

LEMC
YOUTH

SMALL GROUP

H A N D B O O K

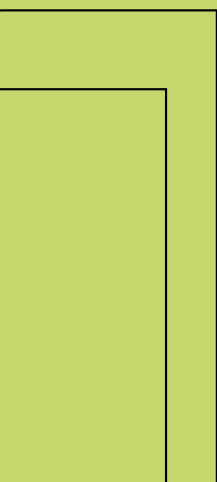
"We are cultivating growing and passionate relationships with Jesus – Embodying the fullness of Christian Life, we inspire and empower the Next Generation to own their influence and build the Kingdom."





TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	01
The Learning Circle	02
Discovery Bible Method	03
Small Group Basics	04
How to Handle a Busy Group	05
Motivational Interviewing	06
Working with Neurodivergent Teens	07



INTRO DUCTION



This booklet serves as a valuable resource for guiding your small group! Whether you're a Junior Youth leader or a Senior Youth leader, you'll find useful tips and information within these pages. As a small group leader, your investment in the lives of a few is essential to fostering authentic faith. Your success is measured by the ways teens grow in their faith in Jesus and strengthen their connections with others in the group.



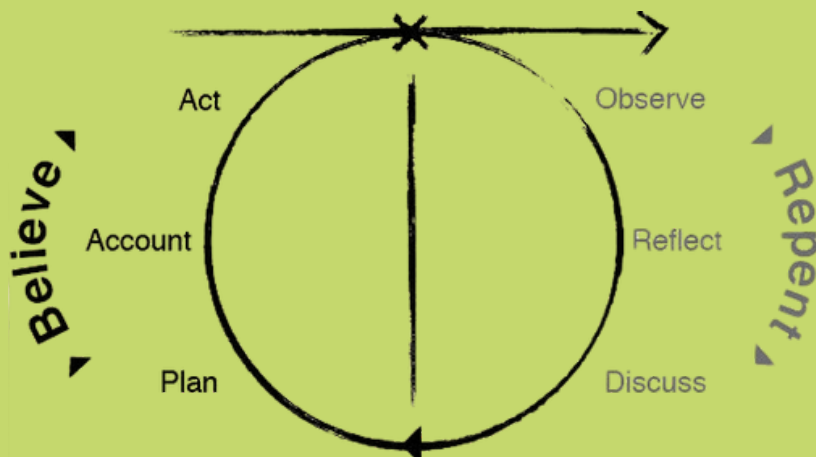
THE LEARNING CIRCLE

The Learning Circle is a concept built from Mark 1:15 where Jesus says, "The time (kairos) has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news of the Gospel."

Key words for the learning circle are kairos (the little x), repent, and believe. The goal of the learning circle is to hear from God and put what God says to us into practice. It is about having faith followed by the works God had in mind (Ephesians 2:8-10). It is hearing the word, followed by doing the word (James 1:22).

The path of life is symbolized by the arrow. When you have an encounter with God, for example, you hear a sermon, you read a scripture, or you find yourself in a challenging set of circumstances. Encounters with God come in a variety of ways. When we recognize that God is at work, that is an encounter with God. That is a "Kairos moment." That is a moment when "the Kingdom of God is near."

At that point, you can ignore it and keep going like nothing ever happened (take the straight line), or you can "repent" and "believe", and work through the circle. Growth as a disciple is not very likely unless we learn to recognize and reorient our lives when we have kairos moments.



DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY METHOD

For Leading a Small Group

Discovery Bible Method (DBS) is a way to study the Bible and engage in discipleship which builds off of The Learning Circle. Through Gratitude and prayer, kairos moments can be identified and worked through over the course of the study. Below is an example of what leading DBS could look like in your small group.

Gratitude

- What happened last week that you're thankful for?

Prayer

- What challenges or stress do you see in life, family or world?
- Who needs our help or how can we be there for others?

Accountability

- How did you obey, share or meet the needs of others this week?

Read a Scripture

- Re-read, re-tell and consider the details of the scripture.

Ask Open Questions

- What do we learn about God or people?
- What sticks out to you and why?
- Who needs to hear this? What is God saying to you and what are you going to do about it?

DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY METHOD CONTINUED...

Why Discovery Bible Study (DBS) Is Meaningful In A Small Group Setting.

- It allows for leaders to mentor students to grow in their spiritual lives and leadership skills
- Encourages students so they can gain confidence in the gifts God has given them
- Helps students act on what God is calling them to do, or recognize where/how God might be speaking to them

How You Can Disciple Your Students Through DBS

- Facilitate
 - Step back from being the "expert." By asking simple, repeatable questions, you teach students how to read, understand, and apply Scripture on their own.
- Drive Toward Action
 - Move beyond just gathering head knowledge. Disciple them to create specific, weekly "I will..." statements to practice immediate obedience to God's Word.
- Train Them to Share
 - Use the question, "Who will you share this with this week?" to build an immediate habit of evangelism and sharing their faith with friends and family.
- Pass the Leadership Baton
 - Because the format is simple, you can easily hand over the microphone. Let students take turns facilitating the discussion to grow their leadership skills.
- Keep Them Accountable
 - Use the opening questions to follow up on last week's action steps. This builds a healthy culture of loving accountability and deep spiritual community.

SMALL GROUP BASICS

The transcendent goal of small group is to be a ministry of reconciliation. You are bringing people back to God and the life He created for them to live.

A Good Small Group that Fosters Growth Needs to have Grace and Truth

- Grace is not only offering someone forgiveness or unconditional acceptance, it is offering up completely unmerited favour, it is asking "what do you need that I can give you?". The more your group understands and acts upon this kind of grace, the more people will grow.
- Truth is another important aspect of growth. Not only does the Bible speak God's truth but it also reveals to us many ways of realizing God's truth.

How To Avoid Someone Oversharing or Taking Up Discussion Time

- Establish Clear Ground Rules Early: Set expectations regarding sharing time so that everyone has an equal voice. Ground rules prevent leaders from looking like they are singling someone out later.
- Use Gentle, Direct Interruption (Truth with Grace): If a member dominates the floor, the leader must step in caringly but firmly. Grace is warmth and acceptance and truth is the clear feedback piece. A leader can say: "Thank you for sharing that insight, let's pause there to give some others who haven't spoken a chance to weigh in."
- Redirect Outside the Group: Over-sharers often look for excessive rescue or uncontained venting. Leaders can set up a boundary by offering to connect with them individually after the meeting or pairing them with a designated mentor/support partner, keeping the group meeting focused on collective growth.

SMALL GROUP BASICS CONTINUED...

Sharing Responsibilities With Students

Healthy groups require active, shared participation rather than passive consumption. Growth happens when members take ownership.

- Define Member Roles vs. Leader Roles: A leader's job is not to do everything, but to facilitate an environment where everyone contributes to one another's growth. Students need to understand that they are co-builders of the group's culture.
- Delegate Functional Tasks: Give students specific, manageable responsibilities based on their gifts (e.g., setting up the space, welcoming people, leading a prayer time, or organizing a social gathering).
- Empower Mutual Ministry: Shift the mindset from "the leader helps the students" to "the body ministers to itself." Encourage students to ask each other good questions, offer support, and hold one another accountable, echoing the biblical model of mutual edification.

How To Make A New Student Feel Safe and Welcomed

Establishing safety is a primary habit of a life-changing group. Safety allows people to drop defenses and actually grow.

- Foster a Grace-Filled Culture: New students are often anxious about fitting in or exposing their flaws. Groups must be places of grace plus truth plus time. Let the new student know they don't have to "have it all together" to belong here.
- Designated Greeters and Integration: Assign a group member specifically to welcome the newcomer, introduce them to others, sit next to them, and explain any inside jokes or ongoing group contexts.
- Protect Confidentiality and Vulnerability: Safety is destroyed when boundaries are broken. Explicitly reminding the group of confidentiality safeguards a new student's trust, assuring them that what is shared in the room stays in the room.

SMALL GROUP BASICS WRAP UP

Finally, some other great resources on how to lead a small group well can be found below:

- Great Questions for Leading Well by Dr. Steve A. Brown
- Making Small Groups Work by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend
- Leading Life-Changing Small Groups by Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson
- The Fuller Youth Institute (FYI)



HOW TO HANDLE A BUSY GROUP

STICKYNOTE METHOD

Have the group write their responses on sticky notes and run around to place them on the walls. Then, proceed to walk around and read them out together.

THINK-PAIR-SHARE METHOD

Give students two minutes to think about their answer, then talk about it with a partner before opening up the floor to share with the group.

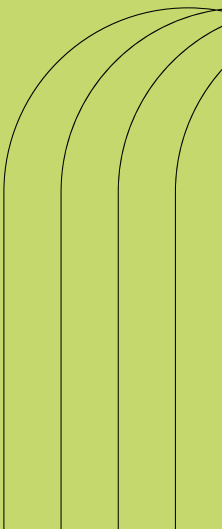
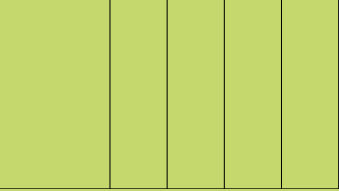
STICKY HAND METHOD

Place discussion question cards in the middle of your group's circle. After giving one kid a sticky hand, let them use it until they have each picked up or slapped a question, they get to choose who has to answer it. The person who answers it then gets the sticky hand next.

ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION

Helpful Resources to read on how to encourage discussion and lead a small group well

- <https://www.raiseupfaith.com/articles/how-to-encourage-discussion-three-top-tools>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imroAOmlvtA>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJeaIRM-IVk>



HOW TO HANDLE A BUSY GROUP CONTINUED...

THE COIN FLIP METHOD

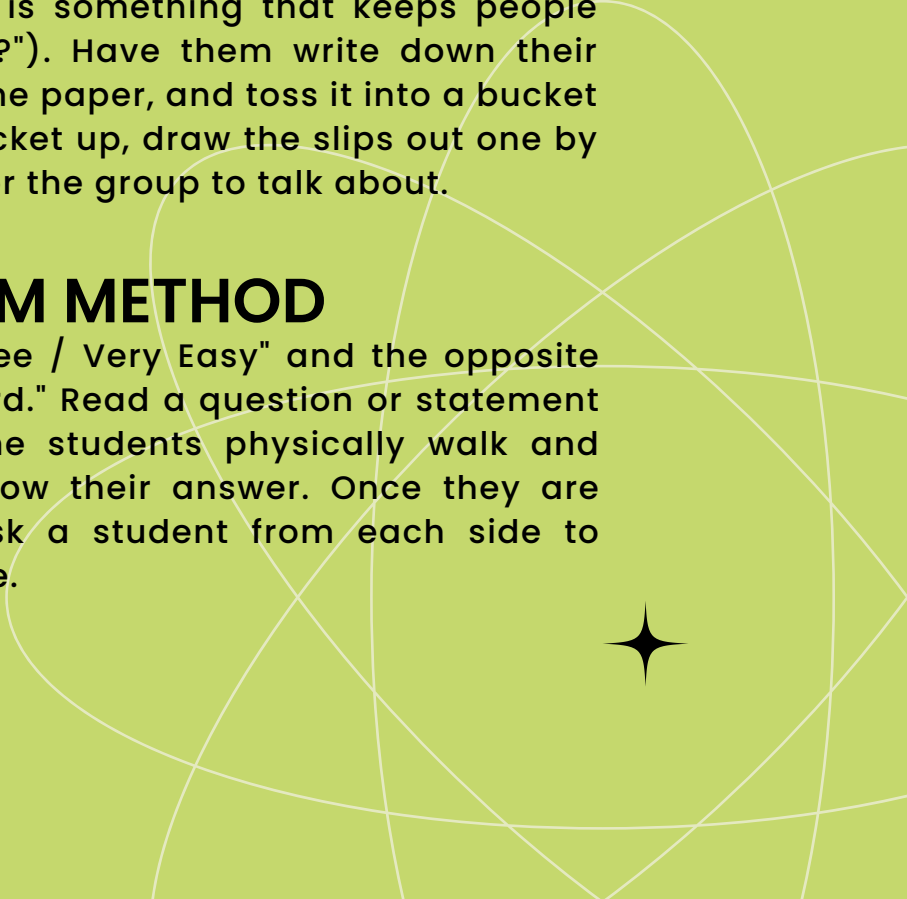
Give a student a coin. Ask a DBS discussion question that has two possible angles (e.g., "Is it harder to obey God when you're afraid, or when you're angry?"). The student flips the coin: Heads means they have to answer the question themselves; Tails means they get to pass the question to any person in the circle to answer. The person who answers gets the coin next.

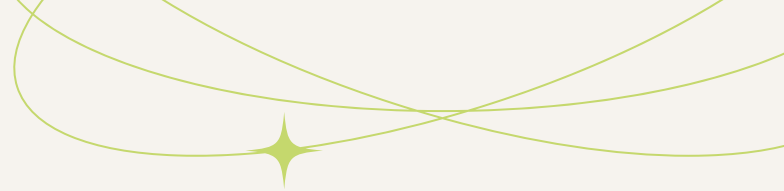
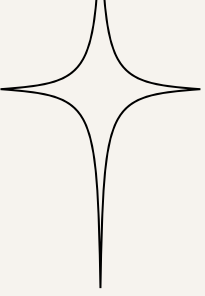
THE SECRET BALLOT METHOD

Pass out a small slip of paper to each student. Ask a question about the text (e.g., "What is something that keeps people our age from trusting God?"). Have them write down their answer anonymously, fold the paper, and toss it into a bucket in the middle. Shake the bucket up, draw the slips out one by one, and read them aloud for the group to talk about.

GAUGE THE ROOM METHOD

Designate one wall as "Agree / Very Easy" and the opposite wall as "Disagree / Very Hard." Read a question or statement from the text and have the students physically walk and stand along the line to show their answer. Once they are standing in their spots, ask a student from each side to explain why they stood there.





MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING (MI)

MI is a nonconfrontational approach to guide a person toward change. The MI approach is effective at engaging apparently 'unmotivated' students.

The practical application of MI occurs in two phases: **building motivation to change**, and **strengthening commitment to change**.

BUILDING MOTIVATION TO CHANGE:

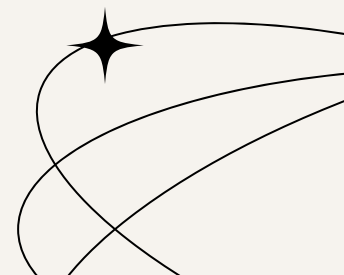
Ask Open-ended questions

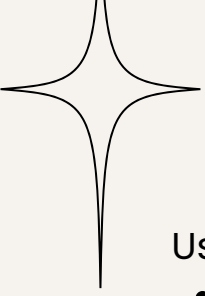
- The student does most of the talking
- Gives the leader the opportunity to learn more about what the student cares about (eg. their values and goals)

Make Affirmations

- Can take the form of compliments or statements of appreciation and understanding
- Helps build rapport and validate and support the student during the process of change
- Most effective when the students' strengths and efforts for change are noticed and affirmed

Use Reflections

- Involves rephrasing a statement to capture the implicit meaning and feeling of a patient's statement
 - Encourages continual personal exploration and helps people understand their motivations more fully
 - Can be used to amplify or reinforce desire for change
- 



Use Summarizing

- Links discussions and 'checks in' with the person
- Ensure mutual understanding of the discussion so far
- Point out discrepancies between the person's current situation and future goals
- Demonstrates listening and understand the patient's perspective

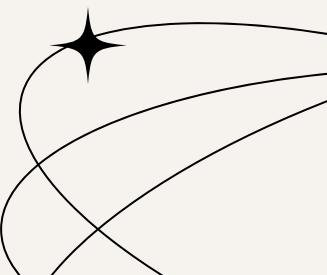
Four guiding principles of MI, represented by the acronym Rule:

- Resist the righting reflex
- Understand the patient's own motivations
- Listen with empathy
- Empower the person

STRENGTHENING COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

This involves goal setting and negotiating a 'change plan of action'. In the absence of a goal directed approach, the application of the strategies of mi can result in the student and leader remaining stuck. This trap can be avoided by employing strategies to elicit 'change talk'.

There are many strategies to spark 'change talk', but the simplest and most direct way is to prompt a student's intention to change by asking a series of targeted questions from the following four categories:

- Disadvantages of the status quo
 - What worries you about _____?
 - What difficulties have resulted from _____?
 - In what way does _____ concern you?
 - Advantages of change
 - How would you like _____ to be in 5 years time?
 - What are the advantages of reducing _____
 - What would be different in your life if _____?
- 

PRACTICAL MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

For more practical examples of how to use this strategy in action, who it's for and how to facilitate it, visit this site:

- <https://uconnruddcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2909/2020/07/Motivational-Interviewing-Example-Scripts-1-1.pdf>



WORKING WITH NEURODIVERGENT TEENS



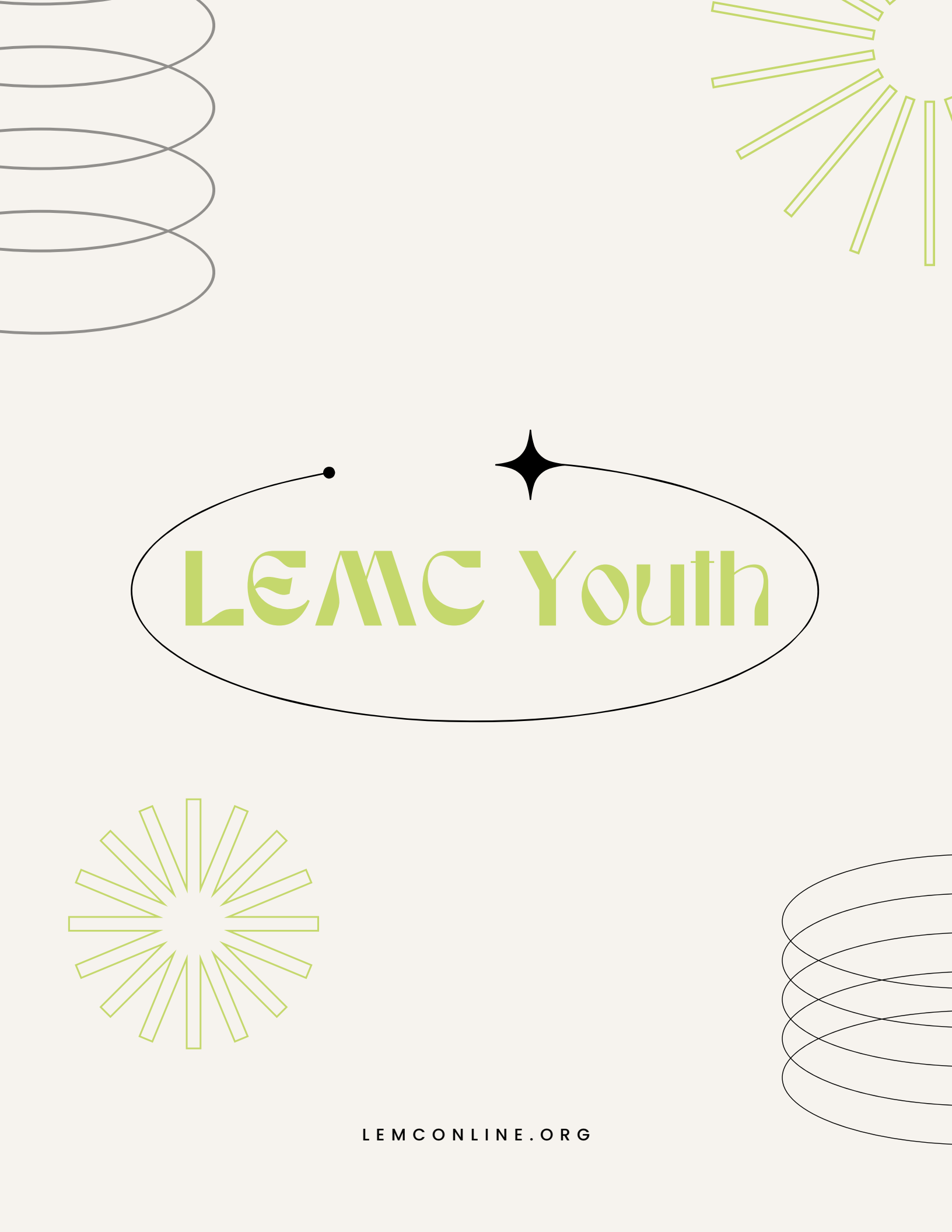
Teens that are neurodivergent often struggle with the chaos that a typical youth group brings. On the following page are three different methods to help neurodivergent teens learn and grow in the youth group setting. Among these is Inclusive Youth Ministry Support. This is the model we seek to implement at LEMC Youth. We strive to discover ways that we can help neurodivergent teens feel more comfortable and able to participate .



WORKING WITH NEURODIVERGENT TEENS CONTINUED...

- Models of Inclusion - Inclusive Youth Ministry Support
 - Students participate in the typical youth group environment with strategic accommodations. For example:
 - Offering a dyslexia-friendly Bible font.
 - Avoiding calling on students to read aloud if that causes stress.
 - Providing a predictable schedule and transitions.
 - Providing a point person that students can go to for extra support
- Specialized Class
 - Designed for teens who need more structured or sensory-friendly environments, often using adapted curriculum such as:
 - Awe & Wonder -
<https://www.specialneedsministryresources.com/special-needs-ministry-curriculum>
 - Lifeway Access
 - Ability Ministry Curriculum -
<https://abilityministry.com/product-category/curriculum/>
- Reverse Inclusion (RISE Model)
 - Neurotypical peers are invited into a class designed around the needs of neurodiverse teens—cultivating friendship, service, and discipleship together.





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