

The spring conference

for GB's children and youth leaders

4 March 2017

All Nations Church, Brickhill Drive,
Bedford, MK41 7QF

Including

volumise

– a resource for equipping young people

Turning up the volume of hope on mental health

What is this resource?

This resource is based on the Volumise equipping session exploring mental health held at Girls' Brigade's conference in March 2017.

This resource has been produced to help you, as leaders, run a practical session with the young people you work with to address mental health and emotional well-being.

The resource contains four sections including:

1. Engage: To help young people engage with issues linked to mental health and mental illness
2. Equip: To help equip young people to understand the importance of mental health, how to nurture it, and how to manage their emotions in positive ways
3. Empower: To help young people explore what the Bible says about mental health and faith and to help them take care of themselves better
4. Enjoy: To help young people celebrate their God-given worth.

Why is it important?

Recent statistics show that poor mental health is one of the most pressing issues facing young people in the UK:

- 1 in 10 young people will experience mental health problems (Young Minds)
- 1 in 7 (14%) girls (10-15) are unhappy with their lives as a whole (The Children's Society)
- 52% of girls (7-21) would not seek help because they feel uncomfortable talking about their feelings (Girl Guiding UK).

Girls in particular want more support in the area of emotional well-being:

- 34% of girls (11-21) want more mental health support for young people (Girl Guiding UK)
- 80% of young people want to see mental health discussed more in their church youth group (Youthscape).

Girls' Brigade Ministries is passionate about responding to the needs of young people and sharing the positive, hope-filled message of the Gospel. We trust that this Volumise resource will equip you to explore mental health and faith with your GB group in a fun, innovative and significant way.

Where should I use it?

The resource is flexible and can be used in a variety of settings:

- GB groups – you could have a theme night around taking care of yourself (i.e. soul care) and encourage the girls you already work with to bring a friend.
- Why not use some of the activities to run a workshop or assembly in a local school? You can then encourage the girls who attend to come along to your GB group to find out more or to join the online koko community.

Remember that you don't need to do every activity – pick and choose the ones that are most relevant to your group.

Let's get started!

Turning up the volume of hope on mental health

I. ENGAGE

Aim

- To help young people engage with issues linked to mental health and mental illness.

ACTIVITY #1 – QUIZ

Print off three signs displaying A,B and C and put them on separate walls. Invite the group to vote with their feet. Encourage them to make decisions for themselves and not just simply follow the crowd! Statistics are taken from the Time to Talk website.

1. How many young people will experience mental health problems?

- a) 1 in 10 (correct answer)
- b) 1 in 100
- c) 1 in 1000

2. Which of these is a common symptom of schizophrenia?

- a) Split personality
- b) Violent behaviour
- c) Hallucinations and delusions (correct answer)

** Many believe that people with schizophrenia are likely to commit violence – however, most people with schizophrenia do not commit violent crimes, and are more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators. Similarly, there is a common misconception that schizophrenia leads people to have split personalities, when this is not the case. In reality, schizophrenia's most common symptoms are hallucinations, delusions and hearing voices.*

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3. Which country's PM was re-elected in 2001 after publicly taking time off for depression?

- a) Norway (correct answer)
- b) Poland
- c) Mexico

** Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik announced in 1998 that he was experiencing a depressive episode, and took three weeks of sick leave, before returning to office. Bondevik said he received thousands of supportive letters.*

4. Which of these is not an example of a mental health problem?

- a) Depression
- b) Anorexia Nervosa
- c) Diabetes (correct answer)

5. Which of these UK Prime Ministers experienced depression?

- a) David Cameron
- b) Margaret Thatcher
- c) Winston Churchill (correct answer)

6. Which of these statements is the most accurate?

- a) People with OCD just really like things clean and tidy
- b) Everyone is a little bit OCD about something
- c) People with OCD experience intrusive obsessional thoughts often followed by repetitive compulsions (correct answer)

** Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is one of the most misunderstood mental illnesses - many people believe that OCD is a character trait that encourages cleanliness and order. In reality, it's a mental illness based on obsessions and compulsions that can have a serious impact on the people that experience it. Around 1% of the population will experience OCD.*

ACTIVITY #2 – GRAFFITI WALL

- Split the group into two and give each a piece of flipchart paper. On one write 'mental health' and on the other write 'mental illness'. This activity works best when each group doesn't know what word the other group has.
- Give the group sticky notes to write what words, positive and negative, come to mind when they hear these terms.
- Once everyone has done this, go through the terms and discuss. What language is appropriate/inappropriate? Do people agree or disagree with each other?

Key messages to communicate via this activity:

- We all have mental health
- Definition of mental health: 'The capacity to live a full, productive life as well as the flexibility to deal with its ups and downs. In children and young people it is especially about the capacity to learn, enjoy friendships, to meet challenges, to develop talents and capabilities' (from Young Minds)
- Ask the group: how does this differ with what they've come up with?
- Draw similarities to physical health. Most young people will understand that we all have physical health and that some people can become unwell or some people may be very good at looking after their physical health. Mental health is exactly the same.

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2. EQUIP

Aim:

- To help equip young people to understand the importance of mental health, how to nurture it, and how to manage their emotions in positive ways.

ACTIVITY #1: MENTAL HEALTH AND ME

Divide the group into teams of five and get them to draw around one person on a large sheet of wallpaper.

- Ask them to provide a name for their fictitious young person.
- Inside the outline of their young person, ask them to write down any difficult issues that the young person may be facing – poor self-esteem, exams, choices about the future etc.
- Once this has been done, ask them to take a highlighter and highlight the top five issues which are the most common.
- Then, with another colour, highlight the top five issues that they think are the most difficult to deal with.
- Invite them to discuss these issues and highlight any they may want to explore again at a later date.

ACTIVITY #2: GINGERBREAD GIRL

Give every girl a copy of the gingerbread girl on Resource Sheet A (see Page 11) and explain that everyone has a whole bunch of needs. We're born with some physical needs (food, water, air, shelter etc.) and if we don't get these needs met we'd die! But we also have emotional needs. If we don't get these met we won't die, but we might suffer from low self-esteem, depression and anxiety. This activity highlights a few key emotional needs for you to talk through with the girls.

Hand out some brightly-coloured pens and ask the girls to draw a symbol on their gingerbread girl to represent each of the needs that you read out.

1. **ACHIEVEMENT (HEAD)** – you need to know what you're good at. Everyone has something they can achieve at. What's yours? On the HEAD ask them to draw something they're good at.
2. **SECURITY (NECK)** – you need to feel safe so that you can grow in confidence in who you are. On the NECK ask them to draw a necklace with the word 'safe' on.
3. **MEANING (HEART)** – you need to know why you're here and what your purpose is. Draw a HEART on the figure.
4. **INTIMACY (LEFT ARM)** – you need at least one person who knows you 'warts and all'. On the LEFT ARM draw something that represents a good friend.
5. **COMMUNITY (RIGHT ARM)** – you need to know where you belong so that you can reach your potential. On the RIGHT ARM ask them to draw something that represents belonging to a group of people who care for you.
6. **ATTENTION (LEGS)** – you need to receive positive attention from others, and to give it to others because it's not healthy to only be thinking about yourself. On the LEFT LEG draw something that represents listening to others and on the RIGHT LEG draw something that represents being listened to.

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Depending on the age and ability of your group, it would be good to invite them to share their thoughts about this activity and what it's made them think about. You may want to choose just one or two needs to talk about in more depth.

Ask them in pairs to think of a good way to meet one of those needs, and a harmful way. Self-harm will probably come up in some of your discussions. Your group may not think it's always a harmful way to meet their need for attention or meaning, so make sure you're clear with your group about what makes something healthy or unhealthy.

ACTIVITY #3: koko explores: Mental health

Watch the koko explores: Mental health film which can be found on the koko website (www.thekokostory.com).

After watching the short film, ask the group to discuss the following questions:

- Can you share one thing about mental health that you learned from watching the film?
- Did the film change your view of mental illness? If so, how?
- Do you think it's important for more people to share their experience of mental health? Why? Why not?
- How could you help a friend who was experiencing a mental health issue?

koko and GB wants to help break the stigma on mental illness. Encourage your group to share this video on their social media platforms.

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3. EMPOWER

Aim:

- To help young people explore what the Bible says about mental health and faith and to help them take care of themselves better.

ACTIVITY #1: MENTAL HEALTH AND ME

Print and cut out Resource Sheet B (see Page 12). Divide the group into teams of four. Ask them to sort the slips of paper into two categories:

- Things that may improve my mental health
- Things that may affect my mental health in a negative way.

After the young people are finished, ask:

1. Did you find that task easy or difficult? Why? Why not?
2. Did you disagree on anything? If so, what?

Remind the group that the world isn't black and white and everybody is different. However research has shown that frequent exercise (that releases endorphins and burns the stress hormone cortisol), eating healthily, getting sleep, sharing problems with trusted individuals, and making time for doing things that you enjoy can improve people's mental health in positive ways.

This would also be a great time for you or another leader to share how you take care of yourself, particularly how having a Christian faith helps you.

Explain that just as we're encouraged to look after our physical health, it's important that we learn to take care of our emotional well-being too.

Ask the group which three things help them to relax? Are they making enough time in your week for them? If not, what can they change?

ACTIVITY #2: SOUL CARE IN THE PSALMS

Print out the following verses in a large font size from the Psalms and put them on the floor around the room.

Psalm 34:18 – *The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

Psalm 23:4 – *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

Psalm 32:7 – *You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.*

Psalm 31:2 – *Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me.*

Psalm 46:1 – *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*

Psalm 34:24 – *Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord.*

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Explain that when people are looking for hope, comfort and encouragement, many read the book of Psalms in the Bible. The Psalms are wonderful passages displaying the depth of human emotion – from joy and delight to sadness and depression. The writer of the Psalms regularly cries out to God sharing his sadness and anger with honest, raw words. Some people find it helpful to pray the Psalms regularly as well as memorising a few words.

Invite the young people to move quietly around the room reading the various Bible passages. After a few minutes, ask:

- What emotions does the writer convey in these passages?
- What passage would provide you with hope during a difficult time?
- Have you ever shared your problems with God? Why? Why not?

You could produce these Scripture verses on small cards and invite the young people to take home their favourite verse. Alternatively, you could make some time for the group to paint/decorate their favourite verse on blank canvas.

TOOL #1: ELEPHANTS NEVER FORGET!

Giving young people something positive/true about themselves that they can remember in difficult situations is a brilliant resource to help them manage their emotions. You could start by telling each person 'You're amazing...(give an incident...)'.

Then use this verse from Romans to unpack the truth that when we choose to follow Jesus, we belong to God. He's our Father which means we're His daughter.

'God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who He is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us – an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with Him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with Him!' Romans Ch.8:15 (MSG).

You could challenge the young people to learn this verse so that they can bring it back to mind whenever they need to remember the truth about their identity, purpose and sense of belonging.

TOOL #2: BREATHE DEEP

Invite the group to find a comfortable sitting position and to close their eyes. Then ask them to breathe in through their nose and out through their mouths. Once they're all doing this (without giggling) then ask them to count up to three as they breathe in, and count up to six as they breathe out. Repeat. The secret is to make each 'out' breath last longer than each 'in' breath. This has the effect of stimulating the body's natural relaxation mechanism. It stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, making you feel relaxed and calm.

Discuss with the group when they could use this simple technique:

- At exam time
- When they've had an argument with mum or friends
- Instead of harming themselves
- Whenever they feel stressed.

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TOOL #3: FEET DEAL

We feel anxiety in the upper part of our bodies. Waist upwards. Not in our feet! So encouraging young people to focus on their feet is a brilliant way to ground themselves. Why not get a load of nail varnish and bowls of warm water so that the girls can paint their toe nails and remember this technique to calm down?

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4. ENJOY

Aim:

- To help young people celebrate their God-given worth.

ACTIVITY #1: FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE

Show a picture or write the words 'You are fearfully and wonderfully made - Psalm 139:14' on flipchart paper. Play a worship song in the background and ask the girls to quietly reflect on these words.

Explain that this verse reveals a number of truths – each of us is precious to God and He is interested in us because He created us.

Too often life's challenges can leave us feeling like God is distant, or that we don't matter. But the Bible teaches us that there is no-where we can go from His presence and no matter what we're going through He is with us.

Take a moment to encourage the young people to reflect on their own uniqueness and the uniqueness of people around them. Close in prayer.

ACTIVITY #2: BUILDING EACH OTHER UP

Give each young person a blank gingerbread girl (see Resource Sheet A on page 11) and ask her to write her name on it, then place it somewhere in the room (slightly hidden). Once everyone has done it, gather the group together and explain that you're going to put on some worship music and they can go and find someone else's gingerbread girl. Once they find a figure they need to write something positive about them on the paper and pray for them. Then put the figure back and go on to find another figure and pray for that person etc. until you say stop.

ACTIVITY #3: TREE GOALS

Give everyone a piece of ribbon to tie on a tree/tree branch to represent an emotion they feel. Then give them another piece of ribbon (different colour) to represent something they're going to do to express that emotion in healthy ways.

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Further GB resources

We hope that your GB group finds this session helpful and enjoyable. Our regular programmes unpack managing emotions in more detail – why don't you delve in further?

- **n:vestigate** – Our Feelings
- **n:gage** – Courage/Self-control/Inner beauty
- **n:counta** – Our Emotions/Who am I!/Coping with Life
- **n:spire** – Diva Channel/Future Channel

Additional resources

Mind

<http://www.mind.org.uk/> – Mind is a mental health charity that provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. They campaign to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding.

Young Minds

<http://www.youngminds.org.uk/> – YoungMinds is a UK charity committed to improving the emotional well-being and mental health of children and young people specifically.

Think Twice

<https://thinktwiceinfo.org/> – ThinkTwice assists others in their own struggles, and those who stand beside them. Their aim is to increase awareness and decrease stigma so that people are able to be open about their mental health. They provide training courses, consultancy and speakers and writers.

Premier's Mind and Soul

http://www.mindandsoul.info/Groups/108634/Mind_and_Soul.aspx – In many churches and health-care settings Christianity and mental health are kept deliberately separate. Mental health is rarely discussed in churches and Christian spirituality is seen as having little to offer the world of psychology. Mind and Soul aim to change this.

The Lily-Jo Project

<http://www.thelilyjoproject.com/> – The Lily-Jo Project is an online mental health resource designed to 'help you to help yourself and others'.

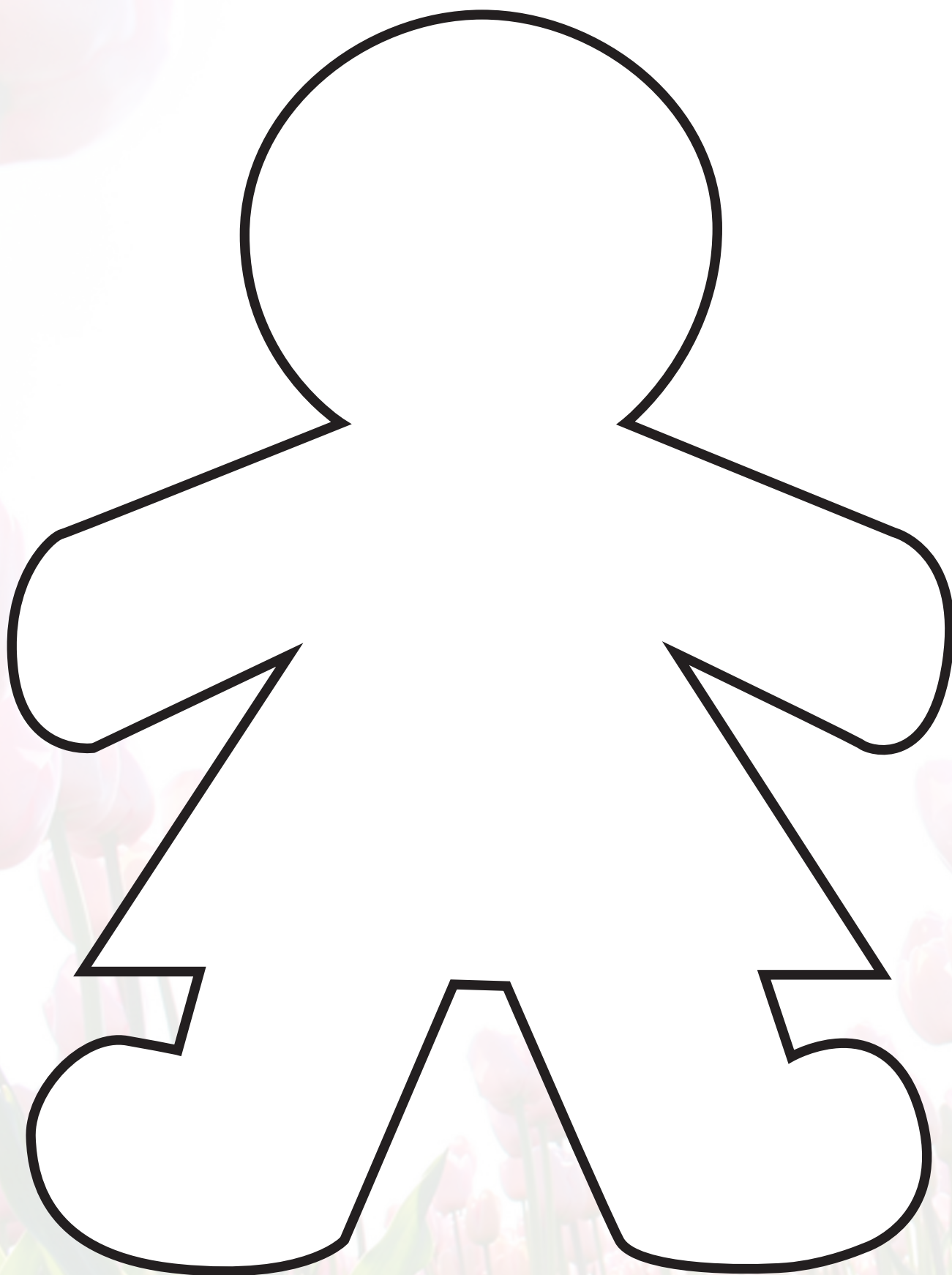


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Resource Sheet A – Gingerbread girl



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Resource Sheet B

Talking to a trusted GB leader	Not talking to anyone about your problems
Eating healthily	Eating sugary and unhealthy foods
Doing some exercise	Never doing any exercise
Taking frequent breaks from revising	Revising and working without breaks
Sharing a problem with a trusted friend/parent	Staying up late on social media
Getting enough sleep	Not sleeping properly
Visiting a doctor	Never making time to see friends
Reading the Bible	Staying in and not getting fresh air
Making time to be part of a sports team	Binge eating
Having a bath	Refusing to eat
Making a conscious decision to limit your time on social media	Self-harming
Doing something creative like mindful colouring in	Making yourself too busy
Talking with God	
Making time to go to GB each week	
Listening to music	Reading a book
Being part of a church family	Learning breathing exercises