

The summer conference

for GB's children and youth leaders

9 July 2016

Cliff College, Calver, Hope Valley,
Derbyshire, S32 3XG

Including

volumise

- a resource for exploring loss with young people

Facing loss: A journey to wholeness

What is this resource?

This resource is based on the Volumise equipping session held at Girls' Brigade's conference in July 2016 focusing on exploring issues of loss that children and young people experience. The session was led by Will Taylor, Youth & Children's Counsellor/Mentor and Loss Specialist. Will has 26 years of experience working with children and young people in a variety of statutory and voluntary settings. He qualified as a mentor seven years ago and is passionate about journeying with young people through the issues they face, particularly when it comes to loss.

Young people can experience loss in a number of ways – loss of identity, purpose, family etc. This resource has been produced to help you, as leaders, run a practical session with the young people you work with to address issues of loss.

The resource contains four sections including:

1. Engage – to help young people understand that we all experience loss in different ways and we're not alone
2. Equip – to help young people understand the emotional and physical effects of loss
3. Empower – to equip young people to create their own emotional first aid kit and develop personal coping mechanisms
4. Enjoy – to recognise that we're all on a journey and need to look after one another.

Check out the Volumise section within the online GB Leaders' Resource Base to find four video clips of Will Taylor equipping you to run the session, as well as a separate resource – Volumise: A resource for equipping leaders – which can be used to equip your local, district and regional leadership teams.

How 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 loss 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!

Some notes before we jump in!

- What is loss? The state of being deprived of or of being without something that one has had. Loss extends beyond the perimeters of bereavement.
- Be mindful that in our society loss is rarely spoken about and so this can be a very difficult subject for some young people. In this resource we'll talk generically about 'young people' and not focus on individuals within the group. In doing this your young people can feel safe to talk and contribute without having to talk openly if they choose not to.

Introduction – koko's lost trilogy

koko (www.thekokostory.com) has produced a trilogy of films exploring loss – Lost // me, Lost // someone, and Lost // family. These innovative, high-quality short films can be downloaded easily from koko's website. We recommend that you choose to play one film as a way of introducing the subject of loss. Remind the group that they can watch all the videos online whenever they want.

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I. ENGAGE

Aim

- To help young people understand that we all experience loss in different ways and we're not alone.

ACTIVITY – DRAW IT OUT

Equipment needed: Large paper and marker pens.

Split the young people into groups of 6-8 with a leader. Draw out a shape of a person on a large piece of paper leaving space around it to write and space on the person to write and draw. Ask them to create a name for the person on the sheet (preferable a new name, not the name of a member of the group).

Ask: How do you think young people experience loss? Explain that loss is the state of being deprived of or of being without something that one has had. Invite the groups to write down their thoughts inside the outline of the person on the sheet. The aim of this exercise is to explore how loss is broader than bereavement and family breakdown (although it does include these).

Here are some ideas of how young people experience loss:

- Loss of childhood (young carers)
- Changing school (loss of safety of what you know, loss of friends)
- Starting work (loss of no responsibilities)
- Changing relationships (loss of friendship circles because of break up)
- Leaving home (loss of security)

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- Virginty
- Significant people moving away (loss of those relationships)
- Self-esteem
- Confidence
- Parental relationship breakdown
- Parental illness
- Bereavement
- Rejection and failure (exams/driving test...)
- Loss of limb
- Loss of a childhood teddy bear.

Get each group to feedback to the others what they've written down. Encourage them to highlight similarities and differences in the group's thoughts. Give young people space to open this up in conversation. Do they all believe that these are losses?

Wherever there is a change, there will be a loss of the thing that you've had taken or that you've left behind. How we process that change is what is important. So even when we move onto new and good things we still leave behind something. What do we leave behind?

Check out the Volumise section (within the online GB Leaders' Resource Base) for a video clip from Will Taylor equipping you to think about how we can engage young people to think broader about loss. Plus a resource of discussion questions/activities which you can use in your group, district network or region to help equip other leaders.

2. EQUIP

Aim:

- To help young people understand the emotional and physical effects of loss.

ACTIVITY – EXPANDING OUR UNDERSTANDING

Staying in their groups from activity one, this exercise encourages young people to explore the emotional and physical effects of loss on a young person's health and well-being.

Ask: Look at the examples they wrote on their paper person in the Engage activity. What words would we use to describe the feelings that this person may have, given their experiences? You may want to use the emotions wheel to prompt the young people with broader words than simply happy, sad or angry (See Resource Sheet A – Emotions Wheel).

It's important to validate all these emotions. Just because one person may feel rejected in one situation it doesn't mean that someone else isn't allowed to feel relief. All genuine feelings are valid and helpful for us to realise that even if other people have had the same experience as us it doesn't mean that we'll feel the same about it. It's important to remind the group the Bible demonstrates that Jesus showed His emotions many times. Invite the group to look up a few of the following Bible references:

- He was angry – Matthew Ch.21:12
- He was troubled – John Ch.13:21
- He was greatly distressed – Mark Ch.14:33
- He was very sorrowful – Matthew Ch.26:38
- He was grieved – John Ch.11:1-44
- He sighed – Mark Ch.8:12

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- He wept – John Ch.11:35
- He groaned – John Ch.11:33
- He was in agony – Luke Ch.22:44
- He was amazed – Mark Ch.6:6
- He rejoiced and was full of joy – Luke Ch.10:21
- He greatly desired – Luke Ch.22:15
- He loved – John Ch.11:5.

We're called to become more like Christ and part of this is to fully express our emotions. Empathy within a group is an important skill to develop in order for the group to grow together. Once we have the words to describe the emotions we move on to drawing over the paper person.

Ask: What are the physical responses that your person may have if they've had an experience of loss and also have these emotions to go with it? Using pens, invite the group(s) to draw their answers all over the paper person.

Here are some ideas if your group gets stuck:

- Tears
- Blindfold
- Lightening towards the head
- Messed up brain
- Clouds around the head
- Fists/boxing gloves
- Shaking
- Sick
- Chained up
- Tired – never sleeping – bloodshot eyes
- Butterflies in the stomach
- No appetite
- Eating sugary food
- Drinking alcohol
- Self-harm.

Exploring the emotions and physical responses of the fictional character they've created gives permission to the young people to talk openly without talking about their own situations.

Bring the groups together again and allow them space to talk and share their thoughts together, again highlighting similarities and differences. Engage the young people in conversation drawing out what, if anything, stands out as surprising to them.

It's important to validate all these emotions. Just because one person may feel rejected in one situation it doesn't mean that someone else isn't allowed to feel relief. All genuine feelings are valid and helpful for us to realise that even if other people have had the same experience as us it doesn't mean that we'll feel the same about it.

Check out the Volumise section (within the online GB Leaders' Resource Base) for a video clip from Will Taylor equipping you to think about how to help young people understand the emotional and physical effects of loss. Plus a resource of discussion questions/activities which you can use in your group, district network or region to help equip other leaders.

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3. EMPOWER

Aim:

- To equip young people to create their own emotional first aid kit and develop personal coping mechanisms.

ACTIVITY – YOUR FIRST AID KIT

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet B – The First Aid Kit. Looking at the paper person that the young people have created, ask: In order for this person to express themselves or feel better about themselves, what do they need? Ask the group to discuss this question and write their answers in the middle of the first aid kit on Resource Sheet B.

Here are some ideas if your group gets stuck:

- Having a friend to talk to
- A list of helpful numbers or organisations that could help
- A journal to write in to let feelings out
- Punch bag to get out anger in a safe way
- A stress ball
- Music to listen to
- Opportunity to sit in silence
- Opportunity to go for a walk
- Exercise
- A safe adult outside of the person's home to talk to (GB leader, school counsellor)
- Talking to God through prayer
- Reading the Bible
- Going to church or GB.

Draw everyone back together for the last time and allow space for the young people to share the self-care ideas for their fictional paper person. Encourage them also to think of how faith and a relationship with God can also help some young people.

Check out the Volumise section (within the online GB Leaders' Resource Base) for a video clip from Will Taylor equipping you to think about how we can equip young people to create their own emotional first aid kit and develop personal coping mechanisms. Plus a resource of discussion questions/activities which you can use in your group, district network or region to help equip other leaders.

4. ENJOY

Aim:

- To recognise that we're all on a journey and need to look after one another.

ACTIVITY – I CAN

Equipment needed: Ball of string/wool.

Sit the group on the floor in a circle with everyone facing inward toward the centre of the circle. Invite the group to think about how they'd complete the following sentences.

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- When I feel sad I can.....
- When I feel angry I can.....
- When I feel hopeless I can.....
- When I feel happy I can.....
- When I feel anxious I can.....

Holding firmly to the end of the string, toss the ball of string to someone in the circle who has not yet received the string. Invite them to complete one of the following sentences out loud. Then, holding firmly onto the string, he or she tosses the ball on to another person. The string should be held tightly and above the ground at all times. Continue until everyone has received the string at least once and told the group one coping method.

Explain: We're all different, we all experience the world differently and yet we all experience loss and have needs to support that. Within this group we can see how connected we are and how, with all our ideas, we can support each other.

ACTIVITY – CREATIVE PRAYER

Equipment needed: Pebbles (enough for each person) with different words painted on them – hope, peace, comfort, joy, rest, love – and Resource Sheet C – Bible Verses.

Explain to the group that many people get comfort from their relationship with God especially His promises in the Bible. Show the group the collection of pebbles with words like hope, peace, comfort, joy, rest, and love on them. Invite them to choose an appropriate pebble to take home with them. Explain that the word on each pebble refers to a promise from God, their Father. Distribute the appropriate Bible verses relating to the pebbles. Close in prayer.

Check out the Volumise section (within the online GB Leaders' Resource Base) for a video clip from Will Taylor equipping you to think about how young people can help to support one another. Plus a resource of discussion questions/activities which you can use in your group, district network or region to help equip other leaders.



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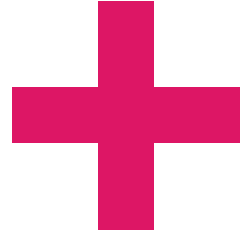
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RESOURCE SHEET A – Emotions Wheel



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RESOURCE SHEET B – The First Aid Kit



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RESOURCE SHEET C – Bible Verses

Hope

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope – Jeremiah Ch.29:11.

Peace

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid – John Ch.14:27.

Comfort

I've picked you. I haven't dropped you. Don't panic. I'm with you. There's no need to fear for I'm your God. I'll give you strength. I'll help you. I'll hold you steady, keep a firm grip on you – Isaiah Ch.41:10.

Joy

The Lord your God is with you, the mighty warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in His love He will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing – Zephaniah Ch.3:17.

Rest

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly – Matthew Ch.11:28-30.

Love

I've never quit loving you and never will. Expect love, love, and more love! – Jeremiah Ch.31:3.