

Compass Youth

Life Groups – The Win & the Why

The Win

We win when students have meaningful interactions during Life Group that influence their faith in Jesus and deepen their relationships with others.

- Does NOT say: We win when we get through all the discussion questions.
- Does NOT say: We win when everyone was on their best behavior.
- Does NOT say: We win when no one brings any drama to the group.
- Does NOT say: We win when all of our groups look and act exactly the same.

Why This Matters

Life Group Leaders matter because students may never know God unless they first know someone who loves God and can show them what God's love is like.

Every Life Group Leader should do 5 things...

1. **Be Present** – predictably, mentally, & randomly.
2. **Create a Safe Place** – church should be the safest place for a student to talk about anything.
3. **Partner with Parents** – God calls parents to assume the *primary* responsibility for discipling their own kids.
4. **Make it Personal** – the #1 way you can influence a student's relationship with Jesus is to model it.
5. **Move Them Out** – engage the students' faith in a bigger story.

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How To Be an Effective Life Group Leader

Expectations

1. Prepare in advance of every Life Group gathering.

- a. Pray for your students.
- b. Communicate with your co-leader.
- c. Review the curriculum.
- d. Pick up your Life Group binder from the Leader Lounge prior to service.

2. Once you step on campus, you're here for the students.

- a. As much as we love each other, hang with & talk with students.
- b. Find and interact with students sitting by themselves.
- c. If First Impressions brings you a new student, introduce them to your group, and don't leave that student behind.
- d. Worship with the students (either up front or in the chairs) & fully participate in the service. Go to where *your* students are who need the most supervision.
- e. If you personally need something, speak with a Pastor or a Coach.

3. Contact your students weekly (outside of program time).

- a. Discover the *best* way to contact each student.
- b. Split the list if you have a co-leader.
- c. Personally invite them to come, especially those you haven't seen in a while.

4. Spend time with students outside of program.

- a. Every 6-8 weeks, organize a group activity.
- b. Find out who does what and get there at least once per semester.
- c. Split the list!

5. Time requirement:

- a. Sundays – attend a church service at 9am or 11am.
- b. Wednesdays – Youth from 6:15pm-8:45pm.
- c. Mandatory Leader Huddles: every other week after Youth at 8:25pm.
- d. Mandatory Leader Trainings: 1 per quarter.
- e. Camps & Events – a few times throughout the year. You don't have to *attend* all of them but you will be *invited* to all of them.

Leading a Discussion

1. Talk less, listen more, facilitate discussion—keep the ball moving, don't be a ball hog.
2. Encourage your students to verbalize their views, however unorthodox.
3. Don't be satisfied with the first response to your question.
4. Don't be afraid of silence. Use the time to think how to rephrase the question.
5. Turn difficult questions back to the group.

Dealing with Distractions

1. Set expectations/rules at the beginning of group time (phones, talking out of turn, goofing around, how we treat each other, etc.) Utilize students in the process—their input will get their buy-in.
2. Utilize your co-leader (and/or text Kevin/Danny).
3. Balance discipline with grace. (see *Proper Corrective Discipline* document)

Protocol for Missing Life Group

1. Block off future dates in PCO and decline the PCO invite.
2. Communicate with your co-leader.
3. Text Kevin/Danny.

Handbook Training

1. Don't go off alone with a student, speak with them in public.
2. Use the Incident Reports—report EVERYTHING and do it IMMEDIATELY.
3. Be wise with midweek contact (time, frequency, what you communicate).

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Proper use of Corrective Discipline

We want to make it clear that we want students to come to Youth who do not yet know how to behave at Youth. The order is **Belong, then Believe, then Behave**...not the other way around. At the same time, any well-organized ministry has a set of expectations that they hold people to so that everyone can feel safe and have a good experience there. But how we hold students to those expectations is key. Below, we cover the process by which we will do this and what our demeanor should be while doing it.

Demeanor

1. Lead with **grace** and assume the best. Keep in mind there are a myriad of factors that could be causing negative behavior in a student.
2. Be stern. But **remain calm** and do not yell. If you need to excuse yourself to calm yourself down before speaking with the student, do so.
3. Do not name-call, label, shame, or threaten a student. Do not give ultimatums.

Steps for Discipline in your own Life Group

1. Remind the student of the Life Group's expectations. Keep in mind the instructions above on "Demeanor".
2. Utilize your Co-Leader to sit by that student, hold them accountable to expectations, or to remove them from the room for a talk, walk, or breather.
3. Call a staff member and ask for extra assistance.

Steps for Discipline during Large Group

1. Be with your students before and during Youth service—talk with them beforehand, worship with them, and sit with them during the message, especially the students you know from your group who need the most supervision. Limit your conversations with other Leaders to after Youth service and to other times during the week.
2. Inform/remind students of expectations. Keep in mind the instructions above on "Demeanor".
3. Find the student's Life Group Leader and ask for extra assistance.
4. Call a staff member and ask for extra assistance.

Please deal with all discipline issues in as **discreet** a way as possible. If the situation allows you to pull the student aside, do so. And do not complain about students to other students or other Leaders. If you are having repeated issues, speak with one of the Youth Pastors directly.

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The Crucial Role of Community in our Spiritual Growth

The Big Question: How do people grow spiritually?

1. The Brain's Role

- a. Right side (fast track):
 - i. Processes faster than the left side
 - ii. Individual identity, Group identity, Emotional attachment, Assessment of surroundings, Relational attachments
- b. Left side (slow track):
 - i. Conscious thought, Speech, Strategies, Problem solving, Logic, Stories
 - ii. Traditional discipleship strategies (reading, study, doctrine, belief, willpower)

2. Full-brained Christianity

- a. Discipleship: the way to become the kind of person who does, easily and routinely, what Jesus said—does it without having to think much about it.
- b. Fruit is *inconsistent* when there is: Low joy, Shallow relational attachments, Unstable identity, Weak community.
- c. A synchronized brain runs smoothly like a well-tuned engine, even under stress.

3. A Few Observations

- a. We're already doing this well in Next Gen.
 - i. Every kid/student is in a group
 - ii. Our ministries are designed to be highly relational
- b. We're nowhere near perfect and can always get better.
- c. Groups are the most important part of the ministry! (Which makes you guys the most important *people* in the ministry!)

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Creating an Irresistible Group Environment

Make your groups feel like family. Like home. A family at the dinner table environment.

1. The space matters.

- a. The same group of people in two different environments will produce different results.
- b. Lighting, decorating, vibes—we can help you make it your space.

2. Traditions matter.

- a. Create them!
- b. Ideas...name the group chat, play a consistent game, lingo/language, *healthy* inside jokes, gifts, food, outside hangs/serving together.

3. New students matter.

- a. The *first* thing you do when you begin group!
 1. Connect...name, phone number, QR code, life details
 2. Acclimate...this is what we do in group time
 3. Include...group chat, inside jokes, events

4. Relationships matter.

- a. Belong → Believe → Behave
- b. Students come back when they feel that they belong.
- c. Youth Ministry is a long game.

5. Their brain matters.

- a. Girls & boys learn differently, but not every girl learns the same as every other girl, and not every boy learns the same as every other boy.
- b. Girls' brains develop earlier than boys:
 1. More oxytocin + More developed limbic system = More complex emotions, more nurturing, more skilled listeners, can sit in one place longer than boys
 2. Primary distraction: Relationships
 3. Learning: Concepts are better understood when tied to relationships/people; girls *really* care what others think (encourage them to use their voice despite this fear)
- c. Boys' brains:
 1. Frontal lobes grow at a later stage than girls (decision-making skills)
 2. Less serotonin = Less impulse control than girls
 3. More spinal fluid in brain stem = More physical than girls

4. Primary distraction: Anything! (because they've been sitting still for too long) – Boys need to move!
 5. Learning: Primarily tactile & kinesthetic learners—meaning touch and movement; appropriate touch & movement can reset them & prepare them to learn
- d. Fidgets, Play-doh, Games & Movement.