



life interrupted

the scoop
on being
a young mom

tricia goyer

leader's guide

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introduction

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Dear Teen MOPS Leader:

Welcome to the leader's guide for *Life Interrupted: The Scoop on Being a Young Mom*. The purpose of this guide is to help you to incorporate the material from *Life Interrupted* into your Teen MOPS meetings. Each of the chapters of *Life Interrupted* focuses on one of a young mom's greatest needs. The leader's guide will follow the chapters in the book, giving you ideas for icebreakers, devotions, speakers, Creative Activities, and Discussion Group questions. The nine chapters will correspond to the nine months of the Teen MOPS year, September – May. This guide also includes ideas for sharing the good news of Jesus—which, of course, will meet a young mom's greatest need!

This book is set up for those already familiar with running a Teen MOPS meeting. If you need more information about how to organize a Teen MOPS group, log on to www.MOPSLeaders.org. On the Teen Positional page you will find information for leading a Teen MOPS group.

The chapters of *Life Interrupted* are:

- 1 Importance: Do I Matter?
- 2 Identity: Who Am I?
- 3 Growth: Where Am I Going?
- 4 Intimacy: Do You Love Me?
- 5 Instruction: How Do I Do This Mom Thing?
- 6 Help: Can You Help?
- 7 Recreation: I Need a Break
- 8 Perspective: What's Most Important?
- 9 Hope: What Am I Here For?

Each participant should purchase the book, *Life Interrupted: The Scoop On Being a Teen Mom*, which is available in the MOPShop with quantity discounts at www.MOPShop.org, and read the text that corresponds with each chapter. How to incorporate the book will be up to your individual group. Some leaders may ask the young moms to read sections of that month's chapter during the week. Other groups may decide to read sections from the chapter together at the meetings. Either way my desire is that messages in *Life Interrupted* will be reinforced at the meetings, meeting the needs of young moms.

Have a great year. May your Teen MOPS group be blessed!

—TRICIA GOYER

september

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IMPORTANCE: DO I MATTER?

“The deepest principle in the human nature is the craving to be appreciated.”

WILLIAM JAMES, AUTHOR

This month we are going to focus on a young mom’s importance. When a young woman faces pregnancy, she often comes across condemnation—not to mention the numerous obstacles of being both a teen and a mother. This chapter of *Life Interrupted* deals with:

- ⊗ A young mom’s needs.
- ⊗ The realization that a mom’s love is the most important thing she can give her child.
- ⊗ Information on how to balance her many roles.
- ⊗ Thoughts on facing stereotypes.
- ⊗ The good and bad of family relationships.
- ⊗ The importance of being a mother.
- ⊗ Encouragement, helping moms realize that what they do today will impact their child’s future.
- ⊗ Ideas on how to use their mothering experience to make changes for the better.

At the start of the year, you may have many girls who don’t know each other. They come from different lifestyles and each face unique challenges. But they do have one thing in common: they are moms, and it is something that will forever change their lives.

The first step in teaching *Importance* is to show young moms they are important to your group. You can do this by: 1) being available when they need you, 2) encouraging them, and 3) remembering that the Teen MOPS meetings are for them. We can plan and schedule our meetings, but in the end we need to make sure the No. 1 priority is a young mom’s needs.

Our weekly meetings demonstrate the young mom’s importance in practical ways: by bringing special snacks, arranging “pampering” evenings, loving their little ones, and praising any good mothering skills we see. We talk to them one on one, remembering the details of their lives. Also, our meetings have a certain structure and consistency that many of our girls haven’t experienced in their lives. This also proves their importance to us.

-VAL PATTINGALE, SMITHS FALLS TEEN MOPS, ONTARIO, CANADA

Below are a list of ideas for icebreakers, devotions, speakers, Creative Activities, and Discussion Group questions. Choose ones that will work best for your group!



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Icebreakers:

I’m Important: Pass around a roll of toilet paper and have each mom tear off a length as tall as she is. Have them take turns telling one reason why they’re important for each square of toilet paper. It may help for leaders to go first.

The Name Game: Have each mom line-up alphabetically by the first letter of her first name. Then have each mom explain where her name came from and what’s important about it. Next, bring out a poster board and markers and asks the moms to volunteer to list some of their other “names,” such as “mommy,” “student,” and “daughter.” Pass out a piece of candy for each of the names listed.

Balloon Game: Hand out balloons (not blown up and all the same color), small scraps of paper, and pens. Have everyone write one piece of interesting information about themselves on the paper and put the paper in the balloon. (Something that no one in the groups knows.) Have them blow up their balloons and throw the balloon in the middle of the circle of participants. One by one moms pop the balloons and guess who belongs with that piece of information.



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Devotions:

I’m Important: Have a leader share about a time when she didn’t feel important. How did her ideas change? How did a relationship with Jesus Christ lead to this change?

My Story: Have a leader who faced teen pregnancy share her testimony. What led her to Christ? How has she found a new identity in Christ?

Before I Was a Mom: Read the poem “Before I was a Mom” in the introduction of *Life Interrupted*. Have a leader share the difference in her life before she was a mom and after. Share both the trials and the joys. Then share how Jesus helps her in her role as a mom.

With God I Can: Have a leader share a time when she was faced with a huge challenge. It could be facing an unexpected pregnancy, finishing school, overcoming a destructive habit, or dealing with a difficult relationship. Have the leader share how God was able to help her during this time and what she did to seek his help. This can also be contrasted with a time she didn't seek God's help and the outcome didn't turn out as well.



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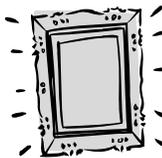
Speaker Ideas:

Important Beauty Tips: Bring in a cosmetologist to share beauty tips, especially quick tips for hair and make-up for moms with a baby who have little time to get ready. If possible, seek volunteers for a “make-over.” Have the speaker share that though true beauty comes from inside, we all feel better about ourselves when we keep up our appearance. Moms can be attractive too—despite those extra pregnancy pounds and despite the fact that they no longer have hours to pamper themselves. –JEANNIE SCHELLING, KALISPELL TEEN MOPS, MONTANA

Important Communication: Break the moms into two groups. Provide a doula or birthing coach to provide information to the pregnant moms on creating a birth plan. She can give information about labor and about preparing for it. A second speaker can share information about baby sign language or ways to communicate effectively with older children. Tips for whining, not listening, etc. can be addressed.

Important Touch–Baby/Child Massage: Ask a massage therapist to teach baby/child massage techniques to the group. The speaker can also include information about the importance of touch and interaction with our children. Pass out bottles of oil and handouts so the moms can try it at home.

Teen Mom's Importance: Ask someone from your local Pregnancy Care Center to share the importance of young moms. Or invite a panel of guests who were raised by a young mom. Have them share the positive impact their mom had in their lives. –KIM WILSON, COORDINATOR, DEEP CREEK BAPTIST MOPS, CHESAPEAKE, VA AND PAM SMITH, RUSH CREEK TEEN MOPS.



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Creative Activities:

Picture Frames: Buy pre-made photo frames and use paint, buttons, beads, fabric, or even feathers to decorate them. Be creative! You can take this one step further by snapping photos of the young moms with their babies the previous week. Then on the night of the Creative Activity, pass out the developed photos to put in the frames.

Bracelets/Anklets: Buy beads and other supplies for making bracelets and anklets. Show the moms how to put them together. (You'll need special stretchy string and glue for the knot. Both of these can be found at craft stores). Then let the moms be creative. Many moms wear their bracelets afterward, which gives them a sense of pride in their accomplishment. –VAL PATTINGALE, SMITHS FALLS TEEN MOPS, ONTARIO, CANADA

Beauty Box: Cover a pencil box or cigar box (which most cigar and cigarette stores will give away free when asked) with pretty paper. On the inside of the lid, glue a mirror. Small mirrors can be found in the craft store on the aisle with the dollhouse stuff. On the lid attach this message: “Open this box to see a beautiful and important person created by God.” –MICHELLE ARMISTEAD, CROSSROADS FELLOWSHIP MOPS IN RALEIGH, NC

“You are Special” Placemat: This is a cheaper version of the Red Plate used to celebrate birthdays, graduations, or other milestones. Hand out markers and scrap paper and allow them to decorate a white paper placemat. Provide sample Scripture verses or inspiring quotes that they can write on their placemats. Once it is decorated, laminate with contact paper. Tell moms to use the placemat for themselves or their children when they celebrate important milestones. –VICKIE MUSNI, RENO TEEN MOPS



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Discussion Group Questions:

Each speaker should bring Discussion Group questions that deal with their specific topic. Below are also general questions that can be used anytime during the month. They are good starting points of conversation and can be used during Creative Activities, during meals, or any other time.

- ☪ Psalm 149:4a says, “For the LORD takes pleasure in His people” (NASU). What about me pleases God the most? –KATIE SCHNEE, KALISPELL TEEN MOPS, MONTANA
- ☪ One MOPS leader said, “I went from being a child of fifteen to being a wife and mom. I was never ‘just me.’ I think this carried over into my adult life, and I didn’t realize that I had an identity until I became a MOPS Leader and found that I could excel at something other than being a mom and wife.” What do you excel at besides being a mom?
- ☪ Society often places more value on what you can “do” outside of the home. What do you think of this? How does this make you feel as a young mom? In the end of your life, what really is important?
- ☪ In *Life Interrupted* Tricia talks about how she imagined life would be when she became pregnant for the first time, and how it really was. Reality check! What did you do when you found out you were pregnant? What was the response of those closest to you?
- ☪ Do you ever wonder where you’d be if you hadn’t gotten pregnant? How can you use your pregnancy experience for good?
- ☪ Read the story, “Moving Mountains,” found in Chapter 1 of *Life Interrupted*. Do you agree that “sometimes human beings can do the impossible when it comes to their child?” What impossible things are you doing right now?
- ☪ Read the following Want Ad from *What Every Mom Needs*, by Elisa Morgan and Carol Kuykendall.¹ Does the ad help you realize your value and abilities? What would you add to your job description? What additional challenges do young mothers face?

Situation Vacant - Housewife/Mother

Applications are invited for the position of manager to a lively team of four demanding individuals. The successful applicant will be required to perform the following functions: companion, counselor, financial manager, buying officer, teacher, nurse, chef, nutritionist, decorator, maid, driver, childcare supervisor, secretary, and recreation officer. Applicants must have unlimited energy and a strong sense of responsibility. They must be independent, self-motivated, and able to work in isolation without supervision, under stress, and adaptable enough to handle new developments in the life of the team, including emergencies and crises. They must be able to communicate with people of all ages, including teachers, doctors, business people, dentists, teenagers, and children. A good imagination, sensitivity, warmth, and an understanding of people are necessary.

HOURS - All waking moments and a 24-hour shift when necessary.

BENEFITS - No guaranteed holidays, no sick leave or maternity leave. No workers’ compensation.

PAY - None. Allowances arranged from time to time with the income-earning member of the team. Successful applicant may be allowed/required to hold second job in addition to the one advertised here.

¹ Elisa Morgan, Carol Kuykendall, *What Every Mom Needs*, Zondervan, p. 31

october

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IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

“People always say how you should be yourself,
like yourself is this definite thing, like a toaster or something.”

-ANGELA, MY SO CALLED LIFE

This month we are going to focus on a young mom's identity. When a young woman gets pregnant, she often feels her life is in limbo. She's young. She likes doing all the teen things: seeing friends, having fun, hanging out, and shopping at the mall. But she often finds herself friendless, fun-less, unavailable, and broke. Young moms need help defining who they are. This chapter of *Life Interrupted* deals with:

- ⊗ Defining who a young mom is.
- ⊗ Talking about the changes that parenting brings.
- ⊗ Learning how to balance her needs with the needs of others.
- ⊗ Being identified by how she looks, and understanding that her looks play a big part in the way other people respond to and treat her.
- ⊗ Realizing her identity does not come from her children, her mother, or any other mother out there.
- ⊗ Realizing young moms don't have to kiss their dreams goodbye.
- ⊗ Understanding how to use past failures as learning experiences.
- ⊗ Appreciating unique personalities and looks.
- ⊗ Coping with not being perfect.
- ⊗ Understanding our true identity comes from God.

Following are a list of ideas for icebreakers, devotions, speakers, Creative Activities, and Discussion Group questions. Choose ones that will work best for your group!

Our girls generally exhibit low self-esteem from being looked down on by society. They are low income, from dysfunctional families (sometimes for generations), have rotten boyfriends. If we can help them think better of themselves, perhaps they can better handle society's attitudes. So, again, we praise them, we notice new hairstyles, we comment on cute baby clothes, we try hard in our short time with them once a week to make them feel special, cared for, important. And, when opportunity permits, we tell them that God loves them. We ask how we can pray for them.

—VAL PATTINGALE, SMITHS FALLS TEEN MOPS, ONTARIO, CANADA



Icebreakers:

Identity Names: Sit in a circle. Each person should think of an adjective that begins with the first letter of her name and describes something positive that identifies her. Go around the circle and have each person say their name and their adjective (such as Awesome Angie), as well as the names and adjectives of the people who went before them. This helps new people remember everyone's names faster and encourages the young moms to focus on their positive traits.

Silent Identification: Each participant is to silently write words or draw pictures that describe themselves. They pin the picture on their chests, and then they walk around and have everyone look at each other's picture. The pictures are then removed and shuffled, and participants are asked to identify the person to whom the picture belongs.

Mommy Relay:

Items needed:

- 3 baby dolls*
- 3 baby slings/soft carriers (Snuggli)*
- 3 vacuum cleaners*
- 1 laundry basket with 3 towels and washcloths*
- 3 cordless phones (play or real)*
- 3 cloth diapers*
- 3 backpacks with a notebook and pencil for each one*

Separate the moms into three groups. If the groups aren't even you can have some people run twice so the same number of moms are running.

Once you say, "Go," the runners load up the backpacks with the notebooks and pencils and put them on their backs. They then put the baby carrier on their front, place the baby doll in the carrier, push the vacuum down to the other end of the room, pick up the cordless phone and hold it up with their shoulder, fold one towel and washcloth (finding the matching ones), take the baby doll out of the carrier and change the diaper, put the baby doll back in the carrier, put the phone down, and push the vacuum back to the other end and the next waiting mom.

You will need one volunteer to unfold the towels and put them back into the basket while the moms are swapping baby carriers and backpacks. —ATHENA HALL, COUNCIL COORDINATOR FOR MONTANA AND NORTHERN WYOMING

Guess the Lie: Go around the room and ask each participant to write down three facts about themselves. Two must be true and one must be a lie. Ask group members to think of particularly unusual or unknown facts about themselves in order to throw you off the trail. Have the moms read them aloud. Then everyone has fun guessing which are true and which is false!

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Devotions:

Imperfect Moms: Have a leader share about a few moms in the Bible and their circumstances. Examples are Sarah (mother of Isaac) and Mary (mother of Jesus). Talk about how these women were not perfect, yet God chose them. God had a plan for them and for their children. Also, have the leader share how she is not perfect, but how she knows God has chosen her.

Look at Me: Have one leader share about her struggle with her looks. It could either deal with an eating disorder, a weight problem, pride, etc. Talk about how the world focuses so much of our identity on outward appearances and how God looks at our hearts.

No Comparisons: Have one leader share how she struggles with comparing herself to others. “The problem with comparison is, we always measure our weaknesses against the strengths of others,” Tricia says in Chapter Two of *Life Interrupted*. “Instead, we need to thank God for our strengths. We can also ask God to help us overcome our weaknesses—not because we want to compare ourselves, or look good in someone else’s eyes, but because we want to be the best mom out there.” Have the leader share how God has personally helped her deal with comparisons.

Unmasking Ourselves: During the last week of the month, have a leader share about the “masks” we find ourselves wearing. We often wear them to impress other people or to get attention. Have her share about a time when she wore a “mask” in an effort to please others. Then she can share how her relationship with Jesus Christ has helped her to appreciate her true identity.

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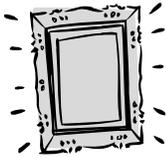
Speaker Ideas:

Education Panel: Invite a panel of speakers who can give information about educational opportunities, such as getting a G.E.D., alternative schools, community college, state college, and vocational training. Give each panel member ten minutes to speak, then open it up for questions. (Let the young moms know that goal setting will be one of the activities in the coming months, so they need to start thinking about their educational goals. Also check out the Individualized Education Plan in the appendix.)

Young Mom Success Story: Invite a former teen mom to come to share about her experiences and her “success” as a mother, student, or employee. How did she overcome the statistics and achieve success?

Career Day: Invite a panel of women who have unique careers and who enjoy what they do. Ask, “How did you discover what you wanted to do?” Offer personal evaluations, personality test, or placement tests for the moms. One book that can help is *Find Your Fit: Dare to Act on Who You Are*, by Jane A.G. Kise and Kevin Walter Johnson.

Speak Up: Invite someone to give information about public speaking skills. They can give information for why effective communication is important, not only for speaking in front of groups, but also in everyday life. (How we speak is one of the first things people notice about us and make opinions about us.)



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Creative Activities:

Tie-Dye: Purchase white t-shirts to be tie-dyed. Tie-dye kits can be purchased at any craft store. Encourage the moms to show their uniqueness by their choice of colors and style. Also remind them to wear grubby clothes in case the dye gets on their clothes.

Mommy Tote Bags: Buy tote bags at your local craft store. Have each young mom apply fabric paint to her child's hand. Then, mom can carefully press the child's painted hand onto the tote bag for a colorful hand-print. With fabric pens have them write, "Hands down the best Mom." Provide extra paint and rubber stamps for additional decorations.

Scarecrow Cupcakes: Bring cupcakes to be decorated. First frost cupcakes with vanilla frosting. Place an ice-cream cone upside down on the upper edge of each cupcake for a hat. You can decorate the hat with frosting gel pens if you'd like. Use shredded wheat cereal (crushed) for the hair. Use candy corn for the nose, small red gumdrops for the mouth and black gumdrops for the eyes.

Recipe Cards: Many young moms may not have experience with cooking, yet now they find themselves having to cook for themselves and their child. Buy index card boxes and index cards so the young moms can start a "Recipe Box." Use rubber stamps and ink to personalize the recipe cards. Paint markers can be used to decorate the box. Have leaders bring easy, kid-pleasing recipes to share. If possible, have them bring the pre-made dishes for the moms to sample too.



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Discussion Group Questions:

Each speaker should bring Discussion Group questions that deal with their specific topic. Below are also general questions that can be used anytime during the month. They are good starting points of conversation and can be used during Creative Activities, during meals, or any other time.

- ☉ How has my mom been important in my life?
- ☉ How can I relate my positive childhood experiences to my children?
- ☉ What are the best things that I can do for my child as a mom? What are the best things I can do for myself?
- ☉ What activities can I do to help my child learn about God?
- ☉ Additional Discussion Group questions are found in the 4U2 Try section of *Life Interrupted*.

november

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GROWTH: WHERE AM I GOING?

“It takes a lot of courage to release the familiar and seemingly secure,
to embrace the new.”

-ALAN COHEN, AUTHOR AND INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKER

This month we are going to focus on a young mom’s growth. Many times when a young woman gets pregnant, she feels her life has been put on hold. When stacked up to reality, a young mom’s dreams seem foolish, yet young moms need to realize that growth benefits themselves and their children. They need encouragement for growing into the best moms and women possible! This chapter of *Life Interrupted* deals with:

- ⊗ Understanding the need to grow.
- ⊗ Realizing growth benefits a young mom’s family too.
- ⊗ Understanding growth benefits a young mom’s world.
- ⊗ Realizing that living up to one’s potential is also a gift to God, our creator.
- ⊗ Dealing with “growing pains.”
- ⊗ Being okay with taking small steps toward growth.
- ⊗ Making wise choices.
- ⊗ Discovering the dream in one’s heart.
- ⊗ Growing through education.
- ⊗ Making a plan of action.
- ⊗ Finding accountability.
- ⊗ Creating oneself.

The job of a Teen MOPS leader is to help the moms as they go through the growing process. These young women will eventually grow up and stop being teens. We can't make them stop being teenagers just because they happen to be moms. They still think and act like teens; sort of irrational, half in a fantasy world and still interested in being cool . . . yet chasing their 16-month-old around the playground making sure they don't fall down the slide. The moms and their kids grow up simultaneously.

-KATIE SCHNEE, KALISPELL TEEN MOPS, MONTANA

Below are a list of ideas for icebreakers, devotions, speakers, Creative Activities, and Discussion Group questions. Choose ones that will work best for your group!



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Icebreakers:

“Have you ever?” This game follows the same principle as musical chairs. One person is “it” and goes to the middle of the group and begins with the question: “Have you ever: ____?” The blank is to be filled in with something that holds true for the person who is it. Examples are: “traveled abroad,” “been to rock concert,” “seen the ocean.” Everyone who the statement holds true for must exchange places with another person. The person who is “it” must move to a spot as well. One person will not be able to find a spot. She is then “it.” Repeat game as much as desired. This is a good way to introduce people to each other and their shared experiences.

Musical Beach Ball: This game is like musical chairs, but with a twist. Blow up a beach ball and write questions on the outside with a marker. Turn on music and have the moms toss the ball around the circle until the music stops. The person who catches the ball must answer whatever question is closest to her right hand. Sample questions are: “If time or money was not a factor, what goal or dream would you pursue?” or “If you had a whole day to yourself, what would you do?”

Data Processing: Divide the participants into small groups. Then have each group process the following data by having them line up according to the correct order. You can play as many rounds as you like.

Examples: “Line up . . .”

- ☉ Alphabetically according to favorite food
- ☉ By length of hair
- ☉ By height
- ☉ By shoe size
- ☉ By birthdays
- ☉ By number of letters in last name
- ☉ By length of thumb
- ☉ By length of time you’ve lived in this town

Working Together: Bring in a small jigsaw puzzle – it should have roughly the same number of pieces as people in your group. Check out second-hand stores or toy stores for inexpensive, simple kid’s puzzles. Give everyone in the group one puzzle piece. Tell them that their mission is to put the puzzle together as a group, but there are two rules. 1) They can only touch the puzzle piece that they are holding in their hands . . . no others. 2) No talking. Watch to see how your group creatively communicates and problem solves.

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Devotions:

Rooted in Jesus: Have a leader bring in a healthy plant and a sick one. Talk about our need for God in order to grow into healthy people. To grow we must be connected to Jesus (John 15:1-8). To grow we must have living water (John 4:13). To grow we need to be rooted in him (Jeremiah 17:7-8). Share from personal experience how God has nurtured you.

Bye-Bye Comfort Zone: Have a leader talk about a time when she had to leave her comfort zone. It could be during pregnancy, during a move, or because of an unexpected event in her life. Talk about how the stretching was uncomfortable, but God saw her through by providing strength and wisdom.

The Nudger: Have a leader share about someone in her life who has been a nudger, helping her and encouraging her to accomplish her dreams. When did God bring that person into her life? How did that person help her to grow? How is God also a nudger in your life?

Growing Up in God: Have a leader share ways that God has asked her to “grow up.” She can share specific Bible verses about the difference between being an infant in faith and being mature. One verse she can share is Hebrews 5:12-13. How has your life changed since you’ve started to “grow up”?

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Speaker Ideas:

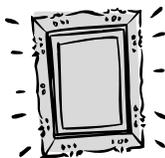
Goal Setting: Invite a speaking to talk about goal setting. How do we set goals? What do we need to do to accomplish them? Then break up into groups and work with the moms to set their own goals. Information for making S.M.A.R.T goals is found in Chapter Three of *Life Interrupted*.

Self-Talk: Invite a Christian psychologist or counselor to speak to the girls about “self-talk.” The voices around us don’t matter nearly as much as what we’re telling ourselves in our minds. Are we building ourselves up with our thoughts or putting ourselves down? What can we do to achieve healthy “self-talk?”

A Well-Balanced Life: Have the a speaker discuss how growth includes all areas of your being: body, mind, emotions, and spirit. Share information on how moms can take care of themselves. Body: Proper care, rest, exercise, water, foods. Mind: learning, interests and hobbies, reading, dreaming. Emotions: being honest with oneself, confiding in a friend, crying, enjoying life. Spirit: thinking about God, prayer, reading the Bible, journaling, and having faith.

Discipline for Toddlers: Invite a child developmental expert to speak on discipline. The talk can include the stages that kids go through. Have the expert share what’s normal and what’s not. This will help moms understand their children better as they grow.

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Creative Activities:

Growth Charts for Baby: Cut a canvas 5 feet by 5 inches. Wrap the canvas around paint sticks (free from paint stores) to the top and bottom and hot glue them for support. With the help of a straight edge and a soft tape measurer, mark off the measurements. Use foam stamps to decorate. Finish off with a wall hanger on the back.

Goal Setting Collages: Gather poster board, markers, glue, glitter and old magazines. Break into groups and have moms share their goals. Then have each mom cut out photos from the magazines that correspond with their goals. For example, a girl who wants to save money for a wedding may cut out a photo of a bride. After the collages are complete, have the moms share how the photos represented their goals. Encourage them to hang the collage someplace they will see it often to remind them of their goals.

Fabulous Flower Pots: Purchase clay flower pots and paints so the moms can decorate them. Let the moms be creative as to how to decorate their pots. Provide plants or flowers and extra potting soil to fill the pot.

When we did the flower pot craft, we made a comparison of raising children as similar to raising flowers. First, you prepare the soil—give your child exercise and good food. Next, pull out any weeds—get rid of bad habits and behavior. Then, feed the soil—create good memories with your child. Finally, plant the seed and watch it grow—provide support and love to your child as they become independent and develop their own identity.

— VAL PATTINGALE, SMITHS FALLS TEEN MOPS, ONTARIO, CANADA

Ribbon Memo Boards: The items you need are corkboard, fabric, hot glue, baby quilt batting. Cut fabric two inches larger than board on all sides. Glue batting to board on one side only. Lay fabric on work surface, wrong side up. Lay board, batting side down onto fabric. Secure fabric to back of board with hot glue. Miter corners. Turn board right side up on work surface. Cut ribbon into four lengths. Set it out to crisscross board. Pin all ribbons to side of board. Turn board over and glue all ribbon ends to back of board. Sew ribbons through board where they crisscross using needle and thread (a thimble may be helpful). Hot glue an appliqué or button over every crisscross section. Make a hanger with the remaining ribbon. Tie a bow to the top of the hanger. With craft paper and a calligraphy pen, write “My Dream is . . .” and post it on the board.



Discussion Group Questions:

Each speaker should bring Discussion Group questions that deal with their specific topic. Below are also general questions that can be used anytime during the month. They are good starting points of conversation and can be used during Creative Activities, during meals, or any other time.

- ☉ What do I enjoy doing most?
- ☉ What qualities do I appreciate about myself?
- ☉ Do I like working with people or working alone? Why?
- ☉ When I look back twenty years from now, what accomplishments will I be the most proud of?
- ☉ What are some of the costs of growth?

- ⊗ What are my long-term goals? (These are goals that may take a long time or many steps to complete. Examples: becoming a doctor, a lawyer, or a teacher.) What steps do I have to take to accomplish these goals? What steps are needed to accomplish my goals? Where will these goals take me in the future? What if they don't work out? Where do I see myself then?
- ⊗ What are my short-term goals? (These are goals that take a short time to complete. Examples: playing an instrument better, spending more time with family, or eating healthier.) What steps can I take to accomplish at least one of these goals? Will these goals have any effect on my future? If so, how? What if I don't accomplish these goals? What will I do then?

december

..... INTIMACY: DO YOU LOVE ME?

“The body is a house of many windows: there we all sit, showing ourselves and crying on the passers-by to come and love us.”

—ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, POET

This month we are going to focus on intimacy. Many young women become pregnant because they long for someone to love them. They believe intimacy can only be achieved by giving themselves sexually to another person. This chapter of *Life Interrupted* will show that this is not the case. This chapter deals with:

- ⊗ A woman's craving to belong.
- ⊗ What intimacy involves.
- ⊗ Giving our time and energy.
- ⊗ Finding good friends and deepening those friendships.
- ⊗ Realizing we are worthy of a loving, committed partner.
- ⊗ Understanding there's more to intimacy than sex.
- ⊗ Knowing where to find intimacy.
- ⊗ The scoop on marriage.
- ⊗ How to be a friend.

Many of our girls have been so emotionally damaged, hurt and unloved, that it is a slow and difficult process to establish trusting, intimate relationships with them. Some have gotten pregnant in order to try to hang on to a boyfriend. Some have gotten pregnant in the hope that they will then have someone to love and someone to love them back unconditionally. Gaining our girls' trust comes only in time and with diligent prayer. We try to show them that God can be trusted and that he can love them unconditionally if they turn to him.

—VAL PATTINGALE, SMITHS FALLS TEEN MOPS, ONTARIO, CANADA

One of our your moms recently mentioned what she appreciates most in a friend is that they accept her the way she is. This is intimacy—trusting a person enough to be yourself. Intimacy involves loving each other even through disappointments.

-KATIE SCHNEE, KALISPELL TEEN MOPS, MONTANA

Below is a list of ideas for icebreakers, devotions, speakers, Creative Activities, and Discussion Group questions. Choose ones that will work best for your group!



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Icebreakers:

All About Who? Give each participant an identical slip of paper. On it, ask them to write some of their favorite things. Choose your own categories. They might include favorite food, movie, TV show, color, place to visit, book, etc. Tell them NOT to include their names. Collect all the slips and distribute them again randomly. Have each person read out the favorites on their paper and see if the group can guess who that paper belongs to.

The Interview: Have each participant pair up with someone they don't know. Give them three minutes to interview each other. You may want to provide questions for them to ask. (What is the best job you've ever had? Do you have any pets? What is your favorite outside activity?) Go around the room and have each interviewer present their interviewee to the group. Be sure to ask the interviewee if they have anything to add at the end of their partner's short presentation.

Human Knot: Have the moms stand in a tight circle. Ask each participant to raise her right hand and grab the right hand of another circle member, but it can't be either of the people immediately beside her! Have them repeat the process with left hands. You have now created a massive human knot. The group's job now is to untie the knot without letting go of each other's hands. If done properly, you will all end up in another circle, though some will be facing out and some facing in.

Connect with Me: This icebreaker starts as the first moms enter the room for the evening, well before the announcements or anything else. Each mom gets ten paper clips when she enters the room. The first three cannot connect with each other, instead they need to persuade the newcomers to join up with them. Their goal is to get others to join up and create the largest ring of paper clips in the group. The new moms may give all ten of their clips to one team, or "compromise" and split their clips among the groups. After this icebreaker, you can talk about the persuasion of the world and the compromises some people make.



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Devotions:

Into-Me-See: Have a leader share a story about her struggle with intimacy. It may have been a struggle with a friend, a spouse, or in another relationship. Then, have her share about the true intimacy she's found in Christ and how it has helped with every other relationship.

Loneliness: Have a leader share about a time she was lonely. Have her share some of the stumbling blocks that kept her from making friends or finding true intimacy. How is she able to go to God even during lonely times?

Do-Over: Have a leader share about a time she believed sex was intimacy. What were the consequences? How have her opinions about intimacy changed? Also share how God is willing to give us do-overs. We can be washed clean again.

My Main Man: Have a leader share about a time when she expected her husband (or boyfriend) to meet all her needs. Share how this isn't possible. No human can meet all our needs, and when we expect this we are setting ourselves up for pain and disappointment. God is the only one who can meet all our needs.



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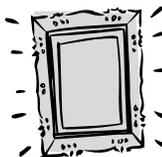
Speaker Ideas:

Being a Friend: Ask two women to speak who have been friends for many years. Have them share about the beginning of their friendship, how the friendship has grown, and what they appreciate about each other. As a group discuss: 1) What makes a good friend? 2) What do you look for in a friend? 3) How can each of us work harder to be more friendly?

Marriage Panel: Invite three happily married couples to be part of your panel. (Steering Team members work great!) If possible invite couples married within these ranges: 0-10 years, 10-20 years, or 20+ years. Give the girls opportunities to ask questions. If they need help getting started ask questions like, "What attracted you to your spouse?" "What do you do when you disagree?" "What was one of the biggest challenges of your marriage, and how did you handle it?"

Second Chances: Invite an abstinence presenter to speak about Secondary Virginity. The speaker can talk about the emotional, physical, and spiritual consequences of having sex outside of marriage. The speaker can also discuss a recommitment to purity, making us "white as snow."

Christmas Traditions: Invite a panel of leaders to share their favorite Christmas traditions. They can share activities, stories, or songs. Stress the importance of developing traditions with our family. Also address that even if the young moms didn't have traditions, now is a good time to start. Ask one leader to talk about the closest intimacy we can have—with Jesus Christ who came to earth as a baby to build intimacy with us.



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Creative Activities:

Snowman Pin or Ornament: Supplies: Wooden craft spoons (these are the type that come packaged with ice cream cups and can be found in craft stores), acrylic paint, fine-point markers, paint brushes, and Fun Foam. 1) Paint the wooden spoons with white acrylic paint. Let them dry for a few minutes before handling. 2) Cut and glue the hat and scarf from the fun foam. 3) Use fine-point markers to draw on the eyes, nose, mouth, and buttons. 4) For an ornament or gift tag, glue a ribbon loop to the back. 5) To make a pin, attach a pin back. Pin backs can be found at craft stores plain or with self-adhesive strips already attached.

Christmas Cards: Invite a Stampin' Up or Creative Memories distributor to put on a Christmas card workshop with various stations. Have all the materials and instructions provided so a different card can be made at each station. Have a final station with envelopes, so the moms can personalize their Christmas cards and put them in envelopes. Now they have Christmas cards ready to share with those they love!

Intimacy Mirror: Intimacy is often referred to as "Into-me-See." This mirror is to remind the young moms that intimacy is giving others a reflection of who we are. Items needed: pencil, mirror (small square), contact paper, Glass Etching solution, stencil(s) and an X-Acto® knife. Cover the glass completely with contact paper. Trace the stencil (not too detailed) on the contact paper. Use X-Acto® knife to cut along the pattern, then remove the areas to be etched. This should remove the layer of contact paper, exposing the glass beneath the cut pattern. Apply Glass Etching solution over all exposed areas of glass. Wait the time indicated by manufacturer then use running water to remove the etching solution. Peel off the remaining contact paper and pattern to reveal entire glass surface. Clean with glass cleaner.

Chocolate Cookies in a Jar:

Ingredients:

- 1 ¾ cups all-purpose flour*
- 1 teaspoon baking powder*
- 1 teaspoon baking soda*
- ¼ teaspoon salt*
- ¾ cup dark brown sugar*
- ½ cup white sugar*
- ¼ cup cocoa*
- ½ cup chopped pecans*
- 1-cup semi-sweet chocolate chips*

Combine all-purpose flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Set aside.

In a 1 quart wide mouth canning jar, layer dark brown sugar, white sugar, cocoa, chopped pecans, and chocolate chips. Pack everything down firmly before you add the flour mixture, it will be a snug fit.

Attach a tag with the following instructions: Chocolate Cookie Mix in a Jar: 1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C) 2. Empty cookie mix into large bowl. Thoroughly blend mixture with hands. Mix in ¾ cup softened butter or margarine, 1 egg slightly beaten, and 1-teaspoon vanilla. Shape into walnut size balls, and place 2 inches apart on a parchment lined baking sheet. 3. Bake for 11 to 13 minutes. Cool 5 minutes on baking sheet, and then move to wire racks.



Discussion Group Questions:

Each speaker should bring Discussion Group questions that deal with their specific topic. Below are also general questions that can be used anytime during the month. They are good starting points of conversation and can be used during Creative Activities, during meals, or any other time.

- ☉ What are your favorite ways to show love?
- ☉ What are your favorite ways to receive love?
- ☉ Have your relationships with your friends changed since you became a mom? How?
- ☉ Intimacy is being understood, sometimes when you don't even understand yourself. Do you have someone who really understands you? Who?

☪ Moms can be too tired to be friendly! What are some ways you can make new friends or strengthen current relationships?

☪ Has becoming a parent changed your marriage? In what ways?

—FROM ATHENA HALL, COUNCIL COORDINATOR FOR MONTANA AND NORTHERN WYOMING

january

INSTRUCTION: HOW DO I DO THIS MOM THING?

“Motherhood is like Albania—you can’t trust the descriptions in the books, you have to go there.”

—MARNI JACKSON, AUTHOR OF *THE MOTHER ZONE*

This month we are going to focus on a young mom’s need for instruction. When a young woman faces pregnancy, one of the first things that she must deal with is what to do about her education. Yet we want to show young moms that instruction involves more than just our educational choices. It involves learning throughout life. This chapter of *Life Interrupted* deals with:

- Where to turn for instruction.
- A mother’s basic instincts.
- How to learn about mothering.
- Which “expert” advice to trust.
- What to do about unsolicited advice.
- How to provide our children with moral instruction.
- The benefits of a mothering mentor.
- Taking baby steps in character growth.
- Finding a mentor.
- Finding encouragement from peers.
- Realizing God can be our greatest instructor.

We try hard to meet these girls where they’re at, while at the same time gently teaching higher standards to strive for (no swearing, no fighting or threatening comments, no gossiping).

—VAL PATTINGALE, SMITHS FALLS TEEN MOPS, ONTARIO, CANADA

As a coordinator it has been my delight this year to watch two moms in action who our now our peer mentors. Over the last three years their personal growth as mother, students, young women and now wives, has been phenomenal. Hearing them give advice and encourage other young moms to reach for their dreams is pure joy for me. Several of our young moms have said without these role models they would not have been courageous enough to return to college or deal with an unsuitable relationship. What a blessing these mentors have been.

-ELIZABETH MELVIN, LIGHT AND LIFE TEEN MOPS, LAKEWOOD COLORADO

Below are a list of ideas for icebreakers, devotions, speakers, Creative Activities, and Discussion Group questions. Choose ones that will work best for your group!



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Icebreakers:

Yeah or Nah: The point of this game is for the moms to pop up and say “yeah” (Yes) or “nah” (No) to answer these questions. Give one point for the team with each correct answer, and then provide a piece of candy for each member of the winning team.

- ☉ At eight weeks pregnant your baby-to-be’s heart begins to separate into four chambers, and blood is circulating throughout the body. *(yeah)*
- ☉ If you child is coughing because of a blocked airway you should slap his back. *(nah)* Explanation: If the baby is coughing because of a partially blocked airway, slapping the back could completely block the airway.
- ☉ Two symptoms of a baby’s ear infection are unexplained crying or a runny or stuffy nose. *(yeah)* Explanation: Other symptoms include pulling at the ear, loss of appetite, and discharge from the ear.
- ☉ Tyler means “maker of bricks” and was the most popular name in Montana in 1999. *(yeah)*
- ☉ Leftovers can be kept at room temperature for only 30 minutes. *(nah)* Explanation: Bacteria can grow on perishable food left out at room temperature after two hours, or one hour in hot weather.
- ☉ About 90% of car seats are used or installed incorrectly. *(yeah)*
- ☉ Think of your own!

Pairs Game: Make up pairs of people/cartoon characters that go together (Mickey Mouse/Minnie Mouse, Barbie/Ken, Sponge Bob/Patrick.) Each card should have a person on each side. Give each person a card with one of the pairs on it. The pairs must find their match. When they find each other, they must discuss the best instruction they’ve received as a mom. Then they turn the card over, find their new pair and then go through the same process of the worst parenting instruction they’ve ever received.

Sentence Game: Split into four groups. Each group gets one sentence. Each group must make up a parenting story that ends in that sentence. The crazier, the better! (Example: And that is why you never allow peanut butter in your shopping cart!)

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Devotions:

Godly Instruction: Have a leader share how she has found instruction through her local church, especially through the Sunday services and Bible Studies. Share how receiving this instruction has impacted other areas of her life.

Mentoring Mom: Have a leader share about a time someone else has “mentored” her in life. It could be through a formal situation, or a more informal one. How did this person provide wisdom and insight? How was this person an example of God to her? How did she get connected with this person?

I Need Answers: Have a leader share about a time when she faced a situation in which she had no clear answers. What did she do? How did God help?

Mommy Decisions: Babies don’t come with instruction manuals! Have a leader share about a time when she had to make a difficult decision concerning her child. If possible, share both wrong and right choices and her process in making those decisions. She can also share the stories of two Biblical moms who had to make choices for their children, Rebecca in Genesis 27:1-13 and Moses’ mother in Exodus 2:1-10.



Speaker Ideas:

Money Skills 101: Invite in a speaker to talk about money management. Specific topics can include talking with your spouse, debt elimination, creating a budget, and wise spending. –ANDREA PFLUGHOFT, MOPS COORDINATOR, EDMOND, OK

Smart Kids: Invite someone such as a preschool or kindergarten teacher to share information on how a child’s instruction begins at birth. Have the speaker share ideas for raising smart kids. Ideas can include the importance of reading to children and how to make learning a game.

Car Seat Safety: Invite a speaker to talk on car seat safety. One possibility is someone from your local fire station or other car seat technician in your area. Ask if they’d be willing to also do a “car seat inspection” for you. Other possible topics could be CPR or First Aid for infants and toddlers.

Tips from the Trenches: Set up four “Learning” areas. The moms can choose which speaker they’d enjoy listening to. Speakers are “real” moms who can offer tips from the trenches. You also can choose to rotate groups if you’d like.

Group 1: Role of Mother

Topics:

What are some traditions you have established with your children?

What are some ways you have fun with your children?

How do you encourage spirituality in your children?

What is the most important thing to do as a mother? How do you do this?

What are some practical ways you instill values in your children?

Group 2: Role of Home Manager

Topics:

How do you manage supertime craziness?

What are some things you do to maintain a fairly clean house?
 What are some of your money-saving tips?
 What are some ways you help to manage your time?
 How do you tame the laundry monster?

Group 3: Role of Wife

Topics:

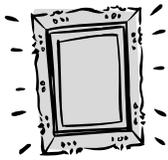
What are some things you do to maintain a relationship with your husband?
 What is a fun, inexpensive date you have had with your husband?
 How do you work together to parent your children?

Group 4: Role of Woman

Topics:

How do you grow your own faith?
 How do you manage stress?
 What are some ways you take care of yourself?
 How do you become closer with other women?

—ANDREA PFLUGHOF, MOPS COORDINATOR, EDMOND, OK



Creative Activities:

Time Capsule: Do you want to always remember what the new year held for you as a new mom? Make a time capsule to record all the important stuff of this New Year.

Supplies:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Clean coffee can or plastic box</i> | <i>Permanent markers</i> |
| <i>Duct tape</i> | <i>Notebook paper</i> |
| <i>Pen</i> | <i>Stuff to put in can or box</i> |

Use the markers to decorate the outside of the can or box. Fill it with your favorite items. Ideas include: photographs (put them in plastic baggie), tracing of your child’s hand, a cd or tape of your favorite songs, a lock of your child’s hair, a letter to yourself or your child, a ticket stub from your favorite movie, a list of your dreams and goals, and newspaper articles. Pass around the notebook paper and pens and asks the others in your group to write a note to you—something you won’t read until the future! Tape the can or box closed and write, “Do not open until (date).” You can make the date five, ten, or even twenty years from now!

Sand Candle: These candles are a great way to light up your New Year.

Items needed:

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| <i>Sand</i> | <i>Water</i> |
| <i>Coffee can</i> | <i>Candle wax</i> |
| <i>Sea shells</i> | <i>Tin can</i> |
| <i>Wicks</i> | <i>Plate big enough to hold the candle</i> |

- 1) Put the sand in a coffee can.
- 2) Pour water over the sand to make it wet.
- 3) Make a hole in the wet sand as big as you want your candle to be.
- 4) Place shells around the sides if desired.
- 5) Melt the wax in a tin can.
- 6) Pour the wax in the sand mold while holding the wick up enough to keep it straight. (Be careful, wax is hot!)
- 7) Hold the wick there for about a minute or until the wax has hardened enough for the wick to not fall in it.
- 8) When it's hard and cold, dig about an inch away from the candle a trench about 6-10 inches deep, depending on how big your candle is, and then GENTLY pull the candle out.
- 9) Put the candle on the plate.

Handpainted “Time” Plates:

Items needed:

- Glass Charger plates (available from craft stores)*
- Metallic paint pens for writing on glass*
- Rubbing alcohol*
- Cotton balls*

Wash plate then rub with alcohol using cotton ball. Let dry. Draw clock-face numerals on the bottom of glass plate using acrylic paints. Paint on the bottom of the plate so that it will be safe for food. (Remember that you are painting the bottom of the plate so you numbers will be reversed.) Now dinner will always be on “time.”

Soapy Snowmen: This project is squishy fun!

Items needed:

- Two cups mild, powdered laundry detergent (such as Ivory Snow Ultra)*
- ½ cup water*
- Twigs*
- Buttons*
- Beads*
- Egg carton*
- Toothpicks*
- Cloves*
- Felt*
- Tempera paints*
- Pipe cleaners*

To make faux snow, pour the Ivory Snow into a bowl. Add the water. Whip with an electric beater until doughy. Shape the damp soap into three balls. Stack them by gently pushing a toothpick halfway into the center of the bottom ball. Then, push the middle ball down onto the toothpick until the two balls touch. Do the same for the snowman's head. Decorate with the twigs, paint, cloves, etc. You can use the egg carton to cut out a snowman hat. Allow the soap to dry. (The snowman will be bright white when dry!)



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Discussion Group Questions:

Each speaker should bring Discussion Group questions that deal with their specific topic. Below are also general questions that can be used anytime during the month. They are good starting points of conversation and can be used during Creative Activities, during meals, or any other time.

- ☉ What’s the best parenting advice you’ve received?
- ☉ If children came with parenting manuals, what would be the first topic you’d want to read about?
- ☉ Where do you turn for instruction?
- ☉ When was a time that you used your “basic instincts” to deal with a parenting issue? Were your instincts correct?
- ☉ When was a time you received unsolicited advice? Was it good advice? What was your response? Did you ignore it, appreciate it, or get irritated?
- ☉ What issues of faith or personal convictions (such as trust in God, honesty, caring, and self-control) do you want to relate to your child? How do you plan on doing this?
- ☉ In *Life Interrupted*, Tricia says, “Just like placing an original document on a Xerox machine, moms soon discover their kids often turn out to be miniature copies of themselves.” What actions are your children currently copying? Are these positive things or negative?
- ☉ What’s one baby step you want to take in growing your character?

february

HELP: CAN YOU HELP?

“There is no such thing as a self-made man.
You will reach your goals only with the help of others.”

—GEORGE SHINN, OWNER OF THE CHARLOTTE HORNETS

This month we are going to focus on a young mom’s need for help. When a young woman faces pregnancy, she must try to juggle school, work, friends, and . . . parenting, childcare, cooking, you name it! Young moms need help in many areas, but often don’t know where to look. This chapter of *Life Interrupted* will help young moms know where to find help! It deals with:

- ☉ A young mom’s greatest needs for help.
- ☉ Asking for help.
- ☉ Getting help from the guys.
- ☉ Dealing with lack of guy help.
- ☉ Building a “supporting cast.”
- ☉ Helping other young moms.
- ☉ Finding a support group.
- ☉ Getting help from Mom and Dad.
- ☉ Seeking emotional help.
- ☉ Finding help from God.

All teen moms I know have a feeling of inferiority. We help them to role-play on how to dress, be on time, and be organized. When they’re seeking help from community organizations, we also teach them to look the person they are dealing with in the eye and keep focused. Even false confidence can go a long way.

It can also develop into true confidence!

—ELIZABETH MELVIN, LIGHT AND LIFE TEEN MOPS, LAKEWOOD COLORADO

As a group, we're always pushing the idea of helping each other. Our girls, though moms, are still just kids themselves—often squabbling, back-biting, and fighting. We try to get across the idea of working together to help each other—share child care, go out together for an evening, have someone over and watch all the little ones together while you visit.

- VAL PATTINGALE, SMITHS FALLS TEEN MOPS, ONTARIO, CANADA

Below are a list of ideas for icebreakers, devotions, speakers, Creative Activities, and Discussion Group questions. Choose ones that will work best for your group!



Icebreakers:

Be the Chef: Lay out all the ingredients for making two batches of sugar cookies on long tables at the front of the room. Sugar, measuring spoons, butter, milk, flour, etc. should all be lined up. Choose two groups to come up front. One person from the group may read the directions. The other person has to follow it, BUT they must complete the mix in less than three minutes! Wherever they are at the end of three minutes, you must collect the mix and bake it during the meeting.

A Tangled Web: Gather participants in a circle sitting around you on the floor. Hold a large ball of yarn. Start by telling the young moms something about yourself. Then roll the ball of yarn to a young mom without letting go of the end of the yarn. The mom who gets the ball of yarn tells her name and something good about herself. Then she rolls the yarn to someone else, holding on to the strand of yarn. Soon they have created a giant web. After everyone has spoken, all the participants stand up, continuing to hold the yarn. Start a discussion of how this activity relates to the idea of teamwork—for example, the young moms need to help each other and not let others down. To drive home your point about teamwork, have one young mom drop her strand of yarn; that will demonstrate how the web weakens if the group isn't working together.

Paper Bag Skits: Split your group into teams consisting of three to six members. Give each team a paper bag filled with assorted objects. These objects can be almost anything, wooden clothespins, a funny hat, a thimble, etc. The object of the game is to present a skit, about receiving HELP as a mom, using all of the props provided. The props may be used as they would be in normal life, or they may be imaginatively employed. Give each team ten minutes to plan and rehearse the skits. At the end of the ten minutes the skits must be performed in front of the group.

Want Ads: As group members arrive, give them cards on which to write “want ads,” advertising for a job made just for them. Later read the ads and guess who wrote them. —RECREATION AND SPORTS MINISTRY NEWSLETTER, AUGUST 2000



Devotions:

Emotional Help: Have a leader share about a time she needed help from a counselor. So many times we try to solve everything ourselves. It's okay to go to others for help. Share about how God helps when our emotions overwhelm us.

Asking for Help: Have a leader share about her struggle with asking for help. Was there ever a time when she should have asked for help but didn't? Contrast this with a time she did ask for help from a friend. Share Galatians 6:2, "Share each others troubles." Also share about how God is our help. We communicate our need when we go to him in prayer.

Mount Momma: In this chapter of *Life Interrupted*, Julie Ann Barnhill, author of *She's Gonna Blow* is quoted as saying, "A volcano, in essence, is a natural thing that explodes under pressure. And that's exactly what can happen to us . . . In an instant we can change from the peaceful, nourishing women we want to be into Mount Momma—spitting fire and brimstone at all who cross our path."² Have a leader share about a time when she needed help dealing with her anger. How did she find this help? How did God help too?

² Julie Ann Barnhill, *She's Gonna Blow! Real Help for Moms Dealing with Anger* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 2001): p. 176

Missing in Action: Have a leader share about a time when a husband or boyfriend abandoned her. Share how difficult it is to feel betrayed by someone who claimed to love you. Share what kind of help was needed most. Also share how God never leaves us or forsakes us. If applicable, share how God brought a caring man into this person's life.



Speaker Ideas:

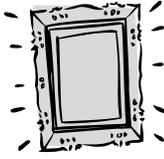
Help at Your Fingertips: Have different "learning stations." The moms are free to move around and get information and ask questions. Ideas for stations include: 1) A photographer who will show them how to take good pictures. 2) An executive who can share time management skills. 3) A job placement counselor to discuss interviewing skills. Give each mom a binder to collect handouts and information so she can have the help at her fingertips when she needs it.

Car Clinic: Help the young moms by teaching them self-reliance when it comes to car care. They don't have to feel helpless and vulnerable. Have the speaker include instruction on how to change a flat tire, check the oil, check tire pressure, jumpstart a car, plus preventative maintenance. The speaker can also have the young moms put together simple winter survival kits for their car. Other topic ideas can include simple home maintenance or self defense. —HEATHER, FROM TEEN MOPS FORUM

Community Resource Fair: Invite members of the community to share local programs for mothers and children. Examples are WICA, Healthy Families, the hospital, etc. The more the better! Encourage the moms to get information from the various organizations. The leader can help them set goals for following through with this information.

Expert Mommy Panel: Invite a panel of leaders or experts from the community to pass on instruction concerning some of the most difficult parenting challenges, such as potty-training, thumb-sucking, and healthy eating. Invite the young moms to ask questions of the panel. Encourage the panel to bring additional materials for the young moms to take home.





Creative Activities:

First Aid Kit: Put together a first aid kit. Include a list of emergency numbers inside the kits for poison control, ask-a-nurse, doctor, hospital, and other hotlines. Use a plastic lunch box to hold all the items.

Kits can include:

Activated Charcoal (use only if instructed by Poison Control Center)

Adhesive Tape

Antiseptic Ointment

Band-Aids (assorted sizes)

Gauze Pads and Roller Gauze (assorted sizes)

Hand Cleaner

Plastic Bags

Scissors and Tweezers

Small Flashlight and Extra Batteries

Syrup of Ipecac (use only if instructed by Poison Control Center)

Triangular Bandage

Anti-biotic Ointment

Ace wrap (elastic bandage)

Safety pins

Petroleum jelly

Calamine lotion

Complete Emergency Release Treatment Form for your family authorizing medical treatment should you not be present in case of an emergency. See Appendix #5

Supporting Cast: In *Life Interrupted*, Tricia talks about developing a “Supporting Cast” of people who can help you in your parenting role. Create a “movie poster” to be used to post the names and phone numbers of the young mother’s supporting cast. Provide craft paper and fancy markers to be used to decorate their movie poster. Encourage the moms to bring photos of themselves with their child. Post the photos under the heading “Stars of the Show.” Bring clip art photos of movie reels, directors chairs, and clapboards that can be cut out and used to decorate the poster. Also, print the supporting cast list below. It will also be glued onto the poster. When the poster is finished, laminate it with contact paper. Once laminated, the names and numbers of cast members can be filled in with a dry erase marker.

Supporting Cast. Who can you call when:

You need childcare: _____

You need help with homework: _____

You’re afraid: _____

Your child is sick: _____

You have an accident: _____

You want to exercise: _____

You need help around the house: _____

Your car breaks down: _____

You don’t have money for rent: _____

You need legal advice: _____

You want to have fun with friends: _____

You are worried about your child: _____

You want spiritual advice: _____

God Can Help Boards: Cut old weathered boards into foot long segments. Sand the edges a little or leave the rough look if you like. Then screw in two eyescrews into the top and string wire or ribbon through them. Paint the front with one of the quotes below. Make the words decorative, add a background, or paint the edges of the board with a different color.

Possible quotes:

- ☉ God can help.
- ☉ “I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”
ISAIAH 41:10 (NIV)
- ☉ “I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble.” —HELEN KELLER
- ☉ “Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.”
JEREMIAH 29:12 (NIV)
- ☉ “Cluster together like stars.” —HENRY MILLER, WRITER 1891-1980
- ☉ “When God measures a woman, He puts the tape around the heart instead of the head.”
—ANONYMOUS
- ☉ “My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth” PSALM 121:2 (NIV)
- ☉ It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself. —RALPH WALDO EMERSON

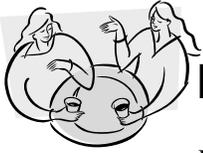
A Hugs Box: These are easy-to-create boxes that the young moms can give away as gifts for Valentine’s Day. Supplies: Tissue paper, glue, paint brushes, empty gift boxes. Cut 2 x 2-inch squares from the tissue paper. Water down the glue. Use two parts glue to one part water. Lightly brush glue onto the box and stick on the tissue paper squares you cut out. You want them to overlap so you do not see the box. Work in small sections until the entire box is covered. Set aside to dry. Once it is dry, you can lightly brush over your box with the glue and water mixture to make it more durable and shiny. Once dry, tie with curly ribbon as you would a wrapped present and attached a gift tag that reads:

*This is a very special gift
That you can never see
The reason it’s so special is
It’s just for you from me.*

*Whenever you are lonely
Or are ever feeling blue
You only have to hold this gift
And know I’m hugging you.*

*You never can unwrap it
Please leave the ribbon tied
Just hold the box close to your heart
It’s filled with hugs inside.*





Discussion Group Questions:

Each speaker should bring Discussion Group questions that deal with their specific topic. Below are also general questions that can be used anytime during the month. They are good starting points of conversation and can be used during Creative Activities, during meals, or any other time.

- ☉ If you could hire one person to help you, who would it be and why? Would it be a nanny, chef, maid, etc. – ATHENA HALL, COUNCIL COORDINATOR FOR MONTANA AND NORTHERN WYOMING
- ☉ What do you need help with the most?
- ☉ Tell about a time you did one of these things. What was the result?
 - ☉ You were afraid to ask for help because you didn't want to hear, "I told you so?"
 - ☉ You believed that you had to "do it all" or your life will fall apart?
 - ☉ You didn't ask for help because you don't want to "owe" someone.
- ☉ In *Life Interrupted*, Tricia says, "Trying to please everyone all the time doesn't work. We turn our lives, ourselves, into a frantic mess. In the end, it's our peace of mind—and our children—who suffer." Do your children ever suffer because you try to "do it all"?
- ☉ Do you have a guy in your life who offers help?
- ☉ Who is your supporting cast?
- ☉ What do you like most about your Teen MOPS Support Group?
- ☉ What type of help does your mom and/or dad offer?

march

RECREATION: I NEED A BREAK

“Live and work but do not forget to play, to have fun in life and really enjoy it.”

-EILEEN CADDY, AMERICA WRITER

This month we are going to focus on a young mom's need for recreation. The teen years are those in which young people enjoy getting together with friends for fun. Too often a young mom is so overwhelmed with her new responsibilities that there often isn't time for fun. This chapter of *Life Interrupted* will help young moms know how to make time for healthy, fun recreation! It deals with:

- ⊗ Being a mom 24/7
- ⊗ A mom's need for a break
- ⊗ Leisure, balance, and interests
- ⊗ Fun as a family
- ⊗ Laughter
- ⊗ Exercise
- ⊗ Responsible fun
- ⊗ Me time
- ⊗ Feeding your spirit

I'm amazed by how much laughter and games loosen up our young moms.
Icebreakers at the beginning of meetings are a quick way
to bond a group of strangers.

-TRICIA GOYER, KALISPELL, TEEN MOPS, MONTANA

Below are a list of ideas for icebreakers, devotions, speakers, Creative Activities, and Discussion Group questions. Choose ones that will work best for your group!



Icebreakers:

Commercial Time: Break moms into groups. Give each group ONE of these items. A package of diapers, a box of Kleenex, a box of Band Aids, a bottle of baby lotion, or any other baby items. Tell each team they will be performing a commercial for the other groups. There are two rules: 1) Everybody on the team must be in the commercial, and 2) the commercial can't be longer than 90 seconds. The leaders will judge the best ones and everyone in that group gets a prize.

Rain Blow: Pass out various colors of bubble gum to participants. Ask them to blow a bubble. Then have them identify and sit with the other people with the same color/flavor. Once they get into groups, they have to discuss their favorite color. One volunteer from each group will be asked to tell the favorite colors of the members of her group. She gets one piece of gum for every one she gets correct.

Dirty Diaper Game: This is a game that is sure to build laughter. Before the meeting get a dozen clean diapers and a dozen different chocolate candy bars. Number the diapers 1-12. Melt the candy bars in the microwave one at a time and put each melted candy bar into a diaper. When the participants arrive pass around the diapers and have them guess the type of candy bar. It's okay to sniff and taste if they're adventurous enough! Have them jot down their answers on paper. The winner receives a dozen wrapped candy bars of the same brands.



Devotions:

God Refreshment: Have a leader share how God refreshes our spirits. Just like our minds and bodies need time to get refreshed, our spirits need replenishment as well. Share how her day always goes better when time is taken to read the Bible, pray, and spend time with God.

Rest for the Weary: Have a leader share how relaxation refreshes our spirits. God did not create us to be on the go 24/7. We are made to require relaxation. God even instructed his chosen people to take time for rest. Have a leader share ways God has helped her to take time to rest.

Take Time: Have a leader share this poem by Elaine Hardt:

*Make a memory with your children,
Spend some time to show you care;
Toys and trinkets can't replace those
Precious moments that you share.*

Have leader share precious moments that she had with her children. Also share how fast they grow up. Include information on how to seek God's guidance in cutting back on "work" in order to make more time for "mommy fun."

Work Worship: Have a leader share about a time when she "worshipped" her work. Worship is anything we focus on above all else. How did the leader change? Was there a disintegration of family life or her relationship with God that led to this change? Explain how nothing satisfies us as much as God—not even successful work.



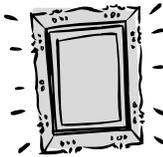
Speaker Ideas:

Physical Fitness: Invite a fitness instructor in to share ways that moms can schedule fitness during their day. Share benefits of being fit—not only to the body, but also to the mind, emotions, and spirit.

Child Safety: Invite a speaker to discuss child safety outdoors. Name the hazards found at fun places such as swimming pools or lakes, playgrounds, etc. Include tips on how to keep kids safe during recreation.

Fun Things to Do in the Community: Invite someone from the community, such as a Parks and Recreation employee, to share fun and FREE activities to do in your community. If possible, pass out calendars with upcoming local events.

Play Day: Surprise the young moms with a play day. Decorate the meeting room with sporting equipment. Rent a humor video from Nicole Johnson, Chanda Pierce, or Liz Curtis Higgs; bring board games, darts, play dough, or other fun activities for Mom play.



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Creative Activities:

Photo Wall Hangings:

Supplies:

- Cardstock*
- Coordinating craft paper,*
- Manual hole punch,*
- ¼ inch coordinating ribbon,*
- Scrapbooking glue,*
- Two photos of young mom and child playing together.*

These wall hangings are simple “frames” for the young moms to hang two photos. First get two pieces of thick 8 x 10 cardstock. Cut two pieces of coordinating craft paper slightly smaller than the cardstock so when it’s mounted over the cardstock it looks like matting. Glue over the cardstock. Next glue two 4 x 6 photos in the center of each piece of paper so that it looks as if it’s framed. Use the hole punch to evenly punch holes in all four corners of one piece of the cardstock (this will be the top “frame”) and on the top corners of the second. String one piece of ribbon through the top two holes, tying it at the top. This will be used to hang the “framed” photos. Use two small pieces of ribbon to connect the top and bottom pieces. If they want, the young moms can add a quote on the bottom edge of the frame, such as the Live n’ Learn quote from the Recreation chapter of *Life Interrupted*, “A happy, relaxed mom makes a happy relaxed home.”

Kool-Aid Play Dough:

Ingredients:

- 2 ½ c. flour*
- ½ c. salt*
- 1 pkg. unsweetened Kool-aid*
- 2 c. boiling water*
- 3 T. vegetable oil*

Mix dry ingredients. Add water and oil; stir. Mix or knead with hands when cool. Store in Ziploc bag or container with lid. If they want to, young moms can decorate baby food jars for storing different colors of playdough. Lasts for several months.

Popcorn Bowls: Purchase large plastic bowls. Have the young moms decorate them and personalize them with paint pens. Pass out microwave popcorn for them to take home too! –REBECCA LIN, TEEN MOPS COUNCIL COORDINATOR, CALIFORNIA

Giggles, Hoots and Chuckles Collection:

Supplies:

8 x 11 cardboard photo box

Pile of Sunday Funny Papers

Glue

Paintbrushes

Cut cartoon strips from paper. Water down the glue. Use two parts glue to one part water. Lightly brush glue onto the box and stick on the cartoon strips. You want them to overlap so you do not see the box. Work in small sections until the entire box is covered. Set aside to dry. Once it is dry, you can lightly brush over your box with the glue and water mixture to make it more durable and shiny. Once the box is finished, use a Sharpie marker to write Giggles, Hoots and Chuckles Collection. Tell young moms to fill the box with the following items:

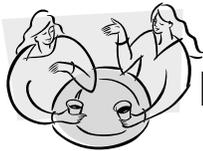
Cartoons from the newspaper

A small notebook of funny things their child says or does.

Goofy joke books.

A journal of humorous things that happened to their child or themselves.

“Gag” costume pieces such as glasses, noses, and funny hats.



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Discussion Group Questions:

Each speaker should bring Discussion Group questions that deal with their specific topic. Below are also general questions that can be used anytime during the month. They are good starting points of conversation and can be used during Creative Activities, during meals, or any other time.

- ☉ What is your favorite way to rejuvenate yourself? A soak in a hot tub? A trip to Wal-Mart, alone? A hobby? When is the last time that you did this?
- ☉ Moms have little time on their hands and in the demands of meeting everyone else’s needs, we often forget about our own, including exercise. Which of the following could you (or do you) work into your daily routine to help keep yourself fit?
 1. Go for a walk or a jog.
 2. Join a health club that provides baby-sitting.
 3. Take baby on long walks in the stroller.
 4. Swap baby-sitting with another mom while you exercise.
 5. Buy or borrow a few exercise tapes to use while baby is napping.
- ☉ Think back to before you became a mommy. What are some things that you enjoyed doing for fun? Do you still do these things? Why or why not? How can you put some fun back in your life? – Athena Hall, Council Coordinator for Montana and Northern Wyoming
- ☉ Hold up different candy bars and have the moms describe how the name of the candy relates to mothering. The best explanation wins the bar!
- ☉ What is your dream vacation? Where would you go? Who would you take?

april

PERSPECTIVE: WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT?

“Greatness is to take the common things of life and walk truly among them.”

-RALPH IRON, AUTHOR

This month we are going to focus on a young mom's need for correct perspective. When young women become mothers they think about things they never considered before—such as being a good role model or scheduling play into our day. They see the world in a different light, mainly because they've brought a precious child into it. This chapter of *Life Interrupted* will help young moms know how to get a perspective on life. It deals with:

- Getting perspective
- Changing perspective
- Making attitude adjustments
- Future thinking
- Doing everything half-hearted vs. doing a few things well
- Treasuring every moment
- Priorities
- Balance

One of the most encouraging aspects of our group has been to watch one of our graduates grow into a good role model. She can really relate to the girls because she's not far from where they're at right now. The truly awesome thing is that this young mom has become a Christian. She prays with the Steering Team before our group meetings, and she is so sincere and so full of new joy in the Lord. When Steering Teams members become discouraged, our ex-teen reminds us that we are making a difference.

It's wonderful to have her perspective, and we get “refreshed eyes” seeing that the Lord truly can change hearts.

-VAL PATTINGALE, SMITHS FALLS TEEN MOPS, ONTARIO, CANADA

Below are a list of ideas for icebreakers, devotions, speakers, Creative Activities, and Discussion Group questions. Choose ones that will work best for your group!



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Icebreakers:

Where Do you Stand? Create four large signs that read: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Tape them up in different corners of the room. Read out statements to the group and ask participants to stand under the sign that corresponds to their response. For example “Our group can change the world” or “Creativity is the most important quality a group can have.”

Marooned! Separate your group into smaller groups of not more than five people. Ask: “If you were stranded on a desert island, what three items would you bring with you?” Be sure that participants explain their suggestions to the group. Have the groups go back to the larger group and explain what tools they would bring with them, and why. This exercise can give you insight into how your group members think. It is also an exercise in group decision-making as participants have to discuss and debate what objects to bring.

If I Were Queen of the World: As the young moms come in, hand them a 3 x 5 card, telling them to put down five laws they would enact if they were made queen of the world tomorrow. Tell them to remember that when they write these laws, everyone will be required to obey them. You will start a lot of laughter or invite interesting discussion when you gather these up and read them aloud. After you have read the cards, you may want to have a brief challenge about the importance of following the right rules: God’s Word.



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Devotions:

Mothering Myths: Have a leader share about some of the “mothering myths” that used to weigh her down. She could use examples from *Real Moms: Exploding the Myths of Motherhood* by Elisa Morgan. Myths include:

- ☉ Good moms look good all the time.
- ☉ Good moms keep everybody happy.
- ☉ Good moms instinctively know what their children need.
- ☉ Good moms take responsibility for how their children turn out.
- ☉ Good moms don’t admit their feelings of guilt or anger or fear—because to admit those feelings might make them look like they are not good moms.

Have the leader explain how God helped her overcome these myths.

Past, Present, and Future: Have a leader share how anger about the past or worries about the future cloud her perspective. Where should we place our thoughts? Not with what has happened. Or with what could happen, but instead walking with “I am” who is with us in the present. Share how walking with God helps keep focus on the present.

Burdens: Have a leader share that sometimes it seems there is so much we HAVE TO DO, but when we take a step back and get a good look at our situations, often we get a different perspective. Do we have to do all

we're doing? Are we piling burdens upon ourselves? Each of us has our own burdens to carry, and sometimes we pile other people burdens on ourselves too. Share Matthew 11:28-29 and how Jesus wants us to come to him, knowing He will never give us more than we can carry.

A Matter of Perspective: Have a leader use these two illustrations to discuss how everything is based on a matter of our perspective. Share how your perspective changed in all areas of your life (relationships, family, fun, truth, etc.) when you accepted Jesus Christ into your life.



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Speaker Ideas:

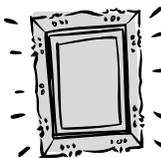
Easter Celebration: Begin by reading a traditional story such as *Benjamin's Box* by Melody Carlson or *The Tale of Three Trees* by Angela Elwell Hunt. Next use "Resurrection Eggs" to tell the Easter Story. Hand out the eggs to the young moms and have them open them at the right times, reading the passages that go with each egg. Next, end with an Easter Egg Hunt. Hide the eggs that are filled with candy and Scripture verses around your meeting room. Finally, finish with a leader's story about what Easter means to her.

Parenting Plans: Invite in a lawyer to discuss parenting plans. Many young moms have questions on what to do with uninvolved fathers, child support, custody, etc. Encourage the speaker to talk to the moms about what's best for the child.

Conflict Resolution: Invite a relationship expert to talk about conflict resolutions in friendships, with parents, or in romantic relationships. Share ways to deal with conflict in productive ways. One of these ways is considering the perspective of the other person.

Healthy Habits: Bring in a speaker to share the importance of developing healthy habits. Have them share what habits have helped them in life. Also, what got them started on bad habits? Have the speaker focus on turning bad habits into good ones and how our habits affect our parenting.

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Creative Activities:

Encourage-Mints: Make Encourage-Mint jars. Print up some sheets of paper with encouraging verses and sayings. (Samples found in the appendix.) Print up tags that say, "Encourage-Mints . . . Have a mint and read a verse, Count your blessings, things could be worse!" Cut out the strips of verses and cut out the tag. Cut out a fabric circle to go on top of the jar and ribbon for attaching the tag. Put two types of mints inside the jars and then put the verses rolled up amongst the mints. -REBECCA LIN, TEEN MOPS COORDINATOR, COSTA MESA, CA

Living Easter Baskets:

Supplies:

Easter baskets or plastic pails (easily found at Dollar Stores during Easter)

Potting soil

Colored plastic wrap (like Saran)

Rye grass seed, spray bottle filled with water

Assembly: 1) Line basket (not necessary with pails) with colored plastic wrap. You might need two pieces to cover all the openings in the basket. 2) Fill basket with approximately 3 to 4 inches of potting soil. 3) Sprinkle on a heavy layer of grass seed. 4) Layer approximately 1/4" of potting soil over grass seed. 5) Mist well with water. 6) Put in a warm, sunny window and mist daily. Seeds should sprout within a few days. 7) For cold weather areas, cover basket with plastic wrap and place on top of refrigerator. 8) You should only need about two weeks for this to grow and it will be nice and full and ready to fill with Easter goodies of your choice! —LAKEWOOD PARK BAPTIST CHURCH IN AUBURN, INDIANA

Milk Carton Bird Houses:

Supplies:

1/2 gallon milk carton

String

Paint

Maker

1) Cut out large windows from three sides of the milk carton, leaving two inches, top and bottom. Decorate with paint. 2) Poke two holes through the top of the carton. Tie the string through each hole. Fill the bottom of the carton with bird food. 3) Use the marker to write Matthew 6:26-27 on a side of bird house: "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

Mini Terra Cotta Butterflies:

Supplies:

1 3/4 inch clay pot

Craft foam

Paint

Ribbon

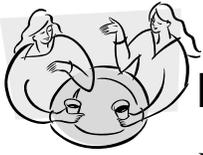
1 1/4 inch doll head bead

Fine tip markers

18-gauge wire

Invert pot and glue doll head bead on top. Paint pot and paint face on head. Cut two 6-inch pieces of wire. Wrap one piece around neck to form arms. Curl other piece at each end for antennae. Tie ribbon into a small bow and glue to top of head. Cut wings out of craft foam. Decorate wings with fine-tip markers. Glue wings and antennae in place.

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Discussion Group Questions:

Each speaker should bring Discussion Group questions that deal with their specific topic. Below are also general questions that can be used anytime during the month. They are good starting points of conversation and can be used during Creative Activities, during meals, or any other time.

- ☉ What does the word “perspective” mean to me?
- ☉ Why is keeping perspective so difficult?
- ☉ What is most important in your life right now?
- ☉ How do you keep your focus on the main thing?
- ☉ Name one area in your life where a lower standard is acceptable right now.
- ☉ How do the models in the magazines you read affect your perspective about yourself?
- ☉ How do the articles in parenting magazines make you feel about your parenting abilities?
- ☉ How do romantic movies make you feel about being a wife or girlfriend? Or worse yet, how do they make you feel if you're single?
- ☉ How do songs on the radio make you feel about life? Excited? Hopeless? Do they make you think of life as a gift?

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HOPE: WHAT AM I HERE FOR?

“Some things you see with your eyes, others you see with your heart.”

-FROM THE ANIMATED MOVIE, *THE LAND BEFORE TIME*

This month we are going to focus on a young mom's need for hope. When a young woman faces pregnancy, she must try to juggle school, work, and friends . . . and parenting, childcare, cooking, you name it! Young moms need help in many areas, but often don't know where to look. This chapter of *Life Interrupted* will help young moms know where to find true hope! It deals with:

- ⊗ Situations that seem hopeless.
- ⊗ The truth about “Happily Ever After.”
- ⊗ How to love and be loved.
- ⊗ Hope is a Person.
- ⊗ What a relationship with Jesus is all about.
- ⊗ Hope for all a young mom's situations.

One thing we tell our girls often is that, no matter what mistakes they've made in the past, no matter how much they've messed up their lives, they can make a new start. They can make things different for their children as they grow. They can create good memories, establish new traditions, etc. It doesn't have to be bad for their children even though it was bad for them.

And, of course, we talk about Christ being able to forgive anything.

-VAL PATTINGALE, SMITHS FALLS TEEN MOPS, ONTARIO, CANADA

Below are a list of ideas for icebreakers, devotions, speakers, Creative Activities, and Discussion Group questions. Choose ones that will work best for your group!



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Icebreakers:

Good or New: Ask each person to share something good or new they have experienced in the last 24 hours. Then challenge them. What if we focused on accomplishing something good everyday, how would our outlook on life change?

My Slogan: Explain that many companies have slogans or “mottoes” which reflect their values. For example, Ford Motor Company uses the slogan, ‘Quality is Job One.’ Ask each person to write (or borrow) a positive slogan to describe herself and share with the group.

Fight for My Attention: Two people are challenged to come up to the front of the room and then to choose a topic (of their choice, within reason, or predetermined topics). The two people must talk about that topic for one minute in front of the crowd, BUT they are both talking about the topic AT THE SAME TIME! The audience must then vote on which person held their attention for longer.

Hopeful Words: Have moms begin this activity by listing at least 25 words that describe things they hope for. No sentences allowed, just words! When they are finished, have them share their words.



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Devotions:

Spring Reminders: Have a leader talk about the newness of life in spring and how it is evidence of the new life we can have in Christ.

Hope Means Rest: Have a leader share how finding hope in God has brought rest and peace to her life. Share Psalms 62:5-6, “Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation” (NIV). Share what this means to her.

Child-like Faith: Have a leader share how she learned to hope in God. Sometimes it means coming to God with faith as a child. Talk about how our children naturally trust us and have faith in us. Jesus wants us to do the same. “I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it” Mark 10:15 (NIV).

Cinderella Story: Have a leader share about how each of us long for the “Cinderella” story. We love watching movies where the handsome prince falls in love with the lowly girl and makes her a princess. Share about the type of true love each of us desires and how this love is found in Jesus Christ.

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Speaker Ideas:

Tea and Testimony: Provide an elegant tea for the moms. Invite a panel of leaders to share their salvation testimonies. If applicable, you can also have one of the young moms give her testimony. Have each of the women share where they turn for hope.

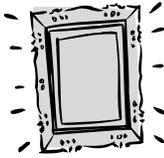
Prayer Works: Have a speaker talk about prayer and how to improve your prayer life. Explain what prayer is, ways to pray (out loud, silently, prayerwalking, in a journal, etc.) Also, have the speaker share answered prayers in her own life. Close by handing out pieces of paper and asking each mom for requests that the leaders can pray for.

The Nine Needs: Invite a speaker to share how our nine needs change once we accept Christ. More information can be found in the last chapter of *Life Interrupted*. Use these props to help with your talk:

- ☉ *Importance:* When it comes to your relationship with God, what matters most is how he sees you. You are significant, not because of what you do, but because of who you are. Prop: Award Ribbon
- ☉ *Identity:* You are God's special creation. He designed you exactly how he wanted you, and he loves you just as you are. When you see yourself as God sees you, you don't have to worry about an identity crisis. Prop: Mirror
- ☉ *Growth:* If you could see the potential God has planted inside you, there'd be no holding you back! When you take time to explore your dreams and dare to grow by trusting God to help you, you become more of the person he designed you to be. Prop: Garden gloves
- ☉ *Intimacy:* When discussing intimacy, we talked about connecting with someone who touches your heart—through communication, time spent together, and love shared. When it comes to perfect love and perfect intimacy, there is only one person who can meet your every need. Only God's love is perfect. Prop: Diary
- ☉ *Instruction:* The Bible is the ultimate source of instruction. When we follow Jesus' instructions we will find the right paths for our future. Prop: Parenting Book
- ☉ *Help:* We need help with many things, but we need God's help most of all. He loves us enough to want us to depend on him—to seek him out for help. Prop: Toilet brush
- ☉ *Recreation:* When God created the world, he worked for six days, then rested on the seventh. He didn't need to take that long. He didn't need a day off. He did it as an example for us. God created within us the need to balance our work with rest. Prop: Bubble Bath
- ☉ *Perspective:* Perspective means focusing on what will last—especially our family and relationships. As we focus on God, he shows us what's important. Prop: Family Photo
- ☉ *Hope:* Sometimes we wonder what life is all about. Our hope comes from trusting that God will always be with us. He will always love us, and we can spend an eternity with him. Prop: Bible

My Turn: Tell the young moms that it will be their turn to provide instruction. Open up the floor and have them share information they have learned over the year that has been helpful to them. Bring a list of the previous speakers and have them share the information they learned from various speakers.

.....



Creative Activities:

Nine Color Bracelet: Create beaded bracelets with nine colored beads. The colors represent each of their nine needs.

Blue Significance When you're feeling blue, remember you are important.

Speckled Identity You are unique like a handmade speckled bead.

Green Growth We all need a chance to grow.

Pink Intimacy Spend time with those you love.

Yellow Instruction Build relationships with others.

Red Help Don't be afraid to stop and ask for help.

Sky Blue Recreation Take time to watch the clouds go by.

Clear Perspective Focus clearly on what's really important.

Purple Hope Hope is a personal relationship with the King of Kings.

Garden in a Jar:

Supplies:

Mason jars

Perlite

Vermiculite

Seed packet

Potting soil

Ribbon

Tags with quote: "The smallest seed of faith is

Charcoal

better than the largest fruit of happiness." –HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Instructions: 1) Pour charcoal layer into Mason jar, gently shaking to settle the layer evenly. There should be about $\frac{3}{4}$ " of charcoal at the bottom of the jar. Repeat the same step when adding vermiculite and perlite. 2) Next, add potting soil, fill to an 1" from the top of the jar (leaving room for seeds.) 3) Plant seeds using instructions on the seed packet. 4) Tie ribbon around jar and attach quote. 5) At home spray the seeds with three squirts of water. 6) Set your garden in a warm, light place out of direct sunlight. 7) If there are no drops of water on the inside of the jar the next day, spray more water inside.

Blessings Journal: Read the instructions for using a Blessings Journal in *Life Interrupted*. You can buy pre-made journals and decorate the cover with craft paper, stamps, and markers.

Beaded Bookmarks:

Supplies:

Wire cutters

18-gauge wire in desired color

Needle-nose pliers

Glass beads

Small dowel

36-gauge metallic wire

Instructions: 1) Cut a 24-inch length of 18-gauge wire. Using pliers bend over one end of wire for the bottom of the bookmark. 2) Thread desired beads on straight end of wire and slide them to the bottom. Shape the wire as desired. 3) For the top of the bookmark, make a bend in the wire or wrap it around a small dowel where you want the top beads to be held. Place beads on the wire. Shape the end of the wire into a spiral to hold the beads in place. If desired, make a wire spiral from a short length of wire and attach to the top of the bookmark by forming a loop in the end of the bookmark wire. 4) If desired tightly wrap small sections of the beaded bookmark with metallic wire.

.....



Discussion Group Questions:

Each speaker should bring Discussion Group questions that deal with their specific topic. Below are also general questions that can be used anytime during the month. They are good starting points of conversation and can be used during Creative Activities, during meals, or any other time.

- ☉ Misplaced Hope: (From *What Every Mom Needs: Balancing Your Life* by Elisa Morgan and Carol Kuykendall.) From the sources listed as misplaced hope, rank in the order in which you tend to turn to them for help, with 1 being your first choice and 4 your last.

_____ circumstances

_____ optimism

_____ people

_____ self-help

- ☉ What do you hope in?
- ☉ Do you think the Bible has any worth to us today?
- ☉ What are you thankful for?
- ☉ What is your favorite part of Teen MOPS?
- ☉ What speaker did you appreciate most from the year?
- ☉ What is one thing that you learned that has helped you?
- ☉ In what ways do you better take care of your needs?
- ☉ How has your view of God changed over the year?

APPENDIX 1

MOPS Discussion Group Guidelines

—ATHENA HALL, COUNCIL COORDINATOR FOR MONTANA AND NORTHERN WYOMING

1. Share our true feelings (authenticity)
2. Encourage each other (mutuality)
3. Support each other (sympathy)
4. Forgive each other (mercy)
5. Speak the truth in love (honesty)
6. Admit our weaknesses (humility)
7. Respect our differences (courtesy)
8. No gossip (confidentiality)
9. Make the group a priority (frequency)

Encourage-Mints

Tag:

*“Have a mint and read a verse.
Count your blessings,
Things could be worse!”*

Messages:

- ☼ “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.” PHILIPPIANS 4:13
- ☼ “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” PHILIPPIANS 4:19
- ☼ “God has not given me a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind.” 2 TIMOTHY 1:7
- ☼ “Cast all your anxiety on Christ because He cares for you.” 1 PETER 5:7
- ☼ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” MATTHEW 11:28
- ☼ A smile never goes out of style!
- ☼ Happiness is found in the little things of life!
- ☼ Happiness is contagious—be a carrier!
- ☼ May your day be bright as a flower!
- ☼ You are a special person. There’s nobody like you!
- ☼ May the light of God’s sunshine brighten your day!

Scripture Verses for the Nine Needs

- ⊗ *Importance*: “Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not turn from it.” PROVERBS 22:6
- ⊗ *Identity*: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.” 2 CORINTHIANS 5:27
- ⊗ *Growth*: “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” PHILIPPIANS 1:6
- ⊗ *Intimacy*: “We love because He first loved us.” 1 JOHN 4:19
- ⊗ *Instruction*: “Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth.” PSALM 86:11
- ⊗ *Help*: “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” PSALM 46:1
- ⊗ *Recreation*: “Come to me, all you who are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” MATTHEW 11:28-30
- ⊗ *Perspective*: “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” MATTHEW 6:33
- ⊗ *Hope*: “Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God.” PSALM 42:5

APPENDIX 4



Where are you now?

Name _____ Date _____

Age _____ Date of Birth _____

High School _____

Currently enrolled Fresh Soph Jr Sr. Credits earned _____

Not currently enrolled _____

Diploma Year _____

Practice GED

GED

Other Education or Training

Currently enrolled _____

Major _____

Degree _____

Certificate _____

What are your future Goals?

High School: Regular Diploma

Adult Diploma

Practice GED

GED

Certification Program: _____(course of study)

Degree Program: _____(major)

Desired occupation(s): _____

Name _____ Date _____

My plan of ACTION

GOAL: _____ by _____ (estimated date)

Step 1. _____ by _____

Step 2. _____ by _____

Step 3. _____ by _____

What I will need to accomplish the above Goal: _____

.....

GOAL: _____ by _____ (estimated date)

Step 1. _____ by _____

Step 2. _____ by _____

Step 3. _____ by _____

What I will need to accomplish the above Goal: _____

.....

GOAL: _____ by _____ (estimated date)

Step 1. _____ by _____

Step 2. _____ by _____

Step 3. _____ by _____

What I will need to accomplish the above Goal: _____

APPENDIX 5



Emergency Release for Treatment

This form should be completed by parents and given to the temporary guardian for use if *emergency* attention is required.

(Please print)

We, _____ and _____
(father) *(mother)*

the parents of _____
(names of minor children)

give temporary guardianship of said children to: _____

while we are away from _____ to _____

The named guardians have full authority to sign and approve any emergency medical care that the above mentioned children may require during our absence.

The children's primary care physician is: _____
(name and telephone number)

Known allergies include: _____

Present medications include: _____

Should notification be necessary, our address is:

Telephone: _____

(signature of father)

(signature of mother)

(home address)

Date: _____

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