

A maze is drawn on a piece of crumpled, light blue paper. The maze is composed of white lines forming a complex grid of paths. A prominent path is drawn in red, starting from the top center and winding through the maze. Several other paths are drawn in blue, scattered throughout the maze. The paper has a textured, wrinkled appearance.

NO LONGER LOST

A Spiritual Framework for  
Engaging Young People





## Where we begin: the question for young people...

### How do we find our place?

We are all trying to find our place. As young people become more independent, they face new opportunities and decisions. They depend less on family members and more on their friendships. High school gives young people a space to make new friends. But sometimes young people can question where they belong in this new, unknown environment. Young people need to be connected to their community and culture to feel safe and accepted. **How can we support young people to find their place in the world?**

Sometimes young people feel lost. Perhaps they're **lost and alone**. Sometimes it can be difficult for young people to make friends. As young people begin expressing themselves, they can be excluded by bullying and marginalisation. When young people are isolated, they can feel abandoned and start believing that no one loves them and they have no place in the world. When young people believe this, they can withdraw from others. They may feel like they're outside the world looking in, rather than actively a part of it. Isolation can also cause young people to distance themselves from their identity and emotions, resulting in mental health challenges.

Young people may also feel **lost and anxious**. Young people's worlds are chaotic. They can feel pushed in many directions at school and home and may not be equipped to handle these pressures. The more they try to control their lives, the less things seem to work out. Global issues like war, poverty, and climate change may also cause stress for young people, as they feel helpless to stop them.

The future of our world is unknown, which can be unsettling for some young people. Because they don't know what will happen, they can feel less confident about the future. Fear of failure, rejection, and traumatic experiences can contribute to why a young person feels anxious. When young people are anxious, they can reduce their world to only things that they can control. When challenges arise that cannot be controlled, they see no option but to give up.

Young people can feel **lost and insignificant**. Young people want to feel seen, heard, accepted, and known. But adults can dismiss them, think they don't know anything, and ignore their suggestions. Their voices can become silenced, and young people can isolate themselves from those they typically interact with. When they believe no one is listening, they can't get the support they need. If young people are ignored, they may believe they have nothing valuable to contribute. Not only do they feel isolated, but the world loses what that young person has to offer.

*"I feel sad sometimes. I cry at school. I don't really hang out with people at lunch. I have friends but we're not all in the same friend group."*

*"There are a lot of times I have really bad attendance at school because at the beginning of the week I have this feeling, like a sickness in my stomach, but I feel like I can't be around people. And I'm in my bed all the time. And then it'll go for a week and I'm like, dang, I missed a week of school and I regret it."*

*"When I was younger, I didn't have a voice. I was always spoken for."*

*"I find certain things hard and difficult, but nobody understands because they're not like me. They're not. They don't feel the same way or have difficulties like me. And so I don't really think I'm going to have much of a future."*

## What happens when young people feel lost?

When young people can't find their place, they can feel lost. When young people don't know where they belong, they can disconnect from others and withdraw from themselves. They can feel trapped by fears of the unknown and worry about the future. If young people don't feel heard, they can stop contributing to conversations and miss out on getting the support they need. Young people can feel unworthy, hopeless, and lost to the world.

## What If...

Youth ministries play a significant role in assisting young people to find their place in the world. We can provide support, encouragement, and resources to empower young people who feel lost. Youth ministries offer a place for young people to connect with their peers and develop skills in growing strong friendships. Adults can create safe, caring, and nurturing environments where young people can talk about their challenges without judgement or rejection. Youth ministries can help them to overcome conflict with themselves and others. By listening to the needs and opinions of young people, adults can create an environment where they feel valued and empowered to advocate for themselves, their communities, and the world. Youth ministries create a space for young people to hear that they're loved, accepted, and belong.





## The Good News

**The Good News is that our place is with Jesus.** When we feel alone, anxious, invisible, or insignificant, we know that God sees us. Even if we feel lost, something is only lost if another person misses it. We know that God loves us, cares about us, and values us for who we are. We are no longer lost because we matter to God.

When interviewed, young people shared how their faith communities helped them to find a sense of connection and build supportive relationships with others. They shared how God provided comfort and confidence in difficult times. They said that following Jesus helped them to find their voice and make a difference in the world.

*“So I was a private person, I didn’t talk to people. It’s very hard for me to talk to people, for me to look into people’s eyes. But when I came to the Salvation Army, it changed a lot about me. They introduced me to some young adult groups, introduced me to the leaders. And I started connecting with people.”*

*“Connection with God means belonging, being loved no matter what. Knowing that you’re loved is so important. Much of my life I didn’t know I was, and felt like no one cared.”*

*“I suffer from depression and that has been a really big thing in my life, but it did change a lot once I started coming to youth and connecting with the Salvation Army. Not just because of faith but being able to see that there is always help there, and talking to my leaders. They helped a lot through that.”*

*“My faith has definitely developed and I’ve been able to learn a lot more, and then also changing over time, being able to share it with people has become a lot easier. I help people if they’re struggling with their faith, just being able to show them what God thinks about them and being able to help them get through troubles and encouraging them to do more and not just sit there and be happy with what they’ve already accomplished, but push boundaries and get the most out of life.”*

## Finding Our Place

When young people are part of an inclusive place where they can connect with others, they’re no longer lost. Belonging as part of their community can help young people move from feeling alone, anxious, and insignificant to feeling connected, secure, and empowered to use their voices. We see an example of this in the story of ‘The Woman at the Well’ in John 4:1-42.

## The Woman at the Well

Jesus and his disciples are travelling through a foreign land when the disciples stop to get some food. Jesus, now alone, sits by a nearby well and meets a Samaritan woman who comes to draw water. Jesus asks her for a drink, but the woman is surprised, as Jews usually have nothing to do with Samaritans. The woman questions Jesus’ intentions, and they talk about their faith in God. Jesus then speaks to the woman about her personal life, asking about her family. The woman is shocked by Jesus’ knowledge of her past relationships and thinks he is a prophet, but Jesus reveals that he is the Messiah she has been waiting for. The woman is so excited to have met Jesus that she leaves her water behind and runs back to the town to tell everyone about him. The town’s people believe what the woman says and choose to follow Jesus.

In this story, Jesus and the Samaritan woman are talking at noon. It would have been unusual for a woman to go to the well alone, especially at the hottest part of the day. Maybe she felt disconnected from her peers, excluded by her community, or ashamed to be seen by others. But at this moment, at the well, she is alone. Jesus chooses to connect with her despite being from different social and ethnic backgrounds. When Jesus talks with the woman, she asks many questions and shares her opinions about what her faith means to her. Jesus creates a safe environment for the woman to share her opinions confidently. Not only does Jesus listen to what she has to say, but he entrusts her with the good news that he is the

Messiah she has been waiting for, something he hadn’t told anyone before. In her town, the Samaritan woman was ignored, unable to share her thoughts, and seen as less than others because of her past relationships. But because of her conversation with Jesus, the Samaritan woman’s life is transformed. Jesus empowers the woman to connect with the people in her community and discovers her purpose to share the good news of God. She goes from avoiding others to actively seeking people out in her community. After meeting Jesus at the well, the Samaritan woman is no longer lost but finds her place with God.

The Good News is that we can all find our place as part of God’s family. When we feel alone, Jesus invites us into fellowship and community with other believers, like Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). When we feel anxious and search for answers, God listens to us and encourages us, just like he did for Elijah on the mountain (1 Kings 19). When we feel insignificant, God helps us find our purpose, just like he helped Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:1-3). Jesus “came to save lost people” (Matthew 18:11).

As young people find their place in the world, Jesus offers connection, provides security, and empowers their voices. Young people are not alone or insignificant because Jesus loves and values them. As adults, we can demonstrate Jesus’ love and care for all young people so they know they are no longer lost.

## The Vision

The following narrative is a way we can share this Good News message, a vision, and a declaration for all of us as we come alongside young people in 2024:

We are all trying to find our place. As we get older, we face new opportunities and decisions. Having more independence to do what we want is exciting. But not knowing what the future will be like can be scary. We start depending less on family or the people we live with and more on the people at school. But finding where we fit in amongst

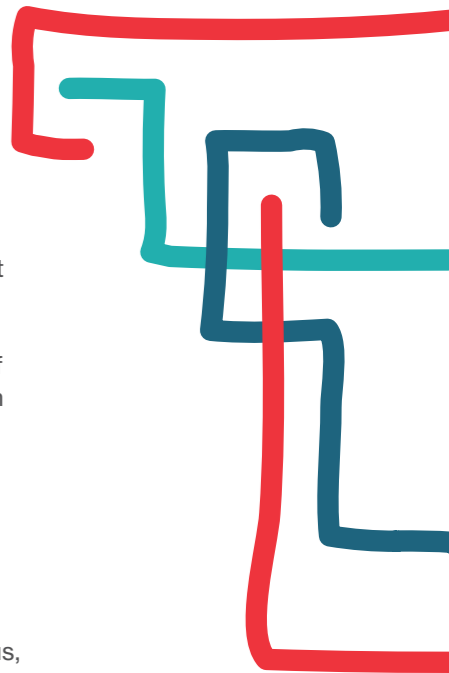
so many people can be challenging. We can start questioning who we are and how we fit into this new environment. Who will be our friends? Are they people we have chosen, or have they been chosen for us because of our circumstances? If we can’t connect with others, we might not feel safe. We can feel alone, anxious, and like we don’t matter. We might feel lost.

When we feel lost, it can be challenging to find our place. When we are lost and alone, we can disconnect or withdraw from others and ourselves. When we are lost and anxious, we can feel trapped by our fears of the unknown, unable to experience life. When we are lost and insignificant, we can feel like we don’t have anything valuable to contribute. When we feel lost, we can close ourselves off from connecting with the people around us and withdraw from the world.

The Good News is that we can find our place with Jesus. When we feel alone, anxious, invisible, or insignificant, we know that God sees us. Even if we feel lost, something is only lost if another person misses it. We know that God loves us, cares about us, and values us for who we are. We are no longer lost because we are significant to God. As we find our place with Jesus, we have a place to belong, where we feel connected, secure, and empowered. Jesus can help us connect with people who love us and find places where we are accepted. Jesus is always there with us and supports us. Jesus gives us confidence to ask questions and brings supportive people into our lives who listen to us and value what we bring to the world. We find our purpose when we take our place with Jesus. He listens to us and brings meaning to our lives.

When we can’t find our place, we know we’re...

**No longer lost.**



No Longer Lost isn't just a slogan or a motto; it's Good News that young people can use to shape their lives. It can also shape how we engage young people and be a guide for our youth ministry. No Longer Lost can guide our practice, especially through the elements that we know create transformation for young people, what we call **The Four Factors.**

The mission of The Salvation Army is to share the love of Jesus by caring for people, creating faith pathways, building healthy communities, and working for justice. To understand where this mission was being fulfilled, The National Youth and Young Adults Team interviewed marginalised young people across Australia who shared that they found transformation and the love of Jesus through four factors: wellbeing, fun, family, and faith.

### **The Four Factors & No Longer Lost**

These Four Factors can inform us as we come alongside young people, and we can see how the No Longer Lost framework is expressed in each factor.

#### **Wellbeing – I am supported in my life**

Young people need a sense of security and stability in their lives. When interviewed, young people shared that The Salvation Army was a place where people supported and cared for them when they needed help. No Longer Lost in Youth Ministry means helping young people feel safe, secure, and cared for. By coming alongside young people, we can help them find stability and feel supported.

#### **Fun – I am celebrated and encouraged to be myself**

Young people need to feel special and valued to express themselves confidently and engage with life. When interviewed, young people shared how The Salvation Army encouraged and supported them to express themselves authentically. No Longer Lost means that young people can explore and connect with who they are, knowing they are loved and safe. By creating spaces where young people are celebrated and encouraged for who they are, they can feel special and valued, helping them to find enjoyment in themselves and their lives.



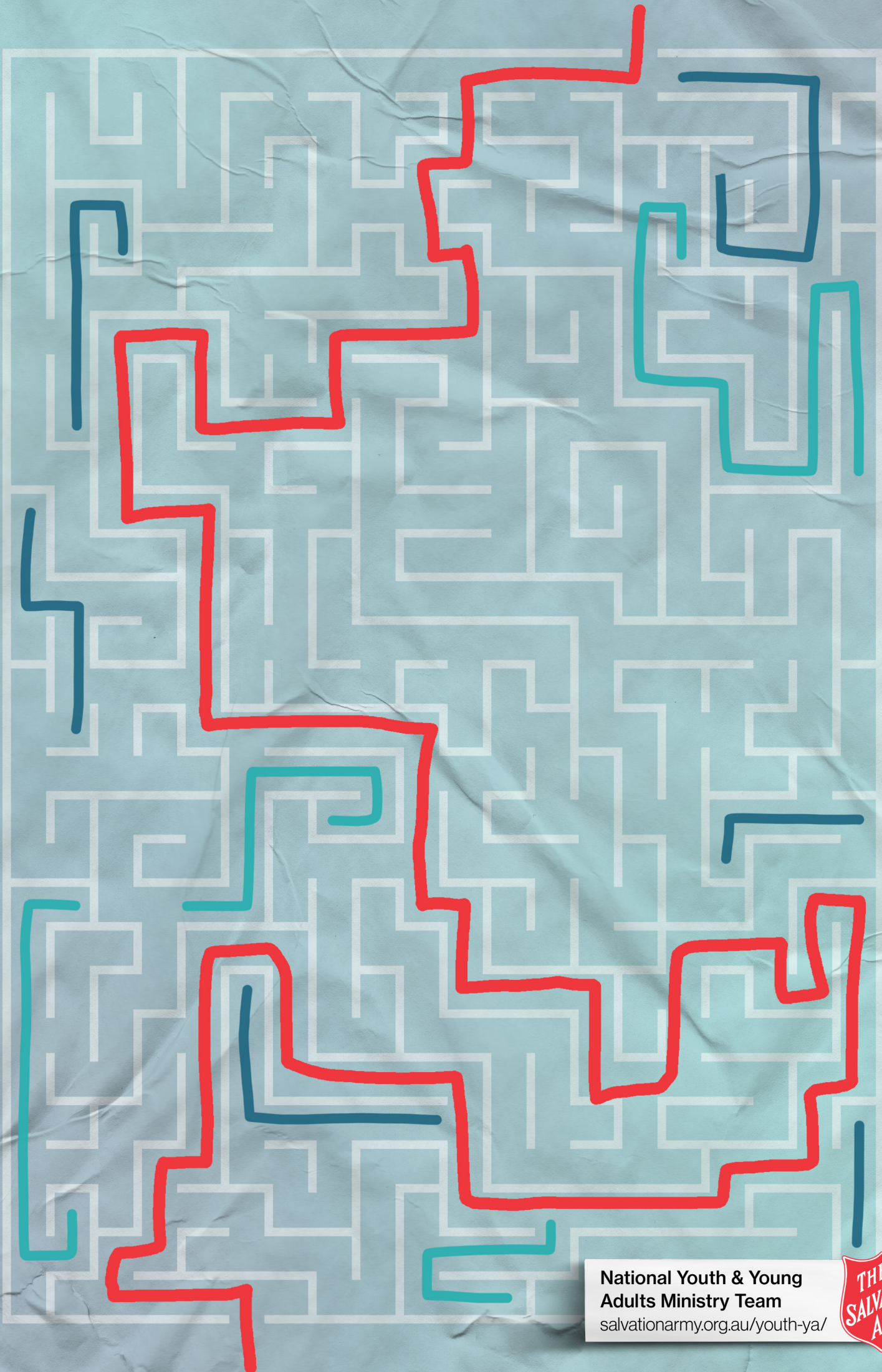
#### **Family – I am not alone**

Young people need to belong and know that someone is on their side. When interviewed, young people shared that The Salvation Army was a place where they found support and acceptance. No Longer Lost means that we aren't alone on the journey of life. By providing support, encouragement, and guidance, we can help young people face challenges as they make their way.

#### **Faith – I can make a difference**

Young people need to know that their life has greater meaning and purpose. When interviewed, young people shared that The Salvation Army was a place that helped them unlock how they could contribute to making the world a better place. No Longer Lost means we all have a part to play in God's Kingdom. By helping young people explore their gifts and passions, we can help them see how they can use them to serve others. When young people understand their unique contribution to the world, they can develop a sense of purpose and meaning that can help guide their lives.

# The Four Factors



National Youth & Young  
Adults Ministry Team  
[salvationarmy.org.au/youth-ya/](http://salvationarmy.org.au/youth-ya/)

