



Battle for the Mind

Outline Plans draft



Note: This is a very significant topic and it will probably take several sessions if you are to explore it properly and for it to start to make a difference in their lives. We had about 45 minutes per session and so spent 3 sessions on it, especially as our opening game took a long time but was great fun so memorable. It will help a lot if your group has already covered the issue of how people value themselves – see the resources on self-image. It is important to read the leader's notes.

Aims

- To see how the way we think can affect our health and well-being
- To see how what we believe about something can affect how we feel.
- Discussion and activities to help them to take on board more Biblical ways of thinking
- To consider the difference between denial and positive Biblical thinking

Programme Overview

- Game or discussion based on what sort of food is good or bad to eat
- Consider the negative things they often say to themselves
- Consider why they say these things
- Discussion and activities to help them resist negative thoughts and adopt more Biblical ways of thinking
- Prayer

Bible bit

I Samuel 18 onwards – Saul going crazy

There are more Bible verses in the back-up notes

Resources for session 1-2 select from:

Whatever you need for your opening food theme game - Choose from:

- Pictures of junk food / healthy food / rotten food from magazines or internet
- Real food items both healthy and junk
- Mouldy or stale food, perhaps even a slug or two!
- PowerPoint 'One man's meat is another man's poison' – available via our e-mail

Something that goes round and round such as old CD discs, cardboard circles, wheels etc.

We used some cheap cannelloni (long tube shapes) pasta and wrote on them in pencil

Food shaped pieces of paper or post-it notes

Paper plates

Pens

A helmet – toy or real

Resources for session 2-3 – select from:

- Use flip chart to revise values
- Butterfly/spider diagram
- Roman centurion outfit - to demonstrate importance of defending our minds and hearts.
- See [School Reports Get Outdated](#)

Session 1 Programme

Aim: In this first session we focused on the importance of what we feed ourselves and began to identify the negative thoughts that can affect our health in every way.

Opening activity

Choose a game or have a discussion based around the theme of good and bad food.

For example

- What are your favourite foods?
- Have 2 plates of food or pictures of food – one good and one bad.
Which of these most appeal? Which are better for you?
- Find a few things that they would not like to eat at all under any circumstances or that would make them ill.

Our Celebrity Jungle game: UK group

This is a food challenge game based on the Celebrity Jungle bush tucker trial idea and it should be great fun.

Find some food that the group might not want to eat and give it unappealing names.

Include food that looks good but is potentially unhealthy.

Encourage them to try anything that won't harm them.

Here is my list of what I did to give you some ideas;

- A jar of pickled mussels
- Half a jar of jam that had started to ferment
- A very black banana with broken skin
- Some leftover egg fried rice that had **NOT** been in the fridge (**could cause food poisoning**)
- Some olives
- Some chopped pickled cucumber
- Some silverskin onions painted with green food colouring
- Some white chocolate chunks softened in the microwave and rolled into worm shapes
- A peanut bar softened and rolled into small balls (named it 'squirrel droppings!') **contains nuts**
- Glace cherries cut in ½ (named it 'rabbits' hearts'?)
- Noodles coloured with green food dye
- Root ginger (named it 'reindeer antler!')

Beware of food allergies and cultural sensitivity.

Discuss

What might happen if you ate unhealthy food?

Some food looks and tastes good but it is contaminated with bugs such as salmonella so we get food poisoning. If chicken or egg dishes are left at room temperature for too long they still taste good but can make us ill. This happened at a wedding reception where such food was left out for about 12 hours and nearly everyone was ill with food poisoning.

Feeding our bodies is fairly obvious – what about feeding our minds?

In what ways do we feed our minds?

What happens if we feed our minds bad stuff – can that make us ill? Doctors tell us that it can!

Research suggests that we talk to ourselves at a rate of up to 1,300 words a minute.

What we think can actually change the chemical composition of our brain cells and the rest of our central nervous system.

Our self-talk can have a huge effect on our physical and emotional health.



Cannelloni / CD disc activity

What sort of bad thoughts do we feed ourselves?

Perhaps write some suggestions on a board or flipchart (you could prepare some beforehand to get this going)

Ask them what thoughts go round and round in their minds?

Give out the 'activity circles' for them to write down their own negative thoughts.

Using the cannelloni worked quite well but be aware that they are quite brittle. You need pencils as pens just slip.

We ended the first session here with the following:

Start to spot the negative things you say to yourself during the next few days. Explain that we will be unpacking this theme over the next couple of sessions.

Quiet / candle time

Long before doctors started to tell us that our thoughts can affect our health the Bible said this.

Read from Proverbs 4:20-23

Prayer time

Battle of the Mind session 2 – the overlap session

Aim: In this session we thought some more about identifying the negative thoughts that trouble us and started to consider how to deal with these.

If you have covered this sufficiently in your first session you can move straight on to the next part.

Feeding the mind activity

Decide on an activity to represent how we feed our minds.

We used paper plates and post-it notes.

Tell them to write down the negative things that they say and think on the post-it notes and stick them to their paper plate.

Invite them to share

I had a small close-knit group who were happy to be open with each other. With a more reserved group you may have to invent some fictitious characters who have these thoughts. A puppet can work well for this even with 13 year olds.

Often it is what we **believe** about an event or a comment that hurts us rather than what is actually said or done. Share Bethany's shopping story, the other examples from the leaders notes.

Positive Biblical thinking is not about ignoring real problems or pretending that everything is okay when there is a serious problem to be faced. It is about facing issues the way Jesus would have done.

Action

Ask Jesus to teach you to deal with negative things like anger, fear and harmful thoughts which are bothering you and ask him to fill you instead with his Holy Spirit. Soak your mind in some Bible verses. The Psalms are a good place to go for help with thinking positively. We are in a battle but Jesus can help us to get better at winning it.

Battle of the Mind Session 2 or 3

Having already set up this topic in your previous session/s you could use one of the example case studies from the leader's notes as your attention grabber

Stories / case studies

- Bethany's friends went shopping without her.
If she believes that they don't want her, she will feel ...
If she believes her friends were planning to buy her birthday present she will feel ...
- But what when friends really do dump you?
Identify negative ways of dealing with this
Identify positive ways of thinking about it and dealing with it.
- Aimee says she is no good at Spanish. Discuss the options here. See back-up notes
- Charlie often fails school assessments and so believes that he is stupid. How could Charlie view this differently?
- Frances has been invited to a party and has to decide what to wear. She is very anxious about it. Why?

It is what we believe about something that often matters most.

How will we feel if what we believe threatens our

- a) Sense of value? It could make us feel demoralised / depressed / rejected
- b) Sense of what makes us significant as an individual / our role? It could make us feel worthless
- c) Sense of security? It could make us fearful

Show and explain the butterfly/spider diagram or something similar.
Perhaps get them to do their own version.

Reflection time

Ask God to show you something you say to yourself that he would like to change

Have writing materials available.

Allow time for prayer.

Writer: Brenda Lord; draft

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