

I am suffering from the debilitating effects of a horrid disease. It's one that most people get at least once in their lives, although it is my third case.

It affects their performance, ability to complete tasks, sleeping habits, and many other aspects of daily life. What is it?

Senioritis.

Bad me affecting is it! (See, it's even messing up some of my writing ability.) As I finish up my master's degree, I've gotten to the point where I don't care so much about getting an A as I do about getting a P. Performing acceptably is a lot more tempting than performing exceptionally.

Senioritis is tough, and most likely you have students in your youth group who are dealing with the disease right now. They have one semester of high school left and are looking forward to walking across a stage, taking their diploma, and

saying "¡Adios!" to this chapter of their lives. They can see the light at the end of the tunnel, and the last thing they want to think about is papers, quizzes, homework, or finals. They're more excited about graduation parties, gifts, senior trips, and the "freedom" of life after high school.

Oh, they're also not too interested in sitting in youth group with a bunch of "young kids" doing and hearing the same thing they've been doing and hearing for the past four years. That's why the second semester of the senior year is the hardest time to keep kids active in the group. So, what do you do? Here are four concepts to think about:

1. For Seniors Only: Seniors are beginning to break away from high school and eagerly await the prospects of college or career. Things that were awesome six months ago are now considered juvenile or boring. So, what do you do? While you can't always provide a separate class or activity just for seniors, you can have a group study on life skills and the Bible for them. Have senior-only fellowships or day trips. Give them special opportunities that...

2. Make Them Important: Notice, I didn't say, "Make them feel important." You need to make them important. They have achieved a noble goal in graduating from high school. That achievement needs to be celebrated and honored. Also, keep in mind that seniors in your youth ministry have been taught for almost six years now. Give them some leadership responsibilities in the youth ministry that they can get excited about. Making them important will create good...

3. Memory Makers: Help seniors build memories from within the youth ministry. The past years of the ministry have already built some memories, but the senior year can have some meaningful memories of its own. The typical robe ceremonies and picture slideshows are a good start. Give them something more to look forward to – like a senior adventure, when you take the seniors on a trip or retreat that incorporates fun with life experience and wisdom for their new start. The trip should...

4. Encourage Them: The senior year is a time full of questions. Your students are making some of the most important decisions of their lives: Where should I go to college? Do I

go to college? Do I get married? Do I get a job? How do I pay for college? Can I handle being far from home? Why is my voice still cracking at 18? This is a difficult time. Be available to your youth and encourage them along the way. Offer them wisdom when they need it, and speak God's love into their lives. Life for them is a little uncertain right now. Give them some encouragement.

Senioritis is tough. But, it's something that everyone eventually gets over—well, almost everyone. Help your students enjoy their senior year, while being responsible along the way. It will make some great opportunities for sharing and ministering as you see them make this transition into "real life."

YOU may be just what the doctor ordered!