

Treasure Box for Mentors

and

other SUPPORT-PERSONS
in EuroPeAn Solidarity CorPs
VOLUNTEERING PROJECTS



BUILD WHAT IS STRONG
instead of
FIX WHAT IS WRONG!

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Masters of the
Learning Path

AN INTRODUCTION LETTER

Dear Mentors and volunteers' support-persons,

We are happy that there are many like you – people who have willingness, motivation, time and the ability to support European volunteers during their volunteering projects. Helping and supporting a young person in an intensive period of their personal and professional life is something wonderful and enriching. It means giving and receiving, but very often it's also a difficult and challenging process.

It requires from you many competences and practical skills (such as empathy, active listening, mediation but also patience, creativity and many more), which most of the time you cannot acquire in formal education programs.





The new European Solidarity Corps - ESC program, as well as the previous program European Voluntary Service - EVS in the frame

of Erasmus+, include mentoring components that are important pillars offering support for the volunteers. This kind of support focuses particularly on personal aspects and the personal wellbeing of the young volunteer, alongside the learning support. It complements the support provided by project coordinators and task-related managers, during working activities.

In this role of a mentor, you are, or may be seen, sometimes like a coach, or a teacher, a “wise person” or crisis manager, maybe a youth leader or a friend, or even somebody who resembles a parent. Which of those roles you will adopt in different moments of the mentoring relationship and their

intensity, will depend on the connection that you establish with the volunteer. Their needs and expectations, as well as your personal style and approach, or the type of mentoring support that was agreed within the hosting organization, will also have an impact.

To get ready for this special task of being a Mentor, we have collected a series of useful tools which may help you to plan your sessions with the volunteer, to find new inspirations and approaches and also gain new motivation for your “supporting service”. These tools and methods are linked with four main areas of your work: Building relationships; Supporting personal, emotional and mental wellbeing; Problem solving and Supporting personal development and the learning process.



Each volunteer, of course, has different needs and it might be necessary to adapt these tools and methods in different phases of your support: before arrival, after arrival and during the project or at the end of their stay. They can be useful for projects of any duration, but care should be taken to adapt them according to whether the placement is short-term (2 weeks to 2 months) or long-term (2 to 12 months) and also to take into account the size of the volunteer group and any other determining factors that you consider relevant. Whilst the tools gathered here are mainly focused on cross-border volunteering experiences, they can also be adapted and used, where appropriate, for volunteers undertaking in-country placements.

We really hope that this TreasureBox will provide you with the necessary knowledge, inspiration and practical means to provide quality support for the European volunteers, to reach the main objectives of volunteering projects, to enjoy your role and dive into it deeper and... to believe:

*"One of the most important things you can do on this earth
is to let people know they are not alone." (*Shannon L. Alder)*

Warm regards,

The „EVS REALM“ project team



What's inside?

This publication contains useful information related to the mentoring processes in European cross-border volunteering projects, as well as several tools created to help all those engaged in supporting volunteers - those who we call support-persons, including the mentors - in their activities with the European volunteers, in different phases of their projects.

In the first part of the toolbox, you will find two chapters as an introduction into the topic :

Chapter 1: Supporting actors and supporting structures

Chapter 2: Emotional support and mental wellbeing

In the second part we present a variety of tools in **4 areas**, where we believe volunteers need most support:

1. Building a positive relationships within the volunteering project team

Human beings are naturally social creatures – we crave friendship and positive interactions. Volunteers separated from their friends and family will seek new contacts and relationships. They will look for them within the volunteering project – which becomes their new living environment for months. In Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, belongingness is included in the psychological needs, which come right after the very basic needs; therefore, it is one of the major needs that motivate human behavior.

By belonging to a group, we feel as if we are a part of something bigger and more important than ourselves. It is really important to create this feeling with volunteers – it will not only keep them motivated, but will also increase the quality of their service in the long term. For this reason we included some tools that can help you build a positive relation with the volunteer. The better the relationships are - the happier and more productive you all are going to be.

2. Supporting personal, emotional and mental wellbeing

A volunteer's condition in all of those areas will affect how they think, feel and act. Those elements are a very



important part of every stage of life in general, which automatically makes it significant in the volunteering projects. In this publication we prepared a few examples of tools that can help you to start supporting volunteers in these areas.

3. Problem solving

Problems and challenges are a common component of volunteering projects. In this TreasureBox we included some tools that will help you understand what is happening in your project, identify aspects you want to change and then figure out the things that need to be done to create the desired outcome

4. Supporting the personal development and the learning process

Very often volunteers joining a European project have just finished their formal education in school or university. They are not familiar with non-formal education and are not at all used to this process. Young people struggle to understand “how am I actually learning with no books and exams? Is it possible without my classmates and the teacher?” There are no marks or grades, and no obvious visible “proof” of the learning achievements, suddenly it is just the volunteer who is responsible to identify and acknowledge their own improvements and learning outcomes.

Mentors are supposed to initiate this process with the volunteer (who may not always be very enthusiastic about it!) and sometimes constantly support it and feed it, to ensure the volunteer’s meaningful reflection towards the end of the project. A mentor focused also on harvesting learning can help avoid the situation where the volunteer feels they wasted their time, but in fact what was missing was the ability to discover learning achievements during the volunteering journey - the *learning path* as we call it.

And finally, in the third and last part of this TreasureBox you can find 3 additional chapters, aiming to reveal some more “shiny” topics that you can turn into treasures :

Chapter 3: Concrete case studies and real life stories from mentors

Chapter 4: Mentor’s role in short-term volunteering activities

Chapter 5: Advice for mentors - how to take care of your own wellbeing



The List of Tools

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The Realm MetaPhor



You may notice that in our project we use magical and story-like terms a lot.

We have acknowledged the true power of volunteering projects to create meaningful experiences and we have decided to encompass our understanding within a metaphor that is representative for volunteers and support-persons alike.

It is sometimes easier to understand a complex role and all the activities it is comprised of, when you can associate it with a character that can be brought to life in a specific landscape or environment. You can visualize that character better, you can start to imagine how they behave or react and in this way, you can shape your role better.

Plus, it is fun and creative, it generates ideas, new views and approaches on the volunteering work, it is visual and versatile and can give a different, more fresh and dynamic atmosphere to the projects and the interaction of actors in volunteering projects.

So here is our Realm metaphor explained:

We visualize EVS and now ESC as a true kingdom – a realm of magical experiences and many inhabitants of many sorts, all bearing stories, life events and skills that make them special.

In this realm, filled with wonderful surroundings, (sometimes) mystical happenings and many times a lot of opportunities for soul-searching, there are many learning paths to walk on, leading to very different towns, castles and open lands.

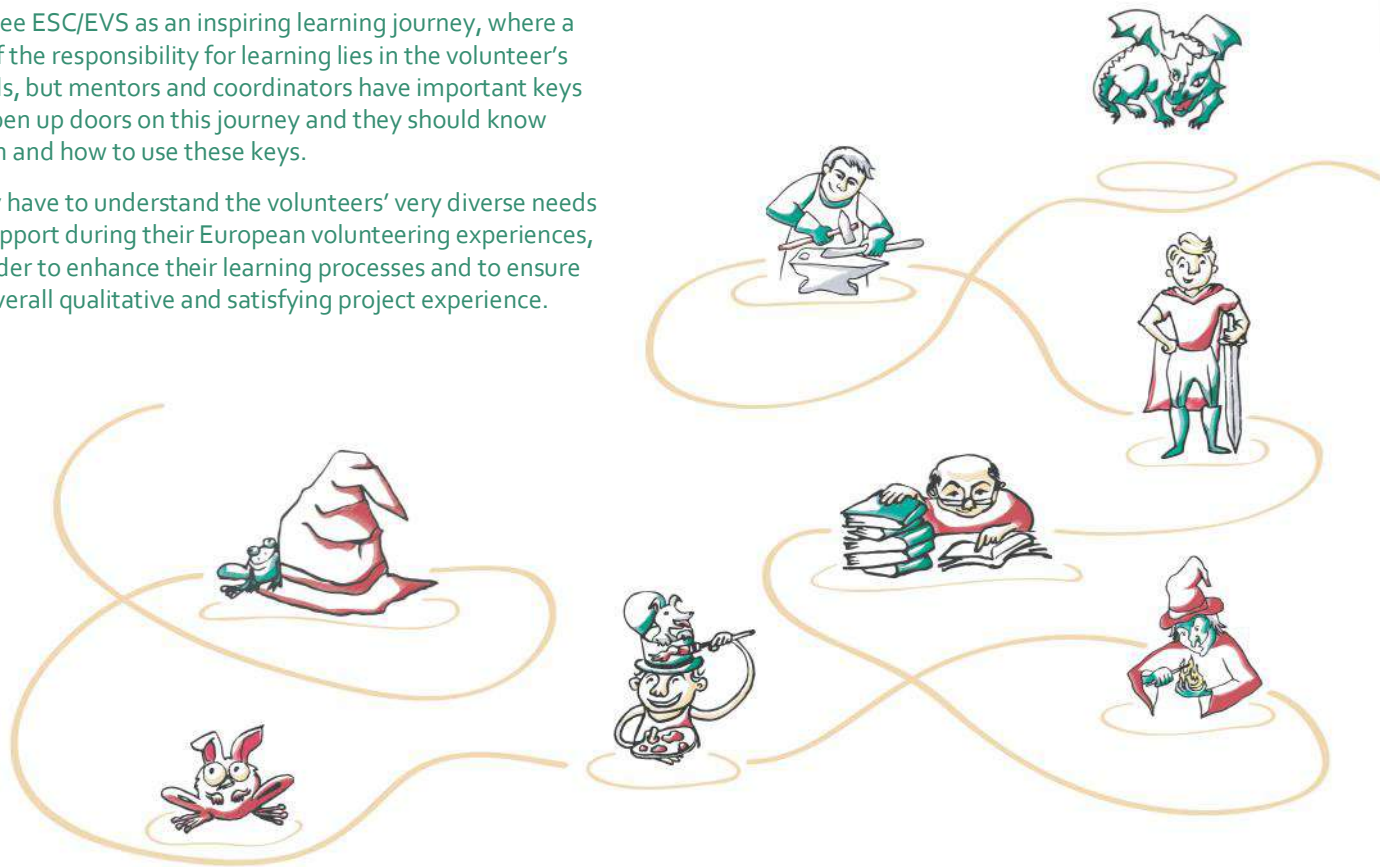
There are also Masters of these learning paths, people with special powers who can safely guide the travellers on these paths and help them reach their destinations with their bags full of riches.

It is these special powers of the Masters of learning we want to help refine with this project. The Masters of learning are ESC/EVS Project Coordinators and Mentors, but in the end also the Volunteers.



We see ESC/EVS as an inspiring learning journey, where a lot of the responsibility for learning lies in the volunteer's hands, but mentors and coordinators have important keys to open up doors on this journey and they should know when and how to use these keys.

They have to understand the volunteers' very diverse needs of support during their European volunteering experiences, in order to enhance their learning processes and to ensure an overall qualitative and satisfying project experience.



Chapter 1:

SUPPORTING ACTORS – SUPPORTING STRUCTURES

Each volunteer in a volunteering project should be provided with support, adapted to their own needs that evolve while the project unfolds. Sending and hosting partners share the responsibility in providing this support and take the lead in different phases of the project.

They also design the most suitable support scheme they can offer, splitting the different support tasks among different support-persons. Special support on a personal level should be provided during the entire project duration, starting from the preparation process in the home country and finishing with reflection after completing the volunteering activity.

“Organisations taking part in volunteering activities should cover either a host role or a supporting role.

*A **supporting role** that entails supporting, preparing and/or training participants before departure, a mediation between them and their host organisations and/or providing support to participants upon return from their activity. Furthermore, where the host organisation cannot or does not wish to be responsible for some aspects of the host functions, these may also be covered by the supporting organisation.”*

ESC Programme Guide

When we refer to supporting actors, we do not refer only to the supporting organizations (see above), but to **all support-persons involved in a volunteering project in general**, so all those from the host organization, the local community, but also from the supporting organization, which can usually be the one sending the volunteer.



The greatest need for providing support arises however during the voluntary service in the host country, for all volunteers, not just for those with less opportunities.

During this time, mainly the hosting organization is responsible for providing support in different areas: voluntary work and fulfilling the project, personal life, language and intercultural adaptation, free time and socializing, learning and personal/professional development etc.

Providing professional support of a high quality and over a long period of time is however very often a big challenge for organizations. It requires the involvement of different people with sufficient time available and with a variety of knowledge and skills.

Support for the volunteer should be shared among different people - at least two people who will work closely with the volunteer – a task-related support person, commonly referred to as a supervisor, task-manager, activities coordinator or project coordinator, and a mentor, focused on personal support and the learning process.

When the organization has taken up the challenge of working with vulnerable youth or young people with fewer opportunities, the reinforced mentorship process is even more important and the support process is much more tailored to their set of needs.

Even when the young volunteers are not clearly described as youth with less opportunities, it would be extremely helpful also to involve in this support-structure more staff from the organization or even people from the local community who want to help the volunteer in their socializing and integration process.

Source:

https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3308/Hopscotch%202015_web_FINAL2.pdf



For the successful implementation of a volunteering project, it may be helpful and needed to create a clear definition of these different supporting roles and to clarify in the beginning of each project with the volunteer who has responsibility for which tasks and which kind of support.





A clarified understanding of the roles in the beginning of the project, followed by the evaluation of these roles from time to time, may increase the chances of success of the project and reduce inherent risks.

In fact, based on the intensive exchange of experiences and expertise gained in numerous European volunteering projects, the partner organizations in this project, have concluded that

mentoring is not a “one-person” show

Rather, it should be designed as a coherent process involving different support-persons, with different levels of responsibilities and degrees of involvement with the volunteers’ overall experience.

The mentoring tasks would ideally be split among team members and staff of the hosting and supporting organizations, as well as local volunteers and other professionals in the hosting community playing the roles of personal companions, local guides or simply friends or buddies, as they are often called.

We believe that a suitable division of the many tasks of the mentor among employed staff or volunteers with the necessary professional skills and competences is a prerequisite for quality mentoring.

For example, the tasks can be shared between those who have a higher responsibility towards the learning and project objectives, and the other people who can help the volunteer with integration and offer personal help, when needed. This would ensure a much better and balanced overall support-process for the volunteer.



Task/ type of support	Who provides this support?		
	Project coordinator/ task-related coordinator	Mentor	Other locals
Introduction to the organization (values, history, habits, procedures, staff, office, other projects etc.)	●		
Introduction to the community and other volunteers, making new contacts	●	●	●
Task-related training	●		
Clarity of given tasks on daily or weekly basis	●		
Safety and security of the working environment	●		
Providing a regular system of monitoring, evaluation and feedback	●		
Support to attend mandatory training sessions in the frame of the volunteering programme	●		
Encouraging volunteer to attend language training	●	●	●



Personal support (for instance, assisting during medical care,	●	●	●
Intercultural adaptation and intercultural learning support (discovering traditions, cultural norms, food, behaviors etc.)	●	●	●
Support in discovering the new town and region		●	●
Keep volunteers informed of local events and potential leisure time activities		●	●
Help in crisis situations and support in solving problems	●	●	●
Potential mediator in case of conflict between volunteer and coordinator/task-related manager or other colleagues		●	
Support reflection on learning, during the service	●	●	●
Recognition of volunteer's learning outcomes	●		

- Usually
- Optionally

** our research revealed that the most appreciated support for the volunteers was the social, intercultural and personal support provided by mentors.* www.provobis.ro/SurveyAnswersVolunteers.pdf



Please remember



- It is not realistic to expect that one person could always fulfill all of the tasks of support listed. All the different kinds of tasks in a volunteering project can be divided among different support-persons within the team of a volunteering project.
- Whoever wants to support a young European volunteer, can just do this and the role of the hosting organization is to create the space for it and the awareness in the local community that volunteers are there and will welcome different interactions with the locals. You don't have to be an official mentor in the project to be able to offer your support.
- People from the hosting organization or from the local community, who are of a similar age and have similar interests with the volunteer (for instance, local volunteers) could provide great help in this supporting process - they could support the international volunteer especially in socializing and organizing free time activities and thus becoming a "local buddy", which many of the volunteers greatly need and appreciate (*as demonstrated also by our project research, here - www.provobis.ro/SurveyAnswersVolunteers.pdf*).
- It is important that the mentor and the volunteer have a common language to use so that the very needed communication process is not affected.
- At the same time, be aware that not all volunteers need all types of support all the time, so be ready to adjust the way you work, based on who is the volunteer you have been paired with.



What does it mean to be an EVS Mentor, according to you?

(*answers from the EVS Realm project research phase, collected from 58 mentors)

"Somebody local who is there on a regular (but not too regular) basis, to check up on how adaptation is going in realms of social life and EVS placement."

"Letting grow, encourage to explore inner potential, asking right questions in a right time."

"Helping the volunteers to get involved in the community, achieve their learning purposes, help them when they have issues with the HO and try to find solutions for that with them, making sure they grow as a person and see the opportunities to grow, motivate them when they feel down and so on."

"Help them to adjust to the local culture. Listen to their problems and advise them. Encourage them. Make proposals. Be their friend."

"To be a friend with a purpose."

"For me the mentorship means to be a person of support to the volunteers. A guide, a counselor, a person who open the new "doors", without influencing the volunteers. It is important to give new points of view on life and make them feel in a foreign ambient that there is a person who absolutely understands them. We need to help them in the integration, cultural and personal growing and guide them during their project."

"Mostly listening and supporting. I try to answer the needs of my volunteer. So it depends what the person needs."

"To guide volunteers, to inform them, help inclusion in the community, make them feel comfortable in the new town."

Do you agree with them?

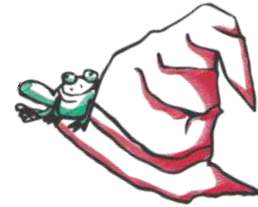
Is there something you strongly disagree with?

Do you recognize yourself in any of these perceptions on the role?

Think about how you would have defined it yourself as a volunteer!



CHAPTER 2: EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND MENTAL WELLBEING



This chapter might be new and surprising when it comes to volunteers' support. Mental health as a topic is often "taboo" in volunteering projects – considered a subject which is simply too difficult to approach with young people, or even one which presents such a minefield of possible responses from volunteers that it's simply not worth the effort.

When we say "mental health" somehow we automatically associate it with a treatment needed – which is not the case.

Our focus should be on what is going well with and around the volunteer, the talents, skills and the participation and engagement of the volunteers and also on supporting them acknowledge all these strengths, which are or can become their "treasures".

We want to act on a level of prevention and take part in creating an environment that will help volunteers in their emotional and mental wellbeing, to create and enhance the positive conditions needed for the volunteers to be emotionally balanced and feed this positivity into the project activities and the interactions with all the people around them.



At the same time, the need to take mental wellbeing into account is clear and sustained by a variety of studies and policy initiatives.

The new EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 includes also the 11 EU Youth Goals, coming out of an intensive massive consultation process with young people from all over Europe, within the Structured Dialogue with Youth process during 2017-2018. The 5th EU Youth Goal is in fact Mental Health and Wellbeing and it is formulated like this:

Achieve better mental wellbeing and end stigmatization of mental health issues, thus promoting social inclusion of all young people.

Within the justifications, there are 2 clear elements that sustain our approach and attention for mental wellbeing and the need for mentors and other support-persons to start working more closely on this topic:

A. One of the proposed ways of reaching the goal by 2029 is: "Focus on **prevention measures** that ensure young people are equipped with the knowledge and the skills required for better mental wellbeing" - here we believe the role of mentors for international volunteers is essential in prevention and support in developing skills and knowledge.

B. The thematic report mentions among solutions given to this issue during the consultations: "Increasing access to volunteering opportunities and youth organizations" - this is a clear recognition of the value of volunteering in overcoming such challenges and offering learning and personal development opportunities.



More info on the these policy documents:

EU Youth Strategy: https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy_en

EU Youth Goals: <http://www.youthgoals.eu/>



But what does mental health really mean?

Mental health is defined as a **state of well-being** in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. (WHO)

Emotional state and mental wellbeing play a significant role in volunteers' performance and engagement during the project.

It is also a fact that cross-border volunteers in a European project are in a higher group of risk for various mental issues and breakdowns, because of factors such as: separation from the family and friends, intercultural differences that cause stress, weather changes, changing eating habits and a different lifestyle in general.

While most youth are healthy, physically and emotionally, still one in every four to five youth in the general population suffer from mental health issues, like depression or anxiety. This situation affects the profile of the potential volunteer that we may welcome and gives us, as hosting actors or initiators of European volunteering projects, new challenges to be prepared for.

Some thoughts might go through your mind right now:



“I have no time for this”

Mentors, coordinators and other support-people have their tasks and priorities and supporting mental wellbeing may just seem like another responsibility to add on a never-ending list.

However, it is worth remembering that by promoting mental wellbeing, you will be working to get the best out of the volunteers that you support and it may end up making your job much easier!



“It’s not my job, I am
not a therapist or
Psychologist”

everyone can support mental wellbeing. You don’t need to be a professional to increase volunteers’ self-esteem or self-confidence, help them to keep a healthy lifestyle and balance.

“What if I oPen uP Pandora’s box?”

It is a common worry that you may feel not having enough time or expertise to handle the situation when your relation with the volunteer goes “deeper”.

It is important to remember that volunteers can be offered professional mental support by the insurance provider and one of your roles can be to support the volunteer in getting professional help when you believe it’s necessary. So you don’t have to become a therapist, but you can notice and signal the need for one!

The topic of supporting mental wellbeing should be particularly important for those of you who will get involved in **'Reinforced Mentorship'**, which is the mentoring process that might be necessary to support young people with fewer opportunities.

This kind of mentorship involves closer contact and more frequent meetings. Volunteers with fewer opportunities are people who need additional support, due to disadvantages they face, such as disabilities, health problems, educational difficulties, cultural differences or economic, social or geographical obstacles, including young people coming from a marginalized community or at risk of facing discrimination.



The European youth programs (especially ESC and the former EVS program), which create European volunteering opportunities for youth, place an important priority on the inclusion of young people with less opportunities. In addition to this, many projects are created with the clear intention of offering the missing opportunities for participation, involvement and growth exactly for these youth who would not normally become involved or are avoided by organizations, as they seem “too much work”.

Therefore, it is very probable that you may end up acting as a mentor for a young person with fewer opportunities, which can turn out to be a very gratifying experience and a chance for you to create a lasting impact in the life of a young person trying out what European volunteering and solidarity can mean.

For such situations, when the volunteers you are mentoring come from the category of youth with fewer opportunities - it may be useful for you to connect with them in advance and start building your relationship before they arrive in the hosting country. Other useful tips you can find in Chapter 4: Mentor’s role in short-term volunteering activities.

So when we talk about supporting mental health of volunteers – what do we aim to focus on?

The Finnish Association of Mental Health created various areas of life that have significant importance on people’s feelings and behavior.

Supporting a healthy lifestyle, for example:

Food and eating habits - most volunteers experience the act of living independently for the first time during the volunteering project. If you notice that volunteers don’t keep a healthy diet, maybe you can offer them an activity of cooking together? Studies have shown that when people keep a healthy diet their anxiety levels, perception of stress and mental outlook improve, compared with people who don’t. You will also spend an enjoyable time together providing the opportunity to get to know each other better in a relaxed and friendly manner. This can help out your relationship further on and will contribute to increasing the level of trust and ease in communication, which can be critical for future situations you may have to tackle later on.



Sleep and rest - getting enough sleep and feeling rested is very important and volunteers who are sometimes overwhelmed with their new environment forget to take care of themselves in this matter. Recent research shows that lack of sleep is associated with an increased risk of depression and bipolar disorder.

Sports and Physical wellbeing - exercise is necessary for the maintenance of good mental health. It is medically proven that it can reduce the likelihood of depression. In addition to providing an opportunity for exercise, the fact of spending time with other people and socializing also plays an important role.

Group activities like team sports can improve communication skills and relationships between the community and the volunteer and can accelerate the local integration. Remember however that not all sports need to be team sports and its important to support the volunteers in finding the most suitable sport or method of exercise for their interests and personality.



Supporting healthy relationship with themselves and others, for example:

Support personal relationships and emotions - positive human connection is essential for emotional-physical health, wellbeing and growth. Volunteers with poor relationships are more likely to suffer from depression. Loneliness is powerful enough to weaken our immune system, which increases the risks of mental issues.

Hobbies and creativity - Research shows that people with hobbies are less likely to suffer from stress, low mood and depression. Activities that get volunteers out of their regular daily routine can make them feel happier and more relaxed. So try to encourage your volunteers to keep and develop new hobbies and explore their creativity in different ways.

Good choices - The research shows that better mental health is linked to higher frequency of physical and mental activity, moderate alcohol consumption, non-smoking and a regular life rhythm. The more healthy lifestyle choices an individual makes, the higher life satisfaction and lower psychological distress they tend to have. And so one of your roles can be to help them make good choices on a daily basis, in different types of situations.



TIP : Inside the Mentors TreasureBox, on page 38 you will find the “Hand of mental wellbeing”. This tool will help you to identify the risks in all areas above and include practical questions to make your conversation with volunteers easier and be able to discover where the volunteer may need support or specific activities to stimulate or increase wellbeing.

Based on:

How to improve mental wellbeing
in youth work practice



Other resources:

Peer learning “Participation of young
people with mental health issues”



Why Positive Relationships Are
Needed for Emotional Health



So now that you have started to explore what mentoring is, what it can mean for you and you already started to think in what areas of mentoring you want or need to invest more, we invite you to open up the TreasureBox and discover some of the tools we have gathered for you.

Their magic is shiny, as you can pick up different tools in different phases, you can test and adjust them according to each volunteer and the specific case... and who knows if you won't also become a tool-forged and start creating your own?



How to use the tools?

In the next chapters you will find various ideas and inspiration on how to support volunteers in several areas where they may need support. There are 26 tools, split in the 4 support-areas we have selected. You should use your judgment and skills to understand when is the right moment to use each of the tools. You would not want the volunteer to feel uncomfortable or awkward - if it happens, then most likely you will not achieve your goal to support them.

Each tool is marked with a symbol that provides guidance to help you understand when could be a suitable time to use that tool, based on the stage in your relationship and how connected you may feel to each other.



You just met and you have very general knowledge about each other.



You feel quite comfortable with each other and you spent already some time together, you are able to talk about general issues, but there is still an uneasiness or a lack of trust on deeper level.



You trust each other and you are able to talk about more complicated and personal issues.



You feel very comfortable with each other, there is mutual full trust and understanding. It comes naturally to speak about emotions, frustrations and struggles.



TOOLS – Part I.

Support Area: Building Relationships Within the Project Team

1. EXPECTATIONS EXCHANGE



This exercise can be used to help in collaboration within the extended project team - coordinator, other volunteers, mentors, local volunteers, other staff and support-people, (depending on who we intend to take part in the activity) or you can make use of it just between the volunteer and you, the mentor.

Why use it?

- To get to know each other better and each other's needs and expectations.
- To declare commitment and share responsibility on building quality relationships .
- To understand mutual expectations and increase chances for a long-lasting and successful volunteer-mentor relationship

How to use it?

1. You should explain the objectives of the process to the volunteer and what it is you both are looking to achieve.
2. In pairs, you should complete the contracting template for the collaboration relationship.
3. Then you swap the lists of expectations and you review the other's expectations.



Next ask yourself the following questions:

- *Do you understand each item?*
- *Are they reasonable expectations?*
- *What is the correlation between what you thought you should be providing and what you were expected to provide?*

Review the other person’s thoughts. Again, what is the correlation and what major differences do you notice (if any)?

4. Discuss and agree on any differences/omissions/additions, then rewrite the “contract” with two columns, creating a list of commonly agreed expectations from each party.

TIP: You can be playful at the end and sign or seal it in a fun way (a stamp, a fingerprint, a secret handshake, etc.)

TIP: You can each keep a copy of the contract and if the relationship becomes more difficult later on, you can return to the expectations and evaluate how each side has kept their part of the contract.

Contract between
Volunteer & mentor
..... &

What I expect from you.....	What I think you expect from me.....
-----------------------------	--------------------------------------

TIP: An evaluation of the working relationship is very welcome in long-term volunteering projects and it allows the volunteers the chance to look objectively on how they behaved within the relationship, what they gave and expected, how a relationship needs commitment and involvement and not just waiting to receive. It can be very beneficial for increasing the volunteer’s understanding of the common responsibility within any relationship.





2. CONVERSATION CARDS

Why use it?

- To get to know each other better and break the awkwardness and the silence that may be present in the very first meeting
- To have fun together!

How to use it?

Cut out the cards and place them on a table, facing down, so no question is visible.

Pick a question and answer - easy! :)

Tip: The activity can work very well when there are more pairs of volunteers and mentors, in a larger volunteering project and they all meet for the very first time. In that case, the exercise can be facilitated by the project coordinator, so that mentors and volunteers can fully focus on their interaction.

Another variation could be to use the conversation cards (these included below or others you may find in card sets or which you create) as a means to allow your mentors and volunteers to know each other better and find common points and interests and to use these findings to later on create the working teams - this can function in case you have not allocated already which mentor works with which volunteer(s).

TIP: There are also other card sets which you can use in a similar way to the Conversation cards and bring variation in your discussions with the volunteers. One example is:

Getting Acquainted -

<https://shop.rsvpdesign.co.uk/getting-acquainted>





If you notice a potential for creativity and you feel your volunteers appreciate visual expression, you can also try to spur conversations using **Story cubes** (<https://www.storycubes.com/>).

The icons on each facet of the cubes can generate a talk and a moment to share and volunteers can play in pairs or small teams, they can create stories about their project or the reasons why they decided to become volunteers, about what

they expect to learn, what is not comfortable for them in the beginning, what values they connect with the project activities and so on.

You can find together ways of playing with the cubes and allow for freedom of expression or innovation, to reach the same purpose.

What's your favorite topic to discuss?	What's new in your world?	What scares you?	When and where were you happiest in your life?
What was one of your embarrassing moments?	If you could talk to anyone from the past (living or dead) who would it be?	What is something funny that has happened to you?	If you were a superhero, what would your superpower be?
What is your very first memory?	What qualities do you feel make a great volunteer?	Are there any common misconceptions about your current job?	What are some things you shouldn't say at work?
If you could go back in time what is one thing you'd learn and master over the years so you'd be an expert at it today?	What single thing makes you nostalgic?	What did you think was cool when you were younger, but isn't cool now?	What is the worst advice that you got and that you actually listened to?
My little secret is.....	Last time I laughed because of...	What are some things that you shouldn't say when receiving a gift?	Many people tell me that....
So far my impression about the volunteering project is.....	The most difficult part of living in another country for me is....	I currently miss the most.....	Free question! Now it's YOUR chance!

An alternative tool here for building and keeping the relationship can be the Motivation cards - described on page 51.



3. WHO AM I AND WHO ARE WE?



Why use it?

- To get to know each other in the first phases of the mentoring relationship in a relaxed and creative manner
- To allow for flexibility and easiness in the building of the mentoring relationship
- To set the bases for an open, free and profound communication process between the volunteer and the mentor

How to use it?

The tool relies on the use of visually rich images or cards. The most well know are the Dixit cards ©, which were created as a storytelling game, where players receive cards illustrated with dreamlike images, they select the cards that match a title suggested by the "storyteller", and attempt to guess which card the "storyteller" selected. However, in non-formal education and especially in trainings and learning activities, more and more facilitators and youth workers have taken this board game and used it in a variety of contexts as a tool to invite participants or learners to express feelings, emotions, learning, to evaluate themselves or the experience they lived, with the help of associations between images and their inner reactions.

As a mentor, we encourage you to do the same - take a pack of Dixit cards (or other similar sets of versatile images), set a meeting with your volunteer(s), create a comfortable, enjoyable atmosphere in the meeting space and get ready to get to know each other in a different way than by asking questions, which can seem like an interrogation.



To give you a bit of inspiration, here are some of the cards with their many different details and symbolic ideas, which can be interpreted in different ways by different young people, in different moments of their lives or even in different phases of the volunteering project, depending on internal and external factors.

Each of them may notice something else in the image or may react to another element or value that is reflected in the picture. This is what makes it so rich and powerful, that you can repeat the activity without getting bored or exhausting its potential.

Depending on your creativity, you can use the cards in a variety of ways. Here are just some ideas:

“The story of my life” - ask the volunteers to think about what they want to share with you about who they are and their existence prior to the project, select a sequence of cards, lay them on the table and then start a story that links up with the elements in each consecutive card.

Don't hesitate to do the same about your own life, up to the moment when you met.



Set out a **topic of discussion** and ask the volunteers to select from the images available and visible on the table, 3 different cards that relate to their answers on the proposed topic. Then in turn, each volunteer presents the cards and their answers. The topics can be pre-set by you, or you can start to suggest the first ones and then invite the volunteer(s) also to propose theirs. It can be open-end phrases or even key words, such as:



Comfort for me is....

I always thought....

I get emotional when...

I care about....

Poverty

Values

Family

Career

Learning

Share something crazy about yourself - for a bit of fun and unexpectedness, this can be done with the pack of cards facing down, so that a volunteer turns a card randomly, reveals its picture and then decides what they can share about themselves connected to that card.

Defining who we are (or in fact how you want to work together) - each of you chooses 3-5 cards that you will use to define the way you want to work and communicate, how each of you sees the mentoring relationship. Then you take turns in presenting this vision and comparing it. Or you can guess each other's understanding by "translating" the cards and then you fill in the missing elements, to make a complete description of each of your views.

"I think you..." - When the relationship is a little bit more advanced and you started to gain trust and really know

each other from other activities you did together and other discussions you may have had in different context, you can return to the cards and randomly pick a card to say something about each other and then take turns to say if that perception of each other is true or not, what is it based on, and so on, starting a discussion that can go deeper, but in your own rhythm and to the depth that you decide, together. It may be good to focus on positive aspects or at least to try to lead the discussion in an appreciative direction, by starting to share to the volunteer aspects you noticed about their personality that can be surprising insights they may not have realized.

Tool created by: Corina Pinteau—Erasmus+/ESC trainer from Romania (<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toy/corina-pinteau.3143/>).





MORE PRACTICAL TIPS AND ADVICE ON BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS



You don't always need to use professional methods and tools to support your volunteer. Sometimes it's also enough to do „simple things“ that can prove just as effective as the complex tools used in specific situations.

Find here a list of practical tips and advice of what else you can do, to support your volunteer in everyday life and in difficult situations.

Suggestions:

- ♦ Call or message your volunteer from time to time and ask how they are. Don't wait for the volunteer to contact you only in case of difficulties or problems;
- ♦ Write them regularly short messages to wish them a good day or make them happy about something simple;
- ♦ Meet for a coffee or tea whenever you think it is a good time to talk;

- ♦ Take a walk together in the nature to discover the surroundings;
- ♦ Visit your volunteer when they are sick at home and bring them some „home-made-medicine“ that is popular in your country or in your family;
- ♦ Invite your volunteer to lunch or dinner in your family or to cook together;
- ♦ Discuss with your volunteer in the very beginning: how do you understand your role as mentor and what the volunteer is expecting from you (see previous tool “Expectations Exchange”);
- ♦ Send them a birthday card or a small gift;
- ♦ Share with the volunteer not only the traditions, culture and history of your country, but also aspects and behaviors of your everyday life, to give them a deeper picture of the practical side of „culture“ (your work, hobbies and interests, family life, social challenges etc.);
- ♦ Invite the volunteer to spend holidays together with you (Christmas, Easter celebrations etc.);
- ♦ In difficult situations, sometimes it helps just to give a „hug“ to your volunteer to support them and make them smile;



- ◆ Show them interesting things from your region - regional food, parties and cultural events, natural elements or other curiosities;
- ◆ Introduce the volunteers to your friends, neighbors, etc - to help with local integration;
- ◆ Visit the volunteer in their flat or in the common room of their apartment (only after agreeing with them on this) - to know them in their familiar environment and connect more casually;
- ◆ Explain and give practical advice on how to live in the concrete climate conditions of the hosting location (connected with clothes, food, insect protection, etc.);
- ◆ Send them a funny or handmade holiday greeting card;
- ◆ Organize a thematic evening (connected to a historic period, or a music style or an event) or a Trivia contest and invite other local or European volunteers, as well as other mentors and friends;
- ◆ Create your own traditions and rituals - like going out for pancakes every month or going bowling or running together - depending on your common hobbies and interests;
- ◆ Take time to talk with your volunteer, to listen to them, without any prepared activities, questions or hidden agenda;

All these alternative ways of constructing a good relationship with your volunteer depend on your creativity and time availability and they have to be adapted to the needs and style of your volunteer.

Some are ways of becoming closer and knowing each other better, others are tips to work on the trust and connection between you, that can allow in time for the volunteer to open up to you during difficult moments and be willing to allow you to support and coach them when needed.

But remember: all these suggestions are not meant to make us the volunteers' best friends, but to build up a relationship of cohesion, trust and easiness that can support later on the other working interactions we may have.



TOOLS – Part II.

Support area: Personal, emotional and mental wellbeing



4. ACTIVE LISTENING - 5 STEP CHECKLIST



Why use it?

→ To improve your listening skills for a better quality of your talk with the volunteer.

Listening is one of the most important skills you can have to support effectively your volunteer.

How well you listen has a major impact on the quality of your relationships with them.

How to use it?

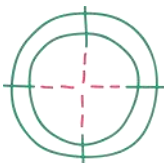
To use „active listening“ with your volunteer you must pay attention to them very carefully. You cannot allow yourself to become distracted by whatever else may be going on around you, or by formulating counter-arguments in your mind, while the other person - the volunteer - is still speaking. Nor can you allow yourself to get bored, and lose focus on what the volunteer is saying.

TIP: If you're finding it particularly difficult to concentrate on what someone is saying, try repeating their words mentally as they say them – this will reinforce their message and help you to stay focused.



There are five key active listening techniques you can use to help you become a more effective listener:

1. Pay Attention



Give the volunteer speaking your undivided attention and acknowledge the message. Recognize that non-verbal communication also "speaks" loudly and especially when the volunteer is not using their native language, the words used may not fully express what they intend, so try to catch as much as possible from the non-verbal messages

- Look at the volunteer directly
- Put aside distracting thoughts
- Don't mentally prepare a contradiction
- Avoid being distracted by environmental factors (such as side conversations)
- "Listen" to the volunteer's body language

2. Show That You're Listening

Use your own body language and gestures to show that you are engaged.

- Nod occasionally



- Smile and use other facial expressions
- Make sure that your body posture is open and interested
- Encourage the volunteer to continue with small verbal comments like "yes", "I see" or "uh huh"

3. Provide Feedback

Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect on what is being said and to ask clarifying questions, especially since the volunteer may not be able to fully detail the situation or present it in a very neutral way.



- Reflect on what has been said by paraphrasing. "*What I'm hearing is...*," and "*Sounds like you are saying...*," are great ways to reflect back and check the understanding, while you also allow the volunteer to think as well about the situation they are presenting
- Ask questions to clarify certain points. "*What do you mean when you say...?*", "*Is this what you mean?*"
- Summarize the volunteer's comments periodically, without interrupting



TIP: If you find yourself responding emotionally to what the volunteer said, say so. And ask for more information: "*I may not be understanding you correctly, and I find myself taking what you said personally.*" OR "*What I thought you just said is Is that what you meant?*"

4. Defer Judgment

Interrupting is a waste of time. It frustrates the volunteer speaking and making maybe an effort to communicate a difficult situation or a frustrating moment and it limits the full understanding of the message.

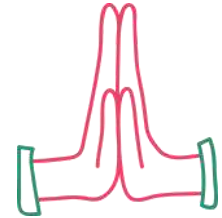
- Allow the volunteer to finish each point before asking questions;
- Don't interrupt with counter-arguments and don't react with comments that can be seen as judgments.



5. Respond Appropriately

Active listening is designed to encourage respect and understanding. You are gaining information and perspective. You add nothing by attacking the volunteer speaking or otherwise putting them down, even if the approach or behavior they are describing may not have been a correct one.

- Be candid, open and honest in your response;
- Assert your opinions respectfully
- Treat the volunteer in a way that you think they would want to be treated



Remember that from each discussion with you the volunteer may learn something about communication, problem-solving or dealing with frustration and other people, so be careful at the example you are setting.

Based on: „Mindtools“ -
<https://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/ActiveListening.htm>



5. EMPA...WHAT? LEVEL UP YOUR EMPATHY!



Why use it?

- To help you as a mentor work on your own empathy, so as to understand the volunteer/mentee, their perspective and reality and, in the end, to help you also build a trustful relationship.

How to use it?

1. Step: Listen

If you meet with your volunteer/mentee for a talk, start with active listening to the entire message that they are trying to communicate.

- Listen with your ears – what is being said and what tone is being used?
- Listen with your eyes – what is the volunteer doing with their body while speaking?
- Listen with your instincts – do you sense that the volunteer is not communicating something important, that they are leaving some information outside?
- Listen with your heart – what do you think the volunteer feels?



2. Step: Ask

As a next step, ask your volunteer what they would like to do about the situation presented.

When in doubt, ask them to explain their position. This is probably the simplest and most direct way to understand the other person. However, it's probably the least used way to develop empathy among people.

As a mentor, you have a great chance to practice empathy development in such a way, treating the volunteer with patience and kindness and offering them the needed attention and time to express emotions, feelings, frustrations and understandings, as well as offering them the context to process them on their own, without interpreting for them what they mean. Most volunteers have the capacity to do this, so do not jump to do the work for them, just be their listener.

Practice these skills when you interact with your volunteer. You'll likely appear much more caring and approachable – simply because you increase your interest in what they

think, feel and experience.

It's a great gift to be willing and able to see the world from a variety of perspectives – and it's a gift that you can use all the time, in any situation.

Here are some more tips for an empathic conversation:

- Pay attention, physically and mentally, to what's happening;
- Listen carefully and note the keywords and phrases that the volunteer uses;
- Respond encouragingly to the central message;
- Be flexible – prepare to change direction as the volunteer's thoughts and feelings also change.

Based on: Mindtools. Essential skills for essential career
<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/EmpathyatWork.htm>





6. HAND OF MENTAL WELLBEING



Why use it?

→ To increase volunteers' understanding of which aspects are affecting their mental and emotional wellbeing.

How to use it?

Ask the volunteer to draw a hand. Each finger and also the middle part of the hand represent a different area of life. After they finish drawing, go through the following questions with them, choosing the suitable ones and keeping a relaxed atmosphere and a dialogue, trying not to resemble an interrogation.

Create from those questions a friendly talk, remembering the topics represented by each part of the hand. Let the conversation flow and help the volunteer to discover areas to improve. After going through all six topics - decide about first "pinky finger" step. to begin a change. Achieving a small goal will create a sense of success and will encourage next steps: **ring** finger step, **middle** finger step, **index** finger step and **thumb** step!

1. Food and eating habits: what did you eat during the day? Did you enjoy a healthy snack every now and then? Who did you share your meal times with? Were you able to enjoy your meals at leisure or did you have to hurry?

2. Personal relationships and emotions: Who did you meet today? Did you make an online video call with your family? How did you feel during the day? Did you share those feelings with someone? Did you have time to listen to a friend? What made you happy or sad?

3. Sleep and rest: What time did you go to bed last night? Did you get enough sleep? Did you sleep well? Did you wake up feeling fresh and rested? Were you able to take it easy during the day? Did you have enough time to relax and rest?

4. Exercise and shared activities: What type of activities did you do during the day? Did you have somebody join you? What type of exercise do you like best? How does exercise make you feel?

5. Hobbies and creativity: What kind of fun things did you do? Did you do something creative? What kind of hobbies make you feel great? What do you find beautiful? How much time did you spend watching TV, other online content, or using the computer? Did you have somebody join you in these activities?

6. Personal values and daily choices in various situations: What kind of choices did you make that made you feel good? What do you value and consider important in your own life?

Source: <https://www.mielenterveysseura.fi/en/julisteet/hand-mental-wellbeing>
The Finnish Association of Mental Health





7. A LETTER OF SELF-COMPASSION



Why use it?

- To create a positive image of the volunteers and increase their self-esteem

How to use it?

1. Ask the volunteer to choose an aspect of themselves that they dislike and criticize. It may be related to appearance, career, relationships, health, attitudes, etc.
2. Ask the volunteer to write in detail about how this perceived inadequacy makes them feel. What thoughts, images, emotions or stories come up in their mind when they think about it?
3. Now invite the volunteer to imagine someone who is unconditionally loving, accepting and supportive. This friend sees their strengths and opportunities for growth, including their negative aspects. Their friend accepts and forgives, embracing them kindly, just as they are.
4. Ask the volunteer to write a letter to themselves from the perspective of this kind of friend. Advise them to let the words flow and not to stress about structure or phrasing.

Give them some supporting questions and guidelines, for example:

- What does this kind friend say to you?
- How does this friend encourage and support you in taking steps to change?

5. After fully drafting the letter, ask the volunteer to put it aside for 15 minutes. Then ask them to return to the letter and re-read it. Let the words sink in. Let the volunteer feel the encouragement, support, compassion and acceptance.

6. Ask how they feel now after re-reading the letter? What do they think about the newly discovered perspective? Does it change in any way their perception on the aspects they criticized initially?

- ! Speak in a calm soft voice, with a steady tone
- ! Try to give some examples
- ! See how the volunteer is reacting
- ! Smile and don't exaggerate
- ! Allow the volunteer their own rhythm

For this activity, try to choose a location and an atmosphere that is comfortable and encouraging (not in a busy or noisy place, but also not in the office maybe).

Based on:

<https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/positive-psychology-exercises/>.





8. THE BEST POSSIBLE SELF (BPS)

Why use it?

- To increase the optimism and the positive attitude of the volunteer during the project or for specific challenging situations they may be facing

The BPS method requires people to envision themselves in an imaginary future in which everything has turned out in the most optimal way. BPS has repeatedly been demonstrated to increase people's mood and well-being (King, 2001; Peters et al., 2010; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006).

Optimism is a personality trait which has repeatedly been shown to correlate with and predict psychological and physical well-being and is therefore an important attitude we believe European volunteers should have and develop during a volunteering project.

How to use it?

1. Invite the volunteer to think about their best possible future self and to write it down or draw it on paper (as detailed and specific as possible).

You can use such instructions and adapt them according to what you know about the volunteer already, to make it more direct:

"Think about your life in the future (or a more specific time frame you choose, like next 1/2/3 years). Imagine that everything has gone as well as it possibly could. You have worked hard and succeeded at accomplishing all of your goals. Consider all of the relevant areas of your life, such as your volunteering project, career, academic work, relationships, hobbies, and/or health. Think of this as a realization of all your life dreams. For the next 10/15 minutes (*or no time-limit, if you want*), write or draw continuously about what you imagined!"

2. Ask the volunteer to imagine life the way they always imagined it would be like, with their best possible self. Instruct them to picture that they have performed to the best of their abilities and they have achieved the things they wanted to achieve in life or specifically, in the volunteering project.





3. Ask the volunteer while writing not to worry about grammar or punctuation, just to focus on writing all thoughts and emotions in an expressive and creative way.

Reflection: after allowing the time to complete the initial exercise, help the volunteer to reflect on the feelings he/she experienced during the writing/ drawing phase and on the answers collected. Invite them to think about the following questions:

- Did it motivate or inspire you? If yes in which way?
- Does it make you want to make changes? What kind of changes?
- How did this exercise affect you overall?

TIP: If you want, you can prepare in advance for the volunteer a handout sheet where to write all this and have a pre-established format. Or if you know your volunteer is creative and likes to use art, you can prepare some creative materials (crayons, paints, bigger papers) and a relaxed atmosphere (music, pillows) to try this activity, which can be very introspective and emotional. Many of the European volunteers enjoy to express themselves in a creative visual manner and this can overcome their language barriers, where these exist.



Either way, make sure you have enough time at the end to also talk about the emotions the volunteer is experiencing. And if they don't feel like sharing, do not push them, but be available for other times.

If you sense the volunteer is reluctant, such arguments can help:

By thinking about your best possible future self, you can learn about yourself and what you want in life. This way of thinking can help you restructure your priorities in life, in order to reach your goals. Additionally, it can help you increase your sense of control over your life by highlighting what you need to do to achieve your dreams. The same works also within a long-term volunteering project.

TIP: The most powerful way to use the exercise is by instructing the volunteers to visualize their best possible self on a daily basis, for at least three days in a row. Each day, they are encouraged to reflect on this desired future, and then to discover ways to make it become a reality, either alone, or with the support and coaching of you as a mentor, or someone else that is ready to play this role. Another effective way of working with it is to repeat it at regular intervals and even compare the results.

“Sometimes our goals in life can be elusive. But research suggests that building optimism about the future can motivate people to work towards that desired future and thus make it more likely to become a reality”





9. NEGATIVE THOUGHT STOPPING WORKSHEET



Why use it?

- To increase positive thinking and decrease negative internal dialogue
- To train the volunteer to view life more objectively and positively

Do you know this feeling when you listen to someone filled with negative thoughts or guilt and you try to deliver positive, alternative thoughts, but nothing seems to do the work? Try to ask “someone” more convincing to help.

All of us can hear inside our minds this voice called self-talk. **Yes, We all talk to ourselves!**



In fact, what we say has big impact on our self esteem, overall mood and general well-being. With this exercise you can help volunteers to confront dark thoughts closed in their minds (internal dialogue) with the reality, to reach more objectivity and simply think: *“Maybe it is not as bad as I thought?”*, *“Maybe I am wrong?”*



How to use it?

Negative thought Example:	Associated emotion when saying thought aloud	Evidence that does not support the thought	Alternative thought	Associated emotion when saying alternative thought aloud
I did not learn anything so far in my volunteering project	Sadness Disappointment	I've learned how to live independently, collaborate in an intercultural environment and speak basic Polish language	I am learning in new ways and in new areas. I need to be patient and let myself go through the pro	Hopefulness Empowerment

1. **Prepare:** explain the exercise to the volunteer and what could be the positive outcome. Give them some time to think if they would like to do it. No pressure, no rush.
2. **Ask** the volunteer to write down negative thoughts along with how each thought made them feel (first 2 columns).
3. **Invite** the volunteer to share what they filled in the table.

Challenge each thought by identifying why that thought might not be true. Armed with this evidence, invite the volunteer to record an alternative thought, ask them to say it aloud and to write down how it makes them feel.

Based on: <https://www.theranest.com/assets/docs/self-esteem-resources/Negative-Self-Talk-Worksheet.pdf>



10. THANK YOU LETTER



Write a Thank You letter to this person. Focus on expressing gratitude. What did this person do that you chose them? Later you can show it to the person or just keep it for yourself. The rule is to stay specific and focus on feelings you want to share.

Why use it?

To foster personal growth and strengthen wellbeing of volunteers

To support volunteers to focus on positive sides of their experience and practise gratitude

How to use it?

While working with the volunteers we need to encourage a positive viewpoint, even if it is not always the easiest task. There could be a time in the project that the volunteer you are mentoring will feel especially vulnerable and lonely. In order to strengthen well being and sense of belonging, guide them through this exercise:

Think about somebody, who helped you during the project, so far. It could be a mentor, another volunteer or somebody else in the community or whom you met during activities or your exploring time.

After the volunteer finishes the letter, there are some points to reflect upon and discuss with them, concerning this activity. You can use some of these guiding questions:

How did you feel before the exercise?

Does something change now after it?

How do you feel now? Why?

What can you do to maintain this positive feeling?

Reflect on gratitude. How often do you feel gratitude? Towards what or whom?

Can you think about more people to whom you would like to say thank you?

Would you like to be at the receiving end of this letter?

Source: Chępa S. Witkowski T., Psychologia Konflikty, 2015



TOOLS – Part III.

Support Area: Problem Solving



11. A TECHNIQUE OF OPPOSED REACTIONS



Why use it?

- To prevent escalation of conflicts arising in the volunteering project or outside it.
- To build the ground for further conversations and improve the general atmosphere.

How to use it?

This technique is useful when you need to unleash aggression and prepare the needed atmosphere for further conversations. The technique is based on the simple rule that nobody can experience two opposed reactions at the same time. For example, try to be angry and happy simultaneously. Does it work?

This means that if the conflicted parties are angry and aggressive and you let them experience an opposite reaction, the intensity of the first will decrease.

Many researches showed that anger and frustration could be reduced by convincing participants in the conflict to show empathy towards each other or provoke amusement.



When the situation gets tense, to prevent arguments or after it, try one of those tricks:

- promote amusement, tell a good joke, do something that will cause smiles
- stimulate empathy: try to explain your personal feelings and reflect answers to the question How do you feel? *"I'm tired and I'm missing my home"*
- show that you like the person; maybe offer a small gift

All of these positive behaviors trigger within us pleasant feelings. Moreover, this technique helps to decrease irritability and afterwards people tend to choose more constructive ways of solving a problem.

This technique brings very practical and instant advice for those involved in the conflict, as well as for the mentor. Try to generate different reactions in a person who is experiencing anger. It doesn't even have to be related to the situation, a good joke can solve or settle sometimes complicated situations.



Source: S. Chełpa, T. Witkowski, Psychologia Konfliktu, 2015.



12. MIND MAPPING



Why use it?

- To boost creative thinking for the volunteers
- To promote conflict resolution and thinking outside the box in a situation which seems blocked

This technique comes from Mind Mapping Theory and is used in various exercises to increase the number of potential solutions to an issue. There is a big probability that the volunteer has heard about this technique before, but even so, they could be surprised by the simplicity and functionality of it.

How to use it?

In order to better explain this tool let's imagine a hypothetical situation:



A few volunteers in the project are sharing an apartment. One of the rules to follow is to keep the flat clean and in good condition. Not all the volunteers apply this principle and conflict over the topic of cleaning begins to grow. In the end, the conflict erupts and you are stepping in to help.

Here are some steps you could follow:

1. Enter as an impartial moderator and ask all those involved to be part of the meeting
2. Instruct volunteers to take one piece of paper and to write on each one separately words as well as associations and symbols related to the conflict (advise them to include solutions, possibilities and action to be taken). They should not be evaluated, judged or selected
3. Spread them all on the table or on the floor and do not divide or separate them yet. Browse through them freely.
4. Now, look together at the configuration that appears. Pay attention how individual elements connect to each other. If nothing comes out or is noticeable, you can replace some items or wait until later.

5. Try to create a mind-map with the written elements, to devise categories and subcategories related with the conflict - for example: causes, solutions, responsibilities etc.

Once you have the mind-map, work with it, discuss its parts, the link between elements and focus on solutions.

Often in this apparent chaos there is an order that allows us to understand or solve the conflict.

This technique helps to free yourself from schematic thinking and break the habit of stubbornly sticking to your reasons or your view on the issue.

The technique can be used more efficiently in groups of volunteers or within teams that are dealing with a specific conflict. In that case, the mentor can moderate the discussion and create a setting where the conflict is first analyzed with this method and then the conclusions coming out of the activity must be discussed and debriefed, so as to overcome the conflict.

Source: S. Čeřpa, T. Witkowski, *Psychologia Konfliktu*, 2015
<http://www.tonybuzan.com/about/mind-mapping/>





13. EPIC TOOL FOR A PEACE WARRIOR — 10 HINTS ON HOW TO FIX A CONFLICT



Why use it?

- To increase effectiveness in a conflict resolution process
- To enhance awareness of the attitudes needed for resolving conflicts

How to use it?

Although nobody really likes it, conflict is natural and it is a normal outcome of communication. Whoever you are - a volunteer, a mentor or another person engaged in the project - when you master the rules of conflict and you know how to deal with it effectively, you will notice improvements in many everyday life situations.

Therefore, when a conflict starts, sit down with the volunteer and discuss the following **suggestions**.

1. **Calm yourself down** by breathing very slowly and deeply. While breathing, think of a moment of great happiness and peace in your life. Don't get overwhelmed by the current situation. Imagine you are looking down on the conflict scene from a peaceful balcony or a mountain top.
2. **Think about what you really need.** What is best in the long run for your mind, your body, your workplace, your family, your community? Focus on these positive goals. Don't get distracted and don't allow the unimportant elements to take up a lot of your energy. This will allow you to negotiate the issues that really matter to you.
3. **Imagine your partner-in-conflict as a potential ally.** Imagine that you are survivors from a plane crash on a desert island with your partner-in-conflict, and that the long-term survival of both of you depends on the two of you cooperating in new and creative ways, that will meet more of both your needs.
4. **Begin by listening to the other person and affirming anything that you can agree on.** Look carefully for, and say out loud to your opponent, any and all the areas where your interests and needs might meet with their interests and needs.



5. Acknowledge and apologize for any mistakes you may have made in the course of the conflict. Others may do the same if you show them the way. Create an accepting space for your partners-in-conflict to start over. Try to let go of defending past mistakes, this could help you to see the situation from fresh angles.

6. Summarize the other person's needs, feelings and position as fairly as you can, and do this first, before you present your own needs or requests. When people feel heard, they are more likely to listen. Summarize to let people know that you have understood them, not to argue with their view.

7. Focus on positive goals for the present and the future, no matter what you and your opponent have said or done in the past. Start over and work on changes in the present.

8. When positions collide, focus on basic criteria. For example, if you can't agree with your flatmates on something, see if you can agree on a fair rule to set. If you can't agree on a fair rule, focus on finding a referee who could help you and your partner-in-conflict define a fair rule.

9. Make requests for specific actions that another person could actually do, rather than for overall feelings or attitudes. Explain how the requested actions will help you, so that the other person feels powerful and respected for their action.

10. Use this conflict as a motivation to study more effective and compassionate ways of resolving conflicts.

As a mentor, when you work with the volunteer on these suggestions, you can continue then the discussion to enhance their reflection on how they personally deal with conflicts. You can open a reflective moment like this:

Knowing all of these advice and after having understood them, think about: *How would you have applied these steps to a recent conflict you had in the framework of the project?*

Imagine how the conflict might have unfolded differently and describe it.



Source: Rivers D. "The seven Challenges Workbook" (2015),
from: <https://newconversations.net/sevenchallenges.pdf>





14. MOTIVATION CARDS



Why use it?:

- To address different needs of volunteers concerning their varying degree of motivation
- To prevent serious conflicts arising from a lack of motivation

How to use it?

The card set contains 3 types of cards collecting ideas and suggestions that mentors and other support-persons can use to deal with the motivation of European volunteers.

The Blue cards present short real-life stories on how people got motivated, as well as definitions, links and tips on helpful materials on this very important topic.

The Green cards give you ideas and tools for motivating your volunteers in their everyday life.

The Orange cards come with simple ideas, insider tips and

tools on how to get back on the right track, when volunteers have lost interest.

You can go through the set of Orange or Green cards and choose the ones that apply to your situation. They contain easy-to-use suggestions which can be applicable immediately either by you alone, as a mentor, or within a team of support-people who are committed to improve the volunteers' motivation.

If you notice that volunteers are starting to lose interest or don't find themselves anymore within the volunteering activities, they keep complaining about the project or about each other, or there are different levels of conflict arising among them, or between a volunteer and staff members, you can almost certainly conclude there is a motivation issue and you can propose within the hosting organization team a meeting to tackle together the issues. Then you can really use the cards as a game, sitting in a circle and drawing different cards to verify if the situation is something that is applicable in your organization, who from the team has noticed it, if the suggestions on it can be applied or adapted. It can be turned into a card game and even played in teams, if there are more mentors and support-people involved.



Important to consider and reflect upon!

The set of cards is developed on the premises that the motivation of volunteers is an ongoing complex process that has a series of specific elements for the volunteers who are European youth placed in the context of a demanding project with important intercultural elements. Also, the act of motivating your volunteers is something needed every day, it is not a single action that you do at the beginning and expect that it ensures a constant level of motivation all throughout the project. Nor is it something that you can expect to be already instilled and fully developed within the volunteer!

It happens often that volunteers come motivated and then a series of factors cause their motivation to drop, or even they come with very little expectations and drive towards what the project proposes them and their motivation fluctuates or is increased only outside the project activities.

Whatever the situation, one thing is certain: the lack of motivation or even a decreased motivation can cause serious difficulties in working with European volunteers and can often be the cause of issues and conflicts.

So one problem-solving technique is to dig a bit deeper than the volunteers' behaviours, to identify what triggered their reactions or negative attitudes and see if there is something you can adjust in the way you work with their motivation.

TIP: Motivation is not just about what you “do” to the volunteer, but also what the entire project approach “builds” for and around the volunteer. It is not a single-person responsibility, motivating volunteers is a team-effort, but it is true that in most cases it will be the mentor who can notice the need for more focus on motivation and the one who can suggest also to the coordinator ideas and solutions!

Some examples you can see below and for the full set of cards we invite you to download it here

<http://motivation.gq>



Orange SEARCH THE MEANING

Looking for a new step!

- Have you asked to your volunteer if he/she understands the meaning of his/her tasks? Is it possible that he/she got bored of „always doing the same things?“
- Maybe it is time to reflect with the volunteer how his/her tasks can be adapted or changed!

THE MOTIVATION KIT
ideas for enhanced volunteer management



Green

Give the sunny day a smile!

ROLE MODEL

- Local volunteers and especially mentors and people with greater responsibilities within organizations, are very often a role model for the newly arrived volunteer.
- Ask yourself who you are, how you behave and what you can expect from the volunteer if he/she is behaving, acting, promoting ... like you do? But still: If you are perfect, please do not expect the volunteer to be perfect (yet)!

THE MOTIVATION KIT
ideas for enhanced volunteer management



Green

Give the sunny day a smile!

BEING @HOME

- Moving into a new flat or a place to stay is not always easy. Some people manage well, others need some help and guidance.
- What makes a house to become a home? Reflect on this question with your volunteer. Help him/her to find his/her own ways to feel @home.
- Orientation is an important part of feeling @home. Does your volunteer easily find his/her way?

THE MOTIVATION KIT
ideas for enhanced volunteer management



Orange CHANGE THE ROUTINE

Looking for a new step!

- We all have a kind of a daily routine. Some are just born, others are created. Looking at the daily routine (or the feeling that there is no routine or that the routine is boring) can be a helpful step towards finding a new motivation.
- Reflect about the start and the end of the day, both the workday and the day in general.
- What is missing? What is helpful? What is needed?

THE MOTIVATION KIT
ideas for enhanced volunteer management



TIP: This tool can also be used to support the personal wellbeing of volunteers, as motivation and emotional wellbeing are intrinsically connected. There are also many suggestions, especially in the Green cards, which can support you in building relationships with the volunteers and laying the bases for a positive interaction. **Source:** the tool was created by a team of 4 youth workers from Germany, Cyprus, Portugal and Romania participating in the Erasmus+ project “VOLUME - Volunteer Management Enhanced”, coordinated by EJBW - European Youth Education and Meeting Centre in Weimar, Germany. The project aimed at increasing the quality of EVS/ESC projects and it followed a long-term approach - training, remote work in working teams developing concrete working tools and a seminar, over a period of 5 months - March-July 2018.



15. FIVE I-MESSAGES



Why use it?

- To increase the flow of communication and express feelings clearly,
- To promote a structured approach on conflict resolutions

How to use it?

By using this tool with your volunteer, while working on a specific conflict or situation, you will help them to connect to their emotions and hopes and get deeper insight into what they were experiencing. The Five I-Messages technique highlights five different activities going on inside a person. Expressing them properly is meant to foster the communication process, which is disrupted in so many situations and by such a variety of factors.

1. observing - what I am seeing, hearing, touching (a simple description of "just the facts")
2. emotions -- the emotions I am experiencing, such as joy, sorrow, frustration, fear, delight, etc., acknowledged in an "I statement"

3. interpreting, evaluating, associating and past wishes -- a large part of our emotional response to a situation (sometimes all of it) can be just an interpretation and evaluation of other people's actions
4. wanting, hoping, ready to request -- what I want now in terms of action, information, conversation or promise
5. envisioning, anticipating results -- what good situation will come about if I get what I'm asking for?

This tool could be used in many situations within a European volunteering project. To name just a few - you as a mentor can make use of it both during the reflection process, and also for conflict resolution attempts.

Here are some examples which you can observe or discover in your talks to the volunteers who notice or experience uncomfortable situations all throughout a project, but especially in the beginning. They may feel disrespected by the behavior of one colleague, they don't feel appreciated for their work, their flat mates are getting on their nerves, the coordinator assigns them to a task while they already have planned something else.

When uncovering such issues with the volunteers during your mentorship meetings, you can give such examples and ask:

"Can you relate to them? Think about more similar situations you have experienced in your project context."



Then sit down with the volunteer, choose a problem that they would like to discuss and go through all the questions. Encourage them to express freely and be a considerate listener. After the volunteer has finished, you can share your view in the same way.

Here you can find an example of “The Five I-Messages” Questions



Source: Rivers D, The Seven Challenges Workbook, 2015
<https://newconversations.net/sevenchallenges.pdf>





16. A look behind the scenes



Why use it?

Very often problems and conflicts during a volunteering project are based on cultural differences.

→ To be able to work and live in an international group or in another culture, one needs to be aware that differences in cultures - and the influence of these differences on communication, on our behavior, on relations among people, on ways of dealing with time, tasks, authorities, etc. – are something “normal”. Understanding the reasons for these differences and then accepting cultural diversity can help volunteers to deal with difficult situations arising during the project.

The tool is based on Geert Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory, which can be used to better understand different countries and cultures and their effects on the values of their members.

How to use it?

During meetings or talks with a volunteer or group of volunteers (preferably a group of various nationalities) ask if they agree with this statement:

“Cultures are different and they shape the way we perceive the world and how we behave”.

Explain then that the Dutch psychologist Dr. Geert Hofstede created a theory called “Cultural Dimensions”, which can be used to point out cultural differences divided into 6 aspects:

1. Power Distance Index (high versus low).
2. Individualism versus Collectivism.
3. Masculinity versus Femininity.
4. Uncertainty Avoidance Index (high versus low).
5. Long- Versus Short-Term Orientation.
6. Indulgence Versus Restraint.

Here you can find the six dimensions in more detail:

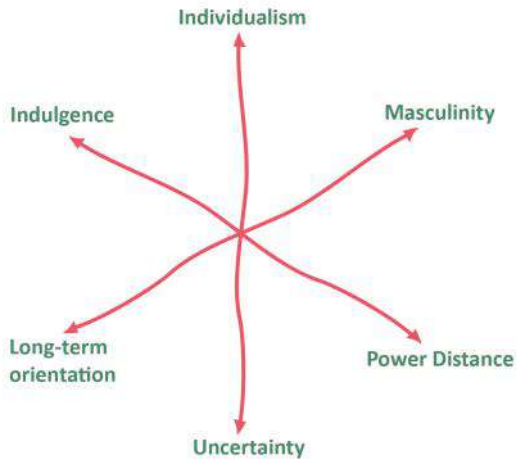
<https://geerthofstede.com/culture-geert-hofstede-gert-jan-hofstede/6d-model-of-national-culture/>

Give your volunteer(s) a short explanation of these 6 dimensions and what they could refer to, in more simple terms. Then start the exercise with the following steps:



Step 1

Ask volunteers to draw a diagram (shown below) or hand them out printed copies.



Step 2

Explain each of the dimensions and ask volunteers to “place themselves” (or their nation/local community/ethnic group) on an axis using a dot. Each axis stands for one aspect.

They can place themselves at the very beginning or very end of the axis if they strongly identify themselves with the dimension, or somewhere in the middle, leaning more towards one or another.

I. Collectivism (0) vs. Individualism (100)

Collective society – spends time with family, plans many events together, eats meals together, spends holidays and free time with friends/family, acts as a group, pays attention to friends’ and family’s opinions. Close relations with cousins and extended family, possibly living in a three-generations house etc.

Individual society – spends lots of time alone or within a small circle of friends, being single is quite natural, living alone, without family is common, smaller families, planning leisure time individually, etc.

II. Femininity (0) vs. Masculinity (100)

Feminine society – genders are emotionally closer, gender roles are not so distinct, competing is not endorsed, sympathy for the poor and disabled, welfare system.

Masculine society – free market, competition is highly endorsed, gender roles are emphasized, men are supposed to



be tough, winning is important.

III. Power distance – Low (0), high (100)

Low – people feeling as equals, friendly relations with bosses and superiors at a workplace, addressing others “you”, less formal towards others, organizing angry manifests to express opinions

High – respect and hierarchy are important, visible gaps between social classes, accepting imposed leadership, addressing others using polite forms (“vous”, “Sie”, etc.) when speaking to superiors, elders or unknown people.

IV. Uncertainty avoidance – tolerant (0) vs. avoiding (100)

Tolerant – open to change and innovation, less sense of urgency, doesn’t have problems with ambiguity, accepts open-ended decisions, doesn’t feel the need for very specific instructions, may have not written constitution or ID cards

Avoiding – needs very specific instructions, double checks to make everything clear, prepares themselves “just in case”, doesn’t like unknown, attached to own habits and routines, prefers to know the exact number rather than an estimate, probably has specifically written law code/constitution/set of rules.

V. Short term orientation (0) vs. long term orientation (100)

Short term – focused on short-term goals and quick results, focused on present or past, people have very strong, biased convictions, rights are emphasized, traditions are valued, immediate gratification is sought for. People like flattery, compromise is perceived as a weakness.

Long term – focused on the future, willing to delay short-term material/ social success or short-term emotional gratification, accepting the changes in the world. Modesty, thrift, perseverance and education are valued.

VI. Restrain (0) vs. Indulgence (100)

Indulgence – spontaneity and following impulse is acceptable, friends and fun are important, overall sense “life is freedom”, focus on personal happiness, “follow your heart/dreams” notion, optimism, importance of freedom of speech, lower police force, more extraverted personalities, looser sexual mores, leisure ethic.

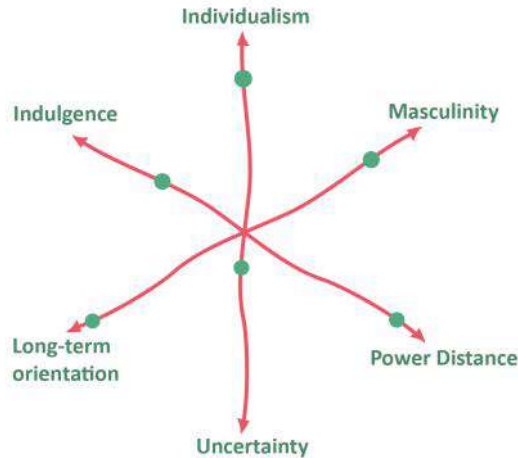
Restrain – rather pessimistic, “life is hard” notion, fulfilling duties and responsibilities is a natural state, more controlled, less spontaneous behavior, more police force, more introverted



personalities, stricter sexual mores, work ethic.

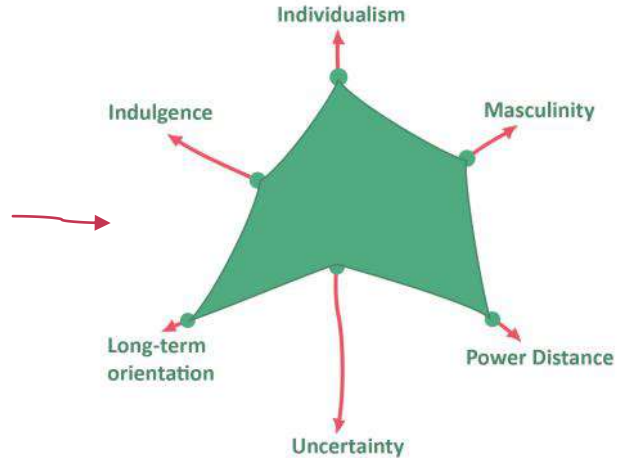
Step 3:

After placing dots, they should be left with a diagram looking,



for example, like this:

Ask volunteers to join the dots and color the shape they



obtained. The result might look like this:

Step 4:

Encourage volunteers to show each other their diagrams, ask them to notice the biggest similarities and the biggest differences. Present them also your diagram – based on dimensions of your culture/ the hosting country of the volunteer.

After presenting and sharing open the discussion – ask volunteers, what did they find surprising and let everyone speak and justify their opinions. Give them an overview about dimensions of the hosting country, explain it in more details and help them to understand the meaning of these differences in practice and every day life.



TIP: It is important to point out to the volunteers that these dimensions are never completely “set in stone” or unbreakable, but they can give indications of why people may behave in a certain way that can be different than what they are used to in their home culture. Being aware of them, starting to recognize them and identify the roots of these behaviors will only support the volunteers become more comfortable in their new culture and start to appreciate the elements that fit them, while not judging the ones that do not.

Your role as a mentor here will be to just offer the safe space for volunteers to start understanding their host culture and to ask questions and make connections between behaviors and values. You do not have to convince them to like this new culture, but to encourage them to be curious about its specificities and how they can be visible in their daily interaction with the locals. This type of awareness will gradually lead to intercultural learning and cultural adaptation.

Source:

Geert Hofstede’s Model of 6 Cultural dimensions – adapted by Magdalena Szewczuk, mentor from Poland.

More information:

https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_66.htm

<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/>





TOOLS – Part IV

Support Area: Personal Development and the Learning Process



17. C.L.E.A.R. MODEL



Why use it?

- To help you as a mentor to specify and focus on volunteer's learning goals
- To assist the volunteers in their learning process and its acknowledgement

How to use it?

The acronym CLEAR stands for: **contracting, listening, exploring, action** and **review**. This tool will help you work on specific skills, abilities and attitudes which volunteers would like to achieve. In fact, it can be a very exhilarating experience to coach them towards chosen goals.

The basis for this process should be a well established relationship, respect and mutual trust. In the previous chapter “Building relationships within the project team”, you can find examples of good practice (such as Expectations Exchange, for example).

Set aside at least 30 minutes with the volunteer for this. Go through the first 3 steps.

Focus on creating a specific plan for action.

Arrange a time for running regular review meetings of the established plan.



DESCRIPTION OF THE STEP / STAGE

C for Contracting – start contracting with the volunteer on the boundaries and the focus of your work together. Establishing agreement and a relationship between you and the volunteer.

L for Listening – listen to the issues the volunteer brings up and things they want to learn/develop. Listen not only to the content, but also to the feelings and the body language, as these are ways of framing their reasons and motivations. Try to be understanding and an active listener.

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED / ASPECTS TO BE CONSIDERED

- ! Setting the frame of our work (when, how often, where to meet)
- ? What will be the scope of our meetings?
- ? What do we expect from each other?
- ? What long term aim might come out of this learning support?
- ? Which areas of competence would you like us to focus on?

- ? What is the situation right now? (Facts!)
- ? What do you want to reach?
- ? How realistic is it?
- ? What are the greatest external or personal challenges in reaching this?
- ? While you are talking, I can observe so much/so little in your body language



E for Exploring - explore with your volunteer what might be obstacles or any other factors to assist their learning process, before undertaking a new action.

A for Action - the volunteer actually tries out what they have chosen to learn

R for Review - review the process with the volunteer and agree the next steps that the volunteer might take.

- ? What has helped you in the past to learn new things?
- ? What kind of things have tripped you up / blocked your learning process?
- ? What kind of support would you need to do this – from me and from others?
- ? What could be the possible ways for you as a volunteer to tackle the task?
- ? Which resources and/or experiences you may already have in other similar activities or experiences?
- ? Who can help you?

- ! Observe the volunteer, if possible and try to gather information about how they try to act upon the learning objectives chosen before.
- ! Offer feedback in an effective way and encourage the volunteer.

- ? How was it for you?
- ? Did you reach the goal you were heading for?
- ? Would some other approach help you learn better?
- ? What could help you now to move forward?

Source: „Clear-model” , Adapted by Monika Kezaitė – Jakniuniene, SOHO International Training Course.





18. THE CIRCLE OF COMPETENCES

Why use it?

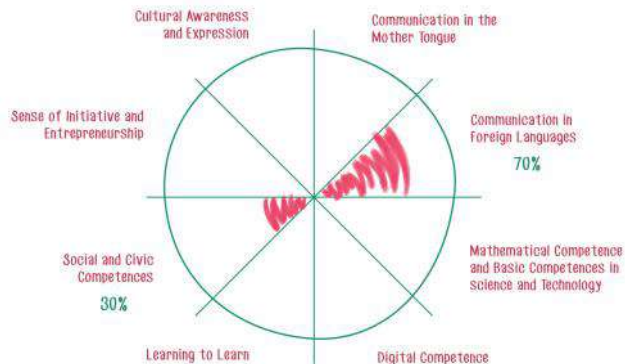
- To reflect on the volunteer's personal development and the learning process of acquiring concrete competences.
- To support other connected processes, such as self-assessment, or planning for future development.

How to use it?

Here are the main instructions you can give to the volunteer. You can go with them step-by-step through each phase and stop to talk and offer any guidance is needed.

1. Draw a circle and divide it into 8 smaller parts.
2. Think about competences (skills, knowledge and attitudes) you find important for your own development. Name them and list them in the circle. Each part of the circle stands for one competence.
3. Think how much (in percentage) you acquired this competence already. Mark it on each part of the circle. Color the part according to your percentage assessment.
4. Look at your circle. How does it look like? Which element are you satisfied with? What needs improvement? How can you get to your 100% in all parts?
5. Imagine this is as a wheel which should be able to move. Is it possible? On which parts do you have to work, at first, to make it round?





You can use this tool in two ways: let the volunteers choose their own skills that they would like to develop, or you can guide them to explore skills and the 8 key competences which are included in the Youthpass Certificate. <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/>



As a mentor, you have an important role in decoding the Youthpass certificate which may be more difficult to grasp or understand, especially by young people not so used to planning and assessing their own learning process or to even reflecting so much about what they learned.

Moreover, volunteers with less opportunities will need you to translate this recognition process in much simpler and practical terms and even to find easier phrases and explanations for what competences stand for.

A visual representation of what they know or can do and what they want to improve, can be of real help.

You could explain and offer them this tool for their self-assessment, before writing up the Youthpass competence description, but also when your volunteers are ready to start planning their future development and the ways in which they can apply what they acquired or developed during their volunteering process, in their future career.

TIP: for more ideas on how to support the reflection process, you can check 2 other publications:

https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3553/Publication_YP-unfolded_online.pdf

https://www.youthpass.eu/downloads/13-62-276/Publication_121_Final.pdf

Source: <https://www.youthpass.eu/downloads/13-62-26/The%20circle%20of%20competences.pdf>





19. SANTA CLAUS



Why use it?

- To find personal values and base volunteers' learning on values
- To learn about motivation and understand other people's motivation

How to use it?

In order for volunteers to set up learning objectives in a realistic way, connected and even rooted in the project framework and for them not get lost in limitless possibilities, we need to guide our volunteers so that they will be able to define personal goals first.

Sometimes, when you are young and don't have so many experiences yet, it's very difficult to clearly answer yourself on questions that may seem easy, but are quite deep, such

as: *"What do I want? What is really important to me? What are my personal values?"*

When you meet with the volunteer, begin with defining personal values and goals they have. Furthermore this may lead to a discussion about learning goals and the steps they should follow in the future to achieve them.

Try to give these guidelines to the volunteer:

Take a piece of paper and imagine that you write a letter to **Santa Claus**.

List everything that you would like to get. It could be things like a new car, a beautiful dress, but also symbolic elements, like money, power, success, friendship, achievements.

When you finish, list all the items you asked for, in the order of their importance to you, from 1 to 10, where 1 will be the most important.

At the end, you can wake up from the dream about Santa Claus and look at this list as your guide. This list represents your real motives, a structured hierarchy of needs and values.

Now think about each of these values, break them into pieces and try to analyze them.



For example, if you scored high in friendship, what is it that you need to learn to become a better friend? Managing anger, being more assertive, prioritizing quality time with friends? Can you agree that there are always some skills and attitudes that you can work on?

You may notice that some values are too vague to work with, some of them could and will change in time, and it's all OK. It's just a foundation for further development.

Then initiate a discussion with the volunteer. Here are some suggested questions to trigger the talks and reflections:

- ? What is on the top and at the bottom of the list of your values?
- ? How does the list represent your personal motives?
- ? Can you see learning objectives behind each value? How do they relate to each other? What is the most challenging?
- ? What do you need to work on? Choose 3 values that you would like to set as a priority for now and focus on them for the time being.

? Do you have skills and/or attitudes that lead me to live according to my values?

? What values do you share with your colleague volunteers? Are they similar?

? How are you different from others? What do you have in common?

The answers and reflections the volunteers will offer to such questions will be the starting points for their internal reflective and planning processes.

Encourage them to take notes and come back to them from time to time, as the learning process needs time-investment, a bit of discipline and a lot of commitment, to be sustainable and meaningful.

Important!

Please be culturally-sensitive when using this tool and make sure the reference to Santa Claus is appropriate and recognizable by your volunteer, according to their cultural background and reality.

Source: Chelpa S. Witkowski T., Psychologia Konflikту, 2015



20. BEAUTY TRAINING



Why use it?

- To support volunteers' personal growth;
- To help volunteers focus on positive attitudes and being able to prevent the "being lost" feeling.

How to use it?

There is a saying "Beauty lies in the eye of the beholder". The good news is that you can train how to see things around you in harmony and appreciate the beauty of each moment. There is a short and powerful exercise you can introduce to your volunteer to support them in building more positive attitude and contributing to their personal growth. Instruct them as follows:

1. Every hour **set the alarm clock** and when it rings stop whatever you have been doing, just for **1 minute**.
2. Try to focus on this moment, **breathe deeply**. Be observant, but not critical. **Be aware!**
3. **Celebrate** the moment, enjoying small things like a smile or a specific scent, an image that catches your attention - instead of thinking "bird" try to **notice** the colors, the patterns or the textures around the bird.
4. Slowly **come back** to the things that you have been doing before this "awareness break".
5. In an hour from now, **repeat** the activity!



Try to repeat this exercise at least for a few days, but preferably for a few weeks .

This technique is derived from the mindfulness training with a well-known and established approach towards a happy and healthy lifestyle. It is an introspective method which slowly builds awareness and contentment in life. It could help people deal with moods and seasonal discouragement.

When the volunteer you are mentoring or supporting is fluctuating in their ups and downs, it is beneficial to point out the great power of being Here and Now. Though it is a self-defining tool, it will be advisable to see its effects after a few days/weeks.

Nevertheless, this activity would not necessarily work for all volunteers, you as a mentor should decide to whom you can offer this activity and in what moment of their volunteering project experience, depending also on the challenges faced or the type of attitudes they demonstrate.



Source: Berndt Ch., Tajemnica odporności psychicznej; 2015
<https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/mindfulness-exercises-techniques-act>





21. SENSITIVITY WHEEL



Why use it?

- To support volunteers working with vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.
- To encourage and support volunteers in learning about the sensitive issues in the community.
- To help volunteers learn about their own bias and impact in the community.

This tool comes from the area of peacebuilding and development, where professionals and volunteers are working in highly sensitive areas, where it is vital to be aware of one's own influence and impact on vulnerable individuals, groups and communities.

However, you can notice that it is applicable in everyday life and also in European Solidarity Corps activities, simply because they happen in spaces of intercultural differences with power dynamics which are important to know how to handle.

Moreover, the discussions and reflection process the tool generates are very needed in ESC projects and solidarity activities which arise from concrete unmet community needs and must therefore be sensitive to these needs, through the behaviors and interventions of all those involved, the organizations and volunteers alike.

Understanding a foreign community and its sometimes invisible mechanisms is not an easy task, but it can prove to be the needed approach for a successful and meaningful project that truly not only promotes, but in fact practices solidarity.

How to use it?

First it is important for you to get familiar with these concepts and understand them. Take a look at the recommended literature and also try to identify in the local media the 'hot issues' from step 1.

Discuss with your volunteers about what they should pay attention to in the community they are working in.



Step 1: MAP

Identify with them the 'hot' areas, issues that the community is particularly sensitive towards, issues that brought problems or/and trauma or perhaps issues which are taboo.

STEP 2: MY POSITION

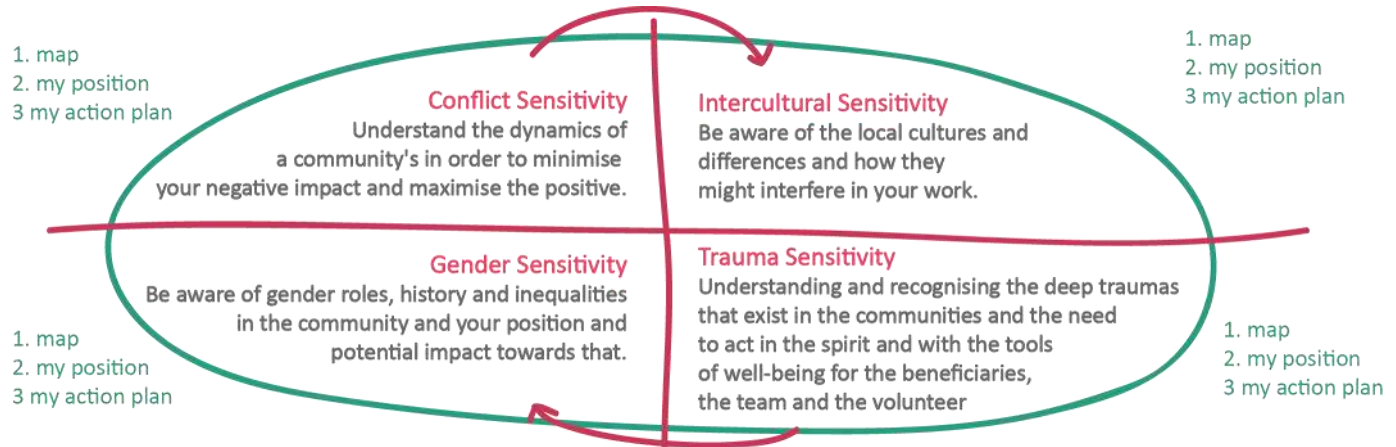
Discuss with your volunteers their own positioning towards

such issues and decide together with them what could their positioning and engagement in such topics be.

Step 3: MY ACTION PLAN

At best, discuss with them how they can avoid 'avoiding' entering into conversations and what they can do and not do during their volunteering time.

To work on this, you can use the following **The Sensitivity Wheel**



Example: Jay is a 25-year old male volunteer, coming from the Netherlands to a rural area in North East Romania. He is working mainly in the area of education for gender empowerment, reducing school leaving and aiming for preventing human trafficking phenomena. Here is what he wrote in his Sensitivity Journaling, guided by his mentor:

Step 1 MAP:

a. CS: In this community there are many intra-family conflicts, instances of domestic violence, families being separated with parents leaving to work in Italy and Spain. Some also mention about a few young girls (16-19) going to “work” as dancers abroad. The community has few sources of income and people are migrating to towns and further, so the local school might be closed .

b. IS: The culture of the community is much more conservative than what I am used to. The people here are also not really used with the “Dutch way” of doing things. They do not tell you things directly, and while they are polite, I don’t think they approve of some of my ideas.

c. GS: There are always more girls in my activities and they seem to be very interested in everything. Talking about gender roles is a challenge from my point of view, and there is no sexual education in school. The episodes of domestic violence I heard about here were not followed by a police complaint.

d. TS: Not sure, but the children being left behind by their parents who work abroad seem ‘cool’ about it, but at the same time quite defensive and prone to be in gangs and ‘cool’ groups .

Step 2 and 3 MY POSITION and MY ACTION PLAN:

a. CS: I am aware of these issues, and know that I can only tackle them at the surface while I am here. I will try to tell stories how these issues are dealt with in my country, to increase awareness about them.

b. IS: It is very different where I come from and I find it hard to accept how people just live with this situation. However, I know that if I convince one or two girls I am working with to stand up to their parents and community, they might be at risk. They could deal with verbal or physical violence. So, I need to get help and perhaps work with decision makers and their peers from my country. I might seek options for exchange programmes. Also I will seek advice as to what support structures exist in Romania and could guide them to those.

c. GS: I realize I am in a power position because of the economic background and gender that I have. I am aware and will clearly present the principles of my interaction with all the beneficiaries of my project. I am including innovative workshops and tools for realizing gender education in my own activities .



d. TS: This is an area which goes way beyond me and my powers to do anything. I acknowledge that and will signal my impressions to my mentor and project manager and I will seek their advice for future action.

TIP: In MAP - pay particular attention to the 'hot issues' that are directly tackled by the project and the organization in which your volunteer is working (e.g. Working with orphan children involves deep childhood traumas or working with a rural community which is highly a traditional community involves particular values around gender roles) .

TIP: In MY POSITION - allow time for the volunteer to reflect, understand and accept the realities of his/her own positioning. Often one comes with a high desire to do good and often deep prejudices (including discrimination or bias sometimes caused by own personal trauma) are not known or obvious without a more careful analysis.

Be ready to give enough time to the talks with the volunteer, be prepared for the issues to keep returning in your discussions, and be ready, if needed, to offer support (from honest discussions, to listening, to exploring options or just acknowledging this journey of awareness).

TIP: In MY ACTION PLAN - provide the volunteer with information about support systems that exist (e.g. dialogue groups about a certain topic, school psychologist, local leaders, other NGOs working on the issue, training courses and workshops, etc.)

Source: The 5 Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Sensitivities: <https://www.peacetraining.eu/handbook/the-5-cppb-sensitivities/> - adapted by Andra Tanase, Erasmus+/ESC trainer from Romania

Additional resources:
CDA - Do No Harm: <https://www.cdacollaborative.org/what-we-do/conflict-sensitivity/>



22. HUNT FOR THE GOOD STUFF



Why use it?

- To support personal growth within volunteers
- To strengthen the volunteers' process of self-empowerment
- To help build better relationships and boost volunteers' gratitude and happiness

How to use it?

Are you a born optimist? In case you realize your volunteer is not, share with them this tool:

In the course of the project, as in life, we all have to deal with ebbs and flows. It's completely normal to feel anxious, sad or to feel like you are not learning anything or not being good enough in something.

So it is really important to acknowledge those feelings and at the same time work on your positive thinking and gratitude. There is a simple exercise to try each night before you go to sleep:

1. Think of three good things that happened to you today. They could be even small things, don't take anything for granted.
2. Write them down.

Reflect on why these have happened - what made these good things possible?

- ? What do these good things mean to you?
- ? What can you do tomorrow to enable more of such positive things coming to you?
- ? How did you or others contribute to these good things?
- ? How can you use the "Hunt for the Good Stuff" tool to enhance your performance?

Keep repeating this exercise daily for at least one week.





This tool aims to build optimism, on the one hand, but on the other hand also to counteract a tendency to pay more attention to negative events than to the positive ones. Exercising gratitude will lead to a good life:

- physically (better sleep, feeling calmer, better health);
- psychologically (lower depression, greater life satisfaction, more fulfilment);
- and especially socially (better relationships, increased appreciation).

This tool can be used in correspondence with another two in our TreasureBox - the "Thank you letter" and "Beauty Training" - so check them up and use them wherever you think they will benefit volunteers to grow in relationship with themselves and others, raising the level of contentment and positive emotions.

Source: Seligman M.; Learned Optimism; 2006
<http://www.bloggingthegoodlife.com/articles/columnist-articles/lets-go-hunt-good-stuff/>





23. UNDERSTAND YOURSELF - PERSONAL S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS



Why use it?

- To support the personal development of the volunteers;
- To encourage a deeper self-understanding.

Supporting the personal development of the young European volunteers is all about creating long-term goals, and then encouraging them to think concretely about how to achieve them. However, before the volunteer knows what they want to do in the long term, they need to reflect on their current situation.

How to use it?

Initiate an open, relaxed discussion where your focus is to support the volunteer to think about and find the answers to the following questions:

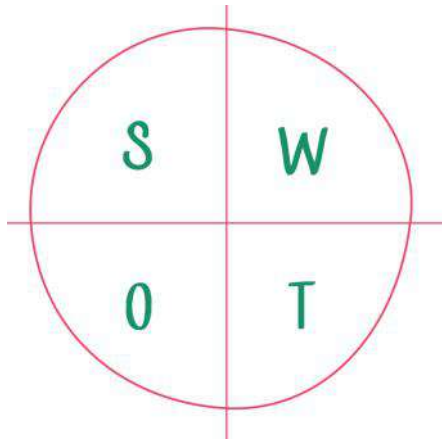
S: Strengths: What do you do better than most people you work with? What are you most proud of? What are you really good at? What skills do others recognize in you, and what do you get rewarded for?

W: Weaknesses: What skills do you struggle to master? What do you do only because you have to, in order to satisfy volunteering requirements? Are there one or two aspects of your personality that hold you back? What do other people most often identify as your weaknesses? When or in what are you vulnerable?

O: Opportunities: In what ways can you take advantage of your strengths? What opportunities are open to people who do these things well? What would you love to do that you're good at? How can you minimize your weaknesses? If these no longer held you back, what could you do? Where do you see the most potential growth for yourself: within your current hosting organization and the volunteering project you are involved in?

T: Threats: Are there any general threats that you need to think about? If you don't address your weaknesses, what problems could they cause? What setbacks might you face? What obstacles have other people overcome when they were trying to get to where you want to go?





Additional tips and advice for the mentors implementing this tool:

The discussion has to be exploratory, try not to suggest the answers to the volunteer, but support them with examples if needed, to find concrete situations to relate to, when replying.

If the volunteer discovers opportunities inside the context of the hosting organization, that could help them in the learning process, but are not necessarily included in the project context, advise them to explore them with the

project coordinator/organization leader and check if they can get involved in additional projects.

Keep them realistic about many additional activities and make sure you also talk to the organization before getting the volunteer overly excited about other tasks. Their main focus has to remain on the project they are involved in.

Depending on the time you have available, if you work with one or more volunteers, you can turn this activity into a group exploration, where the volunteers can also compare their results and share among them, especially if they work in a team.

If the volunteers you mentor are more artistic, it can be helpful to encourage them for the first part of introspection and self-analysis to make drawings and sketches of their answers and afterwards to start the verbal discussions.

Based on: <https://www.mindtools.com/courses/InVg24xo/PersonalDevelopmentPlanning.pdf>



24. THE GOAL KEEPER



Why use it?

→ To support volunteers in defining their long and short-term goals

Goals are important. They show us direction, give us meaning and are a strong source of motivation. They are an answer when the volunteer we work with is in a moment of doubt and may ask themselves: "Why am I doing this?" It happens often for European volunteers to have numerous massive goals for their volunteering project, which in time can feel overwhelming. With this tool you will be able to:

- Help and guide the volunteer to define specific goals
- Support them to choose the most important one at this moment, to be able to focus on it.

How to use it?

1. Ask the volunteer to take a piece of paper and a pen and to draw a table like this one (3 columns X,Y and Z, and 5 rows):

X EMOTIONAL GOALS	Y FINANCIAL GOALS	Z PERSONAL GOALS
<i>(example: I will get to know more local people)</i>	<i>(example: I will go for a trip to Budapest)</i>	<i>(example: I will learn how to swim)</i>
...
...



2. When it is ready, ask the volunteer to start with column X and write EMOTIONAL GOALS - five things which can change volunteers' relations with others.

You can ask helping questions if they struggle (examples):

- ? What is the level of your satisfaction when it comes to integration with locals?
- ? What is your relation with other volunteers? What would you like to be improved?
- ? What kind of conflict situation would you like to resolve and how?

3. Next step is column Y where the volunteer writes FINANCIAL GOALS - five things that the volunteer would like to have or buy during the project (or for which they would need money).

Helping questions (examples):

- ? How much do you want to save/spend this month?
- ? What kind of trips would you like to do?
- ? How do you want to spend your weekends?

4. Last column to fill in is Z, which shows PERSONAL GOALS. Ask the volunteer to think about five things they would like to improve/change in themselves.

Helping questions (examples):

- ? What do you want to be better at? Improve? Learn?
- ? How do you want to make your project more valuable, with what contribution?
- ? How you can improve your health?

5. Now ask the volunteer to draw a circle around the most important goal from each column (emotional, financial and personal), taking no more than during 30 seconds. After this is done, ask them to choose only one from the three chosen before, this time in just 10 seconds!

- ? It is important to act and think fast, first thought is the best :)

6. Now ask the volunteer to write a sentence which includes and specifies the chosen goal, also attaching a deadline to it. For example:

- ? I, (name and surname) know German/Spanish on the level A2/basic, until 23rd of December 2019.



After this part of the exercise which is done individually, with a little facilitation from you in naming each step, try to help your volunteer to plan a step-by-step approach on how to achieve the goal.

Ask them to list concrete measures needed to be taken to reach that most important goal, which they themselves identified from among many.

TIP: You can of course organize this activity of setting goals with more volunteers at the same time, giving the instruction simultaneously and each volunteer filling their own plan.

Then it is interesting to offer a time to share the different plans and possibly discuss the categories they belong to, similarities and differences as well as possible ways of cooperating among the volunteers, so they can all reach their goals.

Together they can identify allies and resources and this shared communication about goals, wishes and desires can create more empowerment and commitment towards the plans.

Important to think about!

There are no right or wrong category of goals in this phase, as all 3 columns indicate parts of the volunteers' life and concerns, especially in the beginning of the project, when the learning part can be seen more like an additional benefit of the project or something that is coming unplanned.

Later on, you can use the context of the project and other activities and tools, to instill a deeper understanding of the personal development and learning process and support the volunteer to uncover the many riches on this journey in the volunteering realm.

Some volunteers notice them sooner, others later, some are more interested in the service they are providing on the way and in the changes they are making in society, but the learning happens, whether or not it is planned, acknowledges or sought out.

The amazing part comes when volunteers become aware of this, with your help as true Masters of the Learning Path.

Source: Tool designed by Kati Ziarczyk, mentor from Poland adapted from Brian Tracy's "Goals!: How to Get Everything You Want -- Faster Than You Ever Thought Possible".





25. THE VOLUNTEERING JENGLE



Why use it?

- To facilitate an open debate on the learning process within volunteering projects
- To increase cooperation among mentors and volunteers for a shared responsibility towards the learning process

How to use it?

You can print out the layout of blocks with questions, which you can find here <http://www.provobis.ro/JengleQuestions.pdf>.

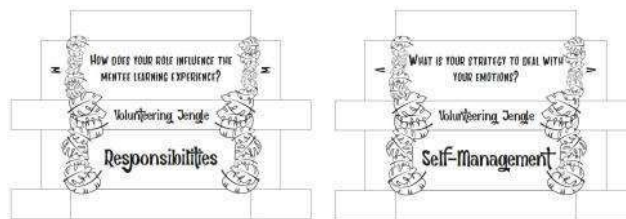
Then comes a bit of craft work, where you cut out all the pieces, fold them and then glue them together to create 3D blocks that resemble the wooden ones used in the Jenga board game, the one that inspired this tool.

But this is a nice moment, which you can in fact share with your volunteers, since it will create bonding and the suitable atmosphere needed for the discussion coming later, when you actually play the game.



TIP: You can add your own questions, besides the ones suggested by the tool creators. You can have also empty blocks to add on-the-spot questions during the game.

Here are some sample unfolded question blocks, so you can get a picture of what they look like.



Once you have the carton blocks all prepared and the players around the table, you are ready to start.

The game can be played in a variety of ways and by different participants - all actors in a volunteering project - volunteers, mentors, project coordinator, or just teams: a mentor and their volunteers, the project manager and the mentor team or even by the project coordinator, together with volunteers and other support-people.

If you as a mentor intend to use it with the volunteers, it may be helpful to know how the tool was built. The Jengle tower is a metaphor of the learning process in European Volunteering projects. It has come to life as a fun tool to use within a volunteering project team, to reflect on the very complex learning process taking place in such projects, but also to share and discuss good practices, creative solutions, different perspectives and even doubts while playing.

There are 3 sets of questions, addressed to the main 3 actors in any such project: Volunteer, Mentor (and other support people) and Organization (as a structure, encompassing the project coordinator and other management roles).

The letters **V**, **M** and **O** are marked on each block, to make it easier for the players to identify their own questions.

Sample questions:

- O — What are the learning methods?
- O — How do you monitor the learning process of the volunteer?
- M — How do you help your mentee to reflect on the learning process?
- V — Where can you look for support when you have a problem?

These and other questions you will find in this game. And the beauty is that you can add your own questions, make them more relevant and adapted to your context and local reality and thus the tool can grow.

Participants in the game build a physical tower with the question blocks. This tower is therefore the result of a building process done by 2, 3 or even more different actors, who realize they teach and learn at the same time during a volunteering project. They also become aware that without their actions, the learning process collapses and the Jengle Tower of Volunteering will fall.



Taking one piece of the tower may make it weaker. On the other hand, this will help you all to gradually create a new tower, based on your own experience and the unique combination of skills, talents, motivations and approaches in YOUR project and community setting.

Here are the basic instructions:

Let's start!

1. Keep calm, being in a Jengle requires cooperation. Sit together and get to know each other. How? Answer each other's questions while you build the blocks of your Jengle! Blocks of each role should be printed on a different colored papers (volunteer, mentor (and other support people), organization), for easier identification.

2. Ok, now you are ready, build your tower! Stack all the blocks in levels of three placed next to each other along their long sides and

at a right angle to the previous level. Make sure you used all the 3 colors of the blocks, mixed. If you never played the Jenga game, see here where we got our inspiration:

<http://www.jenga.com/about.php>



3. Decide your roles. Are you a coordinator, a volunteer or a mentor/support-person? Then each color of Jengle blocks represents your role and you have to pick up from the tower only your specific color of blocks.
4. Now, take one block in your color when your turn comes, from any level of the tower, and read the question on it. Then try to answer it and discuss it with other players. Then use the block you removed, to start a new tower.
5. Write your answers and recommendations on a blank block or a separate board and place it on the new tower.
6. Take. Share. Build. Repeat.





At the end, you can discuss about the new result, how the new tower looks like, what is different, what happened during the destruction and re-building process. Did the tower collapse? Why? What does it mean?

There are many questions you can use to debrief the experience with the volunteers and make sure they draw their own conclusions concerning the learning process.

The tool can be used for a general analysis of their learning and for understanding better how interconnected the actors in volunteering projects are and how their actions determines their learning and satisfaction, as well as their level of involvement and commitment to the project objectives.

It can also be used to tackle a more difficult issue in the learning journey, a standstill, a loss of motivation and interest or even a conflict linked with the learning experience or a perceived lack of it.



At the same time, you can use it to reap the concrete learning achievements of the volunteers, to allow them a moment of sharing and harvesting learning ups and downs, especially in long-term volunteering projects. In that case, you may decide to change the rules or add different questions, but still building a common Jengle Tower.

TIP: An insightful variation of the game is to switch roles. If for the first time you played it from your real character, the second time you play you can swap roles - the volunteers can become mentors and vice-versa. This will create increased awareness of each other's position, limitations and opportunities and it may trigger even deeper reflections and talks.

Suggestion: Give some time to the discussions and try to go deeper. If the content of the question is not familiar do not hesitate to ask about it.

Source: the tool was created by a team of 7 youth workers from Poland, Spain, Portugal, Greece and Italy, participating in the Erasmus+ project "VOLUME - Volunteer Management Enhanced", coordinated by EJBW - European Youth Educa-

tion and Meeting Centre in Weimar, Germany. The project aimed at increasing the quality of EVS/ESC projects and it followed a long-term approach - training, remote work in working teams developing concrete working tools, and a seminar, over a period of 5 months - March-July 2018.



26. Αερόστατο / AEROSTATO



Why use it?

- To support the concept of learning and enhance awareness of the personal learning process of volunteers in a European volunteering project (usually in a team of volunteers)
- To become more aware of the links between the learning experiences and the Youthpass key Competences .

How to use it?

Stage 1

To initiate a discussion on what we (within the team) understand as learning, you can use the “Learning out of the box” cards published by SALTO Youth Training and Cooperation Resource Center (which you can download here:

<https://www.youthpass.eu/en/publications/card-game/>)



A selection of Learning cards/quotes is placed on the floor (depending on the number of the volunteers, you can place 2/3 more).

Volunteers choose and place themselves in front of a card/quote they prefer. Each one is asked to elaborate on their choice, linking their explanations to learning and how they relate to it.

During their explanations, you can invite some of the volunteers to give their opinions and start an interaction on the quotes and statements of their colleagues, focusing on the learning process.

!! If you have a chance, you can link to the terms formal - non formal - informal learning, to assess the volunteers' understanding of the differences in concepts and discover ways or situations during the project in which they can learn in these different ways

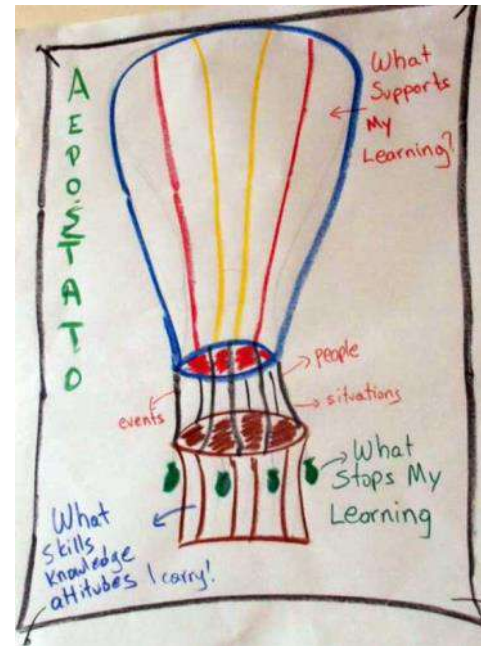
Stage 2

Identifying personal learning using Air Balloon/Αερόστατο as a tool for self reflection.

Building on the metaphor of an Air Balloon/Αερόστατο (Αέρας = air Στατικό = Static), we can resemble our learning process to a device that can elevate, stay static but also start moving towards earth. The questions you can use to support the volunteer's reflection are:

- What elevates/supports your learning ?
- What stops you from learning?
- What do you already have in your basket (skills, knowledge, attitudes)?

You can present a graphic visualization of the metaphor and this elements, such as this.



Stage 3

You then offer volunteers 15 minutes (or more) to design their own AEROSTATO. Instruction to be given can be: "Design your own AEROSTATO, documenting your own learning process. You can write in your own language. When you are finished, share with someone else what you want to share from your reflections and discoveries. You can still complete the design and add elements that you realize during the talks to your peers."

Stage 4

You can decide on a specific timeframe (5-10 minutes or more) to give to the volunteers, so they can share in couples or small teams about their findings.

You can also propose then a change in teams, if you have time available and can sense an interest in this. The volunteers may exchange ideas and still complete their own sketch and notes after they listen to each other's perspective.

The activity can be repeated after some time, in a few weeks or months and it can also be used to connect to the process of issuing the YouthPass certificate . The key competences may fit as titles within the balloon and the volunteer using it identifies what elevates/supports their learning, under a key competence title.

Source: Tool designed by Panayiotis Theodorou (<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toy/panayiotis-theodorou.1273/>)

Other resources that can help you in this reflection process to discover yourself can be found in the Self-Discovery Pocket Book, developed in another Erasmus+ project. The publication contains tools that guide your process of self-discovery, reflection and self evaluation and it is based on two ground-breaking approaches: The Positive Psychology and the Ecocentric development.

<https://learningforchange.net/knowledge-base/self-discovery-pocket-book/>



Chapter 3:

REAL-LIFE STORIES ON MENTORING AND SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS

Maybe you are a non-conventional reader or a more experienced mentor, and you come straight to this section in the Treasure Box to see what all this mentoring and supporting European volunteers can be about.

Or maybe you just reached the end of our Treasure Box collection of tools, after having gone through them meticulously and having interacted with most of the tools we included in the 4 support areas.

Either way, we want to also offer you a glimpse of the reality in projects, what can happen with the volunteers, what kind of situations or emotions they can go through, what types of challenges and subjects are brought by them towards the mentors in the reflection meetings, or the issues the support-persons discover spontaneously when observing the volunteers or when digging within them to understand their reactions, behaviors, ups and downs in motivation and their attitudes and approaches towards the volunteering projects, their volunteer teams, their project coordinators and hosting organizations, or even towards their hosting communities.



These are neither good nor bad situations, they are captions in the life of young people set in new intercultural and professional contexts and they are based on the real-life experiences of mentors in the 3 out of 4 countries of the project partners (Cyprus, Poland and Romania).

Even these cases can become tools for you, as you can take them one by one, read them carefully, try to imagine the situations described, the details in between the lines and then you can attempt to become part of that story, to walk in the shoes of the mentor dealing with that particular case.

If it were you, what would you think about, what would you say or do, what would you encourage your volunteer to analyze, how would you approach it all? And of course, what tools would you use in this process? Which of the tools included here could be of help, which could be used to prevent the difficult situation occurring and which would you need to put in practice while the situation is happening? Would you imagine other tools and methods that could work as well? Have you worked with others that could be worth including in this TreasureBox?

If yes, make sure you contact the project team, as this publication is a living one and it is ready to grow and expand to be of real use to mentors and support people in a variety of contexts and project settings. <https://www.facebook.com/evsrealm/>



Real life story 1: A.M., mentor from Romania

The hardest time for me as a mentor I think was when my volunteer wrote to me one evening that he was discouraged and unhappy, that he had no motivation to continue the project, and that he and the rest of the volunteers were not a united, cohesive group and did not match together.

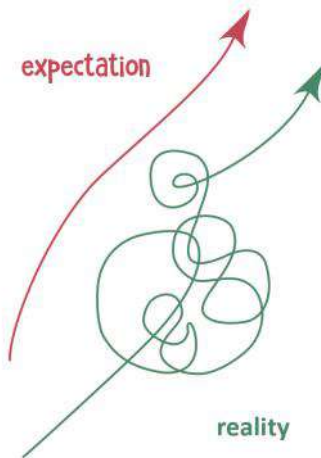
It was a group made up of 6 very different volunteers, with quite diverse and sometimes clashing personalities.

When I heard all this, I tried to find out what had happened and how they got in such a situation. I knew there were some problems in the project and things were not ideal, but I did not think it was so bad.

Then I started to reflect on what could be done. There were a few things I knew were bothering the volunteer, so we slowly started talking about each one.

I spent a lot of time thinking about the best way to approach things and which would be the best solution. So I started by setting up a meeting so I can understand all the discontent.

Then we talked with the hosting organization to see what options we have. One of the reasons for the complaint was that the project activities were not the ones the volunteers wanted (because there was a problem with one of the local partners, and the hosting organization had to replace the promised activities), so we started to analyze what could make him happy and try to find time for these activities.



We found, together with the project coordinator, 2 organizations in which my volunteer could get engaged, besides the project hours. Together with the hosting organization we tried to find the best solution for all the actors involved and an open and assertive communication worked in this case.



Real life story 2: C.I., mentor from Cyprus:

Facing cultural differences, not only of the EVS volunteer but of their family back at home, is one of the greatest challenges I had to deal with some time ago.

The volunteer I acted as a mentor for, was in her late twenties and a university graduate who came from a small village where tradition, religion and family for a girl were of utmost importance. Her parents had not welcomed the idea of her travelling and staying in a foreign country for a year. At the beginning, this did not stop the volunteer from adjusting and planning several projects for her time in the hosting country. She seemed happy and to be settling in the programme, the community and her peers.

After 3 months, I noticed that something was troubling her and the hosting organization also confirmed her loss of enthusiasm for her projects.

After several meetings with her she decided to open up and to explain that her family were pressuring her to return home, because they strongly believed that she should be there and not far away.

She was in contact with them, she travelled home a couple of times. Although the hosting organization was trying very hard to support her, there were no results.

Her parents even visited her in Cyprus, pressuring her to drop the project, either by promising or threatening her. She then turned into a totally different person.

The sending and hosting organizations were in touch and decided that they would have to give her an ultimatum to deal with her issues, or end her volunteering project, always stating their support and encouragement, recognizing also the inability of the family to deal with the very sensitive situation and the fact that the volunteer was stuck in this pressing relationship.

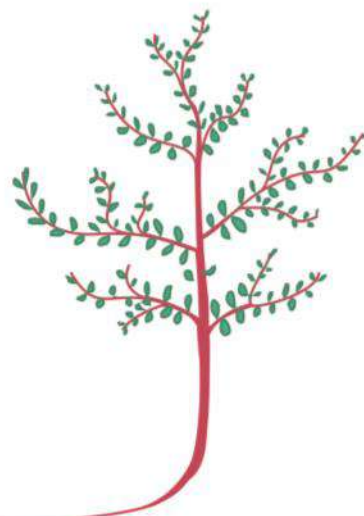


The hosting organization even made an effort of communicating with the family during their stay in Cyprus to explain the benefits of the project and the opportunities and opening of horizons for the volunteer it offered, but this just created the opposite result. They still insisted in a harsh way for the termination of the project.

I remember taking her to the airport and believing that it was goodbye forever. She went home but then returned to Cyprus to complete her EVS! I believe that with the communication and feedback of her sending and hosting organization we were able to support her and encourage her to find the ways [through her siblings] to convince her family that her decision to do her EVS was not wrong!

The tools I usually use in these difficult cases are 'flash cards' (DIXIT) in order to get the volunteers to open up and express themselves. It was also my first challenge and I was not familiar with more tools, but we held loads of meetings and talked... It was really hard and difficult and I strongly believe there was no other way.

The volunteer managed to deal with the pressure. The sincerity and constant communication and support from the mentor, constant communication amongst the sending organization and the hosting organization seemed to have had an effect. At least the volunteer could see a stability in the structure of the mentoring process and could rely on it.



Real life story 3: M.S., mentor from Poland

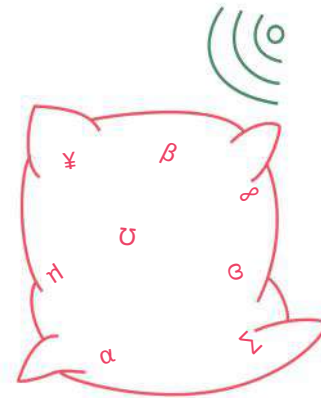
Sometimes it's hard for us to put ourselves in the shoes of a person who goes to a foreign country where he/she doesn't know anybody, neither the language.

To add even more stress, imagine that you are pressed for time to finish your master thesis, working online. In addition, there is a very prosaic problem - in the dormitory where you stay there is no internet access yet.

With such a situation I was about to meet J., my mentee. When I got clear view of his situation, it was obvious to me what I should do. I invited him to stay in my place, although he didn't

expect it from me. After all, I had an internet access and the solution seemed to be natural.

My mentoring adventure began with a week of sharing my room with a volunteer - a person still unknown to me.



However, this week was crucial for our cooperation. I am quoting this anecdote to illustrate that the best projects and friendships often demand time and even sacrifices to become binding experiences.

If we show to the volunteer that we are ready to help them, no matter the time, and somehow we manage to accommodate them in the local environment, they will be willingly participating in the project, in my opinion. And on the way, we make a new friend, with whom we can retain contact over the years.

And that's what I wish warmly to all the mentors.



Real life story 4: J.B., mentor from Poland



I would like to describe the situation that took place during the first year of my adventure as a mentor and to sensitize others to the serious problem, that is depression.

It is impossible to predict what kind of person will join the project and how it will work.



It was my first year as a mentor, which is why I was very concerned about my new role. My volunteer from the beginning had a problem to settle in.

She did not try to integrate with people around her, although locals were contacting and inviting her all the time. She suffered from bad moods and cried a lot, she felt constantly tired, she locked herself in her room and preferred to spend time alone, she did not want to talk to anyone.

We would organize some trips for her, and she would make up various excuses in the last minute and did not show up for the arranged meeting. She used to blame people from the closest surroundings for her condition. She had a problem with fulfilling her duties, did not come to meetings at Language Cafe, thus disappointing the participants.



I did not suspect that she might be depressed, she did not admit it to anyone. I learned that people with depression can try to hide their true state and feelings. They do this because of fear of exclusion.



Often at the beginning the volunteer feels lost: a new environment, new people, a different culture and lack of confidence to speak directly about their problems. That's why I, as a mentor, tried to create a friendly atmosphere and build up relationships, so that the volunteer will feel trust and respect, and turn to me with any difficulties as a friend. As a mentor, I was vigilant, I kept my finger on the pulse so that I could react, as quickly as possible, to any problem.

However, despite my good intentions, not in every situation I was able to help. In case of depression, specialist help is needed, and I was not a professional to help on my own. After all, it is better not to do it, because we can do harm. However, you have to report the problem. I was in constant contact with other people from the project (the coordinator, the hosting organization, etc.).

We met together to talk about current situations and resolutions. The final decision - to leave the project and return home - was left to the volunteer.



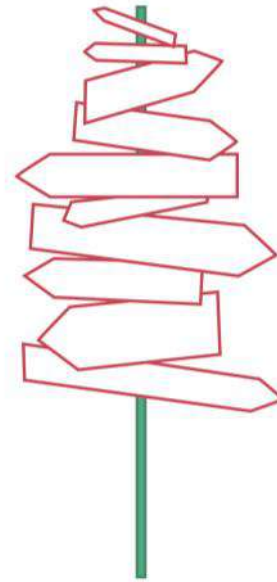
Real life story 5: J.W., mentor from Poland

Being a mentor is not only about helping volunteers to adapt to a new environment in a foreign country, or to support and motivate them to act during the project, but also to help when the question arises: "What should I do after volunteering?".

In my work as a mentor I encountered a situation when a volunteer had to change all her plans and long awaited dreams, related to what she would do when she returned to her family home. She found out that she would not get into studies and that made her very unhappy. Furthermore, she was also afraid to tell her family, because she felt that she had failed them.

In this situation, it turned out to be extremely important to have psychological support and the opportunity for conversation, to present other possibilities of planning the future, such as finding a job, earning money for studies and applying for it in the next year.

Based on my own experience, I made it clear to her that life is not always the way we want it, and there is always a way out of every situation. I also convinced her to talk with her family about it. I helped her realize that the closest ones will understand the situation and will certainly offer her support.



Real situation 6: O.B., mentor from Romania

My most challenging situation was a case of tension in the group of EVS volunteers, affecting the atmosphere and quality of time for all participants.

My volunteer was a young girl, for the first time on a long term project away from her environment, having a very close relation with her parents, sometimes communicating even more times a day. In the project, she soon established a relation of dependency with the youngest ones, keeping a sort of hostility with the rest of the volunteers in the group.

As her mentor, through the good communication with the organization, I found out that there were some problems, and in I asked the volunteer if all things were well and offered repeated contexts for the her to start talking about it, but for some reason, she insisted that there were no topics to discuss and wanted to spend the time with me focusing on other topics. She considered the mentor as a completely independent person from the host organization, someone just for her and her contact to get along in the city and to help her solve problems. She never accepted to discuss more than just usual and very simple details

of her EVS experience, always telling me "Everything is fine", or "I don't like it right now, because there are some issues", but when I asked what kind of issues she said they were not important and changed the subject.

One of the most important concerns of the volunteer was to guide friends and family member in trips in Romania, and most of the requests of help to me as her mentor were based on technical, organizational stuff regarding those trips or holidays.

I was in constant communication with the host organization, and tried to open channels of discussion on the topics of the relations my volunteer had with the others and on the tensions and problems, without letting the volunteer know that she has all the details, just wanting to make sure that if there is something she wants to say or share, she can do it.

I had to decide whether to disclose the fact that I was aware with details of the situation from the EVS volunteer conflict with the group, or to continue to allow my volunteer to use the time with me as a "personal island", away from the daily life problems - as she seemed to want it. I decided to allow this and continued to create contexts for opening the topic at her chosen moment, but it never happened.



Chapter 4:

MENTOR'S ROLE IN SHORT-TERM VOLUNTEERING PROJECTS

In ESC two modalities are possible for short-term volunteering projects:

1. Volunteering Teams are solidarity activities which allow teams of 10 to 40 participants coming from at least two different countries to volunteer together for a period between 2 weeks and 2 months. Such solidarity activities could especially contribute to the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in the European Solidarity Corps (ESC). At least a quarter of the volunteers in this type of projects must come from abroad. In volunteering teams, ESC volunteers will carry out tasks for a project over a short period of time (usually, but not exclusively, during holidays, breaks between study periods, transition from education to work, etc.). Despite their shorter duration, these activities will be valuable both for the individuals and for the communities benefiting from this service.

2. Individual Volunteering can also be short-term, in duly justified cases, especially to encourage the participation of young people with fewer opportunities, offering them the chance to volunteering activities of 2 weeks to 2 months, either in-country or cross-border.

The mentor's role in any type of short-term volunteering project differs from the one played in long term volunteering activities, due to: a. **the difference in duration**, b. **the large number of volunteers usually involved**, c. **the different level and style of involvement of the mentor.**



The short duration and its effects: the duration of 2 weeks up to 2 months, or anything in-between, compresses the emotional cycle or development of the volunteering project within this shorter time frame. Everything is faster and more intense: the first culture shock, the adjustment of being in a team, the change of accommodation, the challenge of dealing with the project. Volunteers tend to spend most of the hours of the day together, through the entire project period and create their own culture as a group, with some interaction with the local community. Their identity as a group of internationals placed in a local context is usually much stronger than that of long-term volunteers, who have more time to integrate and develop links and roots within the local community. Volunteers go through the emotional cycle associated with a European volunteering project very rapidly and many times without having the time to digest the effects or understand its meanings for them individually or as a group.

The size of the team (in Team Volunteering): the large number of the team members, which can range from 10 to even 40 volunteers, also has an effect on the support process needed to be offered to them. Having a large volunteer team, the hosting/coordinating organization aims towards an enhanced group building process, strengthening the bonds amongst the volunteers, so that they can deal with crises or intensive working moments and also “survive” the process, with a positive result on the service demanded and performed and on the overall personal experience they live as volunteers.

The involvement of the mentor: within short-term volunteering activities, the mentor needs to adjust their focus of action, activities and approach, taking into consideration the above mentioned elements. Having to focus on the learning process of the volunteers, (including the Youthpass certificate), the personal reflection process and the personal emotional support, one needs to have the ability to effectively offer support. Not very often organizations have the luxury of a mentor with the abilities to deal with these needs, especially if projects are located in remote areas, such as villages.

The mentor might be a person who is not directly involved in the project activities and keeps a distance from the daily process (maybe does not even live where the project is implemented), visiting the team in designated time frames, with a clear role and objective to offer support to the volunteers, when they meet regularly (for example in a 1-month project, the mentor can come every week for half a day). The mentor in this case designs and implements group and individual activities with the volunteers.



In the cases where it is not possible to have a specific person as a mentor for the volunteers, it also happens that the coordinator offers the support normally given by a mentor. It is essential that the tasks are clearly defined and, if this option is possible, some of the needs should be covered by other support-persons, such as local friends and other staff members.

Especially in Team short-term projects the way the hosting organization is devising the support-scheme around the volunteers, allocating different parts of the role to different people, based on the factors indicated here and the real combination of capacities, will determine whether or not the volunteers recognize the need for support and use the different supports offered to them, for the mutual benefit of the project and themselves.

Hosting/Coordinating organizations choose different options for the mentoring processes included in Team short-term volunteering activities, according to their capacity as organizations, the experience of available mentors, their understanding of the mentoring role and its depth and the value they place on the role of such support, but aiming still to ensure that the needs of volunteers and the project alike are covered. The mentors need to be aware that they have to deal with the team dynamics, the rapid emotional changes the volunteers go through, the varying levels of energy and motivation the youth may experience as well as the unexpected interactions within the very heterogeneous groups of volunteers, bringing with them intercultural elements of diversity that usually manifest strongly during the extended period of time they spend together.

The entire supporting cycle is condensed, as already mentioned before, and the mentor needs to act very fast when time is not usually a supportive factor. Therefore, the abilities of the mentor to mediate among volunteers, to point out opportunities and learning achievements, to accompany the volunteers in their learning journeys and to help them foster a positive attitude and approach of the project activities can be the main factors for success, in these specific Short Volunteering Activities.

A mentor that is genuine, calm, interested and has charisma, will have higher chances to win volunteers over and build the support that they need.



Chapter 5:

MENTOR – HOW TO CARE ABOUT YOUR OWN WELLBEING?

As a mentor (or another type of support-person in a volunteering project), you have a really important and challenging task. Your aim is to support, to help a volunteer who was placed in your community, and this requires from you a lot of power, energy, patience, creativity, calmness and even more.

In order to support the volunteer, you really need to prepare yourself first, be sure that you are physically and psychologically ready for support-giving, which is not an easy process, may it be planned to last 1 month, or 2, or 6, not to mention if it is spanning over an entire year.

If you are tired, sick, or if you have other problems - in order to be able to concentrate on supporting the other person, you will have to deal first with your own issues.

Taking care of yourself and your own wellbeing is the basic step for maintaining a good relationship with yourself and others and then being able to also offer something back.

But how do we do this? We don't want to mention general and obvious advice, like a healthy lifestyle, healthy food, enough physical movement and so on.

We want to show you some simple things, which are connected with the European volunteering projects and which may help you make your "job" better, with a bigger chance of success.

- ! Be assertive: Being a mentor or support-person doesn't mean that you have to be available 24/7. Inform your volunteer about your time limits and hours when you are not available and dose your energy.
- ! Taking care of yourself means also caring from the inside. If you often feel negative, consider getting help to change this attitude, whether via therapy, reading self-help books or spending more time around upbeat people.
- ! Build a Social Support Network of mentors: You are not alone. There are a lot of other mentors and support-persons in different countries, but also in your city or in your region. Very often they have experienced the same problems, difficulties or concerns, as you. They probably have similar stories to share, the same doubts and fears.



It's very helpful to share those stories, as well as solutions and good practices, which you can use later with your volunteer. So, use the support from other mentors – maybe in the form of regular meetings of support groups, peer talks or any other methods.

There is also a community of mentors and support-people called the Masters of the Learning Path. They live in the very special Volunteering Realm, where magic happens in the form of meaningful learning experiences, so we invite you to discover this community and what gives it its magic!

Become a Master too!

<https://www.facebook.com/evsrealm/>

! Don't stay alone with the problem of your volunteer: contact your organization, the project coordinator, other support-people, your community of practitioners.

Sometimes it's helpful to get more background information. Maybe you can also ask for some materials, articles and other helpful resources or suggestions for concrete tools to use. Or you can request an evaluation and debriefing meeting with the project coordinator.



You as a mentor also have a right to talk about what YOU are experiencing in this volunteering project. Open up, share and build upon the acknowledgements!

! Go forward: Not only volunteers are in the learning process. Mentors and coordinators are learning as well. Find ways to keep learning through reading, studying others, doing things differently, testing different approaches.

Stay open to advice, be ready to learn new things, no matter how old you are. Also you could ask your organization for new materials with guidelines to improve your mentors skills or for the opportunity to participate in mentoring training courses. They are organized on national or European level and they could be very inspirational learning mobilities that could increase your TreasureBox of mentoring tools and techniques, they could increase your competences as a youth worker, but also expand your network of fellow mentors and other resource-people in the youth and volunteering field.



IMPRESSUM:

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The project objectives are:

1. Build the capacity of beginner ESC/EVS hosting organizations to design meaningful projects that respond to community needs, while providing valuable learning experiences for the volunteers
2. Increase the quality of the learning experience of European volunteers by developing training and resources for the mentors engaged in ESC/EVS
3. Increase awareness of relevant stakeholders about the challenges faced by organizations in ensuring the quality of the ESC/EVS experiences and the key role of mentors in enhancing the quality of ESC/EVS experiences for the volunteers, the organizations & the community.



The strategic partnership implementing the project is made up of 4 organizations experienced in EVS and European volunteering: Politistiko Ergastiri Cultural Workshop from Cyprus (www.politistiko-ergastiri.org), Association for International and Intercultural Exchange "ANAWOJ" from Poland (www.anawoj.org), CEV-European Volunteer Center from Belgium (www.europeanvolunteercentre.org) and the applicant organization – Pro Vobis–National Resource Center for Volunteering from Romania (www.provobis.ro).

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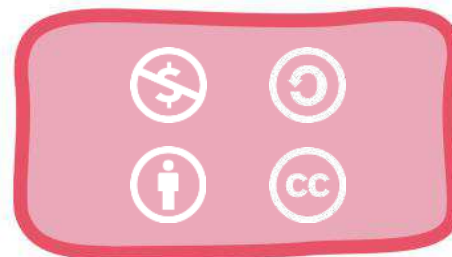
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