



Drawing Students Out
RYM YLT 2026
Ellie Stackhouse, ellie@bluehilltherapytx.com

Drawing Students Out

“We all come into this world looking for someone looking for us”
-Curt Thompson

Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions.
Proverbs 18:2

If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. Proverbs 18:13

Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.
Proverbs 29:20

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. James 1:19

Ogres are like Onions: Conversational Depth

What is conversational depth?

-Moving from What? To Why? And How?

What?: Circumstances- external and internal/Likes

Why?/How?

-Values, Motivations, emotions

-Witness to risk taking

“Vulnerability sounds like truth and feels like courage. Truth and courage aren't always comfortable, but they're never weakness.” – Brené Brown, Daring Greatly

“Our conversations invent us. Through our speech and our silence, we become smaller or larger selves. Through our speech and our silence, we diminish or enhance the other person, and we narrow or expand the possibilities between us. How we use our voice determines the quality of our relationships, who we are in the world, and what the world can be and might become. Clearly, a lot is at stake here.” Harriet Lerner



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Why conversational depth?

- Goal of Redeemed and Renewed Lives
- You have to know someone's life to apply the Gospel to it
- Dignity and honor through time

How do we get conversational depth?

Shout out to Matt Howell: Ministry of Small Talk

Casual Approach -no boldness

Aggressive Approach - no sensitivity

Marathon Approach - moving forward with appropriate pace, marathons are “mass casualty events”

Conversational Humility: “Ordinary People Ordinary lives with gospel intentionality”-Francis Schaeffer

Conversational Selflessness: Earn the right to be heard, let their life set the agenda

Conversational Attentiveness: Be Attuned to what is happening in front of you. Themes, verbal and non verbal cues.

Conversational Authenticity: Be Your Self

Conversational Expectations: If you don't ask about the how and why who will? What is your role in their life-are they things they would say that you would have to tell their parent. Be upfront about those limits.

Ask Questions:

Interpersonal Exegesis:

Asking Questions to determine both what the person is saying and what they mean by what they are saying

Basic Skills



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- Open Ended Questions (WHAT? HOW? WHERE? WHEN? WHY? WHO?)
 - Avoid “Do you...” or giving options

Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*

There are essentially five classes of questions:

- What? questions are the most basic, uncovering general information.
 - How? questions reveal the way something was done.
 - Why, questions uncover a person's purposes, desires, goals, or motivations.
 - How often? and Where? questions reveal themes and patterns in a person's life.
 - When? questions uncover the order of events.
-
- Reflections of Meaning (Its sounds like you are saying...)
 - Reflections of Feeling (Its sounds like you are feeling...)
 - Tell me more!
 - The art of noticing
 - I am noticing that when _____ you _____.

Questions God Asks

- Where are you? (Gen 3:9)
- Why has your countenance fallen? (Gen 4:6)
- Where are you from? Where are you going? (Gen 16:8)
- Who do you say that I am? (Mark 8:27)
- Do you want to be healed? (John 5:6)

Asking about specific events.

“Please talk to Jimmy about xyz...”

What Happened?

How do you feel?

What was the hardest part?

*What can I do?



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What do you mean?

Instruments in the Redeemers Hands, Paul David Tripp

- Define their terms **WHAT**
 - Dating? Popular? 6-7? Crashing out? Anxiety? Depression? Mogging? Aura shedding?
- Clarify what they mean with examples **HOW-**
 - Play a video for me of what you mean by that? Tell the story? What did that look like?
- Explain their actions **WHY**
 - Why did you do what you did?

Listen to Your Students:

General Listening

- Do not Interrupt
- Listen with whole body (posture, non verbal reactions etc)
- Count to 10 (exercise the muscle of not filling silence)

Listening Gap:

“The human brain processes language far faster than people speak. While someone is still talking, our minds are already jumping ahead, filling gaps, or preparing responses.”

- Check for understanding “Don’t paint legs on a snake”

Consider Adolescent Development:

Pruning: a critical, genetically programmed process during adolescence where the brain removes unused neural connections to increase efficiency and specialization

Myelin Formation: “a fatty sheath laid down on neurons, particularly during adolescence, that acts as insulation to increase neural communication speed by up to 100 times and reduce resting time by 30 times. This 3,000-fold increase in efficiency allows for faster, more integrated brain function, supporting the intense learning, skill development, and cognitive remodeling seen during the teen years.”



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Hyper Rational Thinking: the brain's reward-seeking (limbic) system overrides caution, causing teens to overvalue the potential thrill of a decision while undervaluing risks

Identity v Role Confusion: where adolescents explore who they are (values, beliefs, goals) by experimenting with different roles, leading to a strong sense of self (identity) if successful, or confusion about their place in the world (role confusion) if they struggle, resulting in insecurity and self-doubt, as they transition from childhood to adulthood and question their purpose and values

The ESSENCE of Adolescents -Dr. Dan Siegel

“Studies of neuroplasticity—how the brain changes in response to experience—reveal that these are in fact the top four factors that help keep the brain growing and healthy, to keep it integrated, throughout the lifespan. The ESSENCE of adolescence turns out to be the ESSENCE of how to live a full and vital life as an adult.”

Emotional Spark

Best: Passion

Worst: Misunderstood internally and externally

Social Engagement

Worst: Morality caves to social pressure

Best: Collaboration

Novelty Seeking

Best: FUN

Worst: Hyperrational thinking that down plays risks and increases reward

Creative Exploration

Best: Imagination

Worst: Disillusionment and disappointment



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Listening to yourself:

“Habits are at first silken threads, then they become cables” -Spanish Proverb

TRUST = Presence (receptive) + Attunement (focused attention on internal self and others) + Residence (change in response to experience) (*Dan Siegel*)

Staying Present = Receptive v Reactive

Receptivity: presence, open to what arises w/o judgement or prior expectation essential to promoting integration

Reactive States: increase chaos and rigidity

“When someone experiences a stressful event, the amygdala, an area of the brain that contributes to emotional processing, sends a distress signal to the hypothalamus. This area of the brain functions like a command center, communicating with the rest of the body through the nervous system so that the person has the energy to

Fight: “Can I overpower this threat?”

Flight: “Can I outrun this threat?”

Freeze: “Can I hide from this threat?”

Fawn: “Can I appease the treat?”

What about a student might make you reactive instead of receptive? How might that impact your attempts to draw them out?

“What are your core beliefs about sharing vulnerability? Do you believe that you honor the people in your inner circle by sharing your pain and allowing them into your experience? Or, alternatively, do you feel like you're dumping messy emotions on family or friends, making them uncomfortable, putting them on the spot, or spoiling their day? Do you think there is something superior and noble about people who don't complain, who hide their pain and quietly go about solving their own problems? Or, alternatively, do you believe that the strongest, most centered people have the capacity to be open and "out there" with the facts, and with the full range of their emotional experience?”

-Harriet Lerner



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“I resist what I cannot change” -The War on Drugs

“Regulate your emotions or they will regulate you” -Curt Thompson

Responding:

WITNESS

Justification:

Student: What does this struggle say about me? Am I okay?

Gospel: Our righteousness is accomplished and secure in Christ

Sanctification:

Student: How do I change?

Gospel: God is at work.

Scripture:

Student: Who can I trust? What does God say about broken minds and broken emotions?

Gospel: Scripture is trustworthy and true. It addresses the brokenness in our emotions and minds

Glorification:

Student: Is there hope?

Gospel: God is making all things new.



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WITNESS

Job 2:11-13

11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him. **12** And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven. **13** And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

Repentance: model relational repair when you say the wrong thing

Wise Vulnerability: Normalize experiences, when appropriate share similar experiences.

Good base line question in considering self-disclosure: who are you saying this for?

Community: Create a safe space to try new things, connection with you and with peers.

Curiosity: Ask for examples, clarify their meaning

Hebrews 4:14-16

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. **15** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. **16** Let us then approach God's



throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Practice

1. Pick a song Below
2. Identify the ESSENCE of Adolescents expressed
3. Listen to yourself how are you responding to what is share-How does it make you feel?
4. Write a reflection of meaning statement based on the song
5. Write a reflection of feeling statement based on the song
6. Identify 3 terms you want to clarify the meaning of
7. Come up with a How and and Why question
8. What would it look like to practice Witness with this student?
9. What would it look like to practice Witness with this student?

I Guess I just Wasn't Made for these Times

The Beach Boys

... I keep lookin' for a place to fit in

Where I can speak my mind

And I've been tryin' hard to find the people

That I won't leave behind

... They say I got brains

But they ain't doin' me no good

I wish they could

... Each time things start to happen again

I think I got somethin' good goin' for myself

But what goes wrong

... Sometimes I feel very sad

Sometimes I feel very sad

(Ain't found the right thing I can put my heart and soul into)

Sometimes I feel very sad

(Ain't found the right thing I can put my heart and soul into)

... I guess I just wasn't made for these times

... Every time I get the inspiration

To go change things around

No one wants to help me look for places

Where new things might be found

Where can I turn when my fair weather friends cop out

What's it all about

... Each time things start to happen again



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I think I got somethin' good goin' for myself
But what goes wrong
... Sometimes I feel very sad

Jealousy, Jealousy **Olivia Rodrigo**

I kinda wanna throw my phone across the room
'Cause all I see are girls too good to be true
With paper-white teeth and perfect bodies
Wish I didn't care
I know their beauty's not my lack
But it feels like that weight is on my back
And I can't let it go
Co-comparison is killin' me slowly
I think I think too much
'Bout kids who don't know me
I'm so sick of myself
I'd rather be, rather be
Anyone, anyone else
My jealousy, jealousy
Started following me (he-he-he, he-he)
Started following me (he-he-he, he-he)
And I see everyone getting all the things I want
And I'm happy for them, but then again, I'm not
Just cool vintage clothes and vacation photos
I can't stand it, oh, God, I sound crazy

Their win is not my loss
I know it's true
But I can't help getting caught up in it all
Co-co-comparison is killin' me slowly
I think I think too much
'Bout kids who don't know me
I'm so sick of myself
I'd rather be, rather be
Anyone, anyone else
My jealousy, jealousy (yeah)
All your friends are so cool, you go out every night
In your daddy's nice car, yeah, you're living the life
Got a pretty face, a pretty boyfriend too
I wanna be you so bad and I don't even know you

I'm Just a Kid

Simple Plan

One, two, three, four
I woke up, it was seven, I waited 'til 11
Just to (figure out that) no one would call
I think I've got a lot of friends, but (I don't hear from them)
(What's another night all alone)
When you're spending every day on your own?
And here we go
I'm just a kid and life is a nightmare



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I'm just a kid, I know that it's not fair
Nobody cares, 'cause I'm alone and the world
is
Having more fun than me tonight
And maybe when the night is dead, I'll crawl
into my bed
I'm staring at these four walls again
I'll try to think about the last time I had a good
time

Everyone's got somewhere to go
And they're gonna leave me here on my own
And here it goes
I'm just a kid and life is a nightmare
I'm just a kid, I know that it's not fair
Nobody cares, I'm alone and the world is

Extending the Invitation

“I want to go to there” - Liz Lemon

1 Thessalonians 2:8

So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

“But the moment comes when our eyes are opened, and we see and realize that grace is infinite. Grace, my friends, demands nothing from us but that we shall await it with confidence and acknowledge it in gratitude.” -General Lorens, Babette’s Feast

“Come on up to the house” -Tom Waits

Being a Pilgrim

- Meet Student where they are
- Vulnerability Hangover
- Creating New Neural Pathways

The Learning Process: Modeling comfort with moving from What —> Why? How?
T(teach) D(demonstrate)O(observe)E(evaluate)E(encourage)

- Talking about what you love: What do you love? Why do you love it? How do you love it?



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-Talking both about God and talking to God: What do you know to be true about God? Why do you know it to be true? How do you respond to that?

-Biblical Lament: What does it look like to respond to pain and loss? Why to you respond that way? How do you acknowledge what is broken and the hope we have in Christ?

-Relating to your body: What does it mean to have a body? Why did God create us with bodies? How do you care for your body?

Considering Ministry Avenues

One to One

Small Group

Large Group

Questions and Topics that get at the ESSENCE of Adolescents:

Emotional Spark:

Hot Take?

What was it like to be you this week?

What is a song that you connected with recently?

Why do you think God gave us emotions?

When is the last time you cried?

What do you do when you have a feeling you don't understand?

What the angriest you've ever been?

Social Engagement:

What is the cafeteria like at school?

What would your friends say about how your week is going?

What does it mean to be popular at your school?

What do your friends think about xyz? What do you think about it?

Who is your best friend?



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What is the biggest argument you've ever gotten in with a friend?
If a friend was experiencing XYZ how would you talk to them about it?
What do you look for in a friend?
Why do you think you have struggled in friendships?
Draw a friendship map

Novelty Seeking:

What's the craziest thing that happened at school this week?
What is something you are looking forward to?
What has been making you laugh recently?
What do you do when you are bored?
How do you think you have changed over the years?

Creative Exploration:

If you could change one thing about your school what would it be? (family, youth group, sport team etc)
If you had a completely free day how would you spend it?
Who do you look up to the most?
What did not go as you expected it to this week?
What do you want the next 5 years of your life to look like?
Where do you feel the most like yourself?
What questions do you wish you could ask God?
How would you tell the story of your life so far?

Topics for Teaching/Exploration:

Emotional Spark - What does God say about our emotions?

- Psalms, Sermon on the Mount

Social Engagement - What does God say about being a friend?

- Friendship, Fellowship, Acts, Wisdom Literature, Righteousness

Novelty Seeking - What does God say about fun?

- Celebration, Body of Christ

Creative Exploration -What does God say about change in and around us?

- Creation-Fall-Redemption-Restoration, Justice, Sanctification



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Beyond Talk:

- Art projects: ex Smash Journaling
- Gospel Application to Art/Entertainment: ex Album listening party, movie night and review
- Reflective time with written prompts: Opt into discussion or silent contemplation? Invitation to share what they wrote with you
- Play: Not always competitive-places for creativity, flow, and novelty

Cultivator Mindset

“Vulnerability is not a question of if but rather to what degree. This does not imply that we have no choices of being more openly so, but it is an illusion to believe that we are not vulnerable. It is something we can hide but not that we can eliminate. The question, then, is not if we are or will be vulnerable but rather how and when we enter into it consciously and intentionally for the sake of creating a world of goodness and beauty.”

– Curt Thompson, [The Soul of Shame](#)