

# YOUUnite

## Stress Module

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

**HEY.**  
I'm qualified!

**HEY.**  
I'm getting  
healthier!

**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 Sports Module and how is it relevant for a healthier lifestyle?

When assisting individuals struggling with overweight or obesity, it's imperative to address the intricate issue of stress management. Stress permeates various facets of life and can manifest in myriad forms, particularly in navigating adult challenges such as career decisions and workplace dynamics. The aim of this module is twofold: to equip participants with strategies to mitigate stress-induced eating habits and to offer practical solutions for navigating stressors related to employment and daily life.

Stress arises from situations perceived as beyond our capacity to handle, triggering a complex interplay between physiological and psychological responses. Excessive or chronic stress can disrupt normal functioning, leading to a cascade of detrimental effects on physical and mental well-being. Coping with stress is a vital life skill, with resilience playing a key role in determining individuals' responses to stressors.

Understanding one's unique stress response is essential. While some may exhibit inhibition or avoidance behaviours, others may resort to aggression or maladaptive coping mechanisms like substance use. Unmanaged stress can exacerbate health issues, contributing to the onset or exacerbation of various diseases, including cardiovascular conditions and gastrointestinal disorders.

In the workplace, sources of stress are abundant, ranging from interpersonal conflicts to organisational constraints and role ambiguity. Recognizing and addressing these stressors is crucial for fostering a healthy work environment and promoting individual well-being. Types of occupational stress include interpersonal conflicts, role ambiguity, poor time management, organisational constraints, and unrealistic expectations.

Resilience to stress depends on a combination of inherent traits and learned coping strategies. Techniques for managing stress include cultivating mutually exclusive emotions, avoiding emotional triggers, engaging in distraction techniques, and challenging automatic negative thoughts. Additionally, fostering physical health, maintaining a hygienic lifestyle, practising relaxation techniques, and nurturing interpersonal relationships contribute to stress resilience.

The interplay between stress and overweight and obesity serves as a crucial dimension within the complex landscape of weight management. Stress triggers hormonal fluctuations that can intensify appetite, leading to overeating—an often subconscious response known as emotional eating, prevalent among individuals grappling with overweight and obesity. Incorporating stress management techniques into daily routines not only enhances overall well-being but also offers a potent tool in combating overweight and obesity by curbing the impulse to overeat (Harvard Health Publishing (HHP), 2021).

Understanding the multifaceted relationship between stress and overweight and obesity is crucial for developing holistic intervention strategies. Chronic stress can disrupt hormonal balance, contributing to weight gain and exacerbating existing obesity-related health concerns (Rabasa & Dickson, 2016). Furthermore, socio-economic factors, environmental stressors, and individual coping mechanisms all influence this intricate dynamic, highlighting the need for tailored approaches to address the root causes of overweight and obesity within diverse populations.

## Specific Goals and educational objectives are to:

- *Raise Awareness:* We want to deepen participants' understanding of stress, exploring its mechanisms and the profound toll it takes on physical health and personal well-being.
- *Understand the Impact of Stress on Overweight and Obesity:* We'll explore the intricate relationship between stress and overweight and obesity, recognising how these two health concerns interact and influence each other.
- *Identify Stressors:* Through group discussions, we'll help individuals pinpoint sources of stress in their lives, empowering them to recognise its role in their personal challenges.
- *Explore Stress Types:* From acute to chronic stress, we'll delve into the various forms it can take and discuss how each impacts overall well-being.
- *Equip Participants with Coping Strategies:* Participants will learn practical tools and techniques for managing stress, drawing from evidence-based approaches to foster resilience and well-being.
- *Address Lifestyle Impact:* We'll highlight how stress influences lifestyle choices and eating habits, emphasising the importance of self-awareness and self-care in maintaining balance.
- *Dispel Myths:* By challenging common misconceptions surrounding stress, we aim to foster a more informed and nuanced understanding among participants, paving the way for effective stress management.

Through group discussions, shared experiences, and supportive guidance, our goal is to empower individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate and mitigate the adverse effects of stress in all facets of life.

## What are the issues addressed?

### *Activity 1: Stress Unplugged*

By engaging in self-assessment and exploring various coping styles, participants gain a deeper understanding of their responses to stress and learn to apply appropriate techniques for mitigating its adverse effects. Through this process, individuals enhance their mental and physical health in several ways. They acquire skills to reduce the risk of mood disorders like depression and anxiety, increase productivity by managing time and tasks efficiently, and mitigate the risk of chronic health conditions such as high blood pressure and heart disease. Moreover, mastering stress management fosters better sleep quality, strengthens emotional resilience, and improves interpersonal relationships. Ultimately, participants develop a sense of empowerment and control over their lives, bolstering self-confidence and self-esteem. Emphasising techniques like meditation, deep breathing, time organisation, and exercise, the module equips individuals with essential tools for prioritising their mental and physical well-being, laying the foundation for a healthier and more fulfilling life.

### *Activity 2: Strength Surge*

The activity significantly boosts self-esteem and overall individual development. By encouraging participants to recognise their strengths and positive traits, it fosters a positive self-image, which can enhance body image and motivate healthier habits. While not addressing obesity head-on, it supports participants in coping with challenges by building confidence and resilience. In the labour market, this self-awareness helps improve job interview skills and employability, as a positive mindset and self-presentation are key assets.

### *Activity 3: Creative Calm*

The art therapy workshop enhances overall well-being and mental health, helping participants manage stress that often triggers unhealthy behaviours like emotional eating. It boosts self-esteem and personal growth among youth by providing a creative outlet for self-expression, which strengthens self-awareness and confidence, thereby fostering emotional resilience. The workshop equips participants with valuable stress management skills that can lead to healthier lifestyle choices. Additionally, by developing emotional intelligence and adaptability, it prepares youth for the job market, improving their resilience and employability in high-stress professional settings.

### *Activity 4: Breathe & Balance*

This activity aims to introduce trainees to the concept of relaxation and its everyday benefits, emphasising the importance of achieving a state of calm for effective decision-making and reducing stress. By practising this breathing exercise in a comfortable, well-ventilated space, trainees can enhance their physical and mental health, sharpen their focus, and cultivate attentiveness, ultimately fostering a deeper connection between body and mind for improved overall well-being.

### *Activity 5: Nature Escape*

Engaging with the natural environment promotes tranquillity, boosting participants' self-awareness while offering a respite from everyday stress. Mindful interaction with nature can also inspire more physical activity. Furthermore, the mental clarity and focus gained from these experiences equip participants with vital skills for managing workplace stress, enhancing creativity, and improving problem-solving abilities—essential assets in the labour market.

### *Activity 6: Future Frames*

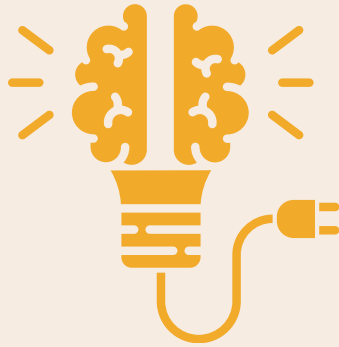
Through visualisation, participants gain clarity about their aspirations, empowering them to pursue their dreams more confidently. This self-awareness encourages participants to prioritise self-care and health, actively shaping their futures and stepping out of their comfort zones.

### *Activity 7: Bites & Bonds*

The activity addresses obesity by highlighting the social context of eating, teaching overweight youth that meals are not just about food intake but also about connection and community, free from shame. It aims to boost self-esteem and well-being by encouraging young people to view eating as a normal, enjoyable experience that fosters self-confidence and openness to new flavours in a supportive environment. Moreover, it emphasises that food should not dominate their lives; rather, it should be integrated into broader social interactions and activities that promote happiness and mental health. By enhancing social skills and self-awareness, the activity also prepares youth for the labour market, reinforcing the importance of social competence as a vital asset in any profession.

## What special skills do trainers need for this module?

A trainer leading a workshop on stress should have some knowledge in various stressors (environmental, interpersonal, internal), the physiological and psychological effects of stress, and effective coping strategies such as mindfulness, deep breathing, and creative expression through art. Tailoring content to the audience's specific needs and incorporating interactive activities can enhance engagement, while knowledge of well-being frameworks and local mental health resources is beneficial.



### **List of Activities**

1. Stress Unplugged
2. Strength Surge
3. Creative Calm
4. Breathe & Balance
5. Nature Escape
6. Future Frames
7. Bites & Bonds

# 1. Stress Unplugged

<b>Time required</b>	Around 1 hour
<b>Type of activity</b>	Workshop/ Self-Reflection
<b>Key takeaway</b>	<b>Learning to cope with stress enhances mental and physical health by reducing the risk of mood disorders, improving focus and productivity, lowering the risk of chronic diseases, promoting better sleep, strengthening emotional resilience, fostering healthy relationships, and boosting self-confidence, all through effective management techniques like meditation and time organisation.</b>
<b>Worksheet</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><u>Workshop on Stress ppt</u></b></li><li>• <b><u>Self-Assessment Test</u></b></li><li>• <b><u>Handout on Stress Management</u></b></li></ul>
<b>Other materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pens and papers</li></ul>

## Overview

The activity focuses on stress management and personal development. The workshop's guidelines can be found in the provided presentation. Participants engage in reflections and discussions to gain a deeper understanding of stress, its impact, and effective coping strategies. The activity encourages self-reflection, group sharing, and learning from one another's experiences. By exploring stress triggers and factors that influence stress levels, participants develop self-awareness and identify their unique needs. They also learn to recognize stress as an opportunity for personal growth and develop skills to manage stress effectively. Through open and non-judgmental discussions, participants gain insights into their stress management practices and discover new techniques to ease a stressed mind.



## Step by step instructions to conduct the activity

### 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- Begin the workshop by introducing the topic of stress
- The provided presentation will guide the trainer and participants through the workshop. The Presentation includes a self-assessment test, a clear definition of stress, and strategies for coping with it.

### 2. Self-Assessment Test (10 minutes)

- The first assignment in the presentation is a self-assessment test.
- Distribute the test along with blank sheets and pens.
- Instruct participants to complete the test.

### 3. Definition of Stress (5 minutes)

- Next up is a clarification on what stress is, highlighting its short-term and long-term effects.

### 4. Reflective Writing and Self-Reflection (10 minutes)

- This is followed by a written reflection task, the guidelines for which are included in the presentation.

### 5. Coping with Stress and Recovery (10 minutes)

- Guide participants in creating a mind map of their personal coping strategies, referring to the presentation for guidance.

### 6. Summary and Conclusion (10 minutes)

- Invite participants to share their experiences and coping strategies with the group, encouraging them to express their thoughts and reflections on the topic.
- Additional materials can be given to participants as supporting documents.
- Conclude by thanking everyone for their participation.





## 2. Strength Surge

<b>Time required</b>	About 1 hour
<b>Type of activity</b>	Self-Reflection/Workshop
<b>Key takeaway</b>	The activity promotes self-awareness, self-esteem, a positive mindset, resilience, personal growth, improved well-being, and enhanced social connections among participants by encouraging them to recognise their strengths, accomplishments, and positive experiences.
<b>Worksheet</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#"><u>Strengths ppt</u></a></li></ul>
<b>Other materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Paper or notebooks for each participant</li><li>• Writing utensils (pens, pencils, markers)</li></ul>

### Overview

The guidelines for the activity are put together into the provided presentation. This activity focuses on promoting self-esteem, well-being, and overall individual development by encouraging participants to recognize and highlight positive aspects of themselves, their actions, and their accomplishments. Participants will reflect on positive things about themselves, like accomplishments and actions individually. Afterwards trainers hold a group discussion and participants have an opportunity to share their own reflections if they wish to do so. By focusing on strengths and positive experiences, individuals develop resilience and a positive self-image.



## Step by step instructions to conduct the activity

### 1. Introduction (10 minutes)

- Begin by explaining the purpose of the activity, which is to recognise and focus on individual strengths and positive experiences.
- Emphasise the benefits of cultivating a positive mindset and how it can contribute to personal growth and well-being.
- Assure participants that sharing their reflections with the group is optional, and they can choose to keep their thoughts private if they prefer.

### 2. Materials and Setup (5 minutes)

- Distribute a paper or notebook and a writing utensil to each participant.

### 3. Reflective Writing (20 minutes)

- The presentation encourages participants to take part in several reflective writing exercises.
- Provide a designated time frame for participants to engage in their reflection process.
- Encourage them to write freely and authentically, without judgement or comparison to others.

### 4. Reflection Time (10 minutes)

- After each task, provide an opportunity for participants to discuss their experiences with the group.
- Encourage active listening and support for one another's reflections.

### 5. Debriefing and Evaluation ( 15 minutes )

- After the presentation, gather the participants and engage in a debriefing session. Ask open-ended questions to encourage participants to reflect on their experience, such as:
  - How did it feel to focus on your strengths and positive experiences? Did anything surprise you during this activity? Did it change your perspective or mindset in any way?
  - Provide space for participants to share their feedback, insights, or any challenges they encountered during the activity. Take note of any observations or suggestions for improvement.

### 6. Closure (5 minutes)

- Conclude the session by emphasising the importance of continuing to recognise and appreciate one's strengths and positive experiences in everyday life. Encourage participants to integrate this practice into their routines and invite them to revisit their reflections in the future to track personal growth.



## 3. Creative Calm

<b>Time required</b>	<b>1,5 hours</b>
<b>Type of activity</b>	<b>Action Based Activity</b>
<b>Key takeaway</b>	<b>The Art Workshop provides a safe space for participants to explore their creativity and emotions through art, fostering self-expression, relaxation, and stress relief, while equipping them with healthy coping mechanisms and practical techniques that can be applied to both personal and professional challenges in managing stress.</b>
<b>Worksheet</b>	<b><i>Not applicable for this activity</i></b>
<b>Other materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Supplies depending on the chosen art form (can be canvases, paints, paper, markers, etc.)</b></li></ul>

### Overview

This art therapy workshop allows participants to explore various artistic mediums, such as painting, drawing, or collage, as a means of self-expression and stress reduction. It allows participants to tap into their creativity and use art as a form of self-expression and stress relief.

One of the commonly known ways to relieve stress is through arts. Art has a huge impact on our overall mental health and well-being, while it also has a therapeutic power. It also helps with personal and emotional growth. Through the presentation and techniques shared by the Facilitator about art therapy, participants will gain more knowledge about stress and its impact on their lives and overall health.

Idea is to provide a supportive and non-judgmental environment where participants can freely engage in the creative process. Trainer facilitates discussions on the emotional and psychological benefits of art therapy.



## Step by step instructions to conduct the activity:

### 1. Introduction and Participant Assessment (10 minutes)

- Begin the workshop by introducing the topic of stress and its prevalence in society.
- Engage participants by asking them to reflect on their past experiences and relationships with stress, including work-related and health-related stress.
- Previous stress-workshops can help with this.

### 2. Presentation on Art Therapy Fundamentals (10 minutes)

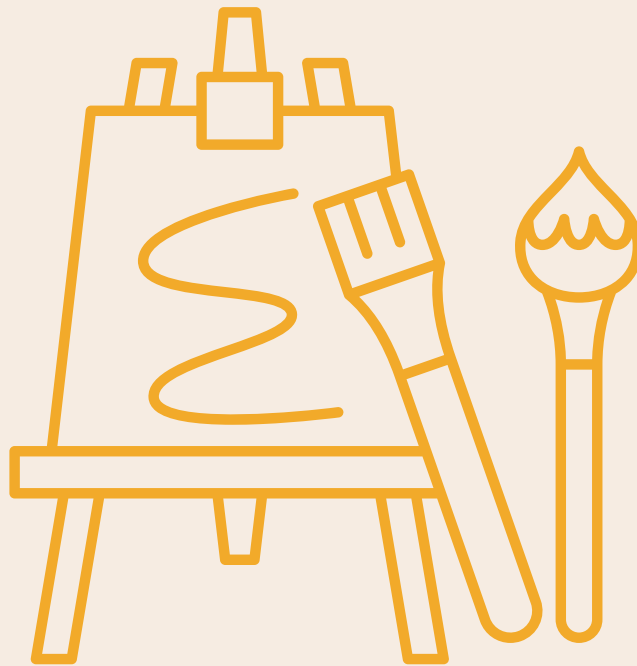
- Discuss the benefits of creative expression in stress reduction.
- Emphasise the therapeutic nature of art therapy in promoting relaxation, self-reflection, and emotional release.
- The group could collectively brainstorm ideas for managing stress through art.
- Ensure the workshop environment remains positive and safe for participants.

### 3. Hands-on Exploration of Visual Arts (1 hour)

- Encourage participants to choose a preferred form of art (painting, drawing, collage, mixed media, or photography) for self-expression. Or decide the art form in advance and provide materials for that.
- Provide hands-on exploration time, allowing participants to engage in their chosen artistic medium.
- Circulate among participants to offer guidance and support.

### 4. Feedback Session (10 minutes)

- Conclude the workshop with a feedback session.
- Allow participants to share their thoughts, experiences, and insights.
- Encourage participants to address any challenges or difficulties they may be facing during the workshop.
- Gather feedback on the effectiveness of the workshop.



## 4. Breath & Balance

<b>Time required</b>	<b>30-40 minutes</b>
<b>Type of activity</b>	<b>Action Based Activity</b>
<b>Key takeaway</b>	<b>By practising deep diaphragmatic breathing exercises, participants will effectively learn to self-regulate stress, leading to improved well-being, enhanced focus, better sleep, and overall inner peace.</b>
<b>Worksheet</b>	<b><i>Not applicable for this activity</i></b>
<b>Other materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Comfortable seating</b></li><li>• <b>Recordings of relaxation music (optional)</b></li></ul>

### Overview

The activity is designed to familiarise trainees with what relaxation is, the benefits of using relaxation in everyday life. First of all, it is designed to teach participants in the simplest possible way to introduce themselves to a state of relaxation. Learning relaxation can be a way to reduce excessively perceived stress and reduce physical and mental tension, which is a necessary condition for rational action and making the right decisions. It is a technique that can be used under any conditions.

The auto relaxation exercise we propose: the **conscious breathing exercise** is used for self-management of stress. With the help of this simple technique, you can independently put yourself in a state of tranquillity and psychophysical balance (reduction of mental and physical tension).

The technique of conscious breathing is important due to the fact that the rhythm of breathing changes depending on what we are thinking about and what emotions are currently accompanying us. Any stressful situation causes our breathing to become shallower, our blood pressure to rise, and our muscles to unconsciously tense up. The longer the stressful situation lasts, the more often the breathing becomes irregular and anxious.

The importance of breathing has long been known. A well-oxygenated body ensures not only good condition, but also mental clarity.

The exercise should be done in a comfortable position, in a well-ventilated room



## Step by step instructions to conduct the activity:

### 1. Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)

- The trainer warmly welcomes all participants and introduces themselves briefly, fostering a comfortable atmosphere.
- Participants are invited to introduce themselves, promoting engagement and rapport among the group.

### 2. Introduction to Relaxation Technique (5 minutes)

- The trainer introduces a relaxation technique called conscious deep breathing, highlighting its effectiveness in reducing stress and promoting relaxation.

### 3. Setting (5 minutes)

- Each participant is provided with a comfortable place to sit, ensuring optimal relaxation during the exercise.

### 4. Guided Exercise (10 minutes)

- Participants are instructed to sit comfortably, ensuring their backs are supported by the chair and their feet are resting comfortably on the floor.
- With eyes closed, participants are guided to start breathing freely, paying close attention to their breath.
- They are encouraged to inhale and exhale slowly while concentrating solely on their breathing.
- Participants are then guided to take a slow, deep breath, holding it for approximately 2 seconds before exhaling slowly, ensuring the exhalation is longer than the inhalation.
- The exercise should be performed slowly and calmly, with complete focus on each breath.
- Participants are prompted to notice each airflow through their lungs, fostering mindfulness.
- After a few minutes of mindful breathing, participants should begin to experience a sense of relaxation throughout their body and a calming of their thoughts.
- The trainer reassures participants that mindful breathing can help calm emotions and relax tense muscles.

### 5. Reflection and Sharing (10 minutes)

- Following the exercise, participants are asked to open their eyes and share their feelings or experiences with the group.

### 6. Encouragement and Conclusion (5 minutes)

- The trainer emphasises the simplicity and accessibility of this breathing exercise, encouraging participants to utilise it independently whenever needed for relaxation and stress relief.

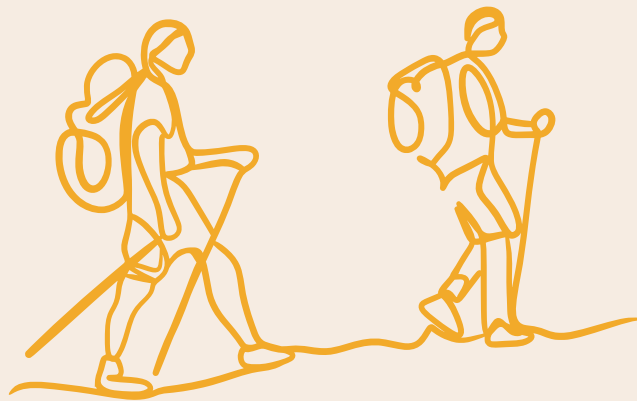


# 5. Nature Escape

<b>Time required</b>	<b>1,5-2 hours</b>
<b>Type of activity</b>	<b>Action Based Activity</b>
<b>Key takeaway</b>	<b>Participants will learn to reduce stress and promote relaxation through nature connection.</b>
<b>Worksheet</b>	<b><i>Not applicable for this activity</i></b>
<b>Other materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Comfortable clothing and footwear suitable for walking in nature</b></li></ul>

## Overview

This activity focuses on nature's healing capacity in lowering stress and restoring well-being. Participants go on a nature walk in a nearby park or natural setting, immersing themselves in nature's magnificence. They practise attentive observation, connecting with the present moment and appreciating the intricacies of the natural world through their senses. Through the healing benefits of nature, the exercise attempts to alleviate stress, promote relaxation, and improve general well-being. The atmosphere of this activity is expected to be meditative and more focused on internal observations of participants.



## Step by step instructions to conduct the activity:

1. Preparations (10 minutes)
  - Research and identify a nearby park or natural setting suitable for the nature walk.
  - Consider factors such as accessibility, safety, and the overall environment.
2. Gather Participants and Introduction (5 minutes)
  - Assemble participants in the chosen natural environment.
  - Briefly explain the purpose and benefits of the nature walk.
3. Engage Senses and Mindful Observation (10 minutes)
  - Encourage participants to engage their senses and practise mindful observation.
  - Guide them to notice sights, sounds, smells, and textures in the natural surroundings.
4. Nature walk (30-60 minutes)
  - Start the walk.
  - Emphasise staying present and appreciating the beauty of nature.
5. Conclusion of Nature Walk (10 minutes)
  - Conclude the nature walk and guide participants back to the starting point.
  - Ensure a smooth transition and maintain a quiet, reflective atmosphere.
6. Facilitate Group Discussion (10 minutes)
  - Gather participants for a group discussion about their experiences.
  - Invite participants to share reflections and insights from the nature walk.
  - Facilitate an open and positive dialogue among participants.
7. Debriefing and Evaluation (10 minutes)
  - During the debriefing, encourage participants to share experiences and insights.
  - Discuss challenges faced during the nature walk and provide a supportive environment.
  - Facilitate a discussion on the impact of nature connection on stress reduction and well-being.
  - Evaluate the success of the activity by gauging participants' understanding and intentions.

*Ensure flexibility in time allocations based on group dynamics and the flow of the nature walk experience.*





## 6. Future Frames

<b>Time required</b>	<b>Around 1,5 hour</b>
<b>Type of activity</b>	<b>Action Based Activity</b>
<b>Key takeaway</b>	<b>Identifying and accessing resources, along with cultivating awareness of personal goals and the perseverance to pursue them, are essential for achieving sustainable growth and success over time.</b>
<b>Worksheet</b>	<b><i>Not applicable for this activity</i></b>
<b>Other materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Assembling material for visualisation: Newspapers, brochures, illustrated magazines, advertisements, old books.</b></li><li>• <b>Pens, glue, scissors, Tixo, wool, glitter, stickers, natural materials, etc.</b></li><li>• <b>Large, non-printed posters (white or one-colour) that can be pasted/inscribed/printed on, etc.</b></li><li>• <b>Optional: Speaker to play music</b></li></ul>

### Overview

In this activity, the young people should be able to express their personal goals and wishes for the future in the form of a vision board. In principle, there are no limits to the imagination; not only future goals have to be depicted, but also the current actual state can be included.

All graphic elements that are available to the young people in analog form can be used.

After the activity, the young people should put the vision board in a place where they will pass by again and again in everyday life and thus be reminded of their goal.

A timeline can be set, but it doesn't have to be. Depending on the type thing, this can be decided on a case-by-case basis. For example, a timeline can be placed using centimetres and every day that the youth approaches their goal on the vision board, a centimetre can be cut off.

A good way to formulate realistic goals is to use the SMART rule:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time-bound



## Step by step instructions to conduct the activity:

### 1. Introduction and Explanation (5 minutes)

- Gather the participants and provide a brief introduction to the activity.
- Explain the purpose of creating a vision board and its significance in expressing personal goals.
- Allow time for participants to ask questions and clarify any doubts.

### 2. Discussion on Vision Board Elements (5 minutes)

- Discuss the flexibility of the activity, emphasising that participants can include both future goals and their current state.
- Encourage creativity by highlighting that all available analog graphic elements can be used.
- Stress the importance of motivation and having a direction for the future.

### 3. Motivation and Goal Setting (15 minutes)

- Facilitate a discussion on the significance of motivation in achieving goals.
- Introduce the SMART rule (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) for formulating realistic goals.
- Allow participants time to reflect on their personal goals and wishes.

### 4. Creation of Vision Boards (40 minutes)

- Distribute materials such as magazines, scissors, glue, and boards or paper for creating vision boards.
- Set a specific timeframe for this creative process, ensuring participants have ample time to express their goals visually.
- Encourage participants to be specific in their choices and design elements.

### 5. Sharing and Discussion (15 minutes)

- Ask each participant to share their vision board with the group.
- Facilitate a discussion on the goals depicted, allowing participants to express their thoughts and motivations.
- Ensure a positive and supportive atmosphere during the sharing session.

### 6. Closure and Reflection (10 minutes)

- Discuss the idea of incorporating a timeline and creating a collage on the vision board as a visual representation of progress
- Conclude the activity by summarising key insights from the discussion and creative process.
- Emphasise the importance of regularly revisiting and reflecting on the vision boards.
- Open the floor for any final thoughts or questions from the participants.



# 7. Bites & Bonds

<b>Time required</b>	<b>Preparation: 2 hours</b> <b>Activity: 1,5-3 hours</b>
<b>Type of activity</b>	<b>Action Based Activity</b>
<b>Key takeaway</b>	<b>By boosting self-confidence and social interactions, participants can learn to enjoy food as a normal part of life, leading to immediate happiness and a lasting positive relationship with food.</b>
<b>Worksheet</b>	<i>Not applicable for this activity</i>
<b>Other materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Plates, cutlery, drinks, cups, picnic blanket, napkins</b></li><li>• <b>Picnic foods</b></li><li>• <b>Music and speaker (optional)</b></li></ul>

## Overview

Food that is suitable for a picnic is bought or organised together. A meeting place is then arranged, and the young people eat, chat, play etc. together in a relaxed picnic atmosphere.

The young people should be taught that it is not always about the food intake itself, but also about doing this together. Yes, eating is nice and good, but it tastes even better together! Eating patterns that one has acquired over time can also be broken, perhaps one tries new dishes, or tastes, because the friend has just brought a new food or a new dish, or this was particularly beautifully arranged. An important point is that participants should not use smartphones and should really focus on eating together and spending time with their friends.



## Step by step instructions to conduct the activity:

### Preparations before the Picnic date:

1. Planning and Preparation (30 minutes)
  - Trainers identify a suitable picnic location accessible to all participants.
  - Brainstorm with the youth group about the picnic content, encouraging diverse food choices.
  - Plan for non-elaborate dishes, considering both familiar and new tastes.
2. Shopping and Food Preparation (1 hour)
  - Trainers organise and purchase picnic foods, considering the brainstormed ideas.
  - Prepare equipment, including plates, cutlery, drinks, cups, picnic blanket, napkins, and music.

### On the Day of the Picnic:

1. Transportation and Setup (30 minutes)
  - Trainers transport all equipment and food to the agreed-upon picnic location.
  - Set up the picnic area with the picnic blanket, arrange plates, cutlery, and ensure a welcoming atmosphere.
2. Introduction and Welcome (10 minutes)
  - Gather participants at the picnic location.
  - Briefly explain the purpose of the activity, emphasising the social aspect of food.
3. Picnic and Social Interaction (1-2 hours)
  - Participants engage in a relaxed picnic atmosphere.
  - Emphasise the enjoyment of food, encourage trying new tastes, and foster conversations among participants.
  - Ensure that smartphones are not used during the picnic, promoting focused social interaction.
4. Discussion and Conclusion (15 minutes)
  - Trainers facilitate stimulating discussions about the food, experiences, and shared moments.
  - Encourage participants to express their thoughts on the social aspects of eating.
  - Conclude the picnic, thanking participants for their engagement.
5. Cleanup and Return Transport (15-30 minutes)
  - Trainers coordinate the cleanup of the picnic area.
  - Transport equipment and leftover items back to the main location.

*Note: The time estimates are approximate and can vary based on the specific dynamics of the group, the duration of the picnic, and the depth of interactions during the activity.*



# Worksheets for Stress Module Activities





## Stress Activity 1 - Stress Unplugged: Self-Assessment Test (1/2)

### Assessment of stress levels

A list of stress reactions is presented below. Mark which symptoms occur for you. This will determine how you are prone to react to stress and whether you are under stress.

Rate each of the listed reactions on a scale of 0 to 3:

0 - never    1 - sometimes    2 - often    3 - constantly

Physiological and somatic symptoms:

- Accelerated heartbeat
- Pressure or pain in the chest, high blood pressure
- Trouble breathing (accelerated breathing, feeling of shortness of breath)
- Increased sweating and dampness of the hands
- Diarrhoea, constipation, stomach cramps
- Stomach or duodenal ulcers
- Frequent colds, other infections
- Allergies
- Asthma
- Weakness, fatigue
- Migraines, headaches, dizziness
- Pain of unknown origin
- Lack of or excessive appetite
- Menstrual disorders
- Sleep disturbances
- Trembling hands, voice

Psychological symptoms:

- Nervousness, irritability
- Anxiety, fear
- Shame, embarrassment
- Guilt
- Jealousy
- Voltage
- Depressive states
- Sentiment volatility
- Seizures of rage
- Escaping into dreams and fantasizing
- A sense of helplessness
- Lack of interest in one's own appearance
- Lack of interest in things that gave pleasure
- Lowering of self-esteem, loss of self-confidence
- Attention deficit disorder
- A sense of constant lack of time
- Recurring, unwanted thoughts, images



## Stress Activity 1 - Stress Unplugged: Self-Assessment Test (2/2)

Behavior:

- Outbursts of anger, aggression
- Apathy, passivity
- Excessive attraction to alcohol
- Abuse of coffee, cigarettes, energy drinks
- Closing in on oneself, becoming depressed
- Compulsive behaviour - repeated actions, rituals of checking e.g. locked doors, washing hands
- Failure to take necessary action, e.g., absence from work
- Decreased level of sexual activity
- Snacking on sweets
- Taking tranquillisers
- Difficulties in decision-making
- Crying for no apparent reason
- Nervous tics

Results:

0-28 = low stress

29-62 = average stress level

63-92 = think about what you can change to reduce the level of stress you are feeling

93 and over = You are subject to high levels of stress, seek help

Look at your answers. In which group did you mark the most? Which symptoms appear earliest? In the future, you can consider them as warning signals of the onset of stress. Their appearance requires you to take action to deal with the situation.



## **Stress Activity 1 - Stress Unplugged: Handout on Stress Management (1/3)**

To effectively manage stress, it is essential to first recognise the various stress responses individuals may experience. By identifying these responses, individuals can better understand their triggers and develop tailored coping strategies to navigate stress more effectively.

### **STRESS RESPONSES**

Three types of human and animal behaviour in tension situations have been identified. These are: inhibition, escape and aggression.

#### **INHIBITION**

Many animals such as hares, rabbits and pheasants react to a sudden, unexpected threat by freezing. This is known as silent, tense immobility. It manifests itself in immobility, silence, invasion of fur, hair or feathers and defecation. Such a stress response protects many animals because potential aggressors pay no attention to them. Humans rarely behave this way.

#### **ESCAPE**

Many mammals, birds and fish automatically respond to danger by fleeing. In humans, such a reaction is far from automatic, but if we judge that the danger is greater than our ability to cope with it, fleeing is a natural and often effective behaviour. Escape can take different forms, for example, a vacation can be an escape from boring work, work - from home boredom. A behaviour very similar to escape is avoidance, that is, non-participation in threatening situations. Avoidance is associated with anxiety, while escape is accompanied by fear or panic.

#### **AGGRESSION**

In situations of tension, gentle animals exhibit a variety of aggressive behaviours, including biting, overlapping from behind and assuming a threatening appearance. In humans, aggression can accompany other manifestations of tension, for example: after surgery, and can also indicate the so-called "A" personality type - with competitive tendencies.

Smoking cigarettes, drinking, eating excessively or not eating, taking drugs or narcotics are other behaviours that can be related to stress.

If stress is strong enough to affect health, the effects can be threefold: stress can cause a new disease, gradually exacerbate an existing one, or lead to an outbreak.

Stress is most closely related to diseases such as:

- Heart diseases
- Diseases of the digestive system
- Peptic ulcer disease of the stomach or duodenum
- Intestinal ulceration
- Allergy
- Skin lesions

Stress can reduce the body's resistance to colds, flu and other more serious diseases.





## Stress Activity 1 - Stress Unplugged: Handout on Stress Management (2/3)

### COPING WITH STRESS

The onset of excessive stress (succumbing to a stress reaction) depends on two factors:

- Resilience to stress
- Ways to cope with stress

By resilience to excessive stress we mean such a constitutional state of the body or such actions that do not allow the development of a destructive stress response.

Such resilience can be innate and is closely related to temperamental traits. Reactivity - the ratio of the magnitude of the reaction to the strength of the stimulus causing it - is, according to the concept of J. Strelau (Temperament-personality-action, Warsaw 1985), the main feature of temperament, and this is an innate quantity. The totality of people differs in terms of reactivity. People in whom a stimulus of a certain magnitude elicits a strong reaction are sensitive to stimuli - highly reactive. Individuals in whom a stimulus of the same magnitude elicits a weak response are less sensitive to stimuli - low reactive. Low reactive people are more resistant to excessive stress than high reactive people.

There are some ways for people experiencing emotions to control them. Techniques for controlling situational determinants of mutually exclusive emotions. It is based on the observation that there are mutually exclusive emotions in the sense that it is not possible to experience them simultaneously (worry and joy, contempt and sympathy, etc.). The essence of this technique is to control a negative emotion by arousing to oneself another emotion that excludes the negative one.

Technique for avoiding emotive situations

Knowing what situations trigger negative emotions in us, we can make efforts to avoid such situations (e.g. avoiding conversations on so-called sensitive topics, avoiding certain people).

Techniques for controlling internal emotional determinants:

- Dispersal techniques

A sizeable portion of unpleasant emotions is caused by a phenomenon called persistent depressive overthinking. A person's mind is seized by persistent, constantly recurring thoughts. A good way to break out of this state is to concentrate hard and engage in a very detailed description of what we are currently perceiving with our senses.

- Technique for recognising and eliminating negative automatic thoughts

Some of the thought processes are carried out on a habitual or downright automatic path. Among automatic thoughts, there are sometimes negative thoughts about qualities, skills and one's own abilities. They appear in response to some external stimulus or to another thought or idea. A feature of these thoughts is that they are wrongly regarded as fully credible and true. They cause negative emotions: feelings of helplessness, sadness, depression, shame and guilt. They also cause discouragement, apathy or even inability to act. One must learn to identify these thoughts, to distinguish them from other mental phenomena. Then one should verify them, check whether they are true, whether they are in harmony with the facts.



## Stress Activity 1 - Stress Unplugged: Handout on Stress Management (3/3)

The following questions can be helpful in this process:

- What are the arguments for the truth of this thought - can you show such experiences of your own that contradict this thought?
  - What other thoughts could arise in response to the situation - what does a particular thought actually mean, what does it actually concern?
  - What negative consequences follow this thought?
  - What would need to be done to test the veracity of this thought?
- 
- Self-persuasion technique

The essence of this technique consists of self-talk and directing advice, requests and reassuring recommendations to oneself, such as: calm down, don't exaggerate your fears, don't worry, etc.

Stress resilience is also understood as the ability to function effectively and satisfactorily despite the onset of a stress response. This is served by, among other things:

- Physical exercise
- A hygienic way of life
- The ability to relax
- Relaxation through massage
- Interpersonal communication skills, including verbal communication
- Self-confidence and resulting self-confidence
- Ability to resolve conflicts, including internal ones
- Ability to coexist in a group, use group support
- The ability to survive crises
- Ability to solve problems
- Internal harmony understood as the integration of body, mind and spirit, and as the correspondence between requirements and expectations and one's own abilities
- Proper organization of work and attention to the physical work environment

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## 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).

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