

YOUUnite

Nutrition Module

Holistic Programme Fostering The Integration of Overweight and Adipose Youth Into the Labour market

HEY.
I'm getting
healthier!

HEY.
I'm cooking!

HEY.
I'm prepared!



About the modules

This module was developed in the context of the ERASMUS+ co-funded YOUnite project, executed from October 2022 to October 2024, which brought together five organisations from Austria, Finland, Hungary, and Poland to collaboratively address challenges faced by youth with obesity and overweight with a special focus on their labour market integration. It is part of the YOUnite training programme, consisting of six modules covering Health/Medical aspects, Nutrition, Sports, Stress Management, Awareness, and Employment. Each Module targets essential aspects of managing obesity and overweight and promoting overall well-being. The Health/Medical aspects and Nutrition Modules provide basic knowledge for making informed dietary and lifestyle choices. The Sports Module encourages physical activity in a supportive environment. Stress Management and Awareness address mental health and coping strategies. Employment focuses on enhancing employability and addressing workplace discrimination, empowering youth to enter the labour market confidently and successfully. Together, these Modules offer a comprehensive toolkit for trainers, teachers, and youth workers and counsellors to support and empower young individuals to take the first steps in their journey towards a healthier, more balanced life.

The YOUnite training programme was designed in such a way that its components can be used very flexibly: Either by implementing the whole programme or only specific modules or activities. Thus, the modules can accommodate very diverse training environments. For each module, there is a module activity paper and instructions for trainers. These documents form an entity and should thus be consulted together. To ensure that the developed training is both effective and comprehensive, working groups were established in each country, bringing together experts from diverse fields, including doctors, medical workers, nutritionists, cooks, employment counsellors, youth workers, athletes, teachers, and psychologists. These experts shared their insights, helping to shape activities tailored to the unique needs of the target group.

Based on the outcomes of the working groups, a draft training programme for youth was developed and the partners conducted train-the-trainers events to equip future trainers with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively deliver the new training. These trainers then led pilot sessions with youth where the modules were tested and refined through practical application. The iterative process of testing and refining allowed us to gather valuable feedback from trainers as well as young people themselves, make necessary adjustments, and confirm that the modules were both practical and impactful. The focus on disadvantaged youth ensures that those who need it most receive the support and guidance to adopt healthier lifestyles and improve their future employability.

Focusing on obesity is crucial given its alarming prevalence and far-reaching consequences. According to the World Health Organization, as of 2022, approximately 20% of children and adolescents (aged 5-19) worldwide are affected by obesity or being overweight (World Health Organization). This growing epidemic is not only a significant public health concern but also a burden on societies and public health systems. Obesity among youth is linked to numerous negative outcomes, including increased risks of chronic conditions such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and mental health issues. These health problems often persist into adulthood, contributing to higher healthcare costs and economic strain. Additionally, obesity can impact quality of life, academic performance, and employment prospects, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage. Tackling obesity is essential not only to improve individual health outcomes but also to reduce the economic burden on public funds and enhance overall societal well-being.

Addressing obesity requires a multifaceted approach, underscored by comprehensive health education. This involves implementing preventive measures and treatment strategies to counteract the pervasive effects of overweight and obesity, while raising awareness about balanced nutrition, consistent physical activity, mental wellness, and stress management. The YOUnite training programme takes a significant first step in this direction, particularly for disadvantaged youth who are further away from the labour market and have not previously engaged with the subject of healthy life habits.



Introduction: What is the goal of the Nutrition Module and how is it relevant for a healthier lifestyle?

The way we eat and the food choices we make play a crucial role in our health, particularly when it comes to issues like body fat accumulation and overweight and obesity. In today's fast-paced world, where food production is advancing rapidly, overweight and obesity have become a widespread concern. Despite cultural diversity, poor eating habits and food overproduction are common challenges across Europe and beyond. Overweight and obesity have now become a global problem, primarily fuelled by consuming more calories than our bodies need, especially from highly processed, high-calorie, sugary, and fatty foods like fast food and snacks. The lack of essential nutrients in these foods further compounds the issue. Therefore, discussions about a healthy diet are directly linked to addressing overweight and obesity.

It is evident that our diet and lifestyle choices are the primary drivers of overweight and obesity. What and how much we eat, along with the nutrients we consume, profoundly impact our health. An inadequate diet not only contributes to overweight and obesity but also increases the risk of various health complications. Nutritional epidemiology helps us understand the connection between dietary habits, health status, and disease risk, emphasising the importance of monitoring dietary behaviours and providing appropriate education, especially for individuals with overweight and obesity (Ruiz et al., 2019).

Diet refers to the foods we habitually consume throughout the day, influenced by cultural, social, and geographical factors. Unfortunately, the prevalence of energy-dense, nutrient-poor diets, particularly in Western countries, is on the rise. This dietary pattern, characterised by high-fat, high-sugar, and highly processed foods, contributes significantly to overweight and obesity. Therefore, understanding the impact of food on health, as well as individual preferences and nutritional needs, is crucial when selecting an appropriate diet.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in healthy eating and adopting a pro-health lifestyle. However, amidst the plethora of dietary trends and misinformation, it is essential to discern reliable information from unreliable sources. This is particularly important given the rising trend of elimination diets, which may not be suitable for everyone and can lead to nutritional deficiencies or even medical conditions.

Furthermore, mindful eating and intuitive eating have emerged as two approaches promoting healthy eating habits. Intuitive eating, which encourages listening to internal hunger and satiety cues rather than strict dietary rules, is especially beneficial for people with overweight and obesity. On the other hand, mindful eating focuses on being fully present during meals, recognising physical and emotional sensations, and fostering a healthier relationship with food. Research indicates that both approaches are associated with maintaining a healthy body weight and overall well-being (Nelson, 2017). Therefore, by understanding the significance of diet and adopting mindful eating practices, we can make informed choices that promote better health outcomes.

Specific Goals and educational objectives are to:

- *Define Eating Habits and Emotional Eating:* The module aims to clarify the concept of eating habits and emotional eating, helping participants distinguish between physical hunger and emotional triggers for eating, and offering strategies to develop healthier coping mechanisms.
- *Promote Mindful Eating:* Through interactive exercises and discussions, the module seeks to promote mindful eating practices, encouraging participants to be more aware of their eating habits, sensations of hunger and satiety, and emotional triggers for eating.
- *Educate on Healthy Eating Habits:* The module aims to educate participants on the principles of healthy eating habits, including the importance of balanced meals, incorporating fruits and vegetables, and making informed food choices to support overall well-being.

- *Encourage Informed and Healthy Food Choices:* Participants will learn how to make informed and healthy food choices by understanding the nutritional value of different foods and recognizing the importance of choosing nutrient-dense foods over processed options.
- *Foster Proper Nutrition:* The module aims to foster an understanding of the importance of proper nutrition for overall health and well-being, emphasising the role of essential nutrients in supporting bodily functions and preventing diet-related health issues.
- *Advocate Portion Control and Serving Sizes:* Participants will learn about the importance of portion control and appropriate serving sizes to maintain a healthy weight and prevent overeating, with practical strategies for managing portion sizes in daily meals.



What are the issues addressed?

Activity 1: Exploring Your Food Relationship

The activity addresses overweight and obesity by promoting self-awareness of participants' relationships with food, helping them identify emotional and situational triggers for overeating, and encouraging the development of healthier eating habits. It empowers participants to reflect on their behaviours in a constructive way, fostering a positive self-image and resilience through creative problem-solving and alternative coping strategies.

Activity 2: Bite by Bite

The Mindful Eating Activity helps participants cope with obesity by teaching them to savour their meals and recognise satiety cues, leading to better weight management. Furthermore, it promotes self-esteem and well-being by fostering a mindful relationship with food, encouraging reflection on personal preferences and habits, which can lead to healthier choices and enhanced emotional development through group sharing. The focus on mindfulness also improves concentration and stress management skills, equipping participants with valuable tools for holistic well-being.

Activity 3: Ingredient Adventures

This activity fosters self-esteem and well-being by offering participants a creative outlet through cooking, boosting their confidence as they see the results of their efforts and develop pride and confidence in their culinary skills. It encourages a positive relationship with food and teaches healthy meal preparation, which is crucial for addressing overweight and obesity.

Activity 4: Homemade vs. Packaged

Participants in the activity cultivate a heightened awareness of ingredients and flavours in both packaged and homemade foods, leading to a deeper understanding of their dietary choices. By comparing store-bought and homemade versions, they are encouraged to adopt healthier eating habits, favouring options with fewer additives and preservatives. The blind taste tests promote mindful consumption, allowing participants to focus on the sensory experiences of eating and how various foods affect their feelings.

Activity 5: The Recipe Exchange

This activity aims to spark curiosity in participants about cooking and trying new dishes, highlighting the benefits of non-processed foods without condemning processed options. By focusing on unprocessed and fresh ingredients, participants will gain knowledge about healthy foods, explore diverse flavours, and learn to prepare recipes on their own, fostering a greater appreciation for wholesome eating.

Activity 6: A Culinary Journey Through the Year

This activity educates participants on meal composition for proper nutrition and potential weight loss by emphasising balanced servings of fruits and vegetables, promoting mindful eating, and boosting self-esteem, while also highlighting the benefits of seasonal eating for enhanced flavour, nutrition, affordability, and environmental impact.

What special skills do trainers need for this module?

A trainer leading a nutrition module for participants with overweight and obesity should possess empathy to create a supportive environment, strong communication skills to simplify complex concepts, and the ability to motivate participants by celebrating small victories. Cultural competence is essential for respecting diverse dietary backgrounds, while basic knowledge of nutrition and portion size enable accurate guidance. Additionally, cooking skills for demonstrating healthy recipes, and effective group facilitation to encourage participation and community support are crucial. Together, these skills help participants develop sustainable, healthier eating habits.

List of Activities

1. Exploring Your Food Relationship
2. Bite by Bite
3. Ingredient Adventures
4. Homemade vs. Packaged
5. The Recipe Exchange
6. A Culinary Journey Through the Year

1. Exploring Your Food Relationship

Time required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activity: 1 hour• Follow-up Evaluation (e.g. at the end of the training programme)
Type of activity	Self-reflection
Key takeaway	The activity promotes self-awareness in participants regarding their relationships with food by identifying emotional triggers for overeating, encouraging healthier eating habits, and fostering constructive problem-solving skills while recognising when to seek professional help.
Worksheet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Exploring your Food Relationship - Questionnaire</u>
Other materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pens• Papers

Overview

The activity aims to help participants reflect on their current relationship with food. The purpose of the questionnaire is to recognize how different emotions and situations may influence eating habits. At the beginning the trainer will introduce the activity and hand out the questionnaire to the participants to fill out by themselves. Afterwards the trainer will facilitate a group conversation where.

The participants reflect on their responses and brainstorm creative alternatives to food for meeting their needs on a blank sheet of paper, which leads into a session focused on planning how to implement these ideas over the next few days, emphasising achievable goals and commitment. Participants are encouraged to take personal accountability for their behavioural changes moving forward. In a supportive group environment participants share their ideas and creative solutions with each other, fostering collaboration and inspiration. If possible, a follow-up evaluation can be conducted at a later stage, during which participants reflect on their progress, assess their successes and challenges, and engage in self-assessment to promote ongoing personal growth.



Step by step instructions to conduct the activity

1. Introduction and Explanation (5 minutes)
 - o The trainer introduces the activity and provides a brief overview of its purpose.
 - o Distribute the questionnaire to each participant, explaining the content.
2. Completion of Questionnaires (15 minutes)
 - o Participants individually answer the questions.
 - o Allow participants to add personalised responses.
3. Reflection and Creative Solutions (10 min)
 - o Participants take a moment to reflect on their answers.
 - o Participants receive a blank sheet of paper.
 - o In response to the reflection, they creatively brainstorm alternative ways to meet their needs or change habits other than resorting to food.
4. Implementation Planning (10 minutes)
 - o Participants consider how to implement their ideas over the next few days.
 - o Emphasise setting achievable goals, personal responsibility and commitment.
5. Individual Accountability (Ongoing)
 - o Participants commit to implementing changes independently.
 - o Emphasise personal accountability for the success of behavioural changes.
6. Group Sharing and Creativity (20 minutes)
 - o Facilitate a supportive and constructive sharing environment.
 - o Encourage creativity within the group to generate ideas for new behaviours.
 - o Participants voluntarily share their answers with the group.
7. Follow-Up Evaluation (2-3 weeks later, at the end of the training programme)
 - o Participants reflect on their attempts to make changes.
 - o Assess the success of their efforts and identify areas for improvement.
 - o Encourage self-assessment and personal growth.



2. Bite by Bite

Time required	1 hour
Type of activity	Action Based Activity
Key takeaway	Mindful eating emphasises awareness of sensory and emotional elements during meals, promoting slower eating, smaller portions, weight management, improved eating habits, and enhanced enjoyment of food.
Worksheet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Cards for Mindful Eating</u>• <u>List of Emotions</u>
Other materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pens or pencils for participants to write down their responses on the cards• List of Emotions (Optional): If needed, provide a list of emotions to assist participants in identifying how they feel during the activity.

Overview

During this activity, participants will take part in a mindful eating session where they will enjoy a meal or snack in a distraction-free environment, free from technology. The focus will be on creating a calm atmosphere that encourages them to eat slowly, savour each bite, and appreciate the sensory elements of their food. By engaging in silence and avoiding distractions, individuals can cultivate a more intentional approach to eating. To enhance this experience, each participant will receive a set of five cards at the start of the session, which will guide them on a reflective journey as they consume their meal. These cards can either be prepared in advance or created collaboratively at the beginning of the activity.



Step by step instructions to conduct the activity

1. Introduction to Mindful Eating (5 minutes)

- Start with a brief overview of mindful eating, highlighting its benefits like improved digestion, enhanced appreciation of food, and better emotional awareness.
- Explain that the purpose of the upcoming activity is to cultivate a deeper connection with food and promote healthier eating habits.

2. Preparation (5 minutes)

- Either prepare the five reflective cards in advance or invite participants to create them together. Each card should prompt thoughts related to the eating experience.
- Make sure that each participant has a set of 5 cards before the meal begins.

3. Space Preparations (10 minutes)

- Transform the environment into a serene setting by arranging comfortable seating and soft lighting. Consider using candles or natural light to enhance the calming atmosphere.
- Ensure that all devices (phones, tablets, etc.) are removed from the space to eliminate distractions, creating a space solely focused on the meal.

4. Meal Sharing and Mindfulness (30 minutes)

- In a group setting, allow participants to prepare and enjoy the meal together, fostering a sense of community.
- Encourage participants to assess their mindful eating habits during the meal. They can use their cards to jot down observations on the aesthetics, feelings, eating pace, and taste of the food. Remind them to eat slowly and consciously, focusing on each bite.

5. Group Sharing and Conclusion (10 minutes)

- After the meal, invite participants to share their experiences and insights with the group. Prompt them to reflect on what they learned about their eating habits and how they felt during the session.
- Emphasise the importance of integrating this newfound mindfulness into their daily eating practices to encourage positive changes.

6. Follow-Up Evaluation (at the end of the training programme)

- Schedule a follow-up session where participants can discuss how they've integrated mindful eating into their lives since the initial activity.
- Encourage them to share successes, challenges, and any changes they have noticed in their relationship with food.



3. Ingredient Adventures

Time required	Minimum 3 hours
Type of activity	Action Based Activity
Key takeaway	Embracing ingredient-based cooking not only creates delicious meals but also saves money, reduces food waste, promotes sustainability, encourages creativity, and simplifies the cooking process, making nutritious meals more accessible and enjoyable for everyone.
Worksheet	Further Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Tim Ferris - The 4-Hour Chef</u>
Other materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ingredients for cooking:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Provide a variety of fresh, healthy ingredients for participants to choose from.◦ These should include vegetables, fruits, lean proteins, whole grains, herbs, and spices.• Kitchen with Cooking utensils and equipment:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Ensure you have a well-equipped kitchen or cooking area with all the necessary utensils and equipment for meal preparation.◦ This may include cutting boards, knives, mixing bowls, measuring cups and spoons, pots, pans, and cooking utensils.• Mobile phones or Computers:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ to search for meal inspiration and recipes.• Recipe cards or notepads:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Provide recipe cards or notepads for each group to write down their ingredient-based recipes and any modifications they make during the cooking process.• Discussion materials:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Prepare a flip chart, whiteboard, or any other materials needed for the follow-up discussion.◦ This can include markers, sticky notes, or any visual aids for capturing ideas and facilitating the conversation

Overview

The activity involves introducing ingredient-based cooking inspired by Tim Ferris' 4-Hour Chef, preparing a meal together, discussing recipe variations, and emphasising the fun and creativity of cooking.

There are two engaging variations of the activity: (A) In small groups, participants create meals using a common set of ingredients, fostering teamwork and creativity, or (B) Participants share and discuss staple ingredients they have at home, then collaboratively whip up a meal based on those items. Both approaches promote active involvement in the cooking process and culminate in a reflective discussion about ingredient choices and meal creation, enhancing the overall experience.

Step by step instructions to conduct the activity:

	A: Given and Chosen Ingredients	B: What do you always have at home?
1	Introduction and Instruction (5 min): Introduce the activity, explaining the concept of ingredient-based cooking and its advantages. Provide instructions on how to put together a balanced meal and emphasise creativity in the process. Address any questions and concerns from participants.	
2.	Ingredient Selection (10 min): Create a list of potential ingredients, considering various tastes and dietary preferences. Briefly explain the nutritional benefits of each ingredient on the list. The group of participants will choose 4 of the given ingredients to prepare a meal out of	Ingredient Selection (10 min): Every participant lists 1-2 items they "always have at home" in the fridge or kitchen pantry. All listed items will be written down on a paper to create a meal out of later
3.	Group Formation (5 minutes): Create small groups of 3-4 participants. Ensure each group has adequate workspace and access to cooking equipment.	Group Formation (5 minutes): Create small groups of 3-4 participants. Ensure each group has adequate workspace and access to cooking equipment.
4.	Healthy Meal Creation (15 min): Groups will create a meal from the 4 chosen items. Encourage the group to be creative and open-minded. Motivate participants to look for inspiration and recipes online as well	Healthy Meal Creation (15 min): Using a minimum of 4 of the listed items participants will look up a recipe online or create a meal themselves. Several courses can be prepared keeping in mind that every participant should have a task during the cooking process. Encourage the group to be creative and open-minded

5.	Grocery Shopping (30-60 min):All ingredients will be bought together. Participants will decide beforehand who is responsible for what in the shop and divide the tasks.
6.	Preparation (10 minutes):Set up the cooking area with organised utensils, equipment, and ingredients. Ensure the workspace is clean and ready for meal preparation. Groups will agree on who prepares what during the meal preparation session
7.	Cooking Session (30-60 minutes):Allow participants to engage in the cooking process. Offer guidance and assistance as needed, ensuring safety and proper equipment use. Encourage collaboration.
8.	Table set-up and Meal together (40 min):Announce the end of the cooking session and ask groups to finalise their dishes. Set up the table. Enjoy a homemade meal together.
9.	Cooking Conclusion (10 minutes):Cleaning the area together. Ensure all cooking equipment is returned to its place.
10.	Discussion and Reflection (15 minutes):Set up the discussion area with a flip chart, whiteboard, or materials for capturing ideas. Lead a discussion about the variations of recipes created, nutritional aspects, and the overall cooking experience. Encourage participants to share their thoughts on the fun and creativity involved. Capture key points on the flipchart or whiteboard for later review.
11.	Conclusion and Closing (5 minutes): Summarise the activity's key takeaways and thank participants for their engagement. Provide any additional resources or information about healthy cooking.

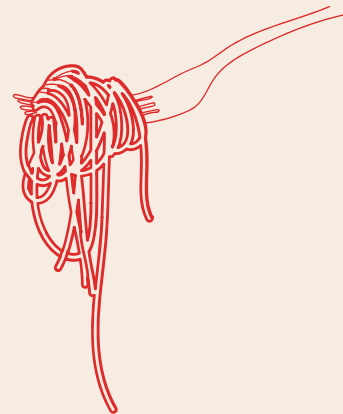


4. Homemade vs. Packaged

Time required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparations: 2 hours• Activity: 1,5 hours
Type of activity	Action Based Activity
Key takeaway	The activity raises awareness about food ingredients, promotes the selection of healthier choices and encourages participants to prepare meals themselves.
Worksheet	<p><u>Handout on Processed Foods</u></p> <p>Further Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Understanding Nutrition Information</u>• <u>Misleading Food Label Claims</u>• <u>What is Food Processing?</u>• <u>Information on Processed Foods</u>• <u>Ultra-Processed Foods and Health</u>
Other materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ingredients for cooking and packaged options for blind tasting• Kitchen to prepare homemade options• Blindfolds (or scarfs / other items to cover eyes)

Overview

This engaging activity involves participants in a sensory exploration of packaged foods versus homemade versions crafted from original recipes. Participants delve into taste tests to discern the nuances between store-bought and homemade varieties. Through blind taste tests, they develop a deeper understanding of flavour profiles and the ingredients that make up their favourite dishes. Additionally, participants learn to attune to their bodies, identifying which foods energise them and which ones leave them feeling tired. Emphasising simplicity and affordability, the activity encourages participants to prepare wholesome meals independently, fostering culinary skills and promoting mindful eating habits. This structured approach will ensure a fun, educational, and engaging experience for all participants!



Examples for foods to compare:

- Mashed potato
- Potato fritters
- Vegetable soup
- Bolognese
- Curry
- Fruit yoghurt or yoghurt drink



Step by step instructions to conduct the activity:

- 1.Meal Preparation, Trainer (2 hours)
 - Select Dishes: Choose 3 or more dishes with distinct flavours and textures.
 - Shop for Ingredients and prepare dishes beforehand
- 2.Set-up (15 minutes)
 - Gather Materials: Have blindfolds ready for participants or ask participants to bring their own
 - Prepare tasting spoons or plates.
 - Set Up Stations: Arrange the dishes on a table, labelling them secretly for later reference.
- 3.Introduction (5 minutes)
 - Explain the Activity: Briefly introduce the concept of blind tasting, emphasising how it heightens taste and smell.
 - Outline Goals: Share outcomes participants can expect, like discovering new flavours and reducing biases towards certain foods.
- 4.Tasting and Evaluation (30 minutes)
 - Participants put on blindfolds and taste each dish one by one.
 - Encourage them to take notes on flavours, textures, and any feelings evoked by the dishes.
- 5.Facilitate Discussion (10 minutes)
 - After tasting remove blindfolds and lead a discussion covering: What flavours stood out? How did the textures feel? Were there any surprising elements?
 - Compare the appearances, colours, and textures of the dishes now that they can see them.
- 6.Comparison (15 minutes)
 - Discuss differences between ready-made and self-cooked meals:
 - Ingredients: Analyse quality and freshness.
 - Cost: Compare the price of ingredients versus store-bought options.
 - Time: Consider preparation time for each dish.
 - Health Benefits: Talk about nutritional value and any preservatives in ready-made meals.
- 7.Discussion and Conclusion (10 minutes)
 - Encourage participants to share their experiences and what they learned about their preferences.
 - Highlight key advantages of home cooked meals, e.g.:
 - Control over Ingredients
 - Cost-Effectiveness
 - Customisation, e.g. you can tailor dishes to your tastes and dietary needs
 - Nutritional Benefits, e.g. fewer preservatives, unhealthy fats, and added sugars
- 8.Conclude Key Takeaways (5 minutes)
 - Summarise the session
 - Reinforcing the value of experiencing food without sight and the advantages of cooking at home.



5. The Recipe Exchange

Time required	3-3,5 hours
Type of activity	Action Based Activity
Key takeaway	Encouraging the exploration of non-processed, fresh, and healthy foods through trying new dishes and fostering curiosity in cooking
Worksheet	<i>Not applicable for this activity</i>
Other materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cell phone, Internet for research• Pens and writing utensils for the recipes and shopping list• Equipped kitchen• Cooking Ingredients• Printer and laminator for the cookbook or Recipe books to write in

Overview

Most people tend to stick to recipes they already know. In this exercise, participants will gather a variety of ideas by each sharing their favourite recipe and researching it. The group will then select 2-3 dishes to cook together. Afterward, a shopping trip will be organised to gather the necessary ingredients, followed by a collaborative cooking session where everyone can taste the dishes prepared together. All the selected recipes will be compiled into a cookbook that includes photos and detailed instructions, serving as a delightful keepsake for participants. This engaging approach not only enhances cooking skills but also fosters collaboration and encourages the exploration of new flavours!



Step by step instructions to conduct the activity:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)
 - Trainer introduces the activity and briefly explains the importance of exploring new dishes and cooking.
2. Research for Recipes (10 minutes)
 - Participants search for a recipe of their favourite dish or meal using their devices or provided materials.
 - Encourage them to consider options that include both processed and unprocessed ingredients.
3. Voting and Discussion (15 minutes)
 - Collect all recipes and present them to the group.
 - Facilitate a discussion with the following questions:
 - Where does the recipe originate from?
 - How frequently is it prepared or eaten?
 - Is it easy to cook, and is the recipe considered "healthy"?
 - Participants vote to select 2-3 dishes they would like to cook together.
4. Grocery Shopping (30-60 minutes)
 - Go out together to purchase the necessary ingredients for the chosen recipes.
5. Cooking Session (30-60 minutes)
 - Depending on the number of participants, divide cooking tasks (e.g., chopping, mixing, measuring).
 - Ensure every participant has a role in the cooking process.
 - Cook the selected recipes as a group, with participants collaborating on their assigned tasks.
6. Meal Time (30-60 minutes)
 - Serve the meal and enjoy it together, fostering a communal atmosphere.
7. Reflective Discussion (20 minutes)
 - Facilitate a discussion on cooking frequency, enjoyment of the activity, and ideas for healthy snacks.
 - Encourage participants to brainstorm practical solutions and suggestions for improving their cooking and motivation in preparing homemade meals.
8. Cooking Book (60 minutes)
 - Collect all the recipes and compile them into a cooking book.
 - Include the recipe name, a photo of the dish, a list of ingredients, a step-by-step guide, and a brief description of each dish.
 - Print, cut, glue, laminate, and bind the individual recipe pages to create the final cookbook.
 - Distribute the completed cookbook to participants as a keepsake.



6. Culinary Journey Through the Year

Time required	1 hour
Type of activity	Action Based Activity
Key takeaway	The activity teaches balanced meal composition for better nutrition and weight loss, emphasising seasonal produce for enhanced flavour, affordability, and environmental benefits.
Worksheet	Further readings (eufic): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Seasonal Products</u>• <u>Dietary Guidelines of Countries</u>
Other materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paper plates• Papers, including coloured paper• Colourful newspapers with pictures of food products• Crayons, markers, paints• Glue, sticky tape, scissors• Possibly modelling clay, plasticine (an additional variant of doing this activity)

Overview

This activity focuses on educating participants about healthy foods and proper portion sizes for a balanced diet. Participants are tasked with preparing 4 seasonal plates, each representing one season (Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn) of the year. It's essential for participants to use seasonal ingredients, aligning with what's available and best suited for that time of year. A well-balanced plate consists of 50% vegetables and fruits, 25% protein (such as meat, fish or vegetarian alternatives, e.g. tofu), and 25% grain products (like groats, rice, or potatoes), as recommended.

Seasonal eating offers several delightful perks, including enhanced freshness and flavour, as produce harvested at its peak, like summer tomatoes and fall apples, is at its tastiest. It also provides a nutritional boost; for instance, winter citrus fruits are packed with vitamin C, perfect for immune support. Additionally, seasonal foods are often more affordable. This practice benefits the environment by reducing the carbon footprint associated with transportation. Embracing seasonal eating allows you to enjoy better flavours and connect with nature's rhythms!



Step by step instructions to conduct the activity:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- The trainer warmly welcomes the participants, briefly introduces themselves, and outlines the agenda for the session.
- Emphasis is placed on the importance of balanced proportions on the plate, with 50% for vegetables and fruits, 25% for proteins, and 25% for carbohydrates.

2. Task Instruction (5 minutes)

- The trainer instructs the participants to create 4 well-balanced plates, one for each season of the year, using locally available and seasonally appropriate ingredients.
- Participants are encouraged to express their creativity using any preferred method, such as drawing, describing, or collaging.

3. Creative Activity (30 minutes)

- Participants engage in creative activities, either individually, in pairs, or as a group, to design their 4 seasonal plates.

4. Sharing and Discussion (20 minutes)

- After completing their creative work, each participant, pair, or group shares information about their plates.
- The trainer facilitates a discussion by asking probing questions:
- Why were these specific products chosen?
- Would you adopt this composition for your own meals?
- Is this practical for everyday life?
- Can you envision creating various dishes from these ingredients?
- What reflections do you have on potential changes to your meal preparations?



Worksheets for Nutrition Module Activities





Nutrition Activity 1 - Exploring Your Food Relationship: Questionnaire 1/2

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help you understand your eating habits, the motives behind eating and how your environment might influence your choices.

Eating habits:

- Do you eat regularly? How many times a day (main meals and snacks)?
- Do you eat when you are hungry?
- Do you eat fruit and vegetables every day?
- How much water do you drink per day? How often do you drink sweetened drinks?
- Do you plan your meals in advance?
- Do you choose food based on its nutritional value?
- Do you pay attention to food labels and ingredients?
- Do you eat late in the evening or at night? Does eating late affect your sleep?
- Do you often eat fast food or convenience foods?
- Do you often eat fast food because it is "more convenient"?
- Do you often order food delivered to your home?
- Are your eating habits different on weekdays than on weekends?
- Do you often eat in a hurry without paying attention to what and how you eat?
- Do you tend to skip meals when you are in a hurry or under time pressure?

Motivations:

- Does your mood affect your eating habits (e.g. stress, sadness, happiness, boredom)? If yes, how?
- Is food a form of reward for you?
- Do you have certain meals that you associate with good memories?
- Does food play an important role in your social life?
- Do you often eat under social pressure (e.g. in a group of friends)?
- Do you make food decisions under the influence of other people?
- Do you often eat more than you need when you are in company?
- Do current dietary trends dictate your meal choices?

Environment:

- Do you usually eat alone or in company?
- Do you usually eat at home or outside?
- Do you have a fixed place at home where you usually eat your meals?
- Is your eating place quiet and free from distractions?
- Do you eat while watching TV or using a computer/phone?
- When you eat out, what are your criteria for choosing where to eat?
- Do your eating habits change according to the season or circumstances?



Nutrition Activity 1 - Exploring Your Food Relationship: Questionnaire 2/2

Summary and Interpretation of results:

Eating habits:

Understanding "when you eat" can give valuable clues about your relationship to food and help identify areas for improvement.

- For example, if you often eat under the influence of emotion or stress, this may be a sign that you should look for other ways to cope with these conditions, such as through physical activity or hobbies.
- If your meals are irregular and unplanned, implementing set meal times can help you better control hunger and avoid unhealthy snacking. Planning meals in advance can also support healthier food choices.
- Responses indicating consumption of a lot of fast food, late night snacking or high-calorie drinks may suggest the need for a more balanced diet, rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

If you find areas you'd like to improve, consider setting small, specific goals, such as adding more vegetables to every meal, limiting snacking in the evening, or planning healthier options when you eat out.

Motives:

Your answers to the above questions can provide valuable insights into your eating habits and motivations. Here are some points to ponder:

- If you selected answers indicating that you often eat in situations accompanied by various emotions, e.g. sadness, stress, fear, anxiety, boredom, this may indicate emotional eating. Finding alternative ways to deal with your emotions can be key to changing your eating habits.
- If you treat food as a reward or eat out of habit, this can lead to unhealthy eating patterns in the long term. It will be beneficial to think about and introduce, as a good new habit, healthier forms of rewards.
- If your eating habits are strongly influenced by your social surroundings or social pressures, it can be helpful and effective to consider how and when you can make more conscious eating decisions.

Remember that understanding "why you eat" is the first step to making changes.

Environment:

The location where you eat can have a big impact on your eating habits, food choices and overall relationship with food.

- Lack of awareness around food and lack of planning can lead to unhealthy choices. Developing awareness around food and planning meals can improve your eating habits. Start with small changes, such as eating at least one meal a day in a place that is conducive to mindful eating.
- For example, if you often eat in a hurry, standing or while working, it may indicate that you are not taking enough time to consciously experience your meals, which can lead to faster eating and less satisfaction with food. Eating in a quiet place, focusing on your food and avoiding eating while standing can help improve your eating habits.
- If you eat a lot of meals away from home, at fast food outlets or order food for delivery, this can affect your food choices, prompting you to choose less healthy options. Consider preparing more meals at home, which gives you more control over the ingredients and nutritional value of your meals.

Notice how the environment in which you eat influences your choices. Do the places where you eat encourage healthy food choices? Can you make changes to make your eating experience more mindful and satisfying?

Conclusion:

Everyone has the ability to change their habits. Any positive change makes a difference and is a step in the right direction, leading to healthier eating habits and better well-being. Start with small but consistent steps to gradually build a healthier relationship with food. Remember that changing habits takes time, so be understanding and patient with yourself.



Nutrition Activity 2 - Bite by Bite: Cards for Mindful Eating

Card 1: Visual Delight

Participants will focus on the appearance of their prepared meal. Each card prompts a detailed and precise description of the visual elements, exploring colours, arrangement, and overall aesthetic qualities. This step encourages a heightened awareness of the visual aspects of their culinary creation.

→ Task: Describe the visual aspects of the meal (colours, textures, arrangement).

Card 2: Emotional Palette

The second sheet delves into the realm of emotions associated with eating. Participants will articulate and name their feelings before, during, and after the meal. This introspective exploration aims to connect the emotional landscape with the act of eating, fostering a deeper understanding of the emotional dimensions of their food experiences.

→ Task: Identify and name feelings before, during, and after eating. (Provide a feelings list if helpful.)

Card 3: Taste Exploration

On the third card, participants will embark on a journey of taste, identifying and describing the various flavours encountered during their meal. From salty and sweet to sour and spicy, this step encourages participants to articulate their sensory experiences, enhancing their awareness of taste sensations.

→ Task: Describe the tastes experienced during the meal (sweet, sour, salty, etc.).

Card 4: Mindful Consumption

The fourth card issues a directive to eat more slowly, emphasising attention to the texture of the food and the dynamic changes in flavours throughout the eating process. By encouraging mindful consumption, participants gain a richer appreciation for the textures and flavour nuances of their meal.

→ Task 4: Command to eat slowly, paying attention to texture and flavour changes. Describe the experience.

Card 5: Reflective Closure

The fifth card prompts participants to reflect on their new experiences during the exercises. They are encouraged to consider if anything was surprising, insightful, or if new perspectives emerged. Sharing these reflections with the group or close individuals becomes an integral part of the exercise, fostering a communal space for insights and shared experiences.

This exercise not only cultivates mindfulness in the act of eating but also provides a platform for personal reflection and shared discoveries, enhancing the overall awareness and appreciation of the sensory and emotional dimensions of the culinary experience.

→ Task: Reflect on the exercise and express willingness to share feelings with the group.



Nutrition Activity 2 - Bite By Bite: List of Emotions

open	numb
content	bored
fulfilled	confused
present	empty
relaxed	indifferent
amazed	uneasy
energised	embarrassed
excited	self-conscious
happy	weak
inspired	afraid
refreshed	anxious
satisfied	frightened
frustrated	hesitant
adventurous	nervous
brave	scared
daring	worried
free	sensitive
grounded	lucky
proud	thankful
strong	encouraged
fulfilled	incapable
warm	calm
curious	reflective
engaged	self-loving
exploring	vulnerable
fascinated	stressed
interested	tense
stimulated	overwhelmed
disappointed	concerned
melancholy	dissatisfied
unhappy	questioning
upset	skeptical
disconnected	suspicious



Nutrition Activity 4 - Homemade vs. Packaged: Handout on Processed Foods

The consumption of industrially produced foods that are high in salt, sugar and additives is increasing in most countries. This is worrying as high consumption of highly processed products can promote obesity and many chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, dementia and cardiovascular disease, according to various studies.

- In the past, food quality was primarily assessed on the basis of dietary patterns or the quantity of certain nutrients. Nowadays, the focus is increasingly shifting to the degree of food processing. In scientific studies, the so-called NOVA classification is used as standard, which divides foods and drinks into groups with different degrees of processing.
- Ultra-processed foods have the advantage that they have a long shelf life, are practical, easily accessible and affordable. They are usually packaged and have a long list of ingredients. The products usually contain plenty of additives, energy (calories), table salt, saturated fats and sugar, but little fiber, vitamins and minerals.
- Examples of frequently highly processed products include carbonated soft drinks, sweet and salty snacks, ice cream, chocolate bars, cookies, margarine, frozen pizza, chicken nuggets, sausages, instant soups, as well as plant-based alternatives to meat, milk, yogurt and cheese.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there is increasing evidence that industrially produced foods with a high degree of processing can have a negative impact on health. High consumption is associated with numerous chronic diseases such as gastrointestinal and cardiovascular diseases, dementia, depression, cancer and obesity.
- The negative effects are often attributed to the usually lower nutritional value. However, this is only one aspect. For example, the high degree of processing can promote the formation of potentially toxic compounds such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, trans fatty acids or acrylamide. It is also possible that harmful substances from the packaging, such as phthalates and bisphenols, are transferred to the food over time, writes a French research group in the specialist journal "The Lancet - Gastroenterology & Hepatology".
- Another point is that a high intake of additives such as emulsifiers and artificial sweeteners is said to promote inflammation in the body. The intestinal microbiome may play an important role in this. Diet changes the composition and activity of the bacterial community in the gut. In this way, a high consumption of highly processed products could disrupt the immune system and thus promote chronic inflammation and associated health disorders in the body. Research is still in its infancy. Future studies must clarify the biological mechanisms behind this.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) recommends limiting the consumption of highly processed foods. The following still applies: the less processed, fresher and more natural a food is, the better it is for the body. Pay attention to the label and avoid products with lots of additives and high levels of salt, fat and sugar. Even if a predominantly plant-based diet has many health benefits, vegan does not automatically mean healthy. If you want to eat a purely plant-based diet, you should limit your consumption of industrial substitute products and instead use unprocessed plant-based foods wherever possible.

References:

World Health Organization. (n.d.). Obesity and overweight. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/obesity-and-overweight> (retrieved 07/09/2024)


Ruiz, L. D., Zuelch, M. L., Dimitratos, S. M., & Scherr, R. E. (2019, 12 23). Adolescent Obesity: Diet Quality, Psychosocial Health, and Cardiometabolic Risk Factors. *Nutrients*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7020092/>

Nelson, J. B. (2017, 8 1). Mindful Eating: The Art of Presence While You Eat. *Diabetes Spectrum*, 171-174.

Acknowledgments:

YOUnite is a project aimed to help adolescents with overweight and obesity in overcoming challenges and improving their employability on the labour market. YOUnite project, supported by the ERASMUS+ programme is seeking to develop a new engaging and self-confidence building training programme to support young obese people to cope with socio-economic difficulties and any other potential source of discrimination.

The partnership is led by ÖSB Consulting (Austria) with partner organisations from Finland (ACR), Hungary (EMINA), Poland (Zdrowy Kształt), and Austria (ÖSB Social Innovation).

 www.younite-erasmus.eu

©YOUnite 2024

The content of this Instruction reflects the views only of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

YOUnite