





A youth group session to celebrate the launch of **Headstrong**: Youthscape and Mind & Soul's new online project to support young people's mental wellbeing. Everything you need to run a brilliant **60-90 minute** session online or in person.



Mental wellbeing is one of the biggest issues facing the young people in your youth group – and it's got even more urgent with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Now's the time to address this – and we've got a session for you, ready-to-go.



DR KATE MIDDLETON

HEADSTRONG PROJECT DIRECTOR

WELCOME TO HEADSTRONG

HEADSTRONG IS A NEW MENTAL WELLBEING PROJECT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE THAT LAUNCHED IN SEPTEMBER 2020.

Mental wellbeing was already an important issue for young people but, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, those needs have become even more urgent. There's never been a more important time to support young people in this way. But youth leaders can often feel unsure about how to talk to young people about problems like anxiety or self-harm – or know where to direct teenagers to get help that is clearly grounded in Christian faith and practice.

Youthscape, with the support of the Mind & Soul Foundation, is launching Headstrong to meet those needs. It's an online space aimed exclusively at young people with a focus on promoting positive mental wellbeing.

Headstrong has advice and insights from doctors and other professionals, including experienced youth workers. But it's also a space where young people can contribute, posting their own vlogs and content. It's full of humour and fun, with competitions and quizzes to help lift mood. Over the next few months many new services are being rolled out, including live support groups and hundreds of new videos offering advice and support.

Youthscape has been supporting young people's mental wellbeing for more than fifteen years, launching selfharmUK in 2010 and developing a wide range of mental health resources including Alumina, a programme to support those who are self-harming. Our work is grounded in our experience with face-to-face support for young people's mental wellbeing in Bedfordshire.

The Mind & Soul Foundation is one of the most respected UK Christian charities in the field of emotional and mental health. Led by Rev Will Van Der Hart, Dr Kate Middleton, Dr Chi-Chi Obuaya and Dr Rob Waller, the Foundation offers education and training to help churches bridge the gap between mental health and Christian faith.

Together we have developed and launched Headstrong – a bold and exciting new resource that gives young people the help and advice they need.



WHAT'S THIS SESSION ABOUT?

The pandemic has turned the lives of millions of children and young people upside down. Many are finding it hard to cope with isolation, a loss of routine, anxiety about the future, a disruption to their education, and in some cases, difficult or traumatic experiences at home.

Young people's mental wellbeing was a concern before the pandemic. Prof. Jean Twenge has famously described young people today as...

"THE MOST PHYSICALLY SAFE, BUT Emotionally fragile generation In History"

Anxiety is one of the biggest issues. According to Childline, there has been a sharp rise in the number of young people seeking help because of anxiety as they struggle to cope with the demands of modern life – including social media, school and exams, and global issues like climate change. Now the coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated those anxieties and brought new ones, like concerns about going back to school, fear of family members catching the virus, job losses, and financial challenges for parents and carers.

The Christian faith has much to say about anxiety and fear. Despite that, our faith and emotions are often kept separate. Mental health is rarely discussed in youth groups, even though so many teenagers are struggling with it.

This session gives you a chance to talk openly and honestly with your youth group about mental health and anxiety with the help of respected psychologist Dr Kate Middleton. Based on a Bible study of two key passages from the New Testament, young people will learn about the psychology of anxiety and how to manage it and see the difference Christian faith has to play in our wellbeing.







WE'VE WRITTEN THIS SESSION ASSUMING YOU'LL BE Running it online using a platform like zoom or something similar.

If you're looking for background music for this session why not try the **HEADSTRONG BACKGROUND TUNES** on the playlist section of our website... For guidance on creating an online safeguarding policy to support your digital youth work...

https://www.beheadstrong.uk/fun-stuff/background-tunes

https://www.youthscape.co.uk/store/product/safer-places-online

Some groups may be able to meet in person. If that's the case, you'll need to adapt the programme and we've given some ideas on how to do that at the end of this resource.



GAMES TO GET YOU STARTED

Open up the session with a fun **"GUESS THE FEAR"** quiz. Below are 10 multiple choice questions about fears and phobias. The correct answer is in **BOLD**.

We've provided a PowerPoint / Keynote set of slides for the quiz and you can show this by sharing your screen. For the more tech-savvy, why not create a basic **Kahoot! account** and run an interactive Kahoot! quiz. You can also run the quiz the traditional way with a leader acting as the quiz master and simply reading out each question to the young people.

2. WHAT IS A FEAR OF SPIDERS CALLED?

- A. ARACHNOPHOBIA
- **B. OCTOPHOBIA**
- C. SPIDOPHOBIA
- D. AGORAPHOBIA

3. ATYCHIPHOBIA IS THE FEAR OF FAILURE?

- A. TRUE
- B. FALSE

4. WHAT IS OPHIDIOPHOBIA THE FEAR OF?

- A. LIZARDS
- **B. SNAKES**
- C. DRAGONS
- D. TORTOISES

5. FEAR OF CARS IS CALLED AUTOPHOBIA?

- A. TRUE
- **B. FALSE***

* Autophobia is the fear of being alone.



https://www.beheadstrong.uk/be-head-strong/HSQuizSlidesPPT

https://www.beheadstrong.uk/be-head-strong/HSQuizSlidesKey

1. CLAUSTROPHOBIA IS THE FEAR OF...

- A. CLOWNS
- **B. OPEN SPACES**
- C. SMALL SPACES
- D. SANTA CLAUS

GAMES TO GET YOU STARTED

6. NYCTOPHOBIA IS FEAR OF THE...

- A. DAY / LIGHT
- **B. DARK / NIGHT**

7. WHAT IS THE FEAR OF BEING WITHOUT YOUR MOBILE PHONE CALLED?

- A. NOPHOPHOBIA
- **B. NOPHOBIA**
- C. NOPHONOPHOBIA
- D. NOMOPHOBIA

8. A FEAR OF DANCING IS KNOWN AS CHOROPHOBIA?

A. TRUE

B. FALSE

9. IF YOU'RE AN EPHEBIPHOBE, YOU'RE AFRAID OF WHAT?

- A. TEENAGERS
- **B. OLD PEOPLE**
- C. BABIES
- D. A MID-LIFE CRISIS

10. HIPPOPOTOMONSTROSESQUIPPEDALIO-PHOBIA IS THE FEAR OF...

- A. MONSTROUS HIPPOS
- B. POTS OF TOMATOES
- C. THORNS ON ROSES
- **D. LONG WORDS**



GAMES TO GET YOU STARTED 2. NAME THE FEAR

Specific fears can have some weird and wonderful names. Just take hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia. It's funny how the phobia name for the fear of long words is itself a ridiculously long word!

This next game involves your young people using their IMAGINATIONS to think up names for some newfound phobias. Have them work either individually or as a team but encourage them to think outside the box. You could even make it a competition with prizes for funniest or most scientific-sounding name per round.

For this game you could send young people into groups in **BREAKOUT ROOMS** and give them one challenge at a time – give them **2 MINUTES** to come up with some suggestions and them come back together to share your answers before sending them back with the next challenge.

WHAT WOULD YOU NAME THE FEAR OF...

FEAR OF... JUSTIN BIEBER

FEAR OF... BAKED BEANS

FEAR OF... DOLPHINS

FEAR OF... ALIENS

FEAR OF... DONALD TRUMP

FEAR OF... MARSHMALLOWS

FEAR OF... SPOONS

FEAR OF... NO WIFI

FEAR OF... NO / RUNNING OUT OF TOILET PAPER

FEAR OF... CORONAVIRUS



GAMES TO GET YOU STARTED **3. BISCUIT CHALLENGE**

This session is designed to be fun and engaging – an exciting launch of a new project. However, it's also true that the purpose of this resource is to start the conversation about mental health and anxiety in a post-Covid world. It's a topic that will likely resonate deeply with many of the young people you work with and some may be at different places in the mental wellbeing journey. If at any point during the session you need an activity to give the young people a brain break and allow them to process, or even if you're simply needing something to fill time, we recommend one of the biscuit challenges.

There are **TWO DIFFERENT CHALLENGES** you could try with the group. The first requires each person to have a whole packet of biscuits.



The young people will need to make sure they have a pack handy before the call starts. Biscuit type doesn't matter but it's a good idea to get a parent or guardians permission.

The group have **3 MINUTES** to build the most impressive structure they can out of their pack of

chosen biscuits. Encourage them to think creatively – whether they want to go for height, complexity of design, whatever! Ask the young people to take a photo of their completed work of art and upload it to the Headstrong Instagram site **@beheadstronguk**. The site will feature regular challenges just like this one and participants are encouraged to share their challenge results through online posts.



The second biscuit challenge involves each young person having just one biscuit. Again, think through the practicalities of making sure everyone knows what they need to bring to the session if you're asking them to supply their own biscuits.

This challenge is a classic. Have each young person balance the biscuit on their forehead. When a leader shouts go, everyone must try to work the biscuit from their forehead into their mouths using only their face muscles to move the sweet treat. If the biscuit falls off mid challenge, simply pick it up and start again. The first to get the biscuit from forehead to mouth, chew and swallow it, is the winner!



GAMES TO GET YOU STARTED 4. INTRODUCING HEADSTRONG

1. Headstrong video

Play the Headstrong video to introduce Youthscape's new mental health resource for young people. It's a short video designed to introduce them to the main features of **beheadstrong.uk**.

https://www.beheadstrong.uk/be-head-strong/HSIntro

2. Young person's review

Ask a young person from the group to share their review of the site. You'll need to direct them to it a few days in advance and ask them to look through the different features and prepare a **3-MINUTE REVIEW** to share with the group. They might want to think about:

- What they liked about the site
- What they'd like to see added to the site over the next few months
- An article, story or video that particularly helped or impacted them.

3. Explore the Website Game

This game is designed to help young people familiarise themselves with the **beheadstrong.uk** website. There's a series of **10 QUESTIONS** and all of the answers can only be found on the site. The best way to run this quiz is to make it all about speed. The first person who gets a correct answer to a question gets a point. You could even have a prize at the end to award to the person with the most points overall. If the young people can't find the answers straight away, encourage them to use the search bar to help get the information they need!

Q1. HEADSTRONG'S TAG LINE IS "REAL LIFE, REAL FAITH, REAL..."?

ANSWER: WORLD

Q2. THE DROP-DOWN MENU ON THE RIGHT OF THE HOME SCREEN HAS HOW MANY PAGE OPTIONS?

ANSWER: 9 (INCLUDING RED AND GREEN)



GAMES TO GET YOU STARTED 4. INTRODUCING HEADSTRONG

Q3. WHAT IS YOUTHSCAPE'S ADDRESS? (CAN BE FOUND AT THE BOTTOM OF ANY PAGE)

ANSWER: BUTE MILLS, 74 BUTE STREET, LUTON, LUI 2EY

Q4. IN THE "STORIES" SECTION, WHAT IS THE NAME OF JULS' HORSE FRIEND?

ANSWER: DOUG

Q7. WHAT IS THE "MY STORY" PAGE ABOUT?

ANSWER: CONTRIBUTING A VLOG FOR HEADSTRONG

Q8. IN THE DISNEY/PIXAR EMOJI MOVIE TITLE CHALLENGE, WHAT'S THE ANSWER TO QUESTION 8?

ANSWER: LION KING

Q5. NAME THREE BEHEADSTRONG PLAYLISTS ON SPOTIFY? (CAN BE FOUND IN 'FUN STUFF')

ANSWER: HEADSTRONG END OF DAY TUNES

ANSWER: HEADSTRONG GET UP AND GO!

ANSWER: HEADSTRONG HAPPY SONGS

ANSWER: HEADSTRONG BACKGROUND TUNES

ANSWER: HEADSTRONG CONFIDENCE BOOST

Q6. WHAT TYPE OF ZOOMER ARE YOU? HOW MANY ZOOM PERSONALITY TYPES ARE THERE?

ANSWER: 12

Q9. WHICH HEADSTRONG CONTRIBUTOR TALKS ABOUT SHOPLIFTING WHEN THEY WERE 14? (SEARCH IN STORIES)

ANSWER: LUCIE SHUKER

Q10. IN THE "INFO" SECTION, WHAT HASHTAG IS USED IN THE TITLE OF SEVERAL ARTICLES?

ANSWER: #WANTMORE



5. GETTING INVOLVED

Headstrong has advice and input not only from medical professionals and youth workers, but also young people themselves. Members of your group can **SUBMIT CONTENT** and videos to share their stories and help others.

There's a process for submitting content which will be moderated by the Headstrong team.

https://www.beheadstrong.uk/be-head-strong/HSGetInvolved

Encourage your group to think about how they could contribute to Headstrong in the coming weeks and months. What videos or subjects would they like to see covered? Do they have a story to tell that would help others?



6. TALKING ABOUT ANXIETY

1. What stresses me out

You can send young people the activity sheet and ask them to print it out and complete it. You can split them into breakout rooms to work on their own activity sheet but chat and discuss their answers with each other as they do so.

https://www.beheadstrong.uk/be-head-strong/HSActivity

Introduce the activity by looking together at the grid on the activity sheet. Notice that it consists of **FIVE** different stress levels, starting with the lowest (1 – Doesn't really stress me at all) at the bottom and the most stressful at the top (5 – Totally stresses me out). For each level there are **FOUR** spaces.

Young people have to work their way through the list of stressful experiences at the top of the activity sheet and decide where they would put each of them on the grid. They write the word or phrase in the grid once they have decided. There are **TWENTY** squares and **FIFTEEN** items on the list, but only **FOUR** spaces on each stress level. There is no set way to complete the task but young people may find it easier to start at the top and look through the list to find the four that stress them the most, and then the next level and so on.

Explain to everyone that there is space for them to add to the list if they feel a significant cause of stress for them has been missed out.

Once they have completed this task, move young people on to share their answers with one other person. The aim is to discover how similar or different they have rated each item. The final question for discussions asks students to consider whether they are more or less stressed about some things on the grid now compared to during lockdown?

If there is time, this activity could usefully end with a discussion together about what has been stressful about young peoples' experiences through lockdown and the return to school.



6. TALKING ABOUT ANXIETY

2. Let's get the conversation started...

The aim of this section is to have an open group discussion about fears and anxieties, both related to the coronavirus pandemic and in other areas of our lives.

Be aware that young people should not feel pressured to share anything unless they choose to do so. In your group there will be some young people who have anxieties you're aware of, but it's also likely there's some battling things you have no idea about!

Start the conversation on neutral ground. Facilitate the young people sharing what it is that is worrying them right now and keep their answers in mind as you work through the rest of the material.

If you think the young people you work with would be happy to share their vulnerabilities with one another feel free to have this as an open discussion. However, if you think it would be more beneficial to give the group a way to raise points anonymously there are options for both the digital and in person meeting. You can have this conversation together using Zoom, but you may also want to create a more anonymous setting to enable young people to feel safe about sharing. To do this use the video chat whiteboard feature on Zoom or similar platforms. This enables you to share a blank whiteboard on which other people on the call can "annotate" the whiteboard and add their own comments. These annotations are anonymous and can be written by dragging a mouse or finger across the screen or typed into text boxes. You can load the blank whiteboard screen, write a question using the textbox, then leave space for the young people to have their say. To avoid any awkward silences, you could play some music in the background from your own computer. This could be some reflective worship music, upbeat pop album or why not try out one of the Headstrong playlists on Spotify. If you do choose to put on some background music, ensure the "share computer sound" feature is enabled (often found in advance sharing options).



6. TALKING ABOUT ANXIETY

Possible questions:

- What has stressed you out or made you feel anxious about the coronavirus pandemic?
- What's the biggest source or stress and anxiety in your life?
- Looking ahead to the next few months, what's worrying you most?
- What do you do to help you when you feel stressed or anxious?

3. How do I show I'm stressed or anxious?

This activity asks young people to think about the different ways they show (or not) that they're anxious. We all show anxiety differently – for some it will make them withdrawn, others will be irritable or bad tempered, others with try and distract themselves. The activity isn't about deciding what is right or wrong – it's a first step to thinking about how we show anxiety and becoming more self aware.

Ask students to grab a piece of paper or a notebook and draw an iceberg on it. Remember that the greater part of an iceberg is hidden under the water so the part that you see is much smaller than the part that you don't see. Then ask students to write in the iceberg section under the water **THREE** or **FOUR** things that are making them anxious. If they've done the previous exercise, they'll already have a good idea of what these might be.

Now they need to look at the top of the iceberg above the water and write in up to three or four things that describe the way they show anxiety. Possible examples collected from other young people during the development of this resource include becoming withdrawn, wanting to be alone, irritable, tearful, short tempered or needing to talk.

For some young people, thinking about how they display anxiety will be a challenging exercise, as they may not be used to thinking about it in such a direct way. The purpose of the activity is not to make a definitive list, but simply to start the process of self-reflection and awareness.

Once everyone has completed the activity, take it in turns to share your answers.



7. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT ANXIETY?

Talk 1 Fear Less: You don't have to run. Matthew 14:22-31

Ever heard it said that there is a 'do not fear' in the Bible for every day of the year? What do you do when you DO feel afraid, or anxious, and hearing that doesn't make it go away? Find out what the bible **REALLY** say about fear and how can it help you in anxious and uncertain times.

https://www.beheadstrong.uk/be-head-strong/Fearless1

So in the story the disciples have had a lot on – and that affects how they respond in the moment Jesus walks out to them over the water. They're a lot more prone to anxiety than they perhaps usually would be.

Questions to discuss

 Have you had moments where you've felt like this? How do you find your stress and busy-ness levels affect how prone you are to anxiety? Another thing that is clear in the story is that the disciples are not thinking super clearly. They don't even recognise their friend when he walks over to them (admittedly coming walking on the water was a bit unexpected but still!). And they are clearly in panic mode, feeling totally overwhelmed.

2. How do you find overwhelm effects your thinking? Have you ever had moments where it is hard to think clearly? What does overwhelm feel like for you?

This is quite a complex question for young people, and the answers are really individual. But you're looking to draw out answers around thinking – negative or panicked thoughts like 'I can't do this' or 'I need to get out of here' or 'This is gonna be a disaster' – or physical feelings 'I feel sick' or 'I feel like I need to run away' or 'I can't sit still' or 'My heart races'.

In verse 27, the original Greek language literally tells us Jesus told the disciples to 'take courage'. He's actually repeating a saying from the time which is all about finding inner strength – recognising that although this is scary, you can do it anyway. Probably the closest equivalent we've got in English is 'you've got this!'.



7. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT ANXIETY?

Of course he's telling them they have **EVEN MORE** than just their own inner strength – they've got him. But they still need to grab a moment to calm down that anxiety response so they can think clearer again.

3. How do you manage when anxiety peaks and starts to feel overwhelming? What have you found you can do to help you drop anxiety in those moments and feel calmer?

Again, this could be a challenging question for some young people. Try to draw out practical examples – get away from the situation, go for a walk, distract yourself with something – sources of additional support – call a friend, text someone – or physiological tools like breathing exercises or something that helps with relaxation, like exercise. Be ready to share your own examples too! In this story Peter does something amazing – even though he is in a tough and anxiety provoking situation, he is able to step out of his comfort zone – and he is able to do something he probably would never have thought he could do!

4. So many of the important things we want to do in life will involve managing anxiety. Have you ever had an experience of doing something that made you feel anxious? How did it go?

This is a moment for the young people to share their stories of overcoming anxiety – remember this is about everyday things like taking an exam or test, going on first date, performing in a show etc. You might need to encourage them in order to draw these stories out.

5. What would be your tips for someone struggling with anxiety that is stopping them doing something they want to do?



"Jesus doesn't calm the storm around Peter that day – but he does calm the storm of fear IN Peter. Managing fear and anxiety isn't about somehow becoming super human and fearless. It is about learning how to respond to them so you can fear less." – Kate Middleton



7. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT ANXIETY?

Talk 2 Fear Less: Peace beyond human understanding. Philippians 4:6-7

We all have moments in life where our worries and anxieties build up and can start to feel overwhelming. So what do you do when your mind feels in pieces because of all the things you are worrying about. Find out how to hand those things over to God and find peace when your mind is way beyond rational.

https://www.beheadstrong.uk/be-head-strong/Fearless2

Life is always busy but in recent months there has been so much going on! A lot of people are finding their minds feel overwhelmed with the number of things there are to worry or think about.

- Have you had moments recently where worries have felt overwhelming, or where you don't know what to do?
- 2. What do you do in moments when that happens?
- **3.** What does it look like to hand your worries over to God? How do you think you can do that in practice.

The verse says that handing our worries over to God not only helps get them out of our minds, but enables something supernatural – something beyond human ability – that God steps in and helps us manage tough stuff which otherwise might feel too much.

Let's take a moment to pray and let God in



LET'S PRAY ABOUT THIS

1. Reflection ahead of prayer

What things have you found yourself worrying about in recent days? Can you grab a moment now to write down any worries that are on your mind? Are there specific things you need to hand over to God?

Give the young people some time and space to write down their worries. If you are leading this on zoom some of them might want to turn off their cameras for this - or you can put a countdown on the screen so they know how long they have.

In the first session, Jesus reminded the disciples that they didn't need to feel overwhelmed because he was with them. Sometimes we need a reminder that God is with us.

2. Prayer ministry

Divide the young people into small groups and have them talk through prayer requests and pray for one another. This introduces an element of vulnerability with young people sharing the things that are troubling them with their peers. It might not work with every group, but it could be a great opportunity to encourage young people to pray for their friends. For an online session, why not see if your video meeting platform allows you to divide the group into smaller discussion or break out rooms. If you do decide to create small groups online, make sure you think through the safeguarding issues that might arise from doing that, i.e. are leaders in the group? If so, there would need to be at least 2 leaders to each small group.

3. Creative prayer

Following the session, you might decide that the best way for the young people to process and reflect on what has been said is for them to spend some time individually in prayer. This could just simply be that they take a moment of quiet to talk to God, with perhaps some worship music playing the background. Or you could try a more creative prayer time.

Or perhaps have the young people get a piece of paper and coloured pens to draw or write. Ask them to reflect on the evening and have them draw a picture or write a prayer about what they've learned, what they feel God has been saying to them, where they feel they are with God right now or just something that really stood out to them. Have them do this away from everyone else – either spaced out in your meeting room, or with cameras and microphones turned off on your video call. Give them 10 minutes or so to really invest in this activity. After, you could give them the option to share what they've drawn or written or let them keep it as a personal moment between them and God.

Alternatively, why not use the Headstrong colouring sheet found at the back of this guide to help young people who may struggle with the idea of drawing their own image from scratch and use this to help them reflect on the session. The colouring sheet contains a Bible verse from The Passion Translation.





4. Say the Headstrong prayer together

One other option is to finish the evening together in prayer by reading aloud the Headstrong prayer.

Lord God, thank you that you care about every detail of our lives. Even in the midst of chaos and uncertainty we can depend on you.

Today we hand our worries to you. We give you the things we've written down, the things on our minds and the things in our hearts we didn't dare put down on the paper. May your peace, beyond our human understanding, guard our hearts and minds today and in the coming days and weeks. Help us to remember you are with us in the moments that anxiety peaks. Help us not to be overwhelmed and to find courage and comfort from you.

Amen.



NOTES ON RUNNING THE MATERIAL IN PERSON WITH YOUR YOUTH GROUP

Guess The Fear

If you're meeting in person you can still use a PowerPoint / Keynote presentation or Kahoot1 quiz provided you've got a screen or TV to display the slides.

Talking About Anxiety

This activity can be done individually but it may work best in small groups allowing young people to complete their own activity sheet but also discuss their answers with each other.

Talking About Anxiety – Let's get the conversation started

For an in-person youth meeting, the best way to keep comments anonymous is by writing things down on a slip of paper and popping them in a box/bag/hat/etc. Someone can then collate all the answers to one place such as a large sheet of paper or a physical whiteboard and that can remain as a visual throughout the event.

Biscuit Challenge

Just a preparation note, you can supply all the packets necessary or ask young people to bring a pack with them to the session.

Prayer Ministry

Make sure each huddle of young people adheres to any social distancing guidelines!



HEADSTRONG COLOURING SHEET





https://www.beheadstrong.uk/be-head-strong/BeBraveBlank

https://www.beheadstrong.uk//be-head-strong/BeBrave



HEAD STRONG