

**TreeHouse – Sandstone**

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**Tuesday & Thursday Program Nights Procedure**

Consistent weekly programs are the backbone of TreeHouse – Sandstone.

In everything we do, we seek:

* To communicate God's love and the Gospel in relevant ways
* To build assets and life skills into the lives of teens
* To help each person know they are loved and accepted unconditionally “with no strings attached”
* To help each person know they are lovable, capable, and worthwhile (valuable)
* To help each person know that they are not alone in what they face

Life transformation is demonstrated by four outcomes:

* Reduce at-risk behaviors
* Build healthy relationships with God, self and others
* Graduate High School, and
* Pursue an educational or vocational track for their future

Support Group and Going Deeper programs occur year-round. Volunteers can be trained and participate in either or both of our program nights.

**SUPPORT GROUP** (Tuesday Night)

TreeHouse – Sandstone Support Group is designed primarily to address emotional needs of the participants. It provides a safe environment where participants have the opportunity to give, and receive support. The focus of the groups is not on fixing participants’ problems, but on helping them identify and cope with their emotions in a healthy way. Secondarily, we include an educational component to the night to teach life skills and build assets in teens.

Participants are required to be respectful and follow the rules, but they are not required to share beyond “checking in.” Everyone should be encouraged to share, and even challenged to take risks, but not forced or pressured into talking about their issues (as might be appropriate in a therapeutic setting).

1. Support Group Goals
	* Create a safe, respectful environment in which youth can experience a sense of belonging and support in constructive ways
	* Teach skills to identify and communicate feelings
	* Ensure successful implementation of the “Three Tasks” format:
		+ Group helps the person taking time get in touch with their feelings.
		+ Group connects/empathizes with the person’s feelings and situation.
		+ Group offers insight and support if the person taking time so desires.
	* Help youth learn to cope with their pain and difficult circumstances without yielding to the unhealthy demands, pressures and negative messages with which they are being bombarded
	* Help youth understand and evaluate the choices they are making, the alternative options available to them, and the impact of their decisions
	* Teach youth about their basic needs and how to meet them in healthy ways through participating in group and accepting God's love and opinion of them (to learn they are not alone, to experience unconditional love, and to experience others affirming that they are lovable, capable, and worthwhile)
	* Help youth learn to trust adults and peers

1. Support Group Spiritual Boundaries

Support Group is the primary program for community agencies to refer teens to us. Though our Christian faith informs everything we do with teens, we are committed to focusing Support Group on teens’ emotional and relational needs. Support Group must be a place where teens from all faith beliefs feel accepted unconditionally. Our goal in this setting is for God’s love and truth to be experienced through us rather than directly taught by us.

1. **Do’s** for Support Group Facilitators

All volunteer persons at Support Group are responsible to:

* + Be prepared to carry out specific functions as assigned by the Support Group leader
	+ Plan and complete transportation to arrive before program starts (if transportation is assigned to you)
	+ Enforce TreeHouse rules and respect for the facility
	+ Follow Mandated Reporting Guidelines, as necessary
	+ Assure that respect is given to self and others
	+ Model supportive, caring behavior toward others at all times
	+ Address inappropriateness respectfully
	+ Fill out the Support Group Check-In Form for use during group and when debriefing with staff and volunteers. Dispose of the form following the debriefing.
	+ Make I’ve Been Feeling… sheets available to group members, as needed.
	+ Follow Support Group Facilitator Guide during group
	+ Express how you feel about choices youth may make
	+ Help students evaluate the costs and benefits of choices they are making or considering
	+ Listen actively and reframe what teens share to bring clarity, when necessary
	+ Ask questions to identify deeper feelings
	+ Treat the whole group as the “client”
	+ Close support group with prayer when appropriate
	+ Attend and participate in debriefing session with other facilitators following Support Group

1. **Don’ts** for Support Group Facilitators

All volunteer persons at Support Group **should not**:

* + Be a support receiving member of the group
	+ Believe you are right and have all the answers
	+ Ask leading questions about a teen’s past
	+ Answer questions that are not being asked
	+ Place a value judgment on how someone is feeling
	+ Support illegal or immoral behavior
	+ Listen but don’t confront when a teen talks about making poor choices (give implicit or explicit permission as acceptance of poor choices)

**GOING DEEPER** (Thursday Night)

The Going Deeper portion of the TreeHouse program is designed primarily to address the developing spiritual and life-skills needs of youth in a large group setting. This weekly gathering incorporates fun games, dynamic teaching, participant interaction, and prayer, creatively and thoughtfully planned and carried out by the staff and volunteer team. The program incorporates biblical scripture and topics, while being generally focused on key topics found in the 40 Developmental Assets list.

1. Going Deeper Goals
* To experience God and to learn how Biblical principles apply to real life
* To help each person acquire life skills and assets through various educational methods
* To introduce participants to their need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and to respectfully encourage them to pursue knowing Him
* To have fun and experience community

1. Responsibility of All Staff and Volunteers Attending Going Deeper
* Be prepared to carry out all assignments made by the Going Deeper leader.
* Plan and complete transportation to arrive before program starts (if transportation is assigned to you)
* Enforce TreeHouse rules and respect for the facility.
* Assure that respect is given to self and others.
* Model supportive, caring behavior toward others at all times.
* Confront inappropriateness respectfully.
* Be real about feelings, values, and attitudes toward choices youth may make.

1. Going Deeper Debriefing

After a Going Deeper, the expectation is that staff and volunteers will reflect upon the evening in order to learn from the experience, and plan for meaningful follow-up.

The goal is excellence in every aspect of the program. The time invested, and the vulnerability required is well worth it. We do it for the sake of the youth, their faith and their future.