



Finding Friendship

Aim: to introduce the Riverbank course and start getting to know one another.

Note: Text highlighted in *italic* denotes script suggestions for what you can say to the group.

Items needed this week

- Flip chart, marker pens
 - Blu Tack or sticky tape
 - Equipment for 'no bake' craft: mixing bowls, cutlery, wooden spoons etc (available to buy at pound stores)
 - Ingredients for 'no bake' craft - please take note of any allergies (eg dairy / cream cheese) and search for alternative recipes in advance if necessary
 - Printed copies of Appendix 2 or of the alternative recipe
 - Take-away boxes/ containers for group to take desserts home
 - Researched answers for the 'Heroes' activity
- Optional extra:
- A notebook to write down thoughts throughout the course. Ask participants to bring their own notebook, if not provided at the start of joining the group.

Welcome

Before the women arrive, set up a welcoming space with refreshments ready. You may want to have some background music and have the seating ready.

Start by introducing yourself and setting out what this course is and what this course is not.

Understanding the course

What this is not:

- *Inward looking - The aim is for us to look outward and move forward in life together.*

- *A religious programme - The Salvation Army is part of the Christian Church but the programme is open to all women from all backgrounds, is non-judgmental and inclusive.*
- *Qualified counselling - If you feel you need more support in dealing with issues raised by the course, this can be arranged.*

What this is:

- *A fresh perspective - This course is about giving ourselves the chance to step back from the busyness and pressures of everyday life, and to look at things from a new perspective.*
- *Opportunity for personal growth - with each other's help and encouragement, we're going to explore some simple, practical ideas that can help us move forward more confidently and positively.*
- *A chance to build community - As well as being a journey of personal growth, it's also about building community. There's an old Chinese proverb that says, 'A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.' And this course is all about taking that first step, side by side. And as we share this journey together, we will hopefully enjoy times of fun and friendship, and some good food.*

❄ Getting to Know Others

Spend some time introducing and getting to know each other a little better; use at least two 'Getting to Know Others' activities from Appendix 1.

Group Guidelines

Having got to know each other a little better, we're now going to split into small groups of three or four and spend a few minutes chatting about how you'd all like this group to work as we share this course together.

For example, what do you hope to experience or achieve together?

You might want to think about things like:

- *being honest with one another*
- *showing respect*
- *really listening*
- *keeping things confidential*
- *building friendship*
- *encouraging accountability*
- *offering support*

You can add anything that matters to you.

As a small group write down your ideas ready to share with the whole group.

Distribute flip-chart paper and pens to each group.

Write these things on the flip-chart paper.

Attach these sheets of paper on a wall visible to everyone in the room. Spend some time creating a group statement/goal that combines all of these ideas. This can be something that you then have on the wall each week to remind group members of the guidelines to adhere to throughout the sessions.

Activities

Heroes

Top tip



Make sure you check the answers online for the topics below before the session begins.

Ask the group together to name:

- Three recent Nobel peace prize winners
- The three people with the most Instagram followers
- The richest five people on the planet right now

Now go round asking each person in the group to name up to:

- Three good friends
- Three inspirational 'heroes' that they look up to (past/present)
- Three people who have taught them something worthwhile

Ask each woman to explain very briefly why they have named those people.

It's funny, isn't it? We might struggle to list Nobel Peace Prize winners, Instagram influencers, or the richest people in the world ... but we can instantly name the people who have made a real difference in our lives.

Those who impact us most aren't necessarily the people with the greatest achievements, the most money, or prestigious awards - they're the people who genuinely care for us.

Maya Angelou put it beautifully when she said, 'People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.'

Do you agree?

And if that is true, then maybe we can also become that kind of person for someone else. Maybe we can be the role models who make a difference simply by caring.

Invite group members to write in their notebook answers to the following questions, and after a few minutes invite them to share their thoughts.

- *What things would make us good role models?*
- *What makes us look up to people?*

This may give us some ideas to take forward in future weeks as we think about our own development.

Craft: Chocolate Truffles / Alternative 'No Bake' Dessert (see Appendix 2)

Making a recipe together is a great friendship building activity because it creates a relaxed, low pressure environment where people can chat naturally while working toward a shared goal.

The teamwork involved - measuring, mixing, and creating something together - helps break down barriers, encourages cooperation, and often leads to fun moments that spark laughter and connection. Sharing the finished food strengthens the sense of community and gives everyone a feeling of having accomplished something together.

Ask the group to get into pairs or threes and display **slide X** from the PowerPoint template.

Encourage the group to take the desserts home by providing equipment such as foil, takeaway containers, sandwich bags etc.

Top tip



You can find alternative 'no bake' dessert ideas on Pinterest or online - just search 'no bake desserts'. Ensure you have considered any possible food allergies. Check you have the recipes printed out, with enough ingredients and equipment available for all of the pairs in the group.



Reflect and Respond

Spend some time reflecting on this session - you may choose to refer back to the aim. Ask the women if they have any questions.

Spend some time reflecting on this session using the questions below:

- *What went well?*
- *Even better if ...?*
- *Is there anything else you'd like to say?*

Invite the group to write the answers to these questions in their notebook and follow up with them individually. Alternatively, have a time of open sharing

After the session, consider if there are any immediate changes to make based on the feedback. Record all other comments for future reference for your leader's feedback at the end of the programme.

Preparation for Session 2

Before the women leave, remind the group to bring in their notebooks for Session 2. Let the group know in advance about the craft in the next session.

If you prefer to use your own, please bring in your hand cream and nail varnishes of choice to the next session. The craft will involve pampering each other with hand massages and doing each other's nails.