you think is cool about yourself. This can be silly, but really think about something that makes you stand out with confidence.

**Growth Path:** Have each student take the card that has been provided to you by your United Leader. Each card shows truths about who God says they are. Create a challenge for them to take it home and read the scripture references on the back. In your United group text, reach out to your students and ask them which truth and scripture stood out to them the most.

# WEEK ONE:

## Small Group Questions

### High School:

**Icebreaker:** Talk about the different social media platforms your students enjoy using. Ask them what their favorite apps are and why.

1. What stood out to you in tonight's message?
2. In tonight's message, Carina mentioned that comparison is not always bad. Give an example of how comparison can be positive.
3. Time to be transparent: The negative side of comparison is called a "Comparison Trap." How does this relate to you in your own life? What are the things that get you caught in these comparison traps?
4. Has social media become something that leads to comparison traps in your life? If you are not on social media, what about school athletics and other extracurriculars?
5. In Romans 12:4-8 NLT (read with them), it tells us why we shouldn't compare to one another. How can you encourage someone in your small group tonight? What is something you have noticed about them that stands out in a good way?

**Growth Path:** Have each student take the card that has been provided to you by your United Leader. Each card shows truths about who God says they are. Create a challenge for them to take it home and read the scripture references on the back. In your United group text, reach out to your students and ask them which truth and scripture stood out to them the most.

# WEEK TWO:

## “Stress”

Stress is the environment, anxiety is the physical and emotional response. This week we are focusing solely on stress and the experiences and circumstances that can send signals of threat to trigger stress in our lives.

There are different types of stress we can experience at any time of day depending on our environment, and we will identify the difference between good stress and bad stress.

Paul writes instructions to the Philippian church on how to live a life of peace in the middle of daily struggles, conflict, hardships, and stresses. He gives them practical tools to not help manage their daily lives but to transform them, and they are the same tools we can use today.

### **Philippians 4:6-9**

*“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.”*

# WEEK TWO:

## Small Group Questions

### Middle School:

1. On a scale from 1 (not stressful) to 10 (super stressful), how stressful are the following situations for you? (Leaders, after each one on the list, have your students explain why to really get them talking.)
  - Making a low grade on a big test
  - Thinking about family problems
  - Problems between you and your friends
  - Thinking about going into High School
  - Trying out for something new
2. How would you explain stress to a friend?
3. What are things you think other middle schoolers, like you, are stressed about?
4. What's your go-to when you feel stressed?
5. How does it make you feel to know that God has given us ways to deal with our daily stresses? Which of those ways do you think you can use to help you when you're feeling stressed?

**Growth Path:** Use a large sheet of paper or a poster board. Have students together write down words of truth from scripture that will be reminders of who God is, and how He helps us work through our feelings and struggles with daily stress. (i.e. Peace, Joy, Hope, Strength, Protection, etc.)

# WEEK TWO:

## Small Group Questions

### High School:

1. On a scale from 1 (not stressful) to 10 (super stressful), how stressful are the following situations for you? (Leaders, after each one on the list, have your students explain why to really get them talking.)
  - Making a low grade on a major test
  - Thinking about the future or planning for the future
  - Family problems
  - Relationships with opposite sex
  - Tension between you and your friend group
2. Is stress a big deal to you? Why or why not?
3. What are some things that stress you out the most? (School, Family, Friends, Future, Changes, etc.)
4. How do you deal with stress? What do you do when you're stressed out?
5. Is there such a thing as good stress? If so, how would you compare it to bad stress?
6. Do you believe that God can help you work through your daily stressors? Identify one of the ways we talked about in Philippians 4 that could help you manage stress?

**Growth Path:** Have each student identify one unhealthy habit they can stop and one healthy habit they can start this week? Come up with a way to keep each other accountable.

# WEEK THREE:

## “Anxiety”

This is a big and complicated subject. Because of that we want to approach it with the empathy and understanding it deserves.

While we aren't promising we will fix our anxiety, we are confident that the conversations we're having will help us move in the direction of finding relief from our anxiety through God's peace.

In no way are we diagnosing students with anxiety, because that is not our job here. Our job is to help students see that Jesus offers them relief in their battle of anxiety, and that they do not have to face life alone!

Many students are battling anxiety, but students also know other peers that are dealing with it as well. Looking at the life of Jesus, we see a story of when his disciples were battling anxiety in a hard situation but what we can see is trust is a major component to our anxiety.

### **Matthew 8:23-27 NLT**

*Then Jesus got into the boat and started across the lake with his disciples. Suddenly, a fierce storm struck the lake, with waves breaking into the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him up, shouting, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” Jesus responded, “Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!” Then he got up and rebuked the wind and waves, and suddenly there was a great calm. The disciples were amazed. “Who is this man?” they asked. “Even the winds and waves obey him!”*

In this story we see that Jesus can be trusted with every area of our lives, especially our anxiety!

### **Psalms 55:22 NLT**

*Give your burdens to the Lord, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall.*



# WEEK THREE:

## Small Group Questions

### Middle School:

1. When you are facing something hard, where do you usually go to get help? (Parent, friend, YouTube, etc.)
2. Do you know someone who deals with anxiety?
3. What do you think is the difference between feeling stressed and feeling anxiety?
4. What do you think makes it hard for students to trust God with problems in their lives?
5. Which of the three ways we can trust God (Sees, Cares, Can) that you have the hardest time with?

**Growth Path:** Have students share something they've learned that they can do when anxiety comes up in their life. If they know someone who deals with anxiety, what is something they can do to encourage and help them this week?

# WEEK THREE:

## Small Group Questions

### High School:

1. What was something that was really hard in your life that you overcame? Did you do it alone? Or did someone help you?
2. Do you know someone who deals with anxiety?
3. What's the difference between Stress and Anxiety?
4. Trust is the first place to start when we are dealing with Anxiety, why do you think students have trouble trusting God?
5. Are there areas in your life where you doubt God's attention and specific care for you? Why or Why not?

**Growth Path:** When anxiety tries to control you, what is something you've learned to do with those feelings that you can do practically this week? Or who is someone you know that deals with anxiety that you can encourage this week?

# WEEK FOUR:

## “Q&A”

This entire month we spoke on ways to work towards bettering our mental health by how we choose to manage our struggles. What we learned was that in order to be a healthier version of ourselves we have to choose to surrender ourselves and our mental health to God.

### **John 16:33**

*“I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”*

1. What is a healthy habit? Ask students to explain what a “healthy habit” is. Give an example if they are not sure.
2. This past month at United, we talked about different topics like comparison, stress and anxiety. What about tonight’s message helped you understand mental health in maybe a new or different way.
3. What was something that was talked about tonight that you have more questions on?
4. What does “peace” mean or look like to you?
5. Read tonight’s verse together. What is something you have been going through that you want to ask questions or prayers about?

**Growth Path:** Think of ways to lead students to the next step. That could be starting a suggested Bible plan from this past month or setting up an intentional hang time with your group. Some students might be hinting or asking for extra resources. This would be an opportunity to connect them with your United Lead at your campus.

# COMPARISON RESOURCES:



**Behind the Mask**  
Bible Reading  
Plan

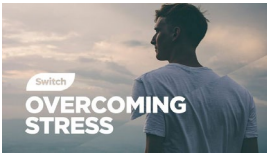


**"Finding Yourself"**  
Message Video



**"They Called You What?!"**  
Message Video

# STRESS RESOURCES:



**Overcoming Stress**  
Bible Reading  
Plan

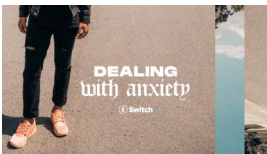


**"Peace Under Pressure"**  
Message Video



**"THIS is Stealing Your Peace"**  
Message Video

# ANXIETY RESOURCES:



**Dealing with Anxiety**  
Bible Reading  
Plan



**Overcoming Fear and Anxiety**  
Video Clip



**"When Anxiety Attacks"**  
Message Video