

ASPIRE

CHOOSE LIFE!



WORSHIPARTS

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ASPIRE – CHOOSE LIFE!

'...today I place before you Life and Death, Blessing and Curse. Choose life!'
Deuteronomy 30:19 (CEV)

Series introduction

We have called our motivational sessions for this term 'Choose Life'. You might wonder what that is talking about. After all, life just happens. No one gets to choose to be born.

However, as you grow you get the opportunity to make more and more choices. In fact they come at you, whether you are ready or not.

'Choose Life' is actually a quote from the Bible. We will be referring to the bible a bit during this series, and it has a lot to say about choices. The verse the title comes from says:
'...today I place before you: Life and Death, Blessing and Curse. Choose Life!'

It is recognising that some choices are life and death issues, and other choices affect whether your life is blessed or cursed.

Choosing to be healthy and safe, or to avoid harmful substances, for instance, are often life and death choices. They can literally shorten or extend length of your life. It is also talking about the belief that we have souls, a spiritual identity that is separate from our bodies, and the choices we make about that.

Other choices also affect how enjoyable or rich our life is: whether we feel overwhelmed by life and whether we achieve the things we would like to achieve; be that good times, great friendships and relationships, doing amazing things, or whatever.

We are going to talk about good choices, bad choices, and no choice.

Making no choice can be the most dangerous option of all, because when you don't make a choice, other people or circumstances will end up making it for you, and choices made by others cannot be relied upon to have your best interests in mind.

Growing up is about taking responsibility for more of your own choices. Our aim is that when you have finished these classes, you will be able to be aware of the moments when your choices matter, and will be able to make good ones.

We'll start with being alert to choices: mindfulness.

1. CHOOSING TO BE MINDFUL

'Because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel.' Psalm 139:14 (MSG)

JUNIOR & SENIOR

Outcome

Learning a mindfulness technique – Nepsis – to overcome fear and panic reactions.

Suggested narrative

We're going to start by learning to check our thoughts by becoming more mindful. It is a technique for getting your mind to a place where it can make choices, not let fear or stress make choices for you.

Every now and then we are confronted with stressful situations and experiences that throw our bodies into overdrive. The survival part of our brain, the amygdala sends alarm bells to get the body ready for anything. In the short term this fear reaction is helpful. It's the brain gearing up for a major event or reacting to an emergency.

The downside of this is that the brain shuts off any chance to think calmly about what's really happening. You become all instinct and reaction, rather than careful decision making.

Sometimes you need to reset your thinking, to reduce the panic and become aware of what's happening around you or within you.

For thousands of years people have been doing this by practicing being more mindful. This is about being more conscious about what our brains are doing; what we're thinking about, how we're feeling ... that sort of stuff.

For Christian believers the bible promises a special God-given mindfulness. It says 'because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel.'

Activity: Nepsis

(See *Printable Resources* on page 26)

For centuries Christians have used mindfulness activities as a way to pray and become more aware that God is always with them.

One of these ancient techniques practiced by Greek Orthodox Christians as far back as the year 1000 is called Nepsis. Today we're going to try Nepsis and see what it's like. By the way, you don't have to be a Christian, orthodox or Greek to give it a go.

Remember though that the people who have done this throughout history probably did it more than once, so after we do it today, your homework is to try it a few times during the week to really see if it can make a difference for you.

Let's start by choosing a phrase we can think about whilst we're learning *Nepsis*.

If you want to think about God, you could try:

- Be still / and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10)
- Trust God / He will help me (Psalm 37:5a)

Or if you prefer not to specifically mention God's name, you could try:

- Look straight ahead / fix your eyes on what lies before you (Proverbs 4:25)
- Do not be anxious / about anything (Philippians 4:6)

Once you have chosen one, find a comfortable spot to sit or stand.

When you are ready, take a long slow breath in and as you do think of the first half of the phrase you're using. Hold your breath for a moment and then whilst thinking of the second half of the phrase breathe out slowly letting all of your breath out.

Alternate more physically demanding posture: If you are standing, you may like to lift upward and outward as you inhale and close and crouch your body into a ball shape as you exhale which may give your thoughts even more to concentrate on as well as the phrase.

Continue, inhale & think of the first half; exhale and think of the second half. Keep going.

If your thoughts wander away from your phrase, that's OK! Acknowledge that you've wandered away from the phrase and just pick it up again being conscious of your breathing.

In fact, each time you notice your thoughts or feelings being distracted that is part of practicing *Nepsis*. You are seeing the patterns of your mind and becoming more self-aware.

When you are ready, open your eyes and become more conscious of where you are right now.

Discussion

What was that like? Would anyone like to share what he or she noticed about their thoughts? What was it like to think about only 1 thing or to breathe slowly?

Aspire Challenge

Perhaps this week you could try the practice of *Nepsis* again, even try it once each day, and let us know how you go next week.

2. CHOOSING TO VALUE YOURSELF

'Body and soul, I am marvelously made! What a creation!' Psalm 139:14 MSG

Outcome

Learning that the place to start making positive choices in our life is choosing to value ourselves. Christians believe this is because we are each a unique, precious creation; loved and valued by God.

Suggested narrative

Did anyone practice being more mindful of thoughts during the week? Did you discover anything new about your thoughts or being still?

You've probably heard the old saying 'sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me'. Its saying, in a simple way, that our value has nothing to do with what people say about us.

In fact, I believe our value has got nothing to do with what we think or how we feel at all. It's not dependent on our personal circumstances; our family background, religion or how much money we've got in the bank. And it's certainly not dependent upon how many times we've failed in comparison to succeeded.

Our value is linked to our being – it's in us, intrinsically part of who we are. Christians believe our lives are created by God, on purpose and with a reason. No one has been created by mistake.

The bible says it like this:

You (that's God) ...you shaped me first inside, then out;
you formed me in my mother's womb.
I thank you God—you're breathtaking!
Body and soul, I am marvellously made!
What a creation!
You know me inside and out,
you know every bone in my body;
You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit,
how I was sculpted from nothing into something.
Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth;
all the stages of my life you already know,
The days of my life all prepared
before I'd even lived one day.

That comes from the bible's book of poetry and songs, the Psalms. There are 150 of them, and this is a section of number 139. In ancient times people almost certainly danced to the psalms. It's a great thought to imagine ancient people celebrating and moving their bodies to this song about being a marvellous creation of God, the same as we are learning to do today.

But more than just our bodies, Christians believe God gave us a soul, a spiritual identity inside our bodies, and that each of our souls is unique, special; made and loved by God.

In order for someone to know us that well, they must really care. We must have value!

Illustration: have a crisp new \$5 note (any note will work).

Here is a \$5 note, its brand new, straight from the bank. What is its value?

Now tell me, what if I scrunched it up, stepped on it & got it dirty, would it still hold the same value? Or would it change?

It would not change, its value stays the same even if it's not as new or is dirty, scrunched up and wrinkled over.

You are precious – just as you are. Our value comes from the one who created us and we all have the same value despite our differences.

JUNIOR

(See *Printable Resources* on page 27)

Our fingerprints are unique; no one has the same design. Let's print our fingerprints onto a poster of our verse to keep here as a reminder of differences yet our same value.

SENIOR

Invite participants to gather into groups of 4 to answer the following questions;

- What do you think about our value?
- Do you think some people have more value than others? Why or why not?
- Is it because we are so used to comparing ourselves to others? What is unhealthy comparison?
- How do we show others we value them?

Aspire Challenge

One of the good things about being more aware of valuing ourselves is that it makes it easier for us to value others. Perhaps you might like to do something to show you value someone else. Be prepared next week to report back something you did to show another person that you value them.

3. GROWING STRENGTH TO CHOOSE

'Yell a loud "no" to the Devil and watch him scamper. Say a quiet "yes" to God and he'll be there in no time.' James 4:7 MSG

Outcome

Learning to be alert to the moments when we choose how to live life. Learning that each time you make a good choice, you grow stronger for the next occasion.

JUNIOR

Suggested Narrative

Last week we were going to try and value someone – has anyone got any experiences to report back about their attempts to show another person that you value them?

Strength can mean a lot of things. Today we're talking about the strength to make choices that help us work through tough circumstances we experience.

When we are babies, we hardly make any choices at all. Everything is done for us. The older we get, the more and more choices we are able to make.

Some of these choices might be:

- To eat breakfast or not
- To try hard at school or not
- A healthy or unhealthy lifestyle.
- Whether or not to make a little more effort to care for the environment.
- Who to be friends with
- Choices about whether to do what all our friends are doing, or stand out.
- Whether to speak up when someone is being bullied or not.

You can think of others I am sure.

Choices can be scary. Some people respond by avoiding growing up, they let other people continue to make choices for them way too long.

Making the right choices in life, especially in difficult situations, builds our strength.

Our strength of character is a bit like our muscles. It is a fact that if we spend two weeks in bed because we are sick, we temporarily lose between 25% and 30% of our muscle strength. We get it back when we get active again, because muscles get strong and stay strong from being used.

In the same way, if we get in the habit of making our own choices, our strength to choose gets stronger.

You may have noticed that when I read out the list of some of the choices facing us, some are two fold, to do something or not.

Napoleon Bonaparte once said that 'nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide'.

The bible promises that one reason that good choices get easier the more you make them is because God promises to help and protect us. For example, it says 'Yell a loud "no" to the Devil and watch him scamper. Say a quiet yes to God and he'll be there in no time.'

Activity: Tag team storytelling

(See *Printable Resources* on page 28)

Purpose: To get participants to think imaginatively about choices while on their feet.

What to do:

1. Ask everyone to stand in a circle. One of the Leaders starts the activity by saying a single sentence to start. This sentence must lead to a choice. For example: 'Brian was walking to school past some shops and noticed that an older person dropped a \$20 note' *Note to Teacher: See the activity card for this lesson for other examples.*
2. The next person in the circle follows this with another sentence, then the next person adds another sentence and so on. The idea is that the group tells a story but the plot can change at any time depending on what an individual says.
3. If the story comes to a natural conclusion, offer another starting sentence that offers another choice. For example: 'It was looking like an awesome weekend, with a party on Saturday night at my friend Tom's house. But I found out Tom's parents won't be there. And my parents have said I can't go to parties where there are no parents...'

Discussion

How difficult was it to think of a sentence on the spot?

Did you try to plan what you were going to say before it was your turn?

Did you have to change it when it was your turn, because of what other people had said?

How did that make you feel?

Which do you think is more difficult? Doing something or not doing anything?

Why?

Aspire Challenge

Just like push-ups help build our physical muscles, so to do making good choices build our inner self. Becoming stronger in making choices helps us be the best we can be.

As you go into the week, try and take a moment or two each day to be more mindful of the choices you make. Are you making the best choices you can or is something stopping you from making helpful choices? Are you avoiding any choices?

SENIOR

Suggested Narrative

Strength can mean a lot of things. Today we're talking about strength as the power to make choices that help us work through tough circumstances we experience.

If you think of your life as a boat on the ocean, its not going to always be smooth sailing. There will be storms, high waves and calm waters. How we respond to the storms or tough life stuff will effect the impact they have on us. Everyday we are faced with choices.

Activity: Brainstorm choices

What are some of the choices that face people you know?

Discussion

Napoleon Bonaparte once said that 'nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide'.

What do you think about Napoleon's comment?

Making the right choices in life, especially in difficult situations, builds our strength. The bible promises that one reason that good choices get easier the more you make them is because God promises to help and protect us. For example, it says 'Yell a loud "no" to the Devil and watch him scamper. Say a quiet "yes" to God and he'll be there in no time.'

Checking out some of the choices you listed as facing young people today, we can see that they could be put into two categories; to do something or not.

Which do you think is more difficult? Doing something or not doing anything? Why?

Activity: What happens next?

Purpose: To enable a group to think about possible outcomes of a situation resulting from decisions that they make.

You will need: Resource cards for this activity (see sheet at the end of this week's outline).

What to do:

1. Split the participants into small groups and give them each a scenario on a card.
2. Ask the groups to come up with three possible outcomes for their situations and the decisions the person in the story has to make.

Discussion

If you were in this situation how would you decide what to do?

Did any of your group come up with a different answer?

Can you think of any situations when you would decide to do nothing?

What would influence you to make a different decision?

Aspire Challenge

Just like push-ups help build our physical muscles, so to do making good choices build our inner self. Becoming stronger in making choices helps us be the best we can be.

As you go into the week, try and take a moment or two each day to be more mindful of the choices you make. Are you making the best choices you can or is something stopping you from doing what you think is right? Are you avoiding any choices?

'...God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control' 2 Timothy 1:7 NIV

4. CHOOSING TO BE RESILIENT

JUNIOR & SENIOR

Outcome

Learn what resilience is, and discuss strategies for learning from setbacks without giving up.

Suggested Narrative

Welcome back. How'd you go making choices? Were there any tough choices you made? What was that like?

I've brought with me a tennis ball; can anyone play handball? Would you mind joining me in a brief game of handball? (Play for a minute or two)

I'd like to talk for a few moments about the importance of being able to bounce back from life's challenges. You might hear the term 'resilience' spoken about a lot in the media and at school. Why do you think this is?

What is resilience? To use the handball metaphor, it's the ability to bounce back through life's curve balls.

Let's play a game and we'll share more afterward.

Activity: Chopsticks & Jellybeans

Preparation: Organise enough small bowls so that when the participants are divided into small groups of 3-4 participants, each group will have two bowls. Distribute the same amount of jellybeans for each group, or similar small candy appropriately catering for dietary requirements. Also ensure there are sets of chopsticks for teams to use. Note: these will not be placed in mouths, so one set per team is OK.

Instructions:

1. Split the group into teams.
2. Give each team a set of chopsticks & a small bowl, placing their bowl of jelly beans on the table in front of each team.
3. Explain the rules:
 - a. Teams are to stand back from the table where jellybeans are held.
 - b. They move from the line up to the table (~2m distance), pick up a jellybean and carry it back to the line placing it in the second bowl.
 - c. Each participant is encouraged to try.
 - d. Participants can ONLY use the chopsticks – NO HANDS.

Note to Teacher: This game will take some time for the participants to finish and will test patience, willpower and resilience to bounce back after dropping the jellybeans.

Discussion

We can learn so much about ourselves when we go through challenges and problems.

What did you notice about yourself during that game? Did anyone want to give up? Did anyone become frustrated and unable to concentrate? What did you do about this? Did anyone change technique or focus from the first time you tried to pick up the jellybeans to the second time?

In the bible it says 'God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control' Do you think power, love and self-control have anything to do with resilience?

Allow me to encourage you in choosing to be resilient. Resilience is very much about being able to bounce back, being able to stay in life, learn from our mistakes and try again. So well done!

Aspire Challenge

Music can be a great inspiration to resilience. We would like to make a combined resilience Aspire class playlist. Think during the week about music that inspires you to keep trying, and to bounce back, and bring a list of the music or make a YouTube, Spotify or similar playlist for next week.

Some examples are:

- *Rise Up*, Andra Day
- *Fight Song* Rachel Platten
- Katy Perry's *Roar*

'Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at their face in a mirror and, after looking at themselves, goes away and immediately forgets what they look like.'

5. CHOOSING TO BE OK WITH FAILING

James 1:23-24 (GNV)

Outcome

To give each other permission to fail, recognise the value of risk taking and learn that success often starts with being OK with failure.

Suggested Narrative (JUNIOR & SENIOR)

Was anyone challenged by something during last week and had a choice to make? What did you do? Did you find a song that spoke about resilience? Let's write up a list and play a few of them over the next few weeks.

We can learn so much about ourselves when we go through tough stuff, and many mistakes we make are an opportunity to grow. You may like to share a personal life lesson that came out of 'failure'. We've talked about being mindful of our thoughts, recognizing our value because we are who we are and building strengths in making choices to bounce back. We continue this today by putting a magnifying glass on our thoughts about failure.

What's failure? If you wrote your life story, would you include all of your failures? Why do people sometimes try to deny their failures?

JUNIOR OPTION 1

Activity

Watch the following 8:09min Youtube clip, Honda the Power of Dreams Failure: The Secret to Success
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJAq6drKKzE&index=2&list=PLvzOwE5lWqhQgMdlA9uIB9OxPPkchlr-6>

Discussion

What are your thoughts on what Honda has done?
What can we learn from how they responded to failures and taking risks?

JUNIOR OPTION 2

Activity

(See *Printable Resources* on page 29)

Encourage participants to make small groups of 2-3. Challenge groups to work on these problems together.

- Say the names of the week backwards, now in alphabetically order from A
- Name two objects for each letter of your first name; increase this to 5, then 7!
- What is the sum of your date of birth? Now calculate the sums of all team members.
- What fruit has its seeds on the outside?
- Name one fruit/ vegetable that is never frozen canned or cooked.
- Name at least 6 things you wear on your feet.

Note: adapted from [ReachOut.com](https://reachout.com) professional resources

Discussion

How did you feel when answering the questions?
Is how you felt different to others in your group?

JUNIOR OPTION 3

Activity

If about to learn a new skill in the dance program, perhaps introduce it here and spend 2-4 minutes on learning it.

Discussion

Afterward invite participants to talk about what it was like? How did they feel?

Making decisions allows us to learn by doing. Here at Aspire, we'd love this to be place you feel comfortable to give activities a go, to be OK learning by doing. This means that sometimes you will make mistakes and that's OK to do.

SENIOR

Activity

(See *Printable Resources* on page 29)

Divide the class into groups of 2-3.

Ask the class to define failure. Share responses with larger group.

After discussing the definition of a failure, you may like to share a personal life lesson that came out of 'failure'.

For example: 'I married my first husband when I was very young because I believed that because I'd made a mistake I had no choice other than to be married. I divorced 3 years later. It took me many years to learn that mistakes are something to learn from rather than be locked into. I married again many years later and have learnt that I can start over when I make mistakes.'

Hand out a piece of paper to each participant with a pencil.

Instruct the students to fold their sheets of paper in half vertically, creating two columns. At the top of the left-hand column, have them write the word FAILURES. Below that, have the participants write a list of their failures in school and in life. Tell them that no one else is going to see their failures, and even though they are in groups, this part of the exercise will not be shared. Have them number each failure.

At the top of the right-hand column, have them write the word WISDOM. In that column, have them write any valuable wisdom they learned from each of their failures. Give an example such as: "Wisdom #1: I learned that I can never look to someone else to make me happy." Tell them they can have many "wisdoms" for each failure as they can think of.

Give participants 5 minutes to complete this. Invite a volunteer in each group to read aloud one wisdom to the rest of their group. Instruct them to keep going around the group clockwise, with each person reading one wisdom each time (with the option to "pass" if they wish). Tell them to read only the wisdom and not to go into detail about how they learned the wisdom. Have them keep going around the group until all in the group have stated all of their wisdoms or time has run out.

Instruct the students to tear their papers in half along the fold. This leaves them with their FAILURES in one hand and their WISDOMS in the other. Have them choose from the following four options:

1. Keep both your FAILURES and your WISDOMS.
2. Throw away your FAILURES and keep your WISDOMS.
3. Throw away your WISDOMS and keep your FAILURES.
4. Throw away both your FAILURES and your WISDOMS.

After students make their choice, tell them that if they chose to throw anything away, to ball up the papers and toss them in the trash can.

Discussion

What choice did you make? Why? What can we learn from this activity?

Making decisions allows us to learn by doing. Here at Aspire, we'd love this to be place you feel comfortable to give activities a go, to be OK learning by doing. This means that sometimes you will make mistakes and that's OK to do.

Aspire Challenge (JUNIOR & SENIOR)

If you can't look at your failures, because they are too embarrassing, because you hurt people, or failed yourself, you won't learn from them.

One of the best things about Christian faith is that it is a great way to be OK with failures. The bible can be a bit of a scary book for some people because, like a mirror, it shows you some of your worst failures and how much they matter. It's not always a pleasant experience, but it is real.

And bible is also full of promises that you are loved and forgiven by God, no matter how bad your failures are. I believe those promises, and I have found that accepting God's forgiveness and love frees you from the pain of your failures so you can be brave, look at them and learn from them no matter how badly you stuff up.

As we leave today, be encouraged to keep trying new things this week, be mindful of what your thoughts are saying to you when you 'don't do it right'.

Have a great week of discovery.

6. CHOOSING TO BE COURAGEOUS

'This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.' Deuteronomy 31:6 (NIV)

JUNIOR & SENIOR

Outcome

To understand courage, and to be conscious of situations in life where courage is required. To learn that it is not a reason not to do things, to be courageous is a choice we can make.

Suggested Narrative

Welcome back – this is week 6.

Who would like to share something they discovered of themselves this last week? How did you go with failing and trying again?

Today we're talking about courage.

At times we can feel afraid to try something new, we might feel inadequate. Courage is recognising the fear and getting on with it anyway.

We have looked previously at choosing to be strong. Choosing to be courageous is different. It's often a more difficult and braver choice, because it's a choice you make to go ahead with something even when you aren't yet sure if you will be strong enough.

What is one of the most courageous things you have seen? Can you remember a moment when you were aware you needed courage?

God promises that if you trust him, he will be with you when you need to overcome fear, particularly when you face the really hard stuff.

For example, you may have heard of a character in the Bible called Joshua. He had to rely on God to fight a strong fortified city of Jericho, with the odds well and truly stacked against him. When he was being given the leadership job, he was told:

'This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.'

Activity: Space Walk

Note to Teacher: This is an activity which challenges participants to try something new, to challenge the fear of the unknown and work at being more courageous.

Clear out a good-sized open space in which everyone can move around.

Invite students to walk comfortably through the space paying attention to their bodies. Invite them to notice their breathing, their feet hitting the floor, their pace and so on.

Let them know you'll give instructions as they keep moving in a random pattern through the available space. Perhaps play one of the songs participants have listed as songs which speak about Resilience.

From there, suggest different modes of walking:

- Walk as if the floor is covered with jelly, glue, peanut butter, or sand.
- Walk as if they were wading through ankle-deep, knee-deep, or chest-deep water.
- Move as if they were on ice.
- Try moving expressing different emotions; anger, anxious, tired, jealous, pleased and joyful.
- What happens if they freeze and unfreeze?
- Make connections or shapes with others on command?

Encourage participants to keep moving into spaces where there are no others. Infrequently ask participants to return to the "normal" walk.

Discussion

What was that activity like? Did anyone feel intimidated or fearful? How did you work through this to keep being involved?

Extra question (SENIOR)

What are some experiences which we need to be more courageous?

Brainstorm – some example answers:

- Standing alone in a crowd.
- Standing against bullying behaviour.
- Choosing not to participate in high risk behaviours.
- Refusing not to gossip about others.

Aspire Challenge

It's OK to feel afraid to doing something new. Throughout the term we've extended our self-awareness to include thoughts and feelings. It is good to recognise these feelings and thoughts, but it's also good to bounce back, to become more confident to make the right choices for you.

Be encouraged this week to choose to be more courageous, to be mindful of thoughts & feelings and give it a go anyway.

7. CHOOSING TO BE RESPECTFUL

Treat others just as you want to be treated.'

Luke 6:31 CEV

JUNIOR & SENIOR

Outcome

Learning the why and how of respect, to support better choices about how we treat others.

Suggested Narrative

Last week we had a chat about making the choice to be courageous. How did you go being mindful of your thoughts and feelings to be able to choose to give new things a go anyway?

Today we're talking about making the choice to be respectful.

What does respect mean for you?

Do you show respect for others? How do you do this?

Are you respected? How do you know?

What about respecting ourselves, what does it look like to respect ourselves?

Note to Teacher: You might like to offer some suggestions if these have not come out previously. Examples may include:

- listening without interrupting,
- using manners in conversation,
- following instructions
- complying to the requests of those who are more senior positions than us (parents, teachers, emergency services personal and etc.)

In an ideal world, respect is something that we would extend to everyone all the time. It is how it is best to be. It's about treating people the same way we would like others to treat us.

Respecting others and demonstrating respectful behaviour is good practice as we live among others. Throughout this term, we've become more mindful of our own value and strengths and been encouraged to think of others around us as with the same value and equally as many strengths, albeit different ones.

Jesus had a simple rule for choosing respect. He said 'treat others just as you want to be treated'. Because we all have the same value, we all deserve to receive respect, no matter how different we are to others.

Activity: The Line Game

The purpose of this activity is to build awareness of common issues people experience by seeing how many of us also experience the same tough life stuff. It's also about looking at how it affects us when we experience disrespect.

Note to Teacher: Prepare by putting a line across the front of the room, either marked out by chairs or rope on the floor. Start with everyone towards the back of the room, back from the line far enough that it will be clear to everyone when people move forward to the line.

This exercise may cause some uncomfortable feelings. Please be sensitive to issues you are aware of within the group.

I'm going to ask you a series of questions and I'd like to invite you to come and stand at the line if these things have happened to you.

- Stand at the line if you play sport
- Stay on the line if you've ever lost a game
- Stay at the line if you have been told it's your fault because of your gender, cultural background, disabilities you live with or because somehow you are different.

Move back to the original position

- Stand on the line if you've ever had a bad day at school?
- Stay on the line if you've had more than one bad day
- Stay on the line if you've not told anyone about these experiences.

Move back to the original position

- Stand on the line if you've ever felt disrespected?
- Stay on the line if this was about your cultural background?
- Financial status?
- Family background?
- Friends?
- Health or illness?
- Gender?
- Another reason you don't even know existed?

Move back to the original position

- Come to the line if you'd like these experiences to stop?
- Stay on the line if you're committed to trying harder to value others and show respect?

Discussion

What are some ways we can respect others who may be different from ourselves?

What is one thing you will change about how you respect yourself or others this week? Invite participants to record the action commitments on the poster with the fingerprints from week 1.

Is there anything people would like to say before we move on?

Aspire Challenge

We all experience life differently and sometimes we don't know what life is like for others or what impact our choices have having on others. As you head out from here into your week, be encouraged to begin to act upon what you have committed to changing when it comes to respecting yourself or others around you.

8. CHOOSING TO BE RESPONSIBLE

'Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life.' Galatians 6:5 (MSG)

Outcome

Learning about how choices affect others and groups: responsibility

Suggested Narrative

Who remembers what we talked about last week? Respect

Who remembers the activity from last week? The line game

What did you find helpful about those activities? Did anyone find himself or herself being more respectful toward others during the week? Or perhaps more self aware of how you were acting toward others?

Today we're talking about being responsible.

What is responsibility? Responsibility is when you are accountable (when you receive credit or blame) for not only the choice to act or make decisions, but also for the consequences or outcome of those decisions and actions.

What are some of the things we are responsible for?

Note to Teacher: Write them on a piece of butcher's paper so that everyone can see them. Let me ask you something else, do you have control over the outcome of these things? If not, who does?

Let's get into an activity.

Activity: We're all connected

Note to Teacher: Equipment: Balls of wool (1 per group); obstacle items.

1. Warn them that the task can get complicated, and you will make a group stop the task if they are being unsafe.
2. Have students get into groups of 4-6 people, in a line.
3. Give each group a ball of wool.
4. Tell them to use the yarn to connect everybody in their group, so even if their eyes are closed, they will know when the group is moving.
5. Ask all of the people in the group to close their eyes, except the person at the front of the line, who needs to keep his or her eyes open.
6. Tell each group that their task is to travel all the way around the room 3 times without running into any of the other groups (you can make this more challenging by asking them to weave through obstacles).
7. Have all groups do the task simultaneously.
8. When the groups have finished, discuss the following questions.

Discussion (JUNIOR)

Whose responsibility it was to get the group around the room 3 times?

Whose responsibility it was to make sure the group members did not run into any of the other groups?

We have a responsibility for our own chosen actions. Our choices are under our control. At times though we are working in a team and therefore share responsibility for the whole team. Can anyone think of examples of teams or groups where we have shared responsibility?

If participants are not sure, offer some suggestions:

- Our family environment. We all live together and therefore share the responsibility to care for our home, get the duties done; some may cook, others clean and others look after younger siblings.
- At school. We are not responsible for teaching the curriculum, BUT we sure are in control of our choice to be responsible students; arriving on time, bringing everything we need for classes, listening, practicing or studying for exams and perhaps even being willing to help others.
- A part time job. You are not responsible for the income your workplace makes that day but you sure are responsible for arriving on time, bringing anything you need specific to your job and working to the best of your ability.

Discussion (SENIOR)

Whose responsibility it was to get the group around the room 3 times? Whose responsibility it was to make sure the group members did not run into any of the other groups?

Who had control over whether the group made it around the room 3 times? Who had control over whether any of the group members ran into any of the other groups?

Is there a difference between responsibility and control?

We have a responsibility for our own chosen actions. Our choices are under our control. At times though we are working in a team and therefore share responsibility for the whole team. Can anyone think of when this might happen?

If participants are not sure, offer some suggestions.

- Living at home with family. We don't have sole responsibility for the mortgage or rent payment, nor maintenance of buildings or gardens. BUT we do still have control over our choice to pitch in and get the duties done to keep the household moving forward.
- A part time job. You are not responsible for the income your workplace makes that day but you sure are responsible for arriving on time, bringing anything you need specific to your job and working to the best of your ability.

Aspire Challenge

The Bible says it this way 'Each of you takes responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life.' This will at times means working with others to do the best for the team.

You are each unique, talented, responsible and resilient. You are each given strengths to make choices each and every day. Together, we all make the choice to be mindful, to build resilience, to be willing to get back up after making mistakes, to be courageous, respectful and responsible.

As you live life this week, be encouraged to be more mindful of the choices you are responsible for which not only affect you but others around you.

You may like to take a note of some examples where doing this was more difficult or became easier over the week.

9. CHOOSING TO FORGIVE

'Be alert. If you see your friend going wrong, correct him. If he responds, forgive him. Even if it's personal against you and repeated seven times through the day, and seven times he says, "I'm sorry, I won't do it again, forgive him." Luke 17:3-4 (MSG)

Outcome

To understand the value of forgiving, and being forgiven.

Suggested Narrative

Welcome back. We were going to note whether our choices to be responsible to others became harder or easier during the week from thinking about them more. Did anyone notice anything about that? So far this term, we've been discovering more about our choices. We started with challenging ourselves to become more mindful of our thoughts, particularly our sense of how valuable we are and how strong we can be.

We specifically looked at how strong we are to make the right choices for us, to be able to learn from not only the tough times in life but also our mistakes. And that in learning and becoming more mindful we grow in courage.

Today we're taking it one step further to understand forgiveness and why being able to forgive others and ourselves helps us reach our full potential.

Who can tell me what forgiveness is?

Forgiveness is being able to let go of the pain - sadness, anger, bitterness, turmoil, confusion, worry or fear - that we feel as a result of what others do or say to us. It is also being able to let go these same feelings that may have been caused by something we did to ourselves or another person. Let's explain it a different way.

Let's try something as a group. I've brought with me some rocks.

Activity

Note to Teacher: you may like to connect with a local landscaper to borrow palm sized rocks for this exercise if you are not able to purchase them. I have found the extension activity writing on the rocks very powerful in being able to remember pain but not take it with us.

For the extension activity you will need some textas to write on the rocks in a contrasting colour

Think of things that make you angry or frustrated; sad or disappointed; anxious or frightened. Some examples include:

- not being able to have a smart phone,
- not having access to endless Wi-Fi,
- not being able to attend a party because adults weren't going to be there or because guardians didn't know the host's family,
- not being old enough to drink,
- being blamed for siblings stuff ups,
- being the oldest/youngest/middle child

As you think of something, come to the front and grab a rock and place it in the bucket, wheelbarrow or backpack.

Allow a few moments for participants to engage. There may be some who already have a firm understanding and practice regularly to forgive others and be forgiven. Encourage them to continue this practice.

Once all have placed their rocks, invite participants to carry the bucket, push the wheelbarrow or carry the backpack around the room.

Discussion

What's it like? Not forgiving and carrying around anger, worry, sadness and the other emotions, is like hauling around an extra bag all day, carrying stuff can weigh us down and slow us up for the journey. Those feelings can seriously affect our lives and our ability to feel happiness. We can start to feel depressed, anxious, self-conscious and insecure. Not letting go of these feelings, not being able to forgive holds us back from reaching our potential.

Forgiving does not mean we do not work through our feelings. It's okay to cry and to be angry. Nor does forgiveness mean we let people be unkind or unfair to us. Forgiveness lets us work through the tough stuff without being overtaken by our emotions.

Sometimes we need courage to work through these feelings and experiences. Maybe we need to talk to a friend, parent, someone here or even a counselor.

There is no judgement in seeking help to be able to forgive, to let go of what others have done to you or to forgive yourself for what you have done to others.

When someone else carried the rocks, they didn't go away, but we didn't bear the weight of them.

In life some things don't go away just because they are forgiven. If you were to steal your parent's money and waste it, your parents might forgive you... eventually. But it doesn't bring the money back – its spent.

If you were to accidentally injure someone else, they might forgive you, but the injury would still be there.

Christians talk about forgiveness a lot. We are excited about it, because we believe that when Jesus Christ died and came back to life – which we celebrate at Easter - he took the weight of our 'rocks' – or sins – permanently, so we never have to carry any of them again.

The bible says: *'Jesus Christ sacrificed his life's blood to set us free, which means that our sins are now forgiven. Christ did this because God was so kind to us. God has great wisdom and understanding'* Ephesians 1:7-8 (CEV)

Activity Extension (SENIOR)

There's a story in the Bible about a nation, the people of Israel, making a new start, making new choices to live the right way with God as their leader 40 years after leaving a life of slavery in Egypt and wandering in the desert.

To make this new start they crossed a river into a new land that God had promised them. After they crossed the river, each family took a rock and together with other families built a large monument so that forever they would remember the moment they were forgiven and able to move on with the life they were meant to have 40 years earlier (Joshua 4:1-24).

I'd like to invite you to grab one of the rocks you placed in the bucket, wheelbarrow or backpack and join it with others to make a monument here at Aspire to remember that we too can forgive others, we can forgive ourselves and live with more freedom to reach our potential. If you would like to write a word which represents what it is you'd like to leave behind tonight, please use this time to do that too.

Note to Teacher: you may like to have some texture for participants to use to write on the rocks.

Aspire Challenge (JUNIOR & SENIOR)

Perhaps you might like to keep thinking about what you may be carrying in not yet forgiving someone for hurting you. Perhaps you're ready to talk to someone about forgiveness, be encouraged to talk to him or her this week. Whatever you choose to do; you are people of courage, worth and strength and believing this is a valuable first step.

10. CHOOSING TO BE PURPOSEFUL

'The body of Christ has many different parts, just as any other body does. Some of us are Jews, and others are Gentiles. Some of us are slaves, and others are free. But God's spirit is in each of us, making us all part of the one body where Christ is our head.' 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (CEV)

JUNIOR & SENIOR

Outcome

To think about what our individual purpose in life might be, and to understand that we are part of a larger system of meaning of life.

Suggested Narrative

Welcome back.

We are unique, all with different abilities, challenges, hopes and dreams. Discovering our purpose is a key aspect to every person's journey. Growing stronger in making choices & bouncing back from life's challenges will help us to discover our sense of purpose.

It enables us to make a difference in our world. Life is not just about living for us; our lives are to be used to make a difference for others.

The Bible uses the metaphor of a different parts of a body to describe our different purposes. Let's quickly refresh our memories on the various parts of the body and what their purpose is.

(See *Printable Resources* on page 32)

Split into groups, one per body part, and brainstorm:

- The purpose of the body part.
- If your body part was a person, what would that person be like?

Nominate someone to share the results with the group.

Note to Teacher: Once the cards are distributed, give the groups 30 seconds to do this and another 3-4 minutes as a group to share, depending on the size of the group. See handout below. As each is shared, bring the card out the front and assemble the body so it builds up into a full picture (use blue tack to stick to a wall or board)

Eyes are great for seeing, feet are great for running, and lungs are great for breathing. There is no point trying to breath with your eyes, run with your lungs or see with your feet.

In the same way, your purpose comes from the kind of person you are. So part of thinking about your own sense of purpose is thinking about where you fit, what suits you, and what is not your thing.

As well as thinking about what you individually are good at, another great lesson to learn from comparing our purpose to parts of a body is that we all need each other to function properly, we are designed to work together, to all contribute to something bigger than ourselves.

Christians believe that finding your purpose in life is part of discovering that there is a design, a higher

purpose to all existence. It all comes back to being created by God for a reason, and being known by him.

Activity

Activity options: Use as many as you can to keep the activity quickly moving onto the next activity. Be mindful this is the final night, so variety, fun and laughter are key for participants to experience as they use their uniqueness to work with others.

1. **Worm Races:** The aim of the exercise is to encourage communication as a team toward an end goal. This communication must be forward in direction from the rear ensuring the front player can lead the group to collect items.

Equipment: As many small handheld items as players to place around the room; a bucket for each team to place their items once found; tea towel or other such blindfold material.

Encourage teams of no more than 6 to join together, if less than 12 participants, halve the original group to ensure 2 teams.

Instructions: Teams will have 90 seconds to grab an item. Once an item is collected the person at the front moves to the rear and the activity starts again. The front person is blindfolded and the rear person unable to speak. All team members need to work together, moving together to reach & gather.

To start, teams have 1 minute to work out a system to communicate.

2. **Standing on a small piece of paper:** To encourage creative thinking, courage and resilience to work together to problem solve.

Equipment: 2 large broadsheet newspaper size piece of paper.

Instructions: Using both large pieces of paper to start encourage all participants to stand on the paper using 1 foot only. When the group is ready, they present a 5 second stand before stepping off and the paper size reducing by half. When the paper is A2 in size, reduce the number of allowed feet on the paper by 1 until the paper size is much smaller and only 2-4 feet can legitimately fit on the paper.

This activity is fabulous at experiencing success of the whole groups efforts, not just 1 or 2 creative talents.

3. **Everybody Up:** The aim of this activity to encourage team building, we are better together!

Instructions: Ask two participants of about the same size to sit on the ground or floor facing each other with the soles of their feet touching, their knees bent, and their hands tightly grasping each other's.

From this position they try to pull themselves into a standing position. If they succeed, ask another participant to join them and try standing with three participants, then four, etc.

As the group grows, each player must grasp the hands of another person and must maintain foot contact with the group. An expanding group will find that thinking is required to come up with a solution that allows large numbers to get everybody up.

Conclusion & Wrap up

Today we've shared some laughs and learnt some new things about our friends. It's been a blast to spend this term with each of you and we look forward to the journey continuing next term.

In these sessions about choosing life, we've shared some chats about who we are and the choices we can make.

We've talked about our value as people with strength to choose; to be resilient, respectful, courageous, responsible, forgiving and OK to make mistakes, to choose to have a purpose in life.

We've laughed together, been honest with each other and made items that will remind us of our uniqueness, the benefits of forgiveness and our intentions to change how we treat others.

What's one thing you will take away from this term?

Be encouraged friends to keep growing and challenging yourself. And choose life!

NEPSIS

BE STILL

**AND KNOW THAT
I AM GOD**

TRUST GOD

HE WILL HELP ME

LOOK STRAIGHT AHEAD

**FIX YOUR EYES ON
WHAT LIES BEFORE YOU**

**DO NOT BE ANXIOUS
ABOUT ANYTHING**

Resources can also be downloaded via Dropbox (A3 and A4 - colour and black & white).
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5zbaz7avow5grja/AABhCBnO9OZcloK4hVSpbRoOa?dl=0>

**YOU SHAPED ME
FIRST INSIDE, THEN OUT;
YOU FORMED ME
IN MY MOTHER'S WOMB.**

**I THANK you GOD
YOU'RE BREATHTAKING!
BODY AND SOUL,
I AM MARVELLOUSLY MADE!**

**WHAT A CREATION!
YOU KNOW ME | YOU KNOW EVERY
INSIDE AND OUT | BONE IN MY BODY**

**YOU KNOW EXACTLY
HOW I WAS MADE, BIT BY BIT,
HOW I WAS SCULPTED FROM
NOTHING INTO SOMETHING.**

**LIKE AN OPEN BOOK,
YOU WATCHED ME GROW
ALL THE STAGES OF MY LIFE
FROM CONCEPTION TO BIRTH;
YOU ALREADY KNOW**

**THE DAYS OF MY LIFE
ALL PREPARED
BEFORE I'D EVEN
LIVED ONE DAY.**

PSALM 139 V14-16

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<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5zbaz7avow5grja/AABhCBnO9OZcl0K4hVSpbRoOa?dl=0>

PRINTABLE RESOURCES


GROWING STRENGTH TO CHOOSE/ GAME CARDS / Activity: Tag team storytelling (page 7)



Brad is walking along the street. He sees the man ahead of him drop \$50 on the ground. He doesn't notice and carries on walking.



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

(Would the decision be the same if it was a woman who dropped the money?)




Maddie has asked her parents if she can have friends round one evening. They have said no. Her parents are then invited out and Maddie is home alone.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?



Jackson knows that he should be home by 10.30pm but his mates have asked him to go to the cinema with them. The film finishes at 10.30pm.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?



Izzy sees a woman struggling down some stairs with two children and her shopping. Izzy is late to meet someone.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?



Sophie sees a girl from school in a shop slip something into her bag and leave without paying for it.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?



Resources can also be downloaded via Dropbox (A3 and A4 - colour and black & white).
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5zbaz7avow5grja/AABhCBnO9OZcIoK4hVSpbRoOa?dl=0>

SAY THE NAMES OF THE WEEK BACKWARDS, NOW IN ALPHABETICALLY ORDER FROM A	
NAME TWO OBJECTS FOR EACH LETTER OF YOUR FIRST NAME; INCREASE THIS TO 5, THEN 7!	
WHAT IS THE SUM OF YOUR DATE OF BIRTH? NOW CALCULATE THE SUMS OF ALL TEAM MEMBERS.	
WHAT FRUIT HAS ITS SEEDS ON THE OUTSIDE?	
NAME ONE FRUIT/ VEGETABLE THAT IS NEVER FROZEN CANNED OR COOKED.	
NAME AT LEAST 6 THINGS YOU WEAR ON YOUR FEET.	

Resources can also be downloaded via Dropbox (A3 and A4)

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5zbaz7avow5grja/AABhCBnO9OZcl0K4hVSpbRoOa?dl=0>

FAILURES

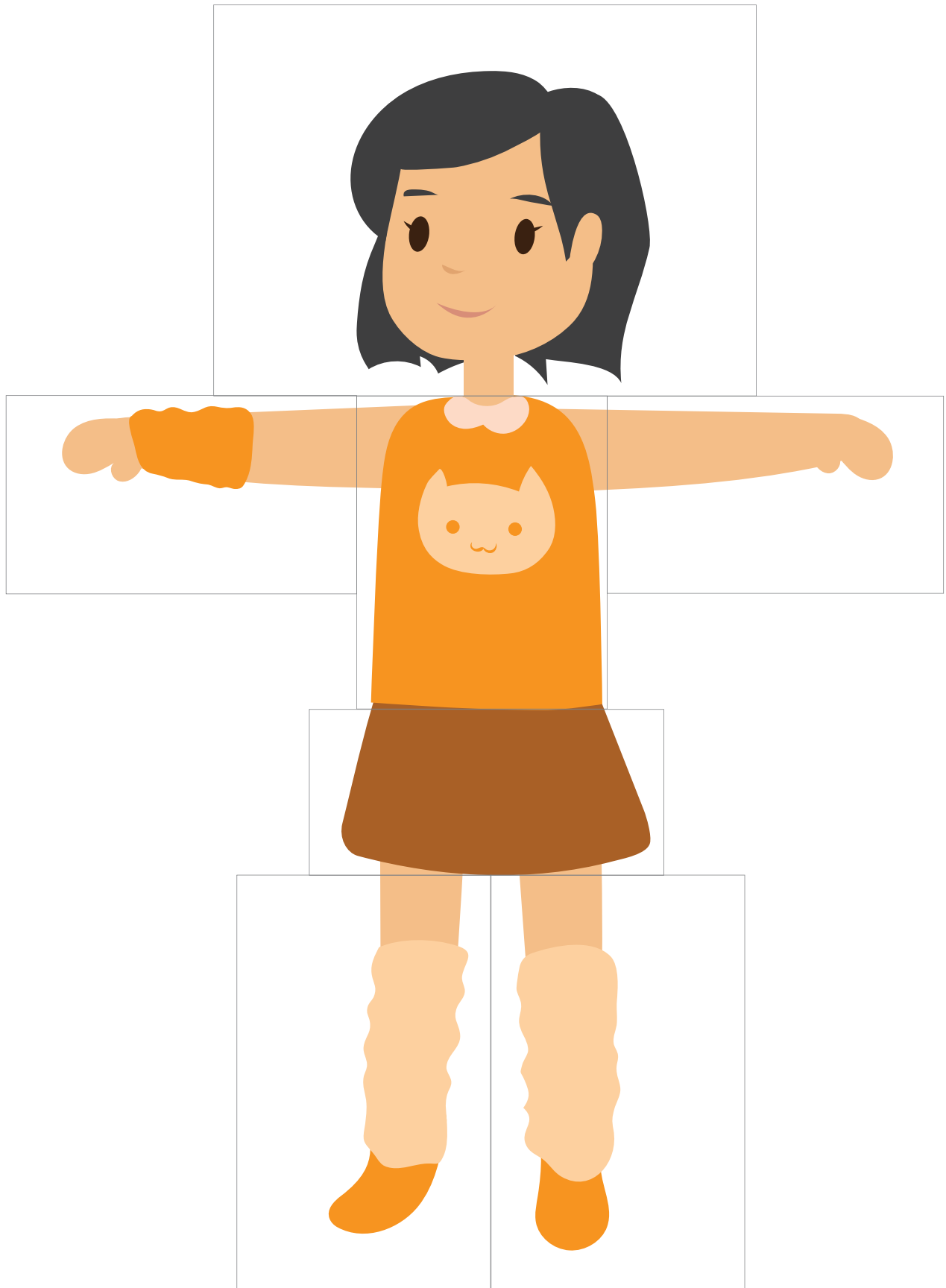
WISDOMS

Resources can also be downloaded via Dropbox (A3 and A4)

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5zbaz7avow5grja/AABhCBnO9OZcloK4hVSpbRoOa?dl=0>

PRINTABLE RESOURCES

CHOOSING TO BE PURPOSEFUL / BODY PART CARDS / Brainstorm: Body Parts (page 23)

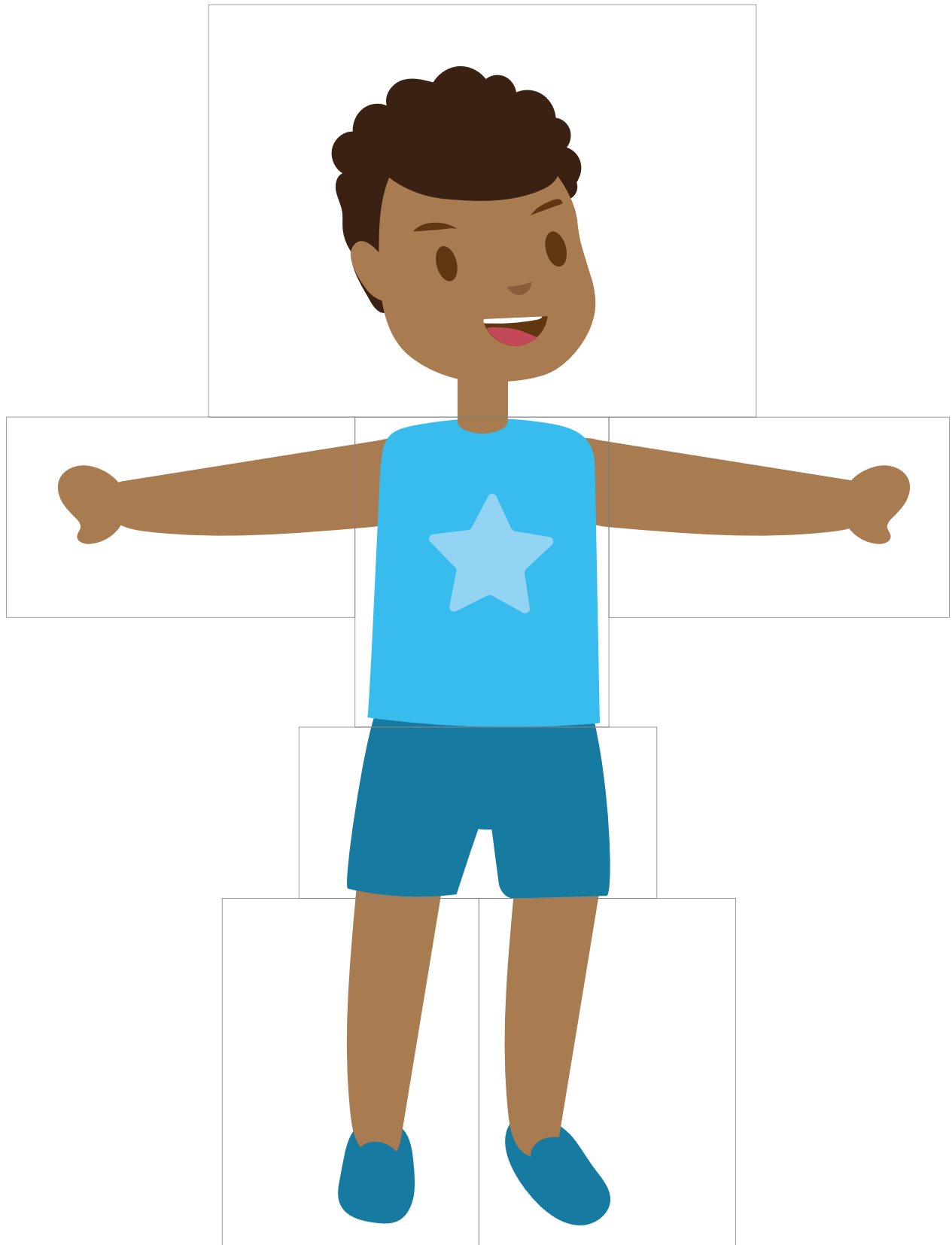


Resources can also be downloaded via Dropbox (A3 and A4)

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5zbaz7avow5grja/AABhCBnO9OZcloK4hVSpbRoOa?dl=0>

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