

Is Anybody Listening?

Introduction

Is Anybody Listening? is a workshop about social media and value, and is centred around a spoken-word piece that talks about the challenges of social media and the difference that Jesus makes.

It is intended to be an interactive, discussion-based workshop, rather than a front-led talk.

It is suitable for young people from age 13 of all faith levels.

Aims

- To help young people explore the positive and negative impact that social media can potentially have on their lives.
- To provide a conducive environment for young people to talk freely about social media and its effects on their wellbeing.
- To explore the difference Jesus makes to self-value.

How to use

- Use this workshop outline as a guide rather than a script. Be responsive and adaptable to the circumstances in your unique setting.
- This workshop is intended to be interactive and to allow the young people to have freedom of expression.

Getting support

Scripture Union's Mental Health and Wellbeing resources are intended to help you engage children and young people in supportive and helpful conversations around the challenges that a child or young person may be facing.

We believe that Jesus can make a difference to the challenges and adventures of mental health and wellbeing. In this context we talk about the difference Jesus can make in sensitive and appropriate ways:

- We acknowledge that we don't have all the answers, but are here to offer support, listen and stand alongside people who are struggling.
- We don't promise that Jesus will fix everything right now, rather that he will always be with us and brings hope for a different future.
- We express the love of Jesus in practical and tangible ways – not just as an abstract idea.
- We don't shy away from using the Bible to help us explore challenging issues with young people.
- We trust that God can and will intervene in the lives of those we work with.
- We recognise, however, that these are sensitive issues, and it's vital to provide suitable support, and signpost on to professional or specialist support where needed.

Some key concepts for using this material:

Do remove the stigma

Often young people feel ashamed for how they feel, that they should keep their



feelings to themselves, or that no one else could be feeling the way that they are, or understand the challenges they have.

Removing the stigma and creating a safe space to engage around mental health and wellbeing are important first steps; let children and young people know that it's OK to feel however they do, and that it's safe to share that, without shame or stigma.

Do let those you work with take the lead

Don't make assumptions, don't judge, don't offer support you can't provide. Do create space and let them share at their pace and in their language. Do listen, do see that the person is more than their mental health challenges.

Don't force faith

We believe in the transformative work of Jesus, but often the most helpful thing for someone with mental health needs is space, a listening ear or just a friend.

If there's an invitation to share your faith, or use the resources we provide to do so, then do. But our hope is that our Mental Health and Wellbeing resources encourage children and young people to explore the difference that Jesus can make for themselves, at their own pace, and find hope in whatever situation they are in.

Don't try to fix the mental health challenges

Help with the basic needs by being supportive and listening, spending time with the children and young people you're working with. Extend the radical friendship of Jesus, share transforming love, support and hope, while recognising that it's OK to struggle with our mental health, and that mental health professionals are better equipped to provide the further support.

It's important when working with children and young people in this area to never promise confidentiality. You might like to say something along the lines of: 'I cannot promise confidentiality if I'm worried about your safety or another person's safety.'

Do share these resources with others who might value them

If you would like to share these resources with others, please signpost them to the Scripture Union England and Wales website.

Do signpost to professional or specialist support

Before using any of Scripture Union's Mental Health and Wellbeing resources, you will need to make sure you have thoroughly studied your organisation's safeguarding policy, and are aware of your referral processes for extra support.

We also recommend you take some time to explore the list of organisations listed over the next few pages and assess whether you may want to connect with them as part of



your preparation. You may also find some of these organisations helpful places to signpost young people towards, if you feel it is appropriate.

An important first step in seeking support for any mental health needs is speaking to a GP, school mental health lead or local healthcare provider. Ensure that the child or young person you are working with is directed to the right mental health professional, and supported by an adult as appropriate in doing this.

Our *Get Help* cards can be a valuable resource to give to children and young people as part of a Mental Health and Wellbeing session – either to keep for themselves or to pass on to friends who may be struggling. These cards list several organisations that can provide various levels of support for young people. *Get Help* cards are available from the Scripture Union website.

<p>Young Minds www.youngminds.org.uk</p> <p>Young Minds is a charity fighting to make sure children and young people get the best possible mental health support and have the resilience to overcome life's difficulties. They have advice, support and resources for children, young people and parents.</p>	<p>Kooth www.kooth.com</p> <p>Kooth is an accredited digital mental health support service. It gives children and young people easy access to an online community of peers and a team of experienced counsellors. Access is free of the typical barriers to support: no waiting lists, no thresholds, no cost and complete anonymity.</p>
<p>Self Harm UK www.selfharm.co.uk</p> <p>Self Harm UK is a support website for young people, dedicated to self-harm recovery, insight and support. Self Harm UK started out of the work of Youthscope.</p>	<p>Lily Jo Project www.thelilyjoproject.com</p> <p>The Lily Jo Project is an online mental health resource, with information and help on common mental health issues including depression, anxiety, self-harm, eating disorders, childhood trauma, self-esteem, and grief.</p>
<p>Samaritans 116 123 www.samaritans.org</p>	<p>Childline 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk</p>



Organisations that can provide extra support

CAMHS

www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services

CAMHS is used as a term for all services that work with children and young people who have difficulties with their emotional or behavioural wellbeing within a statutory local authority.

Local areas have a number of different support services available. These might be from the statutory, voluntary or school-based sector, such as an NHS trust, local authority, school or charitable organisation.

Mind

www.mind.org.uk

Mind offers information, advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. Mind also lobbies government and local authorities on their behalf.

Young Minds

www.youngminds.org.uk

Young Minds is a charity fighting to make sure children and young people get the best possible mental health support and have the resilience to overcome life's difficulties. They have advice, support and resources for children, young people and parents.

Mercy UK

www.mercyuk.org

Mercy UK provide pastoral training and remote support services, equipping the church to see hope restored and lives transformed among those with life-controlling issues. Mercy UK also have residential homes for women with life-controlling issues.

Self Harm UK

www.selfharm.co.uk

Self Harm UK is a support website for young people, dedicated to self-harm recovery, insight and support. Self Harm UK started out of the work of Youthscape.

Lily Jo Project

www.thelilyjoproject.com

The Lily Jo Project is an online mental health resource, with information and help on common mental health issues including: depression, anxiety, self-harm, eating disorders, childhood trauma, self-esteem, and grief.

Mental Health Foundation

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>

Since 1949, the Mental Health Foundation has been the UK's leading charity for everyone's mental health. With prevention at the heart of what they do, they aim to find and address the sources of mental health problems, so that people and communities can thrive. They are involved in community and peer programs, research, public engagement and advocacy. Their vision is good mental health for all. Their mission is to help people understand, protect and sustain their mental health. They are most well-known for running Mental Health awareness week across the UK each year.

For more information on body image from the Mental Health Foundation go to <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/body-image-report/intro>



Confidential support lines and websites

Samaritans

Call: 116 123

www.samaritans.org

Childline

Call: 0800 1111

www.childline.org.uk

Kooth

www.kooth.com

Kooth is an accredited digital mental health support service. It gives children and young people easy access to an online community of peers and a team of experienced counsellors. Access is free of the typical barriers to support: no waiting lists, no thresholds, no cost and complete anonymity.

Support and advice for churches

Mind and Soul Foundation

www.mindandsoulfoundation.org

The Mind and Soul Foundation seek to educate, equip and encourage the Church in the field of mental health. They have developed a number of high quality resources that you can use in your church or community, to understand more about Christianity and Mental Health.

Thirtyone:eight

www.thirtyoneeight.org

Thirtyone:eight (previously CCPAS) are a Christian charity helping individuals, organisations, charities, faith and community groups to protect vulnerable people from abuse. They provide expert advice around safeguarding, working with vulnerable people and referrals to statutory agencies.

Is Anybody Listening? session outline

Icebreaker

You will need

- copies of the social media profile sheet (available on page 10 of this resource)

Welcome your group to the session. The idea of the icebreaker is to help the young people get to know each other and to facilitate free-flowing discussion, as well as introduce the topic for the day.

Give each person a copy of the social media profile sheet and ask them to fill out the bio section without including their name. Once they are done, collect in the sheets, mix them up and give them out to the group. Invite each person, in turn, to read out the bio that they have received and try to guess who in the room it belongs to. When the person has been correctly identified (if they are unable to correctly guess, the person should reveal themselves), the person that it belongs to should collect their sheet back and elaborate briefly on what they wrote in their bio, and why.

Debate (20 mins)

You will need

- large sheets of paper
- pens

Explain that the young people are going to debate the following statement:

Social media is a negative thing for young people.

Divide the group into two teams and give each team some sheets of paper and pens. Assign one team to argue for the statement and one against. Ask the teams to lay aside any views they already have and to do their best to argue for their side.

Give them five minutes to discuss within their teams. Go around to each team as they are discussing to see how they are doing, feeding in points that will help them build their argument, if required.

Begin the debate, allowing each side two minutes to present their arguments, and then two minutes each for a closing statement.

Round up the debate by sharing the viewpoints that each of the teams has presented. Explain that the purpose of the debate was not to turn them for or against social media, but to highlight its positives and negatives.

Is Anybody Listening?

You will need

- *Is Anybody Listening?* video and the means to play it (available to download [here](#))
- copies of 'Is Anybody Listening?' discussion sheet, (available on pages 11 and 12 of this resource)

Show the *Is Anybody Listening?* video (four minutes).

After playing the video, invite the young

people to form small groups.

Give everyone a copy of the discussion sheet. Take each of the discussion prompts in turn, giving five minutes per point for people to discuss within their small groups and write down their personal thoughts on the response sheet. (If you don't have time to discuss all ten points in this way, choose those most relevant to your young people, or invite them to choose points for discussion within their groups.)

At the end, bring everyone together for a discussion, inviting people to share what they have written on their sheets and consider their different responses.

During this discussion, give enough opportunity for freedom of expression. Encourage the young people to share their own thoughts and respond to one another. Ask appropriate follow-on questions and ask the other young people what they think about what their peer has shared.

The discussion is very much intended to be led by the young people. Round up the discussion with some key takeaway points, although you may find that a lot of what you want the young people to gain can be found in their own reflections.

The paragraphs below are not a script to be read out, but a guide to help with some of the thoughts that you may like to share:

Social media: positive or negative?

There's a lot that we have discussed today, and from this you have likely seen that there are different sides to social media. It

can be a positive or negative thing. It really depends on how you use it as an individual and the way you view yourself.

For some, social media has been an avenue of expression and a way to explore things they are interested in. For others, it has been a source of anxiety and social pressure.

However, the important thing is to ensure that, if you are using social media, it is having a positive rather than a detrimental effect on your wellbeing, and if you do begin to notice negative effects, you take the necessary steps to combat them. This could be cutting down the time you spend on social media platforms, unfollowing accounts whose content has a negative impact or perhaps cutting social media out completely for a period of time.

On the other hand, if you think that social media has been beneficial to you, maybe have a think about how you can affect other lives positively through the same medium.

Each of us is unique and has something to offer our world. Maybe there is something you can do with your social media that will affect other lives positively – maybe you have a gift or talent to share. Have a think about it!

Self-worth and social media

You will have seen the idea in the video, and our discussions, that the way someone sees themselves and their self-worth may be affected by social media. For you, this may or may not be the case. But social media aside, for life in general it is so important that you are able to see how valuable and

precious you are.

You may meet people in life or on social media who may make you feel as though you are of lesser value, by comparing you with others.

Real friends won't do this. The right friends should see how unique you are and appreciate you for this.

Every person you meet is valuable, and it's important that you treat everyone, including you, as someone of value. Sometimes you can look at things about yourself that you don't like and this can influence the value that you see in yourself, but your value is not in what you are like or what you can do, it's much bigger than that.

Jesus

Where does Jesus fit in this whole discussion about social media and value? Why is he mentioned? Well, when we think about the value of something, we think about how much we are willing to pay for it. Let's look at something from the Bible:

Christ arrives right on time to make this happen. He didn't, and doesn't, wait for us to get ready. He presented himself for this sacrificial death when we were far too weak and rebellious to do anything to get ourselves ready. And even if we hadn't been so weak, we wouldn't have known what to do anyway. We can understand someone dying for a person worth dying for, and we can understand how someone good and noble could inspire us to selfless sacrifice. But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him.

Romans 5:6-8 (The Message)

Here we see that Jesus gave his life for us, and that doesn't really make sense because, when he did it, we couldn't have done

anything for him. We didn't look right, we didn't act right, but he still looked at us and saw value, and this is why he gave himself as a sacrifice for us.

Now that we are set right with God by means of this sacrificial death, the consummate blood sacrifice, there is no longer a question of being at odds with God in any way. If, when we were at our worst, we were put on friendly terms with God by the sacrificial death of his Son, now that we're at our best, just think of how our lives will expand and deepen by means of his resurrection life! Now that we have actually received this amazing friendship with God, we are no longer content to simply say it in plodding prose. We sing and shout our praises to God through Jesus, the Messiah!

Romans 5:9-11 (The Message)

But his sacrifice wasn't for nothing, it was a means to an end. He did this to make it possible for us to be brought into a relationship with God. When God looked at us, he didn't see all the flaws that we have, but instead he saw the people that he had created, and felt a longing to have a relationship with us. He loved us in our most unlovable state and he saw our value. He said we were worth the highest price.

But how does this change things?

When you know who Jesus is and what he did for you, you start to get an understanding of how valuable God thinks you are.

This should help in the way you think of yourself, knowing that, irrespective of what you look like or what you do, you are still valuable.

For some, this takes away the pressure of social media, because it stops being a source of validation. You no longer need anyone on social media or in life to make

you feel wanted or accepted, because you know that, regardless of their opinion, God wants you, he accepts you, loves you and has shown you value in what he did for you.

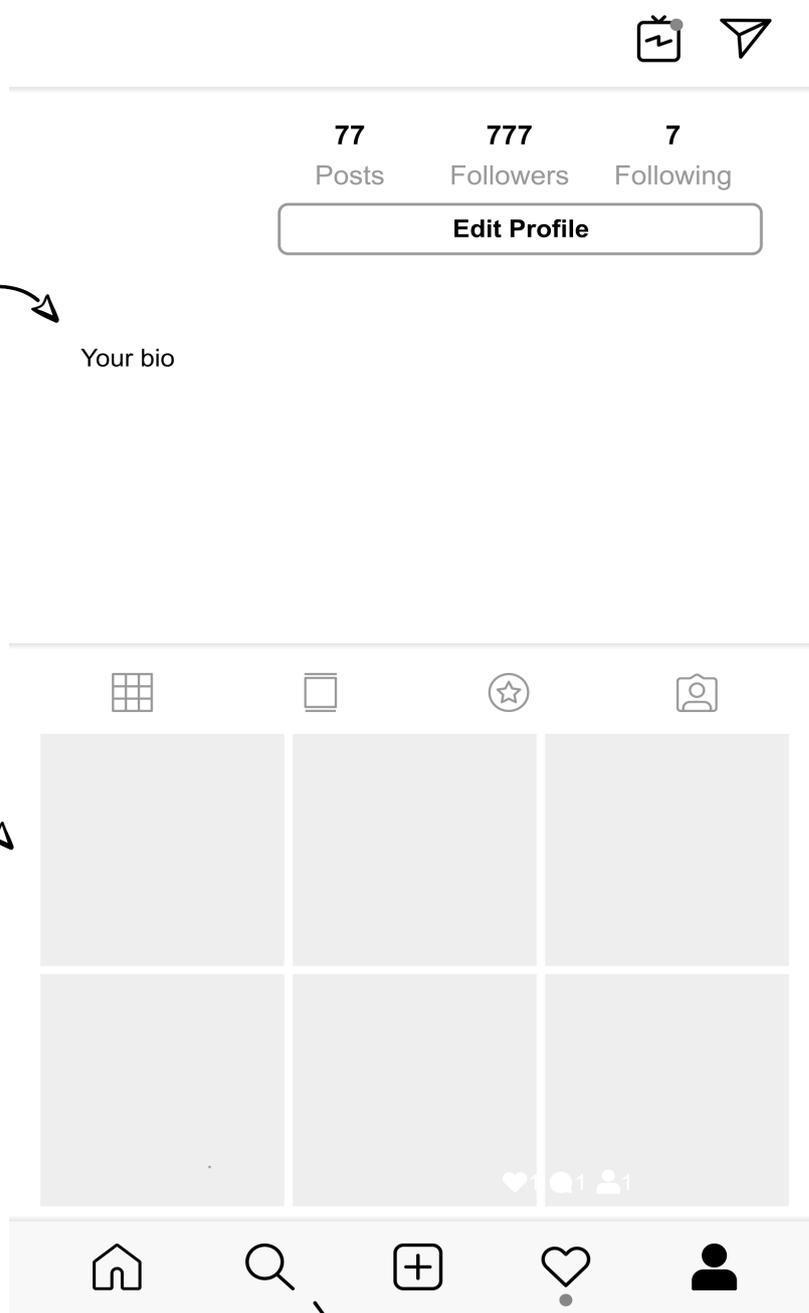
Rounding up the session

At the end of your session, say something like:

You may be here and have different thoughts about Jesus and everything that you have heard, and that is totally fine. We are here to answer any questions you would like to ask, and to offer any help that you might need in exploring all of this and what this means for you. Whether you would like someone to pray with you, help you know more about Jesus or maybe just to talk through some of the things we have talked about today, we are here.



Your profile...



Your bio

Use this space to write three lines that describe you without saying your name.

In these six squares, roughly draw six pictures that you think describe your life

What would you say is your most searched thing on social media? ➡

‘Is Anybody Listening?’ discussion sheet

- 1 Is anybody listening when I’m feeling all alone, despite having 1,036 Snapchat contacts on my phone?**
 - Are social media friends real friends? Why or why not?
 - Do you think someone can still feel alone despite always having connections online?
 - Are there ways that friends on social media can be beneficial to you?
- 2 Is anybody listening when I’m afraid to go filter free, worried they won’t approve if I’m authentically me?**
 - Do you think filters have influenced the way people see themselves?
 - Have you used filters? How have they influenced you?
- 3 Is anybody listening at the other side of my Instagram Live and would they still be listening if I gave them a true glimpse into my life?**
 - How honest do you think others are on social media?
 - Do you feel free to be honest about your life on social media?
- 4 Is anybody listening when half-dressed pictures get tonnes more likes, so I barter with my body to see the numbers hike?**
 - Do you think people adjust their physical appearance to get more likes?
 - How important are likes to you, and why?
- 5 I’m here to tell you that the fulfilment that you seek, is found in a destination you’ll only find when you are found in me – *I’m listening.***
 - What would you say fulfilment is?
 - Is Jesus a place where people can find fulfilment?

6 I'm hearing those things in your heart that you never said, like when you were posting about living your best life whilst thinking about death
– *I'm listening.*

- Do you think people can be open about their personal challenges?
- Do you feel comfortable to share your real thoughts and feelings on social media?

7 You see all of this is the product of an inadequacy from within, a void that can't be filled like a bag with holes in
– *I'm listening.*

- Are people trying to fill a void through social media?
- Is there something you hope to gain through your social media interactions?

8 You see you've sacrificed your self-worth on the altar of men, your self-image rises only to be torn down again by the force of comparison and criticism.

- Do people base their self-worth on public opinion?
- Have you ever felt defined by what others think of you?
- Do you ever feel like you are being compared with others?

9 So today I ask you to not be defined by your followers and choose to follow me.

- Do you think people feel as if they are defined by their followers?
- Do you think people should feel like their followers define them?
- Is there a difference between following Jesus and following someone on social media?
- What would it mean for you to follow Jesus?

10 You see he died so that you could begin again, you want followers, but he came to make you God's friend.

- Do you think God wants to be friends with people?
- What would it be like for you to be a friend of God?