

*Mom2Mom*

# *Refresh!*

Experiencing God with  
Your Five Senses

A Relaxing  
Mini-Retreat  
for Moms

New York Conference Women's Ministries Department



Mom2Mom is a connecting and mentoring ministry.

This program is designed to be a connecting ministry for mothers of all ages.

Using the framework of experiencing life through our five senses, each segment draws women in with hands-on activities that lead them to an awareness of who they are in God's eyes.

This should be a child-free event to give moms a chance to relax and be pampered. This is a great event for single moms in need of pampering, a reclaiming ministry, and reaching out to other faith-based community members.

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So often mothers hear words of criticism, rejection, and sermonizing, when what they really need is a hug, assurance that it will be okay, and a safe place to be who they are – imperfect, learning, growing, discouraged, tired, lonesome, and in need of a little support.

We want to place a picture in your mind –

Jesus, sitting under a tree resting after a long day of talking, walking, listening, healing, encouraging, and praying for others. The women have, because of the culture they live in, been pushed to the back or the side of the main crowd of men. But as the day draws to a close, mothers linger with their children; hoping that Jesus will have just one more blessing, one more smile to bestow on their little ones.

The disciples are tired too, and anxious for rest they quietly attempt to convince the mothers to take their children and go home.

But. Jesus sees.

And He commands His disciples to leave the mothers alone, to allow the little children to come crawl in His lap, touch His robes, and show Him the tiny treasures they have spent the day collecting. His laughter mixes with that of the children gathered around Him, and He smiles broadly at the proud, if exhausted and harried, group of mothers standing at a respectful distance. He has time for the little ones. And He has time to understand the mother's hearts and desires as they draw close to the Healer.

Their weary souls are seeking respite under the calming, loving, reassuring gaze of Jesus. He gathers their children, knowing how challenging it has been for them to keep their children behaving and out of the way all day. He knows the thirst these women have for acceptance and assurance that their lives matter, that what they do day-to-day is seen and is important.

We need to provide shelter and assurance for the mothers Abba places in our lives. Nurturing relationships that are intentional, vulnerable, authentic, and grace-filled. Just. Like. Jesus.

## Using This Program

There is something universal about motherhood. No matter what country or culture one lives in. No matter what language is spoken or traditions kept. No matter what the thinking regarding religious and spiritual journeys – motherhood has common themes that transcends all barriers.

Mothers are tired, sleep deprived, and in need of quiet rest.

Mothers are worried about doing this parenting thing right.

Mothers need time away from mothering to slow down, breathe deep, and be reminded that they do not travel this path alone.

Spending some time relaxing, reconnecting with self, and breathing deep helps calm and soothe the soul. The five senses are also a powerful means for us to encounter God, not only as we practice our faith but also as we participate in the “messy splendor” of daily life.

Refresh! is designed to be easy to set up and do. It was originally used as a ‘pop-up’ ministry at a Campmeeting for mothers of a local preschool/daycare center.

## Setting Up

Any location can be used

We suggest a small group size (20 or less). If you have many more—divide into smaller groups and assign a facilitator for each group.

### You will need:

Chairs—enough for attendee’s, helpers, and facilitators; arranged in a circle

Table, nicely arranged with tablecloth, a vase of flowers (see below), tasteful selection of sliced fruit, a pastry, beverage, cups, small plates, and napkins

Flowers: select ones with a strong scent (roses), and have enough for each participant

Fruit: suggest watermelon, orange slices, mango

If you choose: gift bag for each mom: could include encouragement cards, lip balm, hand lotion, Kleenex, chocolate.

Relaxing music to set the tone

### Items needed for experiencing with five senses:

Hand lotion—lightly scented or unscented for hand massage

A place to hear nature, or a recording of nature sounds/music

Flower (as mentioned in the table decorations section)

Piece of chocolate (one per participant)

A place to observe nature, or a tray of items from nature (such as smooth rock, shell, sand or dirt, flower, etc-you will need at least enough items for each woman to take one)

Have items within reach of the facilitator.

Every woman brings a story with her. Some stories include abuse, neglect, abandonment. As you prepare for this event, be mindful that triggers may be present—a sound, smell, taste, touch, or visual—for some women. Avoid invalidating behaviors such as cajoling or coercing women to do something they are reluctant to do, or even to speak. When approaching women you do not know, be respectful of their personal space and ask first before hugging.

## *Refresh!* | Welcome

Welcome women, and invite them to select a seat.  
(soft music should be playing in the background to set the tone)  
Offer guests a cool drink.

When you are ready to begin, turn off the music.  
Welcome everyone, thanking them for coming.

Introduce your program using your own words.

### **Ask:**

What does/did your child do as he/she began exploring their world? Think of what a 6-month-old baby does when presented with a new toy: she grasps it, tastes it, turns it over in her hand, pounds it. She encounters it with all her senses, and in so doing, learns more than we might guess.

Young children do some of their most important learning through the senses. But as adults, the wonders of simple things get overwhelmed with to-do lists, schedules, relationships, work, and parenting.

Today, we will spend some time reconnecting with our five senses as we explore the simple wonders of God's reminders of His love for us.

Note: before beginning a new sensory experience, encourage women to deep breathe three times. Deep breathing relaxes and helps manage anxiety.

Every activity should be done slowly, not rushing through, and with as little talking as possible.

Healthy touch is an important part of thriving. A quick search of the internet turns up numerous scientific studies about the positive effects of touch, including stress reduction, easing pain, and lifting depression.

Select one or more of the following activities for your group to do, allowing enough time for the interaction to be calming. Or add your own ideas in the notes suggestion.

Keep in mind that some people may be touch adverse. Creating safe relationships includes respecting individual needs for space and acknowledging their discomfort with certain activities. Encourage anyone not wishing to have someone touch them to do one of the following activities for themselves.

- Feel - self-hand massage w/lavender lotion (soothe)
- Deep breathing (proper breathing) – learning to be still
- Relaxation techniques - slow down to be present in your body
- Hugs-really hug someone. Not 1 second hug, but hold-feel the other person

**Ask:**

- Would anyone like to share how they felt during this activity?
- How could incorporating this activity into your everyday help when you are stressed?

**Notes**

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We are bombarded with noise from the moment we wake up, so making time to listen may seem a bit misplaced. However, there are many ways to listen, and this is the time to encourage listening that calms and uplifts.

You may have to remind everyone to shut down their inner critic or overactive thoughts for this activity!

Select an activity from the list below, and spend some time relaxing into the experience of listening.

- Invitation to silence in nature (a few minutes of silence – outdoors, what do you hear?)
- Listening to silence
- Deep breathing – listening to what your body is saying
- Listening to calming music

**Ask:**

- Would anyone like to share how they felt during this activity?
- How could incorporating this activity into your everyday help when you are stressed?

**Notes**

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## Refreshing | SMELL

Smell is often an overlooked sense. Aside from helping us determine if the baby needs changing and if last week's chili is still good, smell is forgotten. However, as with all of our sense, studies show that smell can be a potent weapon against stress, depression, and headaches. It can also boost our immune system, aid in digestion, reduce pain, and help us sleep better.

With so many benefits to smell – what better way to connect with moms who are likely experiencing stress, headaches, and exhaustion?

'Smell' activities can be fun or relaxing. Select one or more of the following activities and ideas for your group to enjoy.

You may want to start by asking moms what their favorite scent was when they were a child and what their favorite scent is today.

One study from Columbia University found that the most pleasurable scents include: orange, vanilla, cinnamon, crayons, and cookies.

Avoid synthetic sprays and perfumes as many people are allergic.

Give each mom a flower – and encourage her to 'sit and smell the roses'

Give women permission to relax – sit and quietly enjoy a natural scent

Mindfulness – ask women to sit quietly and do deep breathing while focusing on what they smell.

Smell in nature – take a nature walk and do a smell map – write down everything you smell (the human nose can detect one trillion distinct scents)

### **Ask:**

- Would anyone like to share how they felt during this activity?
- How could incorporating this activity into your everyday help when you are stressed?

### **Notes**

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Sight, of course, doesn't require much by way of introduction! We rely on sight for much of what we do. But, just like all of the other senses, sight can and should be used to promote stress reduction, easing of depression, and a sense of well-being.

Of course, not all 'sight' is done with our eyes. Much can be seen in our mind as well. We tend to 'see' ourselves through other's eyes, or struggle with 'seeing' our good qualities.

Sight is a good topic to discuss God, or introduce the concept of how God 'sees' us. Incorporate any of the following into the activities you do for sight:

Seeing your best self – draw a chart listing all of your good qualities and characteristics.  
Seeing you through God's eyes – do a study on who God says you are.  
Seeing each other through God's grace – discuss ways to reach out to others by choosing to see them as God's children.

- Looking at nature – go on a nature walk or scavenger hunt – write down what you see that is unusual, often overlooked, or difficult to spot.
- Have a beautiful floral arrangement for women to look at
- Have a tray of items from nature, enough for each woman to select one... Spend time observing the intricacies and properties of the item. Have women switch items.

**Ask:**

- Would anyone like to share how they felt during this activity?
- How could incorporating this activity into your everyday help when you are stressed?

**Notes**

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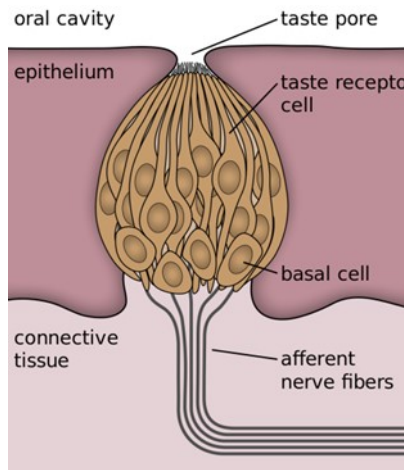
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We have saved taste for last as this is a great time to include a bit of socializing before ending your meeting. If you have chosen to complete this series in five separate sessions – one for each sense – try to incorporate a beverage and snack into each session. Sharing food together has the magical effect of bonding and bringing people closer together in a non-threatening, relaxed way.

Have you ever seen a taste bud? Not on the top of your tongue, but down inside...? Here it is:



Pretty neat, huh?

There are 50-100 taste receptor cells in each taste bud.

Way more complicated than what is typically envisioned! Makes me wonder if my kids actually taste their food as they shovel it in as quickly as possible!

Moms likely have forgotten what it feels like to relax and savor the food they eat as screaming toddlers, fighting middle schoolers, and a host of mini ‘emergencies’ crop up exactly as that fork of salad is scooped up!

This is a great time to offer moms a chance to ‘be still’ and ‘taste and see that Abba is good’.

Offer your moms any or all of the following discussions and activities, and encourage them to slow down and really taste what they are putting in their mouths and in their minds.

- Offer a variety of fresh fruit slices – discuss the flavors as each mom samples
- Chocolate - offer a piece of good quality, nut-free, chocolate to each mom. Encourage them to savor the chocolate with eyes closed, thinking about how the chocolate feels in their mouths as it melts. Bring it around to ‘taste and see that the Lord is good’.
- Encourage women to linger over their food. This is a great time to bring together all of the senses by incorporating elements of each – highly scented foods, quiet music, visually appealing arrangement of food and flowers, offering a variety of textured foods.

## Notes

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