

**Kids helping kids!**



**LESSON PLANS**

# Day 1: Cookson Hills Intro

## OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

To visually introduce your kids and volunteers to the ministry of Cookson Hills and present the goal you've chosen.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Equipment necessary for showing a video to your group
2. Cookson Hills 7 Minute Video :  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Y98DciI2HyXADIFpeUAm3N7yR4duDTifu/view?usp=share\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Y98DciI2HyXADIFpeUAm3N7yR4duDTifu/view?usp=share_link)  
*(If a physical copy is needed, please email [sarah.curry@cooksonhills.org](mailto:sarah.curry@cooksonhills.org) at least 7 business days before your VBS begins).*
3. Copies needed of “**Send Home Flyer**”:  
<https://www.cooksonhills.org/VBS/SendHomeFlyer.pdf>
4. Optional- DIY large scale thermometer to track your group's progress.
  - a. Here is a link to a fun printable thermometer  
<https://fundraisefactory.com/fundraising-thermometer-poster>

## PLAN (10 minutes)

1. Start off your Cookson Hills introduction by showing video. (5 min)
2. You or someone in the church can share a short story about their connection to Cookson Hills. Maybe you can tell a story about a time you visited, or how long your church has supported the ministry. (2 min)
3. Reveal the goal amount you've set and what this amount can accomplish (text provided below). If you've made a thermometer, now would be the time to unveil it. (3 min)
4. Pass out the “**Send Home Flyer**” during dismissal that kids can share with their parents. (1 min)

## 5. CHOOSE YOUR VBS OFFERING GOAL

**SUPPLY DRIVE** — Throughout the year, about 75 kids will call Cookson Hills home. During this time, many basic needs arise. A supply drive will put tangible goods directly into the hands of the kids at Cookson Hills. In order to steward finances well, please only choose this goal if you or a member of your church will be able to drop off the supplies at our main office. Printable sign for drop off containers:

<http://www.cooksonhills.org/VBS/SupplyDrive.pdf>

**\$100** — Starting over can be scary, especially when you're 9 and you don't know anyone in your new home. A \$100 goal can supply a new child with their basic hygiene needs, and pillows and blankets to curl up in at the end of a long day.

**\$300** — Our on-site Christian school allows our students to get an education in a safe place that also encourages them to get to know Jesus. A \$300 goal can supply an entire classroom with everything they need for 1 month! From curriculum and supplies to technology and textbooks, you can equip an entire classroom!

**\$500** — When you've been through a lot of hard and scary things in life, the best way to heal is to talk to a Christian counselor who can help you walk through your messy past. A \$500 goal can cover 6 months of counseling for a child who has been through a lot of hard times in their young life.

**\$800** — As a kid, some things in life are unknown, like what is for dinner tonight or if there will be any blue popsicles left when you get home. Did you know that some kids wonder about where their next meal is coming from or what day they'll get their next meal? A goal of \$800 will provide 530 meals for the children at Cookson Hills and give them security by knowing that one of their most basic needs will be met.

**\$1,200** — When you've been through a lot of scary things in life, you remember those things for a long time. A goal of \$1,200 can provide 1 month of fun, positive, lasting memories for the entire campus. With volleyball, basketball, cross country, equine experiences, and summer trips to swim, fish, or visit the zoo, this goal will help our kids replace bad memories with new and positive memories to carry with them for the rest of their lives!

# Day 2: Nicholas's Story

## OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Hear a personal story about a kid who is enrolled here at Cookson Hills, and learn to empathize with those who are hurting.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Nicholas's Story- 2 minute video: <https://vimeo.com/491853897>. If a physical copy is needed, please email [pat.hubbartt@cooksonhills.org](mailto:pat.hubbartt@cooksonhills.org) at least 7 business days before your VBS begins.
2. Equipment necessary for showing a video to your group
3. Bible
4. Optional- DIY large scale thermometer to track your group's progress. Here is a link to a fun printable thermometer <https://fundraisefactory.com/fundraising-thermometer-poster>.

## PLAN (10 minutes)

1. Recap the goal amount for your group to raise for Cookson Hills. (2 min)
2. Show Nicholas's video. (2 min)
3. Host a discussion (5 min)
  - a. Sometimes, bad things happen in our lives that are completely out of our control. For Nicholas, it started when he was 6 years old and his mom could not take care of him and his brother, this is called neglect. These types of situations can be called "traumatic".
  - b. Traumatic means that you've gone through something that was extremely scarring, painful, or terrible.
  - c. When people go through "trauma" they experience feelings of pain, and must find ways to deal with this pain. Can anyone tell me some of the feelings that Nicholas shared in his story?
    - i. He became angry.
    - ii. He did not feel accepted.
    - iii. Additionally- He did not know what it felt like to be a part of a family who loved him and took care of him.

- d. For Nicholas, the best thing for him was to come to Cookson Hills and begin to heal from the hard things in his life. At Cookson Hills, Nicholas has become a part of a family who loves him and accepts him and has taught him to be “selfless” instead of “selfish.” He is fed three meals a day, has a stable home to live in, and does really well in school. He’s learned how to take help from others and God has given him a heart to help others in return!
- e. Just because you’ve gone through something really hard in your life does not mean that you will need to leave your family and go to Cookson Hills, too. But if you have gone through something really hard in your life, or maybe you saw something really bad happen, it’s very important to talk to a grown-up about it. You might feel scared or nervous to talk about it, but grown-ups have been there too. We’ve gone through hard things, we will listen.
- f. If you’ve never been through something like this, chances are you know someone who has. If this sounds like you, it’s important to show empathy. Does anyone know what “empathy” means?
  - i. It does not mean you feel bad for someone.
  - ii. It DOES mean that you put yourself in their shoes and imagine what it would feel like to be them.
- g. Empathy is an important part of our relationship with Jesus. He often spent time with people who were hurting and felt the pain they felt.
- h. The Bible also teaches us it’s an important piece of following God.

Read scripture verses:

- i. Matthew 7:12 (ICB), “Do for other people the same things you want them to do for you.”
- ii. Galatians 6:2 (ICB), “Help each other with your troubles. When you do this, you truly obey the law of Christ.”
- iii. Hebrews 13:1&3 (ICB), “Keep on loving each other as brothers in Christ. Do not forget those who are in prison. Remember them as if you were in prison with them. Remember those who are suffering as if you were suffering with them.”

4. Close with prayer (1 min)

# Day 3: Mission of CH

## OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

To learn more about the mission of Cookson Hills, the kids we work with, and scripture we use for guidance.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Cookson Hills Mission Statement Scramble:  
<http://www.cooksonhills.org/VBS/MissionScramble.pdf>
2. Scripture Scramble: <https://www.cooksonhills.org/VBS/ScriptureScramble.pdf>
3. Bible
4. Optional - DIY large scale thermometer to track your groups progress.  
Here is a link to a fun printable thermometer  
<https://fundraisefactory.com/fundraising-thermometer-poster>.
5. Optional - Printable home version of Cookson Hills Mission Statement Scramble for virtual participants. Good resource to add to a home kit:  
<https://www.cooksonhills.org/VBS/MissionScramble-HomeEdition.pdf>
6. Optional - Printable home version of Scripture Scramble for virtual participants. Good resource to add to a home kit:  
<https://www.cooksonhills.org/VBS/ScriptureScramble-HomeEdition.pdf>

## PLAN (13 minutes)

1. Recap the goal amount for your group to raise for Cookson Hills. (1 min)
2. Brain Refresher: (2 min)
  - Q. “Who knows where Cookson Hills is located?”**
    - A. Northeast Oklahoma
  - Q. “Who can tell me what Cookson Hills does?”**
    - A. “Cookson Hills provides home, school, and therapy for kids who are at-risk.”

3. Activity: **Mission Statement Word Scramble** (3 min)

Ask for 4 student volunteers to come to the front. Randomly hand each volunteer one page of the Mission Statement word scramble. Instruct the volunteers to put themselves in the correct order!

*\* For an added challenge, have the kids do this without talking!*

*\* For virtual home participants, have parents mix up cards and ask students to place them in the correct order to spell out the Cookson Hills Mission Statement.*

4. Transition Discussion ( 3 min)

**Q. “What does ‘kids who are at-risk’ mean?”**

- A. Kids who are not likely to have a successful future.
- B. As we talked about yesterday, some kids go through trauma or really difficult situations and they try and get through it all on their own. But when you’ve been through hard things, you can’t just get through it on your own. You need grown-ups who can help you through it.
- C. You may remember Nicholas was in a situation that made him, ‘at-risk.’
  - 1. His mom could not take care of him and his brother
  - 2. He was dealing with feelings of anger
  - 3. These two things were setting Nicholas up to not have a successful future.

D. For other kids, things that can make their future unsuccessful would be their family constantly fighting, poor behavior choices, using drugs or alcohol, homelessness, or being hurt (abused) on purpose by grown-ups.

E. Cookson Hills is a place where kids who are at-risk can come to live, heal, and live a better life. A verse we like a lot here at Cookson Hills is Psalm 18:18b-19, (ICB):

*“The Lord supported me. He took me to a safe place. Because he delights in me, he saved me.”*

5. Activity: Scripture Scramble (3 min)

- Ask for 4 student volunteers to come to the front. Randomly hand each volunteer one page of the Scripture Scramble. Instruct the volunteers to put themselves in the correct order!
- For virtual home participants, have parents mix up cards and place them in the correct order to spell out the scripture in the correct order.

6. Close in prayer (1 min)

# Day 4: Stories & Prayers

## OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

For VBS attendees to empathize with the stories of children at Cookson Hills and pray for them.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Multiple copies of PDF “**Real Kids, Real Stories**” (Pages 10 and 11)
2. Predetermine places around the room for groups to spread out and hear a story of a student as read by their group leader.
3. Optional - DIY large scale thermometer to track your group's progress.
4. Here is a link to a fun printable thermometer  
<https://fundraisefactory.com/fundraising-thermometer-poster>.

## PLAN (10 minutes)

1. Recap the goal amount for your group to raise for Cookson Hills. (1 min)
2. Brain Refresher: (2 min)

### Q. “Who can tell me: What does Cookson Hills do?”

- A. “Cookson Hills provides home, school, and therapy for kids who are at-risk.”

### Q. “What does empathy mean?”

- A. “Putting yourself in someone else’s shoes to understand what it would feel like to be them.”

3. “Today, we are going to break into smaller groups and spend some time hearing more stories and praying for the kids at Cookson Hills.” Feel free to dismiss kids to their groups at this time. Group leaders can choose to read one story or both, and then have a student lead their prayer. (6 min)

4. *Optional:* Repeat yesterday’s scripture scramble activity. (2 min)

*“The Lord supported me. He took me to a safe place. Because he delights in me, he saved me.”*  
Psalm 18:18b-19

# Day 5: Celebrate

## OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

For VBS attendees to celebrate and let Cookson Hills hear from you!

## MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Smart phone, camera, or small video camera
2. Optional- DIY large scale thermometer to track your group's progress. OR some sort of visual representation to show the kids what they've raised! Here is a link to a fun printable thermometer <https://fundraisefactory.com/fundraising-thermometer-poster>.

## LESSON PREP

- Cookson Hills wants to hear/see you! To prepare for this lesson, please consider the following things:
  1. Do I want to take a video or picture of our group?
  2. Do I want to have the kids hold any signs for our video/image?
  3. Where do I want the kids sitting/standing for this?
  4. If we're doing a video, what short phrase should I have all the kids say? **Example:** Adult, "From our kids at (church name) to yours at Cookson Hills" Kids all say, "We love you!"
  5. Are there any kids who do not have a photo release or whose parents I should speak with before posting this?

## PLAN (10 minutes)

1. Reveal the final amount your group raised for Cookson Hills. (2 min)  
*\* This may mean you should do your final collection at the very start of your final day events so that you have time to count up for this big reveal.*
2. Let the kids know that we want to hear how they did with the challenge! So take a picture or video! Don't forget to upload it to Facebook or Instagram and tag us **@CooksonHills!** You can also use # such as: **#cooksonhillsstorystarter**, or **#Cooksonhills**. Your post can include what your goal was, if you achieved it, and what your gift can help us accomplish!

# Tissues and Chocolate - Claudia



I was at Cookson Hills for just over a year, and every day I learned something new. I always grew up feeling like something was missing. Growing up in an adopted family was hard for me, personally, I always felt lost. I regularly wondered why my birth mom would just give me up as though I didn't matter. The devil would constantly get into my head saying I wasn't enough, and I believed those thoughts.

I tried everything to numb my feelings. Every day I turned to pills so I could sleep and feel nothing. I threw myself into unhealthy relationships thinking they could give me the love I

needed. I was at my breaking point when I packed a bag and just left everything behind me, not caring for my parents' feelings. I ended up going from shelter to shelter, then eventually ended up just on the streets altogether. My difficult experiences on the streets developed a toughness within me. After a few months, I was picked up by the police, returned to my parents, and a month later I was at Cookson Hills.

## **COMFORT FOR THE PAIN**

It was hard at first. I missed people I shouldn't have; I was hurting so much I could feel all the pain. I worked hard every day to become a better person while I was there. I had struggles and I had times when I just wanted to give up, but my houseparents were so loving. I tried so many times to push them out, but they were always there with a box of tissues, comforting words, and some chocolate.

At Cookson Hills, I learned patience and respect. I was taught how to view relationships with men differently. I learned how to love myself. Most importantly, I learned of the love God has for me. Living at Cookson Hills changed me, and I am so thankful. If I didn't have Cookson Hills, I honestly don't know where I would be in life.

They build you up. When you first step onto the campus, you may not think that. You may not even think after six months of being there. But, when it's time for you to leave, you will bring something with you that is applicable to the next chapter of your life.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR — Claudia, Class of 2020, considers Kansas City home. She likes to work out, be with animals, and binge watch Gossip Girl. She is learning to groom animals and also studying to become a vet tech.**

# A New Hope, A New Start - Ethan



I was adopted at 15 months by my aunt and uncle, whom I call Mom and Dad. Their names will never change for me, I love them. It wasn't until I was 11 that I shared with a few friends that I had been adopted. But, I was betrayed by those friends and I started getting bullied for it. I told my teachers and principal of my school what was going on, but nothing ever seemed to change. Eventually, I took measures into my own hands by getting physical.

Every time someone opened their mouth to make fun of me for being adopted or how tall and skinny I am, I would fight. My anger rose more often and I found myself in detention, a lot. At 12, I began taking out my anger on my mom by having screaming matches. My dad was always gone because he is a police officer. When some

“police involved shootings” began around the nation, my classmates began bullying me even more, all because my dad was an officer. That's what really stirred me up. Things took a turn for the worse the day I felt like my teacher was joining in on the bullying...I was full of rage and verbally lashed out. Soon after, I came here, to Cookson Hills.

When I first arrived at Cookson Hills, I was a defiant, awkward, entitled teenager who fought and didn't care about school. I was definitely not interested in working the gears in my head. During my arrival, I learned I couldn't talk to my parents for the first 30 days and I panicked. I didn't know what I was going to do, I had to talk to them! Things got busy though when I started school. However, I began school at a weird time; the rest of the students were taking their standardized tests, so I spent my time sleeping. The teachers were there and I made a few friends, but I didn't really want to be here.

A month passed by and I FINALLY got to talk to my mom and dad. I was surprised by my own emotions as I sat on the phone with them and cried. I wasn't crying because I was angry, I was crying because I missed them so much. Shortly after, I was assigned to work with a counselor! I was really excited to talk about deep things, then bam... she leaves four sessions later, right when I was getting settled in.

I felt so alone and my anger rose back to the surface.

One day, someone mentioned that I should try working with the horses. Reluctantly, I tried. Turns out, I love horses and love working with them! The horses are very therapeutic. They've taught me patience, love, and kindness. They have helped me understand how to be my own person and trust others more. I know horses are just animals, but God put them on this earth for a reason. When I leave Cookson Hills this winter, I plan on getting a horse of my own!

I ended up getting another counselor who is really awesome! He has inspired me to try new things and make my life better. He tests me to my limit, but I think it's the beginning of something great. Cookson Hills has helped change me. I am no longer the defiant, ready-to-fight kid full of rage. I am living life to the fullest. When I leave this place, I really hope that the things I've learned here actually make a difference; that they can stick with me. I don't want to lose who I have become.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR — Ethan, Class of 2020, is from Catoosa, Oklahoma and enjoys horses, football, and cars.**