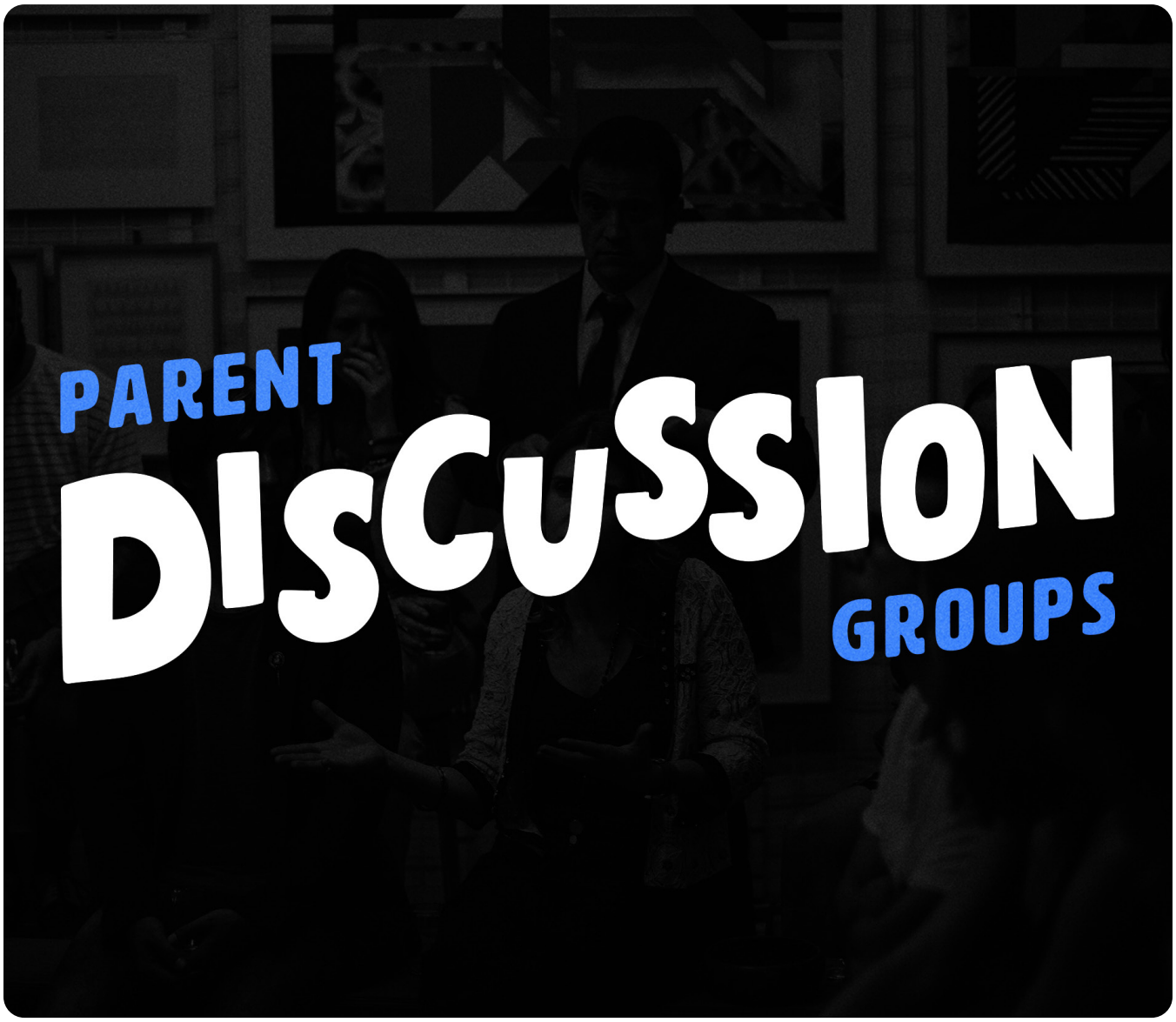
Grow

AN ANNUAL STRATEGY FOR YOUR PARENT

DISCUSSION GROUPS

*FROM GROW'S ANNUAL **FAMILY STRATEGY***



All aspects of Grow® Curriculum and Annual Strategy are owned by Stuff You Can Use (including all logos, images, videos, language, and related products and resources). Stuff You Can Use gives permission to the organization that purchased this product to download, print, electronically send, and use its components for its organization's use only. No part of Grow® Curriculum and Strategy may be copied, shared, resold, or republished outside of that organization in any way, except in the case of brief quotations or product reviews that credit and link back to Grow® Curriculum and Strategy (growcurriculum.org). Reproducing any of this material or incorporating it into a new work that does not follow these guidelines (including a blog post, podcast, video, article, book, or other resource) is a violation of U.S. copyright laws.

Grow

AN ANNUAL STRATEGY FOR PARENT DISCUSSION GROUPS

PARENT DISCUSSION GROUPS

The Grow Strategy provides seven tactics to help you invest well in families: events, meetings, discussion groups, one-on-ones, communication, tools, and celebration. **This resource gives you an annual strategy for your...**

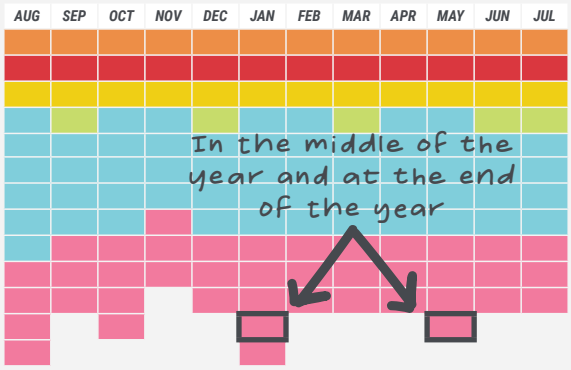
PARENT DISCUSSION GROUPS

A discussion group is a gathering with a small group of parents with kids of a similar age, with the goal of idea-sharing and problem-solving. The Grow Strategy recommends scheduling at least two discussion groups per year, and to leave room for more discussions as needed.

When we think about training and leading parents, we probably picture environments where we (the youth pastor or staff member) are doing the training and leading. That should be a necessary part of our family ministry strategy, but it's not the only way. **Sure, you've got a lot of wisdom to share with parents, but have you ever considered that parents have a lot of wisdom to share with each other—and with you?** That's where these Discussion Groups come in.

If you're building your own customized Grow Strategy Calendar, **we recommend putting this event on your calendar twice a year**—once in the middle of the year for a check-in and once at the end of the year for a debrief. But be prepared to add additional discussion groups for moments of **ministry transition** and care during a **crisis.**

ON THE GROW STRATEGY CALENDAR



Learn to **build your own annual ministry calendar,** and how to customize it for your church, using the Grow Strategy!

WHAT'S INCLUDED

PLANNING

- Discussion Groups overview
- Ready-to-print and editable discussion group guides for...
  - **Checking in mid-year**
  - **Checking in at the end of the year**
  - **Navigating a ministry transition**
  - **Connecting during a crisis in your community**

GRAPHICS

- Editable graphics
- Title and background images in horizontal, square, and vertical formats
- Flyers

Grow Curriculum ©2025 Stuff You Can Use. All rights reserved.

INSTRUCTIONS

EVERY YEAR

The premise of a Parent Discussion Group is pretty simple: invite a small but diverse group of parents (about ten people) connected to your ministry to join you for coffee and dessert (or chicken wings and soda) **so they can share some of their biggest wins, struggles, and lessons learned.** The Discussion Group Guides we've provided each fulfill a different purpose:

- **MID-YEAR:** This is your most important Discussion Group Guide! Use it to check in with parents during the year to receive feedback and provide support in real-time.
- **END-OF-YEAR:** Use this Discussion Group Guide to review the previous year of ministry and get feedback before the new year begins.
- **MINISTRY TRANSITION:** Use this Discussion Guide to check in with parents during times of significant change at your church.
- **CRISIS CARE:** Use this Discussion Guide to support families during a time of crisis in your community.

Exactly how many Discussion Groups you need to schedule each year depends a lot on the number of kids or teenagers you have in your ministry and what else you have on your ministry calendar. But here are a few tips to help you figure out how many Discussion Groups are right for you.

- **DON'T SCHEDULE THEM DURING BUSY MONTHS:** If you already have a Family or Parent Event or Parent Meeting scheduled in a certain month, don't add a Parent Discussion Group to the calendar too—that's a little too much activity for one month!If you haven't already, we recommend using our Annual Planning Meeting Guide to help you strategize where all of your family ministry efforts should live on the calendar. (And that planning resource is free! So why not?)
- **PRIORITIZE THE MID-YEAR CHECK-IN:** If you only have time for one Discussion Group this year, make this the one you do! These check-ins are designed to achieve multiple things at once:
  - Give parents a chance to connect with you and each other.
  - Give parents a chance to troubleshoot their challenges together before they and their kids get too frustrated with each other.
  - Give you greater insight into their experiences and challenges so you can provide better support for the second half of the year.
- **THEN ADD THE END-OF-YEAR CHECK-IN:** Because not every parent will have kids returning for another school year with your ministry, this end-of-year check-in will likely be more beneficial for you (the ministry leader) than it will be for some parents. With that in mind, don't be discouraged if it's less attended than other Discussion Groups.
- **SCHEDULE THE OTHER DISCUSSION GROUPS WHEN YOU NEED THEM:** You won't be able to plan ahead for a Discussion Group about a ministry transition or a crisis in your community, but if those situations pop up, don't forget you've got a resource that can help!

Grow Curriculum ©2025 Stuff You Can Use. All rights reserved.

EVERY DISCUSSION GROUP

Once you've decided when you'll do these Discussion Groups and who you'll invite, you're ready to start planning them! And here's the good news: since the success of these Discussion Groups depends on the wisdom, advice, and questions parents bring to the table, they're pretty easy to plan!

Remember, the purpose of these Discussion Groups is not for you to teach principles or cast vision. These Discussion Groups are very different from other methods of parent training you might be used to. Most of the time, we probably talk to parents as if we're experts. These Discussion Groups, however, are an opportunity to help your parents see themselves (and each other) as the experts! **The purpose is to engage parents in collaborative conversation, coaching, and problem-solving** so parents can walk away from your discussion with plenty of practical ideas and lots of helpful advice. During these discussions, encourage parents to share their own specific stories, ideas, and best practices so that other families can learn from them and steal their ideas.

When you're ready to plan your Discussion Group...

- **LIMIT EACH DISCUSSION GROUP TO 10 PEOPLE:** More than ten parents per group means everyone won't get a chance to really be heard. If you have more than ten parents, you'll need to either...
  - Plan multiple Discussion Groups on different days to make sure everyone can participate.
  - Have everyone meet on the same day, but split into smaller groups after everyone arrives.
- **INVITE PARENTS:** Rather than choosing a time and place on your own, talk with some of the parents you plan to invite and let them choose! That's the beauty of a smaller gathering. If you have fewer than ten families involved in your ministry, inviting everyone should be pretty easy. But if you have more than ten, here are a few things to keep in mind when inviting people...
  - **Mix up the genders!** There's no need to separate men and women in this context. In fact, your men and women definitely have insights, experiences, and techniques that will benefit everyone.
  - **Keep similar age groups together!** Someone who is parenting an elementary-aged kid will have very different struggles than someone who's parenting a teenager for the first time. So make sure the people in each group parent kids of similar ages.
- **PREP YOUR SPACE:** If you're meeting at a coffee shop, restaurant, or remote workspace, you probably won't need to worry much about the environment. It will already be pretty cozy. There may even be some music playing. But if you're hosting your Discussion Group in a home or somewhere requiring set-up, we recommend either couches and armchairs or a big dining room table (covered in delicious food). You want your environment to feel welcoming and personal.
- **PREP YOUR FOOD:** If you can find a location with desserts and coffee (or appetizers and fountain drinks), you're all set! Order a few things to share, or let everyone place their own order. Either way, pick up the tab for your team. If you're hosting in a home or somewhere without the benefits of food service, grab a few trays of fun desserts and snacks.
- **PRAY:** Once you've prepared your questions, consider any specific questions, issues, or concerns you'd like to discuss with the parents you'll be meeting with, and spend time in prayer.

When you're finally sitting down with parents in your Discussion Group...

- **CATCH UP WITH EACH OTHER:** Be sure to always start your discussions by letting everyone catch up personally. This connection will help pave the way for more honest and engaging conversations.
- **BE A FACILITATOR:** You know those skills you learned leading small groups of kids or teenagers? It's time to use them again! As you facilitate the conversation...
  - **Be conscious of the over-talkers and under-talkers in the group** to make sure everyone has a chance to speak.
  - **Redirect off-topic conversations** warmly.

Grow Curriculum ©2025 Stuff You Can Use. All rights reserved.

    - **Affirm their contributions to the conversation** by repeating their best insights, encouraging everyone to take notes, and saying outright when you love what someone has shared.
- **ASK ABOUT THEIR SUCCESSES:** What's going well? What's the best thing about parenting your kids right now? What's a great parenting idea they had recently? What answers to prayer are they seeing?
- **ASK ABOUT THEIR STRUGGLES:** What challenges are they facing? What's the most difficult part of their jobs as parents right now? What kind of support do they need from their church?
- **FOLLOW-UP AFTERWARD:** After your discussion, follow up with parents with a quick text thanking them for their time. If you had a challenging conversation, be sure to follow up with them about that as well.

Grow Curriculum ©2025 Stuff You Can Use. All rights reserved.

CREDITS

Everything we create for Grow Curriculum is a big team effort by people all over the world, from a wide variety of ministry contexts, and with tons of different skills! Here are the people who helped make this one happen...



EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP: Elle Campbell, Kenny Campbell, Yulee Lee, Brooklyn Lindsey, Linda Moon, Danny Sugimoto

CURRICULUM TEAM: Elle Campbell, Brooklyn Lindsey, Linda Moon, Emily Nguyen, Jason Sivewright, Danny Sugimoto, Stephen Switzer

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT: Kyle Barrett, Kristen Boers, Caitlin Bomer, Sunny Brown, Bria Burrell, Charlie Conder, Kegan DeWitt, Saoumyaa Jatkar, Imani Johnson, Jay Logan, Lauren Madeira, Caitlyn Smelser, April Wahl, Kevin White

Grow Curriculum ©2025 Stuff You Can Use. All rights reserved.

Grow

MID-YEAR
DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDE

PARENT DISCUSSION GROUPS

A year is a long time—that's why **a mid-year check-in with parents is a great way to gather information that can help reengage them in what your ministry is up to.** Plus, it's the perfect time to refresh what you're doing to support and care for families. This Discussion Guide is designed to help you ask strategic questions to help you and learn from and with the parents you've invited!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What's the best thing about raising kids right now?

What's the hardest thing about raising kids right now?

What's one really helpful thing you've learned about parenting recently?

What are your biggest questions or fears about parenting right now?

What are some things our ministry does well to support you and your kid?

What are some things our ministry could start doing, or do differently, to better support you and your kid?

Grow Curriculum ©2025 Stuff You Can Use. All rights reserved.

END-OF-YEAR
DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDE

PARENT DISCUSSION GROUPS

The end of a school year is a great time to **re-connect with parents for an end-of-year review.** This Discussion Guide is designed to help you ask strategic questions to help parents share more about their experiences so you have plenty of time to implement their ideas and feedback before the new school year begins.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What was your favorite parenting moment of the past year?

What was one of your biggest parenting struggles this past year?

What do you know about parenting today that you wish you knew last year?

In the last year, what's one thing our ministry did really well to support you and your kid?

Next year, what's one thing you hope our ministry does differently to better support families?

What's one word of wisdom or encouragement you want to share with everyone here?

Grow Curriculum ©2025 Stuff You Can Use. All rights reserved.

MINISTRY TRANSITION
DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDE

PARENT DISCUSSION GROUPS

Whether it's a change in leadership, a staff reorganization, or a change in your ministry time, strategy, or location, **change can be difficult for everyone—especially families.** This Discussion Guide is designed to help you ask strategic questions to help you learn how parents and their kids are experiencing the transition your ministry is in.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

During this transition, how have you been feeling?

During this transition, how have your kids been feeling?

As a result of this transition, what fears, frustrations, or concerns do you have?

What are you most looking forward to on the other side of this transition?

What questions do you still have about this transition?

What would help you feel supported during this time of transition?

Grow Curriculum ©2025 Stuff You Can Use. All rights reserved.

CRISIS CARE
DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDE

PARENT DISCUSSION GROUPS

Whether it's a loss in your local community, a national tragedy, or a global crisis, **knowing how to care well for the families in our church communities is difficult.** This Discussion Guide is designed to help you ask strategic questions to help you and your team better support kids and their parents during tragic circumstances.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

When tragedy strikes, it's important for all of us to both give and ask for support. So how are you? What's weighing on you right now?

How are your kids feeling? What's weighing on them right now?

What unhelpful things should we avoid doing or saying in front of your kids right now?

What are some helpful things we can do and say to support your kids right now?

What fears, questions, or concerns do you have?

What kind of support do you need right now?

Grow Curriculum ©2025 Stuff You Can Use. All rights reserved.