

# Unlocking Feelings



Creative Activities and reflections  
on the themes of Emotions;  
connecting the way we feel in day  
to day life with Bible stories



Developed by  
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# Unlocking Feelings

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**\*Group Leaders are advised to review this section before they begin.**



# Why Feelings?

This is a set of related activities and discussion questions for use in small groups.

It includes six sessions; each on a different emotion. Plus a 'mopping up' session, looking at what the group have learned together.

We all have emotions! Sometimes they are helpful, sometime less so. They will affect each of us in different ways and some days we are better at coping with them than others!

Some of us will experience some emotions particularly strongly or often. It's important that we support one another as we explore these feelings, instead of judging each other.

Understanding ourselves and each other a bit more, can be helpful and hopefully we will be able to see that Jesus 'gets us' too.



# Feeling Angry

**Question** What makes you angry??  
(Go round and let everyone speak)

**Activity** What does anger feel like?  
Put the emoji sheet (page 7) on the table and ask people to jot down the physical symptoms we can experience when we're angry. Chat about the different levels of anger and how they feel at the time, and afterwards



**Question**  
Is anger really what it seems?



**Activity**

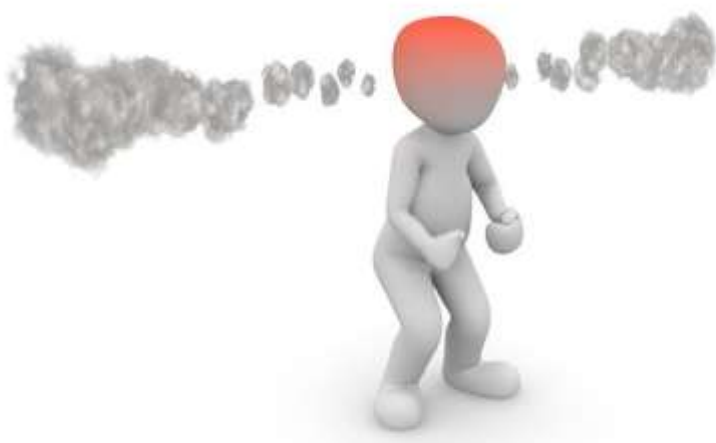
Give out the Anger Iceberg (page 8) and a look at it together for a few moments.

Does it make sense to us? Can we relate to it?

Is anger always "simply" anger?

Does the diagram help us think about things differently?

In the resources section (page 9) are some blank diagrams. Depending on the group, each of us might like to think of a situation where we have been angry – maybe the one at the start of the discussion – and now fill in what was actually going on under the surface for us.



Or the group might just want to discuss that - or take the ideas home to think about later.

**Question**

Is anger always a bad thing?

**Activity**

There are two Bible passages on page 10 That you can read aloud, or together.

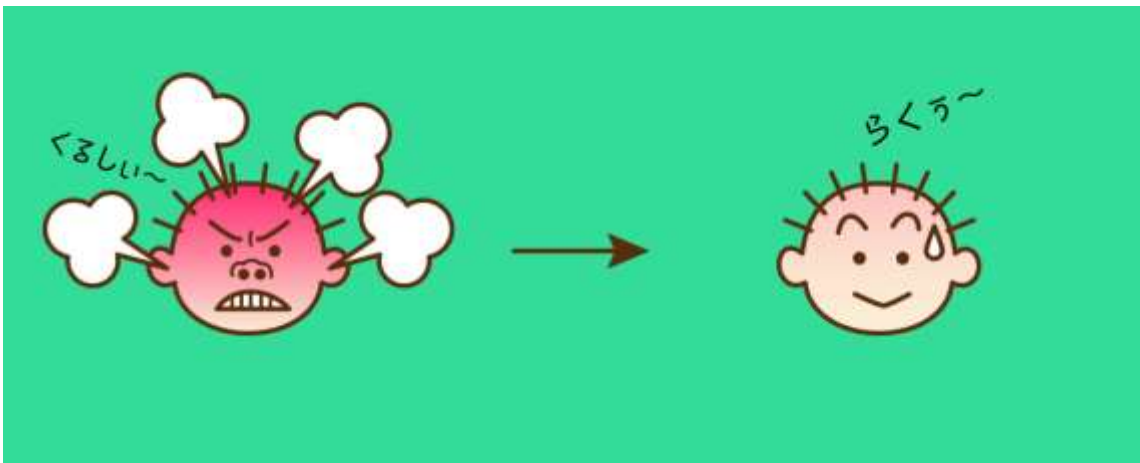


**Questions**

- How does this help us in our discussions about anger?
- Does anything surprise us in these 2 passages?
- Is Jesus really preaching one thing then doing another?

**Activity**

Can we, as a group, put together 10 top tips for managing our anger. You can use page 11



**Closing Challenge**

Are any of us willing to try out any of the top ten tips this week, and if so, which ones?



# Anger Resources





# Anger Iceberg

Our emotions affect our thoughts, behaviors and the sensations we feel in our bodies. What changes do you notice?

When we are angry, there are often other emotions under the surface

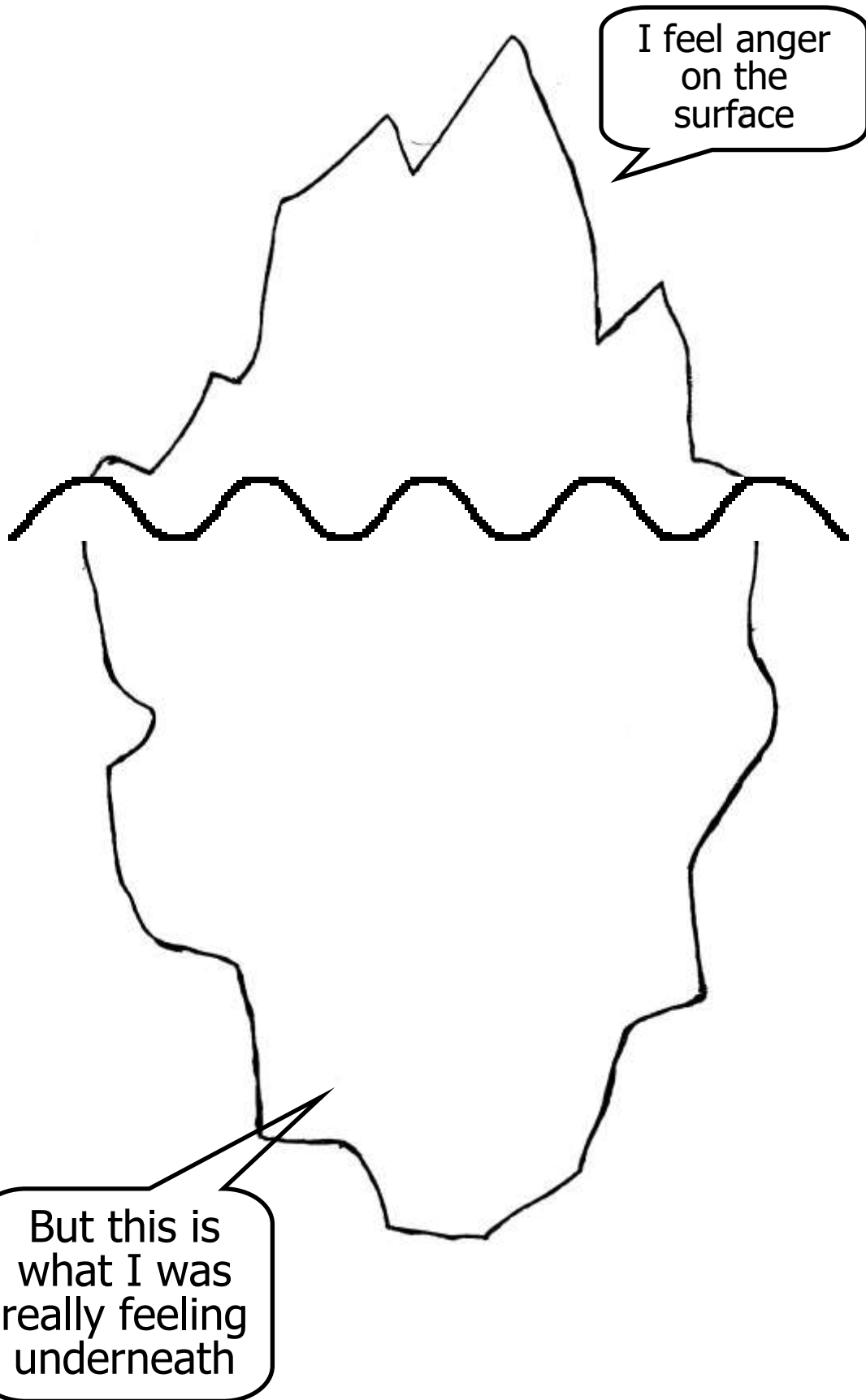
Icebergs are giant floating pieces of ice found in the coldest parts of the ocean.

What you can see from above is just a tiny part. Most of the iceberg is hidden under the surface.





# Anger iceberg



**Matthew 5:38 - 42**

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But now I tell you: do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, let him slap your left cheek too. And if someone takes you to court to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well. And if one of the occupation troops forces you to carry his pack one mile, carry it two miles. When someone asks you for something, give it to him; when someone wants to borrow something, lend it to him.

**John 2:13-17**

It was almost time for the Passover Festival, so Jesus went to Jerusalem. There in the Temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and pigeons, and also the moneychangers sitting at their tables. So he made a whip from cords and drove all the animals out of the Temple, both the sheep and the cattle; he overturned the tables of the moneychangers and scattered their coins; and he ordered those who sold the pigeons, "Take them out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" His disciples remembered that the scripture says, "My devotion to your house, O God, burns in me like a fire."



# Our (10) Top Tips for when you're feeling angry.....



# Feeling Peaceful

## Question

What does the word, "peace" make us think of?



(Go round and let everyone speak)

## Activity

Look together at the sheets (page 14-15) with the quotes re inner peace and let people have some time to read them through.

Which quotes do people like? Are there any we're not sure we agree with?

How does this help us think about "peace"?

## Question

What takes our peace away?

*(the Peace in Chaos picture on page 16 gives some ideas! As a group we might want to draw or write our own version or additions)*



## Activity

There are two Bible passages on page 17 That you can read aloud, or together.

## Questions

- What do we think Paul is trying to get across to the Philippian Christians?
- Does this help us see why, and how, we can have inner peace?
- How helpful is this?

Come On Inner Peace



I Don't Have All Day

## Activities

Try a calming exercise to regulate breathing (several options attached on page 18-19)

Discuss the '10 healthy habits from people with inner peace' on pages 20 – 21

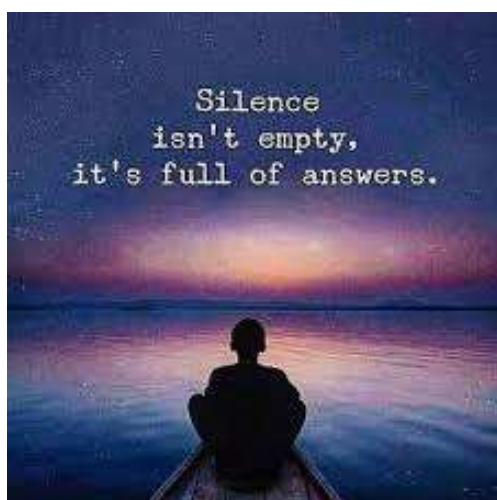
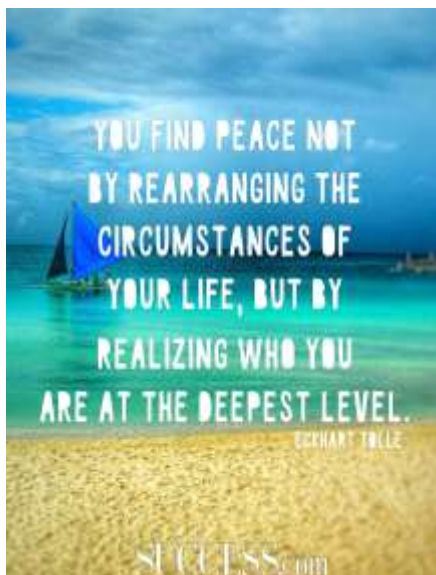
## Closing Challenge

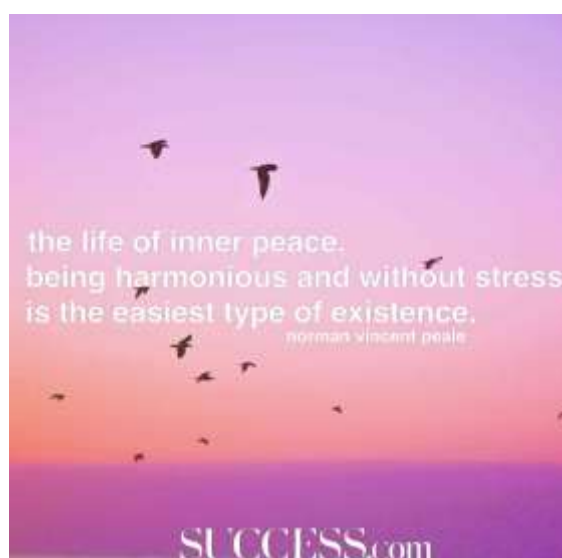
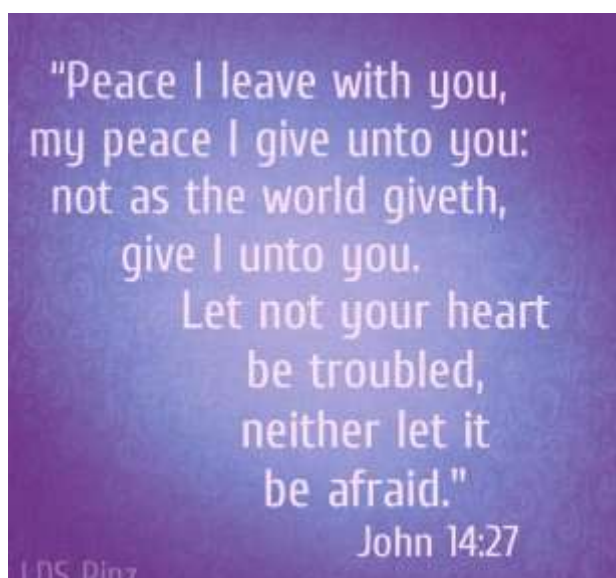
- Can we try to take notice of the times we feel peaceful this week?
- Can we take note of the times when our peace gets stolen this week?
- What might we do to regain it?





# Peace Resources







# Peace Resources



you can have... **Peace in CHAOS**

Math 6:19

John 14:27



## Philippians 4:4-9 and 11a-13

May you always be joyful in your union with the Lord. I say it again: rejoice!

Show a gentle attitude toward everyone. The Lord is coming soon. Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.

In conclusion, my friends, fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honourable. Put into practice what you learned and received from me, both from my words and from my actions. And the God who gives us peace will be with you.

And I am not saying this because I feel neglected, for I have learned to be satisfied with what I have. I know what it is to be in need and what it is to have more than enough. I have learned this secret, so that anywhere, at any time, I am content, whether I am full or hungry, whether I have too much or too little. <sup>1</sup>I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me.



## Practical Deep Breathing Exercises to Help You Handle Stress Better

### 1. Pause F.O.R. Peace

This is simplicity at its finest. No matter what you're facing, you can pause, even if only for 10 seconds. Actually, the very point of this exercise is that you use just a tiny moment to reconnect with the present moment, and how you DO want to feel.

The "F.O.R." stands for:

**FOCUS on one, long, deep breath.** Inhale deeply, feeling your diaphragm and belly expand (not your chest). Exhale through your nose or mouth for the same count, or longer. Be fully conscious of this breath.

**OBSERVE your mind.** Does it wander during this breath? It's okay if it does. Where does it go? Can you try again to be right here, right now?

**REFOCUS** if you need to, bringing your mind back to your breath. If your mind wanders, just acknowledge this without judgment, and return to one deep breath.

Pausing for a few conscious breaths gives your head a chance to catch up with the emotion. The purpose of this exercise is to simply be aware of how you're being, wherever you are and whatever you're doing.

### 2. Equal Breathing

There really are only two things you need to do to feel the balancing effect of this exercise:



## Practical Deep Breathing Exercises to Help You Handle Stress Better - *continued*

**Inhale** through the nose for a count of four.

**Exhale** through the nose for a count of four.

You can work your way up to a count of six or eight as you become more practiced. Just breathe for equal counts through the nose. Use it during the day or at nighttime to promote better sleep.

This technique is a gentle yet powerful way to calm the nervous system, repel stress, and enhance awareness.

### 3. Progressive Relaxation

This is a deep breathing technique you can employ when you have a little more time (but you still don't need more than a few minutes), and the ability to close your eyes. You can effectively practice this technique lying down, sitting, or standing.

**Close your eyes.**

**Focus intently on each body part**, one at a time, from your toes working your way up to your eyes — calves, knees, thighs, butt, stomach, back, chest, neck, arms and hands.

**Breathe deeply through the nose and tense each muscle group**, one at a time. Hold the tension for three to five seconds per muscle group.

**Breathe out slowly through the mouth and relax** the tensed muscle group. Slowly release for three to five seconds, or longer.



## 10 healthy habits from people with inner peace ....

### 1. Not engaging with toxic people

The people we surround ourselves with affect the way we think, feel, and behave. Engaging with people who lie, gossip, bully, or cheat takes a toll on our well-being.

Mentally strong people don't waste energy trying to change toxic people. We establish healthy emotional and physical boundaries.

### 2. Avoid excessive self-blame

Thinking everything is 100 percent our fault - whether it's a failed relationship or an accident - will affect the way we see ourselves and the world around us. We can't always prevent bad things from happening.

Mentally strong people take appropriate accountability. We recognize we're responsible for our choices, but we also acknowledge factors beyond our control - like the state of the economy, the weather, and other people's choices.

### 3. Don't chase happiness

Thinking we need to be happy all the time will backfire. Momentary pleasure is much different from long-term satisfaction.

Mentally strong people are willing to put in the hard work it takes to gain contentment. We refuse to give in to instant gratification or temporary indulgences. We look for ways to build a brighter future by creating long-term goals.

### 4. It's not always good to stay comfortable

It may seem like staying inside your comfort zone is the key to feeling good in life. But avoiding discomfort always backfires in the end.

Mentally strong people face our fears, venture into unknown areas, and test our limits. We know that being uncomfortable is tolerable and allowing themselves to experience discomfort is the key to living a better life.

### 5. Avoid developing a victim mentality

Thinking the world and the people in it are out to get us will prevent us from being our best. In fact, if we blame all of our problems on external circumstances we'll never take responsibility for our own lives.

Mentally strong people acknowledge our choices, even in the face of tragic circumstances. We focus on the things we can control, and we refuse to waste our time and energy hosting pity parties.





## 10 healthy habits from people with inner peace .... *continued*

### 6. Quit trying to impress people

You could waste a lot of your life trying to make people like you. Depending on admiration from others, however, gives others power over you.

Mentally strong people are comfortable in our own skin. We don't waste our time worrying about whether other people approve of our choices. Instead, we focus on living according to our values.

### 7. Abandon the pursuit of perfection

Striving for excellence is healthy. But insisting on perfection is an uphill battle. You'll never feel good enough if you set the bar impossibly high.

Mentally strong people accept that we're going to fail and make mistakes. We are able to acknowledge our own flaws and weaknesses.

### 8. Give up holding grudges

You may think holding onto a grudge somehow punishes someone else. But, in reality, clinging to anger and hatred only reduces *your* life.

Mentally strong people let go of grudges so we can focus our energy on more worthwhile causes. That doesn't mean we allow ourselves to be abused by people, however. It just means we don't allow pent-up resentment to overtake our lives.

### 9. More is not better—give up the quest for material things

No matter how much money you make, a bigger house, a nicer car, or more expensive clothing won't give you peace of mind. Expecting material possessions to satisfy your needs will leave you sorely disappointed.

Mentally strong people aren't necessarily minimalists, however. We can enjoy nice things. But we don't expect our material possessions to give us joy and contentment.

### 10. You cannot rely on complete self-reliance

Thinking you can do everything on your own is about acting tough - not being strong. There will be times when asking for help is important.

Mentally strong people aren't afraid to admit when we need help. Whether we rely on a higher power, ask for professional help, or lean on a friend during a time in need, we gain strength from others. Knowing we don't have to have all the answers gives us a renewed sense of inner peace.



# Feeling Anxious or Worried

**Question** What do we mean by anxiety?

**Activity**

- Give out postcard pieces of paper (page 24) and felt tips.

Ask people to draw what anxiety looks or feels like (no right or wrong answers). We need to not chat, but each just do our own and no letters, words, numbers or symbols can appear in the drawing.

- Go round and let everyone briefly explain their drawing
- Now put our ideas and common themes together. Can we create a drawing that we all agree with of a single image of what anxiety looks and feels like for us.
- Once we have done this as a group, ask the question: "If we could add words to the image, what would we they be?"

**Question** How anxious are you?

**Activity**

- Give out the quiz sheets (page 25) and let everyone spend a few moments ticking the boxes appropriate to them.
- Ask the question if people are surprised by the number of boxes we have ticked – are we more, less anxious than we thought we were? This can be a discussion or just for private thought ....





**Discussion** If helpful, have a discussion around anxiety – it's causes etc. There is space here to have a bit of input and discussion using the links on page 26 on Understanding anxiety & what keeps our anxiety going?

***(Mental) Health Warning:*** - *If you are not confident about discussing this with your group consider finding someone sympathetic with relevant expertise who will come and support you to manage this session well. Above all allow what you do and discuss to be led by the group's expressed wishes, and concerns.*

**Activity** There is a Bible passage on page 27 that you can read aloud, or together.

- Questions**
- Does it surprise us that Jesus talks to his followers about anxiety?
  - Does it relate to the discussions we've already been having?
  - How helpful do we find this advice?

**Closing Challenge** It's good to be prepared (forewarned is forearmed and all that!)

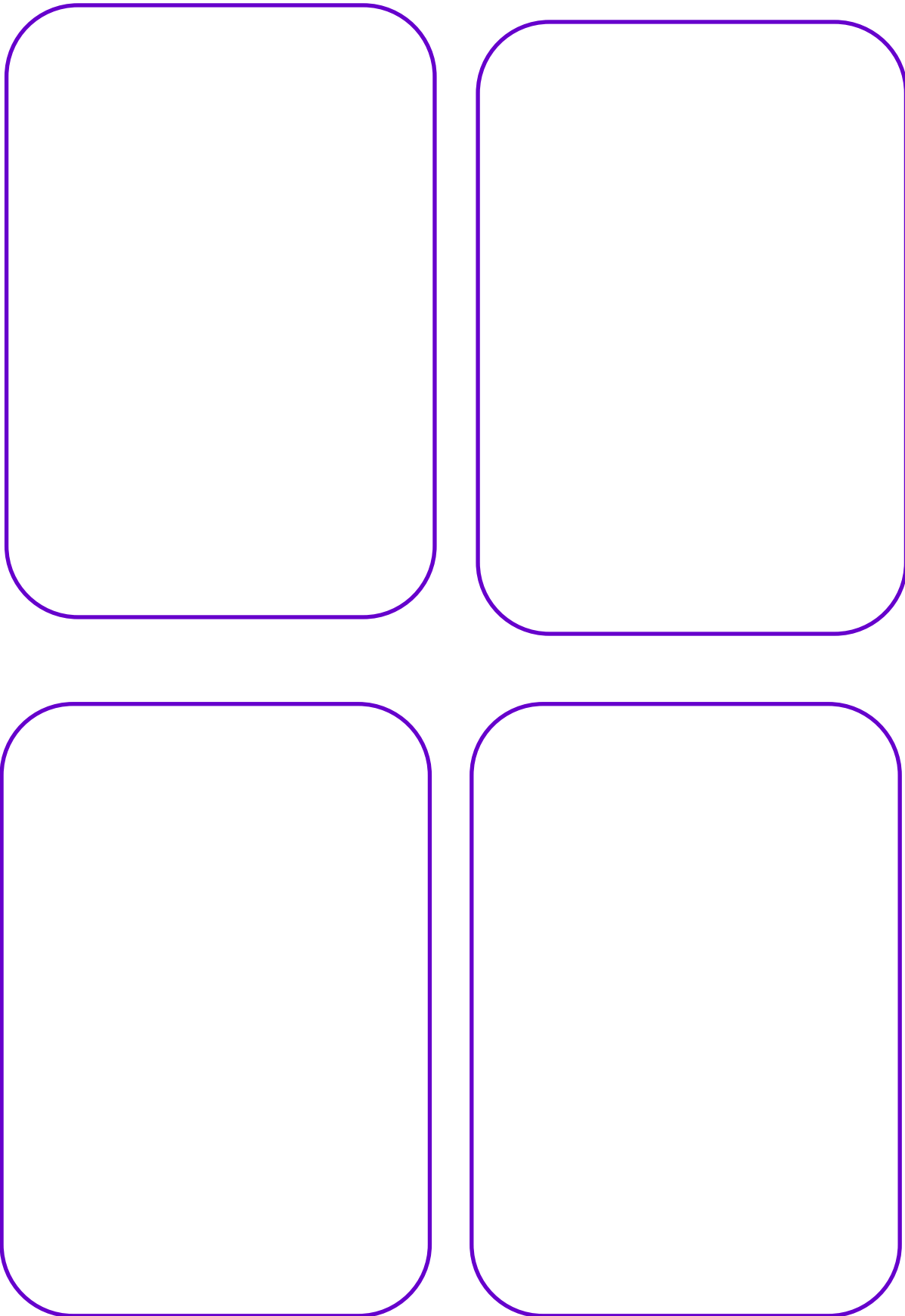
We can each fill in the anxiety prep sheet (page 28), thinking of a situation that makes you anxious and how you might prepare to handle it differently next time.

And then can we put that into action this week?



## Blank Postcards for first activity

*Print half a dozen or so for each person.*

The image displays four identical blank postcard templates arranged in a 2x2 grid. Each template is a rounded rectangle with a thin purple border. The interior of each rectangle is completely blank, intended for a drawing or message.

## Self-Test for Anxiety

This questionnaire— called the GAD-7 screening tool— can help you find out if you might have an anxiety disorder that needs treatment. It calculates how many common symptoms you have and— based on your answers— suggests where you might be on a scale, from mild to severe anxiety.

GAD-7 stands for "generalized anxiety disorder" and the 7 questions in the tool. Choose one answer for each of the 7 questions below:

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
1. Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge	0	1	2	3
2. Not being able to stop or control worrying	0	1	2	3
3. Worrying too much about different things	0	1	2	3
4. Trouble relaxing	0	1	2	3
5. Being so restless that it's hard to sit still	0	1	2	3
6. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable	0	1	2	3
7. Feeling afraid, as if something awful might happen	0	1	2	3
<b>Add up your results for each column</b>				
<b>Total score (add column totals together)</b>				

### What your total score means

Your total score is a guide to how severe your anxiety disorder may be:

- 0 to 4 = mild anxiety
- 5 to 9 = moderate anxiety
- 10 to 14 = moderately severe anxiety
- 15 to 21 = severe anxiety

If your score is 10 or higher, or if you feel that anxiety is affecting your daily life, call your doctor.

*The GAD-7 was developed by Drs. Robert L. Spitzer, Janet B. W. Williams, Kurt Kroenke, and colleagues, with an education grant from Pfizer, Inc.*



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1

Before using this material with a group please ensure that you can support one another to work through the results or refer those who need it to appropriate support.



## What causes anxiety? What keeps our anxiety going?



You can find further information at the links below. Select what will be most useful for your own group and present the information in an appropriate way and only in response to issues and questioned raised in the group.

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/generalised-anxiety-disorder/overview/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/causes/>

<https://overcoming.co.uk/742/What-keeps-anxiety-going#:~:text=We%20can%20see%20that%20the,way%2C%20a%20cycle%20is%20established.>

***(Mental) Health Warning:*** - *If you are not confident about discussing this with your group consider finding someone sympathetic with relevant expertise who will come and support you to manage this session well. Above all allow what you do and discuss to be led by the group's expressed wishes, and concerns.*



## Matthew 6:25-34

"This is why I tell you: do not be worried about the food and drink you need in order to stay alive, or about clothes for your body. After all, isn't life worth more than food? And isn't the body worth more than clothes? Look at the birds: they do not plant seeds, gather a harvest and put it in barns; yet your Father in heaven takes care of them! Aren't you worth much more than birds? Can any of you live a bit longer by worrying about it?

"And why worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow: we do not work or make clothes for themselves. But I tell you that not even King Solomon with all his wealth had clothes as beautiful as one of these flowers. It is God who clothes the wild grass—grass that is here today and gone tomorrow, burned up in the oven. Won't he be all the more sure to clothe you? What little faith you have!

"So do not start worrying: 'Where will my food come from? or my drink? or my clothes?' (These are the things the pagans are always concerned about.) Your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things. Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things. So do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings.







## Being ready for things that make us anxious

If we know we are going into a situation that is likely to make us anxious there are things we can do beforehand to be better prepared

**What's is the situation?**

**What it is about it that might make me anxious??**

**How have I handled similar situations in the past?**

**What can I do to be better prepared?**

**What Anxiety warning signs can I look out for?**

**What can I do to help me cope?**

# Feeling Playful

*Not quite an emotion—more a state of mind!*

**Activity** Remember together about what we used to play as children: Outdoor games, imaginary play, board games, card games.

What were our favourite games? What are our memories of playing out? Or at school playtimes?  
Can we remember how it made us feel?

*No need to rush this. Give people time to share memories*

**Activity** Explain that we are going to play a game together. Play a simple game Eg marbles, tiddly winks, snap, Pit etc



- Questions**
- How often do we play nowadays (perhaps go through the categories again - outdoor, imaginary etc?)
  - What stops us playing more? (Could be physical barriers and/or emotional)
  - How did you feel when I said we were going to play a game?







Share the image above and discuss it together

**Activity** There is a Bible passage on page 34 That you can read aloud, or together.

- Questions**
- What does this tell us about how Jesus sees us?
  - And how Jesus sees children?
  - What can children teach us?

**Closing Challenge** Consider if we need to be more playful. How might each of us make that happen this week?



## Matthew 18:1 - 5

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, asking, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?"

So Jesus called a child to come and stand in front of them, and said, "I assure you that unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven. The greatest in the Kingdom of heaven is the one who humbles himself and becomes like this child. And whoever welcomes in my name one such child as this, welcomes me.



# Feeling Sad

*A little word with a big range! And an emotion we all experience in many different ways*



## Activity

Working together on a big sheet of paper, write down as many words as we can think of for sadness

*(Thesaurus gives: unhappy, down, low, blue, depressed, gloomy, grieved, dismal, melancholy, glum, dejected, downcast, grief-stricken, tearful, down in the dumps – but encourage the group to use our own words e.g. "off it" etc.)*

## Activity

Together watch Michael Rosen's 'Sad Book' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcpCLpCKZOc&t=194s> or read it aloud for the group (but do practice first - It is about the death of his son).

## Questions

Are there parts of the book that we particularly associate with? Any bits that we don't connect with or understand?

*(Give plenty of time for people to share their stories)*



**Activity** Give out tear-drops (page 35). Let everyone have as many as they want. We can all draw or write on them the kinds of things that usually make us sad. Discuss together.

**Activity** Music is one of the ways in which people connect about sadness. Listen together to one of the songs links on page 36.



**Question** How is sadness together different from sadness alone

**Activity** There are two Bible passages on page 34 that you can read aloud, or together.

**Questions** Does it help to know that people in the Bible (even the really faithful ones) experienced times of sadness and despair? Does it help to know that Jesus felt it too?

**Closing Challenge** If appropriate make and say a simple prayer together, asking God to be with each of us, whatever our circumstances and emotions might be.





## Psalm 119:25-28

I lie defeated in the dust;  
revive me, as you have promised.  
I confessed all I have done, and you  
answered me;  
teach me your ways.  
Help me to understand your laws,  
and I will meditate on your wonderful  
teachings.  
I am overcome by sorrow;  
strengthen me, as you have promised.

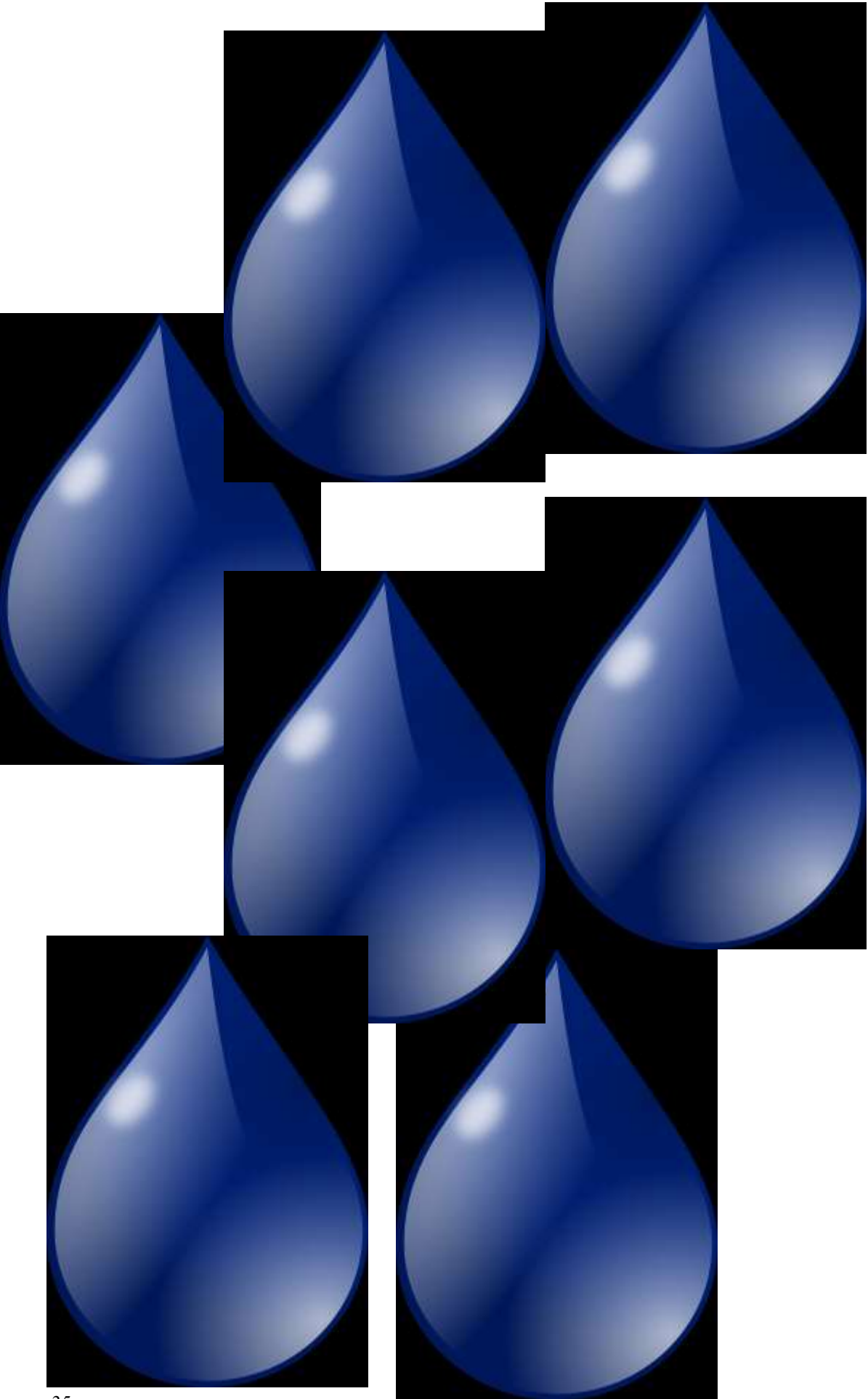
## Matthew 26:36-39

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. Grief and anguish came over him, and he said to them, "The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me. Stay here and keep watch with me."

He went a little farther on, threw himself face downward on the ground, and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, take this cup of suffering from me! Yet not what I want, but what you want."



# Sadness Resources



# Sadness Resources



## Listen to: -

- Annie Lennox sings 'Dido's Lament' with massed online choir  
[https://www.classicfm.com/composers/purcell/annie-lennox-didos-lament-with-london-city-voices/?fbclid=IwAR2k8VMLH3eiCXLvY7dIIRhYTm\\_Vu0Napp-Fb0K8WW6Tu3IX68s6WxTGEuXY](https://www.classicfm.com/composers/purcell/annie-lennox-didos-lament-with-london-city-voices/?fbclid=IwAR2k8VMLH3eiCXLvY7dIIRhYTm_Vu0Napp-Fb0K8WW6Tu3IX68s6WxTGEuXY)
- The Lament for Boromir - from the Lord of the Rings Film - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDN1sA3Fpqq&list=PLvM65\\_qRuWZsrXapSiO47DihU5HD2TP6N&index=78](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDN1sA3Fpqq&list=PLvM65_qRuWZsrXapSiO47DihU5HD2TP6N&index=78)
- Eric Clapton's song River of Tears - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CrH8sylmw0>
- Weep with me by Rend Collective - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UEAIWY72acc>
- O Lord you never let go by Matt Redman - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y83-vMeWc9E>
- Rob Halligan, Singing Myself to Sleep - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngSvshPin5Q>



# Feeling Happy

*Ah the elusive – happiness! So important, so great when we have it, sometimes so fleeting, or it feels like that anyway.*

## Activity

Play Pharrel Williams song “Happy” with the lyrics – [here](#)  
Does the song make you happy? Why?  
How many songs can you all name that are about happiness or have “happiness” in the title?  
Which songs make you happy?

## Activity

Everyone is given 4 small pieces of paper and invited to draw or write down 4 different things that make us happy (remember to be honest – we don’t need to just put worthy/important things down – for instance, my 4 would include having nice clean stairs and finding a bargain!)

Take it in turns to put the 4 pieces of paper down on a table whilst briefly explaining what we have written/drawn. No one should comment on each other’s.

As a group, can you find common themes in what everyone has chosen? Move the cards around to group similar ones together and try and briefly explain it e.g. “home” or “family” or “having fun”.



**Question** Do the things that make us happy stay the same or have we changed? A good way to think about this is think about yourself one, three, or five years ago

**Activity** There is a Bible passage on page 39 that you can read aloud, or together.

**Question** How do you think the psalm writer would respond if asked what made them happy?

**Closing Challenge** Give everyone a bucket template (page 40).

Mental health experts talk about our need to fill "our bucket" with the things that bring us joy (and spot the holes that drain it out!) Everyone can spend a few minutes writing or drawing things in their buckets – both



things we currently have, and things/habits we'd like to add to our own Bucket of Joy



## Psalm 92

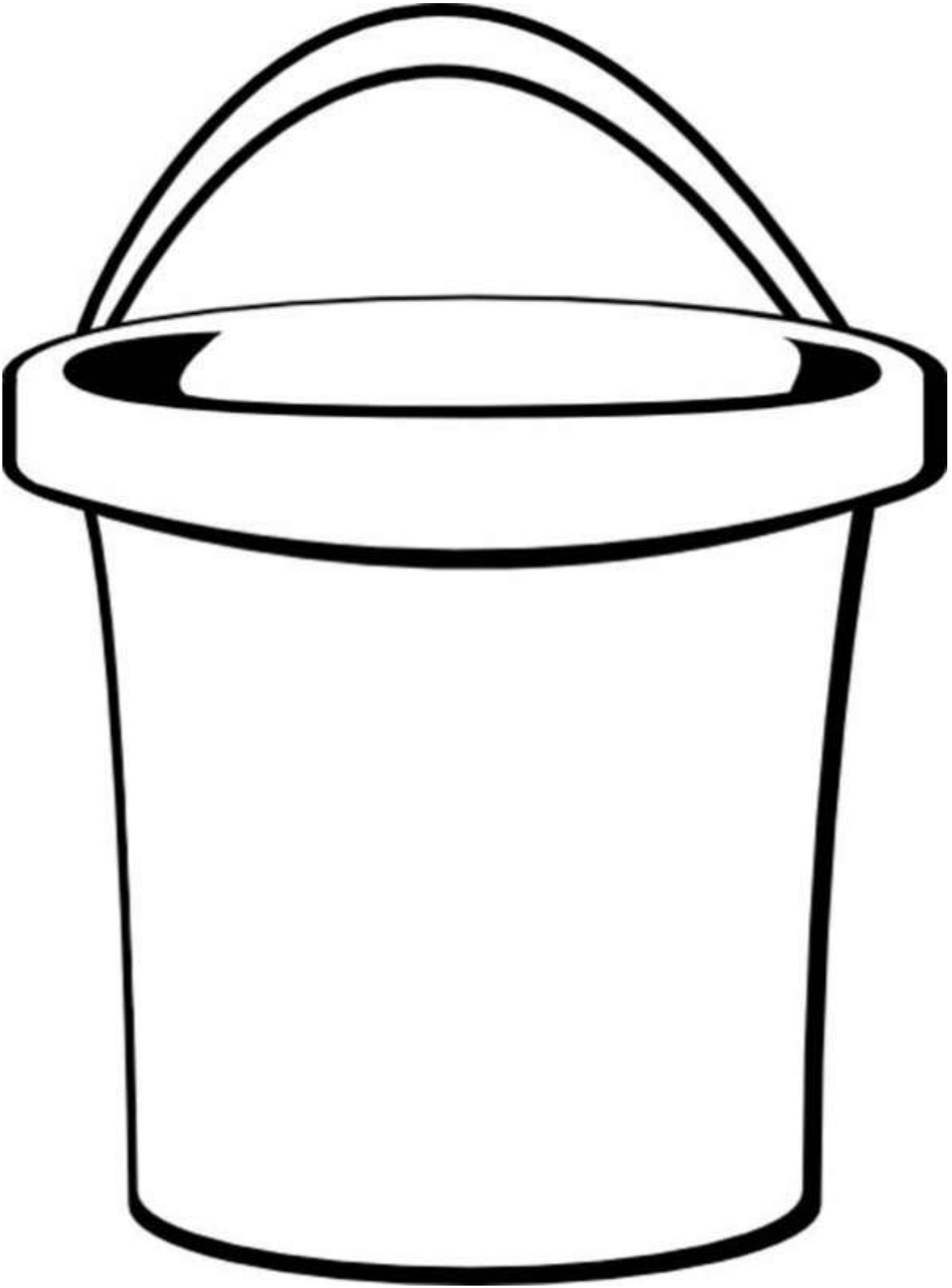
How good it is to give thanks to you, O LORD,  
to sing in your honour, O Most High God,  
to proclaim your constant love every morning  
and your faithfulness every night,  
with the music of stringed instruments  
and with melody on the harp.  
Your mighty deeds, O LORD, make me glad;  
because of what you have done, I sing for joy.

How great are your actions, LORD!  
How deep are your thoughts!  
This is something a fool cannot know;  
someone who is stupid cannot understand:  
the wicked may grow like weeds,  
those who do wrong may prosper;  
yet we will be totally destroyed,  
because you, LORD, are supreme forever.

We know that your enemies will die,  
and all the wicked will be defeated.  
You have made me as strong as a wild ox;  
you have blessed me with happiness.  
I have seen the defeat of my enemies  
and heard the cries of the wicked.

The righteous will flourish like palm trees;  
we will grow like the cedars of Lebanon.  
We are like trees planted in the house of the LORD,  
that flourish in the Temple of our God,  
that still bear fruit in old age  
and are always green and strong.  
This shows that the LORD is just,  
that there is no wrong in my protector





# Looking back

*Before we finish we can take some time together to consider what we have learnt together.*

**Activity** Think back through the course sessions – anger, peace, anxiety, playfulness, sadness and happiness

**Activity** Can we each name:

- Something we have enjoyed
- something we have found difficult
- something we have learned about ourselves
- something we will take away from the things we have done together

**Question** . How can we continue what we have been doing together?  
• What good habits might we take up?

**Activity** Ann Voskamp has a great scheme called the Joy Dare – and it can be found here [Take the Joy Dare - Ann Voskamp](#) with free printables, which although are for 2012 are still accessible.



# For Group Leaders

For Group Leaders

**Resource name:** *Unlocking Feelings*

**Authors / Facilitator:** Cathy Westby (Unlock Hull)

**Aims:** To enable participants to engage with their own emotions and stories and to grow in self understanding and self confidence. To create opportunities to explore how their own story connects with the bigger story within scripture. To be able to reflect on the impacts, both positive and negative, of our attitudes and actions. To enable participants to reflect theologically on situations in their lives and in society, and to make reflective and informed choices about how we respond to challenging experiences and circumstances.

**Outcomes:** The group will be more able to engage with each other, using a reflective theological cycle, starting from their own story or the stories of others in the group, or things that have affected them on a daily basis, without necessarily having to have to understand at an academic level. The group will be more able to refer to the connections made with Scripture, and intended changed approaches in similar situations in the future. The group will be able to reflect on their own experiences, and topical issues which affect them, and to do this in relation to scripture. The group will be better able to manage the points of crisis and tension in their lives with reference to scripture.

## Session Content

### Unlocking Real Life Experience

**Reference points:** the sharing of participants' own stories is facilitated starting from their own feelings, memories and experiences. Some of this materials is sensitive. You need to know your group and assess what it is appropriate to do with them.

**Own story:** Within our own narratives and situations are threads that can be woven into scripture and understood, helping us recognise our connections with God's story. The contents of this resource were designed for a specific group of people with particular needs. Other groups will have different needs.





# For Group Leaders

**Group leaders** are encouraged to take some time to work with their group to agree some **ground rules** as part of their first session together. This should include participants taking responsibility for their own level of sharing.

**Ice Breakers and opening questions:** See individual sessions for suggestions or insert your own.

**Revealing the Good News of the Down to Earth Christ**

**Bible:** Passages used (examples):

**Matthew 5:38 - 42**

**John 2:13-17**

**Philippians 4:4-9 and 11a-13**

**Matthew 6:25-34**

**Psalms 119:25-28**

**Matthew 26:36-39**

**Psalms 92**

*The Bible passages suggested are a selection from which facilitators can choose; if the group's discussions go in a different direction you may need to choose others that are more appropriate.*

**Releasing Life Changing Skills and Confidence**

By connecting God's story with our own, we begin to encounter alternative responses to the issues and pressures we encounter in our day to day lives.

**Reflective Activities**

Creative activities to enable further reflection are offered as part of each session. Leaders are advised to review them in plenty of time to allow for the gathering of any necessary resources.



**Unlock**, by various names, has been around since 1972, trying to help (mainly) urban Christians to understand and share their faith appropriately. Our life experience matters; our stories; our joys and sorrows. The Bible has plenty to say, more than we'll ever know, about our lives, if we know how to read it and apply it - if we know how to **UNLOCK** it!

Unlock uses an approach to engaging with the Bible that is different to traditional Bible studies (see page 45). Unlock's approach starts from the stories and experiences of group members, whereas a more traditional approach starts from the Biblical text. Unlock's approach has been found to work well with small groups of urban, oral learners from outside of the church. There are many free resources on the Unlock website designed for use with such groups. However, because each of these resources was designed for a particular group in a particular time and place they are unlikely be a perfect fit for your group as they stand. They are offered more as inspiration to you to design your own materials along the same lines, rather than as ready to use packages.

Unlock usually works with people outside of church who may be interested in finding out a bit more about faith but perhaps are not attracted to the formal methods of learning often associated with church. Our work is based on a reflective learning cycle and is a tried and tested way of introducing people to the Bible in a non-threatening way. Many churches have activities that draw in members of their surrounding community but then struggle with how to move on from those relationships into exploring faith, especially in urban environments where anything formal might be treated with suspicion.

This resource has been developed by an Unlock volunteer in Hull. The sessions were developed to meet the needs of specific groups of local people.

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# The Unlock Learning Cycle

## Unlocking real life stories of urban people

Start with the group telling stories from their real life experience.

## Leading to more experience

What we learn now is learnt for life and changes us. We also learn to keep reflecting!

## Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ

The real life stories are connected to and compared with similar situations in the Bible.

## Releasing life changing skills and confidence

Change happens as a result of linking real life experience with the Bible. This change often leads to action among others.

