



"LEADING TEENS CLOSER TO CHRIST"

GOALS OF EDGE

1. To foster a transforming spiritual experience of Jesus through the liturgy which will allow middle school youth to experience the Word of God and the Eucharist in a more profound way.
2. To create a positive experience of the Catholic Church for middle school youth.
3. To assist middle school youth in gaining an understanding and appreciation of what the Catholic Church teaches and believes.
4. To incorporate the Catholic Church's vision of social justice and peace into the spiritual lives of middle school youth.
5. To develop an understanding in middle school youth that they are a vital presence within the parish community.
6. To enter into and transform the culture and lives of middle school youth with the Good News of Jesus Christ and His Church.

EDGE MINISTRY OVERVIEW

Edge Core Team members are the heart and soul of this Catholic middle school youth ministry experience. In teams of two or three, Edge Core Members lead small group discussions and activities during Edge Nights. The Core Team is given a copy of the Edge outline ahead of time to study and prepare for an Edge Night and their small group. Edge Core Members remain with the same group of middle school youth throughout the entire year. This allows the Core Team and middle school youth the opportunity to develop strong, meaningful relationships. The Core Team also volunteers to lead prayer, read Scripture, perform skits, give witness/catechetical talks, and help lead other important tasks throughout an Edge Night.

MINISTRY REQUIREMENTS:

1. A love for Christ and the Catholic Church.
2. A commitment to prayer, especially weekly attendance at Sunday Mass.
3. A desire to minister to middle school youth.
4. A willingness to serve as a Christian role model.

MINISTRY EXPECTATIONS:

1. Pray for each middle school youth, especially those in your small group.
2. Attend annual Core Team retreat and necessary Core Team trainings and meetings before and during the year.
3. Attend Edge Nights every Sunday from 12pm to 2:30 and from 2:30-3pm (to pray together as a team and plan for the next meeting.)
4. Attend the annual Edge middle school retreat.
5. Actively work to do relational ministry with the middle school youth at the Edge, especially with your small group members.
6. Create a warm and welcoming environment for the middle school youth.
7. Be prepared! Take time to pray through each session ahead of time and then plan and prepare the best way to approach the discussions and activities with your small group.
8. Create a safe and affirming place for the middle school youth.
9. Follow the Edge discipline policy and work with the Edge Coordinator if discipline issues arise.
10. Act as a liaison between the Edge and parents. Contact parents throughout the year to discuss both positive and negative behaviors and to discuss important Edge information.

CORE MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

1. BE COMMITTED...

a. Time commitment:

12:00-1:pm Lunch/Social with Kids

1:00-2:30pm EDGE Meeting: Core Members Focus: Minister to youth in their group.

2:30-2:40pm Help with dismissal and clean up.

2:45-3:00pm Pray as a team, discuss the night and plan for the next night.

b. Dedicate yourself to the Edge and to the youth for one full year.

2. BE PREPARED...

a. Pray before each Edge Night and pray through the topic for each Edge Night

b. Read through the lesson several times to fully understand the flow of the night.

c. If you volunteered to lead a portion of an Edge Night, have your materials ready, lines memorized or talk prepared.

d. Take time to read the Scripture verses and *Catechism of the Catholic Church* references for each Edge Night.

e. Know the small group activities and discussion questions and pray how to best lead your small group.

f. Being prepared will help you to be present to the youth in your group.

3. BE IN RELATIONSHIP...

a. Know the names of the youth in your group, get to know the names of other youth, and the Core Team.

b. Get to know your youth's "stories" and share your own. If a youth misses an Edge Night, call him/her to encourage them to come next week.

c. Be affirming of the youth in your group. Nurture and challenge them to stay focused at Edge Nights and to go deeper in their faith.

d. Challenge your youth to develop a deeper relationship and commitment to Jesus and the Catholic Church.

e. Get to know the parents of the youth in your group. Make phone calls or contact parents with positive feedback about their child.

f. Find Christ in each youth and share that awareness with others.

g. When there are conflicts, be willing to discipline when necessary, remain positive and communicate with the Edge Coordinator.

4. BE WILLING...

a. To stay immersed in prayer and to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

b. To get excited about working with middle school youth. That excitement will transfer to the youth in your group.

c. To risk, to be silly and goofy for the Gospel. Be willing to step out of your comfort zone.

d. To be a mentor for the youth and model respect and obedience at Edge Nights and in your faith.

CORE MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

As a Core Member, we ask you to:

1. Work with a partner and possibly a high school teen leader in a small group with 8-12 middle school youth of the same grade level. Your ministry is to lead the youth in your group through the activities and discussions at an Edge Night.
2. Establish a relationship with the youth in your group. Adults are very influential at this age and can have a profound impact in a middle school youth's spiritual and emotional development.
3. Make attendance at Edge Nights your Sunday afternoon commitment (12-3pm, 12-1pm is Optional. The EDGE Meeting from 1-2:30pm is the priority!) Relationships are built by spending time together. By your consistent attendance, you are modeling a commitment to your faith and to the youth in your group.
4. Commit to attending Mass every Sunday. You and your family are welcome to join us for the 11AM Sunday Mass. This is also a great way to connect with the middle school youth in your group and others you see weekly at Edge Nights.
5. Come to each Edge Night prepared. Pray and read through the session outline so you can successfully lead your group through the night's activities. This demonstrates to the youth in your group that you are committed to their faith formation and spiritual development.
6. Join us for the annual Edge middle school retreat. This is a time to get away from the worries and stresses in our daily lives and to spend time with our Lord. This is also a great way to do relational ministry and be present to the youth in their faith journey.
7. Join us for our Core Team Training/Team Building session(s).

"It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you." John 15:16

CORE TEAM MEMBER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use the following questions:

1. What do you believe are the reasons some middle school youth have a difficult time making a commitment to Jesus and the Catholic Church?
2. What are your reasons for wanting to minister to middle school youth?
3. What are your fears or concerns about ministering to middle school youth?
4. How can we as a Catholic Church do a better job of reaching out to our middle school youth?
5. How can you as an Edge Core Member work to help our middle school youth make a deeper commitment to Jesus and the Catholic Church?
6. What are your concerns in having to discipline a middle school youth?
7. What are your hopes for the Edge ministry at our parish?
8. What are three things you have learned today about: Edge, middle school youth and middle school youth ministry?

DEALING WITH INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

Here are some ideas on how to deal with a middle school youth who is exhibiting inappropriate behavior at an Edge Night. Some behaviors can be corrected through non-verbal communications such as a firm glare, a finger to the lips to ask for silence, or moving to sit between two or three talkative youth. However, if the behavior continues use the following strategies for dealing with inappropriate behavior.

1. A verbal warning from the Core Member is given to the youth.
2. If the conduct continues, the youth would be timed out of the group and would discuss the situation with a Core Member designated and trained to work with middle school youth who have behavior issues. The Core Member can discuss the inappropriate behavior and strategies for improving his/her behavior in order to rejoin the small group. This interaction may allow the youth to talk about some issues that are going on in his/her life with a caring adult.
3. If inappropriate behavior continues, the youth's parents are called and requested to meet with the Edge Coordinator to discuss the behavior and strategies for improving the behavior. If necessary, create a "social contract" that states what is expected of the youth, strategies to improve behavior, consequences if the negative behaviors continue and also privileges that may be earned if the youth corrects his/her negative behavior.

FACILITATING A SMALL GROUP

SET YOUR SMALL GROUP UP FOR SUCCESS:

- Establish respect within your group from the start.
- Begin each small group with a prayer, eventually inviting youth to lead the prayer.
- Be prepared!

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS:

- Encourage participation from each member of the small group.
- Be affirming of answers.
- Use open-ended questions.
- Do not be satisfied with the first response. Keep asking deeper questions.
- Keep the discussion and activities moving. Middle school youth have about a 5-7 minute attention span.
- Be alert to the individual personalities of your group.
- Do not be afraid of silence.
- Turn difficult questions back to the group.
- Stay flexible to the group's needs.
- Be prepared to learn from your group.

THE DON'TS OF LEADING SMALL GROUP:

- Do not be too talkative. This is a huge temptation. Small groups are for helping the youth break open what they have learned.
- Do not be insecure. Your identity is not in how well you lead a small group, it is in being a son or daughter of God.
- Do not be unprepared. Middle school youth know when you do not know what is going on and will take advantage. They deserve your best effort!
- Do not be inflexible. If something is not working, move on to the next activity. If the group needs to talk about something else, be open to their needs.
- Do not use negative humor on the youth. They are looking for a safe place to share and negative humor is a quick way to lose their trust.
- Do not be walked on. Keep control of your group by setting the expectation of respect.
- Do not be a hothead. Do not allow negative behavior to build up and then explode.
- Deal with negative behavior appropriately.

HINTS FOR POSITIVELY DEALING WITH MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH

STRIVE TO BE AN EXAMPLE: Demonstrate to the middle school youth what it means to have compassion, composure, character and decency.

PRAYERFUL REVERENCE: Be sure to set the expectation high and clearly communicate the need for reverence during times of prayer and Scripture readings.

GO OVER THE GROUND RULES: People cannot follow rules they are not aware of. Discuss the Edge Rules/Guidelines with the youth at the beginning of each semester. Follow up with the youth for a few weeks to help them remember what is expected of them.

TRY NOT TO YELL AND SCREAM: Discuss inappropriate behavior early with the youth involved. Ignoring behavior issues and then losing your temper is not an effective way to deal with inappropriate behavior. Try to remain calm, but firm in your correction.

BE IMPARTIAL AND CONSISTENT: Be fair and consistent with each of the youth at an Edge Night.

NEVER HUMILIATE: Behavioral issues are best dealt with one-on-one. Humiliating a youth in front of the group can be harmful, not helpful.

BE AWARE AND ALERT: Keep focused on the middle school youth throughout the night.

ELIMINATE POSSIBLE TROUBLE: Make sure items that youth could play with and cause a distraction with (paper, pens, markers, etc.) are not within their grasp.

NO NEED TO GO SOLO: Utilize the Core Team in assisting you in the disciplining process. Do not try to do it by yourself. This is also a good reason to have two adult Core Members for each small group.

REACH OUT TO THE "PROBLEM CHILD": More than likely these are the youth who need your help the most. Take extra time to be relational with them and to affirm them.

KNOW THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH'S AND THEIR PARENTS' NAMES

When you know their names and have a relationship with them and their parents, they are less likely to act up and misbehave.

AFFIRM YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH: Many youth hear lots of negativity throughout the day. Edge should be a place where middle school youth are affirmed for their uniqueness.

EDGE RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

DURING EDGE NIGHTS I AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING:

1. I WILL RESPECT OTHERS.
 - a. I will listen while others are speaking.
 - b. I will respect my peers and my friends.
 - c. I will respect the Core Team.

2. I WILL STAY ON TASK.
 - a. I will stay in the designated area.
 - b. I will participate in group discussions and/or activities.
 - c. I will stay focused on the material being covered during Edge Night.

3. I WILL KEEP HANDS, FEET, AND MATERIALS TO MYSELF.
 - a. I will respect other's personal boundaries.
 - b. I will respect Church property.
 - c. I will respect all Edge materials.

4. I WILL ARRIVE AT THE EDGE NIGHT ON TIME.
 - a. Edge Nights start at 1:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted. (Lunch/Social 12-1pm Optional.)
 - b. Please be at the Edge by 12:50 p.m., so we can start on time.

5. I WILL KEEP MY PERSONAL BELONGINGS AT HOME.
 - a. I will leave my cell phone, iPod and other devices at home so that I am not distracted.
 - b. A parent must pick up personal items collected during the night.

6. I WILL COME READY TO PARTICIPATE.
 - a. I will wear appropriate clothing/footwear in case we play active games.
 - b. I will have a good attitude and do my best to participate in EDGE activities.

CONSEQUENCES:

FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE RULES MAY RESULT IN:

- a. Receiving a time-out during an Edge Night.
- b. Loss of privileges and removal from small group until behavior is corrected.
- c. A phone call home and a conference with parents.

Middle School Youth's Signature

Date

Parent's/Guardian Signature

Date