

Getting Unstuck:  
Finding Our Passions &  
Developing New Patterns for Leading  
By Austin M. Schafer

### Purpose

This session engages high school participants in a reflective experience using the movie *Groundhog Day* to help generate new patterns of effective living and leading in youth ministry. By looking at some short clips from the movie, participants are presented with the challenge to reexamine their life and current priorities, with the intent of helping participants see how their current patterns of communication and leadership might have them stuck in a rut and missing out on potential opportunities. Participants will also brainstorm how to better tap into the interests and passions of their peers to develop better leaders in youth ministry—people who focus their passions toward actions to initiate, collaborate, and take ownership of ministries.

### Session at a Glance

- 7:00 p.m. Welcome and Introduction
- 7:05 p.m. Opening Question/Opening Prayer
- 7:10 p.m. Movie Clip #1: Reliving the Same Day: Being Stuck in a Rut
- 7:30 p.m. Individual Reflection, then Shred Those Bad Habits!
- 7:40 p.m. Movie Clip #2: Getting Unstuck: You can live better!
- 8:00 p.m. The Challenge: Developing New Ways of Leading  
Extend the Session: Developing a Plan of Action (add 15-30 minutes)
- 8:15 p.m. Closing Prayer: “I Do It Anyway”
- 8:30 p.m. Refreshments, Announcements, Good Night!

### Extend the Session: Making a Plan of Action (15-30 minutes)

If you have time to extend the session, it is highly recommended. After the brainstorming session where participants strive to develop new ways of leading, consider developing a concrete plan of action where you can put into practice these new ideas as a group in your programming and outreach. This moves the program’s focus from personal change to increasing your youth ministry’s influence at the parish and beyond.

### Materials Needed

Movie, *Groundhog Day* (Columbia, rated PG, 1993)

Television, VCR or DVD player

Note to Leader: Your audio visual set up needs to be adequate for everyone to be able to hear/see the movie clips.

Electric paper shredder

CD player (or iPod with speakers)

• The song “Anyway” by Martina McBride for closing prayer

‘High Tech’ Version for Closing Prayer: If possible, show the music video of “Anyway” instead of just playing the CD. Two options: (1) If you have a computer with a high-speed Internet connection, play it online for free by visiting: ["Anyway" Music Video](#). To

show to your participants, hook up your computer to a video projector, and project the image on a screen or blank wall. (2) Purchase the music video of “Anyway” at the iTunes Music Store online for \$1.99, and download it to your computer and/or video iPod. This music video has powerful images, and it will have a strong impact if you choose to use it for the closing prayer. You have one of two options to show the music video: (a) If you own the proper AV cables to hook up a video iPod to a TV, you can show it this way, or (b) Hook up your computer to a video projector along with speakers, and play the file from iTunes, projecting the image on a screen or blank wall. Young people are very talented at doing this, so if you choose to use it, ask one of them for help in advance.

- Resource 1, Finding Our Passions, one for each small group of six to eight
- Lyrics to “Anyway” by Martina McBride (see #2 in Prepare in Advance)
- Table for prayer space, colored tablecloth, crucifix or cross, candle, Bible, and matches or lightstick
- Pens and paper for each participant
- Newsprint (several sheets)
- Masking tape
- Nametags
- Markers
- Quiet, reflective music
- CD player

#### Prepare in Advance

1. Review the entire session plan; watch the entire movie before using this session so that you are familiar with the plot. It is also important to learn more about the story line, reception, and influence of the movie. A good synopsis of this can found by visiting this website: [Wikipedia](#).

Note to Leader: The clips chosen for this session were done strategically, so be sure to practice starting and stopping the film in the correct place. The main character of the movie, Phil Connors (Bill Murray), gets stuck in reliving the same day (Groundhog Day) over and over. He tries everything to break this pattern, including negative actions, such as committing suicide. These scenes are omitted from this session, because they are beyond the scope and topic of this session.

2. Set up your meeting space so that everyone can enjoy the movie clips. Cue the videotape or DVD to the appropriate starting point.

3. Prepare a sheet of newsprint or a PowerPoint slide with the words to “Anyway” by Martina McBride. The lyrics may be found on several Internet sites, such as: <http://www.sing365.com/music/lyric.nsf/Anyway-lyrics-Martina-McBride/E3046900E9FF10FD4825723D002B573D>.

4. Create a prayer table with the table cloth, crucifix, Bible, and candles. Put it in central area of the room where it is visibly present.

5. Make sure your electric paper shredder is working ahead of time, but keep it out of sight of the participants.
6. Invite a participant to proclaim Matthew 11:28-30 during the Closing Prayer.
7. Set up tables for refreshments and sign-in. Have one or two people at the sign-in table with a check-in sheet and name tags. Hospitality is important: As the facilitator, do not use the gathering time before the session begins to take care of last minute preparations. Spend the time moving among the participants, greeting and speaking with them.

### Session Outline

#### Welcome and Introductions (5 minutes)

As participants are arriving, create a welcoming atmosphere and have contemporary music playing in the background. Greet the participants warmly as they arrive and have everyone make a nametag. After everyone has gathered, invite the participants to sit down comfortably in front of the TV where you will be showing the video clips.

#### Opening Question/Opening Prayer: (5 minutes)

Introduce the session by saying something like:

In today's world, we live busy and hectic lives, and often, we get stuck in a cycle making the same wrong decisions over and over. For example, how many of you in the morning hit the snooze button on the alarm clock over and over again, and sometimes accidentally even turn it off, finding yourself being late to school or a meeting? Or, have you ever found yourself saying over and over again, "I'll get to studying and working on that big project or assignment," but you procrastinate to the very end, stressing yourself out? Or, have you and your friends ever been caught in a pattern of gossiping or let cliques develop? These are just a few examples, but what are some other ways that you or your peers get caught in a bad habit?

Get a few responses from the participants.

What's the solution to these problems? Often, we complain that we don't have enough hours in the day to do everything we want to accomplish. However, more time isn't the solution. Time only provides the context or the space for us in which to live. I've heard a lot of people say, "Time heals everything." However, does it really? No, it's not time that does the healing; it's what we intentionally choose to do with that time that helps us heal and live better lives. So, tonight's theme is "getting unstuck": it's about moving out of those areas of our lives that are dead ends. If we can do this, we can begin to see the amazing potential and possibilities that can be reached. We can improve our lives and become better leaders. But, before we get into the heart of tonight's program, let us first remember in prayer that our life and every breath we take is truly a gift from our loving God.

Pause for quiet.

Prayer Leader: (begin with the Sign of the Cross)

Good and gracious God, catch us off guard tonight. Help us listen more intently to the story of our lives by helping us be honest with ourselves. Surprise us with some moment of grace, so that for at least a moment, we may come to realize the areas of our lives that are currently stuck in a rut that are in need of change. Loving God, you are one with us, always and everywhere within this life we breathe. Breathe your Holy Spirit into the depths of our being, so that we may clearly hear your voice tonight. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Movie Clip #1: Reliving the Same Day: Being Stuck in a Rut (20 minutes)

Introduce this section by saying something like:

We are going to watch a few scenes from the movie Groundhog Day. You will meet a television weather reporter whose name is Phil Connors (actor Bill Murray), who finds himself stuck reliving the same day over and over again, Groundhog Day. Phil can't stand this day, and he doesn't want to be in this small town covering the news story. However, he finds himself waking up every day at 6:00 AM to only relive the same day over and over again. This fictional romantic comedy shows us how one man gets stuck in a rut of making self-centered, bad decisions, mostly over trying to control Rita, the producer of his TV show. Phil does many things to try and control Rita so that she will fall for him. This clip is about one-third of the way into the movie, and Phil has already been re-living the same day for weeks. Let's see what he does with his time.

Show the first clip, which is from Chapters 17-18 (44:15 to 1:00:25).

Individual Reflection, then Shred Those Bad Habits! (10 minutes)

Introduce this section of the program by saying something like:

The key line from this scene was at the end of the clip when Phil states: "I don't even like myself." Indeed, you cannot love someone unless you genuinely love yourself. Phil tries to get Rita to love him, but he makes self-centered decisions and tries to control her for his own benefit. Phil gets stuck. Many of us get stuck too, and even get depressed like Phil. We can only be our best selves when we break the habits that lead us to be self-centered, or lazy, or any number of other things. Let's take some time to reflect on this by writing our answers to two questions:

Where am I getting stuck?

What bad habits are holding me back?

Distribute paper and pens to each participant.

Ask God for help and guidance. This reflection paper is for your eyes only: it will not be collected or read by anyone else, so be honest with yourself. Spread out in the room to give each other some space to reflect and write.

Note to Leader: In the background, play soft, reflective music. After about five minutes, introduce the next activity:

You know what is holding you back—what is getting in the way of being unstuck. God knows this too and is always inviting us to be our best. We have to be willing to believe that we can become unstuck—and then we have to take the necessary actions. Sometimes we hold ourselves back because we just don't believe we are capable of more. Let's prove ourselves wrong!

Ask for a volunteer. Ask him/her to fold their paper in half and to bring it to the front of the group. Ask the volunteer to place the paper on the floor, a bit of a distance from him/herself. Take a piece of masking tape and create a line which the volunteer cannot cross over. Now, move the paper further away from the volunteer. Ask him/her to reach for it. Continue to do this until it is completely out of reach, and still ask the person to retrieve the paper. (They might take off a sweater and drag it across the floor, or otherwise be creative in how they retrieve it.) The rest of the participants can give ideas, but they cannot physically touch the paper. End the activity by making the following points:

One of the best ways to get unstuck is to acknowledge that you are stuck. As you have seen, when we acknowledge our limitations, we can always move past them. It's the first step in becoming a better person. On your own paper, you have written down one or more of your own limitations—things that you think will be really hard to overcome. But, just like \_\_\_\_\_ [volunteer's name], you are capable of much more than you may think or believe. You might need to really stretch yourself—but you can do that. Or, you might need to get help or ideas from others, but that isn't so hard, or you may find that you already have everything you need to become unstuck, you just need to focus on that goal.

As a sign of your willingness to not let yourself stay stuck—to move beyond where you currently are, please come forward and shred your paper—let go of those things that are holding you back! As you come up to the paper shredder, make a commitment to yourself to begin to shred those bad habits away.

Movie Clip #2: Getting Unstuck: You can live better! (20 minutes)  
Introduce this section by saying something like:

Now that you have become unstuck in some of your ways, let's see how Phil Connors gets unstuck from his rut. When Phil stops worrying about himself all the time and embraces where he is, he starts living a life of service to others and of continual self-improvement. Trying to win over Rita is really a metaphor for winning over excellence. Phil's goal is now doing what he can do in the present moment to make things better instead of worse. Let's watch.

Show the second clip from Groundhog Day. Play Chapters 21-26 (1:15:20-1:34:38).

The Challenge: Finding our Passions for Youth Ministry (20 minutes)  
Introduce this section by saying something like:

Phil has a conversion experience. He helps the old homeless man, learns a musical instrument, and even becomes an artist. It is only when he improves himself and turns toward others in service does his life become truly joyful. Only then does his influence increase, and only then does Rita freely choose to love him. Ultimately, Phil pursued his passions—the yearnings, hopes, and desires for good— deep inside of him that compelled him to act.

At the beginning of the movie, no one would call Phil a leader, but by the end, he has made a very big difference in people’s lives—and that person is a leader. We, too, can be leaders by being of service to others. Just like any other group or ministry, our youth ministry can get stuck—always doing the same things, attracting the same people, or other things. You can be of great service to this parish today by helping youth ministry get unstuck, and that makes you a leader.

Like Phil, we must work at tapping into those forceful emotions—the passions deep in our hearts—if we want change to happen in youth ministry. In small groups of six to eight people you will share with each other your passions for youth ministry. On newsprint, write the answers to your reflection. You will have eight minutes to do this, and then each small group will share briefly with the large group your insights.

Give each small group a sheet of newsprint, a few markers, and a copy of Resource 1, Finding our Passions. After about eight minutes, have each small group tape their sheet of newsprint to the wall, and ask them to present their insights to the large group.

Note to Leader: Save these sheets of newsprint and bring them to your next youth and adult leadership core team meeting to discuss and make a plan of action. If you take the passions and insights and developed them further, what might change or break open? The key question is open-ended: “What if we...?” Imagine the possibilities.

Closing Prayer Service: “Do it Anyway” (10 minutes)

Note to Leader: Post the newsprint with the words to the song, “Anyway” or project them using PowerPoint.

Gather

Prayer Leader: (begin with the Sign of the Cross)

Jesus, you help us with our every need. Thank you for the gift of this evening,  
especially for opening our eyes to the ways we get stuck in our everyday lives.  
Help us get unstuck from these destructive patterns so that we can embrace new,  
abundant life. We ask this in Your Name. Amen.

Listen

Invite the reader to proclaim Matthew 11:28-30. Allow a few moments of quiet reflection, then play the song, "Anyway" by Martina McBride or show the music video.

Respond  
Prayer Leader:

Now that you have heard the song "Anyway," I invite you to respond by voicing aloud your answer to the statement: "I want to be..." For example, "I want to be a better friend, leader, etc." This is your response to Jesus. Take a minute to think about what you want to be in silence, and then, I invite you to voice it aloud.

Go Forth.

After participants share their responses aloud, close the session by praying together the Our Father.

Refreshments, Announcements, Good Night! (5 minutes)

Make any necessary announcements, thank the participants for coming, and invite them to stay for some refreshments.

The websites mentioned in this session were successfully accessed on February 23, 2008.

This session was written by [Austin Schafer](#), Campus Minister in the Office of Retreats and Faith Communities at the University of Dayton, Ohio.

Resource 1

Finding our Passions

Passions are the yearnings, hopes, or desires already deep inside us that compel us to act. Focus your passions by connecting them with your deepest hopes, and respond to the following questions as a group. If focused, your passions can lead to change and action!

You will have eight minutes to do this activity. Write your responses on the newsprint.

What really excites me about being Catholic is...

If I could bring my real passions and interests in life to youth ministry, I would...

This is my dream for our parish...

Sometimes I feel that God is calling me to...