



# **LEADERS GUIDE**

<b>WEEK</b>	<b>HEALING STEPS</b>	<b>GROUP TEACHING LESSON</b>
1	1: Get Help	Introduction and Lesson 1: Denial
2	1: Get Help	Lesson 2: Powerless
3	2: Open your heart	Lesson 3: Hope
4	3: Depend on Christ	Lesson 4: Turn
5	3: Depend on Christ	Lesson 5: Action
6	4: Hear and Speak	Lesson 6: Truth
7	4: Hear and Speak	Lesson 7: Life-review
8	4: Hear and Speak	Lesson 8: Confess
9	5: Embrace God's Way	Lesson 9: Ready
10	6: Ask for Forgiveness	Lesson 10: Forgive
11	6: Ask for Forgiveness	Lesson 11: Grace
12	7: Live for God	Lesson 12: Your Heart—Healthy or Hurting?
13	8: Support Others	Lesson 13: Give
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Bonus Lesson!		The Seven Reasons We Get Stuck
Appendix:		Options for those in Juvenile courts and treatment centers



# **DENIAL**

## LESSON 1



# LESSON 1 INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION TO LIFE HURTS GOD HEALS

Take a few minutes to introduce yourself. If you have struggled with something in the past you may want to share about it briefly adding your journey to healing. (Remember you are speaking to hurting kids. Because of this, be sensitive not to use obvious or inside church language.)

Then continue with the following:

I am here because I want you to have the best life possible. When I was a student, I would have loved for LHGH to be part of my experience. Having the 8-steps in which LHGH is based, would have saved me (or my friends) from a LOT of hurt.

Thanks for having the courage to show up. I realize, some of you are forced and some showed up willingly. If you are forced, I want to encourage you to give this a chance. I believe you will be glad you did. If you're here willingly I applaud you!

Let me start with some rules I will review each week. Don't freak out when you hear the word "rules." They're not here to frustrate you but to insure this is a safe place for everyone.

### LIFE HURTS GOD HEALS RULES:

- 1. Large/Small group are a dynamic duo.** We ask that you don't just show up to small group, but that you come to both large group and small group. If you think you have a special circumstance, discuss it with your small group leader.
- 2. Showing up "under the influence" is not permitted at Life Hurts God Heals.**
- 3. Romantic affection is not permitted at Life Hurts God Heals.** We're not down on romance; we're up on health. We believe focusing on dealing with our pain will give each of us a greater opportunity for healthy relationships in the future.

# LESSON 1 INTRODUCTION

Today we begin a journey together toward healing. There are two types of people in this room:

- 1) those of you who have experienced a lot of pain in your lives and
- 2) those of you who have experienced some pain in your lives. Regardless of which describes you, pain is part of life. The pain in your life may be different than the pain in my life, but we can both agree, when pain hits, pain hurts.

Perhaps you can identify with the first person—you have experienced a lot of pain. Some of the pain in your life may be a result of what others have done to you. Other pain you've experienced may be a result of decisions you've made. Some of those decisions have led to serious bad habits, addictions, or consequences that result in pain. *Regardless of the source of your pain (done to you or by you), it's safe to say, if you were offered healing from your pain, you'd take it . . . right? Of course you would!*

The rest of you might identify with the second person—you've experienced some pain, but not enough to cause deep-rooted pain. Well, guess what? This journey is for you, too! As you know, it's impossible to live a full life and escape pain. Pain will hit, and when it hits, you'll need help.

*That's what this Life Hurts God Heals series is all about—healing. God's healing is available for the pain you've already had as well as the pain that will come your way. God wants you to live your life to the fullest and He's provided you with a way to live life, released from the heavy load of pain, fully connected with Him.*

**God's healing is available for the pain you've already had as well as the pain that will come your way.**

Let me push the pause button here to say something big: throughout our 8-step journey, you will hear the name of Jesus as well as Bible verses. Whether you would call yourself a Christian or an atheist or someone in between, I will not use the Bible like a bat to hit you over the head. Instead, I use the Bible as a tool because it is the most powerful tool in my life. I look at it as God's love letter to us.

Another important tool involved in LHGH are the 8-steps. Honestly, those students who have found healing at LHGH have done so because they memorized and applied the 8-steps to their daily life. One student made the 8-step their computer's screen saver! Another took the wallet sized cards and read it before school every day. And many students used their 56-day LHGH journal/devotional on a daily basis. I'm telling you, if you really want life to change for the better, if you lack hope, purpose or meaningful relationships, keep showing up week after week. If you apply the 8-steps to your life, you will leave a different person. I promise.

We don't give you all the 8-steps at once—that would be overwhelming. We will give you one step at a time because, as you know, the journey of healing begins with a big first step, followed by another and another and another and another.

**Step One: Admit you are powerless on your own and that you need help.** Basically, you can't change on your own.

Here are a few reasons why people felt "stuck" and unable to change:

- Parents separation/divorce
- Depression
- Cutting
- Eating disorders
- Sexual temptation
- Addictions: pornography, drugs, alcohol etc.

# LESSON 1 INTRODUCTION

Whatever the reason is that brings you here, the reality is, when you are “stuck” you need help. Fortunately, the same people who felt stuck have also found hope and healing through Life Hurts God Heals. Let’s meet a 14-year old girl who felt stuck for years and finally got free when she showed up to Life Hurts God Heals. This is Dez.

## **Video: DEZ (cutting)**

Today, Dez is free! And you know what? You can be free from your area of struggle too. Let’s discuss practical ways to help you get there.





# LESSON 1 DENIAL

## STEP 1 - GET HELP

### G.O.D. H.E.A.L.S.

Get help. I admit that I am powerless on my own, and that I need help.

**ASK: "Why do so many people, like Dez and others, remain stuck with their pain for so long?" Get responses from group.)**

### VISUAL OPTIONS:

**Cooking Pot  
Water for the Pot  
Matches**

### SONG SELECTION

Some experience fear while others deny the source and the depth of their pain. Here's the point: before you can take this first step and get help, you need to admit your pain and/or struggle. Say step one with me:

**STEP ONE:** Get help. I admit that I am powerless on my own, and that I need help.

Are you ready to admit you're powerless and ask for help? If not, then you won't get any help. You can't get help if you don't admit your pain! It's that simple. Not dealing with your pain is called denial. And if you're living in denial, you can't face your pain, which means you won't get help. It's a vicious cycle! So break the cycle and journey toward healing by facing your pain.

### WHAT IS DENIAL?

**[Teaching Tip: If you passed out the photocopied outline, you may want to let students know you're giving them the first answer to the fill-in-the-blank.]**

*Denial is "a self-protecting behavior that keeps us from honestly facing the truth."*

**[Ask: What are some "self-protecting behaviors" people use to cover up the truth?]**

Another example may be if you are trying to block out pain in your life, your denial technique might be to get very involved with sports. If you are consumed with sports, and the key word is consumed, you will have no spare time to think about your life and the source of your pain. That's a form of denial.

Let me ask you, have you ever denied that your parents had problems? Have you ever denied that you had problems? The truth is there are times we can all answer yes to these questions.

**Picture this:** You are sitting in your living room and you notice a pink elephant standing in the middle of the room. Seated around the pink elephant is your entire family. But no one in the family talks about or acknowledges the pink elephant in any way. Would you agree that is denial? Of course! Well, guess what? Some of you have pain as obvious as a pink elephant in your life that you see and feel but you don't talk about. It's obviously there; you just keep ignoring it.

### CHECKPOINT

**"What might your 'elephant' be?" Give students a few seconds to think about this, then continue with the lesson. This question is repeated in the student notebook.**

So what can you do about it? You have to get to the root of your pain and admit what you've been denying.

# LESSON 1 DENIAL

## **VISUAL OPTION - Cooking Pot, Water, and Match**

**If you need to boil some water, you put the pot of water on the stove and turn on the heat. Eventually, the water starts boiling, right? What is making the water boil? Obviously not the pot or the water, but the heat underneath the pot.**

Our pain is similar. We must get to the flame which makes the water (our lives) boil out of control. Here's the reality: Some people go their whole lives with their water boiling, never looking honestly at the flame (the root of their pain) underneath.

The point of this lesson is to help you identify the flame (pain) and stop denying that it's in your life.

**[Teaching tip: You may want to share your testimony here. Focus on how you were in denial at a time in your life and how you got out of it.]**

## **EFFECTS OF DENIAL**

Let's look at some truths to help us better understand how denial slows down the healing process.

**[Teaching Tip: Point out that this curriculum uses acrostics to communicate the main points of the lessons—a lot!]**

### **D.E.N.I.A.L.**

**D**isregards our feelings

**E**xhausts us

**N**ever lets us grow

**I**solates us from God

**A**bandons our relationships

**L**engthens our pain

**[Teaching Tip: Ask students to pay attention to which of the following they have felt before.]**

## **DENIAL . . . DISREGARDS OUR FEELINGS**

The D in denial stands for DISREGARDS our feelings. Pretending like everything is okay (living in denial), freezes our emotions and keeps us in pain. Denial quiets our true feelings. For example, pretend that you have negative feelings every time you see your dad because you're so angry that he had an affair, moved out of the house, and broke up a 20-year marriage. But instead of expressing your true feelings of resentment, you pretend everything is okay. Each time he asks you, "How are you?" you say, "Great," even when you're not. Basically, you wear the denial mask by disregarding your feelings. You may do this for any number of reasons: You don't want to make dad mad, you're not sure it's right to have these feelings, you think that it will all go away soon, etc.

But God tells us in Jeremiah 6:14, *"You can't heal a wound by saying it's not there!"* [This verse, and many others, are in the student workbook outlines.]

# LESSON 1 DENIAL

## **DENIAL . . . EXHAUSTS US**

A major side effect of denial is nervousness and anxiety, both of which cause us to waste energy when dealing with past hurts, past failures, and the fear of the future. While it is important to deal with the pain of our past, worrying about the past and dreading the future makes us unable to live and enjoy God's plans for the present. Denial makes us tired.

*He [God] frees the prisoners . . . He lifts the burdens from those bent down beneath their loads (Psalm 146:7).*

## **DENIAL . . . NEVER LETS US GROW**

When we are in denial, we are like a plant which never receives water—it becomes lifeless and no longer grows! Your growth as a person will be, like a waterless plant, stunted by your denial.

There is a saying: We are as sick as our secrets. We cannot move toward healing until we're ready to step out of our secrets (denial) and step into the truth. The first step is opening up about the secret you've been holding inside. But don't worry! You do not have to do this alone. God is waiting to take your hand and bring you out so that you might grow. Listen to this Bible verse: *They cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains (Psalm 107:13-14).*

## **DENIAL . . . ISOLATES US FROM GOD**

Adam and Eve are a great example of how secrets and denial separate us from true intimacy with God. After they sinned, their secret separated them from God. Genesis 3:7 tells us that Adam and Eve hid from God because they felt naked and ashamed. Denying our pain can distance us from God.

Of course, Adam tried to rationalize his actions—another form of denial.

He said to God: *"The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree" (Genesis 3:12).*

First, he tried to blame God saying, *"The woman you put here with me"* . . . Then he tried to blame it on Eve: *"She gave me some fruit."*

Remember, God's light shines on the truth. Our denial keeps us in the dark.

*God is light, in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:5-7).*

**[Teaching Tip: You might want to pause here. Acknowledge that this is a lot of information to process, and it will take time to figure it all out. Remind them that not only is time is on their side, but so are you and so is Jesus.]**

# LESSON 1 DENIAL

## **DENIAL . . . ALIENATES US FROM PEOPLE**

Denial makes you think you're getting away with something. When you're living in the state of denial, you think no one knows, but they do. While it appears that denial protects you from the hurt, it also keeps you from helping yourself and it keeps people away from you. Chances are good that you don't want to reveal your true self and your pain to others for fear of what they will think or say. You believe you must protect yourself—your secrets—at any cost. So you isolate yourself to lessen the risk of rejection from others. But what's the cost? Loneliness and the eventual loss of important relationships.

What's the answer? Listen to Ephesians 4:25: *Stop lying to each other; tell the truth, for we are parts of each other and when we lie to each other we are hurting ourselves.*

Remember, it is always better to tell the "ugly truth" than a "beautiful lie."

## **DENIAL . . . LENGTHENS OUR PAIN**

We have the false belief that denial protects us from our pain. In reality, denial allows our pain to become shame and guilt. Denial extends pain and multiplies our problems. Truth, like surgery, may hurt for a while, but truth brings a cure. God promises us in Jeremiah 30:17: *"I will give you back your health and heal your wounds."*

## **WRAP-UP**

I want to encourage those of you in denial to try something new. If you've been denying something happened in your family, in a relationship, and have carried a secret for some time, I dare you to apply Step 1. Everything about you may shout, "Don't do it! It's not safe to be real or honest." But you ARE safe here. You have people who care about you, love you, and are for you—people who will stand beside you as truth becomes a way of life.

Jesus tells us: *"Know the truth, and the truth will set you free"* (John 8:32). Step out of your denial so you can step into Jesus' unconditional love and grace. Take a step in your healing journey to be free from pain.

## **SMALL GROUP DARE**

I dare you to be honest with your leader tonight. You don't have to share everything, but I dare you to take one step towards getting out of denial.

**[SONG SELECTION - Teaching Tip: Remind students that they are on a journey for the next 13 weeks. Encourage them to stay until the end. Then ask them to close their eyes, take a deep breath, and relax as they listen to a song which sets the tone for the journey they are about to enter. Pick a song that focuses on the journey of life which has its ups and downs, but provides hope that we're not alone in the journey.]**

One last thing before we head to small groups. I want to give five guidelines to get the most out of our time together. You will hear these every week, and pretty soon you'll know them by heart.

# LESSON 1 DENIAL

## **SMALL GROUP GUIDELINES**

1. Keep your sharing focused on your own thoughts and feelings and limit it to 3–5 minutes.
2. No “cross talk.” Cross talk is when two individuals engage in a conversation which excludes others. Each person is free to express feelings without interruption.
3. We are here to support one another. We will not attempt to “fix” one another.
4. Secrecy and confidentiality are required. What is shared in the group stays in the group! The only exceptions are when someone shares about hurting themselves or others, or being abused.
5. Offensive language has no place in a Life Hurts God Heals small group.

# LESSON 1 DENIAL

## STUDENT OUTLINE – LESSON 1: DENIAL

### GOD HEALS

Get help. I admit that I am powerless on my own and that I need help.

What is denial?

"Denial is a self-protecting \_\_\_\_\_ that keeps us from honestly facing the \_\_\_\_\_."

### DENIAL

#### D \_\_\_\_\_ our feelings

*You can't heal a wound by saying it's not there! (Jeremiah 6:14)*

#### E \_\_\_\_\_ us

*The LORD frees the prisoners . . . The LORD lifts the burdens of those bent beneath their loads (Psalm 146:7 NLT).*

#### N \_\_\_\_\_ lets us grow

*They cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains (Psalm 107:13-14).*

#### I \_\_\_\_\_ us from God

*God is light, in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:5-7).*

#### A \_\_\_\_\_ us from people

*Stop lying to each other; tell the truth, for we are parts of each other and when we lie to each other we are hurting ourselves (Ephesians 4:25).*

#### L \_\_\_\_\_ our pain

*I will give you back your health and heal your wounds (Jeremiah 30:17 NLT).*

My thoughts, feelings, ideas, questions . . .