

UNIFORMED ORGANISATIONS - SESSION 1

WELLBEING

Short of time?

These are the core activities – topic introduction, Bible basics, real life application, time to reflect – taking action, and the prayer. If you have more time, then pick and mix additional activities from those below to add to these core ones.

The Wellbeing Journey

Join the Youth Wellbeing Journey – [find out more here](#) and [watch the youth promo video](#).

What are we trying to achieve?

By the end of this session, your young people should have explored what wellbeing is, how they can improve their wellbeing and how they can pass on their worries to God.

Topic introduction

Note to leaders: Share this introduction with the group to set the scene for the activities and discussion to follow.

Length of activity: 5 minutes.

Wellbeing is an important topic and covers both our physical health as well as our mental health. People with good wellbeing tend to be happier and live longer lives.

There are many ways to look after our wellbeing from healthy eating, being active, challenging ourselves, connecting with others and more. We also know that habits such as bottling up our feelings, poor diets, lack of exercise and high pressure can also be bad for our wellbeing.

In the Bible, Jesus tells all those who are tired and weary to come to him and he will give them rest. How can sharing our worries with God and giving him control help our wellbeing and allow us to live happier and fuller lives?

The Royal Family, particularly the younger generations, have been championing wellbeing and particularly mental wellbeing over recent years. This includes campaigns such as 'Heads Together' which is an initiative spearheaded by The Royal Foundation of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, combining a campaign to tackle stigma and change the conversation on mental health with fundraising for a series of innovative new mental health services.

Here's a [video clip you can watch](#) of Prince William and Premiership footballers talking about mental health.

Quirky question

Length of activity: 5 minutes.

Ask your young people the following question and have a short discussion using their answers.

In the 2020 series of I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here, Jordan North went to his 'happy place' when doing Bushtucker trials to block out the fear, and the catchphrase 'Happy place, happy place, Turf Moor' was created. What / where is your 'happy place'?

A leader may wish to start by sharing their 'happy place'. This might be curled up on the sofa with a pizza, at your favourite holiday destination, walking along the beach, watching your sports team play etc.

Highlight that we all have different things that make us happy. There isn't one route to happiness.

Activity – What a Heavy Load

Note to leaders: This activity involves lifting and holding a brick. Please ensure this is done carefully.

What you'll need: A brick (or similar) & Post-it notes

Length of activity: 10 minutes.

Hold up a brick. Ask the group how heavy they think it is. Who thinks they can lift this brick? Now ask who thinks they can lift the brick with just one hand? Ask if anyone thinks they can hold the brick out in front of them with a straight arm? Let someone try. How long can they do it for?

Whilst we were all confident that we could pick up the weight of one brick, none of us would be confident that we could hold the brick in front of us for hours on end. The longer we hold the brick, the heavier it gets and the less able we are to cope with the weight.

The same can be said about our burdens or the problems that we face in life. The more problems we have and the longer we carry them, the more difficult things become for us.

Spend some time thinking about the different burdens / problems we face. Write them onto Post-it notes and stick them onto the brick. Examples might be school pressures, illness, relationship issues, difficult decisions, unkind people, mental health and more.

Finding ways to deal with these problems is really important for both our physical and mental wellbeing. The activities below will explore how we can do that by focusing on positive wellbeing actions and also on relying on God.

Activity – The Beachball of Wellbeing

What you'll need: Inflatable beachball & Sharpie pens.

Length of activity: 10 minutes.

Sit the group in a close circle. There should be one inflatable beachball and a pile of Sharpie pens (or similar).

Ask the group if any of them know what 'wellbeing' means? The definition simply states that wellbeing is the state of being 'comfortable, happy and healthy'.

Spend some time as a group thinking about your wellbeing. What makes you comfortable, happy and healthy? As someone in the group shouts something out, throw them the beachball and get them to write it onto the ball. Encourage the young person to talk about what they have said and how that activity / object / place etc helps with their wellbeing. Examples might include playing sport, meeting friends, reading a book, taking the dog for a walk, having a cup of tea, watching a film, shopping and so on.

Encourage everyone to contribute and add to the beachball of wellbeing. After the ideas have dried up, a leader should grab the beachball and highlight some of the wellbeing activities / actions that are now on the ball.

Looking after our wellbeing doesn't have to be hard or complicated. There are loads of quick and easy ways we can boost our wellbeing. Encourage your young people to think of these wellbeing examples next time they are feeling down or in need of a boost.

Bible basics – All Who Are Weary

What you'll need: A Bible.

Length of activity: 5 minutes.

Read Matthew chapter 11: verses 28-30 to your group or get one of them to read it.

Before looking at these verses in more detail, ask the group what their initial thoughts are. What do they think this verse is saying? What do they think this verse is encouraging people to do?

We've been looking at managing our burdens and looking after our wellbeing. What links can the group see between this topic and the Bible verse?

You might want to [watch this video](#) by Joel Harris.

Then ask why does mental health matter? What strategies can we put in place to help improve our mental health?

Real life application – Simone Biles

Note to leaders: More information about Simone Biles can be found online.

What you'll need: A picture and or video clip of Simone Biles

Length of activity: 5-10 minutes.

Ask the young people if they know who your picture is of. Explain that it's Simone Biles. Have they heard of her, and do they know why she's famous?

Simone is an American gymnast. Whilst still only young (born 1997), she is incredibly successful with over 32 Olympic and world championship medals to her name. She is widely regarded as one of the greatest gymnasts of all time. If possible, show a YouTube clip of her performing, to help show just how good she is.

The highlight of any athlete's calendar is the Olympic Games. It is the thing they work towards, with their eyes firmly set on an Olympic gold medal. They train for four years, specifically for one performance that can last just a few seconds or minutes. They are not only representing themselves, but also their sport and their country. The pressure athletes are under can be immense.

In the Tokyo Olympics during the summer of 2021, Simone was scheduled to compete in six different events during the games. However she made the difficult decision to drop out of five of those events due to her mental health. Simone recognised she wasn't in the right frame of mind to compete and decided to withdraw. She said 'My mental and physical health is above all medals that I could ever win.' After missing out on five events, she returned for her final event, the beam, winning a Bronze medal.

Ask the group how much pressure they think Simone must have been under? How must it have felt to decide on not taking part; to prioritise her mental health instead? Do you think you would have been brave enough to do that, given the spotlight that was on her at the time? Do you give your mental health the same priority as Simone, or are you guilty of neglecting your wellbeing over other pressures?

Time to reflect – Thinking it through

Note to leaders: Read the information below to help your young people think about how we can hand over their problems and rely on God.

Length of activity: 5 minutes.

Matthew 11: 28-30 shows us that we don't need to deal with our burdens alone, thus negatively impacting our wellbeing. Instead God wants us to share our burdens with him and take some of the load.

We know life can get difficult, so surely we need to rely on those who can help us to navigate the path before us? But how do we actually 'give' our burdens to God and what difference will that actually make?

Letting God in – Firstly we need to build a relationship with God. We need to let him into our lives and trust him to do what is best for us. 'Accept my teachings and learn from me...'

Giving our burdens to God – Once we have that relationship with God, we can share our burdens through prayer. We can tell God what is troubling us and ask for his help. Regular conversations with God help to off-load the pressure and hand problems over to him. 'Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you rest.'

Trusting God – Maybe this is the most difficult thing to do sometimes, but we can have faith in God to do what is right for us. God will never give us more than we can handle and he is always in control. ‘The burden that I ask you to accept is easy; the load I give you to carry is light.’

Time to reflect – Taking action

Note to leaders: Pose these questions to your group and then listen to their answers.

Length of activity: 5-10 minutes.

As well as being a fantastic gymnast, Simone Biles is also a Christian. Biles often draws on her faith when facing time of trouble. Biles has previously said ‘I was taught that you can go to God for anything and he’s the one that directs your life. My mum would always tell me if you don’t know, leave it up to God. Pray to him about it.’

Are you prepared to hand over your worries to God and let him take control? Would worrying less give you more time and energy to focus on other things, including your wellbeing and the wellbeing of those around you? What one thing could you give to God now that would help to start that process?

Challenge – Five Steps to Mental Wellbeing

What you’ll need: NHS Website (or printout).

Length of activity: 15 minutes

Focus on ways in which we can all improve our mental wellbeing.

Evidence suggests there are five steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life. As a group take a look through the five steps and think about ways you could incorporate these into a future meeting night. Could you plan a whole session around mental wellbeing?

NHS [Five Steps to Mental Wellbeing](#)

- 1) Connect with other people
- 2) Be physically active
- 3) Learn new skills
- 4) Give to others
- 5) Pay attention to the present moment

Let us pray – Wellbeing Prayer

Note to leaders: Share this prayer with your group.

Length of activity: 1 minute.

Dear Lord,

Thank you that you are always there for us to turn to when we need your help. Help us to always remember that we can talk to you, in the good times and the bad. Help us to build a strong relationship with you; one where we can share our burdens and trust you to take control of every situation.

Lord, we also pray for those in our communities and beyond who are suffering with their wellbeing. We ask that you will be with them and comfort them as they work through their problems.

Amen.

The Wellbeing Journey

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70 Acts of Service

The Queen has served the UK and the Commonwealth for 70 years. To honour her, let's join together in [70 Acts of Service](#) during 2022.