LESSON 2—"HOW CAN I CALM THESE STRONG EMOTIONS?"

For leaders only—This lesson offers four activities that can help your members relax and calm their emotions.

Opening—Prayer and song

Looking back—From the last meeting's assignment, ask members to share their drawings with the group. Invite children to share their pictures. Discuss how you felt during the exercise. Ask members to share how it helped them express their feelings.
Leading the lesson

Section 1—Do something . . .

- Choose someone to read through this section and then ask members to list additional activities that they could do.

Sections 2, 3, & 4:

- Choose other group members to lead the next three activities and guide the members to do these activities together as a group.
- After concluding each one, ask members how they felt as they were doing it.
- Ask which of the three exercises they liked the most.
- Ask members to share other ideas about how they relax.

Individual assignment—Prior to the next group meeting, ask members to invite family or friends to do one of the exercises from Lesson 2. When your members are leading others to do an exercise, it will help them remember it better and allow them to begin putting it into practice in their own lives.

Closing—Prayer and song.

2. How can I calm these strong emotions?

CALMING YOUR EMOTIONS

After a traumatic experience, you may feel very anxious, angry, or afraid. You may never have had such strong feelings before. You can learn how to calm these emotions so they don't control you. Here are some ways.

1. **Do something small that engages your mind, like calling a friend to see how they are, taking a walk, or playing a game.** Allow yourself to do these things as soon as you notice strong feelings rising up in you. This is not wasting time; it will help you heal.

   Do not forget your friends or your father's friends … A nearby neighbor can help you more than relatives who are far away.

   PROVERBS 27:10

   Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can help him up. But if someone is alone and falls, it's just too bad, because there is no one to help him. If it is cold, two can sleep together and stay warm, but how can you keep warm by yourself? Two people can resist an attack that would defeat one person alone. A rope made of three cords is hard to break.

   ECCLESIASTES 4:9–12

2. **Think of a scene that makes you feel peaceful.** It may be a scene from where you grew up, or a beach or forest. It may be a scene from a story about Jesus. You might remind yourself of God's love. Get quiet inside and imagine being in that scene. Go there in your mind whenever you begin to feel that strong emotions may overwhelm you.

   "The mountains and hills may crumble,
   but my love for you will never end;
   I will keep forever my promise of peace."
   So says the LORD who loves you.

   ISAIAH 54:10

3. **Practice breathing from the diaphragm to calm strong feelings.** Try to practice this for five minutes, three or four times per day. You may notice this takes effort at first. You may even become tired while practicing it. But continued practice will make this calming, soothing way of breathing easier and more automatic.

   - Get into a comfortable position, either on a chair or lying down. With your knees bent, focus on the feeling of your feet or body touching the ground. Release any tension you

notice in your shoulders, head, and neck.

- Place one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach, just below your rib cage.
- Breathe in slowly through your nose so that your stomach fills with breath against your lower hand. The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.
    - As you breathe out slowly through your nose or through pursed lips, feel your lower hand move back toward your spine as the air is released. The hand on your upper chest should remain as still as possible. Imagine this exhale takes with it any stress in your body.

You can also do this exercise with children to help them calm themselves.

May the LORD bless you
and take care of you;
May the LORD be kind and gracious to you;
May the LORD look on you with favor
and give you peace.
NUMBERS 6:24–26

4. Container exercise

Sometimes we can be overwhelmed by what we have experienced but we are not in a situation where we can express our feelings. This exercise can be helpful.
Close your eyes, or just look down at the floor so you are not distracted.

Imagine a big container. It could be a big box or a shipping container. Imagine a way to lock the container, like a key or a padlock.

Now imagine putting all the things that are disturbing you right now into the container: big things, small things—everything that is disturbing you. When they are all inside the container, imagine closing it. Now imagine locking the container and putting the key somewhere safe. Do not throw it away. When you are ready, open your eyes and look up.

Later, find a time when you can get quiet. Imagine that you take the key, open the container, and take out the things you have put inside one by one. If you can, do this with a person you trust who can help you talk about these things. Do not leave them in the container forever!

Even if I go through the deepest darkness,
I will not be afraid, LORD,
for you are with me.
Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.
PSALM 23:4

Even though you are so high above,
you care for the lowly,
and the proud cannot hide from you.
When I am surrounded by troubles,
you keep me safe.
You oppose my angry enemies
and save me by your power.
You will do everything you have promised;
LORD, your love is eternal.
Complete the work that you have begun.

PSALM 138:6–8

For Reflection

What has helped you to relax?

Did the container exercise help you? If yes, how?