

THREE HURTS



CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR SGLs

If a kid talks to you about the hurt in their life, it's because they trust you and they need an adult who is for them. There are three areas of hurt to be aware of when working with kids and students: being hurt, hurting themselves, and hurting others. When one of your few confides in you about any of these, it's your responsibility to report it to someone in a position of authority. You're likely not trained as a professional counselor, and that's okay! Leave the heavy lifting to those who are more prepared.* Often times, the best thing to do for a hurt child or student is to be a consistent presence and assure them they're not alone. Think of this as an ongoing dialogue and not a "one and done" conversation. Below you can find some things to say and not to say as you talk with your few about the three hurts.

*Check with your church or ministry leader about their specific policies and procedures for situations when you become aware a minor is experiencing one of the three hurts. As you establish group guidelines with your few, you might choose to frame their expectations by saying something like, "This is a place we can talk about anything. What's said in small group stays in small group, with this exception: someone is being hurt, hurting themselves, or hurting others."

WHAT TO SAY:

WHEN A STUDENT IS BEING HURT:

- "You're not alone. We're going to walk through this together."
- "You're not broken, and the situation isn't hopeless."
- "Thank you for trusting me. Because I care about you, this is something I have to share with __. I want you to know I'll be with you every step of the way, and even though I have to involve some other adults, I'll do everything I can to keep this from becoming public knowledge."

Note: If the parent is the one doing the hurting, consult your ministry leader about what to do next.

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WHEN A STUDENT IS HURTING THEMSELF:

- “You’re not alone in this. We’re going to walk through it together.”
- “You’re not broken, and the situation isn’t hopeless.”
- “Thank you for trusting me. I think it would be a really good idea to talk to ___ about what you’re feeling.”

Note: Give the kid or student a deadline for talking to their parent, counselor, or ministry leader. Offer to go with them. Let them know if the deadline comes and goes, you will talk to the person. If the child or student wants to talk to them alone, offer methods that make it more comfortable like writing a letter or an email. Be sure to follow up—ask them to text or call you after they talk to this person. It’s possible the kid or student will push back, but remember that, as an adult, one of the most loving things you can do is encourage them to do the right thing even when it’s hard.

WHEN A STUDENT IS HURTING OTHERS:

- “Thank you for trusting me. Telling someone and admitting this is happening is the first step in growth.”
- “I know you, and I know you’re more than this. This doesn’t change how I see you.”
- “There’s always a why behind the things we do. I’d love to understand why you did this because that’s just as important as what you did. If you don’t know why you did it, you won’t be able to deal with the root issue. And left unresolved, you may find yourself hurting others again.”
- “I think it would be a really good idea to talk to ___ about what you’re feeling.”

Note: Again, give them a deadline for talking to the person you suggested. Offer to go with them. Let them know if the deadline comes and goes, you will talk to the person.

WHAT NOT TO SAY:

- Words that communicate you’re freaking out. Try to remain calm.
- Words that shame. Shame raises a barrier between you and the student confiding in you. Work to bridge the gap by offering your presence and a safe place.
- Words that condemn. Keep in mind the kid or student is not the sum of their behavior or the behavior that has been done to them. Try to see them as a person who has done something wrong or has had something wrong done to them—they themselves aren’t the wrong thing.

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