

# Adventist Health Ministries Health Week

13-20 May, 2023

## General Aims and Approach for Children's Guides

### Preamble:

- **Children are not immune to stress.** They are exposed to many stresses, some of which are direct stresses—as a result of being present in stressful situations themselves—though some may be transferred stresses from situations which affect others around them.
- **Children experience stress in different ways.** Not all children experience stress in the same way.
- **Young children do not automatically learn about stress,** but they may use 'feeling' words to describe some of the symptoms of stress.
- The **lessons this week are pitched to a primary age level** child (8-10 years of age), and will need to be modified for older or younger children. (See suggestions in lesson)
- Research has shown that children who struggle with stress or mental health issues as young children have an **increased chance of suffering mental health issues as adults.**

### Aims:

The lessons this week aim to help children:

- **recognise stress** in themselves or others,
- **develop a vocabulary** to describe stress,
- **identify the source** of the stress,
- **develop ways of coping, alleviating, avoiding or dealing with stress.**

### Approach:

- **Each lesson is introduced with a well-known Bible story** about a situation with which children can identify.
- **Discussion is to be encouraged but guided.** Even young children should be encouraged to share their feelings or give ideas of how to cope. (See Caution below)
- Where practical, it is suggested that each of the facilitators for the children's sessions, **become familiar with all of the lessons**, so that they can use the discussions to reinforce the four aims of the lessons. (see above). This may be best achieved by holding a short preliminary meeting with the adult facilitators.
- **Treat these sessions as a safe space.** If for any reason there is concern about any child's safety or if they exhibit severe stress, talk to a professional (doctor, counselor, pastor or someone who has had ADSAFE training.)
- **CAUTION:** The adult facilitator in a group setting should **NOT ENCOURAGE OR ALLOW children to share stories which break confidentiality** or expose them to taunts or bullying. However, the facilitator does have a duty of care towards any

child who refers to an abusive or violent situation. This should not be ignored but be referred to an appropriate trusted professional or ADSAFE contact.

- The ***practical activities (building the bridge) are not a separate activity***, but are designed to illustrate stress in a practical way and introduce vocabulary that children can use.
- Where popsicle sticks and glue are not freely available, similar lessons can be drawn by using available materials such as sticks and binding materials such as raffia or flax.
- ***Use language that is appropriate*** for the age group and home language of the children.
- ***Avoid blanket questions*** like, "What did we learn from this?" and rather focus on specifics like, "What part of what the twelve spies did was stressful?" (Day 1 illustration)
- With older children, one can ***introduce new concepts*** of 'positive/helpful stress' or the difference between 'pressure' and 'stress'.

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## Some Tips for helping Primary School-age Children cope with stress

For Primary Age children there are three main arenas where stress is experienced:

- **the home,**
- **the broad school environment,** (*e.g. classroom, playground, travel*)
- **in relationships with friends.**

For younger children this list is more limited and related to the home, while older children/young people are more susceptible to stressful social situations and moral/ethical conflicts.

Some of this stress might be direct—such as when confronted by a bully or when they are struggling with a subject at school. Some of it might be reflected by individuals who themselves are under stress—for example when adults in the family are undergoing financial or relationship stresses.

As an adult with a special role in a child's life, there is a responsibility to help a child learn to cope with stress. You can be instrumental in helping the child to: recognize when they are stressed, develop a vocabulary and learn to express their feelings around stress, identify the source of the stress and develop ways of coping with it.

it's important to note that each child is unique and may respond differently to different coping mechanisms. Here are some tips:

1. **Encourage them to talk about their feelings:** Create a safe and supportive environment for your child to express their emotions. Listen to them attentively and validate their feelings.
2. **Help them develop coping skills:** Teach your child relaxation techniques such as deep breathing and mindfulness. Encourage them to engage in physical activities like sports or exercise, which can help reduce stress.
3. **Set reasonable expectations:** Avoid putting undue pressure on your child to perform in school or other activities. Help them prioritize their tasks and set achievable goals.
4. **Create a routine:** Establish a daily routine that includes time for homework, play, relaxation, and family time. Consistency and predictability can help reduce stress.
5. **Model healthy behavior:** Children often learn how to deal with stress by watching their parents. Make sure you model healthy stress management techniques, such as taking breaks, seeking support, and engaging in self-care. Show them how to de-escalate tense situations.
6. **Seek professional help if needed:** If your child's stress seems excessive or is causing significant distress or impairment, consider seeking the help of a mental health professional.

**Remember, stress is a normal part of life, but it's important to teach children healthy ways to cope with it.**

***It is suggested that where possible, this page be printed as a handout for parents and teachers.***

# Adventist Ministries Health Week

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## A lighthearted poem to give children some tips for coping with stress

*Synthesised from Google articles by 'Artificial Intelligence'*

*Oh dear, dear child, let me tell you what to do,  
When stress has got you feeling quite blue.*

*Speak out your feelings, let them be heard,  
For bottling them up is really quite absurd!*

*Find some coping skills that work for you,  
Like taking deep breaths or trying something new.*

*Don't set your expectations too high,  
Just take it step by step and give it a try!*

*Make a routine that works for you,  
Balancing work, play, and relaxation too.*

*Watch your parents and learn from their ways,  
For rest and self-care are important every day.*

*And if stress is too much to bear,  
Talk to a pro and know they care.*

*So remember these tips, my little friend,  
And you'll find some stresses come to an end!*

**Day 1: Sunday,** (14th May 2023)

## Giants and Grasshoppers

***Numbers 13; Deuteronomy 1***

### Memory Verse

*"Be strong and Courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord God will be with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9 (NIV)*

### Alternate Memory Verse

*Strength! Courage! Don't be timid; don't get discouraged. God, your God, is with you every step you take." Joshua 1:9 (The Message)*

If you have ever felt scared because you were going to a new school, or you were worried that the other children were bigger than you, then you would understand the feeling of the twelve spies which Moses sent to spy out the land of Canaan.

You will remember the story—Moses chose twelve men to go into the land of Canaan and come back with a report on what the children of Israel might expect to find when they crossed into Canaan. Would it be a good place to grow crops? Would it have trees? What would the fruit be like? And more importantly, what would the people be like?

The spies returned carrying figs, pomegranates and grapes—one bunch of grapes was so big that it took two men to carry it on a pole between them. This was very exciting! "This is a land flowing with milk and honey!" they said.

You can imagine how Moses and the people felt when they heard that! I'm sure that the people just couldn't wait to see for themselves. "What are we waiting for?" they were thinking.

"But..." said ten of the spies, "... the people who live there are huge and powerful! We felt as tiny as grasshoppers! They will eat us alive!"

"They must be giants!" people started saying. Soon everyone was talking about the giants living in Canaan! Suddenly no one was thinking "What are we waiting for?", they were now saying, "Forget it, we are not big enough to defeat the giants." Others were saying, "I'm not taking my family there to be killed by the giants!" Soon an epidemic of fear spread through the camp as quickly as a tidal wave.

Imagine what the children of Israel felt like. Were their knees shaking? Did they have that funny feeling in their stomachs that made them suddenly need to go to the toilet? Those are two of the things that happen when we are stressed or scared and I'm sure that the people in Israel were just the same as us.

Only two men in the whole camp said that they should go into the country anyway.

All twelve spies were stressed, but Caleb and Joshua said, "We should go ahead. We can do it, even if these men are giants."

That's an interesting thing about this story - Why did most of the people say "No way!" and

refuse to go, but two men, said "Go ahead!?" ((spend some time to explore the children's suggestions))

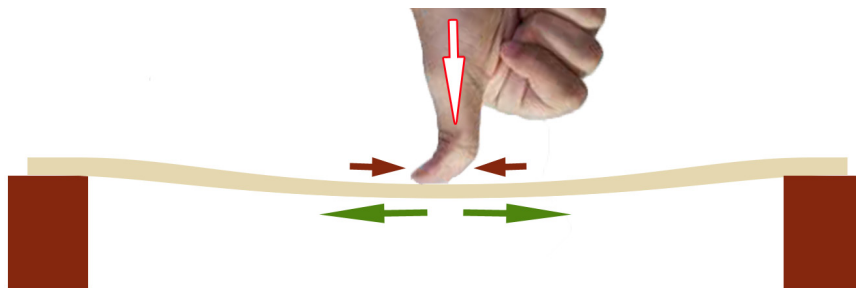
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This week we want to look at what makes some people shake in their boots (or sandals) and others be full of confidence.

To do this, we will need some popsicle sticks, some glue and a plan. We are going to build a bridge using our popsicle sticks and glue, and see if that will help us understand more about dealing with the feelings that make us freeze, make us so scared we start shaking, or so worried that our palms start to get wet and sticky.

The first thing we need to discover is how strong a popsicle stick really is. To do that we are going to take a single popsicle stick and watch carefully what happens when I put direct pressure on the stick.

Our experiment will look like this: (Set up a popsicle stick between two thick books and press down the middle taking careful note of the way it changes shape and then snaps.)



As the stick bends, the fibres in the wood (like our muscles) will either be **squashed** together or **stretched**. We call this **Compression and Tension**. (Demonstrate without breaking the stick) These are the most common stresses and are the result of the pressure of my hand on the wood. (Demonstrate and use the terms **Pressure, Compression and Tension** several times so the children get used to using the new vocabulary)

At some point the stick will break. Draw the children's attention to the way the fibres part at the point of tension before they snap at the point of compression.)

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**More About Compression:** Think about our story: The spies saw huge people, and cities with strong walls around them... they started thinking about how big the people were, and how strong the cities were. The more giants they saw, the greater the pressure they felt and the more their thoughts told them, "You are not strong enough! You are too weak! You are too small!" Anything that makes us feel small or worthless, compresses or squashes us, and we can feel it in our mind and in our body's reactions.

Show me how tall you think a Giant would be... and how big is a grasshopper. Question the children to see if their perceptions were real! **Stress exaggerates the situation**. Big, yes, but not as big or small as our thoughts are telling us. Discuss situations which involve "compression stress", where we feel reduced. Draw from children without exposing confidential details.

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**More about Tension:** When the spies saw the crops and how rich the land was, their thoughts told them, "This would be a great place to live, just imagine what such good crops would taste like. Let's go and live in this land - we won't have to work as hard as we did in Egypt!" Can you imagine how much they wanted to taste one of the grapes, or maybe share a pomegranate. What riches! "Thank you God! Thank you Moses!"

But... when the spies saw the high city walls, their knees started shaking and their stomachs ached and their thoughts were telling them things like, "You will never be able to get over these walls!" "The walls are as high as the sky, and as thick as the red sea!" "This country will eat you up and spit out the bones!"

How can both those things be true at the same time?

When their thoughts made them feel smaller, they were being Compressed. When their thoughts were in two opposite directions, they were experiencing Tension. Anything that makes us feel small or worthless compresses us. Anything that tears us in opposite directions creates tension. These two reactions are what we often call stress, and we know that we are stressed when our bodies tell us.

So stresses are reactions we feel inside - either in our thoughts, or in the way our body reacts to pressure.

Can you think of other things that happens to our bodies when we are stressed?  
(Encourage the children to cover most of the areas below:

- Sleep disturbances,
- Nightmares/bad dreams
- Eating problems - not hungry or eating too much, nausea
- Rapid heart beat
- Headaches
- Need to go to the toilet
- Shaking knees/ body, sweaty palms etc
- Crying
- Feeling sad.
- etc.)

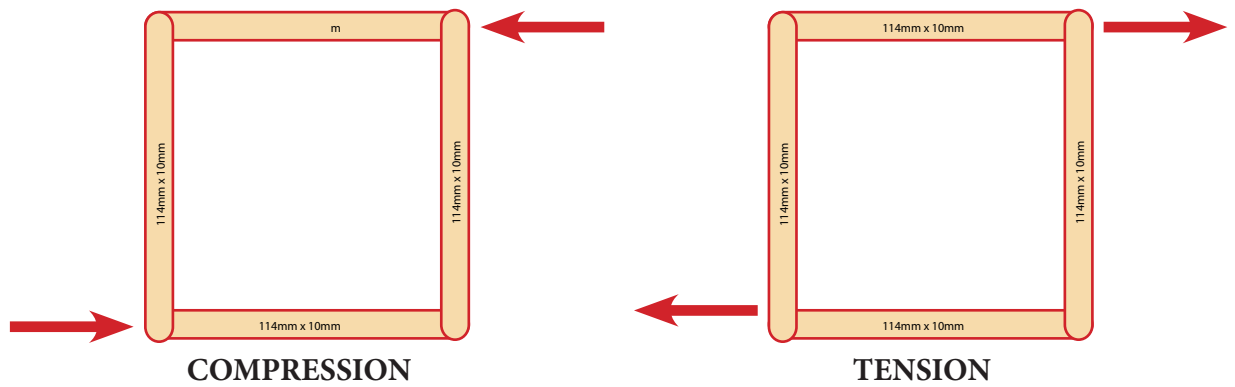
For ten spies, the stresses made them freeze and feel worthless. For Caleb and Joshua, the stresses were the same, but they chose to go forward. The stresses produced a different result. This week we will find some of the ways in which we can be like Caleb and Joshua.

(Guide the children to include the memory verse for a clue)

For older children, ask them to think about the tension stress for Moses - on one hand, he wanted to obey God, but he also wanted to listen to the people. He was being pulled by two different forces.

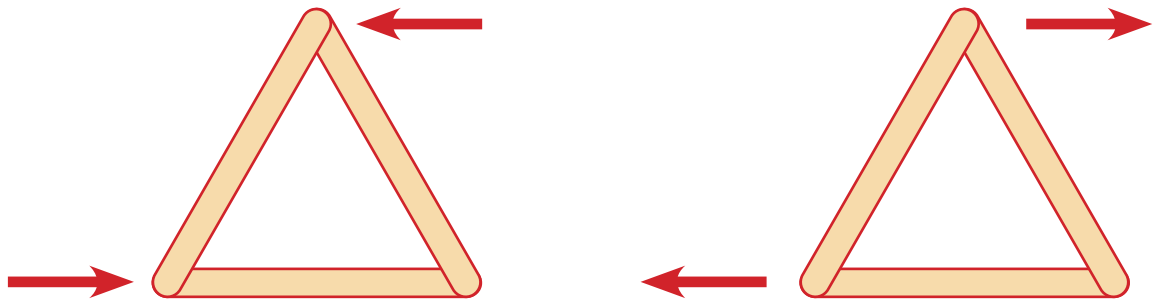
(Another topic for older children; talk about the pressure resulting from the majority of the spies putting pressure on the minority and how rumours in the camp put pressure on the spies to refuse to go forward.

To take it one step further, we are going to look at two different shapes and discover which is able to handle compression the best.



If we apply pressure on either one of these shapes - like the arrows above. Both will change shape and will eventually snap. We need to explore another shape which will stand up to more stress.

Let us try that with a triangle and see what happens.



The shape will rotate, but it does not change shape. (Unless much more force is applied)

If we want to build our bridge and make it strong, we have to use triangles in making our bridge.

On Day 2, we are going to start by making triangles for our bridge.

## Review:

- We know that stress comes from pressure or force applied to an object or person.
- We know about two different kinds of stress: Compression and Tension.
- The triangle shape can handle more stress than a square shape.
- Stress can make us feel small and weak (compression) or tear us in two directions (tension)
- Everybody feels some stress—but we can learn to manage stress
- Our bodies tell us when we are stressed (symptoms)
- People react to stress differently — for some it makes them act, for some it makes them freeze.
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**Refer to Day 1 in the Activity Guide for construction and further discussion topics.**



## Day 2: Monday, 15th May 2023)

### Pigs or Parties

**Luke 15:11-32**

#### Memory Verse

*He got up and went to his father, but, while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him. Luke 15:20*

#### Alternate Reading from The Message

*Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a prize-winning heifer and roast it. We're going to feast! We're going to have a wonderful time! My son is here—given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!*  
Luke 15:23-24 (The Message)

Many years ago, there was a rich man who had two sons. I'm going to call them Nathan and Jacob. Because Nathan was two years older than Jacob, he was his father's right hand man on the farm—even as a teenager, he was responsible for doing a whole lot of the chores, milking cows, feeding the goats and the sheep and looking after the chickens. If you wanted to know when to plant the corn, Nathan was the one who would be able to tell you.

Nathan was really good-looking and all his hard work gave him very strong muscles. Because Nathan was really quite shy, he preferred to work on the farm rather than to visit with his friends. This meant getting up really early in the morning and milking cows, and then milking them again at sunset. When it was time to harvest crops, it seems as if he never slept, he just kept working, but he seemed happy enough and hardly ever complained.

Jacob was very different. He was seventeen, feeling very grown-up and being a bit of a dreamer he had a really strong imagination. He was artistic, not practical, so farm life really was not his thing. He hated the smelly old cowshed and really could not understand why his brother loved riding horses, milking cows and growing corn. Secretly he wanted to leave the farm and go on an adventure. He was really a bit of a rebel.

The two boys could not have been more different than chalk and cheese, or black and white.

On his 18th birthday, Jacob went to his dad, "Father," he said, using his most polite voice, "I'm bored here and I will never be a farmer. Give me my part of the money from the farm, and I will go and do some exploring on my own. I want adventure, new experiences and fun."

Very sadly the father decided to give Jacob his wish and divided his wealth and gave Jacob his portion. As you will have guessed, this is a story which Jesus told us and we can read it in Luke 15.

You know the rest of the story - how Nathan did his duty every day, but gradually he began to hate the routine and he really didn't think his father appreciated him and his hard work. He

## ADVENTIST HEALTH MINISTRIES HEALTH WEEK - CHILDREN'S READINGS

did not complain, but he kept his feelings hidden. (Have children identify the kind of stress he was feeling - would it be compression or tension?)

Jacob went and had a really wild time with lots of new friends—as long as he had money in his pocket, he had friends. When the money ran out, so did his new friends—they disappeared as quickly as the early morning fog. Suddenly Jacob was all alone—a long way from home; no money, no friends, no family no job and no food.

Stop for a moment - If this happened to you—no family, no friends, no work, no money, no food and no skills at all. How would you feel. What would you do? (Discuss this in detail with group)

"So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs." I'm thinking he must have been homesick very soon. This boy who could not stand the smell of the barn was now living with the smelly, dirty pigs. See if you can identify his stress - would it be compression or tension?

The Bible tells us, "He longed to fill his stomach with the food that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything." (Tension)

As he came to his senses the Bible tells us he thought to himself, "How many of my father's hired men have food to spare and here I am starving to death." (Tension) "I will set out and go back to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have done you wrong. I am no longer worthy. I do not deserve to be called your son.'" (Compression - a feeling of worthlessness.) "Please make me like one of your hired men."

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All of us need people around us to support us. In this story, Jacob knew he could not trust his friends but that he could trust his father. Family support is really important, even when we think we are grown up. Jacob's thoughts were doubly stressed - tension (explain) and compression (explain). How would he solve the stress?

Nathan kept his feelings to himself and his father did not realise that he was neglecting to recognise just how hard Nathan was working. Possibly the father was too worried about what Jacob was doing and if he was OK (What kind of stress did the father have?). All we know is that the stress in Nathan was building up and he was close to bursting point. How would he solve his stress?

Jacob's father said to his servants, "Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a prize-winning heifer and roast it. We're going to feast! We're going to have a wonderful time! My son is here—given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!"

We each respond to different pressures in different ways. Explore the different stress reactions of the two sons and the father. by exploring some of these questions:

- Did Nathan's stress reduce (get less) or increase? At what point did stress burst out of him?
- Did Jacob's stress reduce or get even more? At what point did stress overwhelm him?
- At what point did the father's stress reduce or increase? How did the reduction in stress show in the father?
- Can one feel compression and tension at the same time? Give some examples from the story.
- Which parts of the story are most like 'real life'?

**Refer to Day 2 in the Activity Guide for construction and further discussion topics.**

## Day 3: Tuesday, (16th May 2023)

# Luxury or Lentils

## Daniel 1

### Memory Verse

*"Exercise is good for your body, but religion helps you in every way. It promises life now and forever." 1 Timothy 4:8 (CEV)*

### Alternate Memory Verse

*Exercise daily in God—no spiritual flabbiness, please! Workouts in the gymnasium are useful, but a disciplined life in God is far more so, making you fit both today and forever. 1 Timothy 4:8 (The Message)*

"Ashpenaz, I want you to choose the very best looking, most handsome young princes from all of our territories and bring them to my palace."

"My Lord, the King, I will do what you ask. Here I have fine young princes from all of the nations you have conquered. First we have Prince Anatoli, of Anatolia; Prince Carcamesh from Ninevah; Prince Qatna from Aram and Prince Hamath from Assyria. I also have Hannaniah and three of his friends from Judah.

These are some of the most handsome, qualified leaders we have found in any country. I think they will make good leaders."

"Very good, Ashpenaz. Make sure they have everything of the very best. For three years, I want you to feed them the very richest foods from my kitchen and the best wines from my table. Don't spare any expense at all - rich clothes, rich food, rich wines. They must have the best of the best, and be the brightest of the bright."

Wow! Imagine that feast! All of the tastiest meats, desserts, wines and sweets! Would you swap that for lentils, beans and barley? Yet that is what the four princes wanted to do. "Please test us for ten days, and then compare our appearance with the young men who eat the royal food."

Ashpenaz was astonished! "Why would you turn down the best food in the country! Won't you find that you get bored with lentils, beans and barley? Just vegetables and water, no sweets, chocolates, desserts, meat or wine! Will it make a difference in only 10 days? "

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Does the food we eat affect how we look? Does it affect how we study or concentrate? Does it affect how we sleep? Does it affect how we feel? If good food makes us feel better, does bad food make us feel worse. So, in what way can food cause us stress?

Ever had a tummy ache? Ever felt sick just before a test at school? Ever seen your younger brother or sister after a birthday party when they have had too much cake and ice-cream?

Yes, food can cause stress, but our body can also show us when we are stressed.

Not hungry after a fight with your best friend? Needing to go to the toilet just before playing that big soccer or football game? Not sleeping well the day before moving to a new school? You may have felt some or all of those things. What other ways does your body tell you that you are under stress? (Guide the children to list things like headaches, cramps, nightmares, dreams, etc. This is a revision of a similar task on Day 1)

After ten days the king orders Ashpenaz to bring out all the young princes, so he could inspect them.

"Ashpenaz, I really want to test all the new young leaders! Bring them out so I can look at them."

"Certainly, my King. May I present Prince Anatoli from the Hittites, he has 17 years. Prince Hamath from Assyria, he is also 17. Unfortunately Prince Qatna from Aram is not fit enough to come before my Lord, the King. But I have Hannaniah, Mishael, Azariah and Daniel from Judah. They have seen 16 summers."

"Stop right there Ashpenaz! Why do these four boys have no pimples like the others? Look, their skin is glowing. I have seen enough! These boys are in the best physical shape."

"In three years I will test everyone on Mathematics and Astronomy. That will sort out the best of the best"

"My King, I already know that these boys have learnt more than all the others who spent their time eating cake and drinking wine!"

You know the rest of the story about Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, "in every way in which the king tested them, they knew ten times more than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom." (Daniel 1:20)

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One of the things that Daniel did to reduce stress was to keep a regular routine—every day he prayed at the same time and in the same place. As he grew up, Daniel kept up his routines by practicing self-control and discipline (regular habits). Though he did not always know what other people were going to do to him, he never had to worry about /or be stressed about what to do next.

There are other things we can do to help our body work better, with less stress. Can you think of things that help us feel less stressed?

How does poor food put stress on our bodies - give some examples of reactions (stress reactions - compression/tension) within our bodies that indicate poor choices of what we put into our bodies. (Include, rich foods, alcohol, tobacco, drugs, vaping etc)

**Refer to Day 3 in the Activity Guide for construction and further discussion topics.**

## Day 4: Wednesday, (17th May 2023)

# Down the Up Escalator

## 1 Samuel 19 & 20

### Memory Verse

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God."  
Matt 5:9 (NIV)*

### Alternate Memory Verses

*"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."  
Proverbs 15:1*

*"You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family." Matt 5:9 (The Message)*

Do you remember the first time you saw a set of moving stairs - an escalator? It may have been in a shopping mall, or an airport. If you live in a small village, you may never have seen one, because they are usually only in big cities where there are lots of people.  
(Discuss)

Many years ago, I was in charge of a group of young children who were visiting the city for the first time. At the train station, for the first time, the children saw a set of moving stairs which would take them down to the platform and the train. Oh, they really loved those stairs! They spent many minutes travelling up and down on the escalators. After a short while, some of the boys started running down the up escalator. That meant they had to take two steps just to stay in place, and had to watch their feet as the steps were going against them. I remember thinking that if moving stairs were called escalators because they were going up, then the ones going down must be de-escalators!

When someone is really angry or there is conflict, de-escalating tension is as difficult as trying to run down an escalator that is going up. All the pressure is on making the conflict worse. So to de-escalate we have to be working twice as hard to succeed.

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Have you ever seen somebody lose their temper? Or shout without being able to control themselves? Or throw a tantrum like a 3-year old child? It's bad when that happens, but really bad when the one that does that is a grown-up or someone who is supposed to love and care for us.

King Saul was a man who could lose his temper very suddenly. Although he was a king, he was a bully who had no self-control. When he was angry he would do really dangerous things like throwing spears at people—even his own family—and he would insult them by calling them names or mocking them. Whenever there was trouble, King Saul would make it worse—we could say he escalated the trouble. (Discuss the new word)

Talking to someone who has no self-control, or who is drunk, or who throws tantrums like a young child, is always difficult and may even be dangerous. King Saul's son Jonathan knew that this was true. He knew that if he answered his father in the 'wrong' way, he would become violently angry in an instant. And Saul would do just that. "You are the rebellious child of a foolish, obstinate woman!" he shouted and then picked up a spear and threw it at Jonathan, aiming to kill his own son.

Jonathan was a good friend of David, the hero who killed Goliath the giant enemy leader of the Philistines. You would think that the King of Israel would be glad that Goliath was dead. No way! He was jealous because this young teenage boy had made the king look bad! He became even more jealous when David became a successful army captain and more popular than the king himself. All the girls wanted to be seen with David; he was young, good-looking and famous.

That made Saul even madder.

Imagine the tension in the palace—from our bridge, we know that tension is when things are being pulled apart. In the palace there was tension between Saul and David—Saul wanted to kill David.

This is where Jonathan became the peace-maker. Another way of saying that is, Jonathan tried to de-escalate the tension. He could not simply say to his father his father, "Why would you hurt an innocent man?" that question might cause Saul to get angry. So instead of simply asking the question, he began by speaking well of David, and showed how David had done things which made Saul glad. Things which made the country strong when God had helped David. Only then did Jonathan ask, "Why would you want to do wrong by killing an innocent man for no reason?" He asked the difficult question, but he did it by calming Saul down first.

Another way to de-escalate tension is to walk away or avoid fighting if possible. David left the palace and went and lived with his army. When Jesus was being punished, he did not answer the men who were beating him. That is another way of de-escalating tension. In other words, the Bible says that speaking politely and gently will de-escalate tension, but answering back or shouting will make the anger worse. (Proverbs 15:1)

When we are being shouted at or bullied, there is something that makes us want to fight back and beat up our tormentor. But speaking calmly and politely can help to make things easier. It also helps to have someone else with you and to report bad behaviour like this to an adult you can trust. Remember, that even if you made a mistake, the other person does not have an excuse to violently shout at you or beat you. But it is not a good idea to tell them that while they are shouting, out of control or drunk. Be quietly respectful and leave if you are able, then talk to an adult you trust!

Another step on the de-escalator is learning to let bad things go. If we hang onto all the bad things that people have done to us, that creates tension too - tension between wanting to get back at people and the wanting to enjoy life without those bad memories.

**Refer to Day 4 in the Activity Guide for construction and further discussion topics.**



## Day 5: Thursday, (18th May 2023)

### A Locked-out Lock-down

***Luke 17:11-19;***

#### **Memory Verse**

*"Your faith has made you well" Luke 17:19*

#### **Alternate Memory Verse**

*I will praise you oh Lord with all my heart... when I called, you answered me; you made me bold and stouthearted. Psalm 138: 1a,3*

**Opening Discussion:** *What was the COVID lock-down like for you? Did you miss being with your friends? Did you miss shopping, or going to school? Imagine if that went on and on without stopping - just because you caught COVID.*

Bartholomeu was depressed; He was locked out of his home because of his skin condition and it was not getting better. In fact, he was beginning to lose all feeling in his fingers and toes. He knew, that like the people living near him, his face would soon show the signs of his disease. He was truly depressed when he thought about that.

The cave he was living in was cold at night but if he made a fire, he had to be very careful that he did not burn himself. He had seen other people with leprosy who had been badly burnt because their hands did not tell them how close they were to the fire.

He thought of his children, Sarah and John, who he would never be able to hug again. He missed those hugs. It was too dangerous to get even close to them—not dangerous for Bartholomeu, but dangerous for his children. He did not want them to get leprosy by touching him. So he could wave at them from a long way away and he knew that soon they would forget about him. No wonder he was depressed and discouraged. He was locked-out of his home and in a lock-down that had no chance of getting easier.

No wonder he was depressed!

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Bartholomeu's cave was in the side of a hill alongside the river Kishon. It was part of a whole series of little caves which people like him had made their homes. Most of the men nearby were from Galilee on the one side of the river and but he was from Samaria .

One morning, James, his neighbour came rushing in, "Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples are coming down the road, do you want to see him? We have heard he can heal leprosy"

Bartholomeu, thought for a moment. He knew the history of the Jews and the Samaritans. Each group thought they worshiped God, but they hated each other.

Bartholomeu thought, "If Jesus is from Galilee and I am from Samaria, then I am not

worthy! He won't want to heal me! You go ahead, I will stand behind you and watch what happens."

So James and his friends ran out to greet Jesus, but they did not get too close. They were too ashamed. "Unclean" they shouted to let Jesus know that they had leprosy. Some of the lepers had to cover their faces, because the disease had changed how they looked.

"Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" James shouted loudly. Soon every one of the lepers was shouting the same thing. Even Bartholomeu shouted, "Jesus, Master, have pity on me!"

Can you imagine the tension at that moment? Ten sick people hoping that Jesus would make them well! If they could be well, they could join up with their families again. They could hug their children and live in a warm house. They would be out of lock-down and never have to live in the cave again!

Jesus saw the men, but he did not say, "You are going to be made well". Instead he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." How disappointed the men must have been. Jesus did not heal them right away. But still they would go to their priests. It was the priests who would decide if the men were still sick.

James and his friends were from Galilee, so their priests were in Galilee, but Bartholomeu's priests were in Samaria. He would have to go to his priests in Samaria.

All the men turned to go to their countries. James and his eight friends were walking to Galilee, Bartholomeu was walking to Samaria. As they walked, James noticed his skin was healing. The white flakes on his skin were fading, so he kept walking.

Bartholomeu noticed the same thing. His skin was nearly back to normal. He immediately realised that Jesus was making him well. He realised Jesus' miracle was not just for the men from Galilee, but that Jesus thought he was worthy to be healed!

Now he had a choice to make. Should he run quickly to see the priest as Jesus had told him? Or, should he run back and thank Jesus first? If he went to the priest, he would be able to see his family sooner than if he turned around and went back to see Jesus.

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Did you notice the different stresses in the story. Bartholomeu felt unworthy. He did not deserve to be healed. Feeling unworthy is compression - it makes us feel smaller, but longing to be well shows us the tension Bartholomeu was feeling when he knew he was not well, but he really wanted to be with his family again. He was being pulled in two directions.

So often we feel unworthy and feel compressed but we also feel stretched between two opposites. We first feel this stress in our minds, then in our bodies. Our thoughts become twisted as we try to cope, then our heart beats faster and we take short shallow breaths. We might make our hands into fists and have shaky knees. These are signs from our body that we are stressed.

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Jesus does not want us to feel unloved or unworthy because of the country we come from or how rich or poor our family is. He does not want us to treat people differently because of the colour of their skin, or the clothes they wear. For Jesus, it makes no difference whether we are boys or girls, whether we are tall or short, thin or fat. Jesus does not see differences like that! Those differences may cause us stress, but they make no



differences to how God sees us.

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For Bartholomeu, going back to thank Jesus, was a way to praise God and to show how grateful he was. Once upon a time he was in lock-down that never had an end. Now he was free from lock-down because Jesus made him well.

Once he was lonely and depressed. Now he was praising God and looking forward to hugging his children again. Once he felt he did not deserve to be made well. Now he knew that Jesus does not treat people differently.

Discuss how forgiving someone can free that person from stress and reduce our own stress.

**Refer to Day 5 in the Activity Guide for construction and further discussion topics.**

## Day 6: Friday, (19th May 2023)

# Courage and Conviction

## *The Book of Esther*

### Memory Verse

*Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself ...  
comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say.  
2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 (NEV)*

### Alternate Memory Verse

*Forgetting what is behind, and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward  
the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.  
Phil 3:13-14 (NIV)*

Esther stood on her the balcony of her private rooms at the palace. She looked out across the city of Susa, the capital of Persia, where she was now the queen. Susa was a grand and beautiful city, full of rich traditions and culture, and although Esther was a Jew, she had come to love this city as her own and called it home. Today, she had a worried look on her face and turned her gaze towards the sky as if in prayer.

How different her life was now from when she was a child, her name then had been Hadassah, a Jewish name given to her at birth. Her upbringing had not been easy, both her parents had died in an accident when she was very small. She had gone to live with Mordecai who, although was her cousin, was much older than her and who she looked on more like an uncle.

Uncle Mordecai, worked for the King and was stationed at the gates of Susa where he completed his official duties each day. It was through this work that he had overheard the plans Haman (the King's chief adviser) had made for all the Jews living in Persia.

Haman hated the Jews and had convinced the King that it was the Jews who were causing all the problems in the city. They were the reason why there was so much crime, poverty, violence, and hardship. Sadly, the King had believed him and had ordered that on a certain day all the Jews would be put to death.

Mordecai had gone straight to Esther and had told her about these plans. They had met for days discussing what could be done, and in the end, it was decided that Esther would need to ask the King for mercy on behalf of her people.

But there were two big challenges Esther needed to deal with. Firstly, the king did not know that Esther was a Jew, and secondly going to the king without an official invitation (even for the queen) could result in her being put to death. However, if the King stretched out his royal sceptre towards her when she approached him, she would be welcomed into his presence and would be safe. The king wasn't always in a good mood, and so Esther couldn't be sure he would be happy to see her; she was taking a big risk.

For three days before Esther went to the King, she and all her ladies in waiting fasted and prayed.

It was such an important request that Esther had asked Mordecai to tell all the Jewish people across Persia to do the same. In this time, God helped her come up with a plan.

Esther decided that she would invite the King and Haman to a special dinner, on not just one night, but two nights. At this time, she would feed them lots of healthy, and delicious food, and she would have lots of relaxing and fun things to do as well. She thought this was a good way to give respect and honour to the King, showing him how much she cared for his welfare. Then when she asked him to spare her people, he would know she was a good person and that what Haman had said about the Jews couldn't be true.

Esther and Uncle Mordecai met one last time, where Mordecai had encouraged her with saying that perhaps being queen was exactly where God needed her to be at this important time. They prayed together and asked God to give Esther courage and strength to do what she needed to do. Then after a good night's sleep, Esther had broken her fast that morning, and had eaten a healthy breakfast. She had gone for a long walk in the fresh morning air, breathing in deeply and relaxing her mind and body. She had dressed carefully, wearing colours that made her feel happy and had dabbed her wrists with her favourite perfume—one the king had given her as a gift. Now as she stood on her balcony looking out across Susa, she raised her face towards heaven and in a quiet voice said, "If I should die, I die, but God, your will be done".

As Esther neared the King's court, she heard the murmurings of many people's voices. In the background someone was playing beautiful soft music on a harp, this was in stark contrast to the loud and fast beating of her heart ringing in her ears. As she got closer to where the King sat, she took deep breaths to calm her stress and focused on what she was going to say. Esther noticed that everyone had stopped what they were doing and turned to look her way, watching with anticipation to see what the king would do.

King Xerxes was chatting quietly with Haman at his side when he noticed the noise in the room had stopped. He raised his eyes in concern to see what was happening, and there before him stood the beautiful Queen Esther. With delight in his eyes and without hesitation, the king lifted his sceptre and stretched it out towards her, and with silent thanksgiving to Yahweh for his protection Esther reached out her hand and touched the sceptre in reply.

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### **Discussion Points to summarise the week:**

What was Esther's secret to cope with the stress of visiting the King?

Let's list the things she did:

- *She took advice from Mordecai, someone she trusted to give her good information.*
- *She asked God to help her with a plan, fasting and praying for three days.*
- *She understood what she needed to do and concentrated on the best way to do it.*
- *She ate healthy food, slept well, and was physically active.*
- *She slowed her breathing down by taking deep breaths.*
- *She prepared herself by focusing on what she was going to say.*
- *She saw how God had worked in her life and understood that she had a special role to play. (A clear sense of purpose)*