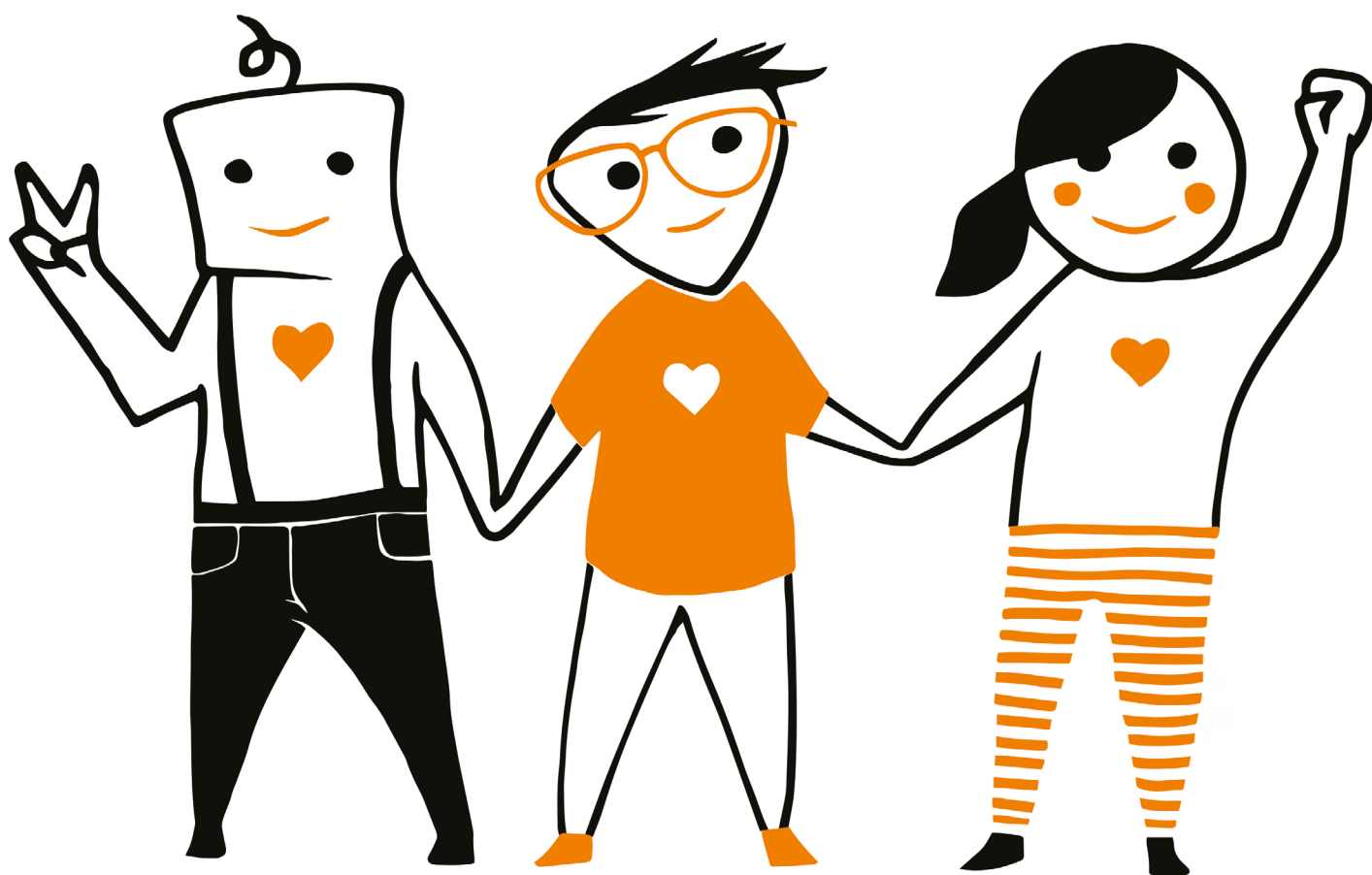


# -Highway—— to mental health.



This handbook is part of the **Highway to mental health** project financed by Erasmus+, a program of the European Union.



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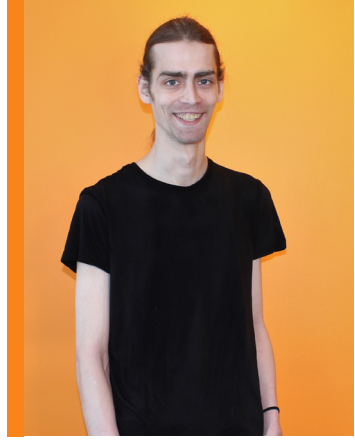
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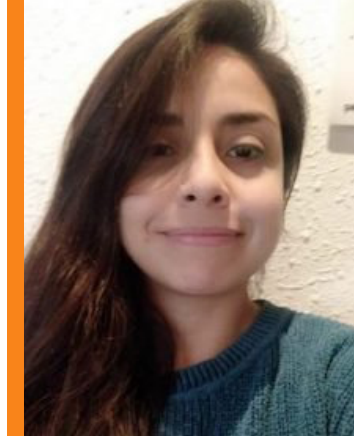
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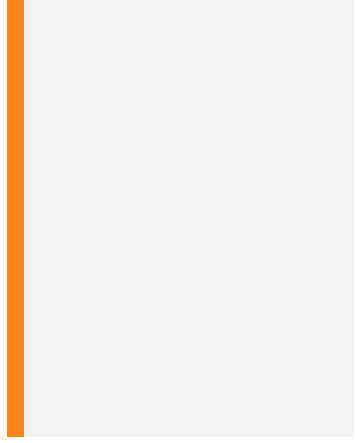
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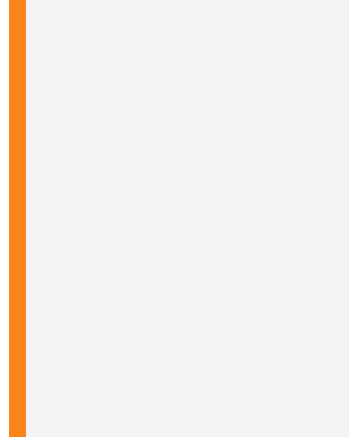
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# About the handbook

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## What is **it** about?

This handbook is a collection of non-formal activities created for groups of young people aged 18-25, to strengthen their emotional resilience. The authors of this handbook chose a few areas to focus on as pillars for emotional resilience. Therefore, the handbook covers the following seven topics, each divided into a few other subtopics:

- 1. Emotions** (literacy, integration, expression)
- 2. Authenticity** (needs, personal expression, purpose)
- 3. Life management** (resource toolbox, redefining success, sustenance, personal path)
- 4. Empowerment** (assertiveness, personal strengths, human rights, self-determination, self-efficacy, self-compassion)
- 5. Nature** (benefits and connection)
- 6. Social relationships** (vulnerability, empathy, trust, love, compassion)
- 7. Community** (human rights-shared responsibility for inclusion, personal impact, peer support, gender perspective and intersectionality, mutual aid, togetherness)

## Who is **it** for?

The handbook is dedicated to people working with youth in various contexts and from various roles. This includes but is not limited to leaders, mentors, counselors, trainers, camp facilitators, peer supporters, social workers, psychologists in NGOs, youth centers, universities or other structures that support the personal development of young people.

## How to **use** it?

The handbook is divided into two parts. The first one is theoretical and is dedicated to defining the seven topics and thirty sub-topics. It is a synthesis of the existing literature on these topics, from the perspective of the handbook's authors. The second part contains detailed descriptions of the non-formal group activities created by the authors, based on the topics mentioned before.

Each subtopic has one 90 minutes long session of activities, with very few exceptions, to which two sessions were dedicated. Some session descriptions also have handouts attached, to be used by the facilitator when leading the activities or given to the participants as informational support.

There are multiple possibilities to implement the sessions in the handbook. We suggest the following three paths:



## Path 1

---

### **The complete program**

Make time and space for the entire program covering all seven topics, over the course of eight consecutive full days (e.g. in youth exchanges, retreats, camps) or in regular meetings, over a longer period of time (e.g. as part of the organization's regular activities). This option serves the purpose of a comprehensive program for building resilience.

## Path 2

---

### **Individual modules**

Hold separate modules, each based on one of the seven topics. This approach can meet the need to tackle a specific area of emotional resilience promotion, as well as it can simply be a response to a more limited availability of participants or other resources needed.

## Path 3

---

### **Individual sessions**

Organize 90 minutes sessions, when available resources are even more scarce or the learning objectives of the facilitator are very specific and they can be met by the respective session. Each session can be regarded as a stand-alone workshop.

Besides these suggested paths, there are, of course, multiple other possible ones, resulting from different ways of mixing and matching the sessions or the modules, according to the needs that the facilitator identifies in the youth group they work with. A strong recommendation, however, is to use an entire session if you want to address all the learning objectives mentioned in the beginning of each description. The sessions are designed as a built-up flow, with interconnected activities and debriefing questions that cover all objectives.

According to the path chosen, one can either read the handbook thoroughly, or by topics, but the recommendation is to always cover both the theoretical chapter and the respective non-formal session(s).

The theoretical chapters are meant to provide the facilitator with the minimal knowledge, the essence of what is needed to know, in order to facilitate the respective sessions, so they are a mandatory reading.

## Planning the session

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- Identify the developmental or learning needs of your group.
- Assess the availability of your resources of time, space, materials.
- Choose the path of implementation.
- Read thoroughly the topics you have chosen to facilitate, try to understand the concepts and to imagine the activities step by step, in the greatest detail.
- Choose a spacious room, as most of the activities involve some movement, dynamics or separate conversations taking place at the same time.
- If you have the time, listen to your passion and curiosity and read more literature on the topics. This will give you a deeper understanding of the concepts you work with and more confidence in facilitating discussions around them with the young people, as well as it will allow more spontaneity during the sessions.
- For newly formed groups, make sure to start with getting-to-know each other games and activities that build a base of safety and trust among participants.
- Pay attention to the energy level of the group and insert energizers/ calming down activities when needed.
- When possible, hold the activities outdoors, as that can be very beneficial for the emotional states of the participants.

# What is **resilience**?

---

Resilience is the personal, communal and societal capacity to cope with life and adversity.

Resilience does not mean invulnerability. We are vulnerable to traumatic situations or adverse life conditions, especially when they affect us at an early age. More than resistance to suffering and pain, resilience refers to the process by which we can overcome, recover

and move on with our lives, without catastrophic effects on our mental health.

Resilience is about the transformations we undergo to get through negative circumstances and grow through them. Sometimes we will have to make small changes to adapt to a situation; in others, going through and overcoming adversity involves a profound existential change and/or a transformation of our social environment.

## **Resilience:** capacity and process

Resilience is both a personal quality, a capacity that some people have more of, and others have less of, and a personal and social process, a set of circumstances that make us progressively and cumulatively to have more or less resources to go through difficulties and suffering. In this sense, the resources that we

currently have depend on our personal history and our context of life.

Resilience as a process has to be looked at in a long-term continuum and resilience as a capacity is what we have in a specific moment.

## **Resilience and health:** results and not essential qualities

Resilience is similar to health, in the sense that there are those who have more and those who have less and it is a result, the sum (or subtraction) of different factors. The result of this process is influenced by our current and past life circumstances. For example, our state of health depends on the diet we have, the vaccines received, the housing and health conditions of our environment (drinking water, sewers, contamination, etc.), access to healthcare, and many more.

Health and resilience are not something that one "is", but something that one "has". Similarly, resilience is a variable, we have more or less of it, in each moment or circumstance, depending on many factors that affect it positively or negatively. For example: whether or not we have a support network (family, friends, mutual support), if our environment

guarantees our rights or not, if when we need it we receive personalized professional attention that respects our preferences or if, on the contrary, we feel defenseless against the imposition of treatments and coercive measures.

Whether or not we have learned to express and manage our emotions, whether we have grown up in childhood with a positive image of ourselves and have a strong self-esteem, whether we are supported in the face of adversity, etc. will also affect our resilience. For example, the consequences that sexual abuse in childhood can have on our mental health do not depend only on the abusive experience itself, but mostly on the reaction and support of the immediate social environment, after its disclosure or discovery. An environment that creates and protects us makes us more resilient.

## Internal and external protection factors

Taking into account the previous considerations, we can speak of protection factors that make us more resilient:

### People's own attributes:

This includes factors such as the level of sociability and activity, intelligence (which is at least average), communication skills, good self-esteem, an internal locus of control, feeling of self-efficacy.

### Strong emotional ties inside and outside the family:

The close emotional ties, whether with parents, siblings, partners, etc., provide emotional support in times of stress and are essential for promotion of self-esteem, autonomy and evaluation of one's own abilities. Beyond the family, a person can find and/or build other affective bonds that complement or compensate for the affective and emotional support needs that we all people have. These links are also essential to overcome adversity.

### Community support:

There are several external support resources that we can find in our community, such as: school, sports clubs, church, or other community spaces. These are opportunities to strengthen the feeling of belonging, reward and promote the development of one's own capacities, build a value system in which to believe and find motivations and meaning in life. In short, extended family, friends and community are a source of strengthening self-esteem, allow us to learn and exercise the feeling of self-efficacy and expand our repertoire of tools to solve problems and face life's difficulties.

# Non-Formal Learning

## Basic concepts and methods

Our learning can happen with in 3 different frameworks, a categorization first introduced by Coombs and his colleagues in 1973 and later known as Coombs Typology. These are

- 1.** Informal Education: ‘...the truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment—from family and neighbours, from work and play, from the marketplace, the library and the mass media...
- 2.** Formal Education: ‘...the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded “educational system”, running from primary school through the university and including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialized programs and institutions for full-time technical and professional training.’
- 3.** Non-Formal Education: ‘...any organized educational activity outside the established formal system—whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity—that is intended to serve identifiable learning clientele and learning objectives.’

Formal education is linked with schools and training institutions; non-formal with community groups and other organizations; and informal education covers what is left, e.g. interactions with friends, family and work colleagues.

The main differences between these methods are illustrated in the following parallel :

Informal Education	Formal Education	Non-Formal Education
Free path	Plan to follow	Needs of participants centered
Non-measurable	Grades/Evaluation	Self-evaluation
No structure	Structured	Flexible structure
Self-directed	One direction (teacher to student)	Participative
Free	With costs (most of the times)	Voluntary
Free flow	Time conditioned	Adaptive
Self-motivated	Mandatory	Active participation
Non-recognizable	Certified/Diploma	Participation certified

Each of them has certain strengths and shortcomings. Many times they are combined and bring benefits to the learner. It's up to each person to find their method (even if in many countries formal education is mandatory until a certain level) and also to each

teacher, trainer or educator, to use the different approaches. A teacher in a classroom can use non-formal education methods and ask the students to read a book or talk with someone, more experienced in a certain topic, in their free time.

## The importance of non-formal education

Education is part of our life and it happens all the time. Sometimes we don't even see all the things from which we educate ourselves and learn, but this helps us to increase, develop new skills and to handle everyday situations.

Non-formal education happens apart from formal institutions. It's a type of education mostly provided in settings such as seminars, workshops, exchanges, training courses, where you learn by doing, by observing, by working with different methods and, most importantly, by reflecting on what happened to you. This variety of approaches in non-formal education ensures that participants will acquire cognitive, emotional and specific competences and skills, will learn to identify and trust their instincts, as well as develop confidence in their unique learning process.

The methods most commonly used in non-formal education are: ice breakers, energizers, group work, discussions, presentations, role plays, brainstorming, simulation games, warm up activities, indoor and outdoor activities, interactive lectures, etc.

Non-formal education is a learning movement which provides a lot of value for everyone involved, including the formal education system. It helps people acquire and maintain skills and abilities, attitudes, knowledge and behaviours in a new and fun way.

It can sometimes be hard to reach out and find young people interested in additional education since they are already learning in schools and in college. They find their formal learning enough for them, and everything else

very boring. Non-formal education changes this and makes learning challenging, exciting and fun.

Nowadays, this education framework is gaining more and more attention since its benefits are starting to be recognized and validated across the world. It is especially useful for youth workers who are working with young people in various learning and development projects. It is an approach that young people are willing to work with, and at the same time, it gives to us, youth workers, a connection and innovative approach, while helping youth to learn new things and to believe in themselves, their values and possibilities.

Non-formal education is also a basis for life-long learning. It serves as a frame for youth, but also children and adults to engage in self-directed learning processes that can be adapted to different needs as we progress through life. The methods and approaches that are available through non-formal learning can be adapted to fit the needs of 3 year-olds, 13 or 23, as well as 93 year olds. That is because they are always learner-centered.

There are as many tools and approaches to NFL as there are youth-workers and many of these can be discovered in the resources provided.

In this handbook, all activities that you will discover are designed within a non-formal framework. You can benefit greatly if you dive deeper into this topic through the online resources below .

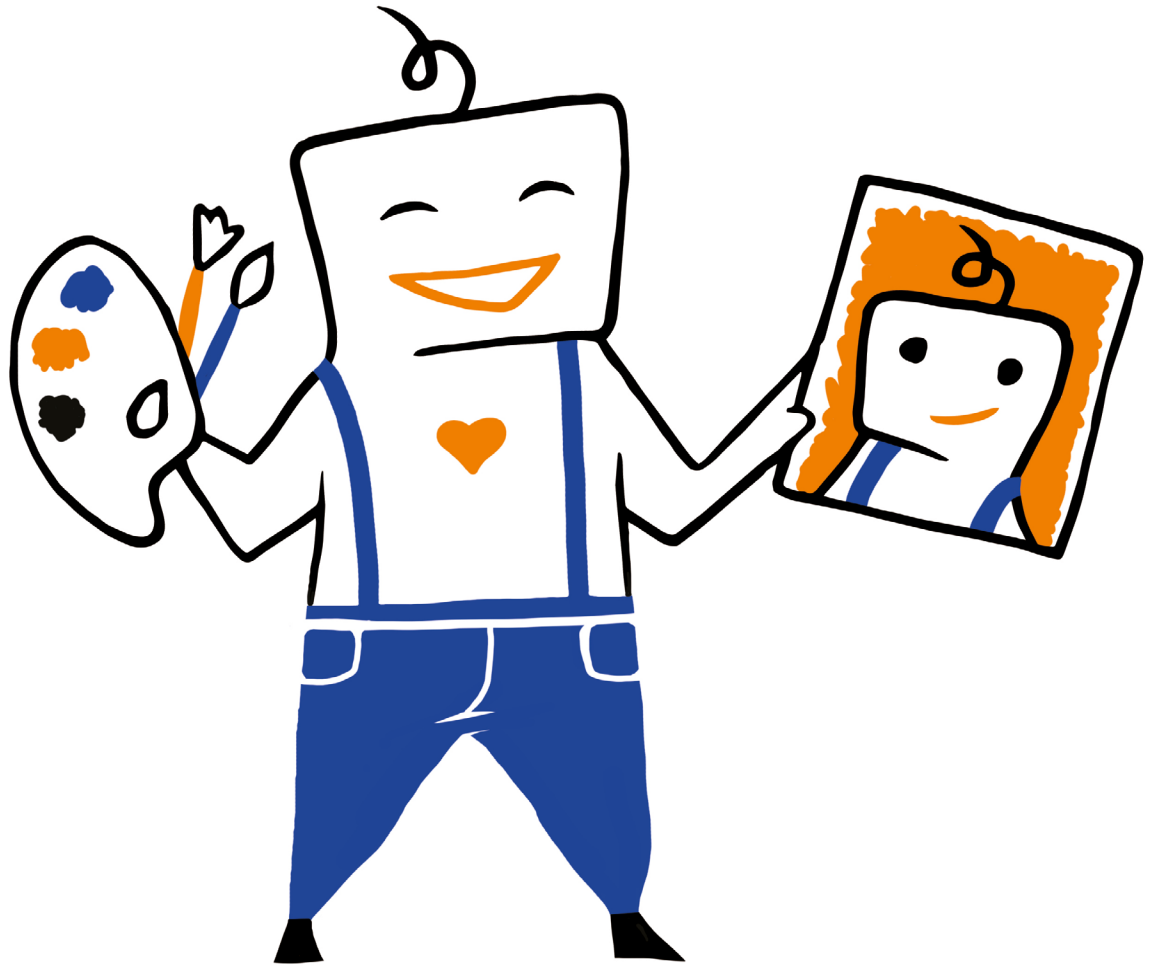
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Chapter

# 01



# Authenticity

# What is authenticity?

---

The word authentic can have several meanings. When we talk about authenticity as the quality or characteristic of an object, we say that this object is real, that it is what it claims in its origin to be. When we refer to the characteristic of a human being, things become more complex and complicated.

The concept of authenticity is an old one in philosophy and has been the subject of discussion of many thinkers. Heidegger believes that being authentic means being perseverant, flexible, open, honest and having a clear vision. Over time, it has been concluded that a person's authenticity is closely linked to the concept of self - it reflects what the self represents, what it is made of, the way a person chooses to express it, but also about morality and personal values. The human trait of au-

thenticity combines the ideals of a person, with their needs, motives, beliefs and desires, and the way a person chooses to represent these things and to act, being more or less influenced by social and cultural pressures.

Given that authenticity is so closely linked to the concept of self, in order to become authentic, we must learn to know ourselves. One of the main ways we can do this is by starting to explore our needs, aspirations, qualities. To understand what they are, what they signal and how they help us. Once we understand these things and have a clearer picture of ourselves, of what we want and where we are going, whether we are aware of it or not, we can express ourselves owning our ideas. It depends on us how much we share, to whom and in what way.

## Authenticity and resilience

When we know who we are, where we are going, when we know our values, strong points and shortcomings, the moment in which we embrace them comes with an inner feeling of peace. When we are honest with ourselves, when we are authentic, we live our lives more present, we no longer feel the need to do various things just to feel accepted or to prove to others various things about us.

A clear sense of self gives us direction in life, helps us make decisions, it allows us to be more fulfilled and satisfied with our lives and the decisions we make.

By expressing our authenticity we can also strengthen our relationships with those

around us. Expressing ourselves freely and openly in accordance with our values and intentions, we give clear signals to the outside world. This makes it much easier for others to approach us. By eliminating the insecurities and stress caused by not knowing ourselves, we increase our well-being.

Authenticity is an ongoing process, it is a way of living rather than a state or destination we arrive at. Living in an authentic way can be extremely empowering.

In this section, we will address a few topics that can help you discover your deeper self and live authentically: needs, personal expression, purpose.

# Needs

## What are **needs**?

A need is a necessity, a “demand” for safety, for a healthy and stable life. Needs are the source of motivation, the drive for each little action, an expression of vital energy. They are innate and universal, a basis for human behaviors from the simplest to the most complex.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow, one of the pioneers in this field, considers that the needs are instinctive and of several kinds. They vary from physical ones, those

related to maintaining a balance/homeostasis in the human body (regulation of blood components, water, oxygen, temperature, etc.), to needs necessary for maintaining mental health such as the need for autonomy, independence, integrity, play, etc. Later, starting from Maslow’s theory, Marshall Rosenberg came to the idea that needs are grouped into seven broad categories: connection, physical well-being, honesty, play, peace, autonomy, meaning.

## How can we become more **connected to our needs**?

In order to become more in touch with our needs, we need to pay more attention to them. First of all, we have to accept that they are normal and it is normal to have them. The next step is to identify needs starting from the emotions we feel. Emotions are always motivations which activate our bodies to meet our needs.

Therefore, we can notice each emotion and how we feel it in the body, focus on the sensations we have, where we have them, how we have them and what it wants to convey to us. This whole process should be repeated as often as possible for a connection to be created.

## Why are needs **important for resilience**?

Once we get to know our needs deeply, recognize, understand and accept them, it is much easier to learn how to meet them and thus be happier. Once we learn how to relate to other people based on these needs, respecting both our own and those of others, it is much more possible to connect more deeply with other people regardless of their age, ethnicity, social status, their political opinion, religion or history.

Our needs are just, we are born with them and it is necessary for them to be fulfilled so that we can grow harmoniously, develop healthily, and have a balanced emotional life. When our needs are not met, they lead to negative emotions, various dysfunctions, frustrations, or even to trauma and personality disorders, if they are not deeply fulfilled in the long run.



# Session Planning

## Title: **What do I really need?**

**Timing:** 90 minutes

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Develop the capacity notice how it feels to have a specific need, even if there are no words to name it

Discover different types of needs and learn how to name them

Develop motivation towards identifying needs and raising awareness of their universality

## Methodology **step by step**

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### Timing for **each step:**

- 1. Introduction discussion about needs with questions and input from participants (10 min)**  
Facilitator guides a 5 minutes group discussion on the topic offering participants the chance to share on the topic.
- 2. Guided imagery to identify a situation to explore (10 min)**  
The guided imagery script can be used in the exact sequence or changed to your style. Time in between the questions/phrases will be given where the dots "..." are in the text, to allow the participants to deepen into the experience.
- 3. Individual work (30 min)**  
Participants will reflect through a self-reflection handout during which you can arrange the art materials for the next step in the center of the room.
- 4. Integration through artwork (10 min)**  
Participants will use art materials to do symbolic artwork.
- 5. Sharing in pairs (10 min)**
- 6. Debriefing (20 min)**

**Setting of the room, participants distribution:** Participants work individually, and then in small groups.

**Handouts or materials:** Handouts with emotions and needs from Non-Violent Communication.

# Instructions to participants

## 1. Introduction discussion about needs with questions and input from participants (10 min)

In this workshop we will explore the topic of needs, by employing our emotions and imagination. What comes to your minds when you hear the word "Needs"?

## 2. Guided imagery to identify a situation to explore (10 min)

You will be working individually, and I will guide you through a self-reflection exercise. For the next few minutes I invite you to close your eyes and allow yourself to be guided. We are going to explore an emotionally charged event in your life, with the purpose of discovering the underlying need in this event. We will be using our imagination, and also pens, paper, emotions and these handouts (give handouts). First, take a few minutes to familiarize yourselves with these handouts. (3 min)

Now, I invite you to close your eyes and allow your body to relax.

I invite you to focus on your breath... your in-breath, and your out-breath... notice your inhale and your exhale... Notice every inhale... every exhale.... And allow an experience to come to your mind. It is your choice what event, experience to explore, be it a pleasant or unpleasant one... Just allow this experience to come towards you.

And notice it. What is going on? Who are you with? Are you alone, are there other people around... What is happening? What is it that triggers emotions? What are you feeling in this situation?....

Good... Now open your eyes and stay in this state, with these feelings, allow it to sink in.

## 3. Individual work (30 min)

In the next minutes you will fill in the self-reflection handout you received earlier. You can also use when needed the handouts with needs and emotions for guidance. Take your time with every question, they are in sequence from 1 to 6, and move on only when you have written something in the one you are working on.

## 4. Integration through artwork (10 min)

Now, using these colored pencils, pastels, and any of the other art materials, allow this need to express itself through this way. Just let yourself go and express what needs to be out at this moment.

## 5. Sharing in pairs (10 min)

I invite you now to find a pair, and share how this experience was for you, what you discovered, maybe share what you just made and what it represents.

## 6. Debriefing (20 min)

### Debriefing questions:

- How are you feeling?
- How was this experience for you?
- How was it to explore the experience and to discover the need?
- What did you discover about your own needs? How about the needs of your partner?
- How was it to feel the need? Did you manage to get to that point?
- How can you stay connected to your needs in the future?
- How can you apply what you discovered here into your daily life?

### Materials:

Handouts: Emotions, Needs, Self-reflection Exercise  
Pens and A4 papers, colored pencils, Pastels, A3 Papers, modeling clay, plasteline

### Tips and tricks

The guided imagery can be done through a journaling exercise if you feel more drawn to that method.

min/max pax | 6 | 20

# Feelings - Emotions

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Feelings likely to be present when we **are** meeting our needs

## **Comfortable**

rested  
content  
satisfied  
relaxed  
refreshed  
nourished  
peaceful  
relieved  
calm  
tranquil  
fulfilled

## **Happy**

glad  
joyful  
cheerful  
delighted  
optimistic  
proud  
ecstatic  
goofy  
amused  
pleased  
energetic

## **Friendly**

warm  
appreciative  
affectionate  
tender  
loving  
compassionate  
sensitive  
playful  
open  
sympathetic  
touched

## **Trusting**

open  
confident  
secure  
hopeful  
grateful  
thankful  
encouraged  
adventurous  
empowered  
centered  
safe

## **Interested**

involved  
eager  
excited  
curious  
alert  
inspired  
fascinated  
enthusiastic  
engaged  
stimulated  
intrigued

Feelings likely to be present when we **are not** meeting our needs

## **Discomfort**

uneasy  
embarrassed  
impatient  
distressed  
impatient  
hurt  
restless  
jealous  
exasperation  
self-conscious  
bored

## **Sad**

unhappy  
depressed  
lonely  
miserable  
melancholy  
blue  
gloomy  
sorrowful  
regretful  
hopeless  
lethargic

## **Mad**

irritable  
frustrated  
grumpy  
irritated  
angry  
bitter  
furious  
resentful  
hostile  
enraged  
outraged

## **Scared**

afraid  
fearful  
worried  
anxious  
insecure  
helpless  
nervous  
horrified  
terrified  
apprehensive  
guarded

## **Confused**

bloggled  
troubled  
torn  
perplexed  
suspicious  
hesitant  
puzzled  
skeptical  
shocked  
rattled  
indifferent

# Needs Inventory

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The following list of needs is neither exhaustive nor definitive. It is meant as a starting place to support anyone who wishes to engage in a process of deepening self-discovery and to facilitate greater understanding and connection between people.



## CONNECTION

- acceptance
- affection
- appreciation
- belonging
- cooperation
- communication
- closeness
- community
- companionship
- compassion
- consideration
- consistency
- empathy
- inclusion
- intimacy
- love
- mutuality
- nurturing
- respect/self-respect
- safety
- security
- stability
- support
- to know and be known
- to see and be seen
- to understand and be understood
- trust
- warmth

## PHYSICAL WELL BEING

- air
- food
- movement/exercise
- rest/sleep
- sexual expression
- safety
- shelter
- touch
- water

## AUTONOMY

- choice
- freedom
- independence space
- spontaneity

## HONESTY

- authenticity
- integrity
- presence

## PLAY

- joy
- humor

## PEACE

- beauty
- communion ease
- equality
- harmony
- inspiration
- order

## MEANING

- awareness
- celebration of life
- challenge
- clarity
- competence
- consciousness
- contribution creativity
- discovery
- efficacy
- effectiveness growth
- hope
- learning
- mourning
- participation purpose
- self expression stimulation
- to matter
- understanding

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# Self reflection - Exercise

<b>1. WHAT HAPPENED?</b> Write exactly what the other person said or did	<b>2. WHAT WERE YOUR THOUGHTS?</b> Write what inner dialogue you were having in that moment, about the other person, about yourself and about the situation. No censorship
<b>3a. HOW DID YOU FEEL IN THAT MOMENT?</b>	<b>3b. HOW DO YOU FEEL NOW THINKING ABOUT THAT SITUATION?</b>
<b>4a. WHAT NEEDS OF YOURS DO YOU THINK WERE AFFECTED THEN?</b>	<b>4b. WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU KNOW, IN RELATION TO WHAT HAPPENED?</b>
<b>5a. HOW DOES THIS NEED FEEL IN YOUR BODY? WHERE DO YOU FEEL IT? WHAT IS IT LIKE? STAY WITH THIS SENSATION.</b>	<b>5b. THIS NEED/ENERGY/QUALITY IS IN YOU REGARDLESS OF THE NEED BEING MET OR UNMET. STAY WITH THIS FEELING.</b>
<b>6a. WHAT COULD YOU HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY, IN THAT SITUATION IN ORDER TO HAVE MET THIS NEED?</b>	<b>6b. WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW TO MEET THIS NEED?</b>

# Personal expression

## What is **personal expression**?

English author, essayist and playwright Fay Weldon said that “The desire for self-expression afflicts people when they feel there is something of themselves which is not getting through to the outside world.” Personal expression is self-expression, in the sense that it encompasses all the ways in which we display and assert our individual traits, characteristics, internal beliefs, or feelings through our actions and choices. It is the process of authentically putting ourselves out into the world. Expressing ourselves means showing our true spirit and character, allowing people to see the totality of who we are. The process of expressing one’s self is realized through very diverse actions, ranging

from the simplest, such as facial expressions, movements, body postures, silence, words, to the most complex: clothing, hairstyle, art forms, career choices, etc.

Expressing our personality creates a cyclical process: whatever arises inside of us is manifested on the outside, which influences our surroundings and relationships, which, in turn, influences and changes our self. The process of expressing our self is, therefore, also the process that builds our self, through constant feedback loops mediated by our feelings and evaluations: we manifest a part of us and the feelings we have afterwards inform us whether or not it is a part we wish to keep.

## How to **express yourself**?

There is no recipe for expression, but one of the most important things is allowing yourself to try and experiment. In the beginning you may find inspiration from people you notice or you may have your own ideas, curiosities, or impulses. Notice the ideas you’re having, the feelings you’re feeling, preferences or even lack of interests. Allow these to influence your choices, dictate an action, or come out through writing, drawing, painting, all the while noticing how letting them out makes you feel.

Even if the idea of expressing yourself might sound simple, the daily bombardment from our surroundings with messages about how we should behave, dress, think, what or who

we should like, it may make it extremely difficult to actually put your true self out there.

Even if we are not aware, we express ourselves all the time. The things we say, the things we do or do not do, the choices we make, the clothes we wear, the relationships we have, they all say something about how we are at a certain point in life. For example, if we usually spend little to no time arranging our hair in the morning, it may mean that our looks are not important to us. Noticing and becoming aware of the things we already express is also a way to better regulate our self-expression by making conscious choices about what to keep and what not to keep, depending on what is closer to my authentic self.

## **Personal expression** and resilience

As mentioned previously, personal expression is a process of testing and regulation of our self: we express our self to create our self. It is a process which, at an individual level, helps us become more in tune with our authentic self, which further allows us to feel more confident, satisfied and embrace what we really are. Expressing our true self also allows us to build more honest and strong relationships, which, we already know, is a cornerstone of resilience.

Inhibiting our natural tendency and need for self-expression leads to all sorts of malaise, especially anxiety and dissatisfaction with our lives, ourselves, and the world around us. Whereas putting ourselves out there allows us to feel satisfied, valuable, capable, strong and hopeful. It helps us to better know and trust ourselves and our qualities, which enables us to access the resources we need in the face of adversity.

# Session Planning

## Title: **The Human Art Exhibition**

**Timing:** 2 hrs 35 min (two sessions) + 15 min break in between

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Differentiate between channels that can be used to express oneself

Choose what is important for me to express and use the appropriate channels to express it

## Methodology **step by step**

### Timing for **each step:**

- 1. Introductory discussion (15 min)**  
Open discussion on the meaning of self-expression, the ways in which it can be done and the importance of it.
- 2. Individual reflection (30 min)**  
Participants reflect on one's own channels for self-expression, their use, the content expressed, and the important things to express for each person. Writing down the answers.
- 3. Preparing the exhibition (10 min)**  
Each participant chooses what is important to express and the channel, prepares a brief "art piece", names it.
- 4. Break (15 min)**
- 5. The Exhibition (70 min)**  
Make pairs and prepare the curators. (5 min)  
Run the Human Art Exhibition: 2min presentation + 1min receiving appreciation / person (60 min total for 20 participants)  
Reading, receiving and taking in the appreciation. (5 min)
- 6. Debriefing (30 min)**

**Setting of the room, participants distribution:** In the corners of the room and along the walls, place many different materials (art supplies, clothes, make-up, toys, musical instruments).

## Instructions to participants

- 1. Introductory discussion (15 min)**  
*Today we'll dive more deeply into the topic of self-expression. What is self-expression? What does it mean to express yourself?  
How do different people express themselves? What channels can someone use? What do people do in order to make statements about themselves? How do they say "This is me"?  
What is the difference between expressing yourself online vs. offline. In what ways do people approach these two differently?*

## 2. Individual reflection (30 min)

I will now give you a few questions to reflect on. The questions will come in turns and you will have a certain time to answer each. I invite you also to write down the answers as you go.

- What are the channels that you usually use to express yourself? How and when do you use them? (e.g. If music is my channel, I can create music, share my favourite songs on social media, play my favourite songs for my friends at parties, etc.) - 5 min
- What do you usually express through these channels? What messages are you sending? - 10 min
- What are the most important things you would like to express about yourself? (E.g. characteristics, values, preferences) - 10 min

## 3. Preparing the exhibition (10 min)

In the next moments we will organize a Human Exhibition! In this exhibition, each of you will be an "art piece", expressing something in some way. We will have time to prepare the art pieces and *after that, run the exhibition itself.*

*In order to prepare the art piece, choose one of the things you decided are important to express about yourself. Then choose, from all that are available, around you or inside you, either a channel that you are not usually using, or one that you believe would be the most suitable for what you want to express. Prepare a very brief (1-2 minutes) moment in which you express something about yourself or make a statement about yourself, using the chosen channel. This will be your art piece. Remember, however, that we are not talking about art in the professional sense. We are talking about the simple "art" of self-presentation in everyday life. You do not have to prepare something extraordinary. In the end, you can even give a title to your moment. You have 10 minutes for this.*

## 4. Break (15 min)

## 5. The Exhibition (70 min)

*Now that the pieces are ready, quickly pair up with somebody and describe your piece to each other, just sharing the channel, the message and the title, but not actually performing or revealing the moment/piece itself. In the next minutes, each of you will be a "work of art", containing a message and, as every work of art, you will have a curator to present you - that is, your partner. You will be curators for each other.*

*Generally, art pieces will come in front one after the other, each will have its individual moment, while the rest of you will be the audience. The curator will come first to introduce the title and channel used (this is especially important for channels which are not so obvious, e.g. decisions one makes or places they appreciate). The "art piece" will then come forward and have their moment. The curator will appear again in the end to close the moment by sharing the message intended and thanking the audience.*

*The role of the audience is to pay attention to each moment and offer appreciation. How you, as the audience, do this, is first by clapping after each moment. You know how to do this. After this, there will be 1 minute in which you will write on post-its feelings that arose in you during the expressive moment and words of appreciation for the respective piece (e.g. it can be something about the message that was expressed, the way in which it was expressed, how you received it, or other elements). Then, you will run and stick the post-its on the "art piece" and that's it, we move forward. As an art piece, after you receive your words of appreciation, please keep them with you, but don't read them yet. At the end of the whole exhibition, we will have a moment in which everybody will be able to read their messages.  
(Exhibition happens - 60 min)*

*Thank you for your beautiful presentations! A big round of applause for our exhibition tonight! Now it's time to enjoy our glory, so take your post-its and have a moment to read them.*

## 6. Debriefing (30 min)



### Debriefing questions:

- Debriefing questions:
- How do you feel right now?
- How did you choose your channel and your message?
- How was it to perform your moment, to express yourself? How did you feel?
- How was it to see others expressing themselves?
- How did you feel receiving the appreciation, being clapped for and then reading the words?
- What did you discover about self expression and how YOU express yourself from this exercise? (the channels you use, the messages you send)
- How can you become more conscious about what and how you express in everyday life?
- Is there anything else you take from this exercise?

### Handouts:

#### Tips and tricks

- Take into account that the time for this activity increases with each extra participant, therefore consider the time you have available when establishing the number of participants.
- The curator part can be done easier by having an assistant facilitator and have them be the curator for all participants.
- Read the material attached to this activity in order to be better able to conduct the discussion.
- You can invite participants to contribute with pieces of their own clothing to the materials for the exhibition if they have a spare, or even to ask them before the activity to bring some materials.

### Materials:

- art supplies, clothes, make-up tools and products, toys, musical instruments. The diversity and number should be high enough that everyone has options to choose from.
- post-its, pens

min/max pax

min 4

max 24

# Purpose

## What is purpose all about?

Purpose is typically defined as the reason for which something is done or created, the reason for which something exists. The reason for our existence is a deep philosophical question and it is obviously exaggerated to claim that this handbook will help anyone discover that. In this section, however, we talk about finding a purpose in matching our talents, resources, skills with the needs of the community we are part of.

A quote by American author Henry Van Dyke says “Use what talents you possess; the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best.” We are all small pieces of many complex systems. There’s the universe at the larger scale and

there’s the smaller scale systems: communities, households, villages, etc. These systems are complex both structurally, in how they are built from all the different components, and dynamically, in the sense of the relationships between the parts. The dynamics of systems are largely based on giving and receiving and the world functions through these exchanges between the parts. Systems, communities, groups, function through exchanges between people and their resources. Therefore, finding your purpose can be specifically about finding what is it that you can put out there to support the functioning or thriving of the community.

## How to create purpose?

Finding the match between what we have and what the community needs is a process of exploration, experimentation and calibration. We need to first get to know ourselves, mindfully explore our values, beliefs, qualities and skills and be prepared to own them. Then we have to turn our mindful eye towards our community and notice possible gaps, something that is missing, or things that are not functioning very well. The next step is to experiment with putting different pieces of ourselves (values, qualities, skills) in different places in the community and notice how we

feel and how the community reacts. This is the process of calibration, in which we can adjust which part of us we put out there, how much, in what way, in which places, depending on how it makes us feel, until we find a configuration that feels good enough and that we can sustain.

It is important to keep in mind that there is a place in the world for any part of us. If it doesn’t feel right, it is possible that we haven’t found that place just yet, we haven’t found the right community for us.

## How is it related to resilience?

Defining purpose as the right match between what we have and what our community needs supports resilience by allowing ourselves to feel valued, to connect to something bigger and find meaning.

Research shows that resilience depends not only on our individual, innate characteristics, but also on how each of us can function in the surrounding society. There is a strong relationship between resilience and opportunities for social inclusion, active involvement in the community, giving and receiving social support, being influenced by and influencing

others, experiencing positive social interactions, and feeling companionship.

Volunteering, a behavior of active and intrinsically-driven involvement in the community, which is typically built exactly on the match between the particular interests, qualities and skills of each person, has been pointed at many times as being associated with high levels of well-being.

All these show that resilience depends not only on what we get from the society, but also on what each of us can give to the community of people around us.

# Session Planning

## Title: **Imaginary cities**

**Timing:** 90 min

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Recognizing community needs

Recognizing one's own abilities

Appreciating the value of sharing your own resources

Matching one's resources with the needs of their community

## Methodology **step by step**

### Timing for **each step:**

#### **1. Introduction (5 min)**

Open discussion on the importance of sharing one's skills and resources with the community. Use the information from the introduction to support participants in understanding the framework

#### **2. Imaginary City (70 min)**

Divide the participants into groups of 5-7 people (depending on how many you have in total). Each group will represent a city and the participants will be the citizens. Place on the floor 10-11 printed house templates for each group/city, so that it looks like the setting of a city, and post-it cards in four different colours for each group.

Participants have time to explore their own city and the buildings in it. They are invited to decorate the buildings together and establish the purpose of each building, the name (e.g. City Council).

Participants will think about their strengths: knowledge in some field, practical (or not) skills, an ability to feel a certain way or attitude towards some issue. They rank them according to how developed each of these is, then write them on post-it notes like this: they write their top strength on four different post-its of the same colour, their second on three different post-its of the same colour, the third on two post-its, and the fourth on just one post-it.

Each group collects the post-it notes from all their citizens, shuffles them and places them at random between houses of the Imaginary City.

Invite participants to assign values and strengths from the post-its to each building, according to where they believe those strengths are needed the most or where they are the most relevant.

At the end, participants discuss how their strengths influence their city and are invited to name the city based on the final picture with the buildings and strengths present (e.g. Empacity). Invite them to also visit other cities, see what they have in common and how they are different. Ask them to choose 3-4 strengths they would wish to import for their own city.

#### **3. Debriefing (15 m)**

# Instructions to participants

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## 1. Introduction (5 min)

Today we'll talk about personal strengths and how we use them. What ideas does this topic bring to your mind? What is a strength? How is it relevant for us to notice our strengths and what can we do if we are aware of them?

Today we will also introduce the concept of purpose... (Explain flexibly and interactively based on the information provided in the beginning)

## 2. Imaginary City (70 min)

Now we'll play a game, so let's first try to split in groups of 6-7 people.

(Place the house templates, post-its and pencils in front of each group)

Imagine that you all come to the most ordinary in the world but empty city. It consists of a dozen or so houses. There are buildings suitable for shops, service establishments, bakeries and confectioneries, a park, a river and a lake. There is a place where people can calm down and look for Communication with the Absolute and a place where people could meet and enjoy time with their friends during the weekend.

People who start to live in this city can live an ordinary life. They probably will meet each other, they will also meet with ordinary joys and sorrows, with friends and with loneliness, with youth and old age.

The buildings are empty. They are waiting only for people and ideas that will live in them.

So each group will be a city and will have a number of buildings, as you can see in front of you. I would invite you to have a little chat in each group and decide what kind of buildings you want in your city, what is their purpose, how are they named, how do they look like. Then feel free to decorate them as you feel it represents your city. You have 15 minutes for this.

Now each of you take a moment and reflect on your own strengths. They can be knowledge in some field, practical (or not) skills, an ability to feel a certain way or attitude towards some issue. Write as many of you as you can on a piece of paper. Take 5 minutes for this. (...) After you've written them, I invite you to evaluate how well you have developed each of these strengths and rank them from the most developed to the least developed. (2 min) When you're done, take post-its from the pile in front of you and write your strengths on them in this way: your top strength on four different post-its of the same colour, your second on three different post-its of the same colour, the third on two post-its, and the fourth on just one post-it. So you will have four colours of post-its and a different number of each (4, 3, 2, 1).

In each group, collect the post-its from all citizens and place them at random between the buildings of the city. Take a look at what strengths you have there and assign them to each building, according to where you believe those strengths are needed the most or where they are the most relevant. [Take 10 minutes for this.](#)

Now take another 10 minutes for your group and discuss how the particular strengths that are present or dominant in your city may influence the dynamics of the city or other characteristics. You can even give a name to your city based on this.

I invite you to finally take a tour and visit the other cities. Look at what they have in common with yours and where they are different. Discuss also with your fellow citizens if you'd like to import any of the strengths to your city and what for. You are allowed to import 3-4 strengths.

## 3. Debriefing (15 m)

### Debriefing questions:

1. How was it for you to be in this exercise?
2. Which part was the most pleasant and which did you find the most challenging?
3. Was there something that surprised you when you were exploring your strengths? How about later, when distributing them around the city?
4. How do you use your strengths in your day to day life? How do you fit them into the spaces that exist in your community?
5. What do you take with you after this exercise?

**Handouts:** House template

### Tips and tricks

- If the group is smaller (e.g. 5) you can allow them to fill in more post-its with strengths
- For some participants, especially young ones, identifying their own strengths and values can be difficult. Notice and support them with additional questions if this happens (e.g. "What do you like to do?", "Is there anything you like most?")

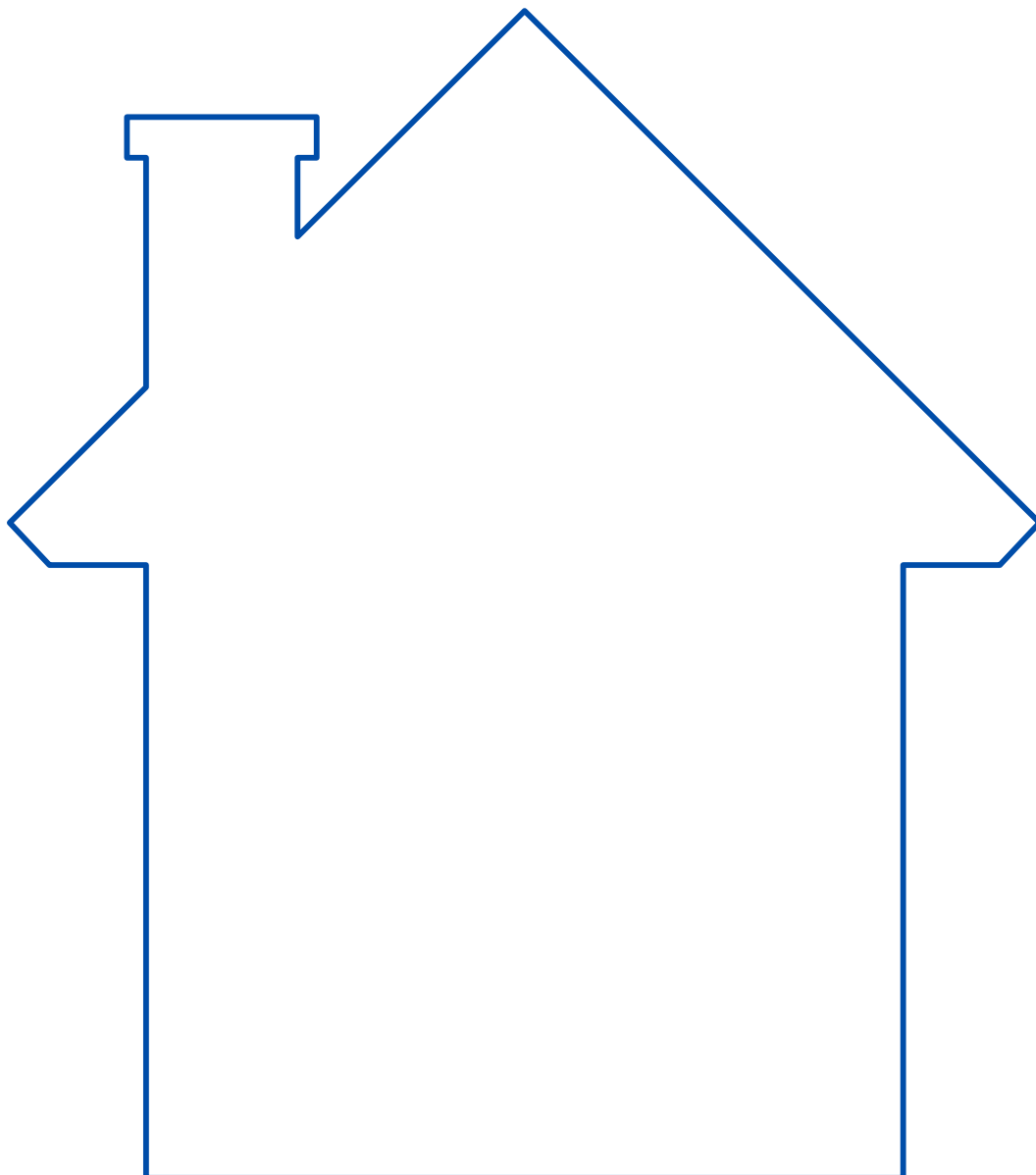
### Materials:

Materials: post-it notes of four colours, pens, crayons, pencils, printed house templates

min/max pax

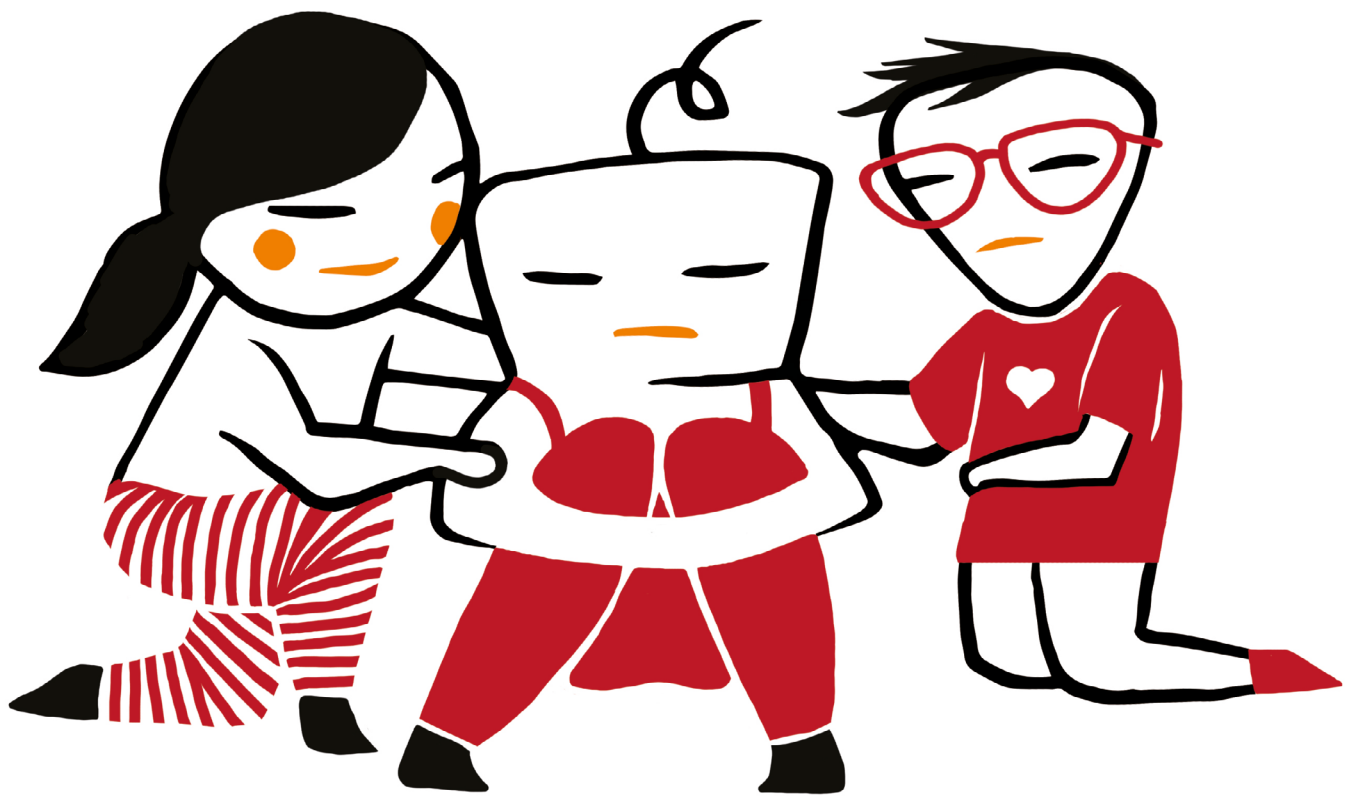
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| 28



Chapter  
**02**

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**Community**

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# 1. What does it mean

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The term *community*<sup>1</sup> comes from the Latin *communitas*, which comes from the greek *κοινότης* and it literally means “that has the quality of being common” (a group of things that share the same quality). It is used to make reference to the people who belong to the same folk, region or nation. It also refers to a group of people that are related by language, religion, values and/or a definition of reciprocal social roles. Lastly, the term community is also used to name the people who gather voluntarily or spontaneously when they have a common objective or share the same interests.

The classical concept about what a community is was developed by the sociologist and historian Max Weber, who defines it as: “a social relation that is inspired by the subjective feeling (traditional or affective) of the participants of a whole”. For Weber the trait that characterizes a community is the prevalence of the collaboration over the particular interests and competitiveness.

Communities are characterized by a series of features that define them:

## Identity

Belonging to a community builds the identity of those who take part in it. The thoughts, values, preferences, etc. of the participants of a community are built upon the shared meanings by the group.

## Common objective

Those who take part in a community share some objectives or goals to achieve. Belonging to a community means to contribute to accomplish those purposes.

## Compromise

The existence and the endurance of a community require a series of agreements and consensus, explicit or tacit, which regulates its functioning. The compromise of the members with this system allows keeping the harmony and the accomplishment of the common objective.

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<sup>6535</sup> Real Academia Española. (2001). *Diccionario de la Lengua Española – DRAE*. 22ª Edición. Ed. Espasa Calpe.

<sup>0</sup> Weber, M. (1958). *Ensayos sobre metodología sociológica*. Amorrortu Editores. Buenos Aires. Traducción de: Weber, M. (1922) *Gesammelte aufsätze zur wissenschaftslehre*.

<sup>1</sup> Durkheim, E. (1998). *El suicidio*. Akal, 5ª Edición. Madrid. Traducción de Durkheim, E. (1897). *Le Suicide*.

<sup>2</sup> Bauman, Z. (2003). *Comunidad: En busca de seguridad en un mundo hostil*. Buenos Aires: Ed. Siglo XXI. (2001). *Community Seeking Safei)* in an Insscure World.

## Culture

The members share values (which determine what is allowed and what is not within the community), traditions, a world vision and an education that transmit, from generation to generation, the features of the community.

## Interaction

The members of a community not only share space, but they also establish some interactions that are socially regulated by reciprocal roles with learnt functions for every single member. The communities also have some external interactions with other coexisting communities.

## Dynamic

The communities evolve, they are in constant change; even if they have a sense of continuity, an identity that perpetuates within its culture, they are not static. The common objectives and needs change as well as the normative systems, the values and the customs.

## 2. Community and Mental Heal

The relation between community bonds and mental health have been studied from the beginning of sociological science. Durkheim, in his book "The suicide" (1897), describes a cluster of mental health problems that can be explained as a product of social anomie, this is the lack or dysfunctionality of social norms. Experiences like rejection, uncertainty, desperation or autolytic behavior (suicide) are many times related with the deterioration or breach of social bonds, with the lack of solidarity and the increase of competitiveness among people in society, and/or with the inability of social structure to provide the people with everything they need to achieve the goals that society itself imposes to its members. The erosion and breach of the bonds between individuals and society has (or may have) serious psychological consequences.

Actually, the changes that the industrial revolution promoted in the social structure, aggravated by the so-called "Liquid Modernity", have provoked that the social identity and the features that characterize a community have been diluted: territory, steady bonds, profession and attachment to a social group get lost in the anonymity of the big cities where more of the 70% of the world population lives.

When the human groups that we inhabit stop fulfilling the proper functions of a community, the feeling of belonging, the security, the identity, etc., can get affected and, with this, generating negative consequences on the mental health of the people.

“

*The regulatory function of the other's gaze on one's own behavior is attenuated or disappears. This nearly disappearance of the community life has its consequences. (...) The mental disorder is also a force that pushes the individual to isolate from the group and the society.”*

**(Ardila & Galende, 2011)**

To sum up, we people are social beings who need to have or build those psychosocial spaces that we inhabit, called community, in order to experience emotional wellbeing. In the present chapter, we will see several topics that might help us to promote the community bonds among people.



# Gender perspective and intersectionality

## What does “Gender perspective” mean?

Commonly, the word “gender” is used to refer to the cultural values, roles, identities and behaviors that are usually attributed to men and women, and that we learn to perform as we grow. As an important part of our culture and our way of being, gender is related to the resources that we can develop in relation to our mental health.

In this sense, when we speak about “Gender perspective”, we refer to approaching and working with a specific phenomenon (in this case, resilience and the promotion of mental health), taking into account how gender impacts it.

## How do we develop it?

According to the previously said, developing a “gender perspective” implies:

- 1.** Recognizing masculinity and femininity as social and historical constructions and, therefore, they might vary between different cultures, times and societies.  
*E.g. the behaviors or the outfits associated with males – via masculinity role models – may not be the same from country to country (like wearing a skirt in Scotland).*
- 2.** Observing the relationships that occur between women and men (but also between men themselves, and women themselves) and identifying the norms that go through the masculinity and femininity role models. Sometimes, changing the way we perform these roles can cause discomfort or can be interpreted as a mental health problem.  
*E.g. authority is associated with masculinity and generosity with femininity*
- 3.** Knowing that “gender” refers not only to the relationships between males and females but also to the processes that happen in different levels of society: institutions, political and economic systems, culture, science and technology, etc.  
*E.g. An important library chain in Spain which only exposes 32% of female authors in the featured books section while in the less featured – juvenile and romantic – section, 97% of the books exposed are written by female authors.*
- 4.** Exploring the subjective dimension of personality and identity. That is to say, according to our gender, we interiorize specific ways to perceive and define ourselves, to feel and express what we think or feel, to search for or receive help, to participate in one or another activity, to relate to our own or others’ bodies, etc.  
*E.g. Studies on gender inequality in health have shown that women have historically visited health services more often thanks to a higher eagerness to accept help and follow the prescribed treatments. On the other hand, in societies where the traditional male role is more related to the unwillingness to show weakness, men usually access health services when there’s already an advanced situation of physical or psychological crisis.*

## Intersectionality: is it just about “gender”?

The intersectional gender perspective arose within the activist movement that not only questioned sexism and the traditional role of women in society, but also analyzed other oppressive systems (racism, classism, heterosexism, ableism). It helps to understand how different systems generate certain situations such as the exposure to specific kinds of discrimination, opportunities to access certain rights and citizenship, or to some privileged activities in society.

The word “intersection” refers to meeting point, or a crossing between two or more lines. Concretely, the term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989 by the afro-descendant professor Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, who discussed about how racism generates a

different way of experience our own gender (among other things, such as social class, sexual orientation, disabilities, age, and so on). All these discussions became, for them, an important tool to reverse these social inequalities and to protect each other.

“Intersectionality” is indeed an approach that explains how gender, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation (and other conditions like age or handicaps) are involved within the oppressions we face and the privileges we enjoy in society. These oppressions and privileges exist not because gender, race, class or sexuality are biologically determined, but because there are social dominance systems that favor some traits before others.

## Intersectionality and Resilience

Gender and other categories mentioned before are closely connected to some key elements that promote and protect our mental health (such as the way we express and communicate emotions, the way we relate to each other, how we ask for help, how we relate to the community, what resources do we have to empower ourselves, and many others).

Being aware of inequalities that persist in our societies and which pose important barriers to mental health promotion enables social

change, personal and collective processes that support us to face adversities and promote resilience. In other words, taking into consideration how perceptions about gender, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, and other characteristics influence our mental health might help us develop strategies to protect it.

# Session Planning

## Title: **Walking on the line**

**Timing:** 120 minutes (two 60 minutes sessions and a 10 minutes break)

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Become aware of how gender and other attributes influence how we experience and respond to the environment

Question privileges related to certain bodies and identities

Reflect on social resources to develop emotional resilience, related to gender and other social structures

Develop empathy

Strengthen social and collective responsibility

### Methodology **step by step**

#### Timing for **each step:**

##### **1. Introduction (20 min)**

Group discussion about gender.

Ask different reflection questions related to gender, collect the ideas from the participants and write them down on the flipchart, to use them later in the debriefing.

##### **2. Drawing your own body (20 mins)**

Give participants a little time to draw the silhouette of their own body (2 min)

Give a flipchart with the following questions:

- How do I know that I am a woman / a man – girl / boy?
- When do I feel comfortable being a woman / man? When have I felt uncomfortable?
- How do I identify with the other gender?
- Have I felt special or different treatment for being a woman / man or identifying with another gender?
- Apart from woman / man, what else defines me? (examples of social roles and qualifying adjectives can be given)

Participants draw the answers to the questions on their silhouettes (15 min)

##### **3. Debriefing (1) (20 min)**

Take the questions on the flipchart in turn and invite the participants to share their thoughts and feelings.

##### **4. Break (10 m)**

##### **5. Walking on the line (40 min)**

Empty the room as much as possible, so the participants have space to move.

Give roles to 6 participants (from the attached material). The rest of them will be spectators.

Participants walk according to their response to situations read by the facilitator (from the attached material).

Invite the participants to reflect after they have advanced or stayed in place for each statement.

##### **6. Debriefing (2) (20 min)**

**Setting of the room, participants distribution:** Participants start together in a circle and then they work individually. After this, they will be distributed in a horizontal row, from which they will take some steps. The space must be wide enough to facilitate these different movements.

# Instructions to participants

## 1. Introduction (20 min)

Today we are going to reflect on different situations that define an important part of us and the others. We will start by reflecting on gender. What do you think when you hear this word? *What do you think is the difference between gender and sex? Does gender and/or sex influence how we think, feel and relate to each other?*

## 2. Drawing your own body (20 mins)

*In this part, each of you should find a space that seems comfortable to you to draw a picture. I will give you a sheet of paper and markers, and each one will have to draw a silhouette that represents your body.*

*Now that the silhouettes are drawn, I invite you to draw within the silhouette what best represents your thoughts and emotions regarding the following:*

*(Reveal the flipchart with the questions and read them to the participants)*

*You will have about 15 minutes for this.*

*If you have finished, I invite you to come together in a circle.*

## 3. Debriefing (1) (20 min)

Let's reflect and share a little bit on what we have drawn.

## 4. Break (10 m)

## 5. Walking on the line (40 min)

*We will now do a performance for which we need 6 volunteers. Let's try to have an equal number of boys and girls.*

*The 6 volunteers, please line up in a horizontal row at one end of the room, as if standing on an imaginary starting line. Each volunteer will receive a piece of paper and they will hold it in their hands so that the rest can see it.*

*(Give a paper with a role to each volunteer.)*

*Now I am going to read some situations out loud, one by one. If you think that your character can perform them, take a step forward. If not, stay in the same place. I also invite you to pay attention to what you may feel and what difficulties, facilities, needs or supports you would detect in every situation.*

*(Read statements one by one, from the hand-out, waiting for the participants to make their move.)*

*(After each statement and after the participants have advanced or stayed in place, ask:)*

*Why do you believe you could or could not have done this?*

*(At the end:)*

*Thank you for your participation and let's give a round of applause to the volunteers!*

*Now let's come back in a circle and I invite you to reflect on the process we have been through, whether you were a participant or a spectator.*

## 6. Debriefing (2) (20 min)

### Debriefing questions:

#### Debriefing (1):

- How do you feel about your answers to the questions, your drawings?
- Let's look at what we discussed earlier about gender. Can you find commonalities between these answers? How about differences?
- Do you identify any gender stereotypes in all these answers?
- What are some difficulties and some advantages of belonging to the assigned gender?
- Comparing various answers to the same question, can you see ways in which people sharing the same gender experience it differently?

#### Debriefing (2):

- How did you feel when you stepped forward? And how did you feel when you didn't?
- How did it feel to get separated from the rest of the group?
- What difficulties, facilities and needs did you feel or detect? What support do you think you would need in some of these situations?
- Do you think it has always been this hard or easy to be in this situation? How do you think it was different in the past? Why is it different now?
- How could gender make us experience the environment in different ways? What else, apart from gender, does this?

### Materials:

Flipcharts, markers, large sheets of paper, stationery material (colored sheets, glues, illustrations, modeling clay, colored pencils)  
Printout papers with roles (in the handout)  
List of everyday situations (in the handout)

### Handouts: Roles and situations

min/max pax

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# Roles and situations - **Handout**

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The following roles will be written or printed out, each on a separate sheet of paper:

- Latin girl with hearing impairment
- Heterosexual trans girl
- Black lesbian girl
- Bisexual Moroccan boy
- White boy in a wheelchair
- Straight English guy
- Black guy with psychiatric diagnosis
- Immigrant non-nationalized girl
- Old man with Alzheimer

The following situations will be read by the facilitator during the activities, after the roles above are assigned to participants:

- Attend an oral conference
- Get on the subway
- Kiss your partner in public
- Play football
- Swim
- Getting married in church
- Watch TV in English language without subtitles
- Vote in state elections
- Adopt a child
- Get a job
- Go to college
- Become a teacher



# Mutual Aid

## What does it **mean**?

Mutual Aid refers to any practice of collective organization and cooperation aimed at overcoming the difficulties of life. This strategy is not exclusive to certain people or groups but is characteristic of every gregarious species and of the human being, in general.

The concept became popular thanks to the essay of Piotr Kröpotkin: “ Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution “ (1902). In this work the author argues that cooperation, not competition, is the driving mechanism behind evolution. This observation, proven in nature, contrasts with the common tendency in our society to em-

phasize individual competence, a tendency based on a common misinterpretation of Darwin’s theory of evolution



*The animal species, in which individual struggle has been reduced to its narrowest limits, and the practice of mutual aid has attained the greatest development, are invariably the most numerous, the most prosperous, and the most open to further progress”*

**(Kröpotkin, 1902)**

Some basic ideas about mutual aid:

**It is based on solidarity, not charity:** It is a support offered horizontally, between equals, and not vertically, from who has more to who has less (power, money, resources, tools, etc.). Furthermore, it is offered reciprocally among all people who share needs, difficulties or goals.

**We practice it all the time:** Contrary to what we could think, much of our society and our daily life is based on mutual aid. For example, when we share tasks in a group work at school, when we organize with our friends to go on vacation together (and spend less money), when we organize in unions to defend our labor rights, etc.

**It is a source of empowerment and well-being:** They are activities that allow us to break the isolation and feel part of a collective, they help us to see the social dimension of our difficulties or needs, to have agency about our life and that of our community, and to value our own experience as a source of knowledge that can serve us and other people. This is the reason why mutual aid is basic to promoting resilience.

## Mutual aid principles

Not all group activities can be considered as mutual support. To be considered as such, they must comply with a series of basic principles:

- **Common experience or shared necessity:** all the people in these groups have a common goal, shared barriers to overcome and/or have experienced or are experiencing a similar situation from which to share learning.
- **Reciprocity and horizontality:** support is a round trip. Simultaneously or asynchronously, everyone in the group supports each other. Moreover, there are no hierarchical differences in roles (who gives care - who receives care), but they are interchangeable.

- **Co-responsibility:** there is a shared commitment to the personal and collective well-being of all participating people. Each member assumes a part of the tasks or obligations required for the common good.
- **Willfulness and respect:** participation in these spaces is free and decided by the people themselves, both in the sense of who wants to participate in them, and in the commitment of what each member can contribute to the other ones.
- **Autonomy and self-management:** organization and coordination of the mutual aid activities are in the hands of their own participants; they decide their functioning and are free from external control.

## How to engage in mutual aid activities

Although most of the activities of mutual support in which we participate throughout our lives are informal, there are also formal activities, more structured and with explicit rules that can help us face some specific difficulties in life. Some examples of these formal activities are: mutual aid groups, accompaniment networks, study or discussion groups, or peer-to-peer support. See the resource at the end of this part for more details.

Useful guidelines if we want to participate in a formal or informal mutual aid activity (about each of which you can find more details in the attached resource) are:

- Identify the “we” of mutual aid
- Search for existing resources and join
- Start a new path if there is no path
- Learn about the history, dynamics, and principles of mutual support
- Be compassionate and sympathetic with yourself and others

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### References:

Kröpotkin, P. (1902). *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. Project Gutenberg Ed. 2014.

# Session Planning

**Title: Crossing the mighty river**

**Timing:** 90 minutes

## Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Value cooperation as the foundation of the common good

Recognize mutual aid as a basic factor for survival and evolution in nature

Learn basic principles of mutual aid: common experience or shared necessity, reciprocity and co-responsibility

Identify what each member of a group can contribute to the other ones for collective benefit

## Methodology **step by step**

### Timing for each step

#### **1. 1<sup>st</sup> Game: A balloon to survive (5 min)**

This game happens before introducing the topic of the workshop!

Each participant receives a balloon and a piece of string of about 50 cm. They have to inflate the balloon and tie it to their ankle.

#### **2. Debriefing (1) (15 min)**

#### **3. Introduction (20 min)**

Open discussion about mutual aid and its importance. Collect the ideas and write them down on the flipchart, with the intention of taking them up in the final reflection.

If participants do not share ideas or examples of mutual aid, write on the flipchart the following ideas and reflect on them:

- Mutual Aid refers to all kind of practices of collective organization and cooperation aimed at overcoming the difficulties of life.
- Mutual Aid is not exclusive to certain people or groups but is characteristic of every gregarious species and of the human being, in general.

#### **4. 2<sup>nd</sup> Game: Crossing the mighty river (20 min)**

For this game, we need groups of 4, 5 or 6 participants. Each member of each group will have a kind of functional diversity: 1/3 of the group will be blind, 1/3 will be deaf and mute and 1/3 of the group will have no arms.

Use the sleep masks or head scarves to blindfold some of them, while those without arms can keep their arms crossed, leave their hands in their pockets or bind them on their backs.

Participants will have to cross an imaginary river and avoid being eaten by wild animals. Stop the game after a few minutes (5-10 min, depending on the number of people in each group) by representing the animals coming to eat them.

Repeat the game for each of the groups.

#### **5. Debriefing (2) (10 min)**

#### **6. General debriefing (20 min)**

**Setting of the room, participants distribution:** Steps 1 and 2. For both games, participants need an empty space to move freely. Steps 2 and 4. For introduction and debriefings, participants sit in a circle. The space must be wide enough to facilitate these different actions.



# Instructions to participants

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## 1. **1<sup>st</sup> Game: A balloon to survive (20 min)**

We will start with a very simple game. Take this balloon and a piece of string. Inflate the balloon and tie it to your ankle. I will set the timer to 2 minutes and there is only one rule to the game: You need to get through the two minutes without your balloon bursting. Whoever does that, wins the game. Everything is allowed, except hurting each other.

Time starts to run ... NOW!

(After two minutes, we stop and reflect on what happened)

## 2. **Debriefing (1) (15 min)**

## 3. **Introduction (20 min)**

Today we are going to reflect on mutual aid. What do we refer to when we talk about mutual aid? If you had to explain this concept to somebody else in a few simple sentences, how would you do it?

Which experience of mutual aid have you lived or heard of?

What differentiates these mutual support activities from other help or collaboration relationships?

## 4. **2<sup>nd</sup> Game: Crossing the mighty river (30 min)**

For this game, we will create groups of 4-6 people each. Let's do it and then we'll find out the rules of the game!

You are each a group of people with functional diversity. Some of you are blind (1/3 of the group), some of you are deaf and mute (1/3 of the group), and some of you have no arms (1/3 of the group). Those who are blind will use the sleep masks or head scarves, while those without arms can keep their arms crossed, leave their hands in their pockets or bind them on their backs.

The objective of the game is to cross an imaginary river that separates one side of the room from the other one. The river is very strong and deep. You cannot swim in it, falling into the river means drowning. On your river side there are wild animals. If you take too long to cross it, they will come to devour you.

In the middle of the river there is a big stone (a chair). And you have two surfboards (the plastic/wooden boards or strong cardboard pieces). It is not possible to just cross the river surfing, because the river is very strong, and it would drag you.

Time is running, you must try to cross fast or wild animals will come to eat you!

(After a few minutes stop the game by representing the animals coming to eat them. Repeat the game for the other groups and at the end, invite each participant to share.)

## 5. **Debriefing (2) (10 min)**

## 6. **General debriefing (20 min)**

## Debriefing questions:

### Debriefing (1):

- How many of you are “alive”?
  - What happened?
  - How do you feel with what happened?
  - What made you act as you did?
- (It's very likely that participants will try to pop each other's balloons. Therefore, the following questions will apply:)
- Why did you try to pop the other balloons?
  - What was the only rule of the game? What did this rule ask you to do?
  - When did you hear that you must eliminate the other participants, that you had to “defeat the opponents”?
  - What strategy could you have used instead? Is there an alternative to competition?
  - Why do you think we are used to understanding that only one person can win? How come we believe that in order to have winners, there must be losers?
- (If someone notices that it is not necessary to “defeat the opponents”, the following questions can be used as additional reflection:)
- Do you feel you won the game? Does everyone feel like a winner?
  - What makes you feel like a winner?

### Debriefing (2):

- How did you feel about the game?
- Were you able to cross the river? All of you?
- Why did you act as you did?
- What did you do to include everyone? How did you use the capacities of all the members in the group?
- Was there anyone who felt excluded at any point in the game? What were the behaviors or attitudes you identified which made you feel like this?

### General debriefing:

- What were the differences between the first game and the second one? How did our behavior differ in the two games? How come?
- Did all participants and all groups act the same? Were some of them able to cooperate more than others? Why?
- To what extent were we able to cooperate horizontally, by recognizing the abilities of all the participants?
- How does this resemble our everyday life?
- How is it different if the need or difficulty is made explicit? Does it change anything in our tendency to cooperate?

### Materials:

Flipcharts, markers, stationery materials and pencils, a chair, 2/3 sleep masks or head scarves, a plastic/wooden board/strong cardboard pieces (to step on)

**Handouts:** None

### Tips and tricks:

- Make sure the space is wide enough and free of obstacles so that the participants can move freely without risk of injury.
- Take into account the number of participants. Time given to each group to cross the river will depend on the number of participants. At least 7 minutes if they are 4 participants, 8 minutes if they are 5 participants, 9 minutes if they are 6 participants, etc.
- Read the material attached to this activity in order to be better able to conduct the discussion.

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# How to engage in Mutual Aid activities - Resource

Although most of the activities of mutual support in which we participate throughout our lives are informal, there are also formal activities, more structured and with their explicit rules that can help us to face some specific difficulties in life. Some examples of these formal activities are:

- **Mutual Aid Groups:** listening and understanding spaces, free of judgments, in which people with the same problem or difficulty meet to share experiences, learnings and resources to help themselves and others overcome their situation.
- **Accompaniment Networks:** self-organized and coordinated groups of people to provide support in times of crisis (personal or collective) or in the face of life's difficulties.
- **Study or Discussion Groups:** collective learning activities, based on shared reflection on various topics of interest to all their participants.
- **Peer-to-peer support:** interpersonal support activity between people with a shared difficulty. When it is not performed as a work activity, roles can be interchangeable between participants.

There are some questions that we can take into account to guide us, if we want to participate in a formal or informal mutual aid activity:

- **It is necessary to identify the “we” of mutual aid.** Reflect on what are the oppressions that cross you, what social barriers you want to overcome and / or what common difficulties you have with a group of people in your environment. You may discover more than one “us” in which to participate.
- **Search existing resources and join:** It is possible that the mutual aid activities you need already exist in your environment (even if you don't know them yet). Do the search on websites and social networks, ask people of your community. It is easier to join your efforts than to start something new.
- **Start a new path if there is no path.** Do not resign yourself if you do not find an organized space on the subject or need for which you seek mutual aid. We can always start a new activity by ourselves if necessary. Find people in the community with the same need and invite them to participate.
- **Learn about the history, dynamics, and principles of mutual support.** There is a lot of systematized experience on how these spaces are born and function, on horizontal leadership, promotion of shared responsibilities, functioning of a collaborative organization, etc. We can learn from those who have already shared their experience.
- **Be compassionate and sympathetic with yourself and others.** People need to learn to function in non-hierarchical or competitive spaces, and we can make mistakes. Others have many years of practice, but for some people it may be our first day participating in a mutual aid activity.

# Peer support

## What is **peer support**?

Humans are social creatures that often thrive best when they have meaningful and supporting relationships to other humans. Peer support is a way of relating to someone through shared humanity and core commonalities. The core principles of peer support are: coming together as equals, active and respectful listening, empathy, respect for the other individual and ourselves, being with and being present without judging or giving advice (unless it's asked for). Peer support is essentially interacting in an empathetic mutual relationship. It happens naturally in our lives but can also be used in a more structured way or as a tool to create and enhance relationships, reach out to those in need and build connection. Peer support has the main ingredients of a friendship but it can be used

even if people don't know each other, the most important thing is that the principles are there. And the great news is that everyone is able to do this!

We can look at 'peer support' as an umbrella term for the many different methods and different ways of implementing this phenomenon of supporting and relating to another. We belong to many peer groups (classmates, work colleges, friends etc.) but in its widest form peer support can be used in most settings, because the focus is on our shared humanity and our shared human experiences – truly putting our labels and roles aside in our relationships.

## **Peer support** in mental health organisations

Peer support has been widely used in mental health organizations. The method and ways of implementing it can be different but the main principles always have to be there. Peer support in mental health organizations is offered by an individual who has lived experience of trauma, psychiatric diagnosis and/or emotional distress. In this setting the term 'peer' doesn't simply refer to someone who has had a particular experience. A nurse or

a clinician may happen to have had similar experiences as those who use their services but this doesn't make that person a 'peer' to the individuals using the services. This is why it's important to keep the different roles we occupy in mind. Within mental health organisations it's important that peer support is always based on the shared experience of facing or having faced emotional distress, and the main goal of that peer support is connection.

## Why is **peer support** important for resilience?

A big part of our emotional resilience is developed in relationships. Social interaction has the capacity to impact our resilience by either strengthening it or weakening it. Supportive and meaningful connection to other people is a booster for our emotional resilience. It enhances connection and gives an outlet for human emotions in a mutual relationship. Social relations that involve being together as humans can also help us regulate our emotions and improve our self confidence, our beliefs about ourselves and our strengths. Peer support is also important for

resilience because it has the power to enhance hope and fight the feeling of loneliness and isolation with one's own feelings or hardship. Peer support opens a new way of interaction that can grow us personally and impact other relationships in our lives for the better. Using the principles of peer support in our daily lives also has the potential to reduce the bystander effect because it puts us in an empathetic mindset – the mindset of seeing commonality in others and how we are all connected through human experiences.

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### References:

Davidow, S. (no date). *A handbook for individuals working in peer roles*. Western Massachusetts Recovery Learning Community.

# Session Planning

**Title: Being with**

**Timing:** 95 minutes

## Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

To cultivate confidence in young people that they can offer support without having to be trained to do it

To build knowledge about what peer support is and what it's not, its principles

To be aware of the obstacles that hinder us in being peers

To practice coming together as peers

## Methodology **step by step**

### Timing for each step

- 1. Introduction (10 min)**  
Group discussion about peers and peer support.
- 2. Stepping out of the circle (15 min)**  
Standing up in a circle, participants will make steps outwards based on the statements read by the facilitator.
- 3. Discussion in pairs (1) (15 mins)**  
In pairs, participants introduce themselves to each other without using the labels that the facilitator previously put on a flipchart.
- 4. Network drawing (15 mins)**  
The group gathers around a flipchart on the floor or a table and draws a network together while discussing.
- 5. Debriefing (1) (10 min)**
- 6. Discussion in pairs (2) (20 min)**  
In pairs, participants share a personal experience and offer each other peer support.
- 7. Debriefing (2) (10 min)**

**Setting of the room, participants distribution:** Participants start together in a circle and then they work in pairs. There needs to be enough room so that they are able to take steps away from the circle in the beginning and are able to have undisturbed conversation when working in pairs.

# Instructions to participants

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## 1. Introduction (10 min)

- Who are your peers?
- What kind of support do you get from your peers?
- What makes the support helpful, or unhelpful?

## 2. Stepping out of the circle (15 min)

For this first part of the activity all of you will stand in a circle. I will now read a few statements that describe how we often identify ourselves. For each statement that you relate to, you take one (big) step out of the circle.

### Statements:

*I am/was a good student; I tend to talk too much; I am a loner; I am a social person; I usually wear trendy clothes; I was raised in a rich home; I am a woman; I am a father; I am a mother; I own a car; I grew up in a city/town; I have an iPhone; I am religious; I have had at least one job; I have done volunteer work; I am an artist; I don't use Instagram; I am a rocker; I am an athlete.*

Now I invite you to look around and reflect on these questions within yourself. How far away is the next person? How does it make you feel to stand so close or far away from each other?

## 3. Discussion in pairs (1) (15 mins)

Now we will work in pairs. Find a person you want to be with at this stage of the exercise. I invite you now to describe yourselves to the other person without using these labels that were mentioned in the previous part. You cannot use work, school, hobbies, volunteer work or a common role (like being a parent) to describe yourselves.

(List on a flipchart all the labels that need to be avoided and puts it in a visible place for participants to see it).

What you can use is passion, likes, values, beliefs, how you feel in this session, and adjectives that describe you. If you choose to, you can also use an object in nature to describe you and tell your partner why you are like that object.

## 4. Network drawing (15 mins)

Now we all gather in a group around this flipchart.

(Put a flipchart on the ground or on a table)

Each of you will write your name on the edge of the flipchart. One at a time, each of you will share one thing they used to describe themselves in the pairs before (passion, likes, values, beliefs, how you feel in this session, adjectives that describe you, an object from nature). If any of you relate to that description you draw a line between your names. It doesn't matter if you mentioned it in the discussion before.

## 5. Debriefing (1) (10 min)

## 6. Discussion in pairs (2) (20 min)

Now we want to practice coming together as peers. We will work in pairs again. It can be in the same pairs as before or new ones. You each get 10 minutes to share something that upset you in the last two weeks. The other ones listen attentively without trying to fix anything or give advice. The goal here is to show support by being present. When you enter the conversation, keep in mind what connected you in the previous part. Also keep in mind the obstacles that we identified together in the first part of the activity.

## 7. Debriefing (2) (10 min)

## Debriefing questions:

### Debriefing (1):

- *How did you feel when you stepped forward? How did it feel to get separated from the rest of the group? How was it to describe yourself without the labels?*
- *When did you feel most connected throughout this exercises? How was it different being with labels and without them? Was there anything you discovered about yourself or others when you let go of the labels?*

### Debriefing (2):

- *How did you show support? How did you react when you received support?*
- *How did you feel during this exercise? How connected did you feel?*
- *What helped the connection? What could have made you feel more connected?*

*What do we need in order to show peer support? If you were to explain to another what peer support is about what would you say?*

At this point, the facilitator writes on a flipchart the principles of peer support, as they come out of the answers from participants. The facilitator adds the following principles in case they weren't mentioned by the participants:

- Coming together as equals
- Respect and active listening
- Being present without judging or giving advice (unless it's asked for)
- Sharing experiences (when needed)
- Keeping in mind the strengths, contributions, wholeness of the person and acknowledging them
- Focus on growth, hope, not fixing problems or crisis
- *How could you use peer support in your daily life and relationships?*

**Materials:** Flipcharts, markers

min/max pax

| 6

| 20

**Handouts:** None

# Personal impact

## The ripple effect of **human actions**

People often think that they cannot make a real difference in the world, that one person's impact cannot be significant enough for the society as a whole. The notion that we are only a small piece in the great mechanism of humanity can be discouraging enough to prevent people from taking positive action or to minimize the importance of their negative deeds.

If we throw a pebble into a pond, we see waves in the form of rings, very small at first, then ever expanding and increasing in number until they spread across the water surface – the ripple effect in action. The “ripple effect” is a metaphor commonly used to describe how our actions (or non-actions) reverberate throughout the physical and social world. One decision or action can affect situations not directly related to the initial interaction – thus increasing its impact several times over. All of this happens due to the reality that we don't live in isolation from one another, but in interconnected systems. Sometimes there

are directly observable consequences to our actions, but for the most part the effects of our daily routines are unseen in any intelligible way and almost impossible to calculate to their full extent.

We see various environmental, social, political phenomena taking place at a national or global level and we fail to understand our contribution to them and implicitly what we can do to make a difference for the better. More often than not, people find comfort in the separation between “I” and “the society”, placing the responsibility for social change on an abstract idea of the society. **However, the individual unit of the society is the person. Each and every one of us is the society and is inextricably connected with everyone else.** Our daily actions, even the smallest ones, and even the lack of our actions in many cases, create effects on those around us and the effects are usually incremental, into the wider society.

## The ripple effect of **kindness**

Psychology studies have shown that kindness and generosity are contagious. In other words, when we act kindly toward one person, that person is much more likely to be kinder toward others in the future. This creates a ripple effect of kindness. It starts as a single act, but then spreads outward affecting many more. Our acts of kindness don't only affect

the people we do nice things for, but many other people who we may never even come into contact with. This shows that our actions can have a real and long-lasting effect on the world, even if they start off very small. By practicing kindness more on a daily basis, one can make incalculable changes over the course of their life.

## Implications for **resilience**

Although the consequences of our actions are incalculable in their entirety, making a practice from the thought process of trying to anticipate them helps build more awareness about one's personal impact. This awareness is important because it constitutes the foundation on which our moral compass intervenes and guides our actions in one direction or the other.

If we are motivated by the wish to do good for the world around us, being aware of our potential impact can increase our confidence that we can make a positive change, just as individuals. And consequently, the chances

that we become more engaged with our actions and with our communities and society become higher.

In order to be an active member of a community, a person needs to have a sense that they can influence the others, that one's actions can make a change for the better. There is a strong link between this and how empowered a person is, as empowerment essentially refers to one's capacity to take charge of their life while also acting from the confidence that they can have a positive impact in their community.



# Session Planning

**Title: The butterfly effect**

**Timing:** 85 mins

**Aim and learning elements / session objectives:**

To cultivate confidence that our actions can create a positive impact

To be aware of our interconnectivity with community and society

To be aware of the ripple effect of our actions or lack of actions

## Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

- 1. Guided meditation during walk (15 min)**  
Participants walk randomly around the room, the facilitator reads a script (see handout) which guides them in a journey through different states of mind and different timelines of history, in order to create the context for interconnection between people and their shared humanity.
- 2. The traveling journey (50 min)**  
Choose a volunteer and split the rest of the participants into four groups.  
The traveler goes through each stop of the journey and will stay at each stop for 10 minutes!  
The facilitator will remind the traveler to move to the next step every ten minutes and encourage the groups in finding possible consequences, both positive and negative and at different levels (individual, community, society).
- 3. Debriefing (20 min)**  
Setting of the room, participants distribution: One participant goes through the journey. The journey has four stops spread over the room or in each corner. The rest of the participants are divided into four groups, one group for each stop. At each stop, place one card with a script in an envelope.

## Instructions to participants

- 1. Guided meditation during walk (15 min)**  
*Start walking randomly around the room, occupying the whole space as much as possible. Notice your body and your presence in this room. We will set off on an imaginary journey and I will guide you through this the whole time, so I invite you to pay careful attention to my voice, while at the same time allowing yourself to focus your other senses on the space, the people around you, and on your journey. Allow yourself to be immersed in the story and allow your imagination to support you in this.*

(Read the script slowly, allowing some quiet time in between the ideas when they need to sink in or when the participants need to act on the script. Use the script flexibly, repeat some ideas if you feel it is necessary.)

## 2. The traveling journey (50 min)

In this activity we will explore how our actions impact those around us and our community. We will need one volunteer that will go on a traveling journey, backpacking around Europe, and the rest of you will be split into four groups, representing the voices of his/her reason.

(Choose the volunteer and split the rest of the participants into four groups)

The traveler will stop at every step, where he/she will find a paper with a situation he/she encounters on the trip and two options for actions to take. The traveler will read the paper out loud and will choose one of the given options, spending no more than one minute to think about it. The group from that step will then brainstorm about how this choice will impact other people in the travelers community or society and will express the ideas out loud, as if these would be thoughts, coming from the traveler's mind. The purpose of the group is to generate as many possible consequences as it can, both positive and negative. We will not go into how the choice affects the traveler, the focus is on the effects that the traveler might have on the people around them and their reverberations into the larger community and society.

Let's start the journey!

(Keep the time and let the traveler know, after every ten minutes, that it's time to move to the next stop. Encourage the groups to find possible consequences, both positive and negative at different levels: individual, community, society).

## 3. Debriefing

### Debriefing questions:

- How was it for you to be the voices of reason and to come up with possible consequences? Was there a difference between finding a positive consequence and a negative one?
- How was it to be the traveler? How did it affect you to hear the consequences of your choice?
- What have you learned from being faced with options? What have you learned from hearing about the possible consequences of your actions?
- How can you relate this activity to your daily life?
- Is there anything you can use in your daily life from this activity in the future?

### Materials:

Printout cards with the steps and options  
Envelopes  
**Guided meditation script**

### Handouts:

Guided meditation script  
Personal impact - steps and options

min/max pax

5

25

# Handout - travelers steps and options printout.

## Step 1

You have arrived safely at your first destination on your backpacking trip around Europe, in a small town in Italy. You will stay in a cosy apartment in the east end of the town. This place is full of exciting opportunities for hiking and sightseeing. But first things first, you will need to buy groceries for yourself for the next few weeks.

**Option 1:** You can have a lift once a week to the town's supermarket by a neighbour.

**Option 2:** You buy your groceries at the small local stores around your area.

## Step 2

It is now your final night in the village in Italy. You decide to dine out at Mytilus Bistrot, a seafood restaurant owned by a local family. When you are about to order the Linguine all'astice you hear a customer making very insulting comments to the waiter.

**Option 1:** You call out the customer and take a stand with the waiter.

**Option 2:** You decide it's best not to interfere.

## Step 3

You are now 6 months into your backpacking trip and are on your way to Berlin. You have seen wonderful things and really enjoyed this time but your savings are about to finish.

**Option 1:** You have a musical skill and you decide to stay in the city to sing or play on the streets for money.

**Option 2:** You choose to go outside of the city to earn some money on a sustainable farm.

## Step 4

For the last few weeks you have been staying in a small village in southern France. It has been everything that you could dream of. Your next destination will be in Paris, where you will be meeting a friend you haven't seen for years. During the final days of your stay in the village, there is a weather disaster. A lot of the local buildings are damaged and people are devastated.

**Option 1:** You travel to Paris because your close friend that you haven't met in months is waiting for you and you have made plans together.

**Option 2:** You stay a few more weeks to help out, clean and restore the village. Unfortunately your friend can't come to help out so you won't be able to meet at all.

# Shared Responsibility for Inclusion

## Defining Human Rights

Human Rights is the legal frame that recognizes and promotes the inalienable dignity of every human being.

What we understand for Human Rights and the definition of them, is relatively recent. It wasn't until 10 December 1948 that the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the **“Universal Declaration of Human Rights”** (UDHR); it was after the horror experienced in World War II that the international community decided to come to a consensus and recognize Human Rights.

The Declaration's philosophy can be summed up in the very beginning of its first article: *“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”*<sup>1</sup>. The Human Rights are called universal because they refer to every single person just for the fact of being a human being regardless if it's a man or a woman, an adult or a child, with or without a disability, their nationality or religion, etc. All the nations and the international community have committed to recognize and defend the dignity of every human being according to what is established in this document.

## Human Rights and resilience

Human Rights violations affect our wellbeing severely and they can cause mental health problems. Every learning process designed to promote emotional wellbeing should educate people on the value of Human Rights. As observed by the World Health Organization (WHO), **“A fundamental link exists between mental health and human rights”**. *Human rights violations within a country can have damaging and harmful repercussions on the mental health of the population”*.

For example, situations like gender violence, bullying, racism, homophobia, poverty conditions and other ways of violence and discrimination have a negative effect on our emotional wellbeing and they can become etiological factors (causes or triggers) for mental health problems. Even if these affect us in every stage of life, they are especially determinant in childhood, adolescence and early adulthood, when we are developing our identity<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>65535</sup>United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Resolution 217 A (III), Paris, France. [https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR\\_Translations/eng.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>Porsdam, S.; Bradley, V. & Sahakian, B. (2016). Human Rights-Based Approaches to Mental Health: A Review of Programs. *Health and Human Rights Journal*, 18(1), 1-13

<sup>3</sup>Mandela, N. (1995). *Long Walk To Freedom*. London, UK: Abacus.

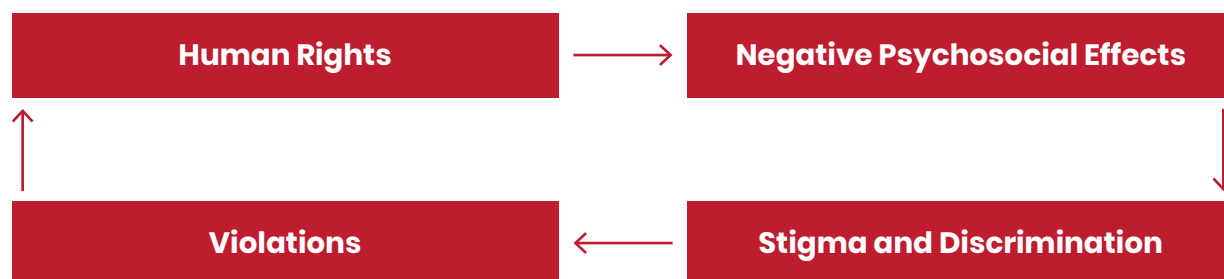
<sup>0</sup>Herrman, H.; Saxena, S. & Moodie, R. (2005). Promoting Mental Health. Concepts – Emerging Evidence – Practice. A report of the World Health Organization. Geneva.

<sup>1</sup>Alperstein, G. & Raman, S. (2003). Promoting mental health and emotional well-being among children.

Moreover, the violations of Human Rights and mental health problems can become a continuous cycle that feeds back itself:

- Violence and discrimination affect mental health.
- Mental health problems (and psychiatric diagnosis) increase the risk of experience violence and discrimination.

In this sense, a **feedback cycle of human rights violations** has been observed



To understand this cycle, we can imagine the following situation: in some cultural contexts the racialized people and/or with a non-normative sexual orientation might become exposed to certain kind of interpersonal violence (insults, molestations), social violence (poverty, social exclusion) or institutional violence (restricted rights). These situations have a negative impact on the emotional wellbeing of those who have suffered them, and they can trigger a mental health problem. They also have other psychosocial effects such as an increased risk of poverty and social exclusion that, by themselves, entail firsthand rights violations that aggravate the situation.

## How to promote respect for **Human Rights**

People have the social responsibility to know, promote and defend the respect to the human rights within the community they belong to. In order to achieve this, we need to:

- **Educate ourselves about Human Rights:** both those under the UDHR and those from subsequent documents elaborated by the United Nations.
- **Avoid assimilationist discourses.** Proposing that “all human beings are equal” makes invisible the heterogeneity of bodies, experiences, beliefs and different values that people have. Human Rights defence demands to set value onto the diversity of human beings instead of denying that diversity. We are not equal, we are diverse.

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and youth: a role for community child health? Child: Care, Health and Development , 29(4), 269–274

- **Listen to the collectives of people who suffer violations of Human Rights.** Sensibility and empathy to those who still suffer from human rights violations can help us better understand these axes of oppression.
- **Look at ourselves from a critical point of view.** Along our lives, we have all received messages with traits of classism, machismo, capacitism, etc. We need to be willing to recognize that we have been educated with stereotyped ideas and prejudices and then thoroughly review our thoughts, feelings and attitudes.
- **Understand that we are all vulnerable.** Anyone might be a subject of Human Rights violation. Moreover, even if it's just due to old age or illness, we will all belong, sooner or later, to a stigmatized social group that is liable to discrimination.
- **Join a collective who fights for Human Rights.** The best way to promote the respect and defence of Human rights is putting it in practice alongside others who already do it.

To reflect on our shared responsibility for promoting inclusion, let's remember some of Nelson Mandela's words and the teachings within them: “ *No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love.*”

# Session Planning

## Title: Human Rights Violation Tree

**Timing:** 90 minutes

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Recognize human rights and understand their role in the society

Identify human rights violations and their consequences on people's mental health

Develop an awareness of each one's responsibility to respect human rights

Identify ways to promote respect for human rights

## Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

### 1. Introduction (10 min)

Open discussion on Human Rights

### 2. First Human Rights Tree (30 min)

Divide participants into two equal groups, each representing a group of people who have suffered violations of their human rights

Participants draw a big tree on a flipchart and reflect on the: prejudices/stereotypes on the chosen category of people, the causes of this discrimination, the social effects, and the consequences on mental health and wellness

### 3. Second Human Rights Tree (30 mins)

### 4. Debriefing (20 min)

**Setting of the room, participants distribution:** Participants stand in a semi-circle in front of a wall or a blackboard. The space must be wide enough to allow moving from the place they are standing, towards the wall or the blackboard, and to look at each other.

## Instructions to participants

### 1. Introduction (10 min)

*Today we are going to reflect on Human Rights. What do we talk about when we say "Human Rights"? If you had to explain to somebody else, in a single sentence, what human rights are, how would you do it?*

*Why are Human Rights universal?*

*What happens when Human Rights are violated?*

*Which groups of people suffer or have suffered Human Rights violations throughout history?*

(Collect the ideas and write them down on a flipchart, keep the flipchart for the final reflection . .)

## 2. First Human Rights Tree (30 min)

Now we will divide into two groups. Each group will choose a category of people who, currently or throughout history, have suffered violations of their human rights. For example: racialized people, LGBTQ people, women, people with disabilities, Muslims, gypsy people, working class people, etc. Take half a minute to decide on this.

The first group, please choose a volunteer who will draw on the flipchart and will write the suggestions from the rest of the group. Draw a big tree with all its parts: roots, trunk, branches and leaves. Write on the tree trunk the type of discrimination that affects the group of people you have chosen (e.g. racism).

Now for the whole group, think about the types of prejudices or stereotypes that affect the people you chose. For example: black people commit more crimes than white people. This will be written on the side of the trunk.

Okay, now we go to the roots of the tree and think and write there which are the causes of this type of discrimination. For example: the causes of racism.

Next, we go to the next part of the tree, the branches. There we write the social effects of this type of discrimination. What are those? For example: higher rates of unemployment.

Finally, we go to the last part of the tree, the leaves. Write on the tree leaves which are the effects on wellness and mental health of this type of discrimination. For example: lower self-esteem.

Look at the tree in its whole and see how you feel doing this, notice whatever goes through your mind at this point.

## 3. Second Human Rights Tree (30 mins)

Next, we will do the same thing with the second group. Choose your volunteer to draw and write on the flipchart. Draw the tree with all its parts: roots, trunk, branches and leaves, and then write the topic you have chosen on the side of the trunk.

(Follow the same sequence from the previous exercise and reflect on:  
Stereotypes and prejudices – Trunk  
Causes – Roots  
Social effects – Branches  
Consequences on mental health and wellness – Leaves)

Look again at this tree and see how you feel as you see what you have written, notice whatever goes through your mind at this point.

## 4. Debriefing

### Debriefing questions:

- How did you feel during this exercise? What went through your mind?
- What do people who belong to these (or other) discriminated groups have in common? Where are the causes of these human rights violations?
- What can we do to fight against these human rights violations if we belong to the group of discriminated people? And what can we do if we do not belong to that group?
- What can we do to strengthen the resilience and improve the wellness of those discriminated against if we also suffer this type of discrimination? And what can we do in this sense if we do not suffer from this type of discrimination?

### Materials:

Flipcharts, markers or chalks, sheets of paper, stationery material and pencils.

**Handouts:** None

### Tips and tricks:

- Use more time for the introduction if necessary, before moving on to drawing the trees. It is essential to understand what human rights are before reflecting on the consequences of their violation.
- Take into account the number of participants and time they need to reflect on every topic. If they are a few participants (5 or less), the same group can do both trees, and every participant can put different ideas in every part of the trees. For more than 14 participants, it may be useful to limit how many ideas each participant can write in the different parts of the tree.
- Read the introduction to this topic in order to be better able to conduct the discussion.

min/max pax

6

15

# Togetherness

## What is **togetherness**?

Togetherness, as we use it here, combines a sense of belonging and solidarity. Collins English Dictionary defines the term as “a feeling of closeness or affection from being united with other people”.

The sense of belonging is based on the feeling that one is part of a group, part of something bigger and satisfies the basic human need of affiliation. Solidarity, on the other hand, involves openness, availability and the willingness to support others when they are facing obstacles or difficult moments. It is based on empathy, perspective, shared interests or objectives, leading to collaborative efforts and problem solving. These efforts create a sense of unity within a group, which further provides a source of meaningful connection and sense of purpose in life for the individuals that are part of the group.

## How can we develop a **sense of togetherness**?

Some elements that we see important for developing a sense of togetherness are: shared space (physical or psychological) or experiences, curiosity and learning about others' personal culture (habits, family, friends, life context, etc.), learning about common interests and goals, investing resources to create actions that support those common goals, giving and receiving support.

## Why is the sense of togetherness **relevant for resilience**?

The two together, belonging and solidarity, resemble the Southern African term “ubuntu”, often translated as “I am because you are”, and can be understood better from the words of theologian Desmond Tutu: “A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed.” It goes without saying, therefore, that togetherness greatly supports our resilience.

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### References:

Tutu, Desmond. No future without forgiveness . Image, 2009.



# Session Planning

**Title: One for all, and all for one**

**Timing:** 150 min - Two sessions of 75 minutes with 15 min break

**Aim and learning elements / session objectives:**

Experience the steps towards building a sense of togetherness

Understand what togetherness means and learn to recreate the experience

## Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

- 1. Values flag (30 min)**

Participants create a list of group values. Then they paint a flag on a piece of cloth to illustrate these values.  
The facilitator takes the flag and puts it in a box with a lock, hiding it somewhere where the participants will need to arrive at the end of the journey.  
Hold a copy of the list to use it in the final debriefing!
- 2. Shared space and presence (5 min)**

Participants gather in a circle in front of the venue in order to share a moment of presence in the shared space.
- 3. The Departure (45 min)**

Participants start their journey. On the road, they make pairs to share about their individual culture and personal mythology. The facilitator prepares questions from four categories: family, friends, personal life, culture of origin. He/she hands out to the participants the questions related to the first category (family) written on a small cardboard paper (from the handouts), to support the conversation in pairs. Participants have 10 minutes to talk, then they stop, change pairs, receive another cardboard paper with questions from the next category and talk for another 10 minutes. This goes on until they have talked about all four areas.
- 4. Break (15 min)**
- 5. The mission (30 min)**

The group stops in a set point and one of the facilitators assigns their mission - a list of many tasks (in the handouts) that they will need to accomplish as a group, in a limited time (30 minutes). Solving all of them will win them the key to a treasure box (in this box, the facilitator has closed the group values flag, but participants do not know this yet).
- 6. Destiny (5 min)**

Before they start to work on their group mission, four participants also receive personal missions (in the handouts) that they will have to accomplish during the group mission. The facilitator asks for four volunteers who want to take these, gives them small pieces of paper and instructs them to do exactly as written, not revealing their missions to the others. These individual missions will actually interfere with the group one.
- 7. The victory and return (30 min)**

When the time is up check with the group if all the tasks were completed correctly. If so, then they receive the key to the box.  
Then they sit for a debriefing (see debriefing questions).  
If the group did not finish the tasks in time or did not complete them correctly, they do not receive the key yet. However, at the end of the debriefing, if it turns out that their group values were respected during the mission, the facilitator gives them the key.
- 8. Celebration (5 min)**

Ask for volunteers to make a committee/team who will organize an evening celebratory activity for the group.

Setting of the room, participants distribution : The activity will take place mostly outdoors, as an excursion. Participants are encouraged to bring the minimum necessary for a walk

# Instructions to participants

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## 1. Values flag (30 min)

Today we will set off on an important journey. All of us, together. What are some very important instruments that one should have on a trip? (Allow for answers and accept all suggestions) One of the most important tools we have when traveling is a compass, which shows us the direction and helps us stay on track and not stray too much. In our quest for a good, meaningful life, it is considered that the best compass we can use is our values. So before we start our important journey, we will create this compass for ourselves. But as I mentioned earlier, we will travel together, which means we will need to find out our values as a group.

Therefore, I invite you to gather closely together in a circle and discuss what are the values you wish your group would live and act by in this journey. Think about what is important for you as an individual but also what would be important for a group you'd wish to travel with. You have 15 minutes to discuss and decide this, and when you are done, I invite you to choose the most important values, maximum 7 of them, and write them on a piece of paper. Go on!

(After 15 min)

If you are done, I have here a piece of cloth that will represent your group's flag. I invite you to paint this flag, illustrating on it the values that you chose to guide you in this journey. You can do this by writing or using symbols or colours or anything you feel suitable. It is your flag, your decision. And when I say YOU, I mean THE GROUP. You will have another 15 minutes for this!

(After 15 min)

Now you can hang the flag on the wall and you will find it when you return from your journey.

## 2. Shared space and presence (5 min) (Outside the venue)

Gather in a circle and stay silent for a few moments. Allow yourself to be here, to feel the space you are in and to inhabit it. Notice how all of us are inhabiting the same space and allow yourself to be present in this shared space. Feel and take in the space with all the people in it. Feel the rhythm of the space and the surroundings. Become aware of the fact that just as you are noticing the presence of others, the others are noticing your presence.

Come closer and make the circle smaller. If everybody is comfortable, let's hold hands for a while. If anyone is uncomfortable with this, you can gently touch the two people next to you with your shoulders or just be there, close to them. Feel the hands you are holding or the shoulders you are touching. In a moment, send a subtle impulse to the hand/shoulder to your right and receive an impulse from the hand/shoulder to your left. Feel this moment of intimate connection. You are in this moment together, connected to each other, influencing each other through each small gesture. This is a great power. Use it wisely.

## 3. The Departure (45 min)

We will now set off in our journey and because we will be companions on this trip, it is important that we know each other. We are now here together, we share the same present moment, our stories come together at this point in time, but for each of us there is a lot of history before this moment. And there will be after this moment as well, but that is still to be created.

For now, I invite you to explore each other's past histories. We will travel in pairs and share about our personal culture and mythology. Let's find our first pair. Look for a person you feel you would like to start with.

Good. With this person, you will share about your family. I will provide a set of supporting questions and you will have 10 minutes to get curious about the other person, as well as share from your own story. You can use one question for the whole 10 minutes, you can use all the questions, or you can come up with your own personal way to start the conversation on the topic. The 10 minutes are for both of you, you can divide it as you wish so that each of you gets to share their story. After 10 minutes I will give a signal and we will have one minute of walking silently with our pair in order to allow the stories to sink in. Then we will stop and find another pair to discuss another topic.

Here is the first set of questions.

(Hand out the cardboard note.)

Let's walk and enjoy your exploration!

(After 10 minutes, give the next note and so on until they have exhausted all four.)

## 4. Break (15 min)

Now let's find a nice spot to sit for a while, rest, drink some water, have a snack if you need to. Let's give ourselves some good 15 minutes for this, before we continue with our journey.

## 5. The mission (30 min)

Now that you have gotten to know your companions better, you will of course have a mission. I have here (show a roll of paper) the details of your mission which you will need to accomplish as a group, in a limited time. Accomplishing the mission in its entirety will win you the key to a treasure box which we'll find at the end of our journey. You are allowed to use any objects or tools you have on you. Again, the mission needs to be accomplished as a group and the group will receive the key. The time you will have for the mission is 30 minutes.

**(The facilitator will give the group mission after the individual ones)**

## 6. Destiny (5 min)

Of course, Destiny steps in with additional challenges. Four of you will also have personal missions that you will have to accomplish during the group mission. I have here (show hand with pieces of paper) the four secret missions which you will have to accomplish exactly as instructed on the paper and without revealing your mission to the others. I will need four volunteers to take on these missions. If nobody volunteers, then Destiny will choose randomly.

(Give the notes to the participants)

Take a moment to understand your personal mission and if there are any questions, come to me.

Now take also your group mission and read it carefully.

(Hand the paper to one of the participants)

You are now ready to start and the 30 minutes will be counted starting from this moment.

## 7. The victory and return (30 min)

The time is now over, let's see what you have managed to do.

(The facilitator checks whether or not the participants have fulfilled all their tasks on the list)

You have fulfilled all the tasks in your mission, so here's your key.

OR

You have not fulfilled all the tasks in your mission, so unfortunately, you do not receive the key. Let's sit for a while and talk.

(Debriefing questions)

(After the debriefing in case they did not fulfill all the tasks)

Since you have followed most of your values when working on this mission, I believe you still deserve the prize. Whether you reach the destination or not, if you are together and do things according to your values, you win.

## 8. Celebration.

I propose a group celebration for tonight in order to mark this success. Is there anyone who would like to organize this special moment for the whole group?

### Debriefing questions:

- (After they open the box and see the flag) How do you feel with your prize? What does it mean to you?
- How was the trip?
- What challenges were there? How did you overcome them?
- What were some surprising moments?
- Did everyone participate in the task? If not, why not? If yes, how did you make sure that everyone takes part?
- How did you feel with the tasks that required everyone's participation compared to those that could be done independently?
- Let's check the list of values you established for the group in the beginning. How well did you take them into account during this mission? Check each value that was respected.
- What do you take from this? How is this relevant for how you are and live outside of this specific context?

### Materials:

Pen and paper, 1m x 1m piece of white textile cloth, acrylic or textile paint, box with a lock, hand-outs

### Handouts:

Question cards  
Group mission  
Personal missions

## Question cards **handout**

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There are four topics, four categories of questions that will support participants to explore their personal histories and mythologies. Each category/topic will get a separate card.

- 1. YOU.** How are you as a person? How would other people describe you? What are you passionate about? What gets you out of bed in the morning? What do you dream to achieve? What is important for you?
- 2. FAMILY.** How is your family as a whole? How about each member? How many are you, where do you live? How are your relationships to each other? How do you spend time together and how often? Do you have any family habits?
- 3. FRIENDS.** How is your group of friends? How many of them are you close to and what are your relationships with the others? What do you do together, what do you talk about? Are there things that describe you as a group (habits, beliefs, interests)? What holds you together?
- 4. CULTURE.** Paint a picture of your country and culture. What do people usually eat, how do they think and behave, how is the music, the arts? What are some rituals, traditions, or celebrations in your country? What do your classical stories and legends talk about? What is the attitude towards foreigners? How does a wedding/funeral look like in your culture?

## Group mission **handout**

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The group has 30 minutes to accomplish the following 10 tasks. All the instructions you need are here. Doing each task as instructed will get you the key to the treasure box.

### **Good luck!**

- 1.** Name 3 countries that are in the EU region geographically but not in the European Union.
- 2.** Make an audio recording of the whole group singing the chorus of a folklore song from one of your countries, in a language other than English.
- 3.** Make a list of all the animals you encounter during the 30 min of your mission.
- 4.** Gather 10 different types of leaves.
- 5.** Find everyone's middle and last names and learn to pronounce it properly.
- 6.** Learn how to say "sheep" in all the languages in the group.
- 7.** Make a video of someone climbing a tree at least 3 metres high.
- 8.** Do 25 sit-ups together, as a group, standing in a circle and holding hands.
- 9.** Choose the sound of a bird you hear around you and learn to imitate it, as a group.
- 10.** Take a photo of each group member hugging a tree.

## Personal **Missions handout**

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These four missions will be given each to one participant on a small piece of paper. Print this paper and cut each point separately.

- 1.** This group mission looks too serious. You decide to make it more fun by making jokes frequently and cheering people up instantly.
- 2.** After 5 min. you get bitten by a bee. Because you are allergic, your tongue swells and cannot talk anymore.
- 3.** After about 10 min. you break a leg and cannot walk properly anymore. You are in pain and can only use one leg.
- 4.** After about 15 min. you get pissed off and want to quit the mission. You get impatient and rush everybody, do not take initiative and refuse to put too much effort into doing things.

Chapter

**03**

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**Emotions**

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# What are **emotions**?

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Defining or describing emotional processes can hardly be done without also referring to their role in our lives.

Emotions are complex, full-system responses that support our survival and adaptation to the environment. They occur within our relationship with the environment, monitoring and detecting dangers, threats, losses or other things that are relevant/important to us. Emotions use our bodies to tell us how we are faring in the world. Because they are so important for our survival, they unfold very fast and do not require time-consuming cognitive processing.

Emotions are communicating all the time, to both ourselves and others. They contain extremely rich and complex information about things that are relevant for our wellbeing. They immediately signal when something we need is happening (pleasant emotions) or not or when our integrity is being affected, when we are in some sort of danger, physically or emotionally (unpleasant emotions). All this information is delivered to us very fast and saves time, allowing us to react fast in important situations. Each specific emotional response comes with a specific adaptive function and provides action tendencies that express

the associated desires or needs. It is important to mention at this point that we see no relevance in the classical dichotomies of good-bad, positive-negative emotions. All emotions are good, healthy, as they represent an adaptive response of our body. We can say they are pleasant or unpleasant, but this is more a quality than a categorization, as it can happen that joy or euphoria too become unpleasant if they last too long or have a high intensity.

Emotions support our physical survival, but also promote social functioning in complex social contexts. They guide our functioning and promote our growth as human beings.

We can also think of emotions as our personal energy or engine. Because we are constantly present in a certain environment, a certain, baseline emotional activity is present at all times, even though we do not notice it. This emotional energy is always running through us but we become aware of it only when it increases or decreases to a significant level. These ups and downs in emotional energy is what we have names for (angry, happy, ashamed, joyous, resentful, etc.) and they prepare our whole bodies to act towards our goals. We experience this as increased or decreased motivation.

## Emotional **skills**

It is obvious how emotions become relevant for resilience, given how we already described their role in our life. Being attuned to our emotional signals provides us with valuable information on how to adapt best to our circumstances and how to enjoy life. At the same time, in some instances, emotional experiences can become overwhelming and we need to regulate them, that is, bring them to a manageable level before we can learn from them.

Emotions are neither good or bad and evaluating them in this way has no real benefit. On the contrary, it can lead to even more distress and attempts to suppress the emotions, which decreases our capacity to regulate them effectively and learn from them. It is important to understand that our aim should not be to get rid of our emotions, as this would not really support resilience (nor is it possible, actually). However, regulating our emotions

enables us to reduce our suffering from painful emotions and to make wiser decisions when we feel overwhelmed, so that we don't make things worse for ourselves. Effectively working with and regulating our emotions involves building a collaboration between our reasoning and our emotions which allows us to create an inner environment that promotes functioning and growth.

In this section, the emotional skills that we will focus on in order to develop resilience are (1) literacy, (2) expression, and (3) integration. Emotional literacy, that is, correctly identifying and describing our emotional processes is the first step to reestablish inner balance. Expressing our emotions gives us the power to own our inner world, be more alive, present in our life and more creative in finding ways to cope with adversities. Finally, integrating the emotions we experience allows us to learn from them, make use of their wisdom and appreciate them even when they are painful.



# Emotional expression

## What is **emotional expression**?

In short and for starters, our animal, wild, intuitive part is highly emotional and looks for ways to express itself. We are in a constant flow of emotions, ours and others, and these emotions are meant to be manifested, expressed, in flow.

Emotions are an integral part of our psyches and this capacity, to be connected to our own emotions and the emotions of others, is a core part of what it is to be a fully fleshed, alive human animal.

Expressing our emotions is one of the most important parts of this vital process that sometimes gets overlooked. That is mainly because our caregivers (parents, uncles and aunts, grandparents, teachers, siblings) were unable to express or cope with emotions themselves and also encouraged (trained) us to stop our emotional expression. They may have said things like: Stop crying! Don't laugh so hard! Stop shouting! Don't say that! *Stop moving that way/or so much! Stop with this nonsense! Use words if you want me to understand you!...*and so on.

## How can we **express our emotions**?

Each of us, children, youth, adults, elders, human or otherwise need to learn how to express our emotions in a way that honors both our inner experience, and the outer world in which we are deeply embedded in.

We spend a lot of time and resources to not manifest our emotions, looking for ways to manage them, control them, stop them, put them down and discredit them. It may even be that we have a part of us, an inner voice, that is responsible for this emotional numbing, emotional management.

And the simple truth is that emotions are meant to be lived, expressed and manifested fully. It is healthy, human and life-affirming, even life enriching as author and peace-keeper Marshall Rosenberg describes the process of Non-Violent Communication.

In most modern cultures, emotional expression is not socially acceptable, our natural bodily responses to our emotions are too much for our peers, too wild, too raw and unpolished. So we learn (the hard way and paying a dire price) that to express our emotional states is dangerous and can lead to being rejected, overlooked, punished, ignored or ostracized. So we don't. We stop ourselves, and doing so we internalize or suppress an action that is usually meant to go towards the outer world, and this creates an imbalance in our psyche. And most of the time, also in our bodies.

Unexpressed emotions foster imbalances, that have serious consequences like bodily symptoms (migraine or headaches, fatigue), pain (physical, emotional, or both), illness and disease (sclerosis, cancer, back or muscle chronic pain), emotional depression (from mild to chronic), loss of vitality, inner drive and motivation, cravings and/or addiction, stress and many others.

There are numerous, maybe limitless ways to express our emotions, from communicating them through words, writing, talking, to artwork (painting, drawing, sketching, collage, poetry, singing, creating sound), body movement (free movement, authentic movement, dancing, posturing), physical engagement (punching/screaming into pillows, play-fight™, hugging, emotional embodiment) and many more.

And this all starts from fully feeling and allowing an emotion to work through you, without censorship and with full, playful curiosity.

## Why is emotional expression **relevant to resilience?**

A person who is in tune with their emotional life and can express the richness of their emotions is balanced, healthy, and powerful. When we are able to feel and express that which is within us, it gives us the power to cope with

adversities in life, to find creative and personal ways to deal, cope and work with what life brings to us (pleasant or unpleasant), and to be more alive present and participative in our live and the communal life.

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### **Bibliography:**

1. Nature and the Human Soul, Bill Plotkin Ph.D., New world Library 2008, [www.animas.org](http://www.animas.org)
2. Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life, Marsall Rosenberg, [www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org)
3. *Animals of the Four Windows: Integrating Thinking, Sensing, Feeling and Imagery*, E. S. Gallegos Ph.D., [www.esgallego](http://www.esgallego)



# Session Planning

## Title: Emotional Expression

**Timing:** 120 minutes Two sessions and a 20 min break

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Develop the capacity to express emotions

Discover different types of emotions, emotional expression

Develop motivation towards expressing emotions

Gain a attitude that expressing emotions is natural and healthy

## Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

- 1. Introductory discussion (5 min)**  
Introductory discussion about expressing emotions with questions and input from participants followed by a random walk focused on emotional connection, bodily sensations of emotions.
- 2. Input on emotions from the facilitator (5 min)**  
Facilitator gives a short input on emotions based on the topic introduction chapter in the handbook.
- 3. Familiarizing participants with emotions (5 min)**
- 4. Emotional expression practice (30 min)**
- 5. Break (20 min)**
- 6. Individual reflection (10 min)**
- 7. Communicating emotions (15 min)**  
Sharing in small group
- 8. Debriefing (20 min)**
- 9. Closing (5 min)**

**Setting of the room, participants distribution:** Participants work in pairs, individually, and then in the whole group, the most common shape/distribution pattern is a circle.

**Handouts or materials:** Handouts with emotions N.V.C.

## Instructions to participants

- 1. Introductory discussion (5 min)**  
*We are here to discover what emotional expression is. What are emotions for you? How do you express them? What comes to your mind, what resonates in you when you hear this phrase, emotional expression?*

*Ok, so let's stand up and start walking through the room in a random manner, by going in any direction, or changing direction suddenly, trying to fill the empty spaces in the room at all times, and slow down or hurry up, fall into your own rhythm....*

Keep walking... Now start noticing how you feel... how is your breath, how does your body feel, what emotions are going through you... and start to notice that there are people around you... Make eye contact, maybe even break a smile or two... Without talking, find a way to show that you acknowledge their presence, that you see them... and come to a stop in front of someone else, forming pairs. With this pair, make eye contact and, holding this connection, synchronize three breaths...

Now keep walking... and come back to your breath... while walking in the same random manner, breathe in deeply three times, filling your lungs and exhaling slowly... Come to rest in front of another person. And with this new partner, you will make eye contact, synchronize three breaths and after you have managed that you will say the first word that comes to your mind... Then keep walking and again come back to your breath...breathe in deeply three times...and come to rest yet again in front of another person. With this new human in front of you, you will make eye contact, synchronize three breaths and after you have managed that you will say a sentence, one sentence through which you express your current emotion. Whatever that is.

## **2. Input on emotions from the facilitator (5 min)**

In this workshop we will be working on emotions from an integrative approach, a holistic approach. That is that emotions are considered an integral part of our psyche and that this capacity, to be connected to own emotions and the emotions of others, is a core part of what it is to be a fully fleshed, alive human animal.

Expressing our emotions is one of the most important parts of this vital process that sometimes gets overlooked. That is mainly because our caregivers (parents, uncles and aunts, grandparents, teachers, siblings) were unable to express or cope with emotions themselves and also encouraged (trained) us to stop our emotional expression. Examples: "Stop Crying! Don't laugh so hard! Stop shouting! Don't say that! Stop moving that way/or so much! Stop with this nonsense! Use words if you want me to understand you!" ... and so on.  
Raise your hand if this rings a bell to you.

(Use the information from the introduction to the topic here)

## **3. Familiarizing participants with emotions (5 min)**

This is a list, not a complete list of emotions. It may be useful throughout the process, and now take a look at it, and just explore it for a few moments. See if you can identify your current emotional state from that list. Maybe there is more than one emotion, maybe one is stronger than the others. Underline the emotion you identify. And if you can, see where this emotion moves or resides in your body.

## **4. Emotional expression practice (30 min)**

We will explore an emotion in the next few minutes. It is your choice what emotion, or emotionally charged situation you wish to explore. So you have the responsibility and power to choose what situation and how deep you go into this exercise. Follow your needs and choose a situation where you had a pleasant or unpleasant emotion. It will be in two phases, one of connecting with the emotion and the situation that brought it and the second phase in which you will go through the room and find a way to express this emotion. This part of the workshop is individual, each with your own experience, so try not to engage in conversation with each other until the moment for sharing.

### **a. First phase: Deepening into the emotion (10 min)**

Close your eyes, allow yourself to relax, allow your body to settle, feel the rhythm of your breath, as it is in this moment. Now allow yourself to notice what comes in from your senses, the smells of this room, the sounds that are around you, the intensity of the light through your eyelids, the temperature, the clothes on your skin and accept all this as your present reality.

And sink in to your body, feel its weight, the sense of it, feel the contact points with the pillow, or the floor, or the chair, feel your posture, and if there is any tension in your body. And come back your breath and breathe in deeply, and breathe out slowly...and again breathe in deeply and breathe out slowly.

And in your own rhythm allow an emotionally charged situation to come to your awareness. Find yourself in a situation, where you had an emotional reaction, that you wish to explore...and notice the details that you remember. Where are you? Is it day or night? Are there any smells, sounds, colors? Are there other people around you? What is going on? Maybe you did something or something happened or something was done to you. How are you feeling? How is your body feeling in this situation? Allow yourself to fully come into this experience. What emotions are arising in you in regards to this? Allow these emotions to rise up, to come to the surface, to manifest fully into your body, your being.

And open to these emotions; offer yourself to them fully, no censorship. Say to your emotions, “here, have my body, do whatever you may”. Allow yourself to fully feel this that you are feeling right now. Let the emotion do what it will do with your body. If you feel uncomfortable doing this with people around, you may do it in your imagination. Maybe you feel like screaming, throwing yourself on the ground, crying, shouting or kicking, or laughing or smiling. Allow any manifestation to take shape either in your imagination or here and now in this room.

(Give participants enough time to deepen into the experience and when you see them settling down, give them about 30 seconds and then move on to the next phase. Try your best not to rush this part.) Ok, so slowly, without talking, and in your own rhythm come back to the present room, holding on to this emotion, and the experience of it.

**b. Phase two: Emotional expression through different strategies (20 min)**

(Full description and instructions of this part is in the document named Stations Description.)

**5. Break (20 min)**

**6. Individual reflection (15 min)**

For this next part we will need our journals and pens. If you don't have any, take a piece of paper and a pen.

(Have materials ready and put them in the center)

I will give you three statements, and you are invited to write as to continue these sentences. We will write in a free writing manner, which means that you will write continuously from the moment we start until I give you the next question. For each statement you will turn a new page and write the beginning of the sentence at the top of the page ending it with three full stops (“...”).

Any questions?

Good. So the first statement is: “Expressing this emotion has been for me...”

Second statement is: “Expressing my emotion brought me...”

Third statement is: “What has changed in me by expressing my emotion is...”

(Read the statements twice and give them 3- 5 minutes between them )

**7. Communicating emotions (15 min)**

Now let's form groups of three and in these groups share what is important for you to be spoken at this moment. Focus on your insights of this experience, or on the most powerful moment of the experience, or the most challenging part. You have four minutes each, make sure everyone has time to share.

**8. Debriefing (20 min)**

**9. Closing (5 min)**

Emotional expression is a key component, a vital step of having an integrative, healthy emotional life. I invite you to be curious and creative in finding ways to express your emotions and share them in the future.

Going around the circle, I invite you to share one word, a metaphor, or an emotion, that describes this experience for you. Whoever is ready can start, and then we go in a circle, clockwise.

**Debriefing questions:**

- How are you feeling?
- How was this experience for you?
- How was it to explore the experience and to deeply feel the emotions?
- How was it to express your emotions in such a diverse way?
- What did you discover about your own emotional expression?
- Was there anything that surprised you in this process?
- How can you express your emotions in the future? What can help you to express them?
- How can you apply what you discovered here into your daily life?

**Materials:**

Pens and A4 papers, clay, crayons, pastels, A3 paper  
Any other materials included in the Stations document (specific to the stations you decide to use)

**Handouts:**

Emotions

**Tips and tricks:**

min/max pax	4	24
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# Stations descriptos handout

## Title: Emotional Expression

**Timing:** 20 min

Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

## Methodology **step by step**

### Timing for each step

Set the room before the workshop starts so you have everything ready when you reach this point. As the participants will be deepened in an emotion it is good to have the stations ready for them to go directly into this phase once they are in the emotional experience.

Every station should have a A4 paper with the name of the station and the instructions written below. This is so that participants can guide themselves, with minimal input from the facilitator. Be there nevertheless, if they have any questions or need guidance of any sort.

Mark half-time with a bell, whistle, drum, rattle, etc.

## Instructions to participants

Throughout the room, you will find different stations, each having a specific way of expressing emotions. You are invited to explore them and choose at least two, a way that feels natural to you to express emotions, and one that you would not usually choose. You can let the emotion you have right now guide you into the right station, or just choose randomly. It is important to explore at least two stations for this emotion that you are feeling through you.

This is an individual activity. No talking, just be with your emotions. Even if you find yourself with someone else at a station, make sure there is minimal interaction, and don't engage in conversation. Respect each other's space and processes.

I will let you know when you are at half time by doing this sound(make an example)

### **a. Dance: speaker and a device with music**

Just paly the music and dance to the rhythm

### **b. Movement: speaker and a device with or without music**

Allow the emotion that is going through you to move you in whichever way it wants to. No right or wrong way to move. Just move. It doesn't have to look good, or in any way. It just should feel right and true for you at this moment.

### **c. Painting**

Use paints to express your current emotional state.

### **d. Drawing**

Use pastels(simpler and more intuitive) to express the emotional state.

### **e. Punching pillows**

A few pillows you can punch at your will and ease. Let yourself go and just punch them.

### **f. Screaming/laughing/crying in a pillow**

This is self-explanatory. A bunch of pillows you can use to express your emotions through sound and body posture to the fullest extent. Go wild.

### **g. Musical instruments**

Use one or more instruments to make sounds that resonate with your emotional state. Just sounds. No music, no art, just sounds.

### **h. A baseball bat and a couch/pillow**

Use the bat to rough up a pillow or a couch. Express rage, anger, resentment, frustration, and all else that comes at full force, full vigor. No censorship.

### **i. Go outside for a very short walk**

Go for a walk, short but intense, make sure you come back. Really, come back, we are starting soon.

### **j. Hug someone**

(facilitator, this station is only and only if one of the facilitators is willing to play this part. Do not do this station unless this is a possibility)

This is the hugging corner. Free hug. As long as it takes, maybe more than one, no talking, just a hug. Try to stay in the hug for more than 30 seconds.

### **k. Collage**

Use the materials to make a collage that symbolizes your emotion. Let your intuition guide, don't think about it. This is for you.

### **l. Shake your body**

Standing or on the ground. Shake your body. For a long time. Keep shaking it.

### **m. Make a symbolic object**

Using the materials, make a symbolic object for yourself, that captures the essence of the energy of this experience.

### **n. Write a letter to someone**

In your journal, or on a separate piece of paper, write a compassionate, fierce loving letter. Maybe to the person whom you had the emotion in regards to. Maybe to yourself. Or to Nature, god, Mother Earth, Cosmos. Or it can be to future you. Or just to that part of yourself who needs a caring, compassionate letter.

### **o. Journal – Free-writing**

Turn a blank page on your journal, set a 9 minute timer, and start to write. Just start to write, and once you have your pen on the paper don't stop until time ends. Keep writing, whatever comes to you. If there is nothing coming, write that: "there is nothing coming to me...there is nothing coming to me...this exercise is stupid...". Just keep writing. Let yourself be surprised.

### **Debriefing questions:**

- Dance: speaker and a device with music, downloaded music (eg: Dead can Dance)
- Movement: speaker and a device with music, downloaded music(eg: Dead can Dance)
- Painting: paints, brushes, A3 paper
- Drawing: pastels, A3 paper, cerated crayons
- Punching pillows: 4-5 pillows
- Screaming/laughing/crying in a pillow: 4-5 pillows
- Musical instruments: 8-10 musical instruments
- A baseball bat and a couch/pillow: 4-5 baseball bats or thick sticks, pillows, couch
- Go outside for a very short walk: none
- Hug someone(facilitator): huggable facilitator
- Collage: scissors, old National Geographic magazines, glue, a4 paper

- Shake your body: 2-3 yoga mats(not necessary)
- Make a symbolic object: string, modelling clay, a rich collection of random objects, glue, scissors, rocks, feathers, pieces of wood, any other objects collected from local surrounding nature
- Write a letter to someone: pens and A4 papers
- Journal – Free-writing: pens and A4 papers

### **Tips and tricks:**

min/max pax		4		24
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# Feeling - Emotions

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The following are words we use when we want to express a combination of emotional states and physical sensations. This list is neither exhaustive nor definitive. It is meant as a starting place to support anyone who wishes to engage in a process of deepening self-discovery and to facilitate greater understanding and connection between people.

There are two parts to this list: feelings we may have when our needs are being met and feelings we may have when our needs are not being met.

## Feelings when your needs are satisfied

### **AFFECTIONATE**

compassionate  
friendly  
loving  
open hearted  
sympathetic  
tender  
warm

### **ENGAGED**

absorbed  
alert  
curious en-  
grossed en-  
chanted  
entranced fas-  
cinated inter-  
ested intrigued  
involved spell-  
bound stimu-  
lated

### **HOPEFUL**

expectant  
encouraged  
optimistic

### **CONFIDENT**

empowered  
open  
proud  
safe  
secure

### **EXCITED**

amazed  
animated  
ardent  
aroused  
astonished  
dazzled  
eager  
energetic en-  
thusiastic  
giddy  
invigorated  
lively  
passionate  
surprised  
vibrant

### **GRATEFUL**

appreciative  
moved  
thankful  
touched

### **INSPIRED**

amazed awed  
wonder

### **JOYFUL**

amused de-  
lighted  
glad  
happy  
jubilant pleased  
tickled

### **EXHILARATED**

blissful  
ecstatic  
elated en-  
thralled exuber-  
ant radiant rap-  
turous thrilled

### **PEACEFUL**

calm  
clear headed  
comfortable  
centered  
content  
equanimous  
fulfilled  
mellow  
quiet  
relaxed  
relieved  
satisfied  
serene  
still  
tranquil  
trusting

### **REFRESHED**

enlivened  
rejuvenated  
renewed  
rested  
restored  
revived

# Feelings when your needs are not satisfied

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## **AFRAID**

apprehensive  
dread  
foreboding  
frightened  
mistrustful  
panicked  
petrified  
scared  
suspicious  
terrified  
wary  
worried

## **ANNOYED**

aggravated  
dismayed  
disgruntled  
displeased  
exasperated  
frustrated  
impatient  
irritated  
irked

## **ANGRY**

enraged  
furious  
incensed  
indignant  
irate  
livid  
outraged  
resentful

## **AVERSION**

animosity  
appalled  
contempt  
disgusted  
dislike  
hate  
horrified  
hostile  
repulsed

## **CONFUSED**

ambivalent  
baffled  
bewildered  
dazed  
hesitant  
lost  
mystified  
perplexed  
puzzled  
torn

## **DISCONNECTED**

alienated  
aloof  
apathetic  
bored  
cold  
detached  
distant  
distracted  
indifferent  
numb  
removed  
uninterested  
withdrawn

## **DISQUIET**

agitated  
alarmed  
discombobulated  
disconcerted  
disturbed  
perturbed  
rattled  
restless  
shocked  
startled  
surprised  
troubled  
turbulent  
turmoil  
uncomfortable  
uneasy  
unnerved  
unsettled  
upset

## **EMBARRASSED**

ashamed  
chagrined  
flustered  
guilty  
mortified  
self-conscious

## **FATIGUE**

beat burnt  
out  
depleted  
exhausted  
lethargic  
listless  
sleepy  
tired  
weary  
worn out

## **PAIN**

agony  
anguished  
bereaved  
devastated  
grief  
heartbroken  
hurt  
lonely  
miserable  
regretful  
remorseful

## **SAD**

depressed  
dejected  
despair  
despondent  
disappointed  
discouraged  
disheartened  
forlorn  
gloomy  
heavy  
hearted  
hopeless  
melancholy  
unhappy  
wretched

## **TENSE**

anxious  
cranky  
distressed  
distraught  
edgy  
fidgety  
frazzled  
irritable  
jittery  
nervous  
overwhelmed  
restless  
stressed  
out

## **VULNERABLE**

fragile  
guarded  
helpless  
insecure  
leery  
reserved  
sensitive  
shaky

## **YEARNING**

envious  
jealous  
longing  
nostalgic  
pining  
wistful



# Emotional Integration

## What is **emotional integration**?

From a holistic, integrative approach, emotional life is an integral, distinct and crucial part of the human psyche, to be cultivated and worked with, as a guide, as a partner. This capacity, to feel our own emotions and the emotions of others, has its own aliveness and it impacts and shapes both our inner experience and our interactions and social relations.

In our approach of working with emotions, anything that comes is accepted, even embraced and welcomed, and the focus is on integration, not control. Integration is like digesting an emotion, working with an emotion, or letting an emotion work you, as opposed to emotional control, sublimation, repression or

suppression. We are working together with emotions, seeing them as an integral part of ourselves.

Emotions have something to give us, a gem, a treasure, they are, like the poet Rumi so beautifully writes, “unexpected visitors” to be treated honourably, even though they could sometimes appear as a “crowd of sorrows, who violently sweep your house empty of its furniture” as they bring gifts, “new delights”. Every emotion, even shame, guilt, anger, joy, envy, every emotion has in it a treasure that enriches our lives. Through the process of emotional integration we uncover these gifts and create ways to take these gifts in our everyday lives.

## How does **emotional integration** work?

Emotional integration is a process inspired by natural rhythms, which offers the possibility of partnering, working with an emotion. From the first moment of being aware there is something there, through fully feeling the emotion, going into insight and discovery (of

what this is about), all the way through taking action (life-enriching and rooted in the emotion) and ending in a state of big-picture awareness (revelation) of the entire cycle of emotional life. We become partners with our emotions and co-create our inner and outer experience.

## Why is **emotional integration** relevant to resilience?

One of the roles of emotions is to guide us in maintaining balance between our inner life and our outer experience. When this balance is upset, we feel an unpleasant emotion, signalling that there is something we have to tend to, maybe a need is unmet, or an important value of ours has been violated, so we are invited to take action toward bringing balance back into our lives. When we feel a pleasant emotion, there is something good going on, and we are invited to acknowledge that, show gratitude, or celebrate it and find

ways to enrich that which is already in balance between our inner life and outer experience.

Therefore, integrating our emotions allows us to understand our needs and to get more information about the things that are good for us, the moments in which our lives are balanced and the things that are missing when balance is not there. Emotional integration allows us to regulate our actions so that we can better meet our needs, stay balanced and enrich our lives.

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2. Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life, Marsall Rosenberg, [www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org)
3. Animals of the Four Windows: Integrating Thinking, Sensing, Feeling and Imagery, E. S. Gallegos Ph.D., [www.esgallegos.com](http://www.esgallegos.com)



# Session Planning

## Title: Emotional Integration Cycle

**Timing:** 170 minutes - Two sessions and a 20 min break

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Develop the capacity to feel, integrate and express emotions

Discover different types of emotions and their source

Develop motivation towards working with emotions and cultivating a relationship with the emotional side

## Methodology step by step

Timing for each step

- 1. Introduction and warming up (5 min)**  
A group discussion about emotions with the participants after which the group is guided through a random walk focused on connection.
- 2. Intro into emotions (10 min)**  
The facilitator gives an input on emotions content found in handouts, after which they receive the handout with emotions you ask them to identify what emotions they currently feel.
- 3. The 5 Step Emotional Integration Model (20 min)**  
A step by step description of the model used before participants are taken into the experiential phase of the workshop. After this description, if there are any questions, encourage participants to hold them until you have gone through the experiential phase.
- 4. Break (20 min)**
- 5. Experiential exercise (50 min)**  
Using the detailed instruction in the handout, the participants are guided through the experiential exercise in exploring an emotionally charged situation.
- 6. Venting and integration with artwork (10 min)**  
Using art materials participants ventilate and integrate their experience.
- 7. Sharing in small groups (15 min)**
- 8. Questions and answers (15 min)**
- 9. Sharing Circle (20 min)**

**Setting of the room, participants distribution:** Participants work in pairs, individually, and then in the whole group, the most common shape/distribution pattern is a circle.

**Handouts or materials:** Handouts – list of emotions, model description and 5 step experiential exercise.

# Instructions to participants

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## 1. Introduction and warming up (5 min)

We will be working with the topic of emotions. What are emotions for you? What comes to your mind, what resonates in you when you hear this word, emotions?

(After taking a few answers go to the warm-up)

*Ok, so let's stand up and start walking through the room in a random manner, by going in any direction, or changing direction suddenly, trying to fill the empty spaces in the room at all times, and slow down or hurry up, fall into your own rhythm...*

*Keep walking... Now start noticing how you feel... how is your breath, how does your body feel, what emotions are going through you...and start to notice that there are people around you... make eye contact, maybe even break a smile or two... without talking find a way to show that you acknowledge their presence, that you see them... and come to a stop in front of someone else, forming pairs.*

*With this pair, make eye contact and hold this connection that is created by making eye contact synchronize three breaths...*

*Now keep walking... and come back to your breath...while walking in the same random manner, breath in deeply three times, filling your lungs and exhale slowly... and come to rest in front of another person.*

*And with this new partner, you will make eye contact, synchronize three breaths and after you have managed that you will say the first word that comes to your mind...*

*And then keep walking and again come back to your breath... breathe in deeply three times... and come to rest yet again in front of another person.*

*With this new human in front of you, you will make eye contact, synchronize three breaths and after you have managed that you will say a sentence, one sentence that is your truth at this moment. Something that is true for you at this very moment.*

## 2. Intro into emotions (10 min)

*In this workshop we will be working on emotions from an integrative approach, a holistic approach. (Full content of the intro can be found in the handout. After you finish, give participants the handout that contains the emotion lists)*

*This is a list, not a complete list of emotions. It may be useful throughout the process, and now take a look at it, and just explore it for a few moments. See if you can identify your current emotional state from that list. And if you can, see where does this emotion move or resides in your body*

## 3. The 5 Step Emotional Integration Model (20 min)

*The Cycle of Emotional Integration is mapped onto the four directions, starting from East, circles around clockwise (East, South, West and North) and returns to the East. The model describing the five steps of emotional integration is applicable to every emotion either pleasant or unpleasant ones. And here we differentiate between negative-positive and pleasant-unpleasant.*

*(Full description of the model, that needs to be presented step by step in this phase, you can find in the handout)*

*Are there any burning questions? I would like for us to go through this cycle, working on an emotion, for you to experience it, and then have a discussion on it.*

## 4. Break (20 min)

## 5. Experiential exercise (50 min)

Good, so I will guide you in this practice, and you will have the opportunity to explore a situation in your life that brought an emotion you want to explore, to deepen. It is your choice which emotion you want to explore, if it is pleasant or unpleasant and how deep or intense you want to go with this experiential exercise.

(Use the detailed instructions from the handout to take participants through the 5 step experiential exercise)

## 6. Venting and integration with artwork (10 min)

For the next few minutes I invite you to use the art materials to express yourself. You can use the crayons, pastels or clay and allow yourself to express, to make something, allow for anything that needs to come out through this way. This is not about doing art, it is about expressing yourself freely.

Or

### Create a Mandala

For the next few minutes, I invite you to use the materials you have in front of you and let your emotions guide you to create a mandala. The Mandala (Sanskrit for "circle" or "completion") has a long history and is recognized for its deep spiritual meaning and representation of wholeness. The core of mandala designs is the circle. You don't have to use only circles, though your art should have some semblance of a circular design. Otherwise, there are no rules or constrictions with regard to mandala designs, just let your feelings inspire your art.

The very nature of creating a mandala is therapeutic and symbolic. It's not about the final product, it's about the journey. The mandala is widely recognized as a meaningful reflection of its creator. So when you reach your destination, you will have a representation of something meaningful and personal... a snapshot of you for a brief moment in time. Your instinct and feeling should inspire and guide you through the process of creation.

## 7. Sharing in small groups (15 min)

Now let's form groups of three and in these groups share what is important for you to be spoken at this moment. You can share on the artwork you just made, or on anything that needs to be expressed right now.

## 8. Questions and answers (15 min)

Any questions about the process? (answer any questions that arise)  
(Final input after answering questions)

This is a practice, it means that it is something you do ever and over again, in a recurrent manner, like weekly, or daily, or any time there is an emotionally charged situation to explore.

While you are exploring an emotion, go through one step at a time even if it takes a few days. The more you do this, the practice becomes more fluent, easier and takes less time

## 9. Sharing Circle (20 min)

### Sharing Circle questions:

- How was this process for you? Was there something new, uncomfortable for you?
- Share some insights, significant things, surprising outcomes.

### Materials:

Pens and A4 papers, clay, crayons, pastels, A3 paper, flipchart with cycle and colored papers (see resources)

### Handouts:

- Emotions (see handout from Emotional Expression activity), 5 Steps Experiential exercise, The cycle of Emotional Integration

### Tips and tricks:

- It is very recommended to go through the Cycle yourselves before facilitating the activity so you have a deep understanding of the process. Following the steps you can go through the cycle, as this is meant to be an individual practice.
- Read the the two resources before facilitating the workshop, to be connected to the topic and the philosophy behind emotional self-work
- Sharing circles are spaces in which participants are invited to share anything, or on a specific topic. In this case, you have specific questions, but the space should be less structured than a debriefing.

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# 5 step experiential exercise

## a. **Somatic experience of the emotion**

All right, so stand up, and let's start walking through the room, in a random manner...but slowly, find your own pacing,...and bring your attention to your breath...and breathe in and out slowly...and again breathe slowly in and out...and slow down even more, look for your rhythm, and even come to a standstill if you feel this is right for you...and gently close your eyes, but not fully, just to be with just yourselves and your experience, but a bit open so you can notice if you will bump into someone...and keep moving, even if you are at a stop, feel the small movement of your body...

And allow a situation to come to you...an emotionally charged situation, allow it to come to your awareness...allow yourself to be fully here in this situation. What is going on? Are there other people involved or are you alone? What does the space that you are in look like? Is it day or night? What are you feeling? And we are slowly shifting into the first step of the somatic experience... What emotion is rising in you? What bodily sensation is there with this emotion? Where do you feel it in your body? Can you name it in any way? Or move it? Slow down and allow this emotion to be there, invite it.

## b. **Full psychological and bodily experience of the emotion**

And let's move into the second step...allow this emotion to move through your body, give it permission to be there, invite it to move through you to do what it wants with your body, with your full being... Invite it to move you, to work through you to manifest in any way it will. This energy, this emotion, this feeling, allow it to do whatever it will, no censorship, full psychological and bodily experience. Allow this emotion to do whatever it will with your body, invite it to move, scream, cry, laugh, throw itself...if you feel uncomfortable to do this physically in this room, you can also do it in your imagination...What movement does it want to make, what posture does it want to take? How does this emotion move or rest through your body?... What images, metaphors, memories, tastes, or smells come to you while this emotion runs through you?...Just allow anything to happen, no censorship, no control, just allow.....

And slowly allow it to settle, and you feel yourself reapproaching equilibrium,...allow it to settle...And let's move into the next step.

## c. **Insight - meanings and significance of the emotion.**

Allright, so I invite you to settle down, find your journal and pen, and sit down, holding this state that you are in, and without talking.

This is the West step, in which you become fully introspective. The West is the time when shadows lengthen, the sun is setting and we slow down, the dark is slowly approaching the world and we are gathering the fruits of our labor, we are drawn to introspective self, to reflection and inspiration. We will be employing a free writing exercise, and that means that you will be writing in your journals continuously, from the moment you start you keep writing, even if you don't have anything to write. In this case you might write: "I have nothing to write...I have nothing to write and so on" or "this exercise is stupid" if this comes to you, whatever needs to be expressed. And I will give you three questions, one after the other, on which to write, with a small break between them. Do you have any questions about this activity?(Make sure to answer all confusions if there are any, if not then go on) In this Western introspective phase you will ask yourself three questions, the insights you're after here are all about you, not others. There's no requirement to put yourself down. Ask with self-compassion. Ask yourself as you would ask a friend you want to support through a difficult moment.

### c.1. First question is: **What is your current emotion most directly about? (2 min time for writing)**

If it is fear, for example, what is the danger? If it is joy, what are you celebrating? If sadness, what have you lost? If guilt, what do you believe you've done wrong? If anger or hurt, in what way do you feel you've been mistreated?

### c.2. Second question is: **What does the fact that this emotion occurred under those specific circumstances (which include any other person or people involved) tell you about you? (5 min time for writing)**

What does it say about your values revealed by this emotion, as well as for your desires, limitations, needs, hopes, loves, fidelities, beliefs, attitudes, sensitivities, inner conflicts, other emotions with which this one conflicts.

**c.3.** Third question is: **In regard to the situation that engendered this emotion, what do you most deeply want? If you could get what you really want, what would it be? (3 min time for writing)**

Facilitator: Raise your hand if you need more time (give participants 2 more minutes if there are any that need more time)...And slowly come to an end. You can come back to this later if you feel there is a need to write more.

**d. Action** – North – The sun has set, it is night but also winter. And for ages our ancestors, our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents and those before them have gathered around the fire and have told stories, and have shared their experience, and have made plans for the days, seasons, years to come. And have acted on what they learned in their experiences.

Now you're ready to act on what you learned in the West.

This North step is essential because the emotional cycle is incomplete until you've acted on your feelings. Given what you've learned about yourself in the previous step, what can you do to align your social world with your emotional world? Often, for example, it's appropriate to express your feelings to others. But more generally you must compassionately act on your emotions so that you honor both yourself and any others involved. This is essential – that your action is deeply respectful of everyone, even if (especially, actually) you felt hurt by an intimate other. When you become clear about what you need to do, go do it.

If what I am experiencing is an unpleasant emotion, there is an imbalance between my inner experience (emotions and needs) and my outer experience (social and natural environment with its emotions and needs), and in this case my action will be something that is meant to bring these two back into balance. If the emotion is a pleasant one, then between my inner and outer experience things are already right, and my future action is focused on celebrating, honoring this, or even enhancing it.

In this step, usually, we express our emotions to others, in word and action, in a nonviolent, kind-hearted way that makes our social world right again, or that celebrates what's already right. But also this can be done through actions alone or projects we start by what we discovered in the previous step.

So now I invite you to do one of the following things.

One is to write a letter to someone, and in this letter express your emotions, and your discoveries through this cycle to someone else. It may be the person, the one linked with the situation that brought this emotion, or it may be to god, universe, nature, and so on.

Second, create a symbolic object that represents the action which you will take to honor this emotion. And think about the details of this action. When will you do it? What resources do you need? What kind of help do you require?

Give participants 10-15 minutes to work on one of the two tasks

You probably cannot do this action right now, so in this phase we are only planning it and making an inner commitment to follow through on it after the workshop.

**e. Illumination – Review the Emotional Cycle**

So, let us shift into the 5th and final step of the cycle, into the illumination phase. Now you are taking a bigger picture of the Cycle that was just completed through your action, even though here and now you cannot do the action itself, you planned it and for the sake of discovering the practice we will move on to the fifth step.

So I invite you now to take a step back, to take a non-attachment attitude, like being on a hilltop and looking down towards your experience.

I invite you to take your journals and spend 5 minutes answering the following question: **How does this experience integrate/fit into my larger story?**

# The Cycle of Emotional Integration handout

The Cycle of Emotional Integration is mapped onto the four directions, starting from East, circles around clockwise (East, South, West and North) and returns to the East. The model describing the five steps of emotional integration is applicable to every emotion either pleasant or unpleasant ones. And here we differentiate between negative-positive and pleasant-unpleasant.

There are no negative emotions, only emotions that we don't want to feel because they might hurt or be unpleasant to some parts of ourselves.

In every emotion there is a gem, a gift to be discovered, a treasure that is life enriching.

Emotions are one's energy, vitality so in trying to block, manage, or lessen an emotion, especially when we feel an unpleasant one, we are limiting our ability to feel we are limiting the flow of vitality within us, and this causes some degree of emotional depression from mild emotional lack of access to inability to feel emotions at all.

For the next part you can use a flipchart paper and the drawn papers that you can find in the materials section. These are the description of each step of the Emotional Integration Cycle to be presented as they are, or you can also use your own wording.

- a. **Somatic experience of the emotion** – East – The sun rises, there is a new day, a new beginning: Here we have the Somatic experience of the emotion, the emotional access part, your first recognition of an emotion might be little more than “there's something going on in my body” – butterflies in your stomach, a burning of the nose, a facial flush, weakening of the knees, a lump in the throat. This bodily awareness is the threshold to the first step (corresponding to the East) of emotional integration. Upon noticing a change in your somatic experience, offer your full attention to that shift, allowing the sensation to expand in any way it wants as you get to know it. These uninterpreted sensations lead to the second step.
- b. **Full psychological and bodily experience of the emotion** – South – The sun is high, there is a lot of energy heat, our wild side is fully active and present, we feel with our whole being, indiscriminately, uncensored, we offer our bodies, our minds, our voice and tears, our laughter to the emotion. Here we experience a full psychological and bodily experience of the emotion, uncensored in any way. Give your body full permission to have these feelings until you find yourself reapproaching equilibrium. Here it is very important not to censor anything. If there is something that the emotion wants to do, or needs to do with your body and you do not feel comfortable to do it here, you can do this in your mind, your imagination.
- c. **Insight - Now ask about the meanings and significance of the emotion.** This is the West step, in which you become fully introspective. The West is the time when shadows lengthen, the sun is setting and we slow down, the dark is slowly approaching the world and we are gathering the fruits of our labor, we are drawn to introspective self, to reflection and inspiration.  
In this phase you will ask yourself three questions, in a specific sequence.
  - c.1. What is your current emotion most directly about?  
If it is fear, for example, what is the danger? If it is joy, what are you celebrating? If sadness, what have you lost? If guilt, what do you believe you've done wrong? If anger or hurt, in what way do you feel you've been mistreated?

**c.2.** What does the fact that this emotion occurred under those specific circumstances (which include any other person or people involved) tell you about you?

*The insights you're after here are all about you, not others. There's no requirement to put yourself down. Ask with self-compassion.*

*What does it say about your values revealed by this emotion, as well as for your desires, limitations, needs, hopes, loves, fidelities, beliefs, attitudes, sensitivities, inner conflicts, other emotions with which this one conflicts.*

*Unless you get completely stuck, don't let anyone help you with this. It's essential that you learn to understand yourself through your emotions.*

**c.3.** In regard to the situation that engendered this emotion, what do you most deeply want? If you could get what you really want, what would it be?

*Don't go to the next step until you've achieved some insight about yourself.*

**d. Action** – North – *The sun has set, it is night but also winter. And for ages our ancestors, our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents and those before them have gathered around the fire and have told stories, and have shared their experience, and have made plans for the days, seasons, years to come. And have acted on what they learned so far. Now you're ready to act on what you learned in the West. This North step is essential because the emotional cycle is incomplete until you've acted on your feelings. Given what you've learned about yourself in the previous step, what can you do to align your social world with your emotional world? Often, for example, it's appropriate to express your feelings to others. But more generally you must compassionately act on your emotions – and the qualities of self that they reveal – so that you honor both yourself and any others involved. This is essential – that your action is deeply respectful of everyone, even if (especially, actually) you felt hurt by an intimate other. When you become clear about what you need to do, go do it.*

**e. Illumination** – East – *A new beginning, a new day, the sun rises, the spring comes, we are taking a larger perspective on what is happening in us and around us, like standing on a hilltop, and looking down at the village where you live.*

*Finally, after completing the action step, you come full circle, returning to the transcendent perspective of the East. Take the opportunity here, with a broader perspective, to review the entire cycle of this particular emotion and notice the irony or humor in it. Gather any wisdom gained about yourself and your life – or about the human condition more generally. Your aim here is not detachment from the emotional experience, but, as Buddhists say, nonattachment – neither clinging to the emotional cycle, nor rejecting it.*

# THE THESPIAN at the OASIS

## Early Adolescence (Stage 3)

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### Emotional Skills

After puberty, maintaining and nurturing emotional health is especially important – and challenging. Both teenage and older Thespians begin with the affective foundations formed in the Garden, upon which they must build a more sophisticated set of emotional skills. I've found it valuable to map emotional skills onto the four cardinal directions. This model, applicable to every emotion, describes

five components of emotional integration. It begins in the East and circles around the Wheel clockwise, returning to the East. While in the grip of a strong emotion, it's possible to get stuck anywhere along the way. Until the cycle is complete, the emotion is not fully assimilated and soon enough will demand more attention. Some degree of emotional depression can be expected until all five steps are completed.<sup>17</sup>

- 1. Somatic experience of the emotion.** Your first recognition of an emotion might be little more than “there’s something going on in my body” – butterflies in your stomach, a burning of the nose, a facial flush, weakening of the knees, a lump in the throat. This bodily awareness is the threshold to the first step (corresponding to the East) of emotional integration. Upon noticing a change in your somatic experience, offer your full attention to that shift, allowing the sensation to expand in any way it wants as you get to know it. These uninterpreted sensations lead to the second step.
- 2. Full psychological and bodily experience of the emotion.** This is the South step. Let the emotion have its way with your body. How does your body want to move? What postures open the doors to this emotion? What sounds does it want to make through you? What gestures? Let it happen. Perhaps you can draw it. What colors and shapes best express this emotion? Can you sing it? Express it poetically? What images arise? What memories? What metaphors occur? It often helps to name the emotion: begin with the Explorer’s basic set of emotion categories (mad, bad, sad, glad, and scared) and elaborate it into something like: anger, hurt, guilt, shame, sadness, happiness, joy, fear, envy, jealousy, despair, and love. What you’re feeling could be any one or a combination of these possibilities. Give your body full permission to have these feelings until you find yourself reapproaching equilibrium. Don’t move on to the next step until that’s happened.
- 3. Insight.** Now ask about the meanings and significance of the emotion. This is the West step, in which you become fully introspective. Begin with this: What is your current emotion most directly about? If it is fear, for example, what is the danger? If it is joy, what are you celebrating? If sadness, what have you lost? If guilt, what do you believe you’ve done wrong? If anger or hurt, in what way do you feel you’ve been mistreated? Next ask this key question: What does the fact that this emotion occurred under those specific circumstances (which include any other person or people involved) tell you about you? The insights you’re after here are all about you, not others. There’s no requirement to put yourself down. Ask with self-compassion. Unless you get completely stuck, don’t let anyone help you with this. In the Oasis, it’s essential that you learn to understand yourself through your emotions. Look for your values revealed by this emotion, as well as for your desires, limitations, needs, hopes, loves, fidelities, beliefs, attitudes, sensitivities, inner conflicts, other emotions with which this one conflicts, childhood survival strategies, and your old scripts and stories about yourself and the world. Also ask: In regard to the situation that engendered this emotion, what do you most deeply want? If you could get what you really want, what would it be? Don’t go to the next step until you’ve achieved some insight about yourself.



- 4. Action.** Now you're ready to act on what you learned in the West. This North step is essential because the emotional cycle is incomplete until you've acted on your feelings. Given what you've learned about yourself in the previous step, what can you do to align your social world with your emotional world? Often, for example, it's appropriate to express your feelings to others. But more generally you must compassionately act on your emotions – and the qualities of self that they reveal – so that you honor both yourself and any others involved. This is essential – that your action is deeply respectful of everyone, even if (especially, actually) you felt hurt by an intimate other. When you become clear about what you need to do, go do it.
- 5. Finally,** after completing the action step, you come full circle, re- turning to the transcendent perspective of the East. Take the opportunity here to review the entire cycle of this particular emotion and notice the irony or humor in it. Gather any wisdom gained about yourself and your life – or about the human condition more generally. Your aim here is not detachment from the emotional experience, but, as Buddhists say, nonattachment – neither clinging to the emo- tional cycle, nor rejecting it.

The emotional skills embedded in these five steps are key to the development of self-approval as well as to gaining genuine approval from others. If you're not able to honor your emotions – from experiential access all the way through to action and illumination – you'll fail to honor yourself. Low self-esteem and emotional de- pression are the results. Conversely, emotional self-honoring and authenticity com- pose the shortest path to positive self-esteem. Developing your emotional skills is a key component of "Inner Child" or "Wounded Child" work. These five steps are your way of exercising emotional self- care as well as one component of your loving care of others. The part of your psyche you're developing with this practice is what I call the Nurturing Parent, a dimension of your wholeness that you need in order to truly love yourself and others.

Excerpt taken from *NATURE AND THE HUMAN SOUL* - Bill Plotkin, New World Library

# Emotional integration resource

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In addition to being enchanted and sensuous, the Wild Indigenous One is wholly emotive and emotionally holy. Within our embodied wild consciousness, we live and breathe the sacredness and pleasure of all the emotions. All of them.

To the Wild One, there are no toxic emotions, not even shame. Each emotion is an experience alive in our bodies. The Wild One is exhilarated by each tremor, moan, or howl of feeling. Every emotion is a valued experience of assimilating the vicissitudes of life, of social, corporeal, and spiritual existence. Through our South subpersonalities, however, we experience our emotions quite differently.

As we'll see in chapter 7, when we react to events through the filter of our woundedness, our emotions often seem unpleasant, and we may then end up acting on our emotions in ways that harm ourselves or others. It bears emphasizing that the mature human — the human Self — is not a dispassionate, merely logical functionary. We do not do well in any domain of life — even (or especially) in government, business, religion, or education — without the free flow of our feelings.

“Emotional intelligence” is as essential to our humanity as any other mode of intelligence, including intellectual, imaginative, sensory, ecological, and musical, to name just a few. Individual humans burn out and human organizations self-destruct without emotional aliveness. Some people believe we'd be better off without emotions because “emotions are irrational.” But, in fact, our emotions always make sense when we're able to fully understand ourselves, and there's a treasure in each emotion. Without emotions, we're not human. Each emotion, if we know how to embrace it, provides guidance in modifying or celebrating our relationships to others, to life, to our world.

Positive or negative, emotions are not experiences we choose. They occur without deliberation in response to our ever-changing relationships to self and others, relationships that manage to regularly get out of balance. The information contained in our emotions, however, can help us recover that balance, repair or refashion our world, and enable us to participate in communities in more fulfilling ways.

A short list of emotions: mad, sad, bad, glad, scared. Every emotion contains a message. Each type of emotion (for example, mad versus sad) offers a particular kind of revelation about self or about the relationship of self to others or the world. What we call negative emotions

tell us that something seems off to us and that attempts at improvement are called for. What we experience as positive emotions embody our appreciation or celebration of a good thing. Every emotion suggests particular kinds of actions that can bring the world back into balance or, in the case of positive emotions, can maintain, enhance, or celebrate balance that already exists. For example, what makes us mad or feel hurt? Every instance of anger or hurt evokes questions such as: How do I believe I deserve to be treated? How should another person or a community of people be treated, or a particular place, or, more generally, the planet? What seems to be wrong with the world? In what way might I be part of the problem? What we believe we or others deserve is, of course, not necessarily an accurate assessment.

The value of the questioning is to help us understand ourselves — our beliefs and attitudes — as well as the moral and social conventions of our people. Sometimes we discover our beliefs are mistaken. At other times our investigation yields confirmation. In both cases, we can learn how to act on our anger and hurt. In particular, we can learn how to respond to others in a way that fosters healthy relationships.

When we're sad, a different set of questions arises: What do I love, admire, or desire that I've lost or fear I'm about to lose? What can I do to keep the loss from happening or getting worse? If it's too late, how can I mourn what's been lost? What does my love or desire say about who I am? How might I praise the things of this world? When we feel bad (guilty or ashamed): What is expected of me? What do I expect of myself? What are the right ways for me to be and to act? What are my genuine values, and which ones have I violated, knowingly or unknowingly? How do I make things right again with others and with myself?

When we're glad: What makes my world better, more complete? What, in general, do I rejoice in? What does this say about who I am, what I value? How might I praise or celebrate what is good? When we're afraid: What is dangerous and therefore to be escaped, avoided, or approached cautiously? What do I need to do to protect myself or others? What degree of risk is tolerable in pursuit of which goals? Given that zero risk can be deadening, what degree of risk is optimal? What is true security? Given life's inherent risks and dangers, what skills or resources do I need in order to take care of myself and others?

## THE FOUR STEPS OF **EMOTIONAL ASSIMILATION**

In healthy cultures and families, we learn in childhood how to embrace our emotions in ways that serve ourselves and others. In contemporary Western cultures, most people must learn this later in life. Many never do. Embracing our emotions can be understood as a journey through the four cardinal directions. Ideally, each of the four steps is thoroughly completed before we move on to the next.

**The first step** — a talent of the South facet of the Self — is to thoroughly experience the raw emotion itself, beginning with how it feels in our body, allowing the emotion to express and embody itself through us, using sound, movement, gesture, or posture. In this step, there's no interpretation, censoring, or sanitizing of the emotion, only the full visceral experience of it.

**Second**, from the mature perspective of the West Self, we explore what the occurrence of that emotion in that particular situation tells us about ourselves (not about others), about our expectations, values, needs, desires, attitudes, and so on. This is intended not as harsh self-criticism but rather as compassionate self-examination.

**Third**, we express our emotions to others, in word and action, in a nonviolent, kindhearted way that makes our social world right again, or that celebrates what's already right (nurturing action is a North skill).

**And fourth**, we review the entire cycle of the emotional process now being completed, seeing how it fits within the big picture of our individual life's story, and, hopefully, have a wholehearted laugh with ourselves and perhaps others about this adventure of being human (an East gift). Through this sunwise (clockwise) cycle — from south to east — our emotions support us in bringing our outer world of relationships into alignment with our inner world of experience, and vice versa. A

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Plotkin, Bill. *Wild Mind: A Field Guide to the Human Psyche* (pp. 57-60). New World Library. Kindle Edition.

# Components of an emotional response handout

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- 1. Prompting event**

Emotions are usually triggered by specific events that can be external (outside the person, in the environment) or internal (inside the person, e.g. own thoughts, emotions, behaviors or physical reaction). These occur right before an emotion starts and will only set off the emotion if we are at least partly or at some level aware of it.
- 2. Interpretation**

Although some events can automatically prompt an emotion, without any thoughts involved, most of the time the meaning we give to a certain event is the one responsible for setting off the emotion. The thoughts, beliefs, assumptions we hold become relevant parts of complex emotions.
- 3. Vulnerability factors**

Certain conditions can increase our sensitivity (biological reactivity) to a triggering event and our likelihood of making emotional interpretations. These can occur shortly before the prompting event, such as not having enough sleep, feeling hungry or sick, using alcohol or drugs, or having just been through a stressful event. For example, if we are rejected by one person and then by another, we may have a much stronger reaction to the second rejection than we had to the first. At the same time, events from the distant past can also increase our emotional vulnerability if they have not been processed or resolved.
- 4. Body changes**

An important part of the emotional system is the complex biological changes that are set off in our body. Depending on the type of emotion, we can detect sensations related to changes in our heart, breathing, digestive processes, glands, reflex actions, and nervous system. These are actually what we mean by “emotional experience”. For example, sadness involves sensations of low energy, heaviness, and emptiness, while anger involves sensations of high energy and agitation. These biological changes also result in what we feel like urges to act. Not being able to sense your body and its changes makes emotion regulation very difficult.
- 5. Expressive behaviors**

Patterns of body changes typical to each emotion become visible through the (de)activation of our muscles and changes in our posture, voice, and actions. Therefore, our bodies have special ways of communicating how and what we are feeling. Also, as nervous system changes activate our body to be ready for action, strong urges arise and we are prompted to act (e.g. fight/attack in anger or flight/run in fear).
- 6. Aftereffects**

Emotions have powerful effects on our thinking, body and behavior. One of the most important ones is the tendency of emotions to organize our system in such a way that they keep “refiring”. They make us hypervigilant to cues and events that could set off the same emotion and narrow our attention to compatible information. For example, when we are sad, we tend to notice aspects about our lives that are “not going right”, remember other things from our past that made us sad and lose sight of positive things.
- 7. Label**

The label or the name of the emotion is not a component in itself. However, this part helps conclude the process of observation and integrate the emotional experience. Accurately naming the emotion was also shown to decrease the discomfort experienced and support communication.

# Emotional literacy

## What is **emotional literacy**?

Emotions are complex, full-system responses that support our survival and adaptation to the environment. They have various components that are interrelated and influence each other. At the same time, each specific emotional response comes with a specific adaptive function. Emotional literacy refers to our capacity to (1) correctly identify and name an emotion by observing and describing its components, and (2) to understand what different emotions do for us.

In order to correctly identify and name an emotion, we need to carefully observe and describe (1) the prompting event, (2) our interpretation of the prompting event, (3) our relevant history in the recent and distant past, (4) the body changes, sensations and action urges that are set off, (5) the expressive behaviors and signals associated with the emotion, and (6) the aftereffects of that specific emotion. It can be very helpful as well to (7) label or name the emotion that has been observed.

## Relevance for **emotional resilience**

Correctly identifying and describing our emotional processes brings great benefits in terms of resilience. Emotions can sometimes send false alarms or overwhelm us, interfering with our ability to pursue our goals. In order to regulate them and reestablish inner balance, we first need to understand where they come from or why they are here.

Examining separately the components of an emotion can help decide how to regulate the emotion. Research shows that being very specific about an emotional experience significantly improves our capacity to process and regulate it, compared to approaching it in overly general ways. Once we can clearly see and describe the parts of our emotion system, we can decide where to act first in order to change it. Changing one of the components can often change the entire emotional response.

Observing our emotions also allows us to step away for a little bit, so that we can think and use appropriate coping strategies. At the same time, being able to sit with our emotions, feel our bodies and the sensations that arise, is necessary so that we can integrate emotions as natural parts of ourselves and regulate them as such.

Knowing what emotions do for us can help us appreciate them when they are painful or difficult. Additionally, understanding the function of an emotional response informs us in choosing the best course of action when regulating it. Importantly, emotions support us in getting our needs met and the decision on how exactly to meet them lies in our hands... and minds.

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Linehan, Marsha M. DBT Skills training handouts and worksheets. Guilford Publications, 2014.

# Session Planning

**Title: The ABC of emotions**

**Timing:** 1 hr 30 min

**Aim and learning elements / session objectives:**

Learn about the key components and characteristics of emotional experiences  
Observe and identify components of one's own emotional experience

## Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

- 1. Introductory discussion (15 min)**  
Group discussion on the subject of emotions.
- 2. Presenting a model of emotional experiences (15 min)**  
Introduce a model of emotions as activity on several levels (use the handout): cognitive (thoughts, the story we tell ourselves, the significance of an event, images), bodily/somatic (physical sensations, physiological activity), subjective feeling, impulse to act. Define characteristics which can be used to describe emotions: intensity, latency (how long it lasts), valence (pleasant or unpleasant).  
**Guided exploration (30 min)**  
Participants explore an emotion linked to a certain event, guided by the model. As you are guiding the participants, give the instructions at a slow pace and use a neutral tone. Also allow a few seconds (5, 10, 20) break in different moments, where participants may need to pay attention to indicated elements (e.g. body sensations, thoughts, impulses to act).  
**3.**
  - Identify activating event and connect with it using imagination
  - Go through each level of emotional activity.
  - Name the emotion.
  - Review and take notes/journaling.
  - Give handouts with elements of the emotional experience.
- 4. Debriefing (30 min)**

## Instructions to participants:

- 1. Introductory discussion (15 min)**  
*In this session we talk about emotions. Let's see, what do you think emotions are?  
What kind of emotions do you know?  
Why do we have emotions? Why are they important for us?*
- 2. Presenting a model of emotional experiences (15 min)**  
*Did you know that emotions are actually complex experiences, which contain a lot of valuable information? Let's see what kind of information they deliver!*  
  
(Use the handout to introduce the components of an emotional experience)  
  
*Does it make sense? Is there anything that is unclear?*

### **3. Guided exploration (30 min)**

*We will now practice a little bit using the model, to see how it applies to emotions we experience in everyday situations.*

*For this, I invite you to identify a recent event or a situation, which brought an emotion in you. It can be a fight you had with someone, a piece of news you received, preparing for an important event, receiving a gift, or any other situation you would like to explore. When you have it, close your eyes so you can more easily connect with the memory of this event, without being distracted by images in the room.*

*Notice first how your body feels right now, allow it to relax and your thoughts as well, to settle and quiet your mind. Now allow the memory of this event to come to your mind as an image and, becoming more and more clear. Go slowly, so you have time to connect to each moment. First notice where you are in this memory, what is around you, who is with you, what you are doing... just like you would be there right now. You are actually there, now.*

*Allow the memory to unfold like a video tape, but slowly, allowing you to notice each moment and to be present.*

*Notice the moment in which something starts to happen inside of you. Maybe you start to feel something in your body. Take some time to notice what is happening, how does your body feel, what sensations are you experiencing, in which areas of your body.*

*Notice the thoughts and images that arise in your mind as you are engaged in this situation. Allow yourself to be honest with whatever thoughts you might have. There is no right or wrong about having different thoughts, anything that comes is acceptable and okay.*

*Take a moment to look at yourself in this image. Is your body posture changed in some way? Your facial expression? The tone of your voice? The speed of your speech or actions? Any other detail that is changing on the outside as there is this activity on the inside?*

*Notice if you feel like doing something, like saying something. Allow yourself to do it here, in your imagination. Don't worry, you cannot do damage here, you are safe to express whatever needs to be expressed.*

*Being here with all these things happening inside of you, give a name, if you can, to this emotional experience. Maybe you are experiencing fear, anger, sadness, joy, disappointment... Anything is okay. Allow yourself to be honest with whatever you are experiencing. As you named the experience, allow the image to slowly fade and clear the space in your mind. Allow any trace of the emotional activity in your body to travel towards the extremities. Inhale slowly, and with each exhalation, allow any sensations to move a little more towards the extremities and exit your body. Inhale, and with each exhalation allow your body to relax a little more. Expand your attention to the outside to notice any sounds in the room, smells, the temperature... You can open your eyes to notice the images, the light. Stand up and shake your body for a few seconds, as strong as you need for your body to release all tension, pressure or whatever trace is left of the experience.*

*Take a few minutes by yourself to make some notes in your journal on whatever was significant in this experience, any insight or simply on what you noticed.*

*Here is a hand-out with all the components of an emotional experience that we went through today. Use it again to explore your emotions day to day.  
(Give handouts with elements of the emotional experience.)*

### **4. Debriefing (30 min)**

*Let's come back to the circle and talk a little bit about what happened.*

**Debriefing questions:**

- Is there anything you would like to share now, from the top of your head, about your experience?
- Did you have any difficulty noticing any of the elements we mentioned?
- Which one was the easiest to grasp and most familiar to you?
- How can it be useful to you to observe an emotional process in this way?

**Handouts:**

Components of an emotional response

**Tips and tricks:**

**Materials:**

Handouts with the components of an emotional response

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Chapter

# 04

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# Empowerment

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# What is **empowerment**?

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In recent decades, the term empowerment has become popular with the general public, politicians and government officials. It is also widely used in mental health programs and in social work. Empowerment can be a somewhat intangible term but, in essence, it refers to certain principles that focus on people's autonomy and control over their lives.

The term empowerment originated in the Black Power movement and movements that fought for gender equality. The terms' connection to human rights is therefore inevitable. The core of empowerment is agency and autonomy. Empowerment is being in real control of your life, having real options and opportunities, having your voice heard, having the freedom to express yourself, having a sense of purpose and belonging and having access to information and resources. For better understanding of what this implies in reality, it can be helpful to

think of empowerment as a spectrum, not as an either/or. One might feel very empowered in a certain aspect of their life, but less in another. Empowerment is therefore not a destination that you reach or a goal that you achieve but more like a continuing process of growth, recovery and healing.

Empowerment has both an individual and a group dimension. It is something that happens from within us, we can't "empower" other people or force them to "become empowered". But still our environment and communities need to make space for our empowerment. Opportunities, support and resources need to be available for us so that we can go through the process of empowerment. Empowerment can therefore only happen in connection with other people and in a dialogue with our environment, community and society.

## **Empowerment** and mental health

The use of empowerment as a guideline in mental health programs originated from people with lived experience of emotional distress. It is an antidote to the disempowerment, paternalism and stigma that often characterizes the mental health system in general and the usual way of thinking about individuals that are labeled as "mentally ill". It challenges the outdated notion of people's inability to decide for themselves and choose their own path of life and of healing. It focuses on people's autonomy, strengths and self determination in a dialogue with their community.

We have become used to the fact that treatment of people that are labeled "mentally ill" often involves disempowerment or taking away their rights to make informed decisions about their own life and recovery. Empowerment is essentially about turning this around and moving the power from the authority to the people themselves. Empowerment is a recovery based tool or a guideline that has a positive impact on our recovery and healing as well as it enhances our self efficacy and general well being.

## Empowerment and emotional resilience

Resilience is the personal, communal and societal capacity to cope with life and adversity. The empowerment of individuals and communities is very important for their resilience. When we have real control over our lives it has a positive influence on our health and well being as well as on our community's well being. Empowered people make for an empowered community and society. Empowered society has more capacity to cope with adversities.

Empowerment makes us feel like we belong, that we have a voice that matters and will be heard. We are therefore also more likely to believe that we can make positive changes

in our lives and our community. When we feel empowered we are more likely to believe in our capabilities, know our rights and personal strengths, have access to resources and information and to be able to state our needs and wants with assertiveness. All of these have the potential to increase our personal, communal and societal capacity to cope with life and adversity.

In the upcoming activities you will be introduced to some key elements of empowerment. They are assertiveness, self-compassion, knowing your rights, personal strengths, self efficacy and self-determination.

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### References:

Chamberlin, J., & Schene, A. H. (1997). A working definition of empowerment. *Psychiatric rehabilitation journal*, 20, 43-46.

# Assertiveness

## What does **assertiveness** mean?

The word assertiveness comes from the Latin word “assertus”, that means “assertion that something is right”; i.e. the etymology means to affirm a statement.

The concept of assertiveness refers to the ability to express our opinions, assessments and points of view in an open, free and clear way, without neither aggressiveness nor manipulation, and without disparagement towards someone else’s thoughts or feelings. It’s a communicative skill that allows us to stand up for our rights while respecting the other’s. It’s the balance between sincerity and respect. It’s a kind of communication and relationship that is neither aggressive, nor passive.

Assertiveness is the basis of effective communication, i.e. goal oriented. With an effective or functional communication we can express clearly what we think or feel as well as we can pay attention and recognize the other, making a difference between the message and the messenger. Someone with a functional communication can express his/her own opinions but at the same time accept other points of view; he/she can see this difference as a learning opportunity and not as a threat.

Assertiveness, like any other interpersonal behavior, is a multidimensional and contextual ability; it’s specific to a certain situation. This means that our proficiency to be more or less assertive depends on several factors that might vary from one context to another:

- The relationship between the talker and the listener (e.g. personal, work partners, strangers)
- The gender of the talker and the conversation partner (for both genders is more likely to be more assertive towards women, and to be more approving towards the same gender to one’s own)
- The status differences (role asymmetry involves taking a behavioral subordinated or superordinate pattern)
- A “team environment” (group spaces with inclusive and respectful rules, both formal and informal, bring on the assertive behavior among their members)

## How to stimulate **assertiveness**

Assertiveness is a communicative skill, a set of learnt behaviors, not a personality trait. This means that everyone can learn and improve their assertiveness. The best way to acquire this skill is by practicing.

There are certain guidelines that can help us learn and use assertive communication:

**Specify what we want to communicate:** Identifying and defining what we want to communicate and the intention or purpose of it. For instance, if someone has used an expression that might have offended us, we can explain and ask them to not do it again.

**Identify our unsatisfied needs:** This enables us to ask someone else for help to cover it. We should talk about what we want instead of talking about what we don’t want. For example, say: “I haven’t finished talking yet, please wait for your turn” instead of “don’t interrupt me”.

**Knowing when it is possible to communicate:**

Choose a good moment to communicate. Expressing ourselves at the right time helps the others to receive our message better. For example, it is recommended to not break the talking turn, interrupt a conversation or change the subject.

**Express ourselves clearly:** Speak clearly and precisely, pointing out just what we want to communicate and nothing else. If we need to ask or request something to an individual or to a group, it is essential to be specific in our demand in order to indicate exactly what we want or expect from them. For example, asking someone to talk louder if we don't hear well enough, or asking for the meaning of some words if we don't understand.

**Do not judge others:** If we need to express some inconvenience, we should do it in a way that does not accuse the other of something. We could talk about what has had disturbed us and why (but not who) and suggest what could be done so the same situation wouldn't happen again or would not restore the present discomfort.

**Empathize with the others:** We should be aware of the impact or the emotional consequences that our words or speech might have in the listeners. It's important to be responsible for what we say and how we say it, taking in consideration the others' feelings. We also need to accept the emotions that might arise in the audience, without denial or judgement.

## Why is **assertiveness** important for resilience?

Assertiveness is one of the elements in the empowerment process. The ability to identify and express our will clearly, next to the possibility to defend ourselves, helps us to achieve what we want. In the same way, assertiveness can help us to identify and express anger, a normal reaction to a clearly outrageous

situation that can be positive for anyone if it's properly expressed.

As we see it, assertiveness is a key tool for resilience because it helps us achieve our goals, express our emotions, defend ourselves and it's a source of well-being.

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### References:

Jentsch, F. & Smith-Jentsch, K. (2001). Assertiveness and team performance: More than "Just say no". In book: *Improving teamwork in organizations: Applications of resource management training*. Publisher: Mahwah, NJ: LEA. Editors: E. Salas, C.A. Bowers, E. Edens.73-94

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Naranjo Pereira, M. (2008). Relaciones interpersonales adecuadas mediante una comunicación y conducta asertivas. *Actualidades Investigativas en Educación*. 8(1), 1-27.

López de Dicastillo-Ruperez, N.; Iriarte Redín, C. y González Torres, M. (2004). Aproximación y revisión del concepto de competencia social. *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 226, 143-156.

Caballo, V. (1983). Asertividad: definiciones y dimensiones. *Estudios de Psicología*, 4(13), 51-62

# Session Planning

**Title: Leaving home during Covid-19 quarantine.**

**Timing:** 90 minutes

## Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Expressing personal opinions and emotions with honesty and respect in different situations-  
Recognizing one's personal and social tools for assertiveness  
Identifying contextual factors that can affect assertiveness in a positive or negative way  
Using assertiveness effectively in communication

## Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

### **1. Introduction (10 min)**

### **2. Role Playing (60 min)**

We use the Theater of the Oppressed technique that allows participants to represent an oppression dilemma.

We go for three rounds and in every round, the characters and situation stay almost the same, with the addition of a certain detail.

In each round, choose 2-3 volunteers to represent the given roles, give the instructions for each role and allow them to enact the situation.

Allow some time for each enactment (5 min. maximum), then pause and invite the participants to reflect based on the intermediary reflection questions.

Invite participants from the audience to get into the scene and change the story by introducing a new character or entering in the shoes of the main or the side (grandmother) character. The "oppressor" (boyfriend/girlfriend, boss) cannot be changed.

Do the intermediary debriefing again.

### **3. Debriefing (20 mins)**

Once all three scenes have been completed, participants sit in a circle again and reflect comparatively on what they have experienced and observed throughout the entire role-playing.

Setting of the room, participants distribution: Steps 1. and 5. For introduction and debriefing, participants sit in a circle. Steps 2., 3. and 4. For role-playings, some participants will use part of the room as stage (real or imagined) and the other participants will be the public. The space must be wide enough to facilitate these different actions.

## Instructions to participants

### **1. Introduction (10 min)**

*Today we are going to reflect on assertiveness, a communicative skill that helps us defend our rights. What do we refer to when we talk about assertiveness? If you had to explain to somebody else this concept in a single sentence, how would you do it?*

*How can we express anger without aggressiveness? How can we expose a disagreement without judging the interlocutor?*

(The facilitator collects the ideas and writes them down on the flipchart, with the intention of taking them up in the final reflection.)

## **2. Role Playing and discussion:**

*We will do a three-parts role-playing. Each part needs 2 or 3 volunteer participants to come on stage. The other ones will have the opportunity to participate in the story by coming in at the end of each scene. Who wants to start?*

(Invite 2-3 volunteers to come in front)

### **1st Round (20 mins)**

*One of you will be a young man/woman, another one will be his/her girlfriend/boyfriend, and the last one his/her 80 years old grandmother. Who wants to represent each role?*

#### **Instructions for the main character:**

**(a)** *Your grandmother had come to visit you from abroad when the Covid-19 crisis came. You have been quarantined with her for 15 days. The government has advised the quarantine will last for at least 10 more weeks. You are really worried about infecting your grandmother; her health is poor.*

**(b)** *You recently started a relationship. Your boyfriend/girlfriend lives in a nearby town and you have not been able to be together since confinement has started. Now he/she video-calls you.*

#### **Instructions for the grandmother:**

**(a)** *You had come to visit your grandson from abroad when the Covid-19 crisis came. You have been quarantined with him/her for 15 days. Now the government has advised the quarantine will last for at least 10 more weeks.*

#### **Instructions for the boyfriend/girlfriend:**

**(a)** *You are starting a relationship with a man/woman that lives in a nearby city. Two weeks ago, the Covid-19 crisis came, and you are in quarantine. The government has advised the quarantine will last for at least 10 more weeks. He/she decided to stay with his/her grandmother.*

**(b)** *You are not willing to spend all this time alone. He/she must decide if he wants to be with his/her grandmother or with you. You are not going to wait 10 weeks. If he/she prefers to stay there, you end the relationship. Maybe you can go back to your ex, who lives two blocks from you.*

(Intermediary debriefing)

(Invite participants from the audience to change the story)

(Intermediary debriefing)

### **2nd Round (20 mins)**

*The second part will unfold similarly and the roles will also be similar.*

(Facilitator chooses the volunteers and explains their role and situations to each of them, the same as before, with the following changes)

Instructions for the main character:

**(a)** *(Same as in the previous section)*

**(b)** *Your boss from work video-calls you. You were not working the last two weeks because the factory had stopped its production due to quarantine. You are afraid to lose your job because you need it to pay your flat, the bills, to buy food, etc.*

Instructions for the factory owner (instead of boyfriend/girlfriend character):

**(a)** *You have a small company. When the government decreed quarantine for 15 days, you sent all workers home as a precaution. But now that the government has decreed 10 more weeks of quarantine, if the workers do not return to produce the company will break. They must come back or you will fire them.*

(Proceed like in the 1st round)

### **3rd Round (20 mins)**

(Facilitator chooses the volunteers and explains their role and situations to each of them, the same as before, with the following changes)

Instructions for the main character:

**(a)** (Explain the same as in the previous section)

**(b)** *Now the one who video-calls is the factory owner where you are the representative of the workers' union. The last two weeks, the factory had stopped its production due to quarantine. You know it is a possibility that the owner wants to re-start the production, but you also know that is not legal and you will defend workers.*

Instructions for the factory owner:

**(a)** *You have a small company. When the government decreed quarantine for 15 days, you sent all workers home as a precaution. But now that the government has decreed 10 more weeks of quarantine, if the workers do not return to produce the company will break. You need to convince the union representative to restart production. Situation is critical.*

(Proceed like in the 1st round)

## **3. Debriefing (20 min)**

### **Intermediary debriefing:**

- Is there anything you would like to share. How do you feel about the situation?
- Why did you act as you did?
- How did you expose your decisions and what did you do to consider the preferences of the other characters?
- Could you express your emotions?
- Do you feel you were assertive?
- Which were the barriers to your assertiveness?
- What helped you to be assertive?

### **Tips and tricks:**

- Explain separately, confidentially, to every participant their role in the scene.
- If you have 8 or less participants, it is not necessary to represent the grandmother in every scene. If there are 10 or more, give the opportunity to participate to as many as possible by encouraging those who have not been on stage to take part in the other rounds.
- You can do one, two, or all three rounds, depending on how much time you have available.
- Read the material attached to this activity in order to be better able to conduct the discussion.

### **Debriefing questions:**

- If the situation was always the same, two characters are repeated in every scene (the young worker and his/her grandmother) and the argument to be defended did -not change (your preference to stay home and respect the quarantine), what was different in every scene? Have you experienced this kind of difference in your own life?
- How did you perceive your freedom to express your emotions in different scenes? How is it in your real life?
- How much did each scene challenge your assertiveness? What did the level of difficulty in each scene depend on? How have you experienced different levels of difficulty in being assertive in real situations?
- What helped or could help a young worker character to act with more assertiveness? What do you think would help you to be more assertive in the future?

### **Materials:**

flipcharts, markers, sheets of paper, stationery materials, pencils

**Handouts:** None

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# Character strengths

## What are **character strengths**?

Character strengths provide a common language to describe what is best in human beings. They are the positive parts of your personality that impact how you think, feel and behave. In this chapter we use the VIA classification 24 Character strengths, developed by Peterson and Seligman. Character strengths are different from your other personal strengths, such as your unique skills, talents, interests and resources, because they reflect the “real” you—who you are at your core. Every individual possesses all 24 character strengths in different degrees, giving each person a unique character strengths profile.

The differences come from the ways in which each person manifests their character strengths. Character strengths are stable but their manifestation can be context based, and they can be developed with practice. Character strengths are both “being” and “doing” – they are essential for both understanding who we are and for behavioral expression/performance.

There are also dynamics that occur as the strengths interact with one another, they can increase or hinder the expression of one another. For example, it is difficult to be creative without some level of curiosity and can we really express kindness in a strong way without expressing humility and perhaps a small dose of bravery?

There is a structure to our character that is best described as a unique profile of strengths with varying highs and lows (i.e. individuals have signature strengths, middle strengths, lower strengths, dormant strengths).

When we talk about signature strengths we describe the strengths which are most essential to the individual, easiest to manifest and energizing. They usually appear at the top of the individual’s character strengths profile.

Dormant strengths are the ones we haven’t used in a while, because the circumstances have not allowed it or haven’t required it.

## Developing your **personal strengths**

It is important for every human being to know their own strengths and develop them further as needed. Sometimes it “just happens” unknowingly when life throws us in all kinds of situations and requires that we use strengths we didn’t even know we had. Some of the strengths we have we know very well, but others can be hidden from us or are dormant. The cause can be that we think we don’t have particular strength or we have never been in a situation where they can be seen.

When we want to develop some strengths further it can be helpful to start with ones that are most accessible to develop and begin with the highest rated skills that we have. We recommend using the VIA classification test to identify

your strengths and how they are rated. And from there, there are many things one can do to develop further: observe them in your daily life and also in the big life events and learn about how they usually manifest, engage in new activities that can be an outlet for that strength (i.e.: if you want to develop humor, you might try watching more comedy and stand-up shows, challenge yourself to make more jokes in social contexts, keep a fun-diary, in which you find something amusing in every day etc.).

The more we reflect and observe our strengths, the more likely we are to use them consciously and for our own purposes. And practicing them is also the best way to develop them.

## Character strength and **emotional resilience**

Developing resilience is both complex and personal. It involves a combination of inner strengths and outer resources. It has been shown that people who express their character strengths tend to be less stressed, more engaged, energized, and happier. The use of character strengths has been linked to higher levels

of self-esteem, greater progression of goals and better relationships.

Knowing and developing character strengths leads us to positive emotions and meaningful life activities. It supports positive communication and we flourish when we identify and develop our strengths.

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### References:

<https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths>

# Session Planning

## Title: **Character strengths**

**Timing:** 210 minutes (Two sessions of 110 min and 90 min, with a 10 min break)

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Identify and explore character strengths

Learning ways to cultivate character strengths

Understand how we can use strengths for our resilience in difficult times

Explore what hinders the strengths

## Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

- 1. Introduction about character strengths (5 min)**
- 2. Warm-up - identifying character strengths (10 min)**  
Divide them into groups of maximum 5, give the handouts and allow them a few minutes to look over them and introduce the task.
- 3. Report of the week (40 min)**  
Participants work individually, then in the trios again, and at the end again individually in a journaling-based and sharing and discussion exercise.
- 4. Exploring strengths (10 min)**  
In pairs, participants choose one strength to explore more in detail.
- 5. Cultivating strengths (25 min)**  
Individual, journaling-based activity to gain insight into cultivating strengths.
- 6. Energizer (5 min)**  
The facilitator guides the participants to walk randomly through the room, gently shaking their arms and legs and then to walk as the following strengths: curiosity, perspective, bravery, zest, love, prudence, humor and creativity.
- 7. Debriefing (15 min)**
- 8. Break (10 min)**
- 9. Masks (40 min)**  
Experiential exercise that starts with creating a mask of strengths and obstacles followed by a walkabout of wearing your own mask and discovering the masks of others.
- 10. Strengths' dialogue (30 min)**  
Journaling activity in which participants will engage in a dialogue carried out between a life dilemma and two of their strengths.
- 11. Debriefing (20 min)**  
This topic should be covered in two sessions.

# Instructions to participants

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## 1. Introduction about character strengths (5 min)

We all possess a set of 24 character strengths, as defined by the positive psychologists Peterson and Seligman in the VIA Inventory. These strengths represent who we are at the core. Each person manifests them differently, with a few signature strengths that are essential and more visible in the person and the rest of middle and low strengths that are rather dependent on the context. Their manifestation supports our well being and our relationships greatly, as well as the way we handle difficulties in life.

We can develop these strengths over the course of our life and in these sessions we will explore several ways to do that.

## 2. Warm-up - identifying character strengths (10 min)

You will work in groups of three, so I invite you to make trios now, choosing people you don't know that well and/or are curious about. Each of you has the 24 character strengths list in front of you. Choose 3 of them, which you believe are your highest rated (you manifest them often, you feel like they define you) and also choose 3 strengths that you know you have, but you manifest just occasionally, or you haven't manifested in a while and you want to develop more.

Then the rest of the group will vote for the person's biggest strength, by placing a dot with a marker on it.

Take some time in the end to look at your set of strengths.

## 3. Report of the week (40 min)

Each of you will write a very short "report" of the last week's activities. Make sure you include the usual, daily activities and also the exceptional ones if there were any. (5 min)

In the same groups of 3, each of you will share your report and in the entire group you will discuss to identify the strengths that the person manifested in those activities. You have 10 minutes for each person. (30 min)

Lastly, you re-write the report of the week, this time including the strengths in it. For example: I showed patience sitting in a boring class and curiosity trying to find something interesting in what the teacher said (5 min)

## 4. Exploring strengths (10 min)

Choose one of your best strengths to explore in more detail. Then find a partner and discuss the following:

- In which contexts/ areas of your life do you manifest this strength?
- How often do you manifest it?
- In which ways do you manifest it? (give behavioral examples)

## 5. Cultivating strengths (25 min)

- Using your Journal, answer the following questions:
- Think of a strength you have that has grown in the past five years. What (from you and the environment) helped you to develop it?
- Choose one strength that you want to cultivate more in the future, you can use one of the lower rated strengths from the first activity. Why did you choose this strength and what will change if you cultivate it? (10 min)
- Try to imagine how a week would look like with this strength cultivated. Imagine the activities you would do this week, manifesting that specific strength. (10 min)
- What would help you cultivate it and what would hinder you? Try to come up with ideas on how to cultivate this strength, both through your usual daily activities and through adding new ones, like picking on a new hobby and write them on each half of the Ying-Yang image (5 min).

## 6. Energizer (5 min)

Let's stand up and start to walk randomly through the room, trying your best to fill the empty spaces at all times. Gently shake your arms and legs and then walk as though you were embodying, the following strengths: curiosity, perspective, bravery, zest, love, prudence, humor and creativity.

## 7. Debriefing (15 min)

- How do you feel, what was most difficult and what was the easiest one?
- Were you able to see your expression of strength of daily life?
- What did it bring you to see strengths you use in daily life?
- Was there anything that surprised you about your strength?
- What are some ways of cultivating strengths that you have discovered?
- How was it to identify strengths in others and how was it for others to identify strengths in you?
- How do you think you could use this learning session in your daily life?

## 8. Break (10 min)

## 9. Masks (40 min)

Strengths are different sides of our identity that sometimes hide and other times show themselves. We can be in full expression of our strength or completely lacking the manifestation of it. It is almost like switching from one mask to another. We are going to play with these sides of our identity, by making and wearing masks.

There are two sides to the mask: on one, try to represent one of your signature strengths/ or two if you want to. On the other side, represent the elements in your life that hinder the expression of your strength/s, through drawing or short writings. Spend some time thinking about the second side of the mask. What do the obstacles consist of? Are they internal or external to your person? Are they currently manifesting or have they manifested in the past? What are their effects on your strength? (20 min)

When you are ready, put on the mask, with the strength on the outside and start walking through the room. Take your time to see the others and their masks. When you feel like it, stop and give them feedback, a reflection of what you see in their mask. It can be a few words, written on a post-it, or maybe a physical gesture. (10 min)

Now turn the mask inside out and start walking again. What do you see in others' masks now? Give them a sign of you seeing them, acknowledging their struggle, feeling with them. Once again, you can use spoken or written words, or physical gestures. (10 min)

## 10. Strengths' dialogue (30 min)

- Identify a dilemma/a big question/ a problem that you are facing at this time in your life and write it down.
- Identify two strengths that you think would be most helpful in dealing with this problem (10 min)
- Imagine and write down a dialogue between the two strengths and the problem/ dilemma. For this, try to connect with each strength at a time, with the way it manifests in your life. See what Strength 1 would tell the problem/ dilemma, what Strength 2 would tell The Problem/ Dilemma and what The Problem/ Dilemma would answer back. Continue the dialogue however it feels natural and useful to you. (25 min)

## 11. Debriefing (20 min)

- How do you feel after these two activities?
- How was it to draw the mask and show both sides of the mask?
- How was it to get reaction from others? (the notes)
- How was it to imagine a dialogue of strengths and what have you gained from it?
- In what way have these activities changed anything about how you see yourself and your strengths?

**Materials:** paper, pens, post-its, thick paper and yarn for masks, scissors, felts/ colored pencils

**Handouts:** Handouts: Yin & Yang drawing, Character Strengths list, Mask Handout

min/max pax

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# Strengths List

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<b>Wisdom and Knowledge</b>	Creativity	Curiosity	Open-mindedness	Love of learning	Perspective
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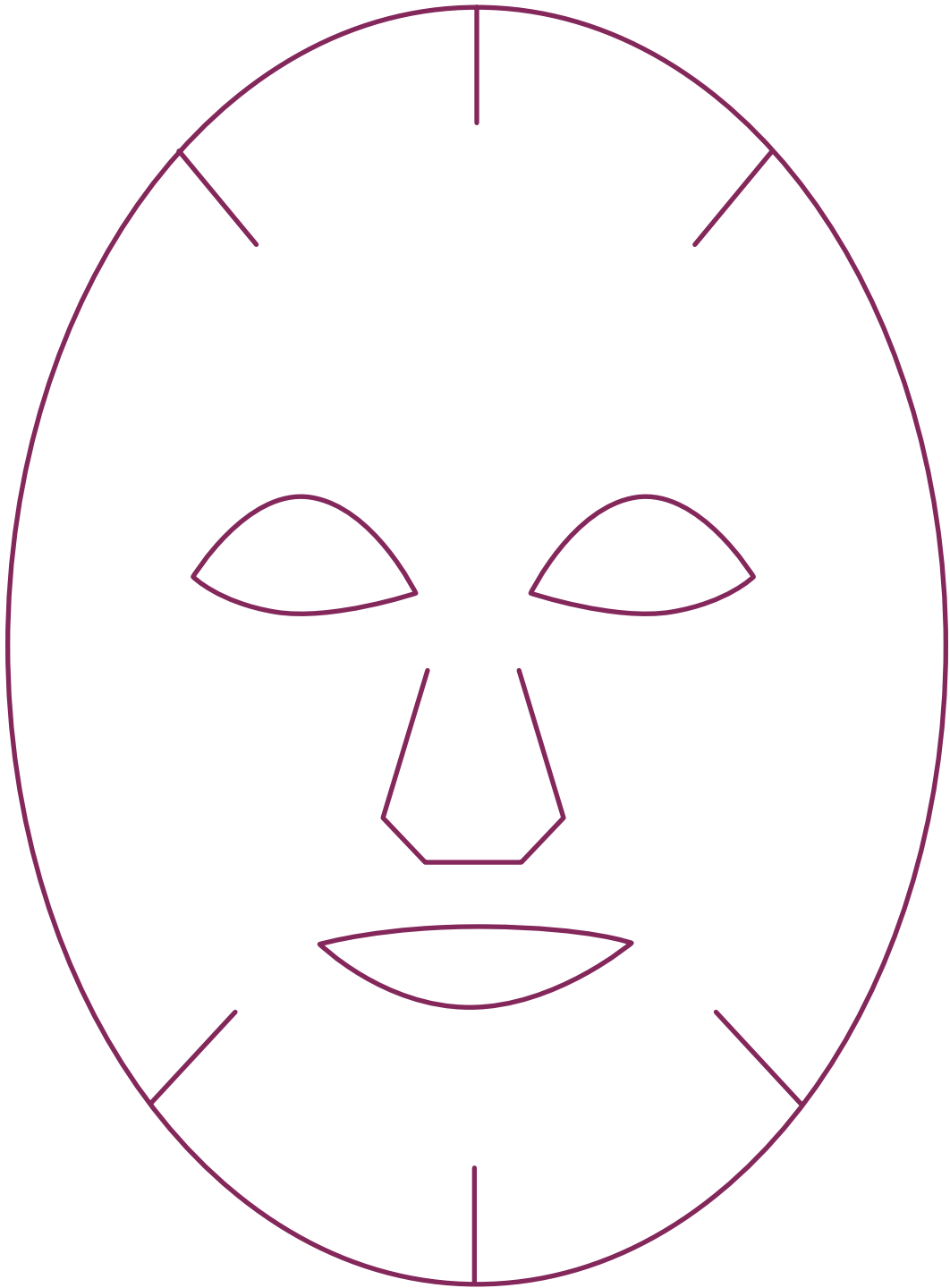
<b>Courage</b>	Bravery	Persistence	Integrity	Vitality
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<b>Humanity</b>	Love	Kindness	Social intelligence
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<b>Justice</b>	Citizenship	Fairness	Leadership
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<b>Moderation/ Temperance</b>	Forgiveness and mercy	Humility/ Modesty	Prudence	Self-regulation
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<b>Transcendence</b>	Appreciation of beauty and excellence	Gratitude	Hope/ Optimism	Humor	Spirituality
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# Knowing your rights

## Human Rights: a tool for **Empowerment**

Human rights are the legal and civic framework that allows the basic needs of all people to be respected. For this reason, they help to establish the ethical standards of life in society. In other words, the objective of human rights is to ensure the satisfaction of the basic needs of all people. In order to achieve this, many treaties and laws have been generated.

Some of the rights to which we have access only based on the fact that we exist are: life, freedom or health, no matter the gender, nationality, race, religion, language, (dis-)abilities or any other condition. To know these rights is not just our duty as citizens but also a tool to promote empowerment.

## **Which rights** do we have?

Throughout time, lawyers, activists and society in general have felt the need to promote and defend different rights that weren't being taken in consideration in the international treatments or daily life. Once the necessities to be covered by different states were identified, new classifications of human rights have appeared (for example the access to work, to freedom or health among others).

Two general ways to cluster human rights are:

### **Economic, social and cultural Rights.**

This rights cluster is protected by "The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights" (ICESCR - 1976) that covers the following:

- The right to work in fair and favorable conditions
- The right to social protection, to an adequate level of life and to have the highest possible level of physical and mental health
- The right to education and to the benefits from cultural freedom and scientific progress.

**Civil and political Rights:** The civil and political needs that are covered by the international agreements go from the liberty of free movement to the protection from any kind of discrimination by ethnical or religious reasons. Likewise, these agreements explicitly ban inhuman treatments, tortures and different ways of discrimination. There is another document from 1976, called "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" (OHCHR), that protect, among others: free movement, equality before the law, fair trial and presumption of innocence, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of association. Also, it protects us from: deprivation on life, torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatments, slavery or forced labour, discrimination and apology of racial or religious hatred, among others.

As mentioned before, throughout history it has been necessary to identify which needs were not covered for every human being and, with that information, to write new treaties about human rights that promoted and guaranteed them. Some of them are meant to achieve the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, to protect the rights of children or the rights of people with disabilities.



## How to defend **human rights**?

Historically, human rights have been collectively defended by those who were affected when these rights weren't accomplished. Once they are established in conventions and treaties, there are different ways to protect them:

- Obtaining information about the rights we have and spreading it.
- Knowing the treaties that have been signed by the countries we live in.
- Identifying discrimination or situations that threaten freedom and discussing openly with our contacts, friends, professionals and relatives.
- Visiting associations or organizations that promote human rights defense.
- Getting together with people in similar past or present circumstances.

## **Human rights** and resilience

Having information about the rights we have is important to defend ourselves if we find ourselves in situations of discrimination or vulnerability that may affect our mental health. This is a fundamental element to promote processes of personal and collective

empowerment, since it allows us to strengthen our possibilities to make decisions freely and responsibly. Thus, knowing our rights also allows us to strengthen our resources to face the adversities of the environment.

# Session Planning

## Title: **Knowing your rights**

**Timing:** 135 minutes (two sessions with a 15 min break)

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Recognize human rights in relation to our basic needs

Understand the role of human rights in our own empowerment

Identify tools to defend our own human rights and reinforce our empowerment

## Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

### **1. Introduction (10 min)**

- Open discussion on Human Rights
- Collect the ideas and write them down on a flipchart, keep the flipchart for the final reflection.

### **2. Basic needs (40 min)**

- Participants work on an imaginary situation.
- Individually, they choose 12 things/people that are essential to take with them in case of an evacuation after a natural disaster. (5 min)
- Participants make pairs and combine their lists to have 10 items. (8 min)
- Then they do the same thing but in groups of four. (10 min)
- Participants reflect on the basic needs of each human being.

### **3. Break (15 min)**

### **4. Understanding Human Rights (50 min)**

- Based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights written in simplified language, the facilitator puts in a bag or box papers with each human right. They pass the bag from hand to hand, and each participant takes out a piece of paper with a right.
- Participants reflect on what the right they have on the paper means to them and illustrate this meaning in a drawing. (25 min)
- Participants share their drawings and meanings and identify the basic needs covered by each right.
- Participants bring their drawings together on the floor or wall, building a joint mural.

### **5. Debriefing (20 mins)**

- Setting of the room, participants distribution: During the introduction and the first activity, participants sit in a circle in a classroom. Then they will be grouped in pairs, and later they will sit in a circle again. There should be a space to put a flipchart for the following stages.
- Handouts or materials: Flipcharts or blackboard, markers, large sheets of paper, stationery material (colored sheets, glues, illustrations, modeling clay, colored pencils...).

# Instructions to participants

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## 1. Introduction (10 min)

Today we are going to reflect on Human Rights, the principles that recognize and defend the dignity of every human being. We will also talk about how to defend these rights. So for starters, what do you think are our rights as human beings?

(The facilitator collects the ideas and writes them down on a flipchart, keeping the flipchart for the final reflection.)

## 2. Basic needs (40 min)

We'll begin with an exercise on an imaginary situation. Take a paper and a pen and imagine the following:

In your locality you are alerted to a great natural disaster and you have 4-5 minutes to leave. In this time, you must choose a maximum of 12 things and/or people that you would take with you. Write these down on paper. Remember to choose things or people that are essential for your future life outside your homes.

(After 5 min)

Now let's make pairs and together choose 10 of the total number of things and/or people on your individual lists. Work together and make a new list of 10 essential things/people. You have 8 minutes for this.

(After 8 min)

Now two pairs will come together and we'll have groups of four. Again, you will have to agree on 10 things and write them in a new list. For this, you will have 10 minutes.

(After 10 min)

Now, choose one person from each group who will write the things from your list on a flipchart. What are the needs that all of us have so that we can live and feel good?

(The facilitator collects the needs that are most frequently mentioned and makes a list on the flipchart, trying to get between 5 and 10 needs at the end.)

(In the end, the facilitator explains that these basic needs must be covered for all people, regardless of how we see ourselves, how we express ourselves, where we are from, if we are women, men or a-gender, etc. Therefore, there are Human Rights that protect all these needs.)

## 3. Break (15 min)

## 4. Understanding Human Rights (50 min)

I have in this bag/box many papers, each one having written on it a basic human right. Take the bag/box and pass it around, each one of you taking one piece of paper.

Read what is on your paper and take a minute or two to reflect on what this right means to you. Imagine how it makes a difference in your life and what would happen if you would not have it. You will have about 25 minutes after this to illustrate the meaning of this basic right for you in a drawing. (25 min)

(After the 25 min)

I now invite each one of you to show your drawing, mention the right that you have represented and explain the meaning you assigned to it. The rest of the group is invited to pay close attention and after each drawing, share their thoughts on what is the basic need that that particular right is covering.

Let's now put all the drawings together on the floor/wall and create a bigger picture.

## 5. Debriefing (20 min)

### Debriefing questions:

- How was it for you to reflect on your own human rights?
- Was there anything new for you in this? Were you surprised by anything?
- Where in your life is each of these rights relevant? Can you give some examples?
- Were there moments in your life when any of these rights was not respected?
- What did you do then? What do you think you could have done? What can be done in such a situation?
- What can we do generally in order to protect our human rights?
- What changes for you if you know your human rights? Does it make any difference now that we have gone through this discussion?
- What do you want to take with you, for your daily life, after this exercise?
- The facilitator ends with a reflection on the importance of knowing our Human Rights: if we ensure that they are respected, we ensure that all people can live well.

### Materials:

Flipcharts, markers, large sheets of paper, stationery material (colored sheets, glues, illustrations, modeling clay, colored pencils...)

**Handouts:** The simplified UDHR

min/max pax

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This is a summary version of the UDHR, for an exact rendering of each principle, refer to the original document by following this link: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights-anniversary/declaration-text>  
For further languages go to: <http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/>

**Article 1**

When children are born, they are free and each should be treated in the same way. They have reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a friendly manner.

**Article 2**

Everyone can claim the following rights, despite

- a different sex
- a different skin colour
- speaking a different language
- thinking different things
- believing in another religion
- owning more or less
- being born in another social group
- coming from another country.

It also makes no difference whether the country you live in is independent or not.

**Article 3**

You have the right to live, and to live in freedom and safety.

**Article 4**

Nobody has the right to treat you as his or her slave and you should not make anyone your slave.

**Article 5**

Nobody has the right to torture you.

**Article 6**

You should be legally protected in the same way everywhere, and like everyone else.

**Article 7**

The law is the same for everyone; it should be applied in the same way to all.

**Article 8**

You should be able to ask for legal help when the rights your country grants you are not respected.

**Article 9**

Nobody has the right to put you in prison, to keep you there, or to send you away from your country unjustly, or without a good reason.

**Article 10**

If you must go on trial this should be done in public. The people who try you should not let themselves be influenced by others.

**Article 11**

You should be considered innocent until it can be proved that you are guilty. If you are accused of a crime, you should always have the right to defend yourself. Nobody has the right to condemn you and punish you for something you have not done.

**Article 12**

You have the right to ask to be protected if someone tries to harm your good name, enter your house, open your letters, or bother you or your family without a good reason.

**Article 13**

You have the right to come and go as you wish within your country. You have the right to leave your country to go to another one; and you should be able to return to your country if you want.

**Article 14**

If someone hurts you, you have the right to go to another country and ask it to protect you. You lose this right if you have killed someone and if you yourself do not respect what is written here.

**Article 15**

You have the right to belong to a country and nobody can prevent you, without a good reason, from belonging to another country if you wish.

**Article 16**

As soon as a person is legally entitled, he or she has the right to marry and have a family.

Neither the colour of your skin, nor the country you come from nor your religion should be impediments to doing this.

Men and women have the same rights when they are married and also when they are separated. Nobody should force a person to marry. The Government of your country should protect your family and its members.

**Article 17**

You have the right to own things and nobody has the right to take these from you without a good reason.

**Article 18**

You have the right to profess your religion freely, to change it, and to practise it either on your own or with other people.

**Article 19**

You have the right to think what you want, and to say what you like, and nobody should forbid you from doing so. You should be able to share your ideas – also with people from any other country.

**Article 20**

You have the right to organize peaceful meetings or to take part in meetings in a peaceful way. It is wrong to force someone to belong to a group.

**Article 21**

You have the right to take part in your country's political affairs either by belonging to the Government yourself or by choosing politicians who have the same ideas as you. Governments should be voted for regularly and voting should be secret. You should get a vote and all votes should be equal. You also have the same right to join the public service as anyone else.

**Article 22**

The society in which you live should help you to develop and to make the most of all the advantages (culture, work, social welfare) that are offered to you and to all the men and women in your country.

**Article 23**

You have the right to work, to be free to choose your work, and to get a salary that allows you to live and support your family. If a man and a woman do the same work, they should get the same pay. All people who work have the right to join together to defend their interests.

**Article 24**

Each work day should not be too long, since everyone has the right to rest and should be able to take regular paid holidays.

**Article 25**

You have the right to have whatever you need so that you and your family: do not fall ill; do not go hungry; have clothes and a house; and are helped if you are out of work, if you are ill, if you are old, if your wife or husband is dead, or if you do not earn a living for any other reason you cannot help.

Both a mother who is going to have a baby and her baby should get special help.

All children have the same rights, whether or not the mother is married.

**Article 26**

You have the right to go to school and everyone should go to school. Primary schooling should be free. You should be able to learn a profession or continue your studies as far as you wish. At school, you should be able to develop all your talents and you should be taught to get on with others, whatever their race, their religion or the country they come from. Your parents have the right to choose how and what you will be taught at school.

**Article 27**

You have the right to share in your community's arts and sciences, and in any good they do.

Your works as an artist, a writer or a scientist should be protected, and you should be able to benefit from them.

**Article 28**

To make sure that your rights will be respected, there must be an "order" that can protect them. This "order" should be local and worldwide.

**Article 29**

You have duties towards the community within which your personality can fully develop. The law should guarantee human rights. It should allow everyone to respect others and to be respected.

**Article 30**

No society and no human being in any part of the world should act in such a way as to destroy the rights that you have just been reading about.

# Self-compassion

## What is **self-compassion**?

Self-compassion is, simply put, the ability to express compassion towards oneself. It involves the acknowledgement of difficult moments and the willingness to comfort and care for oneself when we are in pain. This comes as opposite to judging and criticizing ourselves for our shortcomings, mistakes, frustrations, or losses.

The three core elements of self-compassion are:

1. Self-kindness – being warm, gentle and understanding towards ourselves when we suffer, instead of ignoring the pain and getting angry with or criticizing ourselves.
2. Common humanity – the recognition that everyone makes mistakes and feels pain, that these are part of the shared human experience, something we all go through rather than something that happens because I am “broken” or because “something is wrong with me”.
3. Mindfulness – adopting a non-judgmental, curious stance to our thoughts and feelings, observing them without ignoring, suppressing, or exaggerating them.

## How do people become **self-compassionate**?

- Keep a daily journal and write about your experiences. Allow yourself to write about what happened outside and inside of you, observing curiously and without judgment your own actions and those of others, your thoughts, your physical sensations and your emotions. Notice any tendency to blame yourself or others and redirect your attention towards merely observing with a friendly interest. This helps become more mindful of and process your experiences so that you can later approach them with compassion and create meaning.
- Observe and change your inner dialogue. Acknowledge your self-critical thoughts, gently and patiently reframe them so that, in time, they become more supportive, understanding, kind, encouraging. Imagine a close friend being in the same situation and suffering in a similar way and think of what you would tell them. Write those words and read them to yourself.
- Act kindly towards your body. Comfort and soothe your body through each of your senses: eat something healthy and tasty, drink something warm, surround yourself with smells you enjoy, take a hot bath, listen to calming and soothing music and sounds, wrap yourself in a warm, soft blanket. Give yourself permission to take a break and rest, give yourself a gentle, supportive touch every once in a while, massage your tense areas, your neck, hands, or feet.

## How do people become **self-compassionate**?

Self-compassion is oftentimes a life-saver in terms of mental health. It creates an inner feeling of safety which supports people to take risks and recover quickly after loss or failure. Self-compassionate people have higher self-confidence and higher motivation to reach their goals. They also take better care of themselves on a physical level, exercising and eating well, or going to the doctor when they need to.

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### Reference:

<https://self-compassion.org/>

# Session Planning

**Title: The compassionate self**

**Timing:** 75min

**Aim and learning elements / session objectives:**  
Building a compassionate image

## Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

- 1. Introductory discussion (10 min)**  
Group discussion with input from the facilitator (use the information from the introduction to the topic).
- 2. Simple imagery (10 min)**  
Participants practice working with their imagination.  
Discuss in the group about each person's experience, difficulties, and so on.
- 3. Self-compassion imagery (15 min)**
- 4. Journaling - dialogue with your compassionate image (10 min)**
- 5. Sharing in pairs (10 min)**
- 6. Sharing circle and debriefing (20 min)**

## Instructions to participants

- 1. Introductory discussion (10 min)**  
The topic for this session is self-compassion. Let's see, what is self-compassion? What do you think about when you hear this word?  
(Get some answers from the participants, then offer your input about what self-compassion is.)  
  
Why is it important to practice self-compassion?  
  
Today we will do some work on developing our capacity for self-compassion so that we can benefit from it in our difficult, day-to-day moments.
- 2. Simple imagery (10 min)**  
First, we'll try a simple imagination exercise, just to get into what we are going to do next. When we will start, I will invite you to close your eyes and I will guide you through the exercise, so listen to my voice and allow your imagination to unfold. "Find a comfortable position and close your eyes. Allow your body to relax, breathe, allow your thoughts to settle. Then, in the clearness of your mind, allow an image to appear. An image of a place in which you feel safe. It can be a place you have been to before or one you have never seen, it can be a real space or it may exist only in your imagination, anything is okay. Explore the place using your senses and allow the image to become more clear as you discover the details. What colours are around you? What other objects or beings are present? What sounds? What smells? What is the temperature? Do you feel any sensation on your skin?"



Notice what stands out in this image. And notice how you feel being there. Allow yourself to take in this feeling and let it save a place within you. Slowly, allow the image to fade and in your own rhythm, come back to your body and to the place where you are now, opening your eyes when you feel ready.”

How was it?

Did you feel it easy to connect with the images? Was there anything in particular that was difficult?

Remember, anything you experience during the exercise is valid and okay, receive it. It takes a bit of practice and trust in order to be able to do this.

The experience can come through any of the senses: visual, smell, touch, taste, kinaesthetic, hearing; through metaphor, or emotions, or dialogue and/or story, or any combination of these. And the more you practice, the more this way of interacting with your inner world opens, and experiences tend to be more vivid.

### **3. Self-compassion imagery (15 min)**

Next we will do the actual imagery focused on building a compassionate self. For those of you who find it difficult to create an image, I encourage you to still listen to the guidance and notice what feelings arise within you when hearing the words.

“Find a comfortable position and close your eyes. Breathe deeply, in and out. Notice how your breath follows a natural rhythm, without you having to take care of it. Notice the feelings, the sensations that go through your body and notice how you are feeling your whole body here and now.

Allow your body to relax as much as possible, there is no responsibility you have to take care of now, you have nowhere else to be but here. Allow your mind to relax and as you direct your attention to your mind, notice the thoughts that might arise. And as they come, allow them to settle down slowly, on the floor of your mind, like sand in a glass of water. Allow the space in your mind to be clear of thoughts, like an empty chamber. If new thoughts come up, that’s fine. Gently guide them to settle down.

And in this clear space in your mind, allow an image to emerge and unfold. It may be unclear in the beginning and that’s okay. Allow the image to develop and take shape as you notice a few characteristics in it: wisdom, strength, warmth, patience, understanding, acceptance.

If nothing comes to the mind or the mind wanders, that’s okay. Don’t try too hard. Remain silent, keep your eyes closed and notice whatever feelings arise within you when hearing these words: wisdom, strength, warmth, patience, understanding, acceptance.

As the image becomes more and more clear, you may notice in it a person, an animal, an element of nature, or maybe just a light or a colour... Whatever it is that comes up, allow it to be there with you, with infinite wisdom and full capacity to understand human nature in all its beauty, vulnerability and weakness.

Notice how much strength lies in this image, in this entity or non-entity, and how it is here for you, to support you and offer warmth and kindness. This image knows. It knows what you are going through, it knows where you are coming from and where you are going to, it knows what pains you. And it is standing in front of you, without judging for the things you are thinking, feeling or doing. In this image there is an infinite understanding of the experiences that brought you here, in this point of your life.

Observe this image carefully, its characteristics. What are the colours in it? What sounds come from it? Notice if it wants to tell you or teach you something and listen. Notice how it feels to stand in front of it and to receive what comes from it. How does your body feel, in which spot do you feel it stronger in your body?

Notice how this image interacts with you and how it feels to receive its warmth, kindness, understanding and love. Dare maybe to reveal a bit of that part of yourself which sometimes feels the pain of loneliness, fear, anger, jealousy... and notice what is the response of this wise, strong and loving image. Notice if it is telling you something or it maybe has a way to support you which is beyond words. Receive this response and notice how it feels in your body.

Express your appreciation and gratefulness to this image for being here with you. Ask this entity if it is willing to stay here with you and support you on your path. If so, invite it to find a place in your body where you can access it more easily and notice where this place is, how it feels.

You can ask the image if there is something you can do right now, in return, to honor its presence and gift. And if there is, do it right here, in your imagination.

Slowly start to say goodbye and allow the image to settle in its established place, within the body. Allow it to fade away as you return to your body in the present space, here and now. Notice your body meeting the ground and when you feel ready, in your own rhythm, open your eyes.”

Stand up just a little bit and shake off the feeling, the image and anything that might be left.

Now close your eyes again and call this image quickly and briefly, from the part of the body in which it found shelter and see how it is accessible.

- 4. Journaling – dialogue with your compassionate image (10 min)**  
Remaining silent, grab a pen and paper. Start to write a dialogue between you and your compassionate image, like in a theater play, just as it would happen if you two met in person – Me: ... , Compassion: ... Start to build a relationship with it. Maybe telling about something you are going through right now and allowing reactions. Or maybe you want to ask their opinion about something that is relevant for you in this period. Maybe the image wants to share something with you. Allow the dialogue to unfold naturally. Silence is also okay, if both of you are present in it.
- 5. Sharing in pairs (10 min)**  
Make pairs and take 10 minutes to share about your experience with the imagery and the journaling. Share as much as you feel comfortable to share and make sure each one of you gets the opportunity to do it.
- 6. Sharing circle and debriefing (20 min)**

#### Debriefing questions:

- How was the imagery for you?
- What kind of images did you experience?
- Where did they feel in the body?
- What kind of ideas did they express? How were their attitudes?
- In which situations in your life do you feel it would be most useful to call this image?

**Materials:** pens and paper.

#### Handouts:

#### Tips and tricks:

min/max pax

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# Self-determination

## What does **self-determination** mean?

The word self-determination<sup>1</sup> is a composite concept consisting of the two terms: “self-“ a word forming element that comes from Old English that indicates “oneself” or “automatic” in compounds, and “determination” that comes from the Latin *determinationem* (conclusion, boundary), noun from the verb “*determināre*”, that means to set the limits to, to enclose or bound.

In the personal/individual dimension, this concept refers to the capacity and right that every human being has to make his/her own decisions and set the purpose of life according to his/her will. Self-determination implies both the feeling of having personal freedom and the responsibility for the decisions taken. From this point of view, self-determination should be understood as a right and skill that can be learnt by using it and not as an innate ability. Self-determination is a right to all human beings, with or without disabilities, that is recognized and protected by the United Nations.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) sets the obligation for the countries to offer a system of safeguards and supports for decision-making, instead of replacing the juridical capacity of the people with disabilities.

The concept has also a social/collective dimension that refers to the right of a people to self-determination. This means the capacity that every community has to decide, choose and determine its form of government, its legal and political organization as well as to pursue its economic and social development. Self-determination is included in the International Covenant on Human Rights of the United Nations which are: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) <sup>3</sup>, and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) <sup>4</sup>. As a right and as a learnt skill, the States have the duty of recognizing, promoting and defending self-determination.

## Self-determination and **emotional resilience**

Self-determination is also the basis of a general theory about human motivation known as Self-determination Theory<sup>5</sup>. This theory classifies the psychological human needs which are directly related with personal growth and mental health.

According to this theory, the human being has three basic psychological needs:

- **Autonomy:** it's the need to be causal agents of our own life, the need to feel responsible of our own behavior and decisions. The possibility of choice and the variety of possibilities are important motivational factors.
- **Competence:** it's the need of practicing and improving our skills, it's the feeling that we can influence the results of our own experiences. Positive feedback after our duties increases the motivation to go through with them.
- **Relation:** the human being is social by nature, we have the need of interaction and connection with other human beings. There's a longing of social belonging, of having a place in society. Social acknowledgment can be a great motivation source.

Satisfying these needs of autonomy, competence and relation would have a positive impact in our health and wellbeing. On the contrary, if we lived without autonomy, with lack of control over our personal experiences and isolated from our social environment we would probably end up psychologically suffering, something that could affect our mental health.

These aspects show the importance of self-determination in the development and maintenance of emotional resilience.

## Education in **Self-determination**

Those who work with young people might have an important role in the promotion of self-determination. Some of the guidelines suggested with this purpose are:

- **Promoting decision-making based on personal preferences.** It's important to know one person's interests, needs and desires in order to encourage elections that could correspond to them.
- **Showing to evaluate a diversity of opinions and ponder their consequences.** The exercise of pondering and deciding requires having several options, with diverse consequences, to choose from. The learning experience implies to reflect on the effectiveness of the previous results.
- **Helping to identify and establish personal goals.** In order to choose a path to follow is basic to know where we want to arrive. Reflecting about what we want to reach allows us to have a clearer reference about what we need to achieve it, to be able to communicate it to others and to face the possible difficulties in the process.
- **Promoting self-dependence within an interdependent environment.** We live within a community. The satisfaction of our own goals, wishes and needs requires learning about the interests and motivations of those who live among us in the same environment.
- **Reinforcing a positive vision about personal skills.** It's possible to educate people to be self-confident, to believe in their own abilities and to validate, and value, their own achievements. Moreover, we can mirror ourselves in the positive look that others might have about us.

To summarize, self-determination is a right for people and societies. It's also an ability that can be learnt by exercising it. It's expression is a source of emotional wellbeing. Education can help people to develop their own ability of self-determination.

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### References:

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2. United Nations. (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. New York.
3. United Nations General Assembly. (1966). International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. New York.
4. United Nations General Assembly. (1966). International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. New York.
5. Ryan, R. & Deci, E. (2017). Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness. New York: Guilford Publishing

# Session Planning

**Title: Making decisions with supports**

**Timing:** 90 minutes

## Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

To reflect on what is self-determination and why is important for our emotional wellness

To identify and express our preferences when we need to make decisions that affect our lives

## Methodology **step by step**

### Timing for each step

- 1. Introduction (20 min)**

Group discussion about what is self-determination and how does it affect wellness and personal examples of self-determination.  
The facilitator collects the ideas and writes them down on the flipchart, with the intention of taking them up in the final reflection.  
If participants do not share ideas or examples of their own self-determination, we can explain some examples of our own life.
- 2. Role Playing: First scene - we know what is better for you (25 min)**

For this scene we need 3, 4 or 5 volunteers to go up to an imaginary stage. Participants decide who will be in this scene, then we explain them the situation and give the roles for each volunteer.
- 3. Role Playing: Second scene - you have to find what is better for you (25 min)**

Same setup for the role-play but the attitude of the characters in the roles is different from the previous scene.
- 4. Debriefing (25 min)**

Once both scenes were completed, we sit in a circle and invite participants to reflect comparatively on what we have experienced and observed throughout the entire activity.  
Setting of the room, participants distribution: Steps 1. and 4. For introduction and debriefing, participants sit in a circle. Steps 2. and 3. For role-playings, some participants will use part of the room as stage (real or imagined) and the other participants will be the public. The space must be wide enough to facilitate these different actions.

## Instructions to participants

- 1. Introduction (20 min)**

Today we are going to reflect on self-determination, a human right and a capacity that people learn by exercising it.

What comes to your mind when you hear of self-determination? If you had to explain to somebody else this concept in a single sentence, how would you do it?

In this workshop we will work with self-determination described as the capacity and right that every human being has to make his/her own decisions and set the purpose of life according to his/her will.

Can you give us some examples of your own self-determination?  
(Depending on the answers, we can ask)

How do you feel when you act with self-determination?  
How do you feel when you cannot act with self-determination?

## **2. Role Playing: First scene - we know what is better for you (25 min)**

For this next activity we need 3, 4 or 5 volunteers to go up to an imaginary stage.

This is what will happen: You will each get a role, and your task is to act as if that role as much as possible according to the instruction you will receive.

- 1 participant is a teenager who has just completed basic compulsory education;
- 1 or 2 participants are their mother and/or their father;
- 1 or 2 participants are their academic mentor and/or a professional counselor.

Who would like to be in which role?

(Once they decided who represent each character, we give them the instructions.)

Instructions for the teenager or young person:

- You have completed your basic compulsory education. You are going to a meeting with your academic mentor and/or your professional counselor. They will guide you in relation to your future. Your family accompanies you to the meeting.

Instructions for the parents:

- Your son/daughter have completed the basic compulsory education. You accompany him/her to a meeting with an academic mentor and/or a professional counselor. All together you will guide him/her in relation to his/her future. He/she is lost, does know nothing about life or which is the better option to choose. You know which are his/her competences, strengths and weakness.

Instructions for the academic mentor and/or the professional counselor:

- A teenager from your school has completed compulsory basic education. Today you will receive him/her in a meeting with his/her family. You know this boy/girl and you know what his skills are and where he should be going (choose one option, like math, art, life science, sports, etc.). Your experience has taught you that if young people do not follow the path of their natural abilities, they are more likely to fail in life.

(After a few minutes (10-15) on stage, we stop the scene and we invite each participant to share)

- How do you feel about the situation?
- Why do you act as they did?
- Could you express your preferences? How did you do it?
- Do you feel that your preferences were listened to and respected?
- Were you able to make your own decisions about your future? Are you happy with the decision made?
- Which were the barriers to your self-determination?
- What helped you or could helped you to make your own decision?

## **3. Role Playing: Second scene - you have to find what is better for you (25 min)**

For this second scene we need another 3, 4 or 5 volunteers to go up to an imaginary stage. Who would like to join?

- 1 participant is a teenager who has just completed basic compulsory education;
- 1 or 2 participants are their mother and/or their father;
- 1 or 2 participants are their academic mentor and/or a professional counselor.

(Once they decided who represent each character, we give them the instructions. These instructions are the same for the teenager and new for the other characters).

Instructions for the teenager or young person:

- You have completed your basic compulsory education. You are going to a meeting with your academic mentor and/or your professional counselor. They will guide you in relation to your future. Your family accompanies you to the meeting.

Instructions for the parents:

- Your son/daughter have completed the basic compulsory education. You accompany him/her to a meeting with an academic mentor and/or a professional counselor. He/she must make a step to his/her future. As a teenager, maybe he/she is still learning how to assume responsibilities, and this is a good option to do it. You know him/her and you have a lot of experience to share with him/her, but he/she has to decide what way to follow.

Instructions for the academic mentor and/or the professional counselor:

- A teenager from your school has completed compulsory basic education. Today you will receive him/her in a meeting with his/her family. You know this boy/girl and you know what his skills are, but he/she has not chosen his/her own option (like math, art, life science, sports, etc.). Your experience has taught you that if young people do not follow the path they wish, they are more likely to be unhappy in life.

(After a few minutes (10–15) on stage, we stop the scene and we invite each participant to share)

- How do you feel about the situation?
- Why do you act as you did?
- Could you express your preferences? How did you do it?
- Do you feel that your preferences were listened to and respected?
- Were you able to make your own decisions about your future? Are you happy with the decision made?
- Which were the barriers to your self-determination?
- What helped you or could help you to make your own decision?

## 4. Debriefing (25 min)

### Debriefing questions:

- What were the differences between the first scene and the second scene?
- In terms of our personal behavior, do the participants act differently in both scenes? Why?
- Did we have a similar experience in “real life”? Did somebody else press us to make some decision or did somebody else make an important decision for us? How did we feel when that happened? If not, how we think that we could feel if that happened?
- If something similar happened to us in “real life”, what can we do?
- Inversely, did somebody else support us to make an important decision? How they supported us? What is the difference between supporting somebody to make a decision or press somebody to take one specific option?

**Handouts:** None

### Tips and tricks:

- Make sure the space is appropriate to represent the scenes and to see what is happening on stage.
- Role-playing is designed for between 6 and 10 people to act. If more participants want to act, we can represent a third scene, with some variations in the instructions or situation of the previous scenes.
- Read the material attached to this activity in order to be better able to conduct the discussion.

**Materials:** Flipcharts, markers, stationery material and pencils.

min/max pax

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# Self-efficacy

## What is **self-efficacy**?

Self-efficacy is the belief in our own abilities to deal with various situations or to complete certain tasks. These beliefs can have a great impact on how people think, behave or feel and on their motivation. It also determines what goals we choose to pursue, how we go about accomplishing those goals, and how we reflect upon our own performance.

## Self-efficacy and **self-confidence**

These two terms seem similar, yet there is a distinction to be made between them. While there is still a lot of confusion around the concept of self-confidence, a widely accepted definition of it is an individual's trust in his or her own abilities, capacities and judgments, or belief that he or she can successfully face day to day challenges and demands. Many psychologists tend to refer to self-efficacy when considering an individual's beliefs about their abilities concerning an upcoming specific task or set of tasks, while self-confidence is more often referred to as a broader and more stable trait concerning an individual's perceptions of overall capability.

## How does **self-efficacy** develop?

We begin to form our sense of self-efficacy in early childhood through dealing with a wide variety of experiences, tasks and situations. However, the growth of self-efficacy does not end during youth but continues to evolve throughout life as people acquire new skills, experiences and understanding.

There are five major sources of self-efficacy:

### Successful past experiences

The most effective way of developing a strong sense of efficacy is through mastery experiences. Performing a task successfully strengthens our sense of self-efficacy. However, failing to adequately deal with a task or challenge can undermine and weaken self-efficacy.

### Social Modeling

Witnessing other people successfully completing a task is another important source of self-efficacy. Seeing people similar to oneself succeed by sustained effort raises observers beliefs that they too possess the capabilities to master comparable activities to succeed.

### Encouragement

Bandura also asserted that people could be persuaded to believe that they have the skills and capabilities to succeed. Consider a time when someone said something positive and encouraging that helped you achieve a goal. Getting verbal encouragement from others helps people overcome self-doubt and instead focus on giving their best effort to the task at hand.

### Psychological Responses

Our own responses and emotional reactions to situations also play an important role in self-efficacy. Moods, emotional states, physical reactions, and stress levels can all impact how a person feels about their personal abilities in a particular situation. A person who becomes extremely nervous before speaking in public may develop a weak sense of self-efficacy in these situations.

### Imaginal experiences

Visualising yourself behaving effectively or successfully in a given situation has proven to be a good technique for increasing self-efficacy.



## The importance of **self-efficacy** for resilience

Self-efficacy can benefit a person's sense of well-being and resilience in a number of ways. People with a strong sense of self-efficacy develop deeper interest in the activities in which they participate, form a stronger sense of commitment to their interests and activities, recover quickly from setbacks and disappointments and view challenging problems as tasks to be mastered. This can impact education and work goals, relationships and any other personal endeavours, influencing the degree in which a person is taking charge of their lives and acts for the fulfillment of their needs.

People with a weak sense of self-efficacy avoid challenging tasks, believe that difficult tasks and situations are beyond their capabilities, focus on personal failings and negative outcomes and quickly lose confidence in personal abilities.

Self-efficacy can play an important role in health and how people manage their health, nutrition, and illness. For example, having a strong sense of self-efficacy can help people who are trying to quit smoking stick to their goals. Maintaining a weight loss plan, managing chronic pain, giving up alcohol, sticking to an exercise schedule and following an eating plan can all be influenced by a person's levels of self-efficacy.

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# Session Planning

**Title: I can do it**

**Timing:** 90 minutes

## Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

To gain knowledge about what self-efficacy is and how is interconnected with self-confidence

To understand how our social environment influences our self-efficacy

To learn how to build your self-efficacy about developing skills or accomplishing tasks

## Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

- 1. Introduction and information (10 min)**
- 2. Appetizer - the ripple effect of self-efficacy (15 min)**  
A brownian walk followed by pairs sharing on a specific skill they have in which they feel they are skilled enough.
- 3. Goal setting, visualization, emotions - individually (15 min)**  
Individual reflection exercise aided through questions from the facilitator and journaling.
- 4. Individual reflection and sharing in pairs (30 min)**  
Individual reflection exercise through journaling followed by sharing in pairs.
- 5. Debriefing (20 min)**  
Setting of the room, participants distribution: Participants work alone and in pairs, the space should be clear enough for the brownian movement in the beginning.

## Instructions to participants

- 1. Introduction and information (10 min)**  
In this activity we will explore our self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to the set of beliefs we hold about our ability to complete a particular task or achieve a goal. It is what I believe I can do with my skills under certain conditions. Our belief in our own ability to succeed plays a role in how we think, how we act, and how we feel about our place in the world.  
The main difference between self-efficacy and self-confidence is that self-efficacy has to do with our beliefs about very specific tasks and the skills that we need to do that task while self-confidence is a broader term that refers to our general beliefs about capabilities, values and about our worthiness as persons. Self-efficacy refers to something a lot more narrow. Examples of self-efficacy can include:
  - a student who has a high level of self-efficacy in mathematics will feel confident in her ability to do well in a tough statistics class
  - a young man living on his own for the first time feels confident that he will be able to learn to cook more kinds of dishes than he did before.
- 2. Appetizer - the ripple effect of self-efficacy (15 min)**  
Start walking around the room. Notice how you breathe and how your body feels like. As you make steps, be aware of the different parts of your body: head, spine, arms and hands, legs...Notice what you can do with this body of yours, the way you can fill your lungs with air and how you can release air through your nose, the way you can turn your head around, or stretch your arms, your legs, hop, clap hands...

Think about all the other things that you can do in your life, like taking showers, or maybe driving a car, cooking, or writing emails, having conversations, writing articles...you have a unique set of things that you are capable of doing. Try to set your mind on one of these capabilities, one of the things that you can do. It doesn't have to be a great one, but it can be if you want. You don't have to be perfect at it, just choose something that you can do well enough most of the time. And once you choose it, stop in front of another person. This person will be your sharing partner and for the next 5 minutes you will discuss about that thing you can do well, without mentioning what it is. Use these questions on flipchart (listed below) to guide your discussion. And if you accidentally mention your capability, don't worry about it, just go on with the discussion. After 5 minutes, you will discuss the capability of your partner, in the same way you did with yours. Decide between yourselves who wants to start and I will let you know when the 5 minutes are almost over.

(Flipchart Questions:

Where did it come from or how did it start?

How did you feel about it in the beginning?

How do you feel about it now?

How often do you do it?

Why do you do it?

Why do you think you do it well?

How can this influence other things you could do?)

### 3. **Goal setting, visualization, emotions - individually (15 min)** (Visualization for goal setting:)

Now I invite you to think about a specific goal you have, something that you want to do, or something you want to learn how to do or to develop in yourself. It should be something very specific, like learning how to cook vegan. I invite you to think about that specific goal, within yourselves. What are the elements of that goal? What kind of skills does it require? Now imagine that you have already achieved that goal or completed that task.

Visualize yourself being successful in it. What does it look like? How does it feel?

(Connection with emotions)

Write down the emotions you experienced during the visualisation.

### 4. **Personal reflection and sharing (30 min)**

Using your journals again, I invite you to reflect by answering the following questions:

- Have you achieved anything similar before? Were you ever successful in a similar task?
- Have other people told you that you have any of the skills that you need for the task or goal you visualised before?
- Can you think of any role models for your specific goal? Are there any people similar to you, peers, family or friends who have achieved something similar and who's example you could follow?

(Give participants enough time to reflect on each question)

Now I invite you to make pairs and each of you will share your reflections from before.

### 5. **Debriefing (20 min)**

#### Debriefing questions:

- How was it to discuss the things you could do?
- What emotions did you experience during the visualization?
- How do you feel now about the goal that you set?
- How did the reflection contribute to how you feel about the goal?
- What did you learn about how self efficacy can be built and developed?
- How can you use this for other tasks or goals?
- How can you use what you've learnt to influence people around you?
- How do you think the people around you influence your self efficacy?

**Materials:** Paper and pens, flipchart and markers.

**Handouts:** None

min/max pax

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Chapter

# 05

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# Life management

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# What is **life management**?

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Our life is the biggest and most complex project that we each have to manage. Life management, whether we call it like that in our daily life or not, is something that stretches across the lifespan.

Some of the central processes of life management are: setting goals and standards, planning, handling resources, action taking, reflection and assessment.

Personal goals can be defined as states a person wishes to achieve, avoid, or maintain. In order to achieve them, we plan more or less specific actions to be taken and we look into the resources that we have or can access. In different moments on the way, we stop and

check how close we are to achieve our goals, as well as change the goals to fit the circumstances.

Most of us don't go through these processes in a structured way, but rather irregularly. Also, we don't plan for the entire life but rather for one or a few years at a time. Sometimes we only get to making plans when big changes take place, like moving to another level of education, or graduating, or having to change jobs or countries.

In general, life management should cover the main areas of our existence, such as sustenance, education and development, occupations (work related or not), social relations, self-care.

## Impact on **emotional resilience**

The way we manage our lives impacts our resilience in more ways than this material can elaborate on, but we could summarize them as two such ways:

- 1.** The process of intentionally managing our lives is empowering, because it puts us at the steering wheel of our life, rather than just going along wherever life (in the form of society and other people's norms and expectations, crises and emergencies, external events) pushes us. Having this agency over our life involves being in touch with what we need and what is important for us at any given time, reflecting on how far we are from that, looking for creative ways to get there and setting ourselves on those tracks.

That is not to say that management gives us total control over our life, but it brings us awareness and direction. Being flexible about, accepting uncertainty in an ever changing environment are vital in keeping sane while still chasing what we want. Even when we are in the driver's seat, we still have to lead the car through all kinds of landscapes and types of weather, but at least we get to make the turns, try new paths if we get stuck or change the destination.

- 2.** The choices we make, like prioritizing career on the long term over social connections, or investing time in educating ourselves in what we are passionate about, will either promote more psychological well-being, or raise the risk of mental health crises

This chapter addresses the way we define success – which greatly influences our goals –, how we shape our paths from the point of view of personal and professional development and the means by which we ensure our sustenance. Also, it touches on the topic of resources that make it possible to achieve our goals, nurture our wellbeing and overcome crises.

# Personal path

## What is **personal path**?

When we use the term of personal path we are referring to the sum of the decisions, life-goals, objectives, interests and life-choices that a person has and will make in their lives.

We all have dreams, goals, things we want to achieve or places we want to be. Some of us look forward to some form of education, others to a specific career, maybe some are on their way to being educators, or activists, farmers, parents or politicians. No matter the place we want to get to, we all have a journey to embark on to get there. And even if what we are going towards, the destination, is the same for two people, the path will always be different. Here the concept of equifinality comes in: remembering that a given end state can be reached by many potential means and strategies.

To get from one state of being to another, let's say from early adolescence to early adulthood, we all traverse different routes. From those of us who go to highschool and college, some choose a vocation early on, while others keep exploring and take their time in deciding. Some of us focus more on building interpersonal relationships, others on getting formal education, while others pursue experiences and value practical skills. Some of us stay close to our families or communities and benefit from their support until late in life or even during our whole lives, while others choose to become independent and earn their own way early on.

None of these choices, priorities, aims are right or wrong, but different combinations of them give the diversity of paths that can be followed through life. There are as many different paths as there are people in the world!

## How does one cultivate and enrich a **personal path**?

ing, but what are the stepping stones to getting there. What are our priorities, needs and values? Which areas of our lives do we need to pay attention to so our path is in tune with our values, personal style and authentic needs? Reflecting on all these is an important way to cultivate a path that we can own and be confident about.

Everyone already has an individualized personal path they are walking on, even if we have not chosen it consciously and are not aware of it. Putting the spotlight of awareness on the stepping stones, actively and purposefully engaging our energy and attention to our own way of stepping into the world is how we enrich our experience and go further on this path.

This kind of approach allows us to be active decision makers in our lives. Each person decides for themselves what is important to achieve, they are the ones who set the pace and plan breaks (or gap years), they decide which resources (time, energy, attention, money etc.) and how much of them will be invested in any given area.

## **Personal path** and resilience

Being aware of the choices we make, where our energy and efforts are invested in and, more so, actively deciding on what to include or exclude from our life path is empowering. It gives us a sense of actively participating in our lives, it helps us better predict outcomes, make plans, be flexible and adapt to changes. Having our awareness on the stepping stones of our path gives us ownership over our path and helps us make decisions informed by our values and needs.

All these lead to an increased level of personal resilience, which has a positive outcome on the way we successfully manage our lives.

# Session Planning

## Title: Tangled paths

**Timing:** 90 minutes

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Discover that each person has unique goals and set of priorities

Reflect on their own personal choice of goals

Reflect on one's personal path in life

## Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

### **1. Welcome and introduction (5 min)**

### **2. Tangled paths (25 min)**

Participants receive a ball of yarn, each with his own color and are instructed to go around the room tying the yarn with scotch tape to different life areas they find priority. In this way they create a map of their own pathway in their current life. On the floor should be spread all over the room the flipcharts with life-aims. Participants can choose their own order of aims and skip some spots if they want.

On the empty sheets of paper they can add some aims that they have but cannot find on the ground.

### **3. Sharing in pairs (15 min)**

### **4. Group discussion on the final map (10 min)**

Participants gather around the map they created with the yarn to reflect on it.

### **5. Debriefing (30 min)**

### **6. Closing (5 min)**

## Instructions to participants

### **1. Welcome and introduction (5 min)**

### **2. Tangled paths (25 min)**

Please go around the room and look at the flipcharts. On each you will find a life-aim, a goal, and your task will be to find those that are relevant to you.

You choose the order, the priority of these goals as they reflect in your life at the moment or in the future. At each one that you choose, attach your yarn to it, and write on a post-it in a sentence or a few words why this is important to you. Without cutting the yarn, continue to the next life-aims and repeat the procedure. You can of course, skip the spots that are not relevant to you.

(Demonstrate these steps after explaining them and ask if there are any questions)

When you are finished, wait for the others to be done as well. I will let you know when you are at half time.

### 3. Sharing in pairs (15 min)

Form pairs and take a few minutes to share how this experience was for you. Share on what aims did you choose and what were the most and least priority.

### 4. Group discussion on the final map (10 min)

Let's gather around this map you created together. Take a minute to look at it, to let it sink in. These look like roads, like paths in life.

What do you notice? What does it rise in you to see this map?

### 5. Debriefing (30 min)

### 6. Closing (5 min)

Share one thing that you take from this experience

#### Debriefing questions:

- How did you feel throughout the task
- What do you have in mind looking at the final map?
- Do you see your ways as similar or different to other participants? How so?
- Why do you think the order of life-aims is different from one person to the other's?
- How are these paths different? Which one do you think is the "better" path?
- How is it to see other ways, other paths in life?
- Would you like to change anything from your path, what would it be?
- How does this influence the way you choose in your daily life?
- If you would take this path you made for yourself, how would you bring it in your life?
- What can you do tomorrow to start on this path?

**Materials:** post-its, balls of yarn (a different color for each participant in a group, you can also use ribbons if you don't have enough yarn colors), paper clips or tape

**Handouts:** Life aims list

#### Tips and tricks:

- If there are more than 8 participants, make two groups (you need a lot of space)
- The clarity of the "map" is important, that is why you need a lot of space.

min/max pax

5

20

## Life Aims **facilitator handout**

#### List of Life-aims:

- Social relations
- Home
- Work
- Family
- Animals
- Place to live
- Friends
- Education
- Competences
- Volunteering
- Travel
- Dreams
- Amulets / talismans
- Nature
- Activism
- Vocation
- Hand-on experience
- Fun and Leisure
- Career
- *empty sheets of paper*



# ○ Redefining success

## What is **success**?

Oxford dictionary defines success as “the accomplishment of an aim or purpose”. However, there is great difficulty in providing a more detailed definition or description of the concept. Success springs from our personal goals, standards, dreams and values, which means it is highly subjective and it paints a different picture for different people.

It is not uncommon, however, that the suc-

cess definitions that we hold are not completely ours. In the process of our upbringing, we have learned and been influenced by ideas ingrained in our families, communities, cultures, messages about success coming from our friends, teachers, media, and so on. As success takes such a personal stance, it is highly relevant that we take some time to clarify our own goals, values and dreams.

## How to build our own **definition of success**?

In order to build a definition of success that is our own and which provides us with a healthy motivation, we first need to bring some awareness to the ideas we already hold about success. These can be deeply rooted in our unconscious, so it is important to give some attention to moments which we feel relevant for success or failure and dig deep to discover the motivations and ideas that guide us.

When we have found these, the next step is to reflect on where these ideas and motivations come from, when and where did we hear

them expressed in words or see them manifested in the behaviors of others. Seeing that they didn't initially come from inside of us will be extremely helpful in establishing some distance between us and these beliefs. Setting this distance will further allow us to look at these ideas and motivations and consciously decide which parts or which ones we now want to take for our present and future.

In the end, it is healthy to start from scratch and explore our authentic aspirations, dreams and values in order to draw an original picture of what success means to us personally.

## Why is **success relevant** for resilience?

Psychologically, what and how we pursue will decide whether or not we get to experience positive emotions, create meaning and coherence, build a sense of competence and satisfaction with life. When we can achieve our goals, fulfill our dreams or live by our values, we can feel proud and strong, which increases our capacity to stand our ground in difficult times.

Pursuing ideals of success that we do not truly identify with can lead to feelings of confusion, pressure, anxiety, failure, shame, incompetence, lack of meaning, and so on. Therefore, it is highly important that we place our authentic values and desires in the midst of this pursuit of success!

# Session Planning

## Title: **Redefining success**

**Timing:** 135 min Two sessions with a 10 min break

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Identifying one's existing definition of success  
Building a personal definition of success

## Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

- 1. Introduction to the subject (5 min)**
- 2. Individual reflection (20 min)**
  - Writing one's current definition of success. (3 min)
  - Identifying ways in which this definition is influencing one's life. (5 min)
  - Sharing with the group (take 5-6 definitions). Notice the similarities and the differences between the many definitions. (5 min)
  - Reflecting on where one's definition of success is coming from. (5 min)
- 3. Developing one's own definition of success (45 min)**
  - Short introductory discussion (5 min)
  - Going through three exercises to explore significant aspects of how each person visualizes success:
    - a. Whom do you envy and admire? - Individual reflection, then sharing in pairs. (15 min)
    - b. Daydreaming about success (10 min)
    - c. The eulogy exercise (15 min)
- 4. Break (10 min)**
- 5. Vision board collage (30 min)**
- 6. Debriefing (25 min)**
  - Setting of the room, participants distribution : Participants work mostly individually, so any kind of setting is okay. For the group sharing and discussions, encourage participants to sit in a circle so that everybody sees everybody.

## Instructions to participants

- 1. Introduction to the subject (5 min)**
  - Today we are going to talk about success. Why do you think this is a relevant topic to discuss? How does our definition of success influence our life.
- 2. Individual reflection (20 min)**
  - Write on a sheet of paper your current definition of success. It can be one or two sentences, or a few keywords. Describe it as accurately as possible. (3 min)

Then imagine what decisions, actions, mindsets come from this definition. How would someone who defines success in this way act? What kind of decisions would they make? Can you identify some influences that this definition has on your life? Which of your attitudes and mindsets are based on this? Which of your actions and decisions? Take some time to write a few ideas. (5 min)

Can we hear a few of the definitions you wrote? Notice the similarities and the differences between the many definitions shared by people. What do you think makes them similar and what makes them different? (5 min)

Most of our beliefs and ideas, including those regarding success are not completely our own, but they are a result of influences coming from the culture we live in, our family and friends, the media, our life experiences and so on. Go back to your own definition for a little bit and notice where each piece of the definition might be coming from. Do any parts of the definition sound similar to something you might have heard a lot in your past? From whom or where? Is there any part that you feel you are taking for granted but don't quite understand? And which is the part you feel closest to you? Take some time to mark these and note some ideas about where they might be coming from. (5 min)

### **3. Developing one's own definition of success (40 min)**

Next, we will work more in-depth on building a personal definition of success. Why do you think this is important? Why is it important that we own most of our definition for success?

We will go through a series of exercises which will help us gather as much information as possible so that we can rebuild our definition of success and make it our own.

#### **a. Whom do you envy and admire? (15 min)**

First, we'll reflect on envy and admiration. Envy and admiration are two very informative emotions, telling us a lot about what we want in life and what we value. We can often use them to clarify what is important for us. They are similar emotions but still different and each one gives unique information, so let's try them both. Think of a person you envy and a person you admire and write down their names or initials in two separate columns.

Take them in turn and write under their names some of the things you envy/admire about them. Is it some characteristic they have, a trait, a possession? Try to go to the depth of each thing - oftentimes it seems that we are envious of something that the other person possesses, when actually we are envious of a trait they have which helped them get that possession (e.g. I feel envy towards a person because of the high position they occupy, but actually, if I think about it, I would not like to occupy such a high position, rather I feel envious because they could speak out and ask for a promotion). (10 min)

Let's make pairs and share what feels valuable in this. You have 4 minutes in total, so try to keep it to 2 minutes each person. (4 min)

#### **b. Daydreaming (10 min)**

Now, we will work with our imagination a little bit. For sure each one of us has, at some point in our lives, daydreamed about different things. We will do just that.

Find a comfortable position, you can even lay on your back, you can close your eyes if it helps you or you can keep them open. Imagine yourself in a moment in the future, maybe 15-20 years from now, being successful. Observe what happens in this image: where you are, what you are doing, what is around you, who is around you... Take a few minutes with this image to really explore it. How are you feeling? What stands out in this image that really makes you feel like this?

Take a few notes about what is relevant in this.

**c. The eulogy (15 min)**

In this exercise, we will again work with the imagination, but we will take it a bit further.

Imagine that many many years have passed and you have lived a full, successful and satisfying life. It is now the moment to go and you are at your funeral. In front of all the people present, there is a person who has been close to you throughout your life and who has known you very well. It can be a real person who is already in your life, or an imaginary person who really knows you. They are giving a speech about you, describing your life and you as a person. Write their speech. Write what you would like them to say about you at the end of your life. (10 min)

Come back to the speech, read it and underline a few words you feel resonate the most in you. (5 min)

**4. Break (10 min)**

**5. Vision board collage (30 min)**

Now I invite you to review all the information and insights you have gathered in the previous exercises and make a collage with images, words, phrases which represent and summarize all this. Use a sheet of paper and if more are needed, you can stick others to the sides. At the end you will have something like a vision board to support your new definition of success. You have 30 minutes for this.

**6. Debriefing (25 min)**  
(After the debriefing:)

Remember that this vision board is what you have so far, but it is also an ongoing process. You can always add to it or remove elements you discover are not actually yours. It is useful to keep this question in mind each time you discover something new “Is this mine or someone else’s?”. And if it comes from someone else, “Do I agree with it and want to keep it?”.

**Debriefing questions:**

- How did you feel throughout the task
- How did it feel to go through this entire process, the three exercises?
- Do you want to show your vision board and share a few things you put on it?
- What new insights did you get?
- What will change in your everyday life after these discoveries?
- How can you continue the process of building your own definition of success?

**Handouts:** none

**Tips and tricks:**

Read the intro chapter for success in order to understand how to moderate the discussions and answer question

**Materials:**

White sheets of paper  
Pens  
Magazines with pictures

min/max pax | 6 | 25

# Resources **toolbox**

## What is a resource **toolbox**?

A resources toolbox is a container for all the resources that we have available and that we can use in order to manage our lives effectively, to increase our personal wellbeing and life satisfaction. Additionally, this toolbox can be useful when we face situations of psychological suffering that we all sometimes need to go through. They are resources that help us diminish, as much as we can, the probability of suffering from a mental health crisis or that allow us to be better prepared to overcome them when these crises happen. We could easily call this toolbox a resilience kit.

These resources we can find within ourselves, in our close network of family and friends, in the community, in spaces of mutual support, or in professional settings. They can be directly related to our mental health and wellbeing or indirectly, supporting us to manage our lives, to adapt to and deal with new situations in an effective way.

## How to create a **resource toolbox**?

In order to build a resource toolbox, it is useful to start by reflecting on your current emotional state, then think of those things that make you feel good about yourself and your life. It is also helpful to reflect on what you have to do or avoid in order to not feel bad about yourself and your life. An important next step is to reflect on your personal objectives, your dreams or life projects. Finally, taking into account that we are all vulnerable as humans and that sooner or later in life, we will all have to face situations of great suffering or loss, it is useful to reflect on how we can prepare ourselves to face a mental health crisis.

In parallel, when identifying resources, allow yourself to consider what you already own such as personal skills (practical, mental or emotional), habits and knowledge, material and financial resources, but then go gradually towards the outside, identifying resources you can access within your social network, the community you are part of (e.g. support groups, groups that share the same interests or goals, mutual aid spaces), as well as professional services (e.g. doctors, teachers, financial specialists).

We need to keep in mind, however, that some things that are helpful at one point in life can be unhelpful at another. Our resource toolbox needs to be revised and updated after transitioning different stages of our existence or when our circumstances change.

# Session Planning

**Title: Resource toolbox**

**Timing:** 90 min

**Aim and learning elements / session objectives:**

Finding resources to cope with difficult situations  
Matching resources to situations

## Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

- 1. Introductory discussion (5 min)**
- 2. Self-reflection (15 min)**  
Currently used strategies/resources  
Available but unused strategies/resources
- 3. Group work on an example (10 min)**  
Participants take an example of a difficult situation and suggest strategies or resources they would use to cope.
- 4. Individual work (15 min)**  
Matching difficult situations with appropriate resources.
- 5. Sharing in groups of three (15 min)**
- 6. Debriefing (30 min)**  
Setting of the room, participants distribution: Participants work individually, in trios or in the whole group. They mostly sit in a circle, either with chairs or pillows on the ground.

## Instructions to participants

- 1. Introductory discussion (5 min)**  
During this session we will focus on the resources that we have for difficult moments and we will gather all of them in order to make a toolbox that we can always have available. Why is it important to have a prepared toolbox of resources and self-help strategies?  
What kind of resources can we have?
- 2. Self-reflection (15 min)**  
Take a sheet of paper, I will ask some questions and I invite you to spend some time by yourself after each one answering it. Let's see!
  - What are you commonly doing/using so far that works to stay balanced? List some strategies/resources. (5 min)
  - What are the resources that you have available for difficult days? Whether you're already using them or not. Use this template with the resource areas and try to identify resources from as many areas as possible. (7 min)  
(Give the participants the handout)  
(Ask the next question only if the participants have already gone through other activities in this handbook)
  - What have you learned from the previous activities in the training that was useful to you and you want to keep? (3 min)

### 3. Group work on an example (10 min)

Let's take now an example of a difficult situation and work on it in the group. (Invite participants to offer an example)

Remember if you have faced this in the past or not. If not, then try to imagine yourself in this situation, how you would feel, what you would need. Take a minute to really put yourself in this scene.

Now, share a strategy or resources that has helped you cope better if you have been through this in the past or one that would help you cope if you would face this in the future. I invite you to really try and stay with yourself, your personal needs in this situation and what is appropriate for you.

(Gather answers from participants and write them on a flipchart)

### 4. Individual work (15 min)

Great! Now let's move on and work more on our personal situations. I invite you to list a few difficult situations that you usually face or have faced recently. Write them down!

For each difficult situation, match at least three of the resources/strategies listed previously, in the beginning of this session, that you think could help you cope better with this. Explain very shortly, in writing, how each strategy could serve you in each situation.

### 5. Sharing in groups of three (15 min)

Now that you're finished, let's each find two other people, make groups of three and share what you wrote. Share the resources that you matched with each situation and discuss why/how you thought they could help you. Take about 5 minutes per person to share and I invite you to add to your own list if you get any inspiration from the others while sharing.

### 6. Debriefing (30 min)

#### Debriefing questions:

- How was the exercise for you?
- Were there any situations that you found difficult to match with resources?
- Did you find new resources/strategies to cope with old situations? Where from (other people, training activities, etc.)? Give an example.
- Did you hear about a strategy that someone wrote to be useful for them but you don't believe it can be useful for you? Give an example.
- In which area do you usually find your resources? Why are we not thinking about resources in other areas?
- How do you feel that it helped you to go through this process and have these tools?

**Handouts:** Resource areas template

#### Tips and tricks:

It is useful that the total number of participants can be divided by three in the sharing part. If not, consider the total amount of time you have available when making groups. If you have more than 1h 30 min, then you can make one group of four. If the time is short, then it is better to have one pair or even go directly for pairs instead of groups of three.

#### Materials:

paper, pens, handout with template

min/max pax

| 3

| 24

## MY RESOURCES

**My own skills, knowledge and material resources**

**Professionals**

**My social network**

**The community**

**Mutual support spaces**



# Sustenance

## What is **sustenance**?

What does it mean to sustain yourself? What does it take for a person to cover their basic needs? What are a person's basic needs? How do we discern between needs and desires and how much time do we invest in meeting our sustenance needs?

These are some of the questions that arise from the impact our needs and desires have on how we live our lives. We make decisions and dedicate part of our lives to work or to other ways of acquiring the resources

necessary to meet our sustenance needs. Our lifestyle is influenced by the ways we meet our sustenance needs and vice versa.

Our working definition for sustenance is the capacity of meeting the basic, survival needs, to feed and shelter oneself “whether through employable skills, a craft, a socially valuable talent, a membership in a community, farming, or hunting and gathering”, as psychologist Bill Plotkin describes it<sup>1</sup>.

## How to become **more sustainable**?

In this process of trying to become more sustainable, there is a question that has priority: “What are my sustenance needs?”. This question allows us to define our survival needs and how much or what kind effort it takes to meet them. It also allows us to differentiate between needs and desires and to realize that the choice to meet our desires is a conscious, optional one, not one that our life depends on. This differentiation between sustenance needs and desires is one that is usually lacking in our modern education. We are often living under the impression that we “need” a specific smartphone, a specific car, some brand of clothes, a certain type of food, drinks, an apartment in the city center and so on.

This usually results in a sense of entrapment where we spend most of our daily waking life working to meet these desires that at some point we internalized as needs.

After we have defined our sustenance needs, we can become creative in finding ways to use our own resources, or the resources of the community we are part of, in order to meet these needs. It is a commonly automatized road towards money as the best or only resource that can ensure our basic necessities. However, if we allow ourselves to open our minds and get creative, we may find out that although money is the easiest to think of, it is definitely not the only one and in some cases not even the most accessible.

## Why is sustenance **relevant for resilience**?

The fact that sustenance covers the most elementary things necessary for our survival makes it easy to understand why sustenance is important to resilience. In the end, resilience is a lot about resisting, surviving in the face of adversity and ensuring that we have our basic, physiological needs met, allows us to further take care of our psychological survival and growth.

By defining what our survival needs are, we discover a sense of freedom and empowerment, given by the realization that we can sustain ourselves through the skills we possess and/or further develop the skills we lack. Defining our basic necessities also makes us more capable of finding different ways to ensure them, which gives us more options and, therefore, higher chances of meeting our needs.

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### References:

1. Bill Plotkin, *Nature and the Human Soul: Cultivating Wholeness and Community in a Fragmented World* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2008), p. 194.

# Session Planning

## Title: **Cultivating Sustenance**

**Timing:** 125 minutes Two sessions one of 45 min and the other 65 min with a 15 min break

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Develop the ability of identifying needs

Discover the difference between needs and preferences

Develop a healthy understanding of sustenance(basic)needs and how to fulfill them

Uncovering hidden/fixed beliefs about sustenance

### Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

- 1. Introduction and warming up (10 min)**  
Welcoming participants followed by a random walk and conversation focused on connection.
- 2. Introduction on sustenance (10 min)**  
Discussion about sustenance and building a common definition within the group.
- 3. Needs vs. preferences (10 min)**
- 4. Personal exploration on self understanding of sustenance (15 min)**  
An individual exercise done through a handout.
- 5. Break (15 min)**
- 6. Discovering strategies that fulfil sustenance needs (15 min)**  
Free-writing exercise guided by the facilitator with questions.
- 7. Sharing in pairs (10 min)**
- 8. Group discussion (15 min)**
- 9. Debriefing (25 min)**

### Instructions to participants

Setting of the room, participants distribution: Participants work in pairs, individually, and then in the whole group, the most common shape/distribution pattern is a circle.

- 1. Introduction and warming up (10 min)**  
Hello and welcome, today we are here to discover what sustenance is.  
To begin with, let's stand up and start walking through the room in a random manner, by going in any direction, or changing direction suddenly, and just follow your own rhythm, it is hurried or slow, and notice your body, how it feels, how it moves, what it needs, maybe it want to go faster, or slower, maybe it needs a specific movement or a slight massage...and notice there are people around you...and as you go by maybe you catch a smile..maybe you not..be curious of who are these people around you...and come to rest in front of another person...and just look into their eyes...and then keep walking and find another person and look into their eyes...

## **2. Introduction on sustenance (10 min)**

Now let's go back in a circle and talk for a few minutes.  
What is sustenance? What comes to you when you hear this word?

(Gather responses from participants, and then give the definition.)

Sustenance is the capacity of meeting the basic, survival needs, to feed and shelter oneself "whether through employable skills, a craft, a socially valuable talent, a membership in a community, farming, or hunting and gathering" as psychologist Bill Plotkin describes it.

What is not sustenance? What do you think is not included here?

(Gather responses from participants, and then add or explain that anything outside of survival needs (food, water, air, shelter) are not sustenance needs.)

## **3. Needs vs. preferences (10 min)**

Let's do a quick exercise. Close your eyes and just breathe... slowly... breathe out... breathe in again... and then stop. Hold your breath as long as you can.

(Light an incense perfumed stick while they hold their breath)

Between air and fresh-smelling air, one you actually need the other is just a preference; you can live with or without it. This is the difference between preference and needs. One you can live without (the preference), the other (the need), you cannot. You can live without soda for the rest of your life, but not more than approximately 4 days without water. You can live without burgers and peanuts, but not without food for more than 12 days. And so on.

## **4. Personal exploration on self-understanding of sustenance (15 min)**

For the next part we will work individually, and what we will do is that you will explore your own personal concept, belief system about sustenance using this self-reflection exercise. You have fifteen minutes to answer all the questions.

(Give handout self-reflection exercise and 15 min to fill it.)

## **5. Break (15 min)**

## **6. Discovering strategies that fulfil sustenance needs (15 min)**

Now that you have discovered what your sustenance needs are, let us see how we fill these needs and how can we do it better?

We will be employing a free writing exercise and I will ask you a series of questions with a short break in between. You are invited to write without stopping answering the question and to write each question on a different page.

- How do you meet your sustenance needs at this moment?
- What can you do better? What can you do without?
- What would you like to develop/gain in regard to sustenance skills?
- How much time/effort do you feel is necessary to meet these needs?

## **7. Sharing in pairs (10 min)**

Find a partner and share what you have discovered about your personal strategies to fill your sustenance needs.

## **8. Group discussion (15 min)**

So, let's gather back in the circle. I would like to hear from all of you about your personal discoveries regarding your personal sustenance.

I would like to build together a deeper understanding, a more in working definition of Sustenance. Anyone can start and we will all share by passing the talking piece to another person when we have finished. The question is: "What did you discover about your personal sustenance needs?"

## **9. Debriefing (25 min)**

**Debriefing questions:**

- What did we do during this workshop?
- How did you feel throughout the process?
- What was surprising for you? What did you discover?
- How does this change your view on your needs and desires/preferences?
- How can you apply this to your daily life?

**Tips and tricks:**

- Read the the resources before facilitating the workshop, to be connected to the topic and the philosophy behind sustenance
- Go through the self-reflection exercise yourself before the workshop so you have a in-depth knowing of the outcomes.

**Handouts:** self-reflection exercise  
Pens and A4 papers  
Scented stick

**Materials:**

min/max pax	4	24
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## Sustenance inquiry **handout**

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Please answer all the questions in as much detail as possible.

What do you need in your everyday life? What are the things, items, services and others that you use, consume, spend money on? List here everything, no matter how small or big.

What in your life you cannot do without? What are those things, services, products, items (from the list above or others) that you would put in your backpack if you would have to move somewhere far away and you could only carry this one backpack?

What do you need in order to survive? If you were suddenly all by yourself, in a strange unfamiliar place, with just yourself to worry and to care for? What would you need? How would you provide shelter, food, water, personal care?

How do you provide these basic, sustenance needs right now in your life? From where or how does your food come from? How do you provide your own shelter and or water? Through what actions(work, volunteering, belonging to a group or a family)?

Chapter

# 06

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**Nature**

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# How do we **understand nature?**

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When we speak of nature, we speak of all that is around us and within us. Through this handbook we approach and understand nature as the Earth community, the totality of the beings, elements, plants, animals (including humans), fungi, insects, bacteria and viruses.

This worldview serves to make us aware not only of the obvious nature we may encounter and observe such as trees, sky, wind, grass, etc; but also as to the other beings that we do not pay attention to like bacteria and fungi, oxygen, soil and many more.

Also, we want to introduce here the idea that we, as individuals, are an integral part of an ecosystem, one in which we survive or thrive, but more importantly, in this ecosystem we are in constant relationship with the other natural beings that inhabit the same bio-region. And it is these relationships that determine our well being, our adaptation to our lives, and our resilience on long and short term. The relationship between us and the water we drink, the sources of our food and fresh air, or materials we need to stay warm, to clothe ourselves and build a shelter, are critical for our lives. We are dependent on these resources for our very survival, yet this is a natural relationship of interdependence. It is a relationship of giving and receiving. Like that between the trees and bushes around your building, that breathe the CO<sub>2</sub> you exhale every couple of seconds, and yourself that breathe the oxygen they exhale.

The simple truth about our role in nature is this: We need each other. And the more we are aware of our surroundings, of the relationship we have with the other inhabitants of our bioregion, the more our personal and communal resilience grows and strengthens.

## **Nature** and emotional resilience

There is much to say about the impact nature has on emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual health, mainly, because nature can be understood, or even felt as the encompassing process of all the others.

Everything is nature and we are nature. So any action that we take to feel this connection, this sense of belonging, has a positive impact on our mental health. From spending time contemplating a potted plant on our writing desk or opening the window to our room and feeling the fresh air outside, to the act of spending a few hours or days in a wild setting or even more boldly, engaging in interspecies communication, these actions, projects or practices bring a host of benefits our lives.

Increased fitness levels, better blood circulation, decreased stress and fatigue, increased emotional access and integration, better sleep, increased overall sense of well-being and higher appetite, are just a few of the benefits we get from spending time in nature.

More immersive and in-depth experiences in nature can offer us insight into our emotional, and psychological life. Being mirrored by nature can help us find innovative solutions to life-problems and nature has a tendency to be a good container for emotional and psychological self-healing. It is not that nature is in any way magical (though it may be so) but that when in nature, we start to remember who we are, we discover important clues to how we can better ourselves and even how we can contribute to our world. In nature we are accepted for who we are, with our flaws, shortcomings, talents, vices, gifts, for everything that we are.

These and many aspects of being in and with nature lead to an increased resilience, and so we are equipped to deal with whatever life throws at us.

# Benefits of Nature

## What do we understand by **benefits of nature**?

The benefits of being in nature, being aware of nature, surrounded by, in tune with, or immersed in nature are many. They are astounding and simple at the same time, and they are within our hand's reach. They range from decreased stress and anxiety, better mood, qualitative sleep, pleasant emotions like gratitude, awe and happiness, better blood pressure and decreased chronic pain, even to a more powerful immune system and recovery rate from sickness and trauma, just to name a few.

In his book "Last Child in the Woods", Richard Louv describes Nature Deficit Disorder. He coined this term to describe the human costs of alienation from nature, something that the modern human is suffering from. The term is not meant to be a medical diagnosis (although perhaps it should be), but more to create a wake-up call to remind ourselves we come from nature, are nature, and we need nature to be healthy, resilient and strong.

## How do we access these **benefits**?

First, consider the idea that nature is everything. We are surrounded by nature all the time to a low or a high degree. Nature can be the plant that resides on your desk or windowsill, or the tree that you see outside your window; it can even be the blue or cloudy sky or the bushes and grass in front of your building. Nature can be found all around us, even if we live in a crowded city or in an isolated cabin in the woods.

To the benefits that nature can offer, it can take just a simple stroll in the park, or a deep nourishing breath, looking at the wonderful sky, or enjoying the cool shade of a tree on your skin, or smelling the perfume of a flower. Yet to be in this kind of relationship it requires a bit of your awareness, of your

attention to be directed towards natural elements or beings and some of that awareness to yourself. It is as though a merging, a collaboration between the awareness of my own state of being (How am I in this moment? What am I doing? How am I feeling) also known as self-awareness and an awareness of what is around me (What natural elements are around me, what natural beings: tree, stone, grass, wasp, or ant am I sharing this space with?) or put in another way, awareness of the natural ecosystem I am part of.

We want to stress here the very important fact that it is not necessary to have access or to be in wild nature (although it helps) and that you can feel the benefits of being in nature in your own home, in a city, or metropolis or in a sub-urban area.

## Nature benefits **for resilience**?

In order to enjoy the benefits of nature, it just takes a shift of awareness away from our busy day-to-day consciousness, or busy, high-rate rhythm lives, our highly cognitive strategic thinking minds, towards a more embodied, holistic way of knowing ourselves and the world. We can use what Eligio Stephen Gallegos, Ph.D. calls the Four Windows of Knowing, four natural ways, four modalities of knowing the world directly: Felling (emotions, our own and others), Sensing (the 5 to 12 senses of the human body), Imagination (deep imagination that is alive and participatory) and Thinking (heart-centered, system oriented, mythological thinking). Engaging, interacting and seeing the world through

these four modalities, offers us a way to fully participate in the world around us, and at the same time with the world inside us. It offers a way to be in connection with nature and with ourselves, in order to notice the benefits of how nature influences us day by day.

Personal and community resilience is highly influenced by this inner and outer world connection due to the fact that it allows us to feel more deeply the local ecosystem we are a part of and also our inner reality. Yet, on the more simple level, just being in nature has all the benefits described above, supporting our well-being and recovery from adversity and engagement with life.

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### Further Reading:

1. Last child in the woods, Richard Louv, <https://www.childrenandnature.org/about/>
2. *Animals of the Four Windows: Integrating Thinking, Sensing, Feeling and Imagery*, E. S. Gallegos Ph.D., [www.esgallegos.com](http://www.esgallegos.com)

# Session Planning

## Title: Nature Benefits

**Timing:** 190 minutes

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Learn activities and practices to be in connection with nature and experience it's benefits

Discover the benefits that nature connection brings

Gain insight into what are possible benefits of spending time in nature and being in a constant connection with it

Raise a positive attitude towards spending time in nature and feeling the connection with nature

## Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

- 1. Introduction and connection (10 min)**  
Welcoming participants and introducing the topic and intention of the workshop after which participants connect with themselves.
- 2. Going outside (15 min)**  
Participants are invited outside to notice that we are in nature. They will have a short 5 minute walk in the surrounding area.
  - a.** Short walk  
Invite participants on a short individual walk, in silence in the surrounding area. Give them 5 minutes and ask them not to wander too far away. When 5 minutes are over, call them back by using a whistle, rattle, or a drum, to signal it's time for them to return.
  - b.** Input on 4 Windows of Knowing model
- 3. Deepening the experience of nature connection (10 min)**  
Focus the participants' awareness of their thoughts, emotions, senses, and imagination while being in nature.
- 4. Break (10 min)**
- 5. Nature Journey (65 min)**  
Participants are invited to make a conscious intentional effort to connect with nature, to an element/being of the surrounding nature. They receive invitations based on the four windows of knowing.
- 6. Sharing and Integration time (20 min)**  
Individual artwork and sharing in pairs
- 7. Brainstorm (15 min)**  
Group discussion in the form of a brainstorm on nature benefits discovered and meanwhile the facilitator creates a graphic recording-writing the answers in a beautiful manner on a flipchart or pieces of paper of the results of the brainstorm and after that presenting them to the participants at the end. This is a good graphical way to emphasize the experiences and insights of the workshop.
- 8. Debriefing (20 min)**
- 9. Closing (5 min)**  
Setting of the room, participants distribution: The main activity is a Nature Journey, outside in a park, forest, any natural wild or semi-wild setting, where a walkabout can be done. It can start indoors, and then you can go outside, but it is best if the workshop starts outside in order not to waste a lot of time. The journey is meant to facilitate nature connection in a gradual manner. All participants must have a timepiece, a watch, a phone.



# Instructions to participants

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## 1. Introduction and connection (10 min)

Welcome all, we are here to discover together what nature connection brings to our lives, how it influences our well-being and how it can make us more resilient. Through this journey we aim to simply yet profoundly connect with nature and to discover what are the benefits of this connection.

Let's begin by having a moment of self-awareness, focusing on our breath, noticing the inward breath..the outward breath... just notice you inhale and exhale... and slowly, with your eyes closed, imagine yourself in a moment today, anytime before the workshop started... allow yourself to come to that moment.. with your full being. Open your imagination, your emotions, your senses, your thinking..and just be in this moment... what is around you? What do you notice?... Are there other people around or are you alone?... What do you feel?... What emotions are present in you? ... What do you notice through your eyes, ears, smell, touch, taste?... What thoughts are going through your mind? ... What images, metaphors, shapes go through your imagination?...

## 2. Going outside (25 min)

### a. Short walk

You are invited to have a mindful walk in this area, for the next 5 minutes. This is an individual activity, so no speaking or interacting with each other in any way. Walk very slowly, and open all four windows of knowing: Thinking, Feeling, Sensing and Imagination. While walking, notice what emotions or states arise in you, what comes to your senses, what deep thoughts or stories arise, what images, symbols or metaphors appear to you mind's eye. Make sure you do not wander too far, because I will give you a signal (demonstrate twice with the instrument) when you should come back and you need to be able to hear it.

(After 5 minutes signal the return, make a standing circle, ask a question: How was it?)

### b. Input on 4 Windows of Knowing model

The author and eco-psychologists Stephen Eligio Gallegos described four modes through which we, as humans, understand and gain knowledge about the world and ourselves: thinking, sensing, feeling and imagery. These four modes of knowing are equal as value and power in our being. And each one offers a different perspective on our outer and inner world, together creating a whole picture. It is the way we are naturally built to engage the world.

## 3. Deepening the experience of nature connection (10 min)

Now I invite you again to go and be by yourself in silence in nature and this time you will have ten minutes to visit a few places. Don't think too much about it, just intuitively go in two - three different places and be there for a few minutes, and open all your windows. Allow yourself to know this place in a holistic way, through at least two modes of knowing at a time. For example, you can focus on your senses (what you see, hear, smell, taste, touch) and at the same time notice what feelings/emotions come to you, arise in you. Or you could notice what thoughts you have going around in your head, what stories are you telling yourself about this place, what deep thoughts come to you and at the same time notice what images, verses, metaphors, symbols, visions, dreams, memories, come to you. Or you could focus on your thoughts and senses.... you get the idea. At least two if not all four modes of knowing in all places you visit. Make sure you visit at least two different places. Again, don't go too far, so you can hear the return signal. You have ten minutes for this; any questions?

( after 10 min, signal the return, make a standing circle, ask a question: How was it?)

## 4. Break (10 min)

- 5. Nature Journey (65 min – 15 min instruction and 45 min nature wander):**  
Next, you will have a bit more time to be in nature, in the presence of an element, a being, or a place in nature. What could that be? Well, for starters, everything around us is alive, animate, has a presence, and we can even, with a conscious effort, be in conversation with it. So you will be invited to find a being in nature, to be in its presence, observe, or engage in a conversation with it. It can be a rock, a tree, a blade of grass, the earth, the wind, water, a bug or the clouds. Just any nature being or element will do.

I will give you in a moment specific invitations, things you can do with this other and you are invited to connect/engage to the level where you feel a bit uncomfortable, but to reach this point where you feel a bit uncomfortable, don't stay in the comfortable space.

So here are the invitations! You can write them down or not, and you can do all of them or just choose one or two. When I finish giving the invitations, you are invited to start the wander directly, without talking to each other:

- Find a place, a being or an element in nature, or let yourself be found by one. Open all your windows of knowing and see what comes through each one
- What story is in your deep thoughts in the presence of this other? Or what story are you telling yourself about this other being? About yourself being with it? (Thinking)
- Write the personal story of this being. (Thinking)
- Observe the being through all your senses: touch, hearing, smell, taste, seeing, temperature. (Sensing)
- Feel what emotions arise in you by being in the presence of this element and communicate them to it (out loud or by journaling), or just be present with these emotions. (Feeling)
- Observe any images, metaphors, symbols, memories or anything else from your deep imagination that may arise. (Deep Imagination)
- Draw, sketch, clay or make a poem inspired by this element. (Deep Imagination)

For this wander you have 45 minutes. Start your timer now and make sure you give yourself enough time to return here. We meet back here at exactly (specify the time by counting 45 min from now). I remind you that this is an individual activity, please respect each other's process and do not interact in any way with each other until we meet back here.

- 6. Sharing and Integration time (20 min)**  
Take a piece of paper and draw a river timeline of your personal experience in the journey OR make a symbolic object with clay that represents it. (10 min)

(When they have three more minutes let them know)

Allright, now allow yourself to come to an end, and if you feel to continue, you will always have time for that later.

Now, choose a partner and share on how was this experience for you and what you discovered through the artwork. (10 min)

- 7. Brainstorm (15 min)**  
Allright, so let us put together what we discovered about the benefits of being in nature. I would like for us to have a brainstorm, to reap the fruits of our collective experiences and make a recording of it.

So let's create a storm here, of emotions, thoughts, images, metaphors and senses and create something wonderful together.

We will have a question that we all answer and you are invited to give as many answers as possible. Anything goes; any idea, all that comes to you. And I will write them all down  
The question is: "What are the benefits of being connected to nature?"

- 8. Debriefing (20 min)**

- 9. Closing (5 min):**  
To close this activity I invite you to share one word, or a phrase or metaphor that describes this experience for you. Starts who feels ready and we will go in a clockwise direction.

### Debriefing questions:

- What did we do in this workshop/activity?
- How did you feel throughout this activity?
- What were the main/strongest emotions you felt through this experience?
- What did you discover about the benefits of Nature?
- What surprised you about what Nature can bring to your experience?
- What did you learn about the positive aspects of spending time in nature?
- How can you engage in more beneficial nature encounters in the future?
- What can you do in your daily life to be more connected with Nature?
- What do you take from this experience?

### Materials:

1 or two spare watches if possible  
Flipchart paper and a few markers  
Drum or rattle, or loud whistle  
A4 papers, crayons, pastels, wax crayons  
Pens  
Modelling clay or playdough

### Tips and tricks:

The ideas that result from the brainstorming can be made into a simple PDF Leaflet that is sent to the participants after the workshop.

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# ○ Connection with Nature

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## What do we understand by **connection with nature**?

Connection with nature, as understood in this handbook is the step, the movement toward discovering that we are nature. We are part of a larger ecosystem. We are embedded and intimately linked in a greater web of life, one in which we have a multitude of connections.

There is an urban myth, or maybe a cultural shadow or a blindspot that sounds like this: “You are independent. You are alone and solely responsible for your life circumstances”. This myth is one that is debunked when we turn our attention towards nature, toward the living beings, the others that inhabit the same ecosystem as we do.

We are in constant interaction with all that is around us; be it trees that supply our oxygen, water that quenches our thirst, crows that eat from our trash or trees, worms that compost our food, mushrooms that break down carbon into sugars, vegetables and fruit that feed our bellies, clouds that bring rain, and so on.

Nature connection is the simple, yet profound action of paying attention to and recognizing that the other beings in our environment are alive and sentient and that we are interdependent.

## How do we develop a connection **with nature**?

In our modern cultures, nature connection can be developed through different practices that are meant to help us remember this connection, to learn again how to tune in to nature and its speech. Some of these practices are: mindful walks in nature, solo or groups activities in natural settings, conversations across species boundaries, nature immersions and many others you can find in the resources mentioned at the end of the chapter.

In our westernized cultures the ability to be in dialogue with nature is one that not only has been removed from education but also is actively discouraged in most aspects of life.

As stated before, the first step is to acknowledge that everything is alive and sentient, and then to make the leap to connect with these others (tree, bush, ant, cloud, etc.) and then to listen holistically (through our senses, emotions, imagination and

deep thinking) to what they have to say.

We could say that nature connection develops just like any other significant relationship. It requires curiosity, time, effort, energy, interest and willingness to learn and change through this relationship.

In contrast, in nature-based indigenous cultures, this connection develops through the acts of living because these cultures are deeply embedded in their natural settings, and their connection is not severed through technology or mandatory education.

In a world in which the climate crisis is one of the most urgent and significant challenges that our society faces, we are invited to remember and relearn how to be in direct contact with the other living beings in our ecosystems. In this way, we can do our unique part in maintaining this wonderful world on which we depend.

## **Nature connection** and resilience

A person who is connected with nature finds in it an important ally. Nature mirrors back to us important issues we need to look at in our lives. At the same time it provides us with unconditional support, full compassion, and is always there to listen to us and soothe our pains and struggles.

When in contact with nature we discover hidden or forgotten inner resources, we heal emotionally,

mentally and physically, and most people that spend time in nature tend to discover that they are indeed part of something greater than themselves, feeling a sense of belonging that can be found only in our true home.

All the aforementioned benefits add up to a more resilient, fully alive human, one that is part of a resilient, animate and thriving ecosystem.

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### **Further Reading:**

1. Last child in the woods, Richard Louv, <https://www.childrenandnature.org/about/>
2. *Animals of the Four Windows: Integrating Thinking, Sensing, Feeling and Imagery*, E. S. Gallegos Ph.D., [www.esgallegos.com](http://www.esgallegos.com)
3. Bill Plotkin, *Nature and the Human Soul: Cultivating Wholeness and Community in a Fragmented World* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2008)

# Session Planning

## Title: Nature within and without

**Timing:** 180 minutes

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Develop simple accessible ways (tools, practices) of being in connection with nature

Discover the inherent connection with nature all human beings have

Raise a positive attitude towards spending time in nature and feeling the connection with nature

Raise motivation and worth of being aware of one's connection with nature

## Methodology **step by step**

### Timing for each step

- 1. Introduction and connection (10 min)**  
Welcoming participants and introducing the topic and intention of the workshop after which participants connect with themselves.
- 2. Short group discussion on the topic of nature connection with input from facilitator (20 min)**  
Facilitator guides a discussion about what Nature connection means to the participants for 5-10 minutes after which you introduce the input. you follow with readin the poem(story): Nalungiaq found in the resources. Read it twice and then ask participants the questions below, all at once and take a few answers(be patient, it may be a bit difficult at first for them to share).
- 3. Connection with Nature (25 min)**  
Individual activity in nature followed by sharing in the whole circle.
- 4. Solo nature encounter (75 min)**  
Participants receive invitations and instructions and then they have some time to spend alone in nature.
- 5. Sharing and Integration time (20 min)**
  - a. Journaling (10 min)
  - b. Sharing in pairs (10 min)
- 6. Debriefing (25 min)**
- 7. Closing (5 min)**  
Setting of the room, participants distribution and logistics: Participants work in pairs, individually, and then in the whole group, the most common shape/distribution pattern is a circle (either with chairs or pillows on the ground).  
The main activity is a Nature Journey, outside in a park, forest, any natural wild or semi-wild setting, where a walkabout can be done.  
All participants must have a watch, or a phone on airplane mode and a personal journal.

# Instructions to participants

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## 1. Introduction and connection (10 min)

Welcome all, we are here to discover together what nature connection brings to our lives, how to deeply and directly connect with nature and to experience how it influences our resilience in day to day life.

We will discover in this workshop how we can connect with the other beings that are around us, in nature, and what that connection can bring to our lives.

So let us start by first connecting to ourselves, and for this I invite you to close your eyes for a few moments.

And as you do that, start to notice your breathing...the air coming in...the air going out...just notice...notice every inhale...every exhale...there is nowhere you have to be, and nothing else you have to do...and if any thoughts come in...just let them go, knowing that if they are important they will return later...an notice the sounds around, the light coming through your eyelids, the temperature around you, your body posture, your own temperature, your heartbeat...and accept all these as your current reality. And as you sense these, allow yourself to fully come here, in this experience...leave behind your tasks and worries, the city from which you came and your daily routine and just allow your whole being to arrive in this place, in this experience.

## 2. Short group discussion on the topic of nature connection with input from facilitator (20 min)

What comes to you when you hear Nature connection? How do you connect with Nature?

This workshop is based on a animistic/naturalistic premise that all that is around us is alive, and we as humans are animals, are part of a greater ecosystem comprised of many innumerable beings: trees, bushes, insects, birds, animals, fungi, rivers, lakes, clouds, and so on. Everything in nature is alive, and we are naturally inclined to be in connection, communication and part of this greater web of life.

(Read poem/story Naqguliaq)

What stayed in you hearing this? What resonated in you? What part of the story stayed in you?

## 3. Connection with Nature (25 min)

So in the next few minutes, I invite you to an individual activity, this means that is done without interacting with each other, or engaging in conversation.

Go and find a place, to be in nature, with nature. Just find a place. And observe it. See if there are any beings that attract your attention there. And being in this place, you can say hello, to the place, or to a being in this place. And you can add why you are there.

And after that, just observe. Open your feelings, thinking, senses and imagination and just observe what is happening around you and inside yourself.

Don't go too far because you need to be back here in 15 min. Set a timer or an alarm to know when you need to get back.

(After they return, have a short 5 min time for group sharing)

How was it? Would anyone like to share his or her experience?

## 4. Solo nature encounter (75 min)

What will happen next is that you will have a bit more time to be in nature. This is an individual activity, from the moment we finish with the instructions, until we return to the group and I initiate the group discussion.

You will have individual, solo time in nature, in the presence of an element, a being, or a place in nature.

So you will be invited to find a being in nature to be in its presence, observe, or engage in a conversation with it. It can be a rock, a tree, a blade of grass, the earth, the wind, water, a bug or the clouds, an animal, a bird. Just any nature being or element will do.

*In a moment I will give you specific invitations, things you can do with this natural element. You are invited to connect/engage to the level where you feel a bit uncomfortable, and try to reach this point where you feel a bit uncomfortable, don't stay in the comfortable space.*

*So here are the invitations; you can write them down or not, and you can do all of them or just choose one or two. When I finish giving you the invitations, you are invited to start the wander directly, without talking to each other:*

- *Find a place, a being or an element in nature, or let yourself be found by one. "Notice what comes to you through your senses, through your mind, through your emotions or imagination and see what comes through each one.*
- *What story is in your deep thoughts in the presence of this other? Or what story are you telling yourself about this other being? About yourself being with it?*
- *Observe the being through all your senses: touch, hearing, smell, taste, seeing, temperature*
- *Speak to the being out loud or by writing in a journal, share with it your needs and desires, your longings or you can share what you see or observe about it*
- *Embody the element, move as it does, or take a stance similar to it, follow it's flow*
- *Touch or feel this element with your hands, skin, nose, body*
- *Draw, clay or make a poem inspired by this element*
- *Write the story of this being*
- *Feel what emotions arise in you by being in the presence of this element and communicate them to it (out loud or by journaling), or just be present with these emotions*
- *Observe any images, metaphors, symbols, memories or anything else from your deep imagination that may arise*
- *While you are with this being, you can also write a letter, from a compassionate stance, like you would write for a good friend that you are offering support. You can write this letter to the being, or to yourself, to a friend*
- *Be curious, ask the being if it would like to share, to show you or teach you something.*

*For this wander you have 60 minutes. Start your timer now and make sure you give yourself enough time to return here. We meet back here at exactly (specify the time by counting 60 min from now). I remind you that this is an individual activity, please respect each other's process and do not interact until we meet back here.*

## **5. Sharing and Integration time (20 min)**

### **a. Journaling**

*I invite you to take your Journals and turn a new blank page. What we will do is that in the next 10 minutes you will be writing in your journals in a free-writing style, that is, once you start writing, you keep going and you do not stop until the time ends. Even if you have nothing to write, you just write "I have nothing to write" or "this exercise is stupid"...you get the idea. And you keep writing until I tell you the time is done.*

*Allright, now allow yourself to come to an end, and if you feel to continue, you will always have time for that later.*

### **b. Sharing in pairs**

*Now, choose a partner and share how this experience was for you and what you discovered through the wander. You will have 10 minutes for this, so five minutes each, so go to the essence of the story. I will signal when you are at half time and need to switch.*

## **6. Debriefing (25 min)**

### **7. Closing (5 min)**

*As a closing, I invite everyone to share one word or metaphor that describes this experience for you. Whoever feels ready can start and then we go in a circle.*

**Debriefing questions:**

- What did we do in this workshop/activity?
- How did you feel throughout this activity?
- What were the main/strongest emotions you felt through this experience?
- What did you discover about how you interact with other nature beings?
- What did you discover about how you connect with nature?
- What can you do in your daily life to be more connected with Nature?
- What do you take from this experience?

**Materials:**

1 or two spare watches if possible  
Flipchart paper and a few markers  
Drum, rattle, or loud whistle  
A4 papers and pens  
Poem handout printed

**Tips and tricks:**

Important note: For this activity, it is best if the Nature Benefits activity has already been done with the same group. It is not necessary, yet it will provide a more in-depth experience.

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# Facilitator handout

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## Nalungiaq (Inuit story)

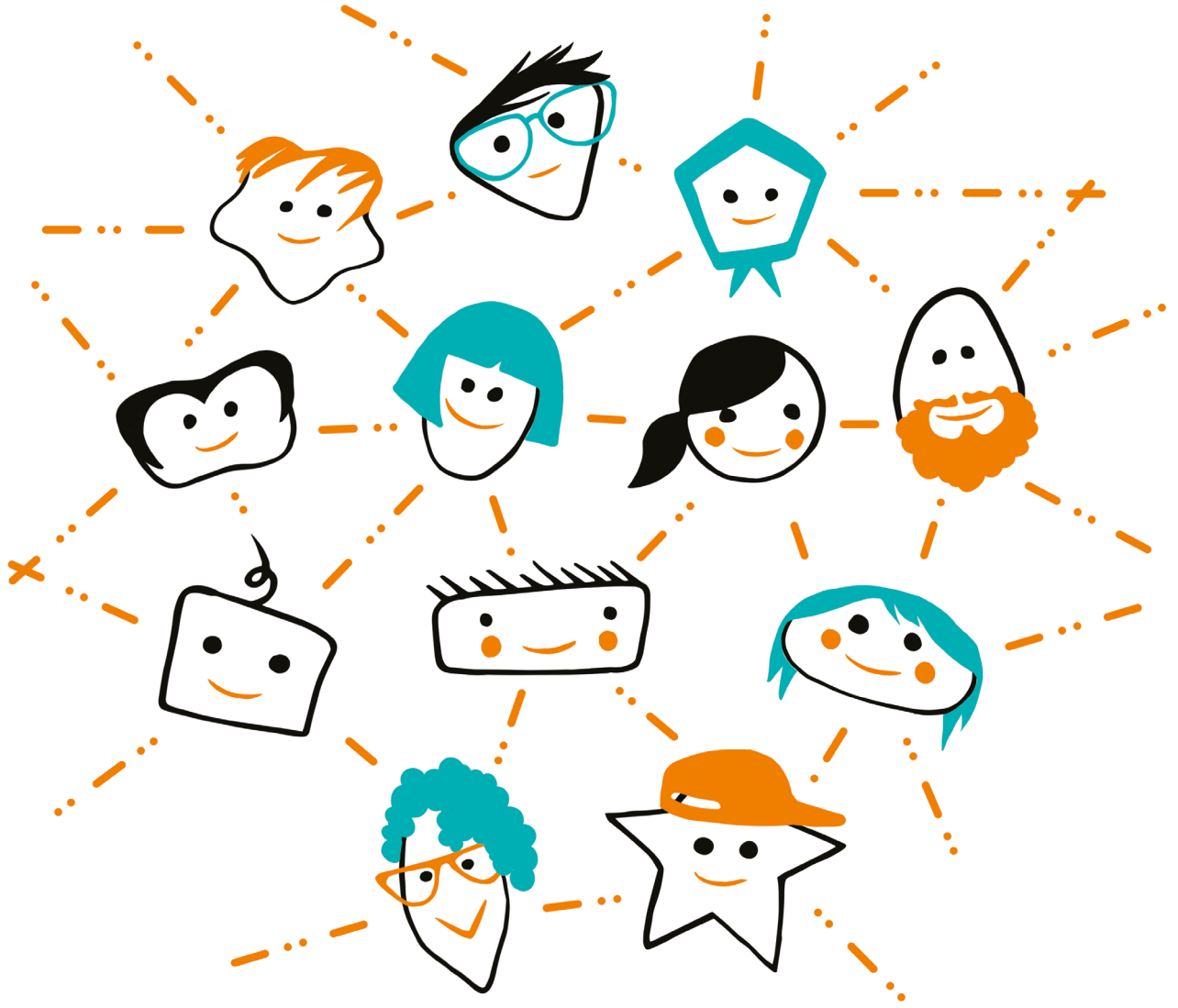
In the very earliest time,  
when both people and animals lived on earth,  
a person could become an animal if he wanted to  
and an animal could become a human being.  
Sometimes they were people  
and sometimes animals  
and there was no difference.  
All spoke the same language.  
That was the time when words were like magic.  
The human mind had mysterious powers.  
A word spoken by chance  
might have strange consequences.  
It would suddenly come alive  
and what people wanted to happen could happen—  
all you had to do was say it.  
Nobody can explain this:  
That's the way it was.



Chapter

# 07

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# Social Relationship

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# Social **relationships**

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One cannot speak of emotional resilience without acknowledging the tremendous importance that social relationships have in building it. As humans, we are social creatures, who seek connections in order to survive physically and emotionally. No matter how independent and self-sufficient we might think we are, all of us rely to a certain extent on a network of people around us with whom we are in different relationships: family members, friends, work colleagues, romantic partners, hobby buddies etc.

Social relationships in one's life usually range from more distant ones, to very close ones. While the greatest benefits come from the closest and most intimate relations we have, it has been shown that even casual connections can contribute to a person's sense of self and wellbeing. However, focusing on the quality of the social connections that one has proved to be more beneficial than focusing on their number.

## What makes a **good relationship**?

The definition of a good relationship can be unique to every person, depending on their priorities in life, values and interests. However, some criteria tend to be common to most people, because we all share some basic needs that can only be fulfilled in relation to other persons. Usually, what we all look for in a good relationship is to feel accepted, respected and supported.

Relationships that could change the course of one's life may begin easy, with having enjoyable conversation over a cup of coffee, or playing a board game together. It is their development and maintenance over time, for

good and for worse, that require sustained attention and effort. It needs an investment of time and presence, being vulnerable and risking to feel uncomfortable or hurt, listening actively, being open to negotiate and balance needs.

In order to have good social relationships, there are many personal factors that one can intervene upon, many abilities that can be developed or knowledge that can be used, but in this handbook we will focus on just the following, which we consider part of the "essential pack": empathy, compassion, vulnerability, trust and love.

## Why are social **relationships important** for resilience?

Relationships are a source of practical, informational and very importantly, emotional support. Our most meaningful relationships protect us against loneliness, depression, anxiety and they strengthen our immune system. They increase our life expectancy, our sense of purpose and hope and our overall capacity to enjoy life and be happy.

A very famous Harvard study on happiness, in which participants were monitored over a period of almost 80 years, revealed that close relationships, more than money or fame, keep people happy throughout their lives. Those ties protect people from life's discontents, help to delay mental and physical decline, and are better predictors of long and happy lives than social class, IQ, or even genes.

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### References:

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/04/over-nearly-80-years-harvard-study-has-been-showing-how-to-live-a-healthy-and-happy-life/>

# Compassion

## What is **compassion**?

Empathy refers to connecting with different kinds of feelings, both comfortable and uncomfortable, and to be able to see the world from another's perspective. Compassion is more related to suffering, and feelings we could call uncomfortable. It can be said that compassion includes empathy with the added motivation to relieve the suffering or distress that someone else is going through. While empathy involves taking on the negative emotions of others, compassion invites feelings of love and warmth

toward others, preventing the desire to abandon those who are suffering.

Pity refers more to feeling concern for someone thought to be inferior or weaker than oneself and is by definition rooted in a hierarchical sense of superiority over someone else. Compassion, on the other hand, does not consider the object of suffering to be weak or inferior in any way. Instead, it encourages a broader vision through common experiences.

## The benefits of **compassion**

Studies have shown that being compassionate can improve our health, well-being and relationships. Being compassionate makes us feel good and can increase our overall happiness. It lowers blood pressure and strengthens our immune response. Furthermore, practicing compassion towards others may help us to be more open to our own uncomfortable emotions, and therefore be more compassionate and accepting of ourselves. When we feel compassion the focus goes to someone else which can often lead to us getting some distance to our own problems and even seeing them from a different perspective. Compassion helps us

to deeply connect with one another, and therefore it has the ability to strengthen all kinds of relationships, whether between partners, coworkers, friends, or in a parent's relationship to their child.

Because compassion makes us connect with other people it also plays a key role in forming communities and societies. Compassionate communities make for connected communities where all its members are viewed as equally human and everyone is cared for. In this way compassionate social connectedness results in a positive feedback loop of social, emotional, and physical well-being.

## How to cultivate **compassion**?

The good news is that compassionate feelings are human and instinctive. We don't have to study compassion for years to master it and it can be advanced rapidly through practise. We all have it within us. A common type of compassion training is through meditation in which one fosters feelings of generosity and kindness towards a person they feel close to, themselves, a

neutral person, an enemy or to all of humanity. At each stage, the person is wished love, kindness and freedom from suffering. It is true for compassion that practise makes perfect. Other ways of cultivating it can be putting a face on suffering when we read the news, to imagine what other peoples' lives have been like and to practise compassionate manner in our daily life.

## Why is **compassion relevant** for emotional resilience?

Compassion can enhance both individual, communal and societal resilience. Compassion is a booster for our physical and mental health on an individual scale. And because compassion makes us feel connected to each other it can in-

crease collaboration among groups, teams, families, partners and communities. These deep connections can be viewed as resources that can be activated when we need them, whether in close relationships, communities or society as a whole.

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### Resources:

<https://positivepsychology.com/compassion-meditation/>  
<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/the-compassionate-mind>  
<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/compassion/definition#what-is-compassion>  
<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/compassion/definition#why-practice-compassion>

# Session Planning

## Title: **Compassion**

**Timing:** 90 min

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Knowledge about what compassion is, how it manifests and why it is beneficial  
Understand in which way one is compassionate  
Develop the ability to manifest compassion to others

### Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

- 1. Introduction about compassion (5 min)**
- 2. Short compassion meditation for a loved one (10 min)**
- 3. Small groups discussions (10 min)**  
Divide the participants into groups of 3-4
- 4. Big group discussion (15 min)**  
You can use the handbook chapter about compassion to guide this discussion.
- 5. Meditation for neutral person (10 min)**  
**Discussion in pairs (20 min)**  
Asks the following questions, every four minutes: Share a disappointment that you had. Speak about something that you are afraid of and how it affects you. Speak about a loss that you experienced in your life. Share a recent struggle. Remind participants to only focus on the inner feeling of being with and to not worry about how this is expressed.
- 7. Debriefing (15 min)**  
Setting of the room, participants distribution: Participants work in small groups, individually, and then in the whole group, the most common shape/distribution pattern is a circle.

### Instructions to participants

- 1. Introduction about compassion (5 min)**  
Today we are going to learn about compassion, what it means, why we need it and how it can be cultivated. Compassion is the feeling you have when you are confronted with another's suffering and the motivation to relieve that suffering. It is important to differentiate between compassion and some other concepts that it is usually mistaken with: empathy, pity and altruism. Empathy refers only to the capacity to take the other one's perspective and feel their feelings. Compassion basically includes empathy, but is mostly related to suffering and it has the extra element of wanting to relieve that suffering. Altruism refers strictly to doing things for others, in a selfless way.  
Another important distinction is to be made between pity and compassion. Pity refers more to feeling concern for someone thought to be inferior or weaker than oneself and is by definition rooted in a hierarchical sense of superiority over someone else. Compassion, on the other hand, does not consider the object of suffering to be weak or inferior in any way. Instead, it encourages a broader vision through common experiences.

## 2. Short compassion meditation (10 min)

The best way to learn about compassion and to expend it is to experience it. That is why we are going to dedicate time to a short meditation exercise. The term Compassion meditation is sometimes used interchangeably with Loving-Kindness Meditation, which helps to develop the mental habit of selfless or altruistic love, encouraging the meditator to understand and accept themselves and others. Whereas Compassion Meditation aims to alleviate suffering, the objective of Loving-Kindness Meditation is to send out unconditional, inclusive love.

I will guide you through it:

(Chooses which of the two types of meditation is best suitable for the group. Scripts are attached for both.)

## 3. Small groups discussions (10 min)

Within these groups, discuss the experience of meditation, based on the following questions: What did you notice in the meditation, how did it feel? How do you manifest compassion?

## 4. Big group discussion (15 min)

Now I invite you to gather in the big group again, as we are going to have a discussion about the benefits of compassion. Why do we need compassion in our lives? How does it help me to be compassionate with others? How does it benefit the society as a whole if its members show compassion to each other?

## 5. Meditation for neutral person (10 min)

Coming back to ourselves, we will repeat the meditation exercise, this time having in mind a neutral person, a stranger. I will again guide you through the steps of the meditation:

(If Loving Kindness meditation is used, use the same script as before, this time using the note about dedicating the meditation to a neutral person. If Compassion meditation is chosen, in this part of the session, guides once again ).

## 6. Discussion in pairs (20 min)

Try to hold on to that feeling of compassion that you have been experiencing in this exercise, to the loving kindness that you felt for another person. Now I invite you to make pairs and with the person in front of you will share their answers to some questions I will give to you. There will be four questions and each of you will answer two of them, alternatively. So, one of you answers the first and the third question and the other answers the second and the fourth. You have 4 minutes for each question. While one of you is sharing, the other one is quiet and only has to focus on being with. It's up to you if in the end of the other one's sharing, you want to express the being with non-verbally, you are not required to do so.

## 7. Debriefing (15 min)

### Debriefing questions:

- How did you manifest compassion when listening to the other? How did you feel the compassion that others manifested towards you?
- Did you manage to stay focused in the mediation?
- What did compassion feel like? What bodily sensations accompanied it?
- How was it to meditate compassionately for a stranger? How was it different from meditation for a loved one?
- Did you have any difficulty feeling compassion? If yes, what do you think might have caused it?
- Have you learned anything that can make you more compassionate?

### Materials:

### Handouts:

1. Loving-kindness meditation script
2. Compassion meditation script.

### Tips and tricks:

min/max pax		4		20
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# Tonglen **Compassion meditation** script handout

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- 1.** Find a comfortable position and begin to follow your breath and quiet the mind. After a few minutes or once you are relaxed, you can bring to mind a friend or loved one whom you know is experiencing emotional discomfort or suffering.  
*Note for facilitator: for the second meditation in the session, the meditator is instructed to think about a stranger they encountered, for example a person they see in the bus on their way to work, or the cashier from the grocery store.*  
Imagine that he or she is standing in front of you, and visualize their suffering as a dark, heavy cloud surrounding him or her.
- 2.** Move your awareness to your heart area and breathe in deeply, imagining yourself inhaling those dark, heavy, uncomfortable, cloudy feelings, directly into your heart. As you breathe out from the heart area, imagine that your heart is a source of bright, warm, compassionate light, and you are breathing that light into the person who is suffering. Imagine that the dark feelings are disappearing without a trace into the light of your heart; the dark clouds transforming into a bright, warm light at the center of your heart, alleviating his or her suffering.  
Silence -1 min
- 3.** Next, try extending your compassion out to a stranger or general population that may be experiencing dark, heavy feelings at this moment. As you did for your loved one, imagine inhaling these cloudy, dark feelings away from those people into your own heart. As the dark feelings settle into your heart, imagine that they are disappearing without a trace into the light of your compassionate heart. You can imagine this person or people being enveloped by the calm and comforting light that you are breathing out from your heart.  
Silence- 1 min
- 4.** Continue the above process of sending and receiving, but this time extend your compassion out to someone you find difficult to associate with. Tonglen can extend infinitely, and the more you practice, the more your compassion will expand naturally. You might be surprised to find that you are more tolerant and able to be there for people even in situations where it used to seem impossible.  
Silence -1min

## **Loving kindness** meditation handout

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- Choose a comfortable place with minimum distractions where you can practice this meditation.
- With eyes closed, back straight, and the mind aligned to the present, think of someone you love

Note for facilitator: for the second meditation in the session, the meditator is instructed to think about a stranger they encountered, for example a person they see in the bus on their way to work, or the cashier from the grocery store.

- Keeping all of them in mind, repeat the following words to yourself in silence and complete awareness – ‘May you be happy,’ ‘May you be safe,’ ‘May you be healthy,’ ‘May you be at peace.’
- Take as much time as you need to repeat the words. You only have to make sure that you say them after realizing what they mean and feeling them from inside.
- Once you have finished repeating the words, end the session by saying, ‘May you and I be happy,’ ‘May you and I be safe,’ ‘May you and I be healthy,’ ‘May you and I be at peace.’

# Empathy

## What is empathy?

Empathy is the ability to step into the shoes of another person, to understand how it might be like to be them and feel their feelings. Empathy has a cognitive dimension and an emotional one.

**Cognitive empathy**, also known as mentalizing or perspective-taking, involves consciously adopting another's perspective and trying to understand how they are feeling or thinking, taking into consideration their background, personality, life experiences, their circumstances. An important distinction to be made is between self-oriented perspective-taking and "other-oriented perspective-taking." Other-oriented means that I imagine I am you in your situation, not me in your situation.

**Emotional empathy** is the capacity to resonate with the other's feelings. That means feeling what the other person is feeling, not just an emotional reaction to their feeling. There is a difference between being sad for and being sad with, only the second one being a manifestation of empathy.

Experiencing the full array of empathy includes sharing feelings while knowing that they belong to the other person; imagining what the experience of the other person is without imposing our own interpretations; not becoming overwhelmed while experiencing those feelings; taking in the context of other people's lives and doing all this in a matter of seconds or maybe minutes. All this appears to be an enormous task, but while empathy is indeed a complex mental process, it is important to remember that our minds are wired for it.

## What makes people empathic?

Researchers have found that people who are highly empathic have some common traits and habits. Highly empathic people manifest in empathy and make the empathic attitude a part of their daily lives. They are open and curious both towards people that they know and to strangers. They find other people more interesting than themselves but are not out to interrogate them. Empathic people like to discover and research commonalities and differences but always with an attitude of openness, kindness and curiosity. They try to challenge prejudices and not judge others.

Empathic people often try to expand their empathy by gaining direct experience of other people's lives. This can involve feeling empathy for both real people and imaginary characters. Experiencing empathy for fictional characters requires using your imagination and allows people to have a range of emotional experiences that might otherwise be impossible.

They are often very good conversationalists and are good at radical listening. They are fully present and listen to what's really going on within the unique feelings and needs a person is experiencing at that very moment. But listening is never enough. The second ingredient is making ourselves vulnerable. Removing our masks and revealing our feelings to someone is vital for creating a strong empathic bond. Empathy is a two-way street that, at its best, is built upon mutual understanding—an exchange of our most important beliefs and experiences.

## How to deal with empathic distress

When we strongly empathize with a person who suffers, we are prone to also experience empathic distress, when our own emotions are blending with the other one's and become indistinguishable from them or when we totally identify with the other one's emotions. Empathic distress can leave us trapped in our suffering and often it is accompanied by the desire to withdraw from a situation in order to protect oneself from excessive negative feelings, rather than being concerned about helping the other.

Feeling the other one's feelings also requires being aware that you are distinct and different from the suffering person near you. Many of us may not have had the chance to learn this over the course of our lives, but this too is a capacity that we can develop in ourselves and there are a few things we can do in this regard:

**1. Check in with yourself**

When feeling overwhelmed by the negative emotions of another, it's worth pausing, taking a breath, and asking yourself exactly what you are feeling. What do you need right now? When and how might you respond to the person next to you?

**2. Question your thoughts and feelings**

If you are empathizing with someone feeling negative emotions, you can ask yourself a series of questions, whether in that moment or later in the day:

- What is the situation that triggered me?
- What am I thinking or imagining?
- What does this thought make me feel?
- What makes me think the thought is true or accurate?
- What makes me think the thought is not true or, at least, not completely true?
- Is there another way to look at this? If so, what is it?
- Is there an action I might choose to take right now?

By regularly questioning your thinking in a structured way, you can begin to shift your perspective, tone down distressing feelings, and ultimately respond more thoughtfully to the people around you.

**3. Practice verbalizing your feelings**

It is important to simply name your feelings, with other trusted people around you. If you can identify, name, and accept an emotion (whether out loud or in your mind), the emotion may lose some of its intensity.

**4. Cultivate compassion**

Compassion is experienced similar to empathy but it includes both concern for another's suffering along with a desire to help alleviate that suffering. Compassion training proves to be efficient in reducing empathic distress.

## Why is **empathy important** for emotional resilience?

Empathy allows people to build social connections with others and to strengthen them. It can lead to helping behavior (although not necessarily), which benefits social relationships. We are social creatures by nature, so things that support our relationships with other people benefit us as well.

This ability to see things from another person's perspective and sympathize with another's emotions plays an important role in our social lives. Social relationships are important for emotional resilience. Empathizing with others helps you learn to regulate your own emotions. Emotional regulation is important in that it allows you to manage what you are feeling, even in times of great stress, without becoming overwhelmed.

To be able to have good social connections and knowing your own emotions helps build emotional resilience.

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### References:

1. Roman Krznaric - Empathy Why It Matters, and How to Get It (2015, Perigee Books)
2. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-empathy-2795562>
3. <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu>
4. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/pulling-through/201912/turn-empathy-compassion-without-the-empathic-distress?fbclid=IwAR2V45Xk5l4U5kqQhSva81kOzjJMjMy2PL50W7V3ObK2yRVxXcKQ6lQtg>



# Session Planning

**Title: Through the eyes of another**

**Timing:** 90 minutes

**Aim and learning elements / session objectives:**

Develop the capacity to imagine the reality of another person

Understand your empathy style

Explore different ways to show empathy

## Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

- 1. Introduction about empathy (10 min)**
- 2. Introduction of the activity and then facilitator guides participants into making pairs (3 min)**
- 3. Draw character handouts and individual preparations of the character (7 min)**

The participants will receive a character description (found in handouts) which they will embody in the next part. They will have some time to assimilate the information and imagine being in the role received.
- 4. Instructions for conversation and present the situation (5 min)**

The facilitator chooses one of the following situations and reads it to the participants, after which they will go in their pairs and spend the next hours sharing with different instructions:

  - a. You are in the waiting area of the airport, the plane you had to take was delayed and you have to wait for 7 hours. To kill time, you engage in a conversation with the person next to you.
  - b. You take a 7 hours trip with the coach/ bus and you have a conversation with the person sitting next to you.
- 5. 1st round of conversation (15 min)**

The pairs have a conversation in which they each share their life story, from the perspective of the character they drew out. In the first turn, one shares the story and the other responds emphatically, as they feel adequate. The facilitator guides the participants to think of themselves as their character and try to act in the ways in which these characters would share stories and show empathy.

When 7 minutes have passed let them know it is time to switch roles as storyteller and listener.
- 6. Individual preparation of the personal life story to be shared (10 min)**

When 15 minutes are over, the facilitator will ask participants to switch from being a character to being themselves. Participants have 7 minutes to prepare individually their personal story that they will share in round 2.
- 7. 2nd round of conversation (15 min)**

The pairs have another conversation in which they each share their life story, this time acting as themselves. The facilitator observes how the conversation is going and announces a switch of turns after 7 minutes.

The facilitator can step in if participants have severe problems with the conversation (e.g. one is taking over or there is complete silence for a long time). Otherwise, encourage participants to have the conversations as naturally as they can.
- 8. Debriefing (20 min)**

Setting of the room, participants distribution: Participants work in pairs. There must be enough space between the pairs so that they can have undisturbed conversations and it is best if each pair can be in separate rooms or areas.

# Instructions to participants

- 1. Introduction about empathy (10 min)**

Empathy is the ability to step into the shoes of another person, to understand how it might be like to be them and feel their feelings. A side of empathy is the capacity to take the perspective of others and another one is the capacity to resonate with the other one's feelings. Empathy helps us build and maintain social connections and is an ability that we can develop throughout our lives.
- 2. Introduction of the activity and then facilitator guides participants into making pairs (3 min)**

In the next activity we will explore empathy, by using curiosity and imagination. You will work in pairs in this workshop so I invite you to find a pair, someone you do not know so well, someone you are curious about.
- 3. Draw character handouts and individual preparations of the character (7 min)**

You will draw a paper containing the description of a character and you will have some time to prepare, which means reading about his/her life story and getting ready to act as them in the later phase of the activity, when you will have a conversation with your pair, as your characters. Read the description carefully and try to imagine that you are this person. Try to imagine how it is to be them, taking into consideration their background, the information you have about them and how this person could possibly think, feel and behave.
- 4. Instructions for conversation and present the situation (5 min)**

You will meet your partner in a specific situation, in which you have to spend a few hours together and you use this time to share life stories. This is the situation: (read the situation you chose from the two).

  - c.** You are in the waiting area of the airport, the plane you had to take was delayed and you have to wait for 7 hours. To kill time, you engage in a conversation with the person next to you.
  - d.** You take a 7 hours trip with the coach/ bus and you have a conversation with the person sitting next to you.
- 5. 1st round of conversation (15 min)**

You will now have 15 minutes in which you will share your life story, from the perspective of the character you drew out. Before you start, maybe you can close your eyes for a few moments and imagine you are this character, feel how this person moves, what are his/her thoughts, emotions, how do they see and feel the world. And as you set down in front of your partner, be this person, as fully as you can. I will let you know when 7 minutes have passed and it is time to switch.
- 6. Individual preparation of the personal life story to be shared (10 min)**

Now let go of the role you have, and return to yourself, to your own personal perspective. You will now have 7 minutes to prepare individually your personal story that you will share in round 2.
- 7. 2nd round of conversation (15 min)**

You will now share in pairs, your own life story. I will let you know when you are at half time so you switch roles.
- 8. Debriefing (20 min)**

## Debriefing questions:

- What did we do in this activity
- How are you feeling?
- How did you try to understand your character in the preparation phase? What helped you to impersonate the character?
- How did you feel when you shared and received empathy?
- How did you show empathy? Did you discover something about your empathy style?
- Did you learn new ways of showing empathy from the way your character expressed? If so, how can you use these new ways in your daily life?
- What can you do in your daily life to further develop your empathy?

## Materials:

Flipchart and markers  
Pens and papers

## Handouts:

Character descriptions that each pair will receive

## Tips and tricks:

min/max pax | 6 | 20

# Character handout

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## Gina

Gina is a 45 year old biologist. She works in a lab at the University of Nairobi. She likes working at the university and knows her work is very important for the scientific community but often feels underestimated because of her gender. It frustrates her.

Gina is a big thinker. When she was growing up in South Carolina she liked to read a lot and study both fossils and living animals. On hot summer days when her classmates were playing in the pool, you would find her carefully watching the behaviour of robins, squirrels and geckos. Or any other animal she found interesting. Her parents had always worked long hours so she spent a lot of time outside playing with other kids. She has five siblings and had to fight for her parents attention when they came home, tired and irritated after the long days at work. When she was a teenager she moved with her family to

Kenya. It was a very big change, as she suddenly found herself without her old friends in a foreign country, with different culture and a different language. It took a while to get used to and although she has lived and studied here ever since, except for a year in Germany, she struggles with belonging. She can feel the distance and barriers between herself and the Kenyan community.

To counteract this lingering feeling of not belonging Gina likes to socialize. She has many friends and acquaintances at the university and likes to invite people over for big dinner parties. She is confident and likes to make other people laugh. Gina has never been in a long term relationship but lately she has taken notice of the new professor in the biology department, Raymond Howell. She wants to ask him on a date but is feeling insecure, and he is also married.

## Toru Watanabe

Toru is a 21-year-old man living on his own for the first time while studying drama in college in Tokyo. He's a decent student who reads a lot, though he usually reads the same books over and over, such as *The Great Gatsby*.

For the most part, Toru keeps to himself. He lost his best friend from high school, Kizuki, when they were 17. As a result, Toru's worldview is formed by the desire to maintain a distance from other people so as not to get hurt again. As a result, Toru is never fully committed to anything: in his relationships with Naoko and Midori, he struggles with guilt and indecision as he's torn between his love for both of them. In his studies at university, he chooses to be a drama major at random and ignores the student protests around him. He takes odd jobs to make ends meet.

Toru is an only child and has a distant and respectful relation with his parents. Although he

never really had many friends, sometimes he gets really lonely. During those times, he goes out with a friend and has short affairs with girls. He ends up being in love with two girls and being very conflicted about it, but his inability to commit to either of them demonstrates that his fear of action is greater than his feelings. Toru claims that he wants to live his life with "intensity," yet finds solace only in loneliness. He is interested in learning how to be a good person but is so afraid of what it would mean to participate in his life that he often ends up failing to do what's right.

Most of the people in Toru's life would say he is a "nice guy," or even maybe a "gentleman." Toru doesn't think there is anything special about him or that he has any skills. Instead, he says he is "*just an ordinary guy, from an ordinary family, ordinary education, ordinary face, ordinary grades, ordinary thoughts in my head.*"

## Nancy

Nancy grew up in Brooklyn, N.Y., in a Roman Catholic American family. When she was 12 years old, she witnessed her father die of a heart attack.

Nancy is 23 years old. She lives in an apartment in Brooklyn with a roommate. She likes her roommate but would rather live alone. Nancy doesn't have any real close friends and is quite a private and conservative person.

Nancy is a secretary in a big ad agency. It's a demanding job and her boss expects a lot out of her. He criticizes her work and chastises her for small mistakes, but he also seems to genuinely believe she has talent beyond being a secretary. She tried to impress her boss but only in a professional way, she wants to be valued for her talents. Nancy can be quite clumsy and awkward in a funny way. Nancy really wants to be a copywriter, but in this

big firm there are no women copywriters. When she was in secretary school she got pregnant and the father was a boy that her parents didn't like, and she was forced to go away during pregnancy and had to give up her child to a family which her uncle knew. She sometimes thinks it was the right decision because she would not be working in this promising company as a single mother but other times she struggles with sorrow.

But the more Nancy cares about her work the less she cares about her family and her church. The frustrating relationship she has with her irritating sister and overbearing mother pushed her away from her family. Her work, though challenging, gives her a welcome escape from her family and her past. But she is not up for surprises or in general having fun.

# Love

## What is love?

Even though it is so present in our lives, love can be difficult to conceptualize. Here we talk about love as a deep human capacity, which can have a diversity of objects and can arise in a diversity of settings, besides just between partners in a couple. Throughout our lives, we can experience parental love, sibling love, love for or from our friends, we can even feel love towards a plant, a place, or an object we cherish and care for.

For the simplicity of speech, we will refer to people in writing this text. Feel free however to creatively adapt these ideas to whatever object you want to consider (person, plant, place, material things). In describing love, we start from the triangulated theory of love designed by Robert Stenberg and adapt it for our purposes. According to the model, love is made of three components: intimacy, passion and decision/commitment. Each of them manifests different aspects of love.

## How do we cultivate love?

We are social beings, love is part of our human nature. But sometimes, in order to love or maintain love, it takes a conscious involvement, a little effort on our part.

We can cultivate love by building on its very components. First, grow intimacy by sharing the same space, sharing experiences, thoughts, feelings, being vulnerable and authentic and offering the space for the other to do the same. Then we can allow fascination to come in by noticing the other person's presence and characteristics, paying attention and activating one's curiosity about them, showing interest, asking questions in a gentle, non-invasive way. Last but not least, we can make a decision or commitment to be there for the other person on a recurrent basis, expressing appreciation,

intimacy refers to the feeling of closeness, gives birth to the experience of warmth, creates attachment to each other and leads to the strengthening of a relationship. Passion involves feelings and desires that lead to physical attraction, romance and sexual consumption. In our use of this model as applicable to relationships beyond romantic ones, we add the nuance of fascination when we talk about passion. Fascination about the other person involves seeing the value in their presence, intense curiosity about them and their story, about both their most appealing qualities and their less appealing ones, appreciation and awe in the face of the other. Decision/commitment refers to one's determination to stay with someone, to move toward common goals. In the short term, it involves the decision for one person to love the other. In the long run, it involves a commitment to maintain that love by performing various actions.

giving compliments, gifts, offering support, caring for them, etc.

When it comes to relationships, it is helpful to pay attention to how others offer love and how they like to receive it. According to Stenberg, the most satisfying and long-lasting relationships are those in which partners constantly invest in sustaining or improving intimacy and strengthening their commitment to each other.

Expressing love can look different from person to person. For some people it can be very important to express themselves in words, for others to spend as much time as possible with the other person, to have common activities, for others to offer gifts, or to do things for the other, and for others physical closeness (eg hugging, touching) is the most relevant.

## Why is love important for resilience?

Love has a great importance for communities, as it creates the perfect environment for compassion, kindness, hope, safety, and cooperation. When we feel love towards someone, we are more willing to be kind and compassionate with them, to support them, we are better able

to see the good in people and thus feel safer, more hopeful and trusting. This has great importance for resilience, since we know that a strong, cohesive, supportive, healthy community is an essential resource in the face of adversity.

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### Reference:

1. Sternberg, Robert J. - Triangulating Love
2. Gary Chapman - The Five Love Languages

# Session Planning

## Title: **Falling in love**

**Timing:** 3 hours and 15 minutes two sessions of 1.5 hours with a 15 min break in between

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Understanding the basic mechanism of love  
Creating the premises for the feeling of love

## Methodology **step by step**

### Timing for each step

Ask the participants before the activity to prepare a song that is important for them in some way.

- 1. Introductory discussion (30 min)**  
Open discussion on defining love.  
Introduce a model of love as based on three elements: intimacy, passion/fascination, commitment. Discuss on each element, what it means and how it can be supported. Give the handout to the participants.
- 2. Falling in love with an object (1 hr)**  
Throw a few different objects on the floor and ask participants to pick one each. Choose objects as different as possible - you may think of objects connected with the 5 senses or objects used in very specific contexts (e.g. a toy, a postcard, a note with a goodbye message, a flower, a book, a piece of blank paper, a stone, a pencil, a candle, a photo, a simple random sentence, a small bag of pepper, an orange, etc.).  
Creating intimacy and fascination with the object (50 min)  
Group sharing (10 min)
- 3. Break (15 min)**
- 4. Growing love towards another person (1 hr)**  
In pairs, participants look at their partners, observe them, make eye contact. (5 min)  
Partners touch gently after ensuring consent. (5 min)  
Share a dream for the future. (10 min)  
Curiosity talk and sharing music. (30 min)  
Create a symbol of the other's universe and offer it. (10 min)
- 5. Debriefing (20 min)**
- 6. Making a plan to cultivate love in personal life (10 min)**  
The participants make a plan to repeat the process within a real relationship in their life.

# Instructions to participants

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## 1. Introductory discussion (30 min)

*Today, we will talk about love. What do you think love is? (Introduce the model of love as based on intimacy, passion/fascination, commitment and explain each element.)*  
*How can we grow intimacy with something or someone?*  
*How can we become fascinated with it or them?*  
*How do we commit?*

## 2. Falling in love with an object (1 hr)

*We can fall in love with anything: an object, an idea, a rock, a plant, an animal, a person; as long as we become intimate with it and we grow fascination. Commitment is what keeps love going.*

*(Facilitator throws a few different objects on the floor.)*

*Choose one of these objects quickly, without thinking too much.*

*Look at the object in your hand. Notice how you feel about it. In the next hour, you will spend time with this object, creating intimacy and growing fascination around it. Use the handout for ideas on how this can be done. For example, you can spend some time to closely observe the characteristics of this object, share a secret with it in order to create intimacy, and then go with your imagination to the history of this object or even search the internet to learn about it, write a poem about it, and so on. You have one hour so there are many things you can try.*

*As we are back with our object, take a moment to look at it and notice how and if your attitude towards it has changed. Let's share a bit of how this hour with the object went for us and what we did.*

## 3. Break (15 min)

## 4. Growing love towards another person (1 hr)

*Make pairs and now we will go through the same process with our partners as we did with the objects.*

*First, I invite you to look at your partner, closely observe their physical characteristics. Look into their eyes for as much as it feels comfortable. Notice if you feel something from this person's energy, or smell.*

*Now, I invite you to touch your partner if they feel comfortable with it. You can touch as little as their fingers, or a strand of hair, hold their hands, touch their face or their shoulder. But check each time if they agree before doing it. Touch can be very intimate for many people and intimacy is not always comfortable. Respecting people's boundaries is also an act of love.*

*Next, have a conversation and share about a dream you have for the future. Do this in turn, listening closely and attentively when the other person is sharing, noticing how you feel when hearing them speak, hearing their voice, their words and allowing your imagination to understand what your partner is describing. You have 10 minutes in total, so make sure to split the time in two, so that each of you gets to share.*

*Now, take a moment of silence, looking at this person in front of you. Connect with your inner curiosity and notice what is one thing that you would really want to know about this person right now. Spend the next 30 minutes exploring your curiosity about your partner, asking questions and sharing from yourself, answering their questions as well. Also within this time, share the songs you prepared from before by listening to them together, in turns and sharing the reason why you have chosen this song. You can stay here or take a walk together, but check the time and make sure you are back within 30 min.*

*Now that you have explored more of your partner's universe, take a few minutes by yourself in which you can process what you have discovered. Allow yourself to be inspired by all this and express it in one way or another. If it comes naturally, you can write a poem or draw an image or make a song or a dance to represent your curious adventure into your partner's inner world. Alternatively, you can find an object from nature or write a short text about your experience.*

*In the end, I invite you to offer the result of this to your partner, as a gift for sharing their inner world with you and also a symbol of how their universe reflects in you.*

## 5. Debriefing (20 min)

## 6. Making a plan to cultivate love in personal life (10 min)

*As we discussed in the beginning, the third important element of love is commitment – conscious actions that support love over time. I invite you to think about a person or, if not, an object or area of your life in which you want to make a commitment for love. Write it down and for the next 10 minutes, write down a plan on how you will grow intimacy and fascination, based on the process we went through in the previous activities. Try to make it as concrete as possible, adding the type and frequency of your actions and the place in which they will happen, if possible..*

### Debriefing questions:

- What did we do in this workshop so far? Let's remember what the activities were.
- How did you feel with the whole process?
- What was uncomfortable?
- What did you enjoy the most?
- What did you discover about love?
- Did you have any new insights about love?
- How will you use this in your personal life?

### Materials:

Handouts, paper, pens, pencils, watercolour paints, musical instruments, many different objects

### Handouts:

Triangular model of love (Sternberg)

**Tips and tricks:** The second part of the activity works best if you have an even number of participants for the pairs. However, if you have an odd number, you can form one group of three people and maybe extend their time.

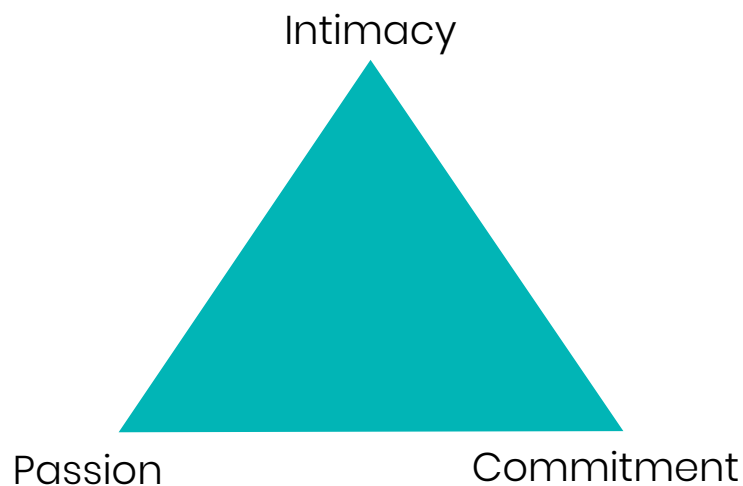
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## Triangular model of **love handout**



*Sternberg's triangular model of love says that love is found at the intersection of three components: intimacy, passion, and commitment.*

**Intimacy:** feelings of closeness, bondedness, and connectedness, which give rise to the experience of warmth in a relationship. It includes, among other things, the desire to promote the welfare of the loved one, the experienced happiness together, high regard for them, being able to count on them in times of need, mutual understanding, sharing of one's self and one's possessions with the loved one, receiving and giving emotional support, intimate communication, and valuing the loved one in one's life. It is not necessary to experience all of these feelings in order to experience love and also, the feelings are usually not experienced independently, but as one overall feeling.

**Passion:** feelings and desires that lead to physical attraction and romance. In a loving relationship, sexual needs may well predominate in this experience. However, other needs, such as those for self-esteem, nurturance, affiliation, and self-actualization, may also contribute to the experiencing of passion. In our use of this model as applicable to relationships beyond romantic ones, we add the nuance of fascination when we talk about passion. Fascination about the other person involves seeing the value in their presence, intense curiosity about them and their story, appreciation and awe in the face of the other.

**Decision/commitment :** feelings that lead a person to stay with someone and move towards common goals. In the short term, it involves the decision for one person to love the other. In the long run, it involves a commitment to maintain that love by performing various actions (e.g. sharing space with the other person, noticing their presence and characteristics, paying attention and activating one's curiosity about the other person, giving compliments, gifts, offering support, etc.)

# Trust

## What is trust?

According to APA Dictionary of Psychology trust is: “reliance on or confidence in the dependability of someone or something. In interpersonal relationships, trust refers to the confidence that a person or group of people has in the reliability of another person or group; specifically, it is the degree to which each party feels that they can depend on the other party to do what they say they will do. The key factor is not the intrinsic honesty of the other people but their predictability. Trust is considered by most psychologists to be a primary component in mature relationships with others, whether intimate, social, or therapeutic.”

Trust is also described as a complicated and unclear construct nevertheless crucial for all human relationships. Trust was in the centre of interest for philosophers, ethicists, psychologists, sociologists, artists, coaches, managers and surely some other scientists and practitioners but what is probably most important at some point by any of us, human beings.

[Miki Kashtan, Ph.D., co-founder of Bay Area Nonviolent Communication and facilitator and trainer.](#)

**Says:** “All these experiences, from both ends of trust building or loss of trust, have left me with a growing sense that trust can be an attitude toward life, quite beyond a reaction to how someone treats us. Living in trust is no guarantee that nothing painful or even dangerous would happen to us. Such guarantees simply don’t exist. Rather, it is a way of responding to life. For me, living in trust is a willingness to risk the loss, and preferring the possibility of being burnt every once in a while to the alternative of living in fear and continually attempting to check out everyone and everything, protect ourselves from all eventualities, and imagine that we can be safe.”

## Trust in others and in ourselves

When we think about trust, important is the context. Do we think of individuals or in relational aspects?

As far as we consider trust from the individual point of view it connects directly to:

- The ability of recognizing one’s emotions and treating them as a good information about our contact with the outside world.
- The capability to evaluate the situation we are in with all its complexity and the belief that our judgement, despite being subjective is valuable understanding our own reactions / predictability to oneself with awareness of our tendencies do misjudgements (e.g. I overreact when someone calls me untrustworthy, but I’m aware of it, what affects my decisions, reactions and finally emotions).

Trust in others is basic interpersonal quality, it occurs in every aspect of our social lives: business relationship, friendship, family relationship, romantic relationship and many many other (e.g. you have to trust your doctor, driving licence teacher or plumber to follow his/her advice, instructions).

## So where are the **origins of human trust** and how does it develop?

Looking for the origins of trust, we should surely remember about attachment theories. John Bowlby, the precursor in research describes attachment as a strong affective bond we feel in relations with very important people to us. It is worth noticing that the attachment is mutual in relation caregiver (most often: parent) – child and is created slowly basing on interactions caregiver – child during the beginning couple of months.

There are a number of theories describing attachment e.g. psychoanalytical, learning theory, cognitive development or etiological. To learn more, see e.g. *Developmental Psychology: Childhood and Adolescence* by David R. Schaffer and Katherine Kipp.

The pioneer in field Mary Ainsworth created the Strange Situation Procedure and described attachment in four categories: Secure, Anxious-preoccupied, Dismissive-avoidant, and Fear-

ful-avoidant. Nowadays some researchers claim that the idea of seeing attachment types as continuum is more relevant. Nevertheless they seem to agree that the early childhood attachment can be a predictor of psychological development later on.

John Bowlby and Inge Bretherton claim that the attachment is the basis of our operating models about knowledge, beliefs about ourselves, others and events. Careful responding to child needs (secure attachment) creates a child's belief that people are generally trustworthy. On the other hand, lack of care causes a child's lack of trust to others.

Erik Erikson in his theory of eight stages of psychosocial development also highlights the crucial significance of trust in early childhood. He calls the first stage (between childbirth and 18 month of age) trust vs mistrust and defines it as "the most important period in a person's life because it shapes our view of the world, as well as our personalities".<sup>2</sup>

Etiologists point out that children who are able to get the parent taking care of them feel loved and and, what's important, have trust in themselves and their abilities later on.

Very important to notice is that those so called operating models, according to Bowlby, can change, for better or for worse, depending on our life experiences.

## The importance of **trust for resilience**

People (children adolescents or adults) who trust in themselves and consider other people trustworthy, as we earlier said:

- have better relations,
- trust in their own judgments and abilities,
- see the world realistically, with its bright and dark sides but consider it rather friendly place,
- can put themselves in others shoes (mentalize) and can be empathic
- believe that other people can and want to be helpful

Such convictions surely influence positively the ability of resilience. Trusting in oneself and others among others undoubtedly enables one to adapt to a changing environment, helps to be more flexible, simplifies asking for help, makes believing in one's competencies and abilities possible, even in difficult conditions.

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### Reference:

1. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/acquired-spontaneity/201208/some-thoughts-about-trust>
2. <https://www.verywellmind.com/trust-versus-mistrust-2795741>
3. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hot-thought/201810/what-is-trust>
4. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5040920/?report=classic>
5. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6486592/?report=classic>
6. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30096516/>

# Session Planning

## Title: Trust Habitat

**Timing:** Two sessions, one 100 min and the other 45 min with a 15 min break in between

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Build a common understanding of trust in the group  
Develop the ability and interest to trust another  
Reflect on the personal meaning of trust

## Methodology step by step

### Timing for each step

Ask the participants before the activity to prepare a song that is important for them in some way.

- 1. Welcome and introduction about trust (5 min)**
- 2. Trust hunting (25 min)**

Participants are invited to find a object that symbolizes trust for them and bring it to the group. Based on the objects chose a discussion is facilitated on the trust topic and facilitator creates a flipchart with the content of the discussion. While the participants share on what trust is for them, they place the object in a simple cardboard box that symbolizes the group knowledge of Trust which they will personalize at the end of the activity.
- 3. Habitat of trust (35 min)**
  - a. Building the totem animal (15 min):**

Participants are asked to build out of clay or plasteline an animal that represents themselves. After they are finished they will present the animal, then they will give it to someone else in the group.
  - b. Building the habitat (20 min):**

The partner will create a caring, nurturing habitat for the animal they received. Then the pair comes together and shares on the process of building the habitat.
- 4. Break (15 min)**
- 5. Debriefing (30 min)**
- 6. Personalizing the trust box (15 min)**

As a group, all participants are invited to personalize the Trust box made at the beginning of the activity using art supplies
- 7. Closing (5 min)**

## Instructions to participants

- 1. Welcome and introduction about trust (5 min)**

We are here to share and discover together what is trust and how it influences our lives, our relationships and our resilience. First, I invite you to go in a circle and share what is your name and what are you bringing here to this workshop, how do you come here.

## 2. Trust hunting (25 min)

What I invite you to do in the next 10 minutes is to go outside and find a object in the surroundings that simbolizes "trust" for you. Ask permission to take it and bring it back here with you.

(After they come back facilitator has a small box and flipchart ready)

Now I invite you to take a few minutes and connect with this object and the idea of trust. Looking at it, touching the object, smelling it, think about what comes to your mind when you think about trust?

So let us create together our own unique group understanding of trust. What do you understand by Trust? How does this word resonate in you? What do we mean when we use this word?

(Facilitator writes the answers on the flipchart)

Ok, now i invite you to place your trust object in the box, that simbolizes this common understanding we have of trust.

## 3. Habitat of trust (35 min)

### a. Building the totem animal (15 min):

What You will do in the next 15 min is that you will build a totem animal using these materials. You are invited to make a animal that represents yourself. It can be an animal that you feel connected to, that resonates with you or that you admire very much. The main idea is that this symbolic object represents you.

Now let's go in a circle and please show us your animal and tell us a few things about it and why did you choose it.

Good so what we will do now is that you will make pairs. And in these pairs switch animals. You give to your pair your own animal and your partner gives you theirs. Take a moment to say goodbye to your animal.

### b. Building the habitat (20 min)

Having the other's animal in your care, now you will have the mission to buid a comfortable, safe, nurturing habitat for this animal you just received. Using the materials you have here, do your best to create the a habitat.(15 min)

Good, now come together in these pairs and share a bit on how this process was for you, while showing also the habitat you built.(5 min)

## 4. Break (15 min)

## 5. Debriefing (30 min)

### 6. Personalizing the trust box (15 min)

Now, as a group let us work together on the box that contains what we understand as trust in this group using the art supplies we have here.

### 7. Closing (5 min)

Let's go around in a circle and share on one thing that we take from this experience.

### Debriefing questions:

- What did we do?
- How did you feel through this workshop? How was it to make an animal?
- How did you feel when you had to give the animal away? How about receiving someone else's animal?
- What made you trust the other person with your animal?
- How was it to build a habitat for the other's animal? How did you feel when you saw the habitat built for your animal?
- What did you learn about trust in this activity?
- How can this relate to trusting people in your own life?
- What can you do in the future to trust people more?

### Materials :

Newspapers, plastiline, A4 paper sheets, crayons, pens, paint, box  
items from outside, if it's possible, chosen by the participants individually

**Handouts:** none

**Tips and tricks:** - If you do not have easy acces to outside nature, you can prepare a separate box with natural objects and bring them to the workshop, so participants can choose from them.

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# Vulnerability

## What is **vulnerability**?

Vulnerability refers to a set of attitudes that are a natural part of the human essence. Brene Brown, an American professor who has spent decades studying the topics of vulnerability and shame, views vulnerability as the basis of all emotions and feelings, both negative and positive, the place where joy, creativity, the feeling of belonging, love, and intimacy are born.

To be vulnerable means to show yourself and what is important to you, to recognize your own barriers and to share them with others. It involves the ability to be open and the risk of being open with others, which supports the connection with people and life. Vulnerability happens outside of our comfort zone, at the intersection of fear and courage, when we have chosen to let our guard down. A person can feel vulnerable when expressing their opinions on sensitive topics, telling someone else that they are going through a difficult period, asking for their rights, saying "no", starting a business, falling in love, trying something new, asking for help, introduce their partner to their family, asking for forgiveness, deciding to trust someone, and the list goes on.

Vulnerability has three components:

- emotional risk
- exposure
- uncertainty about the outcome.

The fact that we are vulnerable does not guarantee a certain result. By showing what is important to us, we are exposing ourselves to the possibility that others may take advantage of it, or not respond with compassion or vulnerability. This can lead to us feeling hurt, ashamed, fearful, distrustful, or sad. That being said, it is not always easy to be vulnerable and many of our defense mechanisms can come up to protect us from feelings.

## How can we become **more vulnerable**?

It often happens that we are encouraged to be strong, not to show signs of weakness because others might attack us, not to trust people, not to leave emotions in sight because it is shameful, not to let our guard down, not to cry in front of everyone. It is practically possible to be told that the vulnerability is a weakness. If we begin to believe this idea and tell ourselves this dialogue, we end up blocking our emotions or numbing them. But numbing does not come selectively, only with negative emotions, but extends over all our emotions. Thus we can become perfectionists, intolerant of those around us, dissatisfied or not living our own lives fulfilled and satisfied.

If we want to change this pattern, we have several alternatives. We can pay attention to our inner speech. What do we think can happen if we are vulnerable? What do we tell ourselves not to be vulnerable? If we analyze these thoughts a little, are they really true? Does it really bring me so many benefits to always be on guard? In order to be more vulnerable, it helps a lot to be in touch with our own needs and emotions. To recognize them, to identify them, to allow ourselves to live them and learn to express them. It also helps to learn to be self-compassionate, to develop gratitude, to listen to other people, to be attentive to their needs and to share our own experiences with them. When we choose to share, to be vulnerable, through our own example, we can inspire other people, help them better understand what vulnerability is and how to express it.

## Why is **vulnerability** relevant to emotional resilience?

Although it has a risk and is often presented as a weakness, being vulnerable is actually a great resource for life and resilience. The process of assuming our vulnerability leads to a deeper experience of life, it helps us live more fully, happily, and meaningfully. Vulnerability also deepens and strengthens our relationships by supporting mutually agreed limits and building trust.

Avoiding or attempting to hide our vulnerability often leads to authoritarianism, criticism, nervousness, or even perfectionism.

Vulnerability nourishes and maintains life fully and manifests in moments when we risk letting ourselves be seen as we really are and when we are honest with ourselves and those around us.

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### Reference:

Brene Brown – The power of vulnerability

# Session Planning

## Title: **Embracing Vulnerability**

**Timing:** 175 minutes (under 3 hours) Two sessions of 90 minutes with a 15 min break

### Aim and learning elements / session objectives:

Develop the capacity to open yourself and be vulnerable

Discover the elements of vulnerability

Develop a positive attitude towards being vulnerable

### Methodology **step by step**

Timing for each step

- 1. Welcome and why are we here (5 min)**  
Introduce yourself and the topic and then ask participants what they understand through vulnerability. Take four/five answers from the participants, depending on how much time you have.  
Read the poem “I will not die an unlived life” (handout) twice, inviting participants to listen holistically, with their senses, emotions, imagination and minds, also with eyes closed. Read the poem twice and after that invite them to share what moved them when hearing it.
- 2. Warm-up (10 min)**  
Warming up the group through random walk focused on connection
- 3. Input on Vulnerability from the facilitator (20 min)**  
Presentation of key aspects of vulnerability. See handout for full content of this presentation.
- 4. Experiential activities with different ways to be vulnerable (75 min)**  
Have a few experiential activities that are diverse as to sensibilities of being vulnerable, because we feel vulnerable in different kinds of situations in different degrees of intensity. These activities can be done in any sequence.
  - a. Depth Connection (25 min)**
  - b. Eye contact and Mirroring (15 min)**
- 5. Break (15 min)**
  - c. Hand massage concentric circles (20 min)**
- 6. Self reflection and sharing in trios (25 min)**
- 7. Debriefing (30 min)**
- 8. One-word circle (10 min)**  
Setting of the room, participants distribution: Participants work in pairs, individually, and then in the whole group, the most common shape/distribution pattern is a circle (either with chairs or pillows on the ground)

# Instructions to participants

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## 1. Welcome and why are we here (5 min)

*We will be working with the topic of vulnerability. What strikes in you when you hear vulnerability? What comes to your mind, what resonates in you when you hear this word? What is the first word that comes to you when you hear this?*

*(Facilitator reads the Poem)*

*What stayed with you from this poem? What moved you? What stirred emotions or images?*

## 2. Warm-up (10 min)

*(Take the group through this sequence in a steady, slow manner at the pace of the group.)*

*Ok, so let's stand up and start walking through the room in a random manner, by going in any direction, or changing direction suddenly, trying to fill the empty spaces in the room at all times, and slow down or hurry up, fall into your own rhythm....*

*Keep walking...Now start noticing how you feel... how is your breath, how does your body feel, what emotions are going through you...*

*And start to notice that there are people around you... make eye contact, maybe even break a smile or two...*

*Without talking, find a way to show that you acknowledge their presence, that you see them... and come to a stop in front of someone else, forming pairs.*

*With this pair, make eye contact and, holding this connection that is created by making eye contact, synchronize three breaths...*

*Now keep walking... and come back to your breath...while walking in the same random manner, breath in deeply three times, filling your lungs and exhale slowly... and come to rest in front of another person.*

*And with this new partner, you will make eye contact, synchronize three breaths and after you have managed that you will say the first word that comes to your mind...*

*And then keep walking and again come back to your breath...breathe in deeply three times... and come to rest yet again in front of another person.*

*With this new human in front of you, you will make eye contact, synchronize three breaths and after you have managed that, you will say a sentence, one sentence that is your truth at this moment. Something that is true for you at this very moment.*

## 3. Input on Vulnerability from the facilitator (20 min)

*In this workshop we will be discovering and unpacking the concept of Vulnerability.*

*Vulnerability is a decision, a step we take towards authenticity, towards courage, it is a step we take to live fully.*

*(Present information from the handout)*

*In the following exercises we invite you to take an extra step from your comfort zone. Take into consideration that each of us have different levels of comfort and what may be comfortable for me, could be the opposite for others, causing real anxiety. So feel free to go as far out of your boundaries as you can allow yourself. Wherever you are, this is the best place to be right now. Maybe even ask yourself this question from time to time: "What is the most vulnerable thing I can do or say now?"*

## 4. Experiential activities with different ways to be vulnerable (75 min)

### a. Depth Connection (25 min)

*Please find a partner for the next exercise, someone you are curious to know more about, to discover and find a spot in the room where you can discuss. Now, you will have a topic for conversation, and 4 minutes each to share. The subject is: "Tell about your relationship with your parents."*

*(Give participants 3 min each and make a sound when it is time to switch. Stop them after 8 minutes and go to the next phase.)*

*Now, you will have another topic for conversation, and 4 minutes each to share. But this time I invite you to share and listen in a Depth Connection manner. This works by taking under consideration these intentions(show flipchart):*

*(Read out loud the flipchart contents one by one - found in Resources)*

*The topic of the sharing is: "Tell a story about your childhood."*



**b. Eye contact and Mirroring (5 min)**

Please find another partner for the next exercise, again, someone you are curious to know more about, to discover and find a spot in the room where you can move freely. What you will do in the next minute or so is that you will sit face to face and look into each other's eyes. Just that make and maintain eye contact, until I tell you to release the connection. Any questions?

(Give participants 2 min.)How was that? (take a couple of answers and continue) Alright, now we will move on to the next practice, which is called Mirroring. What will happen is that in the same pairs, one person will be the Lead, and the other will be the Mirror. And the mirror is doing his or her best to mirror the movements, facial expressions, rhythm and energy of the Lead. (demonstrate with a volunteer). Do this slowly, at your pace, so the mirror can follow. After a few minutes I will let you know to switch roles. Any questions? Then decide who will lead and who will mirror first. And begin.

(Give participants 2 min each)

Now in these pairs share on how this experience was for you.

**c. Hand massage concentric circles (20 min)**

Good, are you ready to move on to the next experience? Let's make a circle. And now count 1,2,1,2,1,2...Remember which number you have.

We will make two circles, so that one circle is facing outward, one inward. The outer circle is facing inward, the inner circle is facing outward. So that you will look in each other's eyes. Number ones are the inner, number twos are the outer circle.

Now what will happen is that the inner circle will close their eyes, and the outer circle will take the left hand of their partner and massage it. And you will do this until I say "Rotate" at which moment you will move clockwise this way changing partners.

Any questions?

How is this proposal to you? Is there anyone who feels like having their hand massaged or massaging someone's hand would be too much? If at any point you get very uncomfortable, feel free to say it or simply withdraw your hand and your partner will know that you want to stop.

Let's start. Inner circle, close your eyes. Outer circle rotates. Rotate. And again rotate. And now start massage...And Rotate and start massage...And rotate and start Massage...And stop.

Now switch roles. Inner Circle moves into outer Circle and vice versa.

Let's start again. Inner circle, close your eyes. Outer circle rotates. Rotate. And again rotate. And now start massage...And Rotate and start massage...And rotate and start Massage...And stop.

With the person in front of you, share for a few minutes on this experience. I will let you know when you are half time, and that signals that you switch who is sharing. You can practice the Depth Connection principles for this. Give participants 5 min.

**5. Break (15 min)**

**6. Self reflection and sharing in trios (25 min)**

Take a few minutes and journal on your experience in these three activities. 10 min

Now let's form groups of three and in these groups share on this subject: "How was it for you to be vulnerable in these activities? What emotions, feelings, movements, shifts, have arisen?" 15 min

**7. Debriefing (30 min)**

**8. One-word circle (10 min)**

To close, let's go around the circle and I want you to offer, share, one word, or metaphor, that describes this experience for you.

### Debriefing questions:

- What happened? What did we do through this workshop? What were the activities?
- How did you feel throughout? What were some emotions that came up?
- What did you discover about your vulnerability? About your own way of being vulnerable? About your personal armour? About what circumstances make you feel vulnerable?
- In which moments did you feel most vulnerable? In which did you feel least vulnerable?
- What do you think is the difference between the activities that were vulnerable and those that were comfortable?
- How do you feel after being consciously vulnerable?
- What came as a surprise to you?
- How does this apply to your life? What can you do to cultivate your vulnerability?
- How can you transfer this to your daily life? What can you do tomorrow to live more vulnerable? How about next week?

### Materials :

Bells, rattle, pens and A4 papers, flipchart with principles of Depth Connection (see resources), flipchart with vulnerability and the three elements (see resources)

**Handouts:** Poem – I Will Not Die an Unlived Life

### Tips and tricks:

min/max pax

| 4

| 24

# Facilitator **resource** (1)

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## Depth connection Flipchart contents:

- Listen from the heart.
- Take the perspective of the one you are listening to.
- No advice.
- Do not try to see the good part of the situation.
- Don't judge, don't interpret, don't jump to conclusions.
- Practice active curiosity and be open minded.
- Connect to the emotion of the other and communicate it by making sure you understand the context and the emotion felt. Curiosity!
- Connect to your own emotions that are aroused in you by being connected to the other and communicating these emotions, without grabbing the interaction.
- It offers body language that indicates openness, curiosity, presence.
- Come towards the one you support, meet the person where they are at this very moment.

# Facilitator **resource** (2)

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- Make a flipchart on which you write on the top as a title the word “**Vulnerability**”
- On 3 different pieces of A4 or A3 paper write the 3 elements of vulnerability: **Exposure, Emotional risk, Uncertainty of results**
- As you present the concept, and the three elements, stick the individual papers on the flipchart.
- The papers can be of different colours, and if you don't have a flipchart, you can make the all four, the title and the elements on coloured papers. The title can be on a A4 paper and the elements on A3 paper

# Facilitator **resource** (3)

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## Key aspects of Vulnerability

*Vulnerability is a decision, a step we take towards authenticity, towards courage, it is a step we take to live fully.*

*It is characterized by three components (put visuals on a flipchart/wall):*

*Emotional risk*

*Exposure*

*Uncertainty about the result*

*Vulnerability nourishes and maintains life fully and manifests in moments when we risk letting ourselves be seen as we really are and when we are honest with ourselves and those around us.*

**Vulnerability vs. Weakness**

*In what situations do you feel vulnerable? Get some suggestions and when you hear the keywords introduce the concept.*

*Vulnerability is commonly associated with weakness, but what we believe and Brene Brown believes and hopefully you will too by the end of this workshop is that it is actually a strength, even a superpower.*

*In vulnerability, in the situations we expose ourselves, we take emotional risks and we embrace our unknowing about the results, we come across a few emotions that usually arise in us.*

*Guilt – I did something wrong.*

*Shame – I am wrong. I'm a bad person*

*Humiliated – When the message "You are a bad person" comes from outside*

*Awkwardness – I do not feel at ease*

*The difference between guilt and shame is that one is internalized, it creates and maintains a fixed unchanging picture of ourselves, this being shame and the other guilt, addresses the behavior and offers us the opportunity to change, to look for balance and resolution.*

*Shame is creating an inward movement, to hide, to disappear, to distance ourselves socially (because I am a bad person and how can I change what I am?) and guilt is moving us towards action, to bring balance, to make things better, to look for a solution, because it is our behaviour that is bad, or undesirable (not ourselves as a whole), and there can always be another behaviour, action or attitude that can be found to meet our needs and the needs of those around us.*

*Frozen Fear vs. Vulnerable Fear*

*Frozen fear is that type, or intensity of fear that keeps us frozen, unable to act, think or be connected to ourselves. Vulnerable fear is when you feel the fear, the tenderness and the risk, and you do it anyway, you open that difficult subject, you start that project or you say sorry or compliment someone, or receive a compliment. And you do it with the fear there, embracing it. One of the practices of vulnerability is to consciously step from frozen to vulnerable fear.*

## Facilitator resource (4)

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### **I Will Not Die an Unlived Life** **Dawna Markova**

I will not die an unlived life  
I will not live in fear  
of falling or catching fire.  
I choose to inhabit my days,  
to allow my living to open me,  
to make me less afraid,  
more accessible,  
to loosen my heart  
until it becomes a wing,  
a torch, a promise.  
I choose to risk my significance;  
to live so that which came to me as seed  
goes to the next as blossom  
and that which came to me as blossom,  
goes on as fruit.

# Facilitation tips, suggestions and other

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This section of the handbook includes tips and tricks for facilitating learning activities with groups and other things we did not find a place somewhere else in the handbook. Nothing in this list is mandatory, but they are valuable things to take under consideration. Implementing these could lead to a better flow of the activities, and could improve the overall quality of the workshops.

## 1. **For intro and closing of the sessions you can use the following statement, or any other variation to it. Feel free to personalize them:**

**A.** Intro: Hello and welcome, introduce yourself, the workshop and the reason you are here, doing the workshop. Alternatively, you can express what your intention is for this process, for the next few hours.

**B.** Closing: To close, let's go around the circle and I want you to offer, share, one word, or metaphor, that describes this experience for you.

OR : Please share three words that describe this experience for you.

## 2. **For when participants have individual work that has a time limit**

When they have 15 minutes left, let the participants know: You have 15 minutes more. Do the same when they have 5 minutes left: you have 5 more minutes.

After the time is passed you can give them a couple more minutes to finish: If anyone needs more time, raise your hand....And allow yourselves to come to an end.

During this you can have some soft music in the background, or you can just have silence.

## 3. **When giving a handout to participants**

Give the participants a few seconds to look over what you give them, and always finish passing the handout around before starting to speak, to make sure you have their full attention when you speak.

## 4. **About opening and closing**

All workshops, and in general any activity you do with groups should have a clear introduction and a clear closing. This is especially important with newly formed groups and very useful with groups that are already with shared experience.

The openings and closings can have many formats, and you can improvise a lot with this part to suit the group. The role of this is to clearly define the workshop, and to separate it from other daily activities.

## 5. **Allow space for questions and clarifications when introducing activities**

When introducing an activity to participants, after you give the instructions, always ask them "Is it clear?" Or "Do you have any questions?" . This allows the participants to clear any misunderstandings and will help you to have a more smooth activity.

If there are no questions, the instructions were well delivered or in some cases everyone is very confused.

If there are lots of questions, than the best course of action is to answer all questions and to give the instructions again.

## 6. **Silence**

Learn to be comfortable with silence when asking questions. Participants need a few seconds, even minutes for a question to settle on them, and for someone to make the courage to speak. It is ok and even recommended to have spaces of silence in a workshop, especially in debriefing sessions and sharing spaces.

Get used to it, even if it is uncomfortable to you. One trick for this is to count in your head from ten to one, a few times, so you know more or less objectively how much time has passed.

# About the team

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The project team of Highway to Mental Health is composed of 12 people from four different countries Iceland, Spain, Poland and Romania.

We got together and started on this wonderful 2 year adventure because we believe that we can make a change in people's lives, that mental health matters and that long-term impactful change comes through experiential education.

A holistic innovative approach of resilience can only be achieved by bringing together people from different backgrounds, so our team is very diverse, in it being people with lived experience of mental health challenges, experts by experience, mental health services users, psychologists, psychiatrists, trainers and youth workers.

## **The four organizations that got together for this endeavor are as follows:**

- Hugarafll is an independent association of people dealing with mental health challenges. The organization is built on ideas of empowerment, recovery, equality and cooperation between users and professionals. Hugarafll has a daily schedule where people can come and work on their recovery, in various group meetings, yoga, therapies, volunteer work, and a great part of the work also consists of activism for improving the public mental health system.
- PROGRES is the Polish association, which was built by workers and users of Hostel in Mazowian Center of Neuropsychiatry. This is a safe place for teenagers and young adults after psychological crises. The programs in the Hostel are based on a therapeutic community and individual therapeutic support. We offer social skills training, psychoeducation, individual and group psychotherapy, occupational therapy, music therapy, cognitive therapy, social activity, sport and leisure activities. Besides treatment and psychotherapy we are involved in prevention and we are trying to change the attitude of society towards mental health.
- Activament is a non governmental organization based in Catalonia. We are part of the associative movement of mental health in the first person: we are constituted, organized and led by people who went through or are living with a situation of psychosocial suffering and/or mental diversity, and we participate as an active agent in the field of mental health in Catalonia.
- Minte Forte is a non-profit organisation from Cluj-Napoca, Romania, which promotes mental health through education, building resources for resilience and growth, and support for maintaining or enhancing mental health. We envision a society in which each person is connected with their inner strength and people support each other in taking care of their mental health. Our main target group is young people, as early psychological education can help build a balanced self and prevent mental health problems.

Handbook