

2023

Behind the Jersey Resource Kit

VOICES *of hope*



Overview

At Voices of Hope we believe in the power of sharing your story and changing how we talk about mental health in Aotearoa and beyond.

Voices of Hope (VoH), a mental health charity, was established in 2017 by Genevieve Mora and Jazz Thornton, individuals who have personally battled mental illness. Motivated by their own struggles, they recognised the importance of leveraging their past experiences and their passion for content creation to ignite change.

Voices of Hope serves as a platform for lived experience storytelling. The organisation shares narratives of individuals who have confronted mental health challenges, emphasising the skills and tools they utilised during their journeys. Through the voices of those who have experienced mental health issues firsthand, Voices of Hope provides authentic, unfiltered, and vulnerable content.

Both founders actively engage in public speaking engagements at schools, corporations, and conferences, where they openly share their own lived experiences. Their aim is to inspire and educate others, fostering empathy and understanding around mental health.

Since the launch of Voices of Hope, their content has received both national and international recognition and has caught the attention of people and organisations wanting to support their vision.

Jazz & Gen have received the Queen's Commonwealth Points of Light Award, named in the Forbes Asia 30 under 30, are both authors and Jazz has spoken at the UN General Assembly with world leaders. After signing a publishing deal with Penguin NZ, they created *My Journey Starts Here*, a guided journal which is filled with the tools Jazz and Gen used in their journeys as a resource people from all different backgrounds can use.

Founders

Jazz Thornton

Having overcome childhood adversity and multiple suicide attempts, Jazz Thornton has now dedicated her life to speaking hope and creating change in the area of mental health. Jazz co-founded Voices of Hope and her unique experience and practical message has gained worldwide recognition, being shared through media, international speaking engagements and through documentary feature film, The Girl on the Bridge (directed by Leane Pooley). Jazz is also the award-winning director of Jessica's Tree and author of Stop Surviving Start Fighting, My Journey Starts Here and Letters to You. She also won the 2021 Young New Zealander of the Year award.

Genevieve Mora

Genevieve Mora spent most of her teenage years battling Mental Illness. As part of her recovery she has made it her mission to offer hope to those fighting mental illness. Genevieve co-founded Voices of Hope and through this uses her lived experience to show people that recovery is possible and that there is no shame in having a mental illness. Genevieve is the co-creator of Love your Kite, a global eating disorder resource app and speaks about her journey regularly on her TikTok page. She is the author of My Journey Starts Here and Bite Back Gen was also named as a Westfield Local Hero and a finalist for the Impact Awards.



Media Coverage

For a comprehensive compilation of our notable media coverage, including links, quotes, and excerpts from news articles, interviews, and features, please visit our website – [Media](#).

Contact Information

For general inquiries, requests, funding, speaking events, or campaign-related matters, please reach out to us at:

Email: contact@thevoicesofhope.org

For shop inquiries:

Email: shop@thevoicesofhope.org

For blogger inquiries:

Email: writer@thevoicesofhope.org

Please feel free to contact us through the respective email addresses above, and we will respond to your queries as soon as possible.

Social Media Links

- [TikTok](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Youtube](#)
- [Voices of Hope](#)

Additional Resources

Project Brief

A campaign that aims/seeks to shed some light on (or bring awareness to) mental health in a sporting world. Highlighting the struggles – behind the jersey.

The Why – Sports people globally, no matter what level, have huge pressures from society to be great. They are expected to rise above, to excel, to win, to work harder, to be tougher and to be happy. On the field or off the field. All the time. Society doesn't recognise these people are real people. And that's our problem, globally.

No matter what level of play – school sport, club sport, rep sport, social sport, professional sport, or elite sport. We need to help spread the message that hidden behind that shining armour, that brand, that expectation, that cult – their jersey, is a person. A real person going through their own personal things, just like us.

Our sports people are REAL PEOPLE TOO.

The Solution

However you are feeling behind the jersey, you are not alone.

We explore sports peoples real struggles that are hidden behind their jersey. Sports people are always on show, on or off the field, they are being watched, judged, compared. They always have to put a brave face on, even if they're not feeling brave.

This campaign involves sports people from all categories, all ages, and all levels, and will reveal the harsh reality of mental health in sport through a powerful piece of film followed by interviews. We want to not only shine the light on the problem but create a campaign that offers a solution too.

Using this Kit

This kit has been put together to support you in having conversations in an educational space around mental health and wellbeing. We suggest you as the teacher/education professional watch the content first and choose which videos you think would be the most relevant to your students. On the next few pages, you will find Q&A prompts, some talking points and some activities to use as an educational guide.

USEFUL RESOURCES AND SUPPORT HELPLINES [HERE](#)

Pre Activity

- What comes to your mind if you were to describe 'mental health'?
- If you have anyone in mind, can you share someone you know that publicly speaks about mental health and is working to normalise the conversation/reduce the stigma?
- If you have anyone in mind, can you share someone you know that publicly speaks about mental health and is working to normalise the conversation/reduce the stigma?
- Mental distress affects many New Zealanders. 1 in 5 adults aged 15 years and over are diagnosed with a mood and/or anxiety disorder (Ministry of Health, 2019). What are your thoughts on that?
- Are you aware of the health services you can access for free if you need to speak with someone about what you are dealing with? (E.g. Youthline 24/7 help/counselling)
- In your opinion, what would you like to see change in the mental health space and why? (E.g breaking the stigma, having it taught as part of the curriculum etc)



Campaign Videos

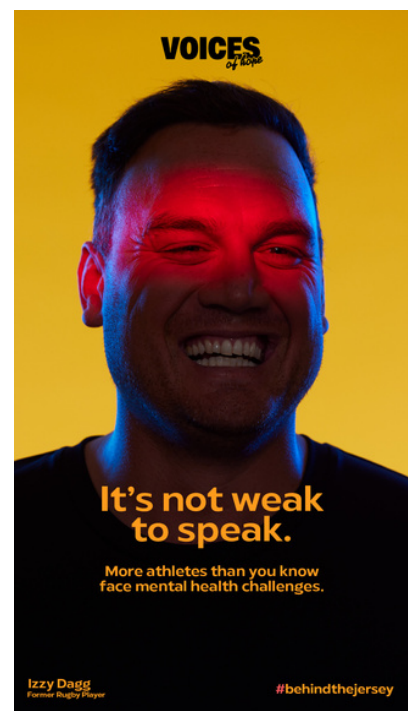
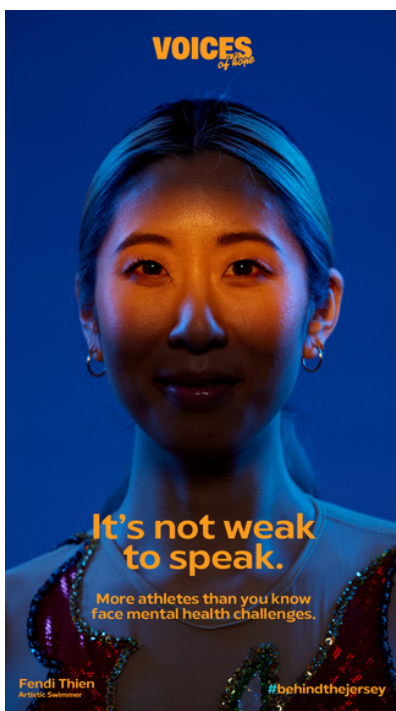
Click the link to watch the videos and then answer the questions below.

1 Campaign Video - [HERE](#)

2 Campaign Video - [HERE](#)

Question Prompts

- What did you learn from this video?
- Why do you think it's important that these athletes shared their own journeys with mental health in this video?
- How could we work to separate our performance (whether that be on the field, at school etc) from who we are as a person?
- What tools or activities do you do that help with your mental health and well-being? (E.g. Journaling, going for a walk, listening to music etc)
- What are three things that you do everyday that help you stay on top of your wellbeing?
- What would your message be to someone struggling?



Tayla Clement

Click the link to watch Tayla Clement's interview and then answer the questions below.

Watch Tayla's Video [HERE](#)

Question Prompts

Question: Who does Tayla refer to herself as?

Answer: The girl who can't smile

Question: Why did Tayla step away from swimming?

Answer: to look after her mental health

Questions: Tayla talks about swimming being her safe space. Why does swimming make her feel safe?

Answer: Because she couldn't hear the bullies from under the water

Questions: Tayla had always wanted to set a world record. What did she discover when she achieved that?

Answer: Didn't feel the high she thought she would. Found winning this title a materialistic thing.

Questions: Tayla spoke a lot about her advocacy in sport and her purpose around the mahi she now does in rugby. What drives her to be doing this work?

Answer: to be the girl she needed when she was younger. To bring representation to sport and the media.

Question: Why do you think it is important to have representation of disabled people in sport?

ACTIVITY

The Impact Of Social Media

Through Tayla's journey she has had to deal with negative comments on social media.

In pairs, create a list of:

1. Ways you could prevent negative comments on social media.
2. Actions you could take if you or a friend are receiving negative comments on social media.

Encouraging students to tell someone if they are receiving negative comments, block accounts and report any bullying or negative comments they see/receive.



Jack Salt

Click the link to watch Jack Salt's interview and then answer the questions below.

Watch Jack Salt Video [HERE](#)

Question Prompts

Jack talks about meditation and how it helped him through his challenges. What do you think are the benefits of meditation?

Talking point: Using what you have learned in the meditation session and applying it to everyday life. Being present.

Question: Jack speaks about one of his roommates going through a hard time. What did he start noticing about his friend?

Answer: Spending a lot of time in his room

Question: What did he do to support his friend?

Answer: Checking in on him, not putting pressure on himself to be there for professional clinical support and rather just be there for him as a friend.

Question: When Jack stepped away from Basketball and made the decision to retire, what did he find challenging?

Answer: Being away from his teammates/team environment. Spending a lot of time in isolation.

Why do you think it is important for athletes to balance and invest in their lives outside of sport?

ACTIVITY

Supporting A Friend

Jack talked about supporting a friend through a tough time. At any point in our lives, we too could have someone we care about finding themselves in a place where they are struggling.

In small groups, answer the following, and then share with the class:

- Write a list of as many things you can think of that MIGHT indicate that someone is struggling.
- What are some ways you can support this person? Keep in mind ways that also keep your own mental health safe.
- As a group, brainstorm ideas of support services or resources that you could recommend to someone struggling. You can go onto the Voices of Hope resources page to help you with this.

Ideas for support:

(i.e. school counsellor, online resources/apps, helplines – have students look at helplines and resources on Voices of Hope website)



Maia Wilson

Click the link to watch Maia Wilson interview and then answer the questions below.

Watch Maia Wilson's Video [HERE](#)

Question Prompts

Maia spoke about her mum being her biggest supporter.

Talking point: Who is yours and how do they support you?

Question: What is the challenge Maia talked most about?

Answer: Body image

Question: Maia went from seeing her body as strength to struggling with body image when she started playing professional netball. What influenced this change?

- Wasn't seeing anyone else her size
- Noticed there was an aesthetic for ads and commercials and wasn't until she lost weight that she was chosen for these roles too
- Comments from media

Question: Maia talks about how everyone has their own struggles going on and two important things that we must do about them, 1.) Verbalising them and 2.) making sure that you do something about it.

Write down 3 things that you think are important to do if you are struggling.

ACTIVITY

Mental health and the media

Maia's mental health as an athlete has, at times, been influenced by the media. In small groups answer the question below and then have a class discussion about your ideas:

- Name as many NZ media platforms as you can.
- How do you think the media impacts sports peoples mental health?
- Brainstorm ideas of what the media could do to have a positive influence on sportspeople and their mental health?



Kieran Read

Click the link to watch Kieran Read interview and then answer the questions below.

Watch Kieran Read's Video [HERE](#)

Question Prompts

Question: Now that Kieran has retired from professional rugby, what does he now focus on?

Answer: Leadership, family, business opportunities

Question: How did he find the pressure from the public?

Answer: He didn't mind the expectation and found it a privilege.

He found everyone supportive and that one bad performance doesn't define you.

Question: What did Kieran struggle with early on as a child and in rugby?

Answer: Self-confidence

Question: What was it that helped Kieran become confident in himself?

Answers: Mentors and coaches and accepting him. Told him he could be himself.

Kieran finishes by saying "if you can have an impact, have an impact". No matter who you are, you can have an impact in the circles you live in. Thinking about the communities you belong to (no matter how big or small), what are 3 things you can be doing to positively impact others mental health?

ACTIVITY

Staying Present

Kieran talks about how much he enjoyed sitting in the shed after a game and looking around and taking it all in. He talks about how in life, not just in sport, we often are looking to the next thing and don't take a moment to appreciate the present.

- Write down 3 things you appreciate in your life right now. It could be about a recent moment you've had, people, sports teams, pets, nature etc.
- For each of the 3 things, describe how they support your mental health.



Alrie Meleisea

Click the link to watch Alrie Meleisea interview and then answer the questions below.

Watch Alrie Meleisea's Video [HERE](#)

Question Prompts

Question: Alrie begins by talking about how important family is and being proud of her culture. What makes you proud of your culture and what is important to you?

Question: Alrie mentions some of her coaches and the important role they have played in her life.

1. Who is someone that has had a positive impact on your life?
2. What do you admire about them?

Question: The boxing ring is Alrie's happy place and a place where she feels free. Describe what your happy place is like and how it makes you feel?

Question: Alrie talks about how you have to be the one who does the work. What do you think she means by that?

Talking point: We have to want to do the work. We can lean on people and resources for support but we have to want to get better and know that noone is going to do the inner work for us.

ACTIVITY

Positive self-talk

How we speak to ourselves matters.

As Alrie mentions, it is easy for us to be our own biggest critics, play small, and feed ourselves with negative thoughts. Whilst still being humble, we can change these negative thoughts into positive ones so that we can learn to lift ourselves up.

- Create a list of attributes you like about yourself and things you do/have done that you are proud of. Don't be humble.



Adam Thomson

Click the link to watch Adam Thomson interview and then answer the questions below.

Watch Adam Thomson's Video [HERE](#)

Question Prompts

Question: What was the big set back that Adam had in Japan?

Answer: Hospitalised in Japan due to excruciating back pain and diagnosed with lumbar discitis, an infection of the spine.

Question: From being a professional athlete to being bed ridden with limited people he could talk to around him, Adam speaks about how dark it became for him. What did he have to do for the first time?

Answer: Be vulnerable and admit that he needed help.

Question: Adam talks about being deliberate with what he puts his energy into, such as business and coaching, family, friends, and his personal growth.

Answer: What are the important things that you put your energy into?

Question: Why do you think Adam was grateful for his experience in Japan?

Answer/Talking point: Lessons he learnt were invaluable, gave him a different perspective on what is important in life, who showed up during those dark moments, outlook wouldn't be the same.

Question: Adam talks about the importance of the little things in hospital that helped him through, like the google translated conversations with nurses and christmas celebrations in the hospital. What are the little moments in your life that bring you joy?

ACTIVITY

Leadership with vulnerability

Adam is now a rugby coach and talked about his efforts to be a leader who encourages vulnerability and authenticity.

- Why do you think it is important for leaders to display and encourage vulnerability?
- If you were in a leadership position, what are 3 things you could do to create an environment where your team/friends/classmates, feel safe to express their feelings and be themselves?



Izzy Dagg

Click the link to watch Izzy Dagg interview and then answer the questions below.

Watch Izzy Dagg's Video [HERE](#)

Question Prompts

Question: What was the biggest blessing that sport gave Izzy?

Answer: Opportunity to better his life, better his kids lives.

Question: Do you recall what Izzy said was his biggest high and why?

Answer: The 2011 World Cup – “I was only 21/22 years of age. There was a lot of pressure but the feeling at the end, the whole journey was special how united the country got.”

Question: Why do you think it is helpful that someone like Izzy who has such a large profile, opens up and shares about the challenges he has faced?

Question: Izzy speaks about one of the rocks in his life being his wife Daisy. As a class brainstorm some people that you could speak to if you need someone to talk to.

Question: Izzy speaks about some of the challenges he has faced and lessons he has learned along the way. What is a challenge you've faced and what did you learn from it?

Question: Izzy lived his dream of being a professional rugby player.

Write about one of your dreams and goals for the future.

ACTIVITY

Self Care Tools

Izzy spoke about the things in his life he does to look after his wellbeing (like speaking to his wife Daisy).

Write a list of FIVE self care activities that you can do to support your Mental Health & wellbeing

Here are a few examples:

- Speaking to your best friend about your day
- Listening to your favourite music playlist
- Getting outside and going for a walk in the park



Niall Williams

Click the link to watch Niall Williams interview and then answer the questions below.

Watch Niall Williams Video [HERE](#)

Question Prompts

Question: What sport did Niall first think she would go on to play professionally?

Answer: Before discovering her love for touch rugby, Niall played netball and had her sights set on being a Silver Fern.

Question: What age did Niall get picked up to play for the NZ touch team, the Touch Blacks?

Answer: 16 years old

Question: What are some of the challenges Niall has faced throughout her career?

Answer: Being away from Family, Injury, Sense of Belonging.

Talking Point: Niall reflects back on her journey and says "I think 5 year old Niall would be proud". If you were 10 years older than you are now, what encouraging statements would you tell your younger/current self.

Question: Niall lights up when she speaks about her journey with sport with one of the highlights being the lifetime friendships. "It's probably the best form of medicine I've ever had in my life". What is a highlight you can share that you've experienced when doing something you love?

ACTIVITY

Practicing Gratitude

Niall spoke about how she was grateful for her teammates and her beautiful family. Practicing gratitude is scientifically proven to improve your mental well-being.

In this activity, we encourage you to write down (and explain) FIVE things you are grateful for

Here are a few examples:

- I am grateful for my ability to hear. Being able to listen to my friends and hear laughter.
- I am grateful for the opportunity to get an education
- I am grateful for my family who love me through it all.



Tai Wynyard

Click the link to watch Tai Wynyard interview and then answer the questions below.

Watch Tai Wynyard's Video [HERE](#)

Question Prompts

Question: Tai is the youngest person to ever make the Tall Blacks. what age was he?

Answer: 16 years old

Question: his is the first time Tai has spoken about his mental health journey. Why do you think it's important that we have these conversations around mental health?

Question: What's something Tai found tough about playing professionally at a young age?

Answer: He missed a lot of his Year 12 and Year 13 schooling years, "you don't really get to go out and experience that school life and being a kid really"

Talking Point: Tai credits happiness to spending time with family and his love of basketball. What gives you joy or you happy?

Talking Point: When Tai was going through mental health challenges, initially he didn't talk to his family about it but now on reflection wishes he did. Why do you think support from others is so important?

Talking Point: Tai mentions Tall Poppy Syndrome and how he felt like he wasn't good enough. What do you think Tall Poppy Syndrome means and what can we do about it?

ACTIVITY

I am Resilient

Tai speaks about going through highs and lows in his sport & life and shows a great amount of resilience.

In this activity we encourage you to get your group to write about a time where they have had to be resilient focusing on the below questions.

- What did it feel like?
- What did it look like?
- What did I learn?
- What tools helped me?
- How could I handle it differently next time?



Symone Tafanu'i

Click the link to watch Symone Tafanu'i interview and then answer the questions below.

Watch Symone Tafanu'i's Video [HERE](#)

Question Prompts

Question: What does Symone describe as her biggest achievement?

Answer: Ranking third fastest women in New Zealand.

Question: Symone's therapist suggested she write a few positive words on her hand before going on the track as a reminder "You have the best intentions, just let go of the outcome". What's some positive words you could write down for yourself?

Question: Behind the Jersey Symone is "strong, resilient, hard-working and loving". Think of four words that describe you.

Talking Point: Symone credits having great support around her and people cheering her on the sidelines. What are some examples of support that are available for young people? (eg. Friends, family, coach, tutor, youth group leader, services, etc)

Question: Symone talks about how she now is able to recognise 'small wins'. Why do you think it has been helpful for Symone to identify the small wins in her life?

ACTIVITY

My Support System

Symone talks about the importance of having a solid support network around her. "I had people rooting for me when I couldn't root for myself"

Create a brainstorm as a group listing who you could talk to if you needed some support.

- My Best Friend
- A family member
- What did I learn?
- Call a helpline



A Special Thanks

SPECIAL THANKS TO everyone who has helped us bring 'Behind the Jersey' to life.

