READY TO USE MENTORING

# Puncture repair

Have you ever had a flat tyre? Maybe on a bicycle? I cycle a lot, so I’ve had plenty. Some are slow and annoying but manageable if you keep pumping it up every few miles. Some are more dramatic and irreparable, resulting in walking miles or ignominiously getting a taxi home.

So why the fixation with flats? Because it makes a valuable parallel for talking to your mentees about their mental health. We all know the metaphor that life can be like a bumpy road, but what about discussing coping strategies, avoidance strategies or acknowledging the emotions inside yourself when life drives you through a pothole?

Being able to fix or replace an inner tube is a valuable skill – why not have this conversation with them while you show them (or learn!) how to do it? Or even better, get out for a ride together and discuss it as you pedal side by side.

## With your mentee

Stretch the metaphor as far as is valuable!

**1 When life’s ‘road’ starts getting rocky**

How does it feel, riding a bike over sketchy terrain – do you feel vulnerable? Scared? Is this the same when hit bumpy patches in life? How does it feel when things go wrong and you feel out of control? What rocky terrain is facing you at the moment? How are you planning to negotiate this?

**2 The puncture**

Do you run away from your problems or do you try to resolve them? What would be the best way to tackle these things?

When did you last try to sort out an argument? Out of ten, how did that go and why?

**3 Mending the hole**

Are you a planner who carries a spare inner tube or repair kit? Or do you just hope for the best? Who do you ask for help when life ‘gets a puncture’? Do you revert to unhealthy habits to make yourself feel better?

See if you can name ten ways you can build your confidence for tackling life’s challenges.

**4 Learning from the experience**

If we don’t try to learn from what happens to us, we may end up only taking bitterness and negativity from it. Turn bad things into something positive then they become an opportunity to grow stronger. Think of that bad situation that happened to you – list five ways you can or did become stronger, better or happier as a result. Perhaps having the attitude of being willing to learn from mistakes and disasters is like ‘carrying a spare’ and having friends and strategies in place is like carrying a ‘repair kit’ with you. Discuss what these might be.

Perhaps this attitude is why Paul suggested we could ‘glory in our sufferings’ (Romans 5:1-5) – there’s always at least one positive we can take from every situation. It might be small but it’s better to focus on that than the alternative!

Happy riding!

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