



My Life is In Your Hands
The Catholic Response to Depression, Addiction, and Suicide
Grades 7-9

Goal:

Students will learn about depression, addiction and suicide as life issues, from the perspective of faith. They will explore the understanding that God has a plan for each person, and that our responsibility is to respond with respect for ourselves.

Lesson:

This lesson touches on sensitive topics that were specifically requested by teachers and administrators who participated in RLW 2013. Clinical depression and mental health problems are serious concerns. This discussion does not seek to solve any medical problems. Rather, it looks at the root cause of much of teen and youth depression and anxiety, which lies in a devalued sense of self and a failure to understand their place in creation. Students who react strongly to this material may need follow-up care.

Please follow whatever protocol your school has in place.

Watch:

[How to be Courageous](#) Justin Fatica shares using God's love to make us overcome our fears. (3.5 minutes)

Discussion:

- What does it mean to be courageous?
- Why is courage needed in today's culture? Examples?
- What does it mean to be a Courageous Catholic?

Discussion:

Ask open-ended questions to gauge the students' understanding of concepts.

- What is drug use?
- What is cutting?
- What is depression?
- What is suicide?
- Do you know anyone who has ever been involved with any of these?
- What was their experience?

- Do you think God has anything to say about any of these topics? Why or why not?

Watch: [Dealing with Addiction](#) Justin shares the positive attitude that helped him overcome his addiction. Focus on others and God to help us overcome addiction. 5 minutes.

Discussion:

- What role did addiction play in Justin’s life?
- Was he able to overcome his addiction? How?
- What has he learned as a result of allowing God to shape his life?

Often, it is difficult to understand where we fit in this enormous world. There are always people smarter, richer, more beautiful or more successful than we are. That is just life.

- So, how do we differentiate ourselves?
- How do we find meaning for our lives?
- What is the reason for our joy?
- Do we have a reason?
- Do we have joy?

Christians have a perspective on their place in the world different from anyone else’s. We know that Jesus came into the world to personally save each and every one of us and to ensure that we would be with him for eternity in Heaven. This knowledge is sometimes difficult to keep in mind with everything else we have to think about. But it is the key to having joy and hope versus having hopelessness and giving up or turning to drugs and other stimulants to get high.

Activity:

Have students research different topics. They can choose to study eating disorders and self-harm (Chiara), overcoming abuse (Catholic wisdom), drug addiction (videos from former addicts), or suicide prevention (TeenBreaks). Resources for these topics can be found in the overview page.

Have the students present what they learned about their topic to the class or write a report on it to be handed in for homework. Ask the students to write or talk about the negative actions or motivations and problems related to their topic and how these can be overcome.

PRAYER FOR HOPE

Heavenly father, I come before you today in need of hope.
 There are times when I feel helpless.
 There are times when I feel weak. I pray for hope.
 I need hope for a better future. I need hope for a better life.
 I need hope for love and kindness.

Father, thank you for sending your Son to bring me life—
 Life to the fullest; life for eternity.
 Thank you for allowing me to share in Christ's Resurrection.
 Christ is alive in me, and His Spirit dwells deeply in my being,
 Even when I cannot see you or even feel your presence.
 Thank you for making all things possible for those who believe.

Thank you for guiding me right now.
May I continue to receive guidance and hope from you
This hour and every hour.
Amen.

Look at a crucifix next time you feel lost or hopeless. Let it remind you of just how much God loves you. And of how much He wishes to help you secure a place in His Heavenly Kingdom for yourself and others! Still feel useless? Remember this, as best you can. God doesn't want to lose any of us!