

the re | VIVE™ *course*

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Names and situations have been altered slightly from their original form to protect those involved.

*To all single moms everywhere:
God loves you, He is there for you,
He knows the way.*

CONTENTS |

01 STORY

02 AWARENESS

03 HEART

04 THINKING

05 VALUES

reTREAT

06 NEXT

07 FORGIVENESS

08 BOUNDARIES

09 FAMILY

10 DATING?

11 TIME

12 FINANCES

GRADUATION

FORMAT OF SESSIONS

real moms

Hear real stories from real moms. Each with their own unique perspective and challenges. Every mom you'll hear in this section has taken The reVIVE Course and completed it.

teaching

Jennifer shares pieces of her story while explaining the topic for the session.

round table

Get to know five women as they walk through their own success and struggles. You may not relate to all of them, but you will see parts of yourself in one of these moms.

group time

After the video is over, get into group time with your specific small group. Get to know each other. Work through the tough stuff. All while being guided by a facilitator.

at home

Do this section at home. It's designed to be done in your own space and at your own time before the next session gets together.

parenting

This section provides you with ideas and activities to share with your child(ren). All the information in this section centers on the session topic and how to apply it at home.

resources

If you have interest in learning more about the topic shared, check out the resource page at the back of each session. This page contains some of our favorite books, website pages, and other materials

Welcome

Welcome to The reVIVE Course! We are so glad you will be joining us over the following 12 weeks and graduation day. You, your fellow small group members and your facilitators share a common path, the path of single motherhood.

We understand the courage and strength it takes to walk the path of single motherhood. Often, as single moms our time is precious and many people and things contend for it. It is normal to feel overwhelmed when starting down the path of single motherhood. Even for those who are veterans the pull and tug of solo parenting can produce moments when we feel like we are drowning.

Our desire is to not add “one more thing” to your plate but rather give you a space to come and explore your story, your heart’s desires, your purpose, and the role you hold as a single mom.

We believe single mom households can be full of joy, rising above the statistics, strong, surrounded by love, full of hope, and worthy of great respect. The health of the single mom household begins with you. Whether you are beginning your journey of single motherhood today or have been on the journey for awhile, it is your time to discover the truth about who you are and the valuable role you play in the lives of your children and community.

No book, program, or teaching can be an instant fix or the end all to what we would like changed in ourselves and our families. Change occurs slowly over time as we process and move through each day with purpose and intentionality. It is about beginning the process, knowing our stories, and learning about who we are. There is no cookie cutter way to build a healthy life. Each group member’s life will look different.

We are created by design to be unique. Each of our families is unique, our situations are different, and the plans for our futures do not all match. The ups, downs, failures, successes, heartbreaks, and moments of peace are all a part of our stories. They are the things that shape and mature us. The reVIVE Course offers a safe place to explore our stories as we look to rediscover or discover for the first time what we were created for.

- *Jennifer*

BEING IN GROUP

The goal of **the reVIVE Course** is to help you become more personally aware. This is done through exploring your own story. You will have the honor of listening to stories of others and sharing your own in a small group setting.

As we all grow together, we will have the chance to increase our ability to listen and respond well to one another. In our fast pace world, it is rare to slow down enough to really listen and respond with thought and care. This small group setting allows space to do this. Each of you will come into this course with your own set of perspectives and opinions on what constitutes a good listener and what makes one's response back a good one. This beginning section of informational material is intended to help get all of us on the same page when it comes to participating in a small group setting. Whether this is your first time being in a small group or your fifteenth, we do group better when we share the same expectations.

Many times when we share a part of who we are with others there can be a discomfort that arises. When the person listening does not listen well or respond well it can bring up self-doubt, uncertainty, and question the validity of what we shared.

Have you ever been in a group of people or with an individual and shared a story? Afterwards, did you feel shame, vulnerable, or awkward? This may happen because of their response or unresponsiveness to what you shared. Another reason we experience these feelings is because we overshared. There are appropriate times to share intimate details of our stories and times when sharing these details is not beneficial and/or appropriate. Trust is built over time and needs to be considered when sharing stories. It is always ok to share the parts of your story you are comfortable with in group. If there are stories you feel uncomfortable sharing in group, we encourage you to share them one on one with your facilitator or share them with someone you trust. **Your story is yours to own and it is your decision how much you choose to share.**

The particulars of abuse and trauma need to be shared in a safe and private place. If your facilitator guides you to share with her privately it is simply to ensure you and your story are handled with respect and honor. In a more confidential environment your facilitator will be able to listen and respond with more care.

After you share with your facilitator, she may encourage you to share with the group or to share with someone who has more experience and care in the area you are expressing.

Group Time is a place for everyone to learn how to appropriately share with each other in ways that honor and respect one another's stories.

>> Thank you for being kind <<

LISTENING WELL

Studies show that listening is not passive, it is active.
To actively listen, we fully engage ourselves in what is being shared.
Here are some ways to actively listen to your group members:

- **When listening, listen with your whole self.** Have open body language. Your body language needs to be inviting and open. Leaning forward with your arms relaxed invites the person to continue sharing. Sitting back with your arms crossed invites the person to stop sharing.
- **Allow your face to be fully present and kind.** It's okay for tears to flow and empathy to be given. Looking angry and harsh will shut the person that is sharing down.
- **Practice active listening** by repeating what is being shared, within your head. This will help you focus on the person sharing and not be distracted by your own thoughts.
- **Speaking back the words** that the person shares for clarification can be affirming.

Examples:

"I hear you saying _____, am I hearing that correctly?"

You can also let someone know you are present by asking a question like this one,
"Would you tell me more about what you mean when you said, _____?"

If you do lose focus while listening it may be helpful to say something like this,
"I am sorry I lost focus for a moment and missed what you were sharing, would you please repeat what you just shared?"

RESPONDING WELL

Most of us have never been taught to respond well.

This becomes especially apparent when someone is sharing something that is painful.

Here are some tips on responses that need to be avoided:

- **Remaining unresponsive.**

When we have no response to a person's experience or story it says to the person that shared we do not care. There are examples of ways to respond on the previous page. Other ways to respond is to use body language. Smiling, leaning forward, asking if it is okay for you to give them a Kleenex, or if you may give her a hug are all ways to respond. It is also appropriate to say, "I don't know what to say." This statement lets the person know you heard her and are listening but uncertain of how to respond.

- **Changing the subject.**

At times when we do not know how to respond, or if we feel uncomfortable, it may be easier to just change subjects. This sends the message that what was shared had little worth.

- **Quoting scripture or other inspired words.**

When we feel uncomfortable, overwhelmed, or at a loss due to something someone said it may be tempting to say a cliché statement: *"God won't give you more than you can handle."*, *"Everything happens for a reason."*, *"Your strong, you will get through it."* Cliché statements tend to shut down a person and can lead to the person feeling shame and a sense that what they shared was invalid. It is usually the feeling that we need to have everything wrapped up into a neat bow and the discomfort that occurs when silence is present that encourages us to default to these kinds of statements. Silence can be a good thing. At times, silence may need to exist so the group or a person in the group has time to think and pause.

- **Relating personally to their story.**

It is tempting in trying to relate to others to respond by using our own stories. *"I can relate, I had a similar situation happen..."* However, this takes the attention from the person sharing and puts it on you.

- **Giving unsolicited advice.**

In an effort to "fix" what was shared, we jump to giving advice. Avoid using "you" statements like, *"You should..."*. Giving advice moves away from the emotions that was shared and may cause the person to shut down and stuff their feelings.

- **Please ask before you touch the person.**

Sometimes touch is not welcomed. When someone is sharing they may feel extra vulnerable and not receptive to touch. Simply ask before you touch.

ROLES OF FACILITATOR & PARTICIPANTS

TO KEEP

We use the word **facilitator** to describe **the person who will help your small group stay on track.**

Their main role is to act as guardrails for the group. When driving, guardrails help us keep within a safe space on our way to where we are going.

All facilitators have gone through a facilitator training with Single MOMM. They are not mentors, counsellors, legal professionals, or life coaches.

Your facilitator is not here to tell you where to go or what to do. Instead, they are here to listen, help you process by reminding you of the things you've shared, where you've expressed you want to go, and to ask questions to help you dive deeper. She may share parts of her own story as you move through reVIVE but this will be at a minimum. The reason for this is to keep the focus on each one of you, and to give space for all of you to share and engage in each other's lives.

If your facilitator begins to tell you what to do, puts you down for choices you have made, disrespects your boundaries, or offends you in any way please address your concerns with her. After addressing your concerns with her if things do not change please contact her mentor.

Your facilitator's mentor is: _____ Email: _____ Phone #: _____

Each facilitator has a mentor she is coached by. If you feel uncomfortable talking to your facilitator first, you may go directly to her mentor. Our hope is that you are able to address your concerns quickly so your experience of **the reVIVE Course** may continue to be a positive one.

As a participant, we expect you to honor the role of your facilitator and allow her to guide your group through the material.

_____ *Please initial that you understand the role of your facilitator and give this page to your facilitator. The next page is for you to keep for your records.

ROLES OF FACILITATOR & PARTICIPANTS

TO GIVE

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TRIGGERS

Being in group is powerful because you will see in each other and in each other's stories, parts of your own. In someone else's story you may hear about a mother that has similarities to yours, or a relationship situation that brings to light one of your own situations.

It is also possible that in hearing someone else's story you will experience a trigger. **A trigger** is when something makes you recall a memory – such as a smell, event, or certain words. You may experience a flash back, remember, or experience a sensation from something in the past that happened to you. During a flash back it may feel as if you are in the place or situation and experiencing what occurred again. Flash backs are not simply memories. They are occurrences where we literally feel like we are in that moment again.

A severe trigger may be intense and cause you to feel paralyzed, numb, disoriented, anxious, angry, and a multitude of other responses. Though it is not the intent of this program or group to trigger you it may happen if you have **trauma** in your story.

There may be small “t” traumas in your story and big “T” traumas in your story. Losing a child, divorce, illness, abuse,

”

Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary. The people we trust with that important talk can help us know that we are not alone.

- FRED ROGERS

GROUNDING

If you experience a trigger, we ask that you please do the following:

Be kind to yourself: Allow yourself to take a pause from the discussion. You may need to check-in with yourself. To do this ask yourself, “What is my heart feeling right now?”, “Where am I at right now?”, “How does my body feel?”

- If things do not feel well with you than there are different paths you can take to help yourself come back to calmness.
- One option is to let your group know that you need to pause from the discussion and take a break or leave for the day. If this is what is best for you please let your group know that something in group has impacted you and you need to break for a moment or the day.
- If possible, let them know that you are experiencing a trigger or unease. At times it is helpful, if true, to let them know that, “It is not you, it is me, I am needing the space to process through what just came up.” This may allow the group to support you well and prevent a misunderstanding.

Other options include:

Do a Grounding exercise.

1. Plant both of your feet on the ground flat.
2. Start with the top of your head and ask yourself to relax your scalp/hair follicles.
3. Then ask yourself to relax your face/jaw, your neck and shoulders,
4. Then to your lungs, the belly/gut area, your hips/buttocks.
5. On to your upper legs, lower legs, ankles, and lastly your feet and toes. Feel your feet touching the floor, literally move them to feel the firm floor beneath you and be aware that you are grounded.

During this activity make sure to breath deep. This activity may be done without anyone knowing or you may decide to leave the group for a moment and do this in private. This activity will help you become present again and really sense where your body is.

- **Breathing** is another good way to check-in. Breathe in through your nostrils and out your mouth. It is important that you exhale for as long or longer than you inhaul.
- **Music** has a soothing effect on the body and brain, your group may consider putting on calming music. It may also be helpful to listen to music as you head back into your normal schedule after group.
- **Rocking** has a soothing effect. Sitting in a position where you can sway or rock may help your body’s sense of calmness.
- **Standing up and stretching**, or repositioning yourself in a different seating posture, may be helpful. At times it may benefit the whole group to stand, stretch, breathe together, or do the grounding exercise together.

GROUP MEMBER AGREEMENT

TO GIVE

Take a moment to silently read this agreement, then sign. Please give your signed copy to your facilitator and keep your other copy for your records.

Responsibility of Self: I will take full responsibility for my words, feelings, thoughts, and actions. I will commit to resolving conflicts that may arise between myself and the group in a positive and healthy way.

Care of Self: I will commit to taking care of myself and being kind to myself. I will abstain from illegal drugs and excessive alcohol during my time in this group.

Care of Others: I will refrain from using abusive language and from emotionally, verbally, spiritually, or physically bullying others in my group. I will work to address my concerns in a positive way that does not belittle others in my group. If I need help in resolving a conflict with another person in the group, I will avoid gossip and speak directly with the person and/or my facilitator.

Timeliness: I will commit to attend all the scheduled group times. If I cannot make the session I will let one of my facilitators know. I also will arrive to all my sessions on time so that I do not interrupt the sharing and teaching times of the group. If I miss a session, I will make it up.

Keeping it About Me: I will seek to share using “I” statements and avoid putting my feelings on other group members by using “You” statements. I will share how I feel and not pressure or presume what others in the group are feeling. I will reduce the amount I share at times to give others space to speak.

Being Present: I will commit to being present with my mind and body during group time. My efforts will be focused on actively listening to others, thinking through the material, and processing while in group. With many other things vying for our time it is important to focus on the topic while in attendance.

Confidentiality: I will commit to maintain confidentiality of all my group members and facilitators’ stories and experiences. I understand that by keeping confidentiality I am establishing trust with the other group members. I realize that my group members will commit to keeping my story and experiences private. I recognize that each story and experience should only be shared by the one who owns it.

Child Care: I will ensure that my children are safely cared for during my time in group and that they will not be present with me during group time. I will pick up my children promptly so childcare providers can return to their own families on time.

Electronics and Cell Phones: I will leave or turn off all my electronics and cell phone during group time. I realize I can leave the number of the facility while I am attending group. If there is an emergency, I can also give the facilitator’s number to my childcare provider.

By signing below I commit to the agreement above. Please sign the next page also and give it to your facilitator.

Name _____

Date _____

GROUP MEMBER AGREEMENT

TO KEEP

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Name _____

Date _____

story

SESSION ONE

”

Signora, between Austria and Italy, there is a section of the Alps called the Semmering. It is an impossibly steep, very high part of the mountains. They built a train track over these Alps to connect Vienna and Venice. They built these tracks even before there was a train in existence that could make the trip. They built it because they knew some day, the train would come.

- UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN

GROUP TIME

We tell stories every day. Some are funny, some are sad, some speak about our history, some share about the dreams we have for the future. Hearing the stories of others helps bring insight and understanding of the path they have walked, why they see the world the way they do, and how the experiences of their past have shaped them.

Sharing your story in group helps bring everyone into an understanding of where you have been, moments that have shaped you, and the hopes and dreams you have for the future.

You and each of your group members are going to share your short story. A short story is a 2 minute overview of your personal story. It allows each group member to get a glimpse into your life and yet it does not lay out all the intimate details of who you are. It is normal to share deeper into our stories over time as trust builds and relationships form. As the weeks pass there will be opportunity to share and listen to everyone's long stories.

Remember, oversharing is a common regret many of us have when sharing stories with those we do not know well. It is a natural and healthy boundary to let our stories unfold in layers as we move deeper into relationship or trust with an individual or group.

”

You are the main character in your story. Your attributes, happenings, and God given gifts speak of who you are.

- DAN ALLENDER

CAPTURING YOUR STORY

STEP⁺ ONE

This step is to be completed at home before retreat.

In the next few weeks leading up to telling your story (this will be done on retreat) start to write, draw, and/or capture in some other way the details of your life story. There is no right or wrong way to capture your story.

In the past women have drawn pictures, journaled, made timelines, used photographs, color coded, and used a multitude of other means to capture their stories.

Ideas on capturing your stories:

Many times it is easier to think of our stories in small bite-size pieces. Check out the suggested timeframes on the next page. These time frames will help you break apart your story.

For each timeframe, try and capture all you can remember during that time. It is important to capture the good memories and the bad. Many times we focus on just the times of pain or just the moments that were pain free. However, it is the combination of these things that tell our true stories.

Give yourself time to soak on each timeframe you choose. Select a timeframe and focus on just that timeframe for a day or two. If memories from other times in life pop into your mind write them down so that you can capture them when you get to the correct timeframe. It is okay to start on any timeframe you desire. You do not need to capture your story in chronological order.

If you come to a place in your story that is too painful to visit you may capture that moment with a word such as “dark”. This gives recognition to the memory without giving details.

CAPTURING YOUR STORY

STEP TWO

*This step is to be completed at retreat.

At the retreat, you will bring your story with you. No one will view the story you have captured. During the retreat you will be writing your story on an easel pad. Chronologically, from the beginning of your story through the present you will write down the significant memories you have captured. If there are parts of your story you do not want to share with your small group you will have the choice to leave them off or mark them by a word, or picture. You will be taught in a workshop format on the first evening of retreat. During this workshop time you will be taken step by step through how to capture your story on the easel pads.

Each person in your group will have the opportunity to put their story up and share it with their small group. Then, with your story up on the wall, you will gain perspective on the strengths you have, some of your weaknesses, where your heart comes alive, and how events have impacted your life.

After each group member shares their story the entire group will help uncover the strengths of the individual and celebrate who she is.

It is an encouraging and hope filled time!

*step two is done
at retreat. we added
this information
in here to let you
know what you will
be doing with
your story at retreat.*

AT HOME

Over the next few weeks take time at home to capture your story. Work through different timeframes in your life, capturing the positive and negative moments.

While working to capture your story it is common to have trouble recalling certain memories and details. You may have partial memories or feel as if your memories are spotty in nature. It is normal to have this occur and more frequently if we have experienced trauma. Please be kind to yourself: take time to soak on the area of your story you are struggling with but realize that you can not force your memories to come back. It may take time and they may come later during reVIVE or later on down the path.

On the following pages you will find some of the Digging Deeper questions that will aid you in thinking deeper about your story. You may use the pages provided to capture your story or use another means.

Remember! There is no wrong way to capture your story!



PARENTING

Our stories began before we were born. The circumstances we enter the world into, the health of our parents, the happenings of the world, and many other factors impact us before our births. **Your kids have story. They have shared story with you and they have story on their own. Their stories started before their births and have been added to each day they have lived on this planet.**

Encouraging your kids to capture story in their childhood and youth is a wonderful gift. It begins to connect them with the happenings of their stories and the impact it has had on them and others. As they grow older they will have a collection of stories to help them better identify their personal values, strengths, passions, and wirings.

While you begin to write out your story, think about the moments, memories, and occurrences that are important for your children to know someday. You may want to highlight these things and set them aside for a time when it is appropriate to share. **It is not always appropriate to share stories with your children at certain ages.** As they develop they will have the means to process their stories on deeper levels. Parents need to be careful not to engage their children with stories that are beyond what they are able to process. *If you have questions regarding this please seek out professional advise and explore some of the materials we suggest in our resources section.*

Not disclosing truths about your children's stories or deceiving them in regards to their personal stories will most likely be detrimental to their well being and your relationship with them. Deciding when and where to share these stories with them may need the input of a professional. Many times your children will begin asking questions when they are ready to begin hearing these types of stories.

Below you will find suggestions on how to capture stories with your children and ways to encourage older children to capture their stories.

- **Start an "I Am" board.** This can be a fun board where you and your child clip-up pictures, words, stories, and other objects that speak about the strengths, values, passions, and talents within your child. Over the years this board will become a mosaic depicting who your child is.
- **Start a memory book of words.** This book is to be filled with words your child says about him/herself or what other's say about him/her. The intent is to capture the words that speak about who he/she is. Another way to do this is to create a word box and capture the words on pieces of paper and put them into a box.
- **Encourage picture/word journaling.** Allowing a child to create a journal that speaks to the happenings of her/his life is a great way to connect our feelings to our stories and to capture the data we may want to know later in life.
- **Create a canvas.** Painting or drawing our stories at times may be easier when language seems to not be present or when we think in picture form easier than word form. This canvas can be an ongoing canvas that details the past, the present, and leaves space for the future.
- **Post-it note wall.** With you or independently your child may want to capture his/her thoughts down on post-it notes and stick them on a wall.
- **Create a child or family timeline.** This timeline may consist of all the significant happenings of the family and/or the child.
- **There are many other ways to capture story. Be creative. Capture story in a way that speaks to your child. And, have fun!**

RESOURCES

The resources we list are intended to help you explore some of the concepts from this session. It in no way is an exhaustive list of resources nor does it mean we agree with everything said within them. These resources have been selected because we see value in them and believe they will help you process more within the session's topic area.

Authors:

The Allender Center:

- Dan Allender has a Ph.D. in counseling/psychology and a Masters in Divinity. He is the President of the Allender Center in Seattle, Washington. You may find his books, blog, podcast, conference materials, and online class by going to www.theallendercenter.org
- His book *To Be Told* is an excellent resource for understanding the importance of our stories and the criticalness of writing our stories out.

Ransomed Heart Ministries:

- John & Stasi Eldredge are leading authors that help point readers to dive deeper into understanding their stories. You may find audios, videos, and books on their website at www.ransomedheart.com

Brene Brown:

- Brené Brown is an American scholar, author, and public speaker, who is currently a research professor at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work. Her talks, books, and classes focus on the importance of vulnerability, the courage to own and tell our stories, the gift of imperfection, and many other focuses. You may find her words at www.brenebrown.com

Bessel Van Der Kolk, MD:

- *The Body Keeps the Score* is an amazing read from Van Der Kolk. The book focuses on trauma and comes from over three decades of his work with trauma clients. Within this book he takes and explains how trauma rearranges the brain's wiring. For anyone that has experienced trauma, asks the question, "Am I crazy?", and wonders if they will ever experience healing this book is a must read. You can find his book on Amazon and most local bookstores.

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Find a Good Therapist:

- Working with a good therapist can help us unpack our personal stories and begin to connect with them in a deeper way. Finding a good therapist can be hard to do. We would encourage you to interview many and find out what will work for you and also how they practice.
- Each therapist will have his/her own way of practicing and you will want to find one that understands the work you would like to do. We would highly recommend looking for a therapist that has the following qualities and abilities.
 - 1. Look to see if they are open to engaging story** – they work by engaging the narrative of your story. They explore the wholeness of your story from birth through the present. The hope is that they are looking at your attachment style, the patterns that reoccur within your story, the characters in your story, the settings, and the plot of your story. This orientation to story differs from someone that leans towards being more topically focused.
 - 2. It is important that they are able to recognize and address the broad dimensions of trauma.** Meaning that they are able to address not just the traumatic event but the trauma in the midst of your whole story and the impact your story has had on you and others.
 - 3. The last quality we would suggest looking for in a good therapist is the awareness of the spiritual dimension and spiritual warfare.** We believe true evil exists and that as we step into addressing the trauma in our stories opposition will be present. A therapist that considers the spiritual dimensions is one that will address the wholeness of who you are: mind, body, and spirit.
