

# ADVENTURES IN MOTHERING CURRICULUM

Mothering is an adventure to be sure! From baby's first kisses and cute messy faces to trips to the playground and pushing a grocery cart with a screaming toddler, a mom's life is full of adventures with her children. But it's not only about the kids. Mothering is also an adventure in personal growth for every woman who undertakes this important role.

The *Adventures in Mothering Curriculum* includes a DVD of seven teaching segments and this CD Leader's Guide. This curriculum is intended to be used along with *The Mommy Diaries: Finding Yourself in the Daily Adventure*. Please customize the curriculum to meet the needs of your group.

**Part I of the Leader's Guide** provides synopses of each of the seven segments, followed by ideas to correlate with that session for Discussion Groups, Creative Activities, newsletter material and community service.

**Part II of the Leader's Guide** provides eight additional non-video-based sessions. Each session gives ideas for meeting themes, topics, speakers, Creative Activities, newsletter material and community outreach activities. These sessions can fill out a meeting year of discussion and application of topics related to Adventures in Mothering.

Keep in mind that often the very best resources are the women seated next to you, sharing this curriculum experience. Be sure to leave time to connect with and tap into the wealth of experience and perspective around you!



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# Part I: Video Segments

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## Segment One: Adventures in Mothering

With Naomi Cramer Overton

Whether you're just at the beginning of the adventure in mothering, anticipating your first child, or if you already have preschoolers and older kids – you will be shaped by being a mom – and as you find yourself in the daily adventure, you will grow as a woman and mom.

### **THE MOMMY DIARIES**

Read a portion of the forward on pages 5-8 to set the tone for the meeting.

### **CREATIVE ACTIVITIES**

- Using a package of index cards (spiral bound or on a ring), create an easy-to-use journal of "Daily Adventures in Mothering." The journal can be used to jot down quick notes about the adventures a mom has in her day-to-day life as a mom and woman and easily carried in a purse or diaper bag. Decorate the cover and think of one or two entries from the past week to get started.
- Create an "Adventure Jar" with local ideas of fun activities. Each mom can take her own jar home filled with ideas for her family.

### **NEWSLETTER**

Feature moms in your group who have had great adventures this past year. List adventures moms in your group would like to take.

### **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Volunteer as a group to help clean up a local park or church playground.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Share a childhood memory that has shaped who you are today.
2. How did you picture the adventure of mothering before you became a mom?
3. When you hear the word "adventure" associated with "mothering" what does it make you think? Discuss how looking at each day as an adventure changes your view of mothering.
4. Which of the six needs (identity, growth, relationship, help, perspective, hope) would you most like to explore together in the coming year? Why?

## Segment Two: The Identity Adventure

With Sara Groves

As women and moms, it is easy to define ourselves in our roles – you are mom round the clock, sometimes so much a mom that you might forget that you are also a woman. And you might also have the role of wife, sister, daughter, employee, volunteer, neighbor and more. While you can feel defined or even trapped by your many roles, somewhere deep within you, you are you – your identity is core, even deeper than all the roles you can take on.

### LEADER'S NOTE

In this portion of the *Adventures in Mothering Curriculum*, Sara shares about her marriage and counseling decisions she and her husband have made. Use this as an opportunity to jumpstart conversations about ways to build a healthy marriage.

### THE MOMMY DIARIES

Open your meeting with a part of "Finding Myself at Disney World" by Liz Curtis Higgs on pages 17-20.

### CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Decorate hand-held mirrors with jewels and beads – allowing plenty of options so moms can show their unique identity through the project. Talk about why each mom chose what she did for her mirror.
- Give each mom a piece of cardstock and a variety of letter stickers (those with fancy fonts, fun fonts, plain fonts, different colors, sizes, etc). In the middle of the cardstock have her write her name – with the stickers – and then all around it other "roles" that she has in her life such as wife, mom, sister, neighbor, teacher, etc. When finished put the cardstock in a frame for a lasting reminder of the many roles that make up a mom's identity.

### NEWSLETTER

Offer tips and advice for embracing your identity:

*Inwardly:* books, magazines, local community classes, Bible studies

*Outwardly:* tips for taking care of yourself, good colors/styles for your body

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Host a talent show at a local nursing home. Allow moms and kids to use their own interests and talents to encourage the residents.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As a group, brainstorm all the roles you hold as a mother. Which roles do you enjoy the most? Which roles do you enjoy the least?
2. What part of yourself feels lost now that you are a mom? How can you recapture that lost piece?
3. Pass around a mirror. What do you like best and why? What would you like to change?
4. Sara Groves said, "Every family has some function and dysfunction." How does this play out in your identity within your extended family? Describe how this affects your ability to model being passionate about your interests to your children.

## Segment Three: The Growth Adventure

With Tally Flint

As moms, we often fixate on the growth of our children and do lots of measuring and evaluating – how tall and how big and how long and how much. But a great truth you can discover in your adventure in mothering is that it isn't just your child who is growing. You are growing along the way as well – growing as a woman and as a mom and as a person of influence.

### LEADER'S NOTE

In this portion of the *Adventures in Mothering Curriculum*, Tally shares about mothering decisions she and her family have made including breastfeeding and working inside and outside of the home. Use this as an opportunity to jumpstart conversations about different choices moms make and the growth that comes out of those choices.

### THE MOMMY DIARIES

Read a paragraph or two from "Goodbye Toddler Mom" by Cathy Peshorn on pages 49-53 to open your meeting.

### CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Bring in a landscaping/gardening specialist to talk about local foliage and how to trim trees/flower bushes for optimum growth.
- Make a growth chart that can be taken home and hung on the wall to measure a child's growth.

### NEWSLETTER

Highlight the growth of your MOPS group by introducing new moms who have begun attending this year. Include a photo of all the new moms.

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Host a children's clothing drive with moms donating all the clothes their children have outgrown. Donate the clothes to a homeless shelter or the Salvation Army.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share something about mothering you've changed your mind about since becoming a mom. What caused this change?
2. Where have you experienced the most growth since becoming a mom?
3. What do you think of Tally's statement, "God is a God of miracles, of unimaginable delights, conqueror of impossible situations"?
4. "I'm so not in control." How does knowing this cause growth in your life?
5. What do you want to look like as a mom and woman on the other side of the MOPS years?

## Segment Four: The Relationship Adventure

With Elisa Morgan

The adventure in mothering is one that is best in relationship with other people. And the great part of the adventure is that you can connect with people who aren't even very much like you and discover new relationships that you didn't think possible.

### **THE MOMMY DIARIES**

Open your meeting by reading the beginning of "Midnight Kisses" by Elsa Kok Colopy on page 93.

### **CREATIVE ACTIVITIES**

- Decorate a small white board or chalk board calendar using family and friend photos.
- Paint a pair of salt & pepper shakers emphasizing to the group that "two are better than one" from Ecclesiastes 4:9 and that everyone needs relationship.

### **NEWSLETTER**

List activities outside of your regular MOPS meetings where moms are invited to have fun and build relationships.

### **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Build upon the relationships within your MOPS group. Plan meals for moms within and outside of your MOPS group with new babies or who are going through hard times. Send encouraging cards to moms who miss MOPS meetings signed by their Discussion Group. Invite moms in the group to attend church with you and your family.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. "Crowded Loneliness." What do you think of this term?
2. Which of the five barriers (time, kids, energy, friends just like me, fear) make relationships most difficult for you?
3. How can we as a Discussion Group build relationships with each other? Let's make a commitment to do one thing as a group within the next month to build relationship.
4. How have you benefited from a mentoring relationship?
5. Share an experience with a relationship that has broadened and deepened you.

## Segment Five: The Help Adventure

With Julie Barnhill

Help can come in different ways for us as moms. Sometimes you are in a position to offer help to those around you, but sometimes you are the one who needs help, and you may be a bit shy about asking for help. Your MOPS Discussion Group can be a place of help – if you all agree to confidentiality, acceptance and honesty with each other.

### LEADER'S NOTE

In this portion of the *Adventures in Mothering Curriculum*, Julie shares candidly about a time when she struggled with depression and her choices in dealing with that. Use this as an opportunity to jumpstart conversations about different types of needs.

### THE MOMMY DIARIES

Open your meeting by reading part of "Mommy's Needs, Baby's Needs" by Shelly Radic on pages 111-113.

### CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Make a Family Emergency Kit. Include items you would put in a first aid kit, but also hotline numbers (poison control, domestic violence, child abuse, etc.). You also may want to include items needed for other types of emergencies that your area is prone to as well as a small Bible.
- Make a "STOP Button" magnet with an encouraging saying or Bible verse to hang on the refrigerator or bathroom mirror to remind moms that it's okay to ask for help.

### NEWSLETTER

List local resources that moms in your group might need for themselves or to share with other moms they know. This can include such resources as a domestic abuse hotline, resources for help with mental illness and Chartering Ministry information. Also, list the MOPS Web site help resources at [www.MOPS.org/help](http://www.MOPS.org/help).

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Host a community-wide Child Safety Kit Fair inviting moms and families from the area to come and receive a kit and have their child's photo taken.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How has your adventure in mothering been like a roller coaster?
2. Who around you acts as a harness to help you and keep you safe?
3. "I am a mess of magnificent proportions." What do you think when you hear this statement? What makes it hard for you to say those words?
4. When have you experienced *grace* in your mothering?
5. Share a time in your life as a mom when you had to hit the "STOP" button. What was the outcome of this experience?

## Segment Six: The Perspective Adventure

With Carol Kuykendall

Remember, we are at an amusement park that represents motherhood. And we're headed toward the Ferris Wheel – which gives you a great view. Sometimes – in the adventure in mothering – that's exactly what you need, to lift your view up a bit, and look beyond the moment or the day to see the bigger picture of your life as a mom and woman.

### LEADER'S NOTE

In this portion of the *Adventures in Mothering Curriculum*, Carol serves as a MOPS Mentor to young moms with questions. Use this as an opportunity to jumpstart conversations between the moms in your group and your MOPS Mentors. You may choose to schedule the next MOPS meeting as a question and answer time with a MOPS Mentor Panel.

### THE MOMMY DIARIES

Start this meeting by reading about Mary Beth Lagerborg's airplane trip to a jungle runway ("The Day I Took Flight" on pages 147-150).

### CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Decoupage a plaque with "The Serenity Prayer" by Reinhold Neibuhr.
- Decorate a picture frame with a Ferris Wheel and insert a photo of your MOPS group to remind moms to look up and that they are not alone in mothering.

### NEWSLETTER

Insert a beautiful landscape photo in your newsletter with "The Serenity Prayer" by Reinhold Neibuhr:

*God, grant me the serenity to accept what cannot be changed,  
Courage to change what should be changed,  
And the wisdom to know the difference.*

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Volunteer at a local Ronald McDonald House or other facility for families in medical treatment where moms in your group can offer help, hope and perspective to women in crisis.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share a sweet memory from your mothering reservoir of experiences. How can this memory get you through the tougher hours of mothering?
2. What is something that you obsess about? Why is that one thing so important to you?
3. Discuss how moms can embrace other moms who parent differently. How can your Discussion Group create an atmosphere of acceptance for every mom?
4. How do you remind yourself that even when the days seem monotonous and meaningless that what you are doing as a mom makes a difference? Share something that you know about another mom in your Discussion Group to help remind her that what she is doing matters.

# Segment Seven: The Hope Adventure

With Shelly Radic

The foundation of hope is that you are not alone in your mothering adventure and you can receive hope from connecting with those in your family, friends and ultimately God. Hope is what gets you through the “free fall ride” part of the mothering adventure and gives you the ability to move forward toward the future, even when your present circumstances might seem insurmountable.

## LEADER’S NOTE

In this portion of the *Adventures in Mothering Curriculum*, Shelly shares candidly about her experience with adoption and a time when a foster daughter was removed from her home. Be sensitive to moms in your group who have experience with adoption or may be trying to adopt. Use this as an opportunity to jumpstart conversations about the need for hope.

## THE MOMMY DIARIES

Set the tone for your meeting on The Hope Adventure by reading a portion of “Lost and Found” by Mária Carraseo Seifert on pages 160-163.

## CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Create a small, wooden wall plaque with the word “Hope” in the center and then paint the verse: “Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. Psalm 62:5” below in smaller letters.
- Paint wall-sized letters H-O-P-E to be taken home and hung on the wall.
- Bring in a CPR instructor to teach child and infant CPR to all the moms.

## NEWSLETTER

List children’s story books that talk about hope and the love of Jesus that moms can read to their preschoolers.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Set up a table at a local race or fun run and pass out bottled water to participants. Put MOPS stickers on the label with contact information to get new moms involved with your MOPS group.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How has the kindness of others brought you hope?
2. Describe a time when you were given a “no” from God. How did you handle this?
3. Share a “Free Fall” you have experienced in mothering. What helped you get through it?
4. In what areas of your life can you offer hope to others? Where do you need hope?
5. What does your relationship with God look like right now – are you close, far-away, do you even believe in him? How does this affect your view of hope?

## Part II: Supplemental Sessions (Non-video)

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### Session One: Clown Car

#### POSSIBLE TOPICS

Traveling to the adventure is part of the fun

#### SPEAKER IDEAS

- American Automobile Association (AAA) representative to share local, fun, family trips
- Seasoned mom with ideas on keeping kids occupied on long trips
- Mechanic on basic car maintenance

#### CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Decorate travel totes to fill with coloring books, journals, small toys and snacks for travel times.
- Personalize travel mugs for mom to use in the car.

#### NEWSLETTER

Ask moms to submit their most memorable travel stories.

#### COMMUNITY SERVICE

Have a nursing/baby-changing station at your next community fair. Provide moms with a safe place to take care of their babies' needs. Hand out bottled water with MOPS brochures and an invitation to your MOPS group.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your biggest obstacle to traveling and visiting new places?
2. How do you prepare for trips? Do you have any hints that make traveling with tots easier?
3. Share your favorite traveling memory.

## Session Two: Three-Ring Circus

### POSSIBLE TOPICS

- Balancing family responsibilities
- Making home fun

### SPEAKER IDEAS

- MOPS Mentor speaking on maintaining a health family schedule
- Organization specialist from a home improvement store can teach how to organize your home more efficiently so that you have time for fun
- Preschool teacher with ideas for things you can do at home to have fun with your children while doing educational activities

### CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Make homemade sidewalk chalk, play dough, bubbles and soap paints.
- Use office-supply laminate to create a reusable wipe-off family schedule calendar.

### NEWSLETTER

List supplies to have in your house so moms are ready for fun with their families at the drop of a hat.

### COMMUNITY SERVICE

Ask moms to bring items to create amusement bags for the local battered women's shelter. Bags can include small toys, coloring books, crayons, stickers and play dough.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are you comfortable with the schedule your family is keeping? If not, what can you eliminate to give your family more time to enjoy each other?
2. What did you do as a child that gave you joy? Can you recreate that with your child now...how?
3. What is the biggest "fun thief" in your life? How can you arrest it and get on with the show?

## Session Three: Tunnel of Love

### POSSIBLE TOPICS

- Love lives for parents
- Making time for romance and fun

### LEADER'S NOTE

Marriage is an important topic for MOPS moms, but as you address this topic be sensitive to moms in your group who are single, divorced or currently facing significant struggles in their marriages. Use this as an opportunity to jumpstart conversations about healthy marriages.

### SPEAKER IDEAS

- A mature Christian couple who can share their testimony of what made their marriage last
- A Christian marriage counselor on the importance of fun in marriage

### CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Decorate a scrapbook to hold photos of you and your spouse only. Make it a marriage memory book.
- Decorate candles for your next romantic dinner together.
- Learn to make a great romantic dessert to serve tonight after the kids are in bed.

### NEWSLETTER

Publish some local, inexpensive great date locations.

### COMMUNITY SERVICE

Plan a babysitting co-op to enable moms and dads to have date night.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you and your husband make time for your marriage – or how could you?
2. Share how you met your spouse.
3. Discuss how you and your spouse keep fun and laughter in your relationship.

## Session Four: Haunted House

### POSSIBLE TOPICS

- Helping kids through their fears
- Facing our mothering fears
- Coping in a frightening world

### SPEAKER IDEAS

- Children's counselor on what normal childhood fears are and how to help your child grow through them
- Panel of MOPS Mentors discussing mothering fears at each stage of mothering
- Representative from the Red Cross to discuss Community and Family Preparedness Programs

### CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Decorate a pillowcase for your child with a favorite Bible verse.
- Make a nightlight.
- Create emergency preparedness kits.

### NEWSLETTER

List local emergency numbers such as poison control, hospital, food bank etc. for moms in need to reference.

### COMMUNITY SERVICE

Distribute the emergency numbers' list you created for your newsletter to local children's stores, daycares, shelters, churches and pregnancy crises centers. Be sure to include contact information for your local MOPS group.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss what children fear.
2. What practical things can you do to help your child with nightmares? Bullies? Separation anxiety?
3. Share your biggest "mom" fears and how you can help each other face them.

## Session Five: Souvenir Shop

### POSSIBLE TOPICS

- Preserving memories
- What's worth keeping?

### SPEAKERS IDEAS

- A mom who does scrapbooking or faith-booking
- A local historian to discuss how to research family origin
- Pastor can speak on leaving a legacy

### CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Scrapbook as a group or create a family tree to be matted and framed.
- Make time capsules to be opened when your preschoolers are in high school.
- Decorate photo frames.

### NEWSLETTER

Give information on resources for finding ancestry information.

### COMMUNITY SERVICE

Make placemats or table centerpieces for a local nursing home.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think about the legacy you are leaving. How do your lifestyle and possessions reflect that legacy?
2. Take a mental home tour – what is one item in your \_\_\_\_\_ room you would want to keep? What one item would you give away? Why?
3. How do you preserve memories and why?

## Session Six: Concession Stand

### POSSIBLE TOPICS

- Fun healthy family foods
- Sharing mealtimes with friends
- Experiencing the kitchen with your kids

### SPEAKERS

- A nutritionist on kid-friendly, healthy meals
- A creative chef who teaches how to present meals with flair
- A local baker who can demonstrate how to decorate birthday cakes
- Grandmother who shares how meals are more about people than the food served

### CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Have moms bring supplies and put together dinner for them to take home.
- Decorate small cakes.
- Make menu/grocery pads.

### NEWSLETTER

Have a creative meal contest and publish the recipes.

### COMMUNITY SERVICE

Host a MOPS food drive and donate to a local food bank.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are your best mealtime memories?
2. What is the biggest obstacle to serving healthy meals in your family?
3. As a group, plan each of your children's next birthday parties.

## Session Seven: Tilt-a-Whirl

### POSSIBLE TOPICS

- Helping families enjoy the ride
- Facing “dizzying” family circumstances

### SPEAKERS

- MOPS Mentor on building a family team so siblings learn to work together
- Pastor’s wife can discuss how to keep in-laws from becoming “out-laws”
- Counselor to share techniques to resolve conflict

### CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Make jars of stress relieving bath salts.
- Create a flag for your family “team.”
- Make fridge magnets with peace-keeping verses on them.

### NEWSLETTER

List quotes and verses that remind moms to be the peacemakers.

### COMMUNITY SERVICE

Plant flowers at your MOPS Chartering Ministry or another local ministry.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you deal with sibling rivalry in your family?
2. What is your relationship with your in-laws like? How can you make it better?
3. What causes the most conflict in your relationships and how can you resolve those conflicts?

## Session Eight: Sky Ride

### POSSIBLE TOPICS

Rising above so you can see beyond

### SPEAKERS

- Woman who has achieved her dream of a home business, gone back to school after she had her children, or has impacted her community in some way to share how she developed and reached her dream
- Career counselor from a local college can discuss opportunities for women via on-line classes, home business or volunteer opportunities

### CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Help moms create their own life maps.
- Invite in a fashion consultant to help moms put together a better look for their days – at home or at work.

### NEWSLETTER

Publish evening course opportunities at the local college and volunteer ministries that will allow moms to share their creativity.

### COMMUNITY SERVICE

Reach out to a local Care Net or Crisis Pregnancy Center by offering to grow a MOPS@ group or Teen MOPS group there.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you see yourself doing after your children are grown?
2. Share the dreams and goals you have for your life.
3. How can you use your gifts and talents to make your dreams come true *because* you are a woman and a mother, not in spite of those roles?