

Methodology for youth workers



Challenge Management
from Problem to Challenge!

ERASMUS +

CHALLENGED!

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INTRODUCTION

Erasmus+ project “Challenged!” aims to improve skills of youth workers and young people, and to raise awareness in the field of emotional education and personal empowerment, to stimulate and enhance the young people we work with, in particular those living in rural areas, and those who carry out their work in regions where they encounter economic, social and cultural challenges.

Training young people in rural areas essentially means helping them to transform themselves into more confident and productive people, capable of applying realistic solutions to overcome their challenges and able to take charge of their own future.

For this, we will use techniques of personal balance, emotional stimulation, creative development, enhancement of talents and education in the values of traditional cultures and personal growth, especially those related to the countryside and nature, to deep reflection on one's life, creative and participatory non-formal methods.

The main **objectives** are:

- Create a working guide that includes tools, exercises and activities aimed at working on the emotional education and empowerment of young people in rural areas and with social, cultural and economic difficulties.
- Improve the quality of facilitators' work by increasing their competences (knowledge, skills, values, behavior) to meet the needs of disadvantaged people in terms of sensitivity, empathy and understanding.
- Promote the development of young people in rural areas and in regions where economic, social and cultural difficulties are most pronounced to meet the needs of marginalized youth, providing them with tools for their inclusion and personal development.
- Promote the inclusion, equity and self-esteem of rural young people by facilitating their active participation in society, their personal training and improving their professional skills and their spirit of initiative.

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- Promote emotional education and youth empowerment, promote diversity and convey the core common values of our society.

Preliminarily it should be noted that any training approach must consider the peculiarities of the territory and the economic, social and cultural dynamics that operate in the communities. The vocations and development potentials of the area concerned must also be identified, not only highlighting its strengths but also the shortcomings/opportunities to better target training interventions.

The development of skills and abilities must refer to a concrete and present economic, social and territorial reality in which their profitable use is foreseeable.

The sustainable development processes of rural communities are complex processes in which multiple biological, social, cultural and economic factors intervene and influence each other. These factors are interdependent, so accompanying the aforementioned processes requires a comprehensive strategy that combines different visions, disciplines and subject lines.

Only starting from these unavoidable presuppositions will it be possible to construct paths that consider the real needs of the subjects, their shortcomings, their disadvantages, not only economic and organizational but also social and psychological.

The increase in facing challenges is not, in fact, linked exclusively to economic support and training opportunities but also to psychological aspects, such as the development of self-esteem, the acquisition of proactive attitudes, and the improvement of communication and relational skills. The success of young people in rural areas depends on all these aspects, which are carried out smoothly and mutually supportive.

This methodology is a guide for facilitators (youth workers) interested in working on the subject of human skills and life projects, both in private and public educational institutions, suggesting educational material that promotes the recognition of the human abilities of young people as the engine of their human and social development, directing them towards their objectives and goals. This methodology is meant for you, as a person who deals with youth education, to have conceptual information about the role you should play, challenge management theories and methodologies to promote this development.

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We believe this methodology will benefit not only rural educators but other development organizations as well, who wish to accompany the young people along the exciting path of challenge management.

The **purpose** of you as facilitator to use one of the 6 areas applying the 9-steps process on a small group of young people is to:

- increase self-esteem of young people
- increase self-motivation to make positive changes in their life
- build more trust in themselves to set and achieve goals
- increase the sense of belonging to the group and their small community
- build more trust between young people and facilitator
- provide environment for social networking
- acquire new transversal competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors) using non-formal education methods

It will allow you to clarify the differences between the roles of **Facilitator**, **Consultant** or **Coach**, will help you to support youngsters in rural areas to face challenges through practical activities, in 6 different areas of interest, such as Psychology, Outdoor Activities, Philosophy, Sports, Arts, and Personal Development, and will suggest how to promote cooperation with Psychologists.

THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

Although this does not happen in the totality of the rural reality, the facilitator's role is not easy when you have to operate in this type of context: you must help the young person to face paradigms and resistances both of their own and of the social context to advance and achieve success in their ideas and personal development.

You may find the following challenges:

- low self-esteem
- attitudes dependent on opinions or decisions of a few people with local social, religious, economic or political rules
- hoping that someone from outside come and solve their problems

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- prejudices
- resignation, fatalism and pessimism
- lack of willingness to commit to trying to solve problems
- lacking initiatives aimed at improving the current conditions
- limitations to express themselves
- frequent conflicts often characterized by strong aggression
- inhibiting familiar contexts
- cultural limitations to expand networks contact

In this methodology, we will try to present some keys that can help you deal with these situations more effectively.

The facilitator's role is very close to that of a coach, although it can take on some aspects of the other models of accompaniment. The task of accompanying the facilitator includes a series of concrete actions which, in general terms, can be summarized as:

- Ask the young learners questions to try to know what their feelings are about the training, their evolution in the learning process, the possibilities they can find to carry out their project and other aspects of their development. In the context of facilitation, more important than knowing if a concept has been understood, it is important to know how the participant feels about the practical application of the concepts in their challenges. More open-ended questions are preferable, such as:

1. *How do you think such a concept - or such an exercise - could serve you for your future?*
2. *What is your position on this issue?*
3. *How do you feel about applying this knowledge?*
4. *What do you think can help you be safer?*

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The idea is that the young person can respond by expressing their feelings as much as possible. If they cannot answer immediately or are confused about how to apply what they have learned, the facilitator's questions will then be aimed at finding the causes of that confusion, to get, if possible, to ask the questions that serve to reflect on possible solutions. Hear what the young have to say about their needs, about what is troubling them, but also about what they hope for and what they think should do. With the help of the questions and through the trust established with the young person, you must be able to support them, to identify what their needs and abilities are, their strengths and weaknesses, hopes and fears. It is very important to pay particular attention to the language the young person uses, to how they narrate an event, to how they construct them. It is especially important to identify the causes to which they attribute their problems, for example, whether they attribute them to internal or external causes. With all this, the facilitator must be able to enable the young person to think about their situation, to observe themselves in the process of growing their skills.

Based on this framework, the facilitator will propose other possible ways of seeing reality, helping the young person to redefine their hypotheses and their way of analyzing problems. In this way the facilitator must not invade the world of young people and modify it in an authoritarian way but, rather, collaborate with the young person in planning tasks that help him/her to move forward by transforming the initial situation, accompanying the young on their journey.

- Schedule follow-up meetings that are used to periodically evaluate the young person's evolution through reflection on the different situations they are experiencing. After passing a certain phase in which the youngster and the facilitator have agreed on a certain task, you will have to ask the young person again the questions that make to reflect on the experience: what things in their opinion worked well and badly, and in your opinion, since you observed the situation; how they felt during the assignment; what they think helped them with; what it would take them to achieve more; what would they do if they were to do the same thing again. The new reflection process must be the starting point for a new program of activities that will go through new and different phases.

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So far, we have examined the role of the facilitator as a companion, guiding the development process undertaken by the participant.

We will now present other roles and their distinctive features that you could perform in the activities with young people, if you think you are prepared for them.

THE CONSULTANT:

It is typically someone who has specialized knowledge in a specific subject. Consultants are often called when something is getting complicated. In some cases, the causes of these problems are not known, in other cases, the causes are known but how to isolate the problem is not known. Therefore, the youngster attributes to the consultant the ability to help them identify the causes of the problems and/or solve them. Sometimes, the consultant's role is to find out the root of the problem and then help to get a solution. Other times, the advice is directed at the prevention of errors or the planning or implementation of good practices. The consultancy can be carried out by different specialists when the young need advice. The idea will be to put them in touch with one expert on the topic on which they request the consultancy. For example, if the young person needs to develop a layout to set up a workshop with complex technology or if they need to develop brochures and branding for a personal project.

THE COACH:

In this case, the orientation is focused on the priorities and needs of the youngster and on the problems faced to solve them. It is neither a question of recommending behaviors proven by the coach's experience (as in the case of the mentor), nor of applying specific knowledge to problem-solving (as in the case of the advisor), nor of promoting the psychological support (domain of the psychologist). The idea is that the person receiving help through coaching has a fairly clear picture of their situation and is considering actions to change it. The way the coach does their job is through questions. Asking the right questions will help to understand certain situations, how the young person feels them, how they would like to feel and what they should do and think to feel this way. Coaches must not be necessarily experts about the specific field of intervention but they should know at least the tasks and responsibilities involved. The

coach helps to discover abilities that the young person sometimes does not have, to "bring out" the best of themselves. All they need to do is ask the right questions. What questions are considered "good questions" from a coaching point of view? Those that serve to make a person reflect on what they do and on their own attitudes and abilities.

THE FINAL CHALLENGE - FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY

Challenged methodology is based on forming habits that need to be repeated a minimum 21 days in a row.

The facilitators should motivate the young people to implement a habit/small activity that will help them grow as people and/or professionals. It should last 21 days in a row after the main activity.

See some examples below, but come up with a list that you can collect from the young people during the reflection step:

- read a book every day for at least 30 minutes
- find every day at least 1 positive aspect in your day and write it down
- find a hobby you wanted to try and work on it at least 20 min/day
- do a physical exercise, at your choice, at least 15 minutes each day
- replace an unhealthy snack with at least 1 healthy snack every day (e.g.: raw fruit, vegetable or nuts, etc.)
- eat and drink without added sugar (e.g.: desserts, juice, etc.)
- write down every day all the bad words / swearing that you replaced with nice words
- make a short list of affirmations and read them every morning

The facilitators will use the Digital Diary of Challenges to follow the young people's progress, communicate with them constantly and motivate them to stay committed to their 21 days challenge.

After the 21 days, the facilitators must organize a meeting with all the young people that took the 21 days challenge. The purpose is to reflect on how they managed with their own challenge, what changed, what have they learned from that. The facilitator can choose one of the evaluation methods described in the 9th step of this methodology.

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Chapter ONE

COPING WITH CHALLENGES THROUGH PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology is the science studying mental states in emotional, cognitive and behavioral processes at conscious and unconscious levels and has the goal to promote mental well-being and disorders recovery.

Rural youngsters very often live in conditions that may expose them to higher psychological risks but also some protective factors.

Psychological consultancy it's a typical act reserved for Certified Psychologists and it's a very delicate topic that should be managed by certified professionals.

Anyhow, some studies about the perception of the profession often pose some prejudice in the adoption of psychologists that may put serious obstacles for all youngsters needing this specific type of support.

Your role, as a Youth Facilitator, is to support youngsters in the request for psychological support, identify possible difficulties to be evaluated and treated by Psychologists, favor a better understanding of mental health issues, fight the stigma associated with mental health conditions and promote the Psychologists as professional dealing not only with disorders but also for the promotion of psychological well-being.

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STEP 1 – KNOWING EACH OTHER

EXERCISE Knowing each other is a very pleasant activity you can implement in youngster groups and can be performed in several ways. It's moreover an opportunity for the Youth Educators to create a positive climate before implementing other groups. We suggest this exercise to promote a nice environment in preparation for further activities.



Structure: Single presentation and feedback



Duration: 30 minutes - 1 hour



Materials and tools: Pen, letters and paper



Number of participants: maximum 12

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- Each participant has to prepare a self-presentation of 3 minutes and perform the speech in front of other participants.
- The listeners write a positive adjective regarding the impression had from the speaker and enclose the document in the letters. Only positive adjectives can be used. Encourage participants to find positive traits in others.
- The speaker receives the letters from other participants.
- All participants do the self-presentation.
- Once all feedback has been received, each participant will read the adjective received.

We give you here some additional questions you can use for make them process the feedback received:

- How do you feel?
- Do you think that adjectives received are accurate?
- Do you want to say something specific about the feedback received?
- What is a concrete action you may do now to improve the positive feedback received?

We give some suggestions to improve your capacity to learn something from self-presentation in group sessions:

- Read a body language book: it will help you to observe participants with better attention and have inputs for feedbacks.
- Read a public speaking book: it will help you to discriminate effective and less effective presentations, but also to support people in improving their communication in groups.

For the analysis and the monitoring of the results, we also suggest you to consider the following categorization of **self-presentation strategies**:

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- **Assertiveness:** in assertive self-presentation, you draw attention to your own attributes and merits, such as making intelligent comments at a party, being funny, dancing brilliantly, talking charmingly to everyone, and so on. Such a direct strategy can be well received by others but can also be easily perceived negatively. The desired goals (to stand out as a particularly intelligent and socially competent person) can thus be nullified.:
- **Ingratiation** to gain approval of other significant, but might slip in evident flattery.
- **Intimidation:** we present ourselves as powerful and somehow dangerous.
- **Promotion of self** (self-promotion), rather than aiming to be pleasant, individuals aspire to appear competent.
- **Exemplary Actions:** the individual wants to be respected and admired for their integrity and moral dignity.
- **Supplication:** sometimes it can be more convenient to portray yourself as poor and defenseless to get people to do exactly what you want them to do in this indirect way, appealing to the social norm of helping people in need.
- **Offensive self-presentation:** is an aggressive way of trying to provide a positive self-image by devaluing others (*downward comparison*) or by making ironic statements or critical evaluations about third parties. Both methods carry risks that you need to be aware of when thinking about targeted self-expression techniques.
- **Protective self-presentation:** the goal of defensive strategies is to try to prevent or limit the possibility of appearing unfavorably by avoiding transmitting negative self-images leaving a bad impression on the public and thus losing influence.
- **Self-handicap:** it is another method of trying to avoid a bad impression on others. For example, you can point out in advance that you did not sleep last night and therefore are not really in top shape today. So, the good impression

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remains intact and, for the moment, the danger of feeling embarrassed and insecure is averted. It is a strategy to increase the chances of justifying failure.

STEP 2 – IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEMS

Psychological diagnosis is an act reserved for Certified Psychologists needing a specific professional evaluation that cannot be performed by Youth Educators. But what you can do is equally important, you can promote the importance of psychological support, fight the stigma associated with mental health issues, stimulate a critical knowledge of psychological science and favor the consultancy and support of specialists, without fear, prejudice or stigma.

And this can significantly help people living in rural areas in the challenge management.

In the creation of training activities for youngsters living in rural areas, we consider it's really important to tailor exercises and activities to the rural context.

Several statistics and sociological data show the obstacles shared by people living in rural areas, including:

- Digital divide
- Lower education level
- Difficulties at the entrepreneurial levels
- Unemployment
- Social isolation

Precariousness of employment is certainly a risk factor for anxiety, depressive states and other negative psychological conditions that may put obstacles in the challenge management.

Your goal, as a Youth Educator, is to highlight also the opportunities to live in rural areas and their advantages:

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- Connection with nature can be beneficial for mental health.
- Strong communities and connection with people have a beneficial impact on social support and stress management.
- Cultural heritage can provide important inputs for the reinforcement of the sense of identity.
- The economic cost of a home in a rural area is usually lower.
- The diet is usually healthier.
- Rural work tends to be more cooperative.
- There is pure air.
- It takes us to exercise physically.

According to Social and Environmental Psychology, living in contact with nature has the following advantages:

- Helps us to eliminate mental rumination
- Helps us to focus
- Makes it easier to fight stress
- Offer perfect places for meditation

The adoption of stories, anecdotes, and inputs related to the rural area in which you live are strongly recommended to reinforce the sense of pride to live in rural areas, despite focusing on negative things.

It's also strongly recommended to find alliances with Certified Psychologists in order to correctly manage possible psychological difficulties that need specific and qualified support.

The suggestions we give you to produce strong alliances with Psychologists ready to intervene in case of difficulties are the following:

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- Check on the Official National Orders that the Psychologist is actually present in their list.
- Ensure that the Psychologist has specific experience and works with the age ranges of the target groups.
- Please remember that if you live in a very isolated area, there may be not a Certified Psychologist living in that specific place. Remember the opportunity to find one in a near area or also to connect with a psychologist ready to offer support online.
- Remember that Psychology includes numerous approaches, with different characteristics, and possible past unsatisfactory activities with a specific approach cannot be generalized to other approaches.

EXERCISE

The exercise we suggest is very wide and flexible. It can be applied during a group discussion finalized to promote critical thinking and problem-solutions approaches. In this sense, you could integrate these exercises in your training in several ways, but we suggest you use it at the initial stages.

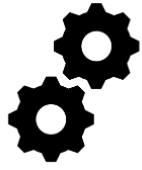


Structure: Group Discussion



Duration: 30 minutes - 1 hour

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Materials and tools: Pen and paper



Number of participants: maximum 12

During the group discussion you should ask to participants the following questions:

- What is your biggest challenge in your life?
- What did you do concretely to face the challenge?
- What of the strategies you implemented helped you to face the challenge?
- What strategies didn't help to solve the problem?
- What is the next step to implement to face the challenge?

Make them write the answers. This will help them to focus better on the content and relevant aspects.

The nice thing of this exercise is that you can perform in different ways:

- Participants can share elements of the questions together, find commonalities in possible challenges, create alliances among them or share activities that helped them to cope with the challenge.
- Participants can write answers privately without sharing.
- You can easily adapt these questions also to explore a possible individual request spontaneously formulated by youngsters facing difficulties.

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To monitor this exercise, please remember that if you have one or more of the following impressions, it would be good to promote psychological consultancy as a reliable methodology to face the problem:

- The challenge seems connected to a persistent emotional management.
- The challenge seems connected to a persistent mental state.
- The challenge seems connected to a constant behavioral dysfunctional status.
- The solutions implemented to face the challenge seems not working, working partially or even pejorative.

STEP 3 – POSITIVE THINKING

Positive thinking is one of the most powerful methods you can apply in your work with youngsters. Technically, positive thinking relates to the ability to see things from an optimistic perspective, enriching and constructive. It also implies believing in yourself, being realistic and facing problems with optimism.

When you start a session for encouraging positive thinking, we suggest you talk about the 4 types of thoughts that cross our minds. We also prepared a text that you can use in frontal lectures or for introducing the topic.



Activity: Frontal lecture



Duration: 10 min

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Setting: group or individual session

The structure of the frontal lecture can be summarized as follows, but feel free to adapt the text and the content to your specific context.

Both thinking and speaking positively are actions that predispose to dialogue and that allow better communication with oneself and with others. Keep in mind that what we think affects our emotions, our mood and our actions. What you say to yourself, through positive thinking, has to do with your internal dialogue or language. Building positive internal language can help you connect more positively with yourself. In addition, this language allows you to get a more constructive view in the face of possible adversity.

The four types of thoughts are:

- Necessary or routine thoughts.
- Useless thoughts.
- Negative and/or destructive thoughts.
- Positive thinking.

1. The **necessary thoughts** are those that refer to our daily routine such as "what do we eat, what should I do today, when do I have to pay the rent, etc.". These are thoughts that concern daily life.

2. **Useless thoughts** are those that have neither constructive nor particularly negative usefulness. They refer to things from the past, such as "if this didn't happen to me, why did they tell me that, if they only did this or that, etc.". You are thinking about something we can no longer change. Useless thoughts also concern the future, such as: "What will happen if...? How will it happen...? What will I do if...? etc.".

Many of our thoughts fall into this category of useless thoughts (and science says we create between 30 and 50 thousand thoughts a day) and, although they are not

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negative, they still take away inner strength and make us feel tired, affecting our own ability to concentrate too.

3. **Negative thoughts** are the most harmful, especially towards ourselves. Aside from the impact they can have on others, these thoughts cause a great waste of our inner peace and strength. Negative thoughts are based on anger, greed, unfulfilled expectations, disagreements, jealousy, etc. If our thoughts are based on these weaknesses it is as if we are poisoning our own mind and also the atmosphere around us. No matter how legitimate thoughts are: if we think negatively we will always be the losers.

4. **Positive thoughts**: they are the only ones that allow us to accumulate inner strength and allow us to be constructive. Thinking positively does not mean ignoring the reality around us and living in fantasy or pretending to be someone else. Thinking positive means seeing the problems and recognizing their reality but, at the same time, being able to find solutions to that problem. This often requires tolerance, patience and common sense.

A toolbox for favoring positive thinking

As a youth educator, you can plan during your session several techniques for improving positive thinking. We suggest you put into practice a set of exercises also in the same session to reinforce the sense of positive thinking.

Since the structure of the following activities is similar, we summarize here the setting rules and procedures.



Context: group discussion

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Duration: approximately 15 minutes per exercise



Number of participants: we suggest 12 participants per session

At the end of each exercise, we suggest you perform a debriefing session to analyze the personal meaning of the answers proposed. We propose the instructions in a set together with the text and main words to be used during the presentation of the exercises

The priming technique

It consists of making a list of positive aspects about you and your environment, highlighting, writing them, aspects such as "I have good health", "I have a family who loves me", "I am good at my job"... If this exercise costs your effort, ask friends and family for help to do it. Reviewing this list and completing it regularly will help you dissolve negative thoughts.

Increase your attention

When you worry or feel depressed, your ability to concentrate is reduced. You can notice this if, for example, you read a book and when you turn the page you realize that you don't remember what you just read. To focus better, there are practical exercises like these: focusing on an object or something external, such as an activity that someone is doing and paying attention to every detail or doing activities that require a lot of attention, such as doing crosswords or painting mandalas.

Improve self-esteem

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In the long run, an attitude studded with negative thoughts can leave you dissatisfied and frustrated, which damages your self-esteem. Practicing the *tree of self-esteem* allows you to visualize your qualities and achievements.

First, you have to prepare a list with two columns: in one, you will list your successes in life, (having a degree, cooking well, knowing how to do jobs...) and, in the other, you will define your virtues (generous, understanding, fighter...). Having identified your achievements and qualities, draw a tree with various fruits; in each of them you set a goal (for example, to make a career), and to the roots you set the relative virtue (in this case, to be a fighter). The result is a graphical way of verifying your value that you can review at the time of day you prefer.

Become aware of your thoughts

The first step in training positive thinking is to become aware of your way of thinking. What do you say to yourself during the day? What thoughts come to your mind about your successes? And in the face of your difficulties? Look at the following: are they positive or negative thoughts? Do they help you to improve and have fun or do they generate interference and suffering? Once you have identified the positive (and realistic) thoughts, try to reinforce them, to reproduce them throughout the day.

Visualize your success

One of the best exercises for learning to be positive is to try to visualize a successful future. You definitely have a purpose in your life, a goal, a dream that you want to achieve. So, to try to see the bright side of things, we encourage you to allow yourself to dream a little, to let yourself imagine that success and, therefore, to fill yourself with positive feelings that will keep you away from apathy and help you motivate yourself and continue to work to achieve your goals.

Accept difficulties

It would be a little naive to think that, just by having a positive thought, things will always turn out well. More or less frequently we have to resolve situations that can upset us, or feel that the days go by without anything satisfying us happening. Also, since

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thoughts have to do with character, lived experiences, education and learning, if you have a pessimistic or anxious personality it can be difficult to put all of our advice into practice. What we want to achieve is positive but realistic thinking, not idealistic and utopian thinking. This is why it is also important to become aware of our difficulties and the obstacles we have to face during the day.

Accept that they exist and propose to reformulate your problems positively: how can I feel better? What can I do to improve the situation? Can I do something or is it something that is not up to me?

Identify the bright side of what happens to you

This is not an easy task but, as in everything, it can be trained. Everything that happens to us has positive and negative aspects and it is important to learn to identify them. There are very difficult situations that we have to face and trying to find the positive part is not always possible. We can, however, always try to find, at least, a lesson deriving from that experience. When we learn to find the positive side of a certain situations we are also cultivating a kinder, compassionate and positive language towards ourselves.

Analyze the feelings you feel while you think

Positive thoughts are not simply those formulated with optimism, but those that generate positive emotions in us, the functional and healthy ones, which have a positive impact on our other thoughts, our emotions and our mood.

This is why it is important to learn to identify which emotions generate our thoughts, to learn to "classify" them as positive (healthy) or negative (maladaptive).

Surround yourself with people who enrich you

Surrounding ourselves with people who make us feel good is also another way to cultivate our positive thinking as our relationships influence the way we think, be and act.

To find out if the people we interact with add value to us or not (i.e. they are positive for us and make us feel good), we can practice the following exercise: ask yourself "how do I feel after seeing that person?" "Do I feel better or worse?" "With more energy or less?" Remember that it's up to you to decide who you want in your life and who you don't.

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Reduce self-criticism and self-righteousness

It's okay to be demanding of ourselves, especially when we want to achieve certain milestones, but consider to what extent your degree of severity benefits you or hurts you. And if there's something that's really bothering you or keeping you from being happy, then it's time to try to change it and improve as a person.

Being very demanding of ourselves and, above all, being critical, can contaminate our thoughts and turn them into negative or dysfunctional. Take care of your inner dialogue, don't judge yourself, forgive your mistakes and flaws and don't be particularly hard on yourself. Remember that love for yourself is the first thing you need to cultivate to enjoy good self-esteem.

Love yourself very much

To learn to be positive, it is important to have a healthy relationship with yourself. Take care of yourself both inside and out, take the time to do what you enjoy doing and enjoy your company. Recover that project or dream that you have abandoned and allow yourself to be the master of your life. In addition to the exercises to learn to be positive, it is also important to follow some techniques that can help you be more prepared to cultivate this new view of the world and your life. To have an optimistic outlook on life, you need to enjoy a positive and healthy life.

Spend time on your hobbies

It is important that you enjoy your life. You can never have a positive outlook on life if you don't like how you are living, if you feel stagnant, lost or with nothing to motivate you. Therefore, our advice is that, within all the obligations and all your routine, you manage to leave a space to enjoy your hobbies and passions.

Reduce the stress in your life

Another of the best techniques and exercises for learning to be positive is to remove stress and anxiety from your day. Living in a constant nervous state causes an alteration of our nervous system and this will affect a large number of situations in our life: we will not rest well at night, we will not eat properly, we will not have time to rest

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or relax, and so on. All this will, over time, make our mood much more irascible and, therefore, it will be almost impossible to see life with good eyes.

Meditate weekly

Another perfect exercise that will help you have a more positive and optimistic attitude is meditation. This oriental practice is totally designed to calm the mind, reduce stress, live in the present and feel great inner peace. The ideal is to try to meditate daily but, if you can't, what we recommend is to do it at least twice a week. There are excellent online courses in meditation, mindfulness and even self-hypnosis, all of which are widely validated and effective techniques for reducing stress.

Exercise

Exercise is a very healthy practice for achieving a more relaxed and positive attitude. Keep in mind that sport makes us release endorphins, which is a type of hormone that makes us feel better and happier. In addition, sport will activate your body and make the cells move through your body faster, making you more oxygenated, awake and in a better mood.

These little guidelines that we have presented can help you develop positive thoughts in your daily life, which allow you to heal your inner dialogue and face the challenges of life with greater serenity, calm and optimism.

However, everyone will have to find their own way to cultivate this type of thinking in the most beneficial way for their daily life.

STEP 4 – CHALLENGE YOUTH WITH FUN

When I, Igor, was a psychology student, my first external course at the University was the Psychology of wellbeing organized by an external NGO. I remember as it was yesterday, a psychologist was moderating the session in groups and the first time I learned the “therapeutic” role of positive emotions. It was fantastic to me learning that positive emotions directly influence our body also at the neurochemical level.

I am always grateful for this experience I had through “Accademia della Risata” Association (Laughter Academy), in Urbino, Italy.

Since the process of learning this methodology can be properly learned with a deep study of the subject, I suggest you here some exercises you can apply for increasing the positive attitudes of participants through laughter therapy. If you want to learn more about this kind of therapy, I suggest you visit the official website of Dr. Madan Kataria here ([Laughter Yoga International for Health, Happiness and World Peace](#)). If you live in Italy and prefer to read content in Italian, I suggest you visit this website ([Accademia della risata - comicoterapia, yoga della risata, gelotologia e terapia della risata](#)).

LAUGHTER THERAPY

To begin a session with youngsters about laughter therapy, it's very good to start with a frontal discussion about what laughter therapy is. Explaining that laughter has direct psychological and positive implications, provides a great suggestion for participants.

Here you have the introductory content about laughter therapy.

This type of therapy has a preventive character for the improvement of the quality of life, the promotion of health and mental well-being.

As the experts of this type of therapy claim, laughter helps to counteract diseases such as depression and can act as an analgesic in those people who find themselves in a situation of physical and psychological distress. Laughter releases the accumulated tension in our body, produces K lymphocytes and is also able to help strengthen our immune system.

Although its name indicates that it is a therapy, actually laughter therapy is a strategy to make people laugh through various activities such as games, dramatizations, dances, body expressions or through the simple contagion of laughter that arises spontaneously when a group of people get together. Laughter therapy is carried out, in fact, only in groups, regardless of whether the members of the group have already had

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contact with each other since one of the peculiarities of laughter is that it increases self-esteem and the ability to socialize.

It is important to keep in mind that in laughter therapy it is not relevant whether laughter is forced or spontaneous, as the body reacts in the same way and gets the same benefits.

Dynamics of Laughter Therapy

Laughter therapy sessions usually last two hours, although they may be longer in a special occasion, such as a demonstration, event, or opening a new group. There are always, however, three distinct phases: warm-up, activities and conclusion.

In the beginning, facilitators make sure that all participants are prepared to carry out the activities and react positively to them, so they need to be calm and focused on the session. Generally, during the first phase, breathing and relaxation exercises are performed, in addition to the classic "circle" of presentations.

The breathing exercises that are practiced in the laughter therapy sessions are usually innovative, so they not only try to reassure the participants by simply controlling lung oxygenation, but they also use other tools, such as playing instrumental music in the background that helps to harmoniously synchronize the breath with the rhythm of the melody, or by spreading sounds of nature to create imaginary scenarios of natural landscapes that lead the subjects to reach the level of tranquility necessary to feel at ease with laboratory colleagues and to be able to perform at their best subsequent exercises.

Many people are therefore uncomfortable when they arrive in new places where they do not know anybody, a situation that can increase restlessness. It is necessary that before starting the activities necessary to create laughter, the participants know each other, as this allows them to relax and enjoy a more comfortable environment. The presentation round will therefore be enjoyable and show the positive aspects of each member. For this reason, in laughter therapy, this phase seeks to highlight virtues, personal characteristics and may also include comments on the first impression participants had of the facilitator of the laughter therapy session.

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The main information about the laughter therapy exercise can be summarized as follows:



Type of session: frontal lectures and group intervention



Duration: 2 hours



Number of participants: 12 to 50

The set of activities proposed have to be performed in sequence.

The potato is burning

Another type of presentations are those that are made by playing in a group, as in the case of "the potato is burning" in which all the participants form a circle and say their name while passing a ball. When one of the workshop facilitators says "*The potato is burning*", the person who is left with the ball in hand must remember and repeat all names of everyone who said them already. This is a way to get to know each other and the laughs come spontaneously during the game.

Three animals

Once participants have traditionally introduced themselves, the laughter therapy session facilitator asks them to think quickly about three animals and pronounce them in the order they introduced themselves, adding a characteristic of each. When all the participants have intervened, the facilitator explains that psychologically the first-named

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animal indicates how a person thinks others see them, the second how they see themselves and the third how they really are. Although, of course, it's just a game, this technique paves the way for collective good humor.

Once the participants have achieved the necessary relaxation and have known each other, the workshop facilitator prepares to use the activities that will intentionally provoke the manifestation of laughter, which will allow all participants to be infected with positive emotions and thoughts. A common feature that the dynamics to use in this type of encounter have is that they try to externalize the inner child that we all hold.

Among the most well-known activities stand out:

Duel of laughter

It is a dynamic commonly used in laughter therapy sessions, which consists of making a couple and looking each other in the eyes, until one of the two cannot take it anymore and laughs, also causing the laughter of the partner and everyone present, creating a wave of joy that will last several minutes. This game is very famous, people use it to do "duels of laughter" and see who can last longer without smiling.

Role exchange

Dramatizations are also often used as strategies to generate laughter. Many games are played with imitation and acting, but the one that is used most regularly in laughter therapy is "role swapping", which consists of adopting the attitudes of another person, that can be another member of the group or a famous artist, and behaving like that person in a certain situation. There is a variant of this technique in which one individual tries to imitate another so that the rest of the participants guess who they are; in both cases, the laugh goes off when the person trying to convey the message behaves funnily without using words, but only gestures.

Sing with a laugh

There are several ways to apply this dynamic in laughter therapy workshops, although the intention will always be for participants to sing some famous melodies using only laughter. The most applied version of this game is that which follows the structure of the exchange of roles. You go to the stage, or in front of the rest of the group, and choose a songwriter or a song, trying to make mates and guess which one it is, while laughing simulating the melody of the song. They will all be involved in big laughs.

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The inner child

One quality that babies and young children have is that they laugh every day, up to four times more than adults, as they can find grace in any situation and their life revolves around games and fun. Little ones are usually a reason for adults to laugh, either because of their innocence or the way they express themselves, which is why most of the dynamics in laughter therapy try to externalize the child that each participant carries within. "The inner child" consists in the fact that the participants have to behave like children, talking like them, making noises, surprising themselves for small details and laughing just like children do, because by imitating them and observing the rest of the group doing this, laughing comes naturally to all.

Once the cycle of dynamics is complete, the closing phase follows, in which participants express how they felt during the session, indicate what they have learned from the experience and what they will try to put into practice in their daily routine. Likewise, facilitators will do some reflections on the activities that have been carried out in the laboratory, the benefits of laughter and the importance of attending laughter therapy sessions regularly, as these are a way to adopt a healthier lifestyle, while helping people to recreate, relax and adopt an optimistic outlook on life situations.

STEPS 5, 6, 7, 8 – PREPARATION, ACCEPTING, MANAGING, MONITORING THE CHALLENGE

Accepting, managing and monitoring the psychological challenge is something that can be performed at a unitary level and should be managed by a certified psychologist.

Once the preparatory activity has been performed, the group should be ready with the right mindset to set a real challenge in their life.

Psychological goals should be always set through the aid of a certified psychologist who can give a professional view of the psychological aspects to be considered in personal development and facing psychological obstacles.

For achieving this goal, we suggest you invite a psychologist for a group session about the psychological state in your group.

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Since this is a sensitive topic and can be carried out individually for technical and privacy issues, we suggest you here the possible activities to be arranged in your group for facing challenges. Please have in mind that psychological evaluations can only be performed by psychologists. For achieving this goal, we suggest you reinforce the staff of your youth education center through the aid of a psychologist.

If you want to optimize the use of a single psychologist in a group, please take into consideration that there are some specific forms of psychological support for the groups.

One is called **group-therapy**, and it's based on the assumption that group dynamics can be applied in order to reinforce the therapeutic effects, but please consider that, usually, group-therapy sessions arrange groups sharing the same type of problem.

Another method to be used by certified psychologists and that can be performed in groups is called **Psychodrama**, a methodology in which persons adopt roles in a simulated session.

Certified psychologists can properly determine goals, challenges, and monitor psychological status.

STEP 9 – EVALUATION

During the closure of a session related to activities connected to positivity and psychological condition, it's good that all parts involved in the process are present in order to reinforce self-esteem and remind participants of the results achieved during the process. A group session including all participants reminding the progress of the group and the main feedback is suggested. This methodology is done to provide to youth educators a set of activities to be performed in rural youth centers, and certainly, the closure of a cycle of activity can be the beginning for another of the 5 areas presented in this methodology.

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Chapter TWO

COPING WITH CHALLENGES THROUGH THE OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Outdoor activities can be fun, adventurous and good for your well-being, even if they require a certain degree of effort and maybe getting out of the comfort zone. There is no clear definition of what constitutes an outdoor activity, but there are some factors that tend to be a part of it like exercise, being in an outdoor space and having contact with nature. However, the interpretation differs depending on the person and the level of intensity should be adjusted to suit the individual. Often, the activities involve a certain effort or have an element of—real or imagined—danger, but these are certainly not inherent characteristics (Korenstra&Worm, 2018).

For young people living in rural areas, with fewer opportunities, who do not like constrained and limited environments and who face psychological and social problems, having outdoor activities is one of the ways to experience joy and

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fulfillment. It is a method to increase self-esteem, build self-confidence, develop communication skills or just an opportunity to find friends. Therefore, participating in outdoor activities is not just any old pursuit of leisure. Just as an example of the benefits of this type of activity: a study has showed that outdoor education yields meaningful experiences on the lives of those with deaf blindness (Gibson, 2005). By participating in such activities, various skills are being trained, which leads to improvements in:

- sleeping
- general physical condition
- physical mobility
- the occurrence of self-injurious behavior.

In addition, there were opportunities for personal and social development, such as:

- self-confidence
- awareness of one's surroundings
- concentration level
- patience
- interpersonal relationships

Although the main objective of outdoor activities can simply be to have fun, it comes with the added bonus of having positive effects on physical and mental health.



[Open link. More about the benefits of outdoor activities.](#)



“

The facilitator, who will be doing outdoor activities, has to be motivated to be active, open-minded and have skills to respond to the needs of rural youth.

”

The facilitator must be well informed about how many rural youngsters are coming to the group activities (from 6 to 12 people) and their main characteristics. According to this, the facilitator has to be able to select the most appropriate activities for that group.

How to manage the facilitation process

To work with young people, we are proposing a 9-step model to be prepared and delivered in the order that follows bellow. In total the whole process could take up to 7 or 8 hours and we suggest scheduling the activities for approx. 3 hours/day, including a break, making it a total of 3 days.

1. **Knowing each other** (30-40 min). Team-building games: “Name Game”, “Who Started the Motion”, “Group Sculpture”. It’s very important to understand social context and respect diversity, so you have to find out what kind of youth you will work with, but do not develop any preconceived stereotypes. To get to know each other you have to play team-building games or activities and icebreakers. Why are team-building games so important? Collaboration, effective

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communication, and group cohesiveness can help individuals succeed in team situations. Showing dedication and enthusiasm for our work creates positive and productive results for those we serve. By mixing these ingredients, knowledgeable and caring professionals can do amazing things. Participants in these games facilitate trust, teamwork, as well as positive and effective communication within groups. You can adapt the materials, equipment, and activities according to the circumstances (Ingalls, 2018; Fisher, 2005).

2. **Identification of the problems** (20-30 min). Detecting fears and problems in a creative way, working together in a group setting. Problem solving is one the most important skills that need to be developed and it helps to look at the problem in a creative way. This activity will serve to develop creativity, critical thinking, problem solving and metacognition, communication, collaboration, information, and technology literacies.
3. **Positive thinking** (40-60 min). The Treasure Hunt will help the youngsters to think positive, because it is an active, exciting and motivating game that stimulates happiness and curiosity, at the same time promoting skills such as communication, group work, accepting shared responsibility, self-confidence, etc.
4. **Challenge youth with fun** (30-60 min). The Viking Chess Throwing Game is an original way to allow the youngsters to face a controlled challenge and to able to overcome it, therefore improving their confidence to face other, real life, challenges.
5. **Preparation for a challenge** (30-40 min). Draw a Hand activity will give the rural youth a chance to work on their creativity and social skills. In addition, this game allows not just to get to know other person, but yourself as well, through the eyes of the other. It should be noted that before doing this challenge, the youngsters need to be aware of what they are like and what are their strengths and their weaknesses.

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6. **Accepting the challenge** (60 min). Cross the obstacle course is a task that will help increase youngsters' self-confidence and ability to deal with challenges, as well as giving them a boost of energy and release of endorphins.
7. **Managing the challenge** (30- 60 min). Hanging large sheets of paper that have challenges written on it will allow a clear and physical visualization of the problems, which will make it easy not just for the individual to face them but also for the group to work on solutions together, fostering a sense of solidarity.
8. **Monitoring** (60 min). Interview with the participants about the outdoor activities and analysis of their expectations and results.
9. **Evaluation** (to be conducted throughout the activities). Reflection is one of the most important steps in any process, and participants should always be given the time and the guidance to do it. Experience sticks after each part of the activities and the reflection time it's the opportunity to think about the problems, to improve challenge solving and to be left with positive emotions in the end of the process.

STEP 1 - KNOWING EACH OTHER

Method: Team-building games



Objective: helping young people feel more comfortable within the group in different social settings respecting diversity.



Duration: 30 – 40 min

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Materials and tools: A place large enough to accommodate all the participants standing in a circle.



Learning outcomes: Understanding social context, getting to know the people around you, learning to trust a person that you meet for the first time.

In the hyper-individualistic culture of the modern world, team-building can be a challenge for facilitators. We often hear the familiar slogan “there is no ‘I’ in ‘Team’”, and it is indeed true that to build a team one must give up some individuality. Ingalls (2018) suggests these improvisational theater games for team building activities.

For monitoring these exercises, the facilitator can take group photos and have a short discussion with the participants after the exercises, by asking questions such: how did you feel doing the task? What were the difficulties of exercises? What did you enjoy the most?

NAME GAME

Purpose: There are many types and examples of name games. Not only they help new groups to learn each other's names, they can also serve as icebreakers or warm-up activities.

Skills/goals: This game requires players to widen the visual attention field and to coordinate their movements with the group.

Group size: This game can be played comfortably with a group as small as 8 or as large as 25.



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Equipment needed: The area large enough to accommodate participants standing in a circle. Name tags for participants, if participants do not already know each other's names.

Time needed: 10–20 minutes, depending on the size of the group.

Instructions for facilitator: The leader explains the steps below, after which the game starts. 1. A points to B across the circle and says B's name. 2. As A says B's name, A begins walking towards B. 3. Immediately, upon hearing the name, B points to C across the circle, says C's name and begins walking toward C. 4. A takes B's place in the circle, B takes C's place in the circle, and continues to do so, until there is a smooth flow of pointing, name-calling, and movement across the circle. The game may end when everyone has had a chance to change places several times and players do not need help with each other's names.

Challenges: The challenge in this game is to remember everyone's name and to support each other to make the flow of "traffic" across the circle smooth.

Tips: Facilitator may encourage participants to help each other with names. They may call out the rules of the game as reminders, including the instruction to point emphatically with an outstretched arm, call out the name, move slowly, and navigate across the circle without interfering with other players. If a participant seems reluctant to point boldly, the leader might instruct everyone to point timidly and see how that changes the game: does it mean everyone has to be alerted twice? Is it difficult to see or be seen? Does that make the game more fun or more challenging?

WHO STARTED THE MOTION?

Purpose: To challenge visual observing skills and awareness of one's own movements.

Skills/goals: The goal of this game is for the group and the person who started the motion (the "leader") to collectively hide who the leader is. The leader must blend in and must be blended in. This may be a challenge for players who believe that good leadership means standing out and being special, creative and innovative. This game emphasizes leading both from in front and behind. It makes the followers the leaders

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in the sense that the leaders must adapt their movements and watch the followers to make sure they are following. This mixing up of leader and follower is a theme that can be played within many games, but especially in “Who Started the Motion?” and “Mirrors.”



Size of group: 10–25 participants. Smaller groups make it easier to guess who the leader is.

Equipment needed: A place large enough to accommodate the group standing in a circle with one arm’s length between them.

Time needed: A minimum of 10 minutes, but this is a fun game and the facilitator can keep it going as long as time permits and if it continues to be a challenge.

Instructions to the leader: 1. The group forms a circle. 2. Person A volunteers and leaves the place. 3. The group designates person B to be a “leader”. 4. The leader begins the movement that everyone follows. 5. Person A is called into the center of the circle and has three guesses who the leader is. 6. After three guesses or a correct guess, person A joins the circle. 7. New people are selected (a new volunteer or the old leader). 8. The game repeats until everyone has had a turn leading role or tried to guess who is the leader.

Challenges: The “leader” moves too slowly and do not change their movement. The “follower” looks directly at the leader.

Tips: The group can agree ahead of time to look at another participant who is not the leader. The group can make up various similar strategies to trick the participant who try to guess who is the leader.

GROUP SCULPTURE

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Purpose: To stop relying on the ability to communicate by speaking and to develop other communication methods; to see (rather than hear) the group “story”.

Skills/goals: The participants learn not to use their own ideas, but to make small adjustments that add to the ideas of the group/ collective sculpture by physically moving the participants in the sculpture.



Group size: Ideal for a group of 12 or 14.

Equipment needed: A place large enough for the group to stand in a circle at least one arm’s length apart.

Time needed: with a small group, approx. 20 minutes for this game. It can be done with a larger group, but it will take more time.

Instructions to the leader: This is a nonverbal game, but firstly participants need to be given some time to decide what is the “story” they will create in the sculpture. The facilitator times the sculpting periods and gives a signal when to start and stop sculpting. The facilitator can also offer some small suggestions or point to details if that feels necessary.

1. The group divides evenly in two.
2. They form two concentric circles. The inner circle is the “clay” and faces out. The outer circle is the “sculptor” and faces in.
3. The facilitator gives the signal for players in the outer circle to start “sculpting” the person directly in front of them.
4. After 30 seconds of “sculpting,” the facilitator gives the signal to stop.
5. For the next 30 seconds, the “sculptors” move clockwise all the way around the circle examining the sculpture.
6. They stop moving when they arrive at the person standing after the one they previously sculpted.
7. They repeat steps 3–5 by adding something to the sculpture that fits what the group is building. The sculpture is finished when they have sculpted the

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person to the left of the first person they sculpted and made a final transit around the circle to observe the sculpture.

8. They then step back and observe the group sculpture.
9. The facilitator may have a group discussion at this point or may have the inner and outer circles switch places and repeat the steps shaping a new sculpture, which will add at least 10 minutes to the game. After the game finishes it is time for the group discussion.

Challenges: This is a hands-on game, “sculptors” need to be firm, but gentle and the “clay” needs to be pliable, but hold the shapes that they have been molded into.

Tips: The main tip is to slow down the sculptors if necessary (slow background music may help). Have a group discussion in which you ask questions such: What was it like to make a group sculpture? Did anyone feel that the sculpture turned out the way they envisioned or planned? How did you decide what to add? How was it working in a group with non-verbal communication?



[Open link for more Team-building activities examples.](#)



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STEP 2 - IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEMS

Method: represent a fear/problem using natural resources in a creative way



Objective: identify young people's problems; identify challenges young people in rural areas have and help to solve those problems in a creative way.



Duration: 20 – 30 min

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Materials and tools: everything that can be found in nature: stones, leaves, flowers, pine cones, sand, twigs, grass, berries etc.



Learning outcomes: learning to pinpoint problems, identifying problem solving opportunities, learning to look at problems in the creative and visual way.

Problems are a part of everyday human life. We can think of them as a burden that we are powerless to deal with or we can choose to look at them as challenges - like a puzzle to be solved. Our willingness and ability to solve problems has a huge effect on our feelings, and largely determines whether or not we become frustrated, avoidant, or depressed. In some cases, the solutions are pretty obvious - we know what has to be done to fix the problem and we have the skills to do it. In other situations, the solutions are not clear and several possible options need to be considered before finding the best solution. So, the most important lesson to remember is that when anyone is confronted with a problem there are ways to deal with it.

Process. Outdoor activities help to solve problems creatively. Creativity refers to the ideation process - namely, the development of new ideas that are novel and useful (Carmeli, Gelbard, Reiter-Palmon, 2013). So, it can be useful to design a fear/problem, for example using natural resources in the creative way and making a drawing or a collage.

The participants need to present and discuss those projects after the activity. It can look like these images:

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STEP 3 - POSITIVE THINKING

Method: treasure hunt

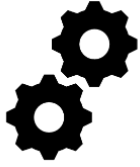


Objective: to help understand that overcoming a difficult path can lead to a sense of fulfillment.



Duration: 40- 60 min

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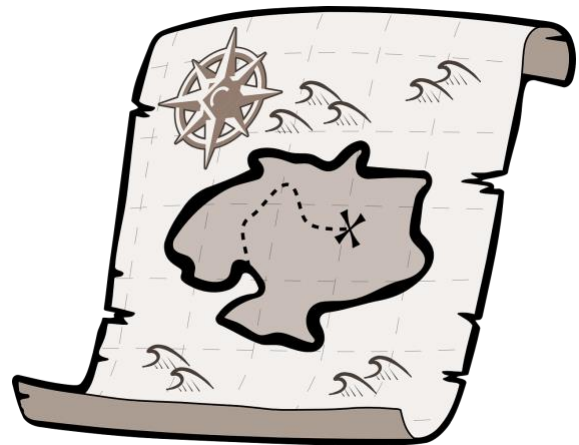


Materials and tools: Paper, box and any materials that can be used to build a treasure.



Learning outcomes: Treasure hunt will help the youngsters to have positive attitudes and because it is an active, exciting game it stimulates happiness, curiosity and positive energy. It will also lead to the development of skills such communication, group work, accepting shared responsibility, self-confidence and self-expression.

Process. Treasure hunt is a UK game show, based on the format of the French show “La Chasse au Trésor”, created by Jacques Antoine. The game is organized by clues, and the contestants are given the first clue, which will lead to the location of the second clue and so on until a trinket or other significant object is found.



The task of the facilitator is to organize a game of treasure hunting for motivational quotes, and later the group needs to rank the quotes, finalizing by presenting and explaining why the particular order was chosen.

To give some examples, these are the type of motivation quotes that can be used ¹:

1. “The best way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.” – Walt Disney

¹ Motivation quotes apps: <https://bit.ly/Quotable>

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2. "The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty." – Winston Churchill
3. "Don't let yesterday take up too much of today." – Will Rogers
4. "You learn more from failure than from success. Don't let it stop you. Failure builds character." – Unknown
5. "It's not whether you get knocked down, it's whether you get up." – Vince Lombardi
6. "If you are working on something that you really care about, you don't have to be pushed. The vision pulls you." – Steve Jobs
7. "People who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do." – Rob Siltanen
8. "Failure will never overtake me if my determination to succeed is strong enough." – Og Mandino
9. "Entrepreneurs are great at dealing with uncertainty and also very good at minimizing risk. That's the classic entrepreneur." – Mohnish Pabrai
10. "We may encounter many defeats but we must not be defeated." – Maya Angelou
11. "Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Wishing is not enough; we must do it." – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
12. "Imagine your life is perfect in every respect; what would it look like?" – Brian Tracy
13. "We generate fears while we sit. We overcome them by action." – dr. Henry Link
14. "Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right." – Henry Ford
15. "Security is mostly a superstition. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing." –Helen Keller
16. "The man who has confidence in themselves gains the confidence of others." – Hasidic Proverb

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17. “The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today.” – motivational quote by Franklin D. Roosevelt
18. “Creativity is intelligence and having fun.” – Albert Einstein
19. What you lack in talent can be made up with desire, hustle and giving 110% all the time.” – Don Zimmer
20. “Do what you can with all you have, wherever you are.” – Theodore Roosevelt

To manage a post-activity session, we suggest discussing what treasures (motivation quotes) the participants found and what can be its meaning for them, what they could do with it and how it can be applied to their lives.

STEP 4 - CHALLENGE YOUTH WITH FUN

Method: Viking chess



Objective: to help the participants to calm down, relax, have a pleasant time and to show that challenges can have a funny solving side.



Duration: 30 – 60 min



Materials and tools: One Viking Chess Game set, which usually would be made of wooden blocks and sticks, can be adapted using other materials, for instances bottles. The necessary thing is to have 10 similar objects that can be put on the ground to be knocked over, one other object taller than the others and two objects that

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can be safely thrown against the ones on the floor. It is also necessary to have space to put two rows of objects with some ground distance of around 3 meters between them or at least enough to make it challenging.



Learning outcomes: learning how to strategize in order to face a challenge, the ability to think about solutions both as an individual but also as part of a group, being able to work on a task until the ultimate goal is reached.

Process:

The way to play Viking Chess Throwing Game is to put two rows of 5 pawns each on the ground, with the rows separated by approximately 3 meters, and to place a king (meaning any taller object than the objects used for pawns) in the middle. Each element of each team has to take turns to throw a stick to try to knock down the other teams' pawns. When all the pawns are down it is time to try to knock down the king, and the facilitator can encourage the youngsters to look at the king as the ultimate challenge or fear that they face in their lives, thus promoting an extra sense of liberation when the game is concluded.



[Open link. How to play Viking chess](#)

It is important to show young people that they can overcome the challenges and enjoy themselves at the same time. Hunicke, LeBlanc, and Zubek (2004) argue that the term 'fun' in game design must be discarded in favor of more precise terminology. Therefore, they present eight distinct types of pleasure that can arise from game playing: sensation, fantasy, narrative, challenge, fellowship, discovery, expression, and submission. This is not claimed to be a complete categorization, and indeed, many other distinct forms of fun have been identified (Sorenson & Pasquier, 2010). Regardless of such considerations, the important lessons to retain are that games provide a way for youngsters to feel enjoyment whilst acquiring valuable skills, that they

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can also show that the process of solving problems can be as interesting as the end result, thus helping them have a more positive attitude to face their lives.

STEP 5 - PREPARATION FOR CHALLENGE

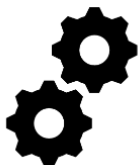
Method: draw hand on a piece of paper and exchange a page with another youngster



Objective: to help getting to know the other, but also to help to know yourself through the eyes of the other. Before accepting this challenge, the participants need to know what they are like, what strengths and weaknesses they have.



Duration: 30 - 40 min



Materials and tools: paper, coloured pencils.

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Learning outcomes: preparing for challenges in a creative way, self-knowledge, self-reflection, communication skills, learning how to share and how to listen to others

Process.

The participants need to draw a hand on a piece of paper, write their name on it and exchange that page with another youngster. Then they need to talk to that participant and write on the fingers the answers to the following questions: what they are like, what makes them sad or happy, where they feel strong, who they would like to be.



This task can *potentially* trigger a negative emotional reaction in some of participants, so it is important to be aware of it and to pay attention to reactions. At the same time, it is a fact that we all have challenges that need to be faced, so this provides a great opportunity to face those challenges and/or fears in a controlled environment, thus being more prepared the next time as a problem arises..

6 steps of preparation for the challenge.

Step 1: Envision the challenge (big or small).

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Step 2: Put the challenge in the perspective. All too often we are making mountains out of molehills and wondering why we are so exhausted after a day of “mountain-climbing”.

Step 3: Ask yourself, “In an ideal world, how do I want to feel in this situation?” Maybe you want to feel calm, satisfied, engaged or any other positive emotion. No one wants to feel angry, upset, or victimized, so you will notice that those do not make the list.

Step 4: Practice feeling that way. Notice what is not a positive thinking and what is a positive feeling. Feeling positive is a skill that must be practiced!

Step 5: In the period leading up to the challenge, when you begin to feel anxious, worried, angry, or otherwise not good about the challenge, stop it. Instead of this, get yourself out of your head, back into your heart, and feel that emotion you have identified in Step 3. Be sincere.

Step 6: In the moments just before the challenge, set aside a couple of minutes or seconds to get yourself into the emotion you’ve been practicing. It is much easier to end on the right foot if you have started there.

<https://www.thestressexperts.com/blog/how-to-prepare-for-an-upcoming-challenge>

STEP 6 - ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Method: cross the obstacle course



Objective: to help youngsters to know their strengths and weaknesses and have a positive view of themselves.



Duration: 60 min

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Materials and tools: any type of materials or objects that can be used to build an obstacle course and a large enough space.



Learning outcomes: increased self-confidence, positive thinking, self-knowledge.

Process:

The facilitator must prepare a course of obstacles and organize the participants to make a run through it, timing each one and encouraging everyone to show support to each other. A small symbolic gift in the end can be provided for the fastest participant, if the facilitator deems fit or appropriate.



Accepting and overcoming a challenge or a change in life not only depends on person's internal state, but can also change it, when the situation requires dictates it. But in order to face anything that arises, it is important to be self-confident. Self-confidence is an attitude about personal skills and abilities, and it means accepting and trusting ourselves and having a sense of control in life. By knowing our strengths and weaknesses well, it becomes easier to have a positive view of ourselves. It means we can set realistic expectations and goals, communicate assertively and handle criticism.

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Therefore, we need to increase the young rural person’s self-confidence for them to be able to succeed in facing challenges and having happier lives.

STEP 7 - MANAGING THE CHALLENGE

Method: to hang large sheets of paper, hang it on a tree and write down a challenge.



Objective: to help managing challenges, to develop critical thinking, to increase self-confidence



Duration: 30 – 60 min



Materials and tools: large sheets of paper and enough pencils for all participants.



Learning outcomes: the ability to reflect on solutions, getting better at problem-solving, learning to be open and trust others, increasing self-confidence.

Process: participants have to hang large sheets of paper on a tree, each one with a challenge written on it. Then the youngsters swap places with one another and write an implementation plan for the challenge the other has written.

STEP 8 - MONITORING

Methods: interviews with some of the participants



Objective: to see the impact for young people with fewer opportunities living in rural areas.



Duration: 60 min



Materials and tools: Record device, such as a smartphone camera

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Learning outcomes: learning if the objectives of activities are achieved, finding out if young people were impacted by activities

Process:

Depending on the type of activity and the profile of young people, the facilitator will decide whom they will talk with. The participation must be based on the principles of voluntariness. The duration of the interview depends on young person's willingness to talk about expectations, feelings during the activities and the possible impact on them.

STEP 9 - EVALUATION

Method: experience stick after each part of activities



Objective: to have reflection, opportunity to think about problems, opportunity to improve challenge solving.



Duration: throughout the session



Materials and tools: stick, materials from activities

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Learning outcomes: the opportunity to improve challenge solving, feeling positive emotions, develop a sense of accomplishment.

Process:

Before everything begins, the participants will get a stick, which will have to be "filled" during the activities. Everyone will need to tie or glue any symbol (e.g. note with the quote used in the activity, flower, etc.) in order to mark each activity they carried out. In the end, while sitting in a circle, impressions will be shared and the sticks will be taken home as reminders of the learning experience.

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About the author:

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Innovation Office is an organization that promotes the development of innovations, aims to create a supportive environment, share innovative ideas, motivate innovators to be active, and form an innovative society.

Areas of the activities:

- innovative projects in the field of education;
- social innovation;
- promotion of entrepreneurship;
- social initiatives;
- application of digital technologies (artificial intelligence, augmented reality, mobile applications, etc.).

The organization implements various projects and initiatives to increase public involvement and cooperation among the organizations in solving social problems, creating opportunities and solutions. VšĮ Inovacijų biuras/Innovation Office - www.inovacijubiuras.lt

Chapter THREE

COPING WITH CHALLENGES THROUGH THE LESSONS OF PHILOSOPHY

Philosophia – the love of wisdom. Philosophy – the way we think about questions.

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“

“This guide on Philosophy Activities is a brilliant collection and so much fun! The next pages guide you through setting up a philosophy journey for challenged youth, provide sample activities, and their detailed implementation. Find everything you need to set up your own philosophy adventure for youth. Highly recommended!”

”

Simona Stoycheva - Youth Worker

The goal of the philosophy is to understand life better and understand what makes us work to persevere and be effective. Because every time we make a choice, whether it's about what to eat or whom to spend our life with, we do philosophy. We use what we've gathered along the course of our life to determine what is right to us, what is valuable and what is in line with the fact that we are not living by ourselves in this world. In the Academy for Active Youth, we have concluded that different schools of philosophy and their teachings can be beneficial for different people and give them the mental toolset to face challenges and overcome them. This is why we want to get educators of challenged youth thinking in terms of philosophy. Both in their personal lives, and when it comes to working with youngsters.

We have devised a program of some activities to help the facilitators pass on distilled knowledge of practices inspired by the philosophy to make the lives of their participants easier and more fulfilling. Through them being trained professionals we will encourage as well as help them devise their own methods of passing on what they've learned to their learners. We also believe that they can be helpful to us as much as we are to them. By seeing how they approach the activities and hearing their feedback, we are

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certain that they will teach us a lot about working with youngsters so that we can make our other projects better.

The activities we have come up with for the program are:

Preliminary activities: getting to know the group – in which we will hold some ice breaker activities so that our participants can get to know us and each other. As a bonus we hope that everyone will feel a little less shy and a little more open to making new connections with other people.

The merits of philosophy – during this activity we will be explaining how philosophy has come to be and how it can and has helped people from times and places to have better reasoning behind their choices and perhaps make the right ones. Once we get into it, it will be dubious whether there is such a thing as a “right” choice.

Familiarization with the history of philosophy and its development – Here we will be talking about philosophies of the past. The way how people have been thinking throughout the years and how this has shaped our lives today.

Familiarization with the current predominant philosophical movements – This will be a natural continuation in which we will cover where philosophy has gotten to and how it has affected the way people think today.

“Answering” the big questions - Probably everyone has heard the Big questions that people have been trying to answer for millennia. We don’t just want to let them stumble in the dark though, we will be giving them the logical toolset and helping them avoid fallacies.

Pick a school – This is where we will come back to the different philosophies we have covered and we will be helping the participants figure out what might work for the best in the long term. We will be thinking together about what each one of our participants thinks is the most reasonable approach and how to implement it to make the best use of it.

Meditation on the school’s teachings – In this activity, participants will be largely on their own. We will let them thinking about how they can shape their lives, inspired by

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the ideas we have presented them with. We will let them think about it all in and emerge ready to apply what they've gathered.

Personal mantras inspired by the chosen school – A more practical activity, this one aims for the participants to come up with sayings what could help them ground themselves in the face of a challenge by recalling a certain string of words that they will have come up with in this activity.

Coping with social confrontation through the teaching of a chosen school of philosophy – a hands-on approach to testing how well their chosen philosophy serves them. We will be staging an argument or a personal attack towards each participant. We will have them deal with that by employing what they've learned so that they can better understand what is being thrown at them and devise a new way to react to it.

STEP 1 - GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

To get a sense of the participants, as well as to track their personal development throughout the project, we will begin with a video interview with each of them. Words being said matter. But also please take into consideration the small gestures made in the conversation and sharing.

Preliminary video interviews

Method: Interview, video recording.

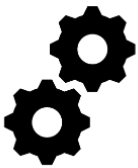
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Objective: To get to know the participants more in-depth and help ourselves assess the success of the program.



Duration: 10 minutes per participant



Materials and tools: Recording device.



Learning outcomes: To help the participants get into the mindset of exploring themselves.

Process:

1. We will call each participant into a separate room where a camera is set.
2. A facilitator will ask them a set of questions about their expectations for the project and their reasoning for joining.
3. They will also be asked how they see themselves in the current moment. And what they see themselves becoming.
4. This will be recorded on video and set aside until the end of the project.

The questions we would answer will be:

- What are each participant's expectations of the project?

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- What do they expect to get out of it?
- How do the participants see themselves?
- What do they see themselves becoming?

We have all had that story that just resonated with us. We felt that it describes our current life and mental state perfectly. For the first activity, we will be looking to get the participants to identify that story for themselves as their life is in that current moment. Our favorite things often help us make sense of the world around us. It feels like they are speaking our language and we speak theirs. Those stories can give us ideas and inspiration about how to go about our difficulties in the moment. We will be looking for movies, series, books, songs.

Tell me your story by telling me another story

Method: Learning through sharing, communication, self-reflection

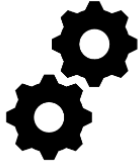


Objective: For the participants to get to know each other. Through identifying with a story presented in any of the suggested mediums.

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Duration: 70 minutes.



Materials and tools: White board and markers, paper and pens



Learning outcomes: Building a rapport between the participants. Helping each one to identify how they feel about the current state in their life. What they identify with. Teaching them to find comfort in stories that resonate with them.

Process:

1. Give the participants some time to reflect on the stories from movies, books and so on that have touched them on a deeper level and have resonated with where they are in life and how they view that.
2. Each participant will have 10 minutes in front of the whiteboard to illustrate through words and images what the story was about.
3. Then they will have another 5 minutes to relate the story to their current situation and explain why it resonates with them so much.
4. After everyone had their turn, a group discussion will be formed where participants will comment on whatever story/life combination has left the biggest impression on them. At this point, participants will choose if they would also like to hear any advice others have come up with.
5. However, the advice will be welcomed if the participant agrees to hear it.

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6. Each participant will have time to sit with what they've heard from their peers and write down ideas on how they can implement the lessons from the story and the advice from their peers in their own life situations.

The questions we would answer will be:

- What story do I relate to the most right now?
- How do its characters deal with their difficulties?
- What lessons can I take out of that so I could solve my own challenges?
- Is there something that I'm missing when looking at my own situation?
- Is it easier to solve somebody else's problems as opposed to one's own?

To bring the group together we will all engage in an icebreaker activity. We have found that it is important for participants to feel familiar with their current peers and an icebreaker helps everyone feel more comfortable because they gather some insights about what the person next to them is like.

As an icebreaker for implementation we have chosen:

Identity circles

Method: Discussion; sharing circle

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Objective: For the group to share their values in life and identify their core one to be their main guide in case of challenges.



Duration: 90 minutes



Materials and tools: Index cards (10 per person) with one value listed on each – written by the participants, pens



Learning outcomes: For the participants to get to know each other. As well as to find out what their core value is and be able to discuss why. This activity aims to show how crucial it is for someone to have a main value, through which to judge the situation they come across.

Process:

1. The participants will be divided into two groups. Ones will form an outer circle that faces inside and the others will form an inner one that faces outwards.
2. In this way couples will be formed which will then discuss the values they have each put down for 5 minutes and, in the end, each has to decide which one to tear up and toss away.
3. The circle will shift so that each participant is paired with the next one in the opposite circle and they will begin another 5 minutes of discussion/debate, starting with their reasoning to tear down the value card that they did. At the end of these next 5 minutes, the participants will tear down another index card, thus discarding another value from the 10.

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4. The iterations will repeat until the participants are all left with a single card. This would represent their core value for life in case of difficulties and challenges.
5. With their most important value in hand, each participant will get their turn to explain to the group why they think this is their most cherished one and what they think it brings into their life, when they face obstacles.

The questions we would answer will be:

- What are my 10 main values?
- What is my core value out of the 10?
- Why did I hold on to the value that I did?
- What does it bring into my life?
- How can it help me to better cope with challenges?

STEP 2 - IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

To bring more clarity to the participants' lives through philosophy, we must first get them to understand what the subject deals with and through what methods does it seek to solve everyday problems, as well as grand, existential ones. In our next activity we will be presenting the subject of philosophy itself to our participants so that they can better understand its capabilities of it.

THE MERITS OF PHILOSOPHY

Method: Presentation, Discussion

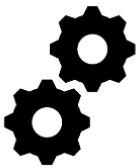
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Objective: For the participants to realize how potentially philosophy is in helping us deal with life's challenges.



Duration: 2 hours



Materials and tools: PowerPoint presentation, projector, notes on how philosophers have gotten better at dealing with the struggles through their own philosophy



Learning outcomes: Realization of the usefulness of different philosophical movements in dealing with hardship; Inspiration to pursue the study of philosophy both during the course of the project and in their own self-developmental time.

Process:

1. The facilitator will present an interactive PowerPoint Presentation followed by a game of Kahoot. The main points of the presentation will be: what is philosophy; why are we; how we are morally as a society; interesting stories about how philosophers have come to their conclusions; how has philosophy helped the people of its time; the echoes of the philosophies of the past.
2. The participants will be prompted to join a conversation on how we can apply philosophy in our everyday life. This will include brainstorming, sharing of experiences, discussing how we could have better reacted to what happened to us then.

The questions we would answer will be:

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- What is philosophy?
- Why do we need philosophy to overcome challenges in our lives?
- Who is a philosopher?
- What is a school of philosophy?
- Why do we need to apply the teaching of philosophy in our everyday life, especially when we are facing challenges?
- What are the benefits of studying philosophy?
- What makes a good philosophical movement?
- How to pick a philosophical movement that works for us?

STEP 3 - POSITIVE THINKING WITH THE LESSONS LEARNT THROUGH THE LESSONS OF PHILOSOPHY

Before the means of mass communication, before people could just google what they wanted to know, there were different approaches to soothe the soul. In Ancient Greece, along with gymnastics, the members of the polis would gather in the agora to listen to philosophers and their ideas about the meaning of life and the proper approach in dealing with hardship. We wish to test this approach in modern times and give a chance to the challenged youth to take something out of it.

Even though some ideas are outdated nowadays, there is a reason, we believe, that they have been discovered and implemented in their respective times. There is at least a little bit of something to learn in everything and the case of Philosophy, previous ideas still echo in our ways of thinking and governing. A better understanding of those will help with the filtration of what might work and what is truly outdated. In addition to that, when paired with the activity after that, the participants could be able to follow how ideas are developed and how to step on previous ways of thinking to reach new heights of clarity.

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Familiarization with the history of philosophy and its development.

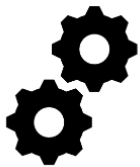
Method: Lecture, discussion, brainstorming, examination



Objective: To introduce the teaching of the past. For the participants to realize how the different movements have arisen because of a need for a shift in the way of thinking. As well as for them to pick out ideas that might work for them in the short and long term.



Duration: 2 hours



Materials and tools: Flashcards, pens and paper



Learning outcomes: Better understanding of the history of philosophy – how it has come to be and how it has benefited the people of its time. Ideas on how we can recycle certain ideas that are now considered outdated.

Process:

1. Passing around flashcards with condensed and structured information on different schools of the past.
2. A lecture on the history of philosophy. What have been the historical benefits of various movements?
3. Discussion on ideas how we can apply outdated ways of thinking that are found to be somewhat ineffective nowadays. The facilitator will present the ideas.

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4. The same discussion as above but this time the participants will be encouraged to share how they have been inspired by what they've learned.
5. A brainstorming session about what we can learn from things which don't work anymore.
6. A brainstorming session about what we've learned can be useful to participants who are struggling
7. A brainstorming session about how the facilitators can transfer what they've learned to their learners in the best way.

The questions we would answer will be:

- What schools have been out there?
- What has been proven not to work anymore?
- How can we derive our own teaching from outdated ones?
- How can we apply what we've learned in our daily lives?

STEP 4 - COPING WITH CHALLENGES WITH FUN

This next activity will be a natural continuation of the previous one. In which we will turn our attention to the philosophical schools that are actively at play in our daily lives, whether we realize it or not. We will be focusing on theories that have yet to be disproven or disregarded as outdated and we will discuss how we sense their presence in our daily lives, now that we are more aware of what they teach.

Familiarization with the current predominant philosophical movements.

Method: Lecture, discussion, brainstorming

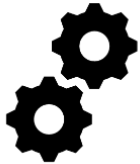
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Objective: To introduce current philosophical movements. For the participants to realize why the current philosophical ideas have arisen and how they serve us both in everyday life but also in politics and interhuman relationships as well and how they can cope with challenges, through having that knowledge.



Duration: 2 hours



Materials and tools: flashcards, pens and paper



Learning outcomes: Better understanding of the philosophical ideas of the current day. Understanding how they serve us in governing, making decisions, resolving conflict, the relationship to self and our relationships with others.

Process:

1. Passing around flashcards with condensed and structured information on different philosophical schools that are predominant in our current age.
2. Interactive lecture summarizing the current philosophical movements at play.
3. How are they influencing our reason and thoughts and how do they help us make decisions?
4. Discussion on the impression gathered by the lecture. What have our participants noticed to be connected to the points we've made, how are they already influenced by the collective reasoning and how do they apply it themselves?

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5. A brainstorming session about how we can better apply what we've learned in the lecture in our daily lives and in decision making. What is found by thinkers but not already applied by the people around us and those who govern us?
6. Another brainstorming session, concerning the applications of the philosophers' teaching in the learning process of the participants. Additionally, how can some of participants use the philosophies to help themselves in solving the problems they face and what way would be suitable for passing on these ideas?

The questions we would answer will be:

- What are the reigning schools of thought?
- Which of their teaching is working well in our time and which ones are not?
- How can we better interpret the ideas to benefit ourselves and society?
- How can we derive our own methods of coping with difficulty from the current philosophical movements?
- How can we apply what we've learned in our daily lives?

STEP 5 - PREPARATION FOR CHALLENGES WITH THE LESSONS LEARNT FROM PHILOSOPHY

There has been a lot of questions that have concerned philosophers throughout the ages. Some of those have yet to receive a coherent answer and are even sometimes used to show people how oblivious we are to what life truly is. In this next activity, we will present a list of such questions to our participants and we will get them to think about them from their own perspective, as well as from someone's perspectives in the past, that we, the facilitators, will share.

“Answering” the big questions.

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Method: Lecture, symposium, discussion



Objective: Getting the participants to think as a philosopher would. Having them go through the process of evaluating the question critically and looking at it from multiple angles.



Duration: 3 hours



Materials and tools: PowerPoint presentation, projector, pens and paper



Learning outcomes: A better understanding how to approach a philosophical question and how the answer of it can be used while we face challenges. Understanding of the value of thinking about how the world is and how it should be. The ability to look at a problem from multiple sides and consider some viewpoints different from one's own, to communicate better and face challenges courageously.

Process:

1. The facilitator will ask the participants some of the more discussed questions about life in general and have them answer with what they are thinking initially.
2. The facilitators will present the group with some of the more popular answers and ways to look at the aforementioned questions.
3. Everyone will discuss whether they agree with what was presented or not. And why.

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4. The participants will be given a chance to update their thoughts on the questions posed initially and the group will evaluate each other on logic and reason.
5. Everyone will be able to pose their own questions in front of the group and have them discussed in an attempt to answer them.

The questions we would answer will be:

- What are the most widely discussed questions in philosophy throughout history and nowadays?
- What makes an engaging philosophical question?
- How do we approach a question which has no one conclusive answer?

We all have a certain perception of ourselves, however vague it might be. And being deeper within ourselves, and sometimes not so deep, impacts on our vision of where we want to be.

Who am I?

Method: Journaling, planning, envisioning.



Objective: To get the facilitators to open up about how they see themselves and where they think they are in their life's journey. To encourage them to make a plan for the following year by trimesters.



Duration: 80 minutes

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Materials and tools: pens and paper



Learning outcomes: A better perspective in the participants about their life's journey and how to travel through it in easier and directed way.

Process:

1. A short introductory talk will be given by the facilitator. It will be aimed at motivating the participants to let themselves expect the best they can hope for.
2. The time will be given with the purpose that each participant would write down where they are in their life: what is their situation, what is difficult for them, what they are doing about it, what they think they should do.
3. Another journaling session will be conducted. In this one, participants will be encouraged to ask the facilitator for help. The participants will be writing journal entries about where they want to be in 3, 6, 9 and 12 months. The facilitators will be there to encourage them to plan boldly but also ground them when needed.

The questions we would answer will be:

- Where am I currently?
- Where do I want to be in the future?
- How can I get there?

This next activity is the gist of our project. Our main idea is to help the potential facilitators, and consequently their learners, to find and adopt a new approach, in case all else has failed. A lesson from that would be that there is always another way, another

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approach and viewpoint to look a problem through. And nothing is ever hopeless because there is always a different approach to try.

Pick a school

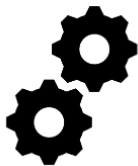
Method: Decision-making, reading up



Objective: To connect with a school of thought and prepare to adopt its main viewpoints. For them to understand what it means to follow their chosen school’s principles. To be able to employ the teaching in conflict resolution and decision making.



Duration: 1 hour



Materials and tools: White board, markers, pens and paper



Learning outcomes: A choice of a set of principles and ideas. An in-depth understanding of them and how to apply what has been studied in daily life – decision-making and conflict resolution. New ideas about what might influence the participant’s life in the better direction.

Process:

1. This activity will technically begin immediately after all the schools of thought are presented. The participants will be encouraged to think about which of the ways of thinking presented seems most fitting to their needs and expectations of life.

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2. A loosely coordinated chat at the beginning of the activity session in which the participants will be encouraged to share with those around them what they are considering to pick.
3. Some options will be written on a whiteboard, pledging that participants will adopt the set of behaviours and reasoning suggested by their chosen philosophies.
4. Questions and Answers on how to apply the principles chosen in the best way and what to be careful about.
5. Additional reading material will be recommended to everyone, according to their choices.
6. Time until the next activity would be used by the participants to further educate themselves on what it means to be a proponent of their chosen school of thought.

The questions we would answer will be:

- Is the philosophy I've chosen suitable to what my goals in life are?
- How can I implement the teaching in my everyday life?
- How can I further educate myself on the way of thinking I've chosen to try out?
- What are some fallacies I might fall as a victim to?

STEP 6 - ACCEPTING CHALLENGES WITH THE HELP OF PHILOSOPHY

Meditation is not always just emptying your mind. This explanation is complete, as oftentimes, meditation is used as a way to first clear one's mind but only to make space for a specific training of thought that the practitioner wishes to explore. Through our activity on meditation, we will be getting the future facilitators to dive deeper on their

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own into how they understand the specific school of thought that they have chosen and to think about how it can serve them afterward.

Meditation on the school’s teaching

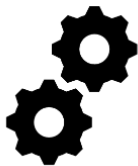
Method: Lecture, brainstorming, discussion, guided meditation, silent meditation



Objective: to devise meditations that would help them stay on track in following their chosen school of thought’s teaching. As well as for them to dive even deeper, mostly on their own, into the core ideas of their respective choice. Furthermore, to build a better understanding of what meditation on a certain topic entails.



Duration: 1 hour and 30 minutes



Materials and tools: Comfortable floor for seating, pens and paper



Learning outcomes: A better understanding of what meditation is and how to devise a personal one. A heightened clarity on the subject matter chosen by each participant.

Process:

1. A lecture will be given by the facilitators about how to come up with meditation and how to implement the chosen study in the practice.

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2. An introductory guided meditation led by a facilitator to present just how effective the method can be as well as to give an example of what meditation could be.
3. Brainstorming by the group about ideas for approaches to coming up with personal meditations. Additional notes and guidance will be given by the facilitators.
4. Time will be allotted for each participant's solitary construction of a meditation that they believe will help them fully internalize the teachings of their chosen philosophical ideas and will help them better implement them in the time following the meditation.
5. Discussion within the participants and with the facilitators about the outcomes of the meditation construction. Feedback and constructive criticism will be given.
6. The mindful practice of the meditations.

The questions we would answer will be:

- What is meditation?
- How does meditation help to understand a subject better?
- How to construct a personal meditation?

STEP 7- HOW CAN WE SUCCESSFULLY MANAGE CHALLENGES?

A mantra is sometimes chanted out loud, sometimes in one's mind. But its purpose is to submerge us in a singular idea and to help us remember a simple truth we have found for ourselves. There are many mantras created for different purposes by masters of mindfulness. We will present the participants with some of them to help them better understand the task at hand. But ultimately, once they've gathered all the materials, they will be on their own to tap into what they truly need from a mantra and how they can best achieve it.

Personal mantras inspired by the chosen school.

Method: Questionnaire, lecture, discussion, brainstorming

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Objective: to come up with personal and unique mantras for themselves, based on the teachings of their chosen school of philosophy.



Duration: 1 hour and 30 minutes



Materials and tools: Comfortable floor for seating, pens and paper



Learning outcomes: A better understanding by the participants about what a mantra is and how to come up with one suitable for their goals. An idea for a mantra or a few that would best serve the participants in their quest of staying on track with their chosen philosophical school.

Process:

1. The participants will be asked to fill in questionnaires on how they are feeling in the current moment and what they think could be improved in their mental state.
2. A lecture will be given by the facilitators on what a mantra is and what its purpose is. During the lecture, instructions will be given on how to devise a suitable one for each participant's intended mental shift.
3. The facilitators will share some of the more popular mantras intended for general purposes and the group will practice them together.
4. A discussion between the group about what makes a good mantra in their opinion.

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5. A brainstorming session on ideas for mantras in which the participants will help each other. Additionally, the facilitators will be giving more tips and guidance in the process as well as providing constructive criticism.
6. Time will be allotted for the participants to each come up with a mantra that they believe would be suitable for them and their needs, according to the methods suggested by their chosen school of thought.
7. Participants will share in front of the group what mantras they've come up with and if willing will receive feedback from their fellow group members and the facilitators.
8. The practice of the repetition of the mantras will be encouraged at the end of the activity session. Participants will say the mantras they've come up with 3 times.
9. The members of the group will take the time to share how they feel after saying the mantras. What are their initial thoughts and whether they see themselves practicing this activity in their own time?
10. Another questionnaire with the same questions will be given out to the participants. They will be asked to evaluate the change they perceive post the mantra practice.

The questions we would answer will be:

- What is a mantra?
- How does a mantra work?
- What is the goal I am trying to achieve in creating a mantra for myself?
- How can we come up with a personal mantra?

Trying to solve our problems can be much too daunting at times. But listening to other people's struggles seems to inspire us to come up with solutions. For their problems.

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We believe it would be beneficial for our educators to open up anonymously about their challenges in life and have other participants come up with solutions to those.

Easier said than done

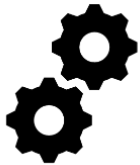
Method: Problem-solving, drawing prompts, discussion



Objective: To get the participants to share their problems anonymously and find solutions to problems whose source they are unaware of.



Duration: 120 minutes.



Materials and tools: Urn, pens and small papers, podium.



Learning outcomes: to gather new insights and ideas about how to approach problems. To get them thinking about how to solve another one's problems, to consider different viewpoints and circumstances when it comes to handling challenges.

Process:

1. Participants will be given a chance to write as many of their problems as they want to on identical pieces of paper.
2. All of the pieces with problems written on them will be tossed in an urn.

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3. Each participant will get a turn to go on the podium and draw a piece of paper. They will be encouraged to describe how they would approach the problem written on it and how they would go about solving it.
4. In the case, a participant draws their own piece they will put it back and draw again until they find something that wasn't written by them.
5. If only one piece is left and it belongs to the one who draws it, they will have a choice to pass it onto somebody, destroy it or answer themselves.
6. Participants will be given a chance to express how the experience has made them feel and whether they have gotten any new ideas about how to deal with their problem(s).

The questions we would answer will be:

- What problems can I identify in my life?
- What are some solutions that I haven't thought of?
- What are alternative ways to look at the challenges that I face?
- Is it easier to solve others' problems?
- Am I already equipped to be giving people advice about their life's challenges?

STEP 8 - REFLECTION OF THE EFFECTS THAT CHALLENGES HAVE ON US

Journaling is a helpful practice that helps people make sense of what is inside of them through the action of writing it down. With an added guarantee that nobody will ever see it, it can even be therapeutic and enlightening. We plan on offering the participants this guarantee by giving them a safe space to pour out their thoughts and have the physical body of them destroyed.

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Write & Burn.

Method: Journaling, self-reflection.



Objective: to let go with what the participants have been keeping from themselves.



Duration: 60 minutes



Materials and tools: Pens and paper, bonfire.



Learning outcomes: A heightened realization in the participants about what is holding them back and how it affects them.

Process:

1. Each participant will get a pen and paper.
2. They will be instructed to write down what challenges them or what they are struggling with at the moment.
3. We will assure them that nobody will read whatever they write and make sure that they have enough privacy.
4. After the allotted time has passed, everybody will come together around a bonfire where they will be encouraged to toss their paper with the writing into the fire.

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5. All will be given a chance to share how the experience has made them feel.
6. We will ask the participants if they would consider doing this in their own time.

The questions we would answer will be:

- What am I struggling with at the moment?
- How am I holding myself back?
- What do I need to put more focus on?

STEP 9 - EVALUATION

Our final activity will be the most practical one. We wish to help the participants hands-on to see how beneficial adopting a different approach can be. We will be putting them in an uncomfortable situation that they might otherwise not know how to respond to. But with instructions from us they will hopefully be able to mitigate a confrontation peacefully and compassionately that would leave all parties feeling better.

Coping with social confrontation through the teaching of a chosen school of philosophy.

Method: Mock arguments, simulation, roleplay

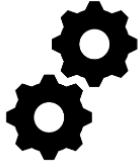


Objective: to develop and practice a skill set that would enable the participants to deal with confrontation more calmly and effectively. As well as to come up with ideas on how to help the participants understand various philosophical teaching and implement them in their own daily confrontations and the facing of challenges.

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Duration: 2 hours



Materials and tools: scripts for confrontational situations



Learning outcomes: An understanding of how philosophy can be an aid in dealing with confrontation and facing challenges. A solid practice of how certain ideas can be implemented in avoiding heated arguments and miscommunication. Learning how to diffuse false arguments and spot fallacies.

Process:

1. Scripts will be devised by the facilitators to face the participants with a heated situation in which one is likely to lose their calm and their focus.
2. Each participant will face a facilitator whose goal is to provoke them and get them to lose their patience.
3. The participants will be encouraged to not answer with the first thing that comes to their mind but rather to reflect on the teaching they've been looking into and assess how they can implement them and answer in such a way that the facilitator attacking them is shut down and out of the base to attack them on.
4. After each participant's turn, the group will discuss how well they've done, how effective they've been in diffusing the argument and staying calm. As well as to what extent this has been done with the help of their chosen school of thought.
5. Each participant will share in turn how they felt during the simulation and whether they think they handled it better or worse than they would with the methods they'd been using so far.

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The questions we would answer will be:

- Is it worth shifting our mentality through philosophy to look at an argument from a different angle and respond through a different set of values?
- Was I more effective or less effective in dealing with confrontation using the new methods I had devised through the course of the project?
- Is it worth further exploring the study of philosophy on my own time?

Through these activities, we hope to spark an interest in our participants towards the field of Philosophy for them to cope with challenges easier. We would like them to think outside of their own boxes and reflect on what they can improve in their daily conversations, arguments and obstacles. We will be working for all of this to be later transferred to the group of youth workers. An emphasis will be put on how each facilitator can get their participants engaged in the methods that certain schools of Philosophy offer in dealing with hardship and how best to educate them on the different ways of thinking that have prevailed throughout history and/or are reigning in our current times.

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About the author:



Stella Nikolaeva studies Psychology and is devoting herself to the sphere of philosophy as well. She develops informal practices for fighting depression and developing meaning for life. She helps with the methods behind the activities and stimulation of the youth towards an active life in every sense of the world.



The fundamental idea of Academy for active youth is based on the principle 'By Young People For Young People'. What we promote can be summed in one sentence which is: the responsibility for the future is in the hands of us, the youth, and what we aim at is to train youngsters to become the ambassadors of a more sustainable society. We help the integration of vulnerable youth groups from our society – unemployed youth, youth with health problems, youth with fewer opportunities, students and pupils, youth with fewer opportunities, youth from minorities, unemployed youth, youth with fewer educational opportunities. The interesting thing for us is that we are all young ourselves, some of us are just 19 (the oldest one of us is 24). Our association

is mainly run by volunteers and youngsters that are supporting our idea. And we all are on various paths of life.

The organization works on the development of youth politics and the active involvement of youth activities in daily social life. Academy for active youth aims to be a mediator between the youth and the power of representation. Our long-term goal is to create an active young society of youngsters that know what it takes to make a change for youth voices to be heard and for more opportunities for the most vulnerable youth. Because only the young are the ones that are allowed to be idealistic by striving for a better world, and most importantly that knows that it is never too early to start and you are never too young to make a change happen. We believe in the youth because we believe in ourselves.

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Chapter FOUR

COPING WITH CHALLENGES THROUGH SPORTS

Young children are naturally active. As they grow older they are less likely to be active. The most dramatic drops in activity occur in the teen years, especially among girls and young women. Young people need to be motivated with a variety of inspirational methods and activities, and clear evidence of progress.

Children grow at different rates at different ages and experience periods of awkwardness during growth spurts. Sports activities need to be adapted so that they are appropriate for the age, abilities and skill level of the learners.

Sport and recreation are key elements of social life. By giving health, joy and entertainment, they allow us to fight the threats of today's civilization – alcohol, drug addiction, violence, etc. They are an irreplaceable educational tool and an important means in the process of social rehabilitation of minors. Well-organized sports and recreational activities have several rehabilitation values. They release mental and motor tension, reduce anxiety, strengthen control mechanisms, which allows the youth to better predict the consequences of their actions, and contribute to the growth of socialization by gaining individual and collective success.²

Although it is never too late to learn motor skills, many, if not most of the skills used in adult sport and recreation are learned early in life. Physical and sports education programs should be given priority in school curricula and community life.

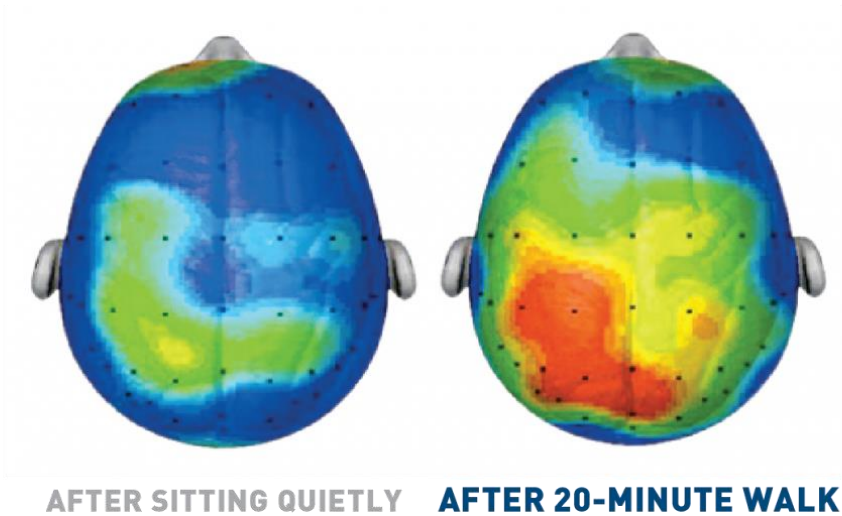
²<http://mow.powiat.koszalin.pl/przyklady/publikacje/MJ.pdf>

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‘Active kids do better in life.’ – According to new research from The Aspen Institute, children who regularly play sports have higher self-esteem, up to 40% higher test scores, lower health costs, lower levels of depression and self-degradation. Those kids are 1/10 as likely to be obese!³

Take a look at the picture below - these changes in brain activity occur after just 20 minutes of walking!

MOVE BODY, ACTIVATE BRAIN
WHAT MRI SCANS TELL US*



* Schools cut recess (and P.E.) to their own detriment. Even if kids aren’t running, they’re winning. Above are composites of MRI brain scans of 20 students taking the same test, as measured by University of Illinois researcher Dr. Chuck Hillman. The red sections represent highest amount of neuro-electric activity.

Source: <https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/youth-sports-facts/benefits>

In sport, variety is the spice of life! If young people are introduced to a wide range of physical activities, they are more likely to find an activity that offers them a source of passion and inspiration.

³<https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/youth-sports-facts>

Initial activities are based on core Olympic values: friendship, respect and excellence.⁴ We will try to improve and wonder about these personality traits, e.g. How do these values show up in my daily life? Do I follow them? What can I do more in this area? This focus on values is especially valuable in times of lots of conflicting information. It allows you to stop and turn inside, instead of constantly looking for answers to existential questions around you.

The main idea of central activities is to prepare Olympic Day for the local community and to improve the management skills of young people. This area will allow you to work out a hard result step by step, establish contact with young people from the area and will be a challenge for the project participants.

Final and reflection activities will help you to draw conclusions, and to implement the acquired knowledge in further activities. Conducting an evaluation will help you to see which areas have been developed as intended and which of them still require additional work. Give everyone a space to speak.

Young facilitator! Remember that the most important thing is being a role model for young people. The group reflects you. Avoid being a boring lecturer. Your positive energy and openness to youth will allow you to derive satisfaction from what you do, and the participants will love the activities you prepared!

STEP 1 - KNOWING EACH OTHER

The first value we focus on is friendship. We will help group members to trust others and feel like they belong to the group, through icebreakers and team-building games. Remember to ensure the safety of the group, e.g. by establishing the rules of cooperation.

⁴<https://www.icsspe.org/system/files/The%20Fundamentals%20of%20Olympic%20Values%20Education.pdf>

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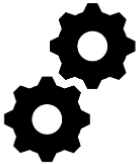
Method 1: Snake game



Objective: Let the group get to know each other in action.



Duration: 20 min



Materials and tools: 2 or 4 buckets, blindfolds (two or four less than the number of participants), 10 items of comparable size, e.g. balls, boxes, markers.

Location: Grass outside



Learning outcomes: Cooperation, trust, friendship definition.

Process:

- 1) Divide the group into two or four teams. You can deal one card to everyone – the people with the black symbol are together (clubs, spades), the other team has the red symbols (hearts, diamonds).
- 2) Each team lines up, one after the other. Everyone is blindfolded, except the people standing at the end of the rows.
- 3) The group selects the signals sent by the snake's tail (the only person who can see it) to the snake's head (the person at the beginning of the row). The body of the snake (the people inside) transmits signals by patting on the shoulders, such as: turn left, turn right, pick up, drop, stop, go, etc. The snake cannot talk!

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4) The groups line up at the starting line. The facilitator places the buckets and items. At their signal, the snakes can start walking. The task of each team is to collect as many items as possible into their bucket.

Debrief:

- What did you learn from this experience?
- Was it easy to trust?
- How did you feel during this activity?
- What are your conclusions after this activity?
- What helped you during this activity?
- Based on this experience, how would you describe friendship? Develop your own definition! You can also create a mind map.

Method 2: Two balls



Duration: 10 min



Materials and tools: 2 balls or mascots (the same size)

Location: Outside / inside (enough space to form a circle)



Learning outcomes: Cooperation, improved definition of friendship.

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Process:

- 1) Group forms a circle and counts to two. We get two groups, one and two, standing in one large circle. The facilitator places the balls on opposite sides of the circle.
- 2) The task of both teams is to pass the ball to the right only to their group members as quickly as possible. You cannot throw the ball. The team to outstrip the opponent's ball wins.
- 3) During the second round, the ball changes direction and is passed to the left.

Debrief:

- What was challenging in this activity?
- What motivated you to pass the ball faster?
- What are your conclusions after this activity?
- Based on this experience, how would you describe friendship?
- Add something to your friendship definition/mind map.

Method 3: The bridge



Duration: 30 min



Materials and tools: 2 balls or mascots (the same size)

Location: Outside

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Learning outcomes: Trust, cooperation, work as one team.

Process:

- 1) Match the participants in pairs (strong with weak). Have them line up in two rows, facing each other, at their fingertips.
- 2) Participants hold their hands low (one person crosses their arms, the other holds them parallel) to form a bridge.
- 3) The couple on the right side of the bridge will start the crossing. Each one lays down on the hands of friends and is slowly tossed towards the end of the bridge.
- 4) When both people of the couple reach the end of the bridge, they become part of it again.

Debrief:

- Were you afraid the bridge wouldn't hold you?
- What was the most difficult part of this exercise?
- How did you feel crossing the bridge?
- Based on this experience, how would you describe friendship?
- Create a final definition of friendship and stick it on the wall.

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STEP 2 - IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEMS

The second fundamental value in sport is respect. We will try to find problems related to respect and then solve them. An important step will be to create a definition and relate it to our real life.

Method 1: Three-point shot



Objective: Presentation of the problems related to the topic of respect. An attempt to find a solution.



Duration: 15 min



Materials and tools: 1 piece of paper for each person, 1 bucket, 1 chair per person.

Location: In the classroom with chairs (and optional desks)



Learning outcomes: identifying differences in people's abilities and capabilities

Process:

- 1) Everyone chooses a chair to sit on and gets a piece of paper. Participants crush the paper and form a throwing ball.
- 2) The facilitator places the bucket in the corner of the room so that some participants sit closer and others farther away.

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3) The participants are asked to hit the bucket with the ball. Then the facilitator counts the people who have succeeded.

4) After debrief you can repeat this activity and implement solutions.

Debrief:

- How did you feel when the bucket was out of your throw range?
- When you were close to the bucket and it was easier for you to throw in, did you think about people who were too far away?
- What can we do to give more people a chance to throw the ball into the bucket?
- How can we compare this situation to real life?
- What lesson about respect is behind this task?

Method 2: The run of (in)equalities



Duration: 20 min



Materials and tools: cards

Location: Outside or at the gym



Learning outcomes: becoming aware of the difficulties associated with motor limitations

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Process:

1) Divide the group into 5-person teams. Each team stands in a row. The first competitors line up at the starting line.

2) The task of each team is to bring 10 cards from the table. Each card has certain limitations, such as the need to jump or touch the ankles. If a player takes a card, they must follow its rules to return with it.

3) Proposal of tasks on the cards:

- you have to join your team in one breath (make a sound)
- touch your ankles
- only jump
- only crawl
- jump on one leg
- do flips
- walk on your knees
- walk foot by foot
- running on all fours
- run by doing jumping jacks

Debrief:

- Which of these cards was the hardest to bring?
- What was it like facing a challenge?
- How can we compare this situation to real life?
- What solutions should be used to reduce inequalities?
- How does respect have to do with it?

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- Should sports include a division by age, gender, or disability? Why? Why not?

Method 3: Respect – crossword



Duration: 30 min



Materials and tools: 1 piece of paper and pen per group

Location: In a room with tables



Learning outcomes: understanding the concept of respect

Process:

- 1) Divide the group into teams of 3 or 4. Give each group a piece of paper and a pen.
- 2) The group's task is to create a crossword. The words used must be related to the solution of the crossword – "respect".
- 3) Teams present their crossword puzzles and explain how their associations are related to the concept of respect.

Debrief:

- Which words are in each group?
- What is the most important in respect?
- What could our definition of respect be?

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- How can we relate our definition of respect to what we've been doing so far?
- How is the respect shown in sport?

Method 4: Imagine...



Duration: 20 min



Materials and tools: 1 piece of paper and a pack of colored pencils per group

Location: In a room with tables



Learning outcomes: the importance of respect in today's world

Process:

- 1) Divide the group into teams of 3 or 4. Give each group a piece of paper and a pack of colored pencils.
- 2) The group creates a drawing in which they depict the world without respect.
- 3) The groups present their drawings. They explain what is included in their work and why they believe respect is important.

Debrief:

- What elements of respect appear in each drawing?
- Which ideas were the most unique? Why?

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- What is the value of respect?
- What is respect here and now?
- How has your approach to the concept of respect changed?

STEP 3. POSITIVE THINKING

The third value important to every athlete is excellence. It is achieved through dedication to your discipline and regular practice. Positive thinking builds persistence and the ability to achieve what seems impossible at first.

Objective: Based on individual pursuit of excellence and teamwork, the group will perform a "cup song" show.

Method: "Cup song"



Objective: Based on individual pursuit of excellence and teamwork, the group will perform a "cup song" show.



Duration: 1 h



Materials and tools: 1 plastic cup per person.

Videos:

- Anna Kendrick "Cups"⁵
- Anna Kendrick "Cups" (karaoke version)⁶

⁵<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmSbXsFE3l8>

⁶<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjcOzqxu4JQ>

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- destined4life “The Easiest Cup Song Tutorial”⁷
- Okaidi Official “Tuto Cup Song”⁸

Location: In place with tables



Learning outcomes: The group will learn the entire "Cup song" sequence and they will experience the process of striving for excellence.

Process:

- Give each participant a plastic cup and show the sequence of movements. The group repeats these movements until each participant repeats six sequences in a row without fail.
- We make a circle around the table. We all perform the presented sequence at the same time, at the end give our cup to the person sitting on the right side.
- When the whole group repeats 6 sequences without fail, we can add music to it. We try to do the “Cup Song” throughout the song. Some can sing.
- You can record the show.

Debrief:

- What was the hardest part of the task?
- How did you learn?
- When was learning easy for you and when was it challenging?
- What truth have you discovered about yourself?

⁷<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5kYLOb6i5I>

⁸<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UhgxAXi-9w>

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- How can you apply this acquired knowledge in your daily life?
- How different sports help to overcome different challenges?

STEP 4. CHALLENGE YOUTH WITH FUN

Success in sport consists of many components, e.g.: the joy of effort, development and



practice physical, behavioral and intellectual skills, fair play in the community and daily life, practicing respect, the pursuit of excellence, healthy choices, balance between body, will and mind.⁹ The challenge in this part will be to organize the Olympic Day for local youth. Through sport, young people have a chance to exceed their own experiences and achieve balance in relations with others and with themselves.

Method 1: The letter

⁹<https://www.icsspe.org/system/files/The%20Fundamentals%20of%20Olympic%20Values%20Education.pdf>

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Objective: Preparation of the Olympic Day – the division of tasks.



Duration: 15 min



Materials and tools: printed/written letter

Location: Inside/outside



Learning outcomes: becoming aware of your own inner change, feeling appreciated.

Process:

1) The facilitator gives the youth a letter with the task. E.g.:

“Dear young people,

I have been watching you for some time, and I have noticed that you have made tremendous progress in your work on core Olympic values. For the sake of your respect, striving for excellence and, above all, friendship, you have been selected to host the Olympic Day in your neighborhood. Your goal is that the values that you have been practicing in recent times also become the share of young excluded people. Invite people, organize a competition and most of all have fun!

Best wishes,

The spirit of the Olympic Games”

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2) The youth reads the letter and then concludes it.

Debrief:

- Why did we receive this letter?
- What have we managed to achieve during the previous activities?
- What can we do to meet the challenge posed by the spirit of the Olympic Games?

Method 2: Planning the Olympic Day



Objective: Preparation of the Olympic Day – the division of tasks.



Duration: 30 min



Materials and tools: Flipchart, markers

Location: Inside



Learning outcomes: Distribution of tasks

Process:

1) On a flipchart, list any tasks that must be completed before the Olympic Day begins.
E.g.:

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- invite local youth
- prepare the registration of participants
- choosing a sports competition or creating your own
- preparation of the opening and closing of the Olympic Day
- documentation of the course of the event

2) Young people choose which area of the Olympic Day they want to prepare. In this way, we create task groups that will be responsible for conducting the competition.

Debrief:

- How do you rate the actions we have taken?
- What can help us in the next steps?
- What threats may await us?
- How will we resolve conflicts? (based on the values: respect, friendship, excellence).
- Question for each of the task groups: What will be your first step in preparation?
- What challenges are / will be overcome during this project?

STEP 5. PREPARATION FOR CHALLENGE

At this stage of the work, allow the group to get creative. Talk to the participants and ask about their needs. Be around if they need something.

Method: Preparation of the Olympic Day

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Objective: Preparation of the Olympic Day – gathering materials.



Duration: 2h



Materials and tools: It depends on the needs of the participants.

Location: Inside/outside



Learning outcomes: challenge management, teamwork, ability to negotiate and discuss, obtaining jointly assumed results.

Process:

The group sets itself the tasks it wants to take on as part of the challenge. The facilitator may give you some ideas, e.g.:

- invite local youth: post on the websites of the city hall, community centers, youth associations, etc.; prepare and stick posters inviting to the event; prepare graphics promoting the event; use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat or WhatsApp to promote the event. Set a date and a schedule.
- prepare the registration of participants: create an online registration form; create a list of participants; prepare the necessary documentation; prepare starter packages for competitors; prepare a competitor card on which the judges will

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write the results achieved in the competitions; providing the opportunity to practice on the track before the official start of the competition.

- choosing a sports competition or creating your own, e.g.: jumping in the sack, throwing an empty plastic bottle, throwing the can into the bucket, dancing, steeplechase, sprint, badminton, weightlifting, billiards, table tennis, table football. Preparation of competition rules, place and materials.
- preparation of the opening and closing of the Olympic Day: prepare a show for the opening and closing of the Olympic Day. You may be inspired by the article describing the actual course of the ceremony.¹⁰
- documentation of the course of the event: preparing a team of cameramen; planning interviews with competition participants and winners; arranging photographers in different places.

Debrief:

- What was the hardest part of the preparation?
- What skills have helped you in this task?
- What have you learned from this experience?
- How to use the acquired knowledge in the future?
- What are your fears and expectations towards Olympic Day? (each person can write them down on cards and stick them in a designated place).

STEP 6. ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

The big day has come! The beginning of the Olympic Day for local youth.

Method: Opening of the Olympic Day

¹⁰https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olympic_Games#Ceremonies

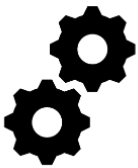
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Objective: Registration of participants, providing the opportunity to practice on the track before the official start of the Olympic Day, conducting the opening ceremony of the Olympic Day.



Duration: It depends on the participants



Materials and tools: It depends on the needs of the participants.

Location: It depends on the participants



Learning outcomes: Sports event management, teamwork, time management skills.

Process:

Teams perform tasks they have developed using the prepared materials.

STEP 7. MANAGING THE CHALLENGE

Finally, the group has a chance to check how their preparations will prove successful in practice. Such an experience cannot be replaced by any, even the best book or lesson.

Method: Conducting the Olympic Day

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Objective: Conducting sports competitions following the principles of fair play, in a spirit of respect, friendship and excellence.



Duration: It depends on the participants



Materials and tools: It depends on the needs of the participants.

Location: It depends on the participants



Learning outcomes: Sports event management, teamwork, time management skills, presenting the values of friendship, respect and excellence in everyday life.

Process: it depends on the participants. The facilitator takes care of the proper course of the Olympic Day and also helps in difficult crises. You should observe the event from the inside and report any faults to the organizers immediately. You are also there primarily to support the group. Remember that you cannot prepare or carry out everything for them. Don't do it, don't give orders. Let the group work while you gather information.

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STEP 8. REFLECTION

After a day full of emotions, it's time to cool down a bit and gather the opinions of the participants of the Olympic Day. It is also a time for summaries, taking photos together and decorating the winners.

Method: Closing of the Olympic Day



Objective: Closing of the Olympic Day, decoration of the winners, interviews with participants and winners, event summary.

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Duration: It depends on the participants



Materials and tools: It depends on the participants, some handmade prizes.

Location: It depends on the participants



Learning outcomes: Sports event management, collecting feedback from event participants, drawing conclusions from the actions taken.

Process:

Participants close the Olympics Day following the prepared plan.

Debrief:

Examples of interview questions:

- What was your biggest challenge today? How did you deal with it?
- What advice can you give to people who don't believe they can achieve something in sports?
- How will this experience affect your further sports activities?
- What are you most proud of?
- What sport do you like most to see / to do?

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- What can I wish for you?

STEP 9. EVALUATION

After the completed activities, the group meets together and sums up the project. Appreciate the group for their efforts.

Method 1: How was it? - Questionnaire



Objective: Check the results of the activities undertaken, the learning outcomes and the internal changes of the participants.



Duration: 15 min



Materials and tools: 1 questionnaire and 1 pen per person

Location: Inside/outside



Learning outcomes: gaining new awareness of yourself

Process:

- 1) Each participant receives a questionnaire and answers the questions contained therein.
- 2) The facilitator checks the results and creates a database of conclusions for further discussion.

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Debrief: Questionnaire:

- 1) What did you enjoy the most?
- 2) How do your previous expectations and concerns relate to reality?
- 3) How do you rate your team's work?
- 4) Did you have any difficult moments?
- 5) How did you solve conflicts?
- 6) After this experience, what would you do differently?
- 7) What is friendship, respect and perfection to you now?
- 8) What have you learned from this experience?
- 9) How will this experience affect your future?
- 10) What would you like to do similar in the future?

Method 2: How was it? – discussion



Duration: 30 min



Materials and tools: Lessons learned from reading the questionnaires, feedback from participants of the Olympic Day, developed definitions of friendship, respect and excellence.

Location: Inside/outside

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Learning outcomes: summary of all actions taken, closing the process

Process:

- 1) Based on the collected materials, the facilitator presents further questions for discussion, and the group draws further conclusions.
- 2) Make a list of the 20 most important conclusions.

Debrief: a question for each person:

- Who have you become thanks to this experience?



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FUNDACJA
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Fundacja Kopalnia Inicjatyw – Initiatives Mine Foundation is a non-governmental, non-profit institution. Established in February 2014. It is located in the Silesian province of Poland. All activities of the Foundation are focused on education of youth and voluntarism. Main aim is to support different groups and institutions using non-formal methods of learning and connect it with formal education.

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Chapter FIVE

COPING WITH CHALLENGES THROUGH ART

Based on the 16th-century concept, the Oxford English Dictionary defines Art as:

“The expression or application of creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting, drawing, or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.”

Merriam-Webster's still refers to it primarily as a "skill acquired by experience, study, or observation". The French painter Georges Seurat puts it in a word, "harmony", while



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*Picture from the performance «S.O.S. Action!», archive Second Chance School of Matosinhos,
Theater Flor de Infesta, artistic director Poliksena Hardalova, 2019, Portugal*

Whatever the definition, Art is an expression of one's deepest emotions and perspectives. It encompasses one's cultural environment and becomes a part of it giving it existence.

It may also work as a therapy, allowing one to express their feelings and opinions in

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a way that is truer to their own self and creating space for a connection with others that otherwise might not take place.

Artistic activities, or activities that use artistic expression as a resource, may, on the one hand, help you reflect deeply over who you and your purposes are, express yourself more clearly and truly, thus connecting more effectively with others and feeling more confident about yourself. On the other hand, it may help you discover more about your cultural identity and appreciate your communal environment on a deeper level.



Arts (inspired) activities in rural contexts are as necessary as natural, being that, even though villagers may not notice, usually their lives are surrounded by artistic expression and guided by it, from the songs that accompany land works to the stories told to keep kids from running astray or even sometimes the rather theatrical rituals preceding or following a daily activity. Also, and even though it tends to be forgotten, or at least depreciated, the way one cares for the land and the living beings in it is also a part of one's culture, thus being called agriculture.

Celebrating 500 years from the travel of Ferdinand Magellan, after the performance «CIRCUM NAVEGAR», artistic director Poliksena Hardalova, archive Second Chance School of Matosinhos, Theater Flor de Infesta, 2021, Portugal

Understanding the meanings and possibilities around one's own hometown maybe,

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on the one hand, a tool to help youngsters living in rural areas to understand that place, its mores and traditions, which are no less than any other.

This may help them by developing a sense of belonging and pride which may help to strengthen their image of themselves, to face the world with confidence and to promote the belief they can be however they want to be, but also to develop their perception of their living context, assisting them in helping their village/hometown and community, by highlighting its strengths and discovering how much they can do for it and how much it can do for them in return.

How to manage the facilitation process

Same as in other areas, you may choose to adapt the exercises to the specificities of the group you're working with and also to the skills of the facilitators involved.

Keep in mind this is **a process**, which means the ends are less important than the path that leads to them. Of course, it is desirable to produce as much beauty with Art as possible, but we're not looking for perfection, we're promoting an experience of each participants' own truth, whatever form it may take.

For the activities proposed to be as fruitful as possible, ideally, the group should be composed of a minimum of 8-10 elements, maximum of 25-30, so that dynamic is guaranteed but depth is not compromised. Of course, there are exercises you use in smaller or bigger groups, but for this specific structure to work as expected, we advise you not to move too far away from the proposition.

You may also change the order of some activities, choose to omit them or even use them separately, in either case, make sure there is consistency in terms of order – for instance, starting with a Forum Theater exercise with a group not at all at ease with the concept and/or each other, is probably not a good option.

The presented structure is ideal for a 5 to 7 days' length process.

But it is also possible to distribute the sessions over two weeks (for example, 5+5 afternoons, mornings, or evenings) or one month (3-4 sessions per week).

We suggest a youth exchange type of activity, choosing an appealing place among the participants' hometowns and bringing together youngsters from different villages (for the 5-7 days format).

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A communal structure or even a camping site might be good options, making sure the youngsters are still close enough to their reality but apart from it in the same way. Or you can visit different villages for one-day sessions, joining young people from the region each time in a new place.

For example: if you want to join young people from 4 small villages you can organize the training sessions during the weekends, visiting all these 4 villages. Each time there would be a ‘host’ that can walk you around and show you the specificities of the area. The suggested timings may vary according to the context.

You may add a rehearsal’s day or a “publicity day”, for example, in case you’re interested in bringing people from other towns or cities nearby to the final show.

Above all, focus on the participants, listen to them, to their propositions, include them in the creation of the process itself if you feel like it. In the end, we’re trying to promote their wellbeing and initiative, why not let it start right from the beginning?

STEP 1. KNOWING EACH OTHER

Method 1: *I am... and I do like this... (movement)*

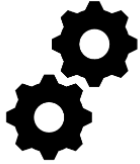
Objective: Even though in rural areas it is very common that youngsters have grown up together and think they know all there is needed to know about each other, it is also common that many of the deeper issues affecting them are never expressed, being for fear of judgment or shame of showing fragility. It is very relevant, then, to promote a space where they may identify and express their own emotions and perspectives freely, helping them get to know each other at a deeper level.

Arts may play a crucial part here, detaching them from their daily reality, where informative spoken word predominates, and using other ways of expression or using verbal communication.

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Duration: 20-40 min (depending on the number of participants)



Materials and tools: None.



Learning outcomes: reflecting upon one's own identity and how to express it, paying attention to other's ways to express themselves, getting to know each other.

Process:

Organize the group in a circle so that everyone can see and hear each other.

Each participant shall step into the circle on its own turn and say their own name and perform a movement connected with themselves.

All others shall repeat each name and movement after the one showing it.

After all participants take their turn, there should be a round for repeating all names and movements. It will help to remember each other's names and connect them with something that they choose to represent themselves.

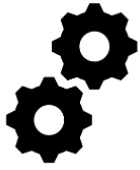
You may add rhythm and/or ask participants to move as "danced" as possible.

Method 2: *The story behind my name (storytelling)*



Duration: 20-40 min (depending on the number of participants)

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Materials and tools: None.



Learning outcomes: reflecting upon one's own identity and how to express it, paying attention to other's ways to express themselves, getting to know each other more deeply.

Process:

In a circle (better sitting), all participants tell a story connected to their names' meaning, how they got it and/or simply how they relate to it.

To help them reflect upon their own identity and what they feel like telling each other about it and, also, to tell a story in a way that is interesting for others to listen to.

If you want to, you can add a rule to define who goes next: one may follow if they have something in common with the story previously told.

If the group is bigger than 10-12 people, it would be good to do the exercise in pairs (partner A and partner B) and after they share their name stories to go back to the circle and to present their partner's name story to the others.

Method 3: *My house banner/shield (drawing/writing)*



Duration: 30 minutes for reflection/drawing + 30 minutes for sharing



Materials and tools: paper sheets and colored markers

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Learning outcomes: reflecting upon one's own identity and how to express it, paying attention to the way how others express themselves and what they choose not to express, getting to know each other more deeply

Process:

Give each participant a paper sheet and markers.

Ask them to draw their "house shield" or "ID card" (as you'd rather call it) on it.

They may use a "typical" shield shape or be more creative, write, draw, use symbols or clear references... It's up to them!

In any case, there should be 4 main fields to fill in.

You may choose to ask them about whatever better suits your purposes and/or the group. Here are some suggestions, being that you can always mix some of the options.

Here the order is clockwise, starting from up:

- their talents (1), expectations (2), fears (3) and wishes (4) for the group;
- what they like the most (1), what they don't like (2), what they want to do in general (3), what brought them to this activity specifically (4);
- who they are (1), their relationship with family and friends (2), with people outside their close circle (3), what they like to do (4);
- their biggest success of the year (1), their biggest "failure"/disappointment of the year (2), their hopes for the next year (3), ...for the next 10 years (4); ...

They may also add their life motto and/or (symbolically or not) draw themselves. Each one will then present their banner to the whole group, choosing what to talk about. You need to be attentive to what is said and what is not, the gestures accompanying it...

You may also ask all participants to write down their feelings while listening to each of their colleagues so that they are attentive and reflect upon their connections towards each other.

STEP 2. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEMS

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Method 1: *Walking around*

Objective: FIND OUT WHO YOU ARE...: rural environments may be perfect for self-reflection and soul searching for someone who isn't there all year round. For people born in a village or small town, the daily routine, mostly filled with hard physical work and nature (all day long) schedules, may present itself as not so soothing as it may seem at a first glance though, especially when one so often needs to reconcile the work in the fields with going to school in a faraway town, helping the family and studying.

Arts-inspired exercises focusing on the reflection over one's own internal and external behaviors may be particularly useful to point out challenges faced by each participant in their context.



Duration: 10-15 minutes for self-observation (+ 10-15 for reactions to environments/emotions) + 10-15 minutes for debriefing



Materials and tools: Music.



Learning outcomes: reflecting upon one's own identity and how it expresses itself physically, paying attention to one's own and others' expression of feelings and emotions, reflecting upon how our (physical) attitude may define the way we're seen and see the world.

Process:

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All participants shall walk around the space randomly, not in circles, not following anyone else and trying to fill the empty spaces.

Guide them in observing their own way of moving with questions such as:

- How do you support your feet on the floor? (do you first touch it with the tips of your toes or directly with the full foot)
- How do you move your legs? Your hips? (are your feet facing forward or sideways? Your knees? Do you move your hips a lot?)
- How is your chest (upright, relaxed...?)
- What about your arms? And your hands? (are they relaxed, following the movements of your body, or do they set their own pace?)
- How is your neck (tense or relaxed?) Your head? (facing up, straight or down?)
- Where are you looking at? (do you usually look at the people around you? The floor? Straight, not seeing anything? Up?)

You may also tell them to imagine themselves on the street, and react accordingly, adding, for example, contact with other people – known or unknown.

This exercise may be used to express reactions to different environments (walking in the desert, in the mountains, at night in the city), situations (accident, money falling from the sky, joyful encounter) or emotions (walk with confidence, joy, anger, stress...), and even to try walking “on different shoes” (of someone they admire or the best versions of themselves they can imagine, for example).

Whatever the case, make sure to debrief and raise questions (that do not necessarily need to be answered) on what they’ve noticed about themselves and how much each aspect says about them and the way they move through life.

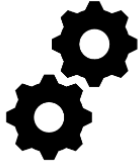
We advise on the use of music to set the environment or environments you’d like your participants to experiment.

Method 2: *Thermometer or Frozen Images (Living Memes)*

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Duration: 10 – 20 minutes for questions and positioning (+ 10 – 20 minutes for discussion among peers) + 10 – 20 minutes for debriefing



Materials and tools: None.



Learning outcomes: reflection upon one's own positions in life/opinions and how it relates to others.

Process:

Organize the group in a line in the middle of the room.

Tell participants to position themselves in space (take steps forward or back) according to how much they agree with or relate to the opinions/situations you'll give voice to.

You may choose themes related to their lives in the rural reality, their feelings about themselves, their opinions on life in other contexts... If you want, you can also ask them to position themselves according to where they'd like to be instead of where they actually are in the present. You may also ask them to express physically how they feel about their positioning.

In the end, you may divide the group into smaller ones and have them discuss their positions. You may also promote discussion during the activity itself, asking participants to look around and defend their options, when relevant. Whatever the case, always promote a debriefing of the exercise, focusing on their feelings regarding the experience. Another option is to have a set of affirmations, clearly divide the room into two zones and ask the group to move either to the "yes" or "no" fields.

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Another option is to use body expression LIVING MEMES. Memes are so popular now, that you can use them to refer to Frozen Images with some text added by you or someone else (one from the group). The group stands in a circle with their backs turned to the center. The Facilitator gives the text of the meme, like: 'Me at 7.30 in the morning!' or "Me being enthusiastic by a project/idea" or "Me being lonely", etc., and starts counting down from 5...4...3...After "1" everybody turns to the center and makes a frozen image of themselves at 7.30 in the morning; being enthusiastic or lonely. Then they should take a look round at the others, without breaking the image. This is repeated with the next memes /or themes, names of feelings, problems, e.g. This method could be a very good, interactive starting point for many issues.

Method 3: *Trust issues*



Duration: 30 minutes for paths in pairs + 10-15 minutes for debriefing



Materials and tools: pieces of fabric/blindfolds, chairs/tables/ whatever you may use to create the obstacle path



Learning outcomes: reflect upon the way one sets strategies, leads and is guided (is trusted and/or trusts), focuses on objectives, adapts to environments and difficulties.

Process:

Organize the group in pairs: A is blindfolded and B must guide A through a certain path so that they will arrive safely to the defined finish line.

Set the rules: B may use words, may only whistle, use a musical instrument, movement, different sensory stimuli (to smell, to touch, to taste, to hear).

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B may also lead A through some obstacles but keep in mind that safety is the most important issue. We suggest 10-12 minutes for a walk, then A gives feedback to B and after that they swap the roles (Guide and Guided).

Make sure to debrief the activity, focusing on how each participant felt in the experienced position, on which one did they feel most at ease, how did their strategy work for them, what were their biggest challenges and successes, why do they think it was so, what did they learn about themselves and the others.

STEP 3. POSITIVE THINKING

Method 1: Present your talents (movement)

Objective: ... AND DO IT ON PURPOSE: much too often, youngsters in rural areas are led to believe their hometown (no one ever has heard of or other youngsters mocking it) is not as worthy as other towns, where they need to go to get an education or work. It's of utmost importance for them to not only be conscious and sure of their own talents but also to know the cultural richness there always is in local stories/legends/curiosities. Exploring traditions and documenting cultural heritage, if possible crossing it with a digital search for national or local examples of success, maybe truly life-changing for some people, not only strengthening their sense of pride in themselves and their people and land but also opening up perspectives for future ways to make a living there.



Duration: 20-40 min (depending on the number of participants)

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Materials and tools: Music, chairs may be used to help create images.



Learning outcomes: reflection upon what one's talents are, how to express them, how each talent can relate to and help communicate with others.

Process:

Ask all participants to think about their 3 main talents. It may be anything they think they're good at: from tying one's shoes to singing or dancing, cooking, or solving the most elaborate mathematical problems. It's up to them!

After they've chosen, each one must think of and rehearse a movement to represent the talent they thought about.

The next step is to create a sequence with all the 3 movements, corresponding to the 3 talents chosen.

Now it's the time to showcase them! Once you turn the music on (choose something soothing but also inspiring) each one of the participants, up to 5 at a time, is asked to go "on stage", present their talents out loud ("*I'm good at drawing, cooking and knitting!*") and perform the developed sequence.

Each one will be doing their own thing, inside their own bubble, creating a diverse "palette of talents". When you feel like it's enough, you may thank the first group and ask the next one to do the same.

At some point, you may also ask the different actors to interact, using their own artistry as a language to communicate with the others.

Method 2: Journalistic theatre (*Finding the Good Story*)

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Duration: IF WORKING IN GROUPS 30 minutes for group strategy definition + 60 – 120 minutes for research + 30 minutes to prepare the presentation + 10 minutes for each group's presentation and discussion.

IF WORKING INDIVIDUALLY 60-180 minutes for research and preparation of the presentation + 5 minutes for each participant's presentation and discussion.



Materials and tools: notebooks, pens, computers and internet connection (if available)



Learning outcomes: discovering local inspiring stories, let oneself be inspired, reflecting upon what a story of success is made of, connecting with people with the same dreams/objectives and/or facing the same challenges.

Process:

Divide the group in areas of interest in terms of what they'd like for their future.

Ask each group (of no more than 4-5 members) to look for examples of local/national people who have succeeded/inspiring stories in the areas they're most interested in. (Oriented) research may take various forms: they can interview people, search on local newspapers or online, being that it might be particularly useful for rural youth to be acquainted with the more informative uses of digital media.



After each group has chosen one story, they should gather the basic information regarding it (what, who, when, where & how?) and define 3 physical images for them to represent the beginning, development and conclusion of it. Each group will present the story to the others, being that the facilitator may ask the actors to add monologues, dialogue and/or action to the images.

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Depending on the group you're working with, you may opt for asking each participant to do the research individually or in smaller groups, and to present the results in whatever artistic form they feel more at ease doing it (writing, drawing, rapping, dancing...).

STEP 4. CHALLENGE YOUTH WITH FUN

Method 1: Road map (drawing/acting)

	<p><u>Objective:</u> <i>DARE TO DREAM: dreamers from birth, same as everyone else, rural youth may soon discover their geographical position may keep on presenting extra challenges to their success, demanding extra resilience and hard work. It's, thus, extremely important to guarantee that they do not give up on their dreams, that they reconnect with the reason why they dreamt it in the first place, regain trust in themselves and believe again in what they used to imagine for their future, using Art as a bridge between participants.</i></p>
	<p><u>Duration:</u> 30 minutes for drawing the “up ‘till now” map + 15-20 minutes for observation and reflection + 30 minutes for the “from now on” map/preparation of dramatizations (+ 30 minutes for presentations, if you choose this option)</p>
	<p><u>Materials and tools:</u> big paper sheet, coloured markers, individual sheets of paper, music.</p>

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Learning outcomes: reflecting upon one's own path, finding similarities and differences among paths, taking a perspective look over one's life and expressing it artistically, defining objectives and steps to get to them.

Process:

Set a big paper sheet and markers, defining the center of the paper as "now".

Invite each participant to draw their own life path up until the present moment, where all different roads meet, being that each one starts at a different point of the paper. You may suggest the use of large/panoramic views to identify "good moments", tight roads filled with holes for "bad" ones, work in progress signs (hospital), barriers/deviations, ...It's advisable for you to use some gentle/introspective music as well (such as "Spiegel im Spiegel" by Arvo Pärt).

Once they're finished, all participants are invited to appreciate the work done collectively and comment on it, if they feel like it. Reflect on what led to the best places and suggest they make a list and evaluate those roads.

After a short or long break (depending on how the first part of the exercise goes), give each participant a new individual paper sheet. It's time to ask them to project the map into the future, focusing on how they would like it to be, with clear objectives and how to achieve them (we suggest "Golborne Road" by Nick Laird-Clowes as a musical ambiance).

You may also choose to dramatize deviations, for example, or to let the participants Dance/Sing/Write/Interpret/Paint/Create an artistic product based on their conclusions. In case the ambiance becomes a bit heavy make a cheerful exercise to close the session.

STEP 5. PREPARATION FOR CHALLENGE

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Method 1: *Working with locals*

Objective: NO ONE IS SOMEONE ALONE: even though one is more than enough, and rural youth tend to be well aware of that, usually having to fend for themselves from an early age, they also need to be conscious of a truth they've probably lived more than others but may have forgotten to resource to as time went by, that "it takes a village to raise a youngster". Often, since it takes leaving town to be "successful", locals never even get to know about the successes of their own. It is then good practice to make sure the success stories youngsters found previously do not boil down to that, but get to help them personally, if possible. It is also essential for them to relativize their concept of "success" and "artist", being that anyone has the potential to express themselves artistically and that "art" comprises many practices other than the ones seen on TV.



Duration: each work session should have at least 60 minutes for sharing perspectives, learning techniques and applying them.



Materials and tools: whatever are needed for the specific Art (ask the specific facilitators beforehand, you may also need to find a suitable place for the work to be developed)



Learning outcomes: contacting with local artists, experimenting with different ways of expression, finding out which one expresses oneself better, learning by doing and sharing, recognizing the artistry that might be found in each activity.

Process:

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Beforehand, preferably, contact local (performance or other types of) artists and/or facilitators and ask them to promote a set of various workshops based on their artistry and experience.

There are artists everywhere, whether they're painters, (church choir) singers, (folk) dancers/music players, or artisans, and it's important for youngsters coming from the same environments to recognize their talents and paths and to have direct contact with them as well.

Make sure the artists are conscious about the social change purpose of the activities and willing to share their stories/knowledge/skills for the construction of a final showcase, and that they'll work together with the youngsters on its development.

By exploring different/new artistic languages/techniques, youngsters have the chance to find out which one suits them the best, while working on their soft skills, creating space for self and cultural expression and identification.

Another option is to go to the next village and to make a small exchange between young people and artists from 2-3 villages in the area.

STEP 6. ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Method 1: *Statues (a variation of Living Memes/Frozen pictures)*

Objective: DIALOGUE WITH ONESELF: knowing and learning to deal with one's limits and (sometimes self) imposed obstacles is as essential as identifying one's strengths. IMAGE THEATRE resources may be very helpful when working on recognition and acceptance, same as in defining compromises aimed at overcoming challenges.



Duration: 60-120 minutes

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Materials and tools: None.



Learning outcomes: recognize one's way to express emotions/concepts, understand different ways to express those emotions/concepts, deal with difficulties/conflicts, listening to others' perspectives on what resolutions may there be.

Process:

Organize the group in a circle, with all participants facing the outside.

Give them a word to think about (you may start with something very simple, such as naming an animal or a nature element). Then count to 5 and clap your hands. Once you clap, all participants must face the center physically showing their depiction of the previously mentioned word in a frozen image/motionless statue. Use feelings and emotions (despair, love, hope, fear, blame, shame, comfort...) or more complex concepts (success, conflict, family, me, future, or other themes relevant to the necessities of group in the rural reality).

Choose one of the statues and draw the groups' attention to it (the chosen one must stay as still as possible). Ask the group to analyze it objectively (position of the body, arms, mouth...), then to interpret what they noticed subjectively (feelings the positions may convey), and to give a title to the statue.

Then you may ask them what they think the statue is thinking, to examine its percentage of opening to the viewer (you may ask to change it to better analyze a given detail), to imagine the situation/context and what it might be saying.

Afterward you may directly ask the statue what it is that it was effectively thinking/saying or only do that after letting other participants create a picture with other characters around it (up to 5). You may choose to keep the picture created or change it into others that may also fit the first statue and what its meaning might be.

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You may also add a conflict between the first statue and a second one, and then the third element, if someone thinks of an idea to be able to solve the situation. Dialogue may also be added. The initial statue may leave the picture to see it from the outside and have a different perspective on the story that was inspired by their proposition.

A debriefing should be done only after a series of experiences. You may use questions such as: what does your physical body/brain/heart tell you? What is acceptable? What do other people in the same situation do? (in this case, the question may give rise to extra research on inspiring stories on overcoming specific challenges).

STEP 7. MANAGING THE CHALLENGE

Method 1: *Forum Theatre (Rehearsal for Reality)*

Objective: THE CRISIS OPPORTUNITY: there are "blessings in disguise", there might be opportunities where it's sometimes hard to see them. FORUM THEATRE is used to present different challenges and different responses (surrender/overcome/be creative) focusing on positive examples. It might be a very useful tool when dealing with contexts where solutions are nowhere to be seen, such as the rural environments in which sometimes youngsters may feel trapped.



Duration: 30-60 minutes (per situation)



Materials and tools: None.

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Learning outcomes: recognize one's way to express emotions/concepts, understand different ways to express those same emotions/concepts, deal with difficulties/conflicts, listen to others' perspectives on what resolutions may there be, giving up from the role of victim, exploring choices and solutions.

Process:

Following the previously presented exercise, you may ask your group to choose one specific story, out of the ones that were presented before, or to propose a new one (personal or not, depending on how the group feels at ease doing it, but always focusing on a matter that is important for the group, or at least a significant part of it). A good story for Forum is the one where somebody feels oppressed by others, where there is a problem that might be resolved by the group. The story must be simple, clear, relevant to the interest of the group.

Clearly define three moments: beginning, crisis and resolution (which needs to not be a satisfactory one for the protagonist). Decide how many scenes you need.

Define the role for each actor: the protagonist (the person needing a solution for a specific situation), antagonist(s), supporting character(s).

Rehearse the situation with this group and then present it to a wider audience (you may start with just the working group but then open it to the community: some subjects may benefit from a general reflection if the working group is ok with it).

After a first full presentation, repeat it, asking the audience to feel free to intervene if they think something might be done to change the overall results.

Take in mind that a good Forum needs a well-trained Joker (Facilitator) who can keep and orientate the interaction and the discussion with the audience. At the end of the chapter, we suggest some extra materials and references about this theater method.

Afterward, make sure to have a debriefing of the exercise, focusing on the different choices that might be made, the investment needed to overcome challenges, the willingness of the participants to invest in the possible solutions... in case we're talking

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about a specific path one might take, for example: What are you ready to invest in your dream?

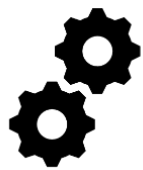
STEP 8. MONITORING

Method 1: *How can I get there?*

Objective: Same as doing, taking time to reflect upon what we do is a very important part of our learning processes. Using a different set of artistic tools to express one's thoughts and feelings is extremely helpful when recording them.



Duration: whatever time each participant wants to dedicate to it along the process



Materials and tools: large paper sheet, markers/notebooks, pens.



Learning outcomes: reflect upon the process, how it went and why it went that way, noticing one's evolution along it.

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Process:

From day one, ask the participants to take a few minutes to create an artistic daily report on what they've done/thought/was more important for them/who helped them along the way.

It may be done in the form of a common poster (particularly interesting for a visual general idea, at the end of the process) or a personal journal.

They may also subsequently use it to share experiences with other youngsters in neighboring (or other) villages nurturing common goals and facing common challenges.

STEP 9. REFLECTION

Method 1: *Final showcase*



Duration: 45-75 minutes (depending on the artistic creations developed)



Materials and tools: whatever may be needed and found/created inside the community.



Learning outcomes: artistically express one's identity and learnings along the process, creating together with peers, learning from locals, recognizing one's cultural value and sharing it with others.

Process:

Using the creations developed along the process or creating new materials with the experiences/lessons learned (also together with the local artists), tell/artistically express (dance, sing, draw) the participants' stories on a final showcase with the local

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and close communities.

The show might be recorded and shared, together with "making off" footage.

It is very important to finish with a positive vibe and to focus the energy of the group in the right direction: what do you want for yourself soon? And in a year? And in 3 years?

All the suggestions above have been tested for many years with different groups of young people. They are just examples that could boost your imagination, creativity and intuition.



Extra resources for further development of competences

- Boal, A. (1979) Theatre of the Oppressed. London: Pluto press
- Boal, A. (1992) Games for Actors and Non-Actors. London. Routledge
- The Geese Theatre Handbook, Drama with Offenders and People at risk, (2002), ed. Baim, C., Brookes, S., Mountford, A., Waterside Press, UK
- <https://www.tip-eu.com/post/forum-theatre-with-and-for-young-people>
- Sensory theatre as a powerful non-formal learning, Portugal (tip-eu.com)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGb9UTCgViE>

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AE2O – *Association for Second Chance Education* is a non-profit NGO whose general objective is to promote second chance education, working especially with vulnerable youth, with low educational and professional qualifications and at risk of social exclusion. Its main activity, in partnership with the Municipality of Matosinhos and the Ministry of Education, is the management of E2OM, the Second Chance School of Matosinhos, a pilot project started in 2008. AE2O is the main founder and promoter of E2O Portugal, the Portuguese Network of second chance schools and initiatives, and the Portuguese representative in the European network of second chance schools (E2C-Europe) and in the second chance program of the Union of the Mediterranean, MedNC.

Chapter SIX

COPING WITH CHALLENGES THROUGH PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Personal development is a vital part of an individual's growth and progression. It's a process of individual self-development and the development of others. Personal development includes goals, plans and actions oriented towards one or more of the following aims:

- improving self-awareness
- improving self-knowledge
- building or renewing identity
- developing strengths or talents
- identifying or improving potential
- building employability or human capital
- enhancing lifestyle or the quality of life

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- defining and executing personal development plans

Personal development¹¹ is about **investing in yourself** so that you can manage yourself effectively regardless of what life might bring your way. It allows you to be proactive. Rather than wait for good things to happen, you get out there and make them happen.



BENEFITS OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. You get to know who you really are: you're values, beliefs and the purpose you wish to pursue. True fulfillment can never come from chasing other people's dreams. If you want to achieve lasting happiness, you need to design your life based on who you are. Then you can chase your own goals and objectives. When you are chasing your own goals, there is as much pleasure to be derived from the journey as there is to be derived from reaching your destination. Self-awareness is the first fundamental step in the personal development process.

2. A sense of direction

¹¹ <https://www.liveyourtruestory.com/core-benefits-personal-development-performance/>

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Once you have raised your self-awareness, you are clearer on the things you wish to achieve in life. Decision-making becomes a lot easier. Tasks that used to take a great deal of your time, no longer make it onto your to-do list. You now realize that they do not move you towards your objectives and therefore are not worthy of your time.

3. Improved focus and effectiveness

With personal development comes clarity. Even with an improved sense of direction, there will always be multiple tasks looking for your attention. As your personal development improves, prioritization becomes much easier. You are clearer on your objectives and you can quickly identify which task will give you the best result with the resources available to you at that moment. Improved focus and effectiveness come with knowing and playing to your strengths.

4. More motivation

When you know what you want to achieve, it is easier for you to see the benefits of taking action. Even when the task ahead is not enjoyable; if you can see a clear benefit, you are more motivated to take the necessary action. There is truth in the old adage *“Where there is a will there’s a way”*. With strong personal development, you develop the necessary will.

5. Greater resilience

There will be tough times in life. When these tough times occur, you need to have the skills and attributes to deal effectively with them. Personal development cannot prevent all bad things from occurring but it will help you deal with them when they do. You will have greater confidence, resilience, personal and interpersonal skills to cope with any eventuality.

6. More fulfilling relationships

Relationships are a double-edged sword. They either lift you or drag you down. When you improve your personal development, you are better able to see which relationships are worth investing in and which need to be cut loose. You also develop the skills to make the most of those relationships which have the most positive impact on your life.

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CONCLUSION

Personal development is about taking the time and making the commitment to invest in your greatest resource – you. When you put the effort in to developing yourself, the rewards are amazing. Many people wrongly discount personal development because the results are not always measurable or immediate. However, the greatest achievers in life know that the key to success is the ability to manage yourself in a variety of situations. That ability comes through personal development.

STEP BY STEP FOR THE FACILITATOR

Build your own competence first

The facilitator must be well informed about what personal development means, understand the mechanisms of motivation for personal development, and to be able to generate the motivation of the participants to build personal learning objectives.

- Do not confuse personal development with professional or life coaching.

“The ultimate goal of coaching is to utilize your full potential while the ultimate goal of personal development is to become a better person.” (Reference¹²)

- It is necessary for the facilitator to create an atmosphere of trust and comfort and to stimulate the sharing of personal experiences among the participants.

“You don't fail when you aim high and miss; you fail when you aim low, and you hit.” - Laurence Lewars (teenage speaker).

- The facilitator can provide examples from their own experience if the case.

“Playing it safe is the most popular way to fail.” - Elliott Smith

- Try not to offer personal development solutions! The facilitator in personal development has the role of giving the right questions, not the right answers!

“If you don't run your own life, somebody else will.” – John Atkinson

¹² <https://mentarcise.com/blog/83-personal-development-vs-life-coaching>

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How to manage the facilitation process

To work with the young people, we are proposing a **9 steps model** to be prepared and delivered in the below order. In total, the whole process could take up to 11 hours of work and we suggest scheduling the work for approx. 3 hours/day, including a break.

1. Knowing each other (40 min)
2. Identification of the problems (130 min)
3. Positive thinking (30 min)
4. Challenge youth with fun (75 min)
5. Preparation for a challenge (140 min)
6. Accepting the challenge (90 min)
7. Managing the challenge (105 min)
8. Monitoring (20 min)
9. Evaluation (20 min)

The facilitator will guide the young people in their **personal development path** by guiding them through these steps. While in theory, it would be ideal to follow these steps in order, in reality, you, as a facilitator, must be aware of **the power of being open-minded**, flexible, and having the skill to adapt your sessions to the young people's needs.

It is important to **guide the youth through the whole process and achieve results** in each step.

According to the young people's personal development needs, communication style, learning style, you might have to **adapt** the sequence of the steps, to go back to some of them a few times, to give more time than initially planned to some of them, or even skip some of them.

Remember that personal development is can be a very “personal process” and it requires from your side, as a facilitator, empathy, patience, attention to the young's people reactions, openness to change or adapt the process on the go but keeping in

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mind all the time your main purpose: **taking the time and making the commitment to invest in the young's people greatest resource – themselves!**

Target group profile: young people from rural areas; in all nine steps the duration of each activity was approximated to minimum of 5 young people.

STEP 1. KNOWING EACH OTHER

Method: “FIRST IMPRESSION”

Objective: helping the young people to feel more comfortable within the group and with the topic of personal development; setting the frame.



Duration: 30-40 min



Materials and tools: post-its/sticky notes of different colors and shapes; markers or pens; music

Learning outcomes: understanding the importance of thinking outside the box; learning to evaluate others through different perspectives; raising awareness on how people can be perceived as unique but also have undiscovered similarities and differences with others.

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Process: the facilitator invites the young people to trust the process and go with the flow. Do not tell the participants the name of the exercise/method ("First Impression") in order not to influence them or lead them too easily to conclusions.

STEP 1: THE TASK (15 MIN)

The facilitator begins by asking the questions *Do you know each other? Well or so/so?* and collects a few answers but without letting them go into details.

Facilitator's comment: If you do not know each other, then this is the perfect moment for this exercise. If you do know each other, then it is the perfect moment to see how well you know each other!

Rules: you are not allowed to talk to each other; the exercise must happen in silence while some music plays in the background; you are not allowed to ask others if they like or dislike your post-its; you are not allowed to refuse a post-it or comment on it; simply give and receive.

Giving the task: the facilitator invites the young people to look around at their colleagues and give them in their mind, for now, characteristics or attributes, regardless of if they know them or not. Encourages them to simply look at them, think of them and in their mind associate some attributes to each person. They could be good ones or less good ones (e.g.: intelligent, shy, beautiful, nosy, etc.). After they reflect a bit on this (1 - 2 min), they must pick up some post-its and markers and write down those characteristics one by one. They have to write down just one characteristic or attribute/post-it. They can give as many post-its as they want to each person. It is up to them if they give 1 post-it to a person and 7 to another. It has to be how they feel inspired at that moment.

Then, they must offer the post-its to the owners of the attributes by sticking them onto their clothing (if they accept) or collecting them in their hands.

This should last between 5-10 minutes according to how well they think they know each other. If they are reluctant to do it, to encourage them to participate, the facilitator can

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play with them and offer them post-its with attributes and say that is open to get some from them also.

The facilitator makes a few remarks about their appearance (covered in post-its, colored, alive, some received less and some receive more, etc., take a group picture). This is intentional, to take them out of their comfort zone and bring them to the next step.

STEP 2: DEBRIEF AND CONCLUSIONS (15-25 MIN)

The facilitator asks a series of questions and collects answers verbally from the participants. If they are shy or reluctant to answer, the facilitator must not insist too much, can use their own case as an example (that requires to participate in the exercise with them), but still has to formulate the conclusions.

Questions part 1: How was the exercise? / How was it to think of and give attributes to the others? How did you feel when you received post-its?

Questions part 2: invite them to unstick themselves and read their own post-its and analyze 3 main aspects: How many post-its you got? / Are they good or less good? / Are those attributes about you or not?

Questions part 3: Why do you think you got only positive attributes (if case)? / Why do you think you got so many/or so few attributes? / What do you think this exercise was about?

Preparation: the facilitator prepares the conclusions before the session, written by hand or printed in big letters on A4 white or colored paper that will be hung in the room after the session (to also help the visual learners and to encourage the young people to go back to that information whenever they feel they want to deepen they knowledge).

Conclusions: The exercise is about **labeling others**. Is about the first impression you might have when you meet someone for the first time in person (the labels you give

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immediately / instinctively / naturally) or about what you think you know about others (the labels you already gave them some time ago based on your interactions with them).

Is the first impression a good or a bad thing? In business or in a job interview or when you first go out on a date with someone, it might be. But it is a bad thing in the process of personal development. It is ok to give labels (it's human nature to judge, sometimes it's a power over us as human beings). But try to see the other side of the post-it also. Besides all those attributes you gave and received there are other attributes (both good and less good) that makes a person. Behind the post-its, there are also the reasons for those attributes. We all act/behave in a certain way due to all the attributes we have and due to all the life experiences, we have had so far.

Especially among young people but also in your relations with adults, it is extremely important to **break down the barrier of the first impression**. You must not be influenced by the first impression but give chances to others to reveal themselves on their own terms and their own rate. For this to happen you also have to be open to letting others know you for real. Knowing each other is a bit like in tango... Both people must take the same steps together but sometimes you must leave space for improvisation to have a "passionate dance".

The invitation is the same for your group. Try to know each other for real to work better together, open up, share easily and help each other in this personal development process.

STEP 2. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEMS

Methods: PERSONAL S.W.O.T ANALYSIS; "HOW YOU SELF SABOTAGE" TEST.

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Objective: identify young people's problems; identify challenges young people in rural areas have about believing in themselves and how they can stay motivated in achieving what they think is important for them; identify personal saboteurs.



Duration: 70 min for SWOT and 30-60 min for the test



Materials and tools: A4 or flipchart paper, colors, markers, pens, a printed S.W.O.T. model or an online version to show, laptop, projector, Internet and 5 mobile phones or laptops/tablets for the online test.

Learning outcomes: understanding personal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; challenging their personal saboteurs in everyday activities; understanding limitative beliefs.

Process:

PERSONAL S.W.O.T ANALYSIS (70 min)

Personal S.W.O.T. analysis is a tool for reflection on you and your life at this moment. The usefulness of this analysis is that it helps you identify the issues that need to be addressed, improved, and most importantly, allows you to identify your strengths that you can capitalize on, to seize opportunities and counter any external threats that may appear in your development.

This analysis will help young people to take action by using the information they discover to formulate their own personal development goals and plan.

STEP 1: THE TASK (50 MIN)

Preparation: the facilitator prepares in advance a SWOT model and explains each step. (10 min).

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The SWOT analysis process must begin by examining one's own strengths and weaknesses:

- **Strengths**

Strengths are individual characteristics, which are known as competencies, personal and internal qualities, all that is associated with success in life and positive evolution. Are positive internal aspects that are under control that you can capitalize on in personal development.

- **Weaknesses**

Weaknesses are the less successful application of a skill or non-exploitation of a situation that could bring you individual competitiveness. The weak points are the negative internal elements that you can control and act on to improve personal negative characteristics. They are the ones that keep you from getting the desired performance and you feel they stop you from progressing.

- **Opportunities**

Opportunities are usually external and are correlated with technological changes/evolutions, people who can influence decisions, any changes or situations that can help you achieve your aspirations. These are positive external conditions that you do not control but based on which you can also plan the achievement of your personal development goals.

- **Threats**

Threats are also external influences that may stand in the way. Due to them, your success can have a negative impact and reduce your competitiveness. Threats are external and you cannot control them but you can reduce their effects.

Giving the task: each young person will work first individually to reflect and take notes on their analysis (20 min), and then they share it with another young person (10 min). Then they go back to their own analyses to add or change information if they got inspired by sharing (10 min). During their task, the facilitator must be available to offer

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support and clarifications so the young people can identify as much information as possible and make sure the information is about them and not “borrowed”.

STEP 2: DEBRIEF (20 MIN)

The facilitator invites them to **share their S.W.O.T. analyses** in plenary (min 2 examples).

Questions: Have you done such analyses before? How was it to work on this one? Was it easy or hard to identify the elements of each quadrant? How do you think this information can help you in your development process?

“HOW YOU SELF SABOTAGE” TEST (30 – 60 min)

Breaking the ice on the topic: Q&A – Do you know what self-sabotage is? Do you think you do it? When and why? Would you like to stop sabotaging yourself?

Short conclusion: a key to Mental Fitness is to weaken the internal Saboteurs who generate all your “negativity” in the way they respond to challenges. Your Saboteurs cause all your stress, anxiety, self-doubt, frustration, regret, shame, guilt, and unhappiness.

How to Conquer Your Saboteurs: you can’t defeat an enemy that you don’t see or one that successfully masquerades as your friend. So, the first step is to identify your saboteurs and expose their lies to discredit them.

STEP 1: THE TASK (15 MIN)

The task: each participant takes individually the free test [How You Self Sabotage](#). It has 50 questions but they are easy to answer and should take approx. 15 min to complete.

STEP 2: DEBRIEF AND CONCLUSIONS (15 – 30 MIN)

Questions: How was the test? Which are your test results? Would you like to share it?

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Conclusions: the facilitator explains the importance of discovering and understanding **How You Self Sabotage**¹³ by showing the website as a resource and giving the basic information.

Saboteurs start off as our guardians to help us survive the real and imagined threats to our physical and emotional survival as children. Our Saboteurs’ patterns of thinking, feeling, and reacting become soft-coded in our brain through neural pathways. When these neural pathways are triggered, we are “hijacked” by our Saboteurs and feel, think, and act using their patterns.

Lies of Your Saboteurs: your Saboteurs claim they are good for you. Indeed, your Saboteurs have successfully PUSHED you to improve and succeed through fear, anxiety, blame, shame, guilt, etc. (Negative Reinforcement). However, research shows that you would succeed even more if you were PULLED by your positive feelings of curiosity, compassion, creativity, love for yourself and others, and love for contribution and self-expression (Positive Reinforcement). AND, you would be far happier and less stressed.

STEP 3. POSITIVE THINKING

Methods: Positive Speech

Objective: it’s about anticipating happiness, health and success – essentially, training yourself to adopt an abundance mindset and cultivate gratitude for your own successes and those of others.

Duration: 30 min

¹³ <https://www.positiveintelligence.com/>

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Materials and tools: A4 paper, pens, recording device (phone or other)

Learning outcomes: developing an emotional and mental attitude that focuses on the good and expects results that will benefit you;

Process:

STEP 1: THE TASK (45 MIN)

Breaking the ice: participants are being asked to describe a regular day from their life or their future (their choice) in a sentence (min 2 examples); the facilitator observes if they use positive or negative expressions and if it's a positive or negative view. (10 min)

Short conclusion: Positive thinking¹⁴, or an optimistic attitude, is the practice of focusing on the good in any given situation. It can have a big impact on your physical and mental health. That doesn't mean you have to ignore reality or make light of problems. It simply means you approach the good and the bad in life with the expectation that things will go well.

Intro to the topic: the facilitator gives [Tony Robbins](#) as an example of motivational speaker and expert in personal and professional development. (10 min)

Giving the task: among many, one habit that is essential to positive thinking is to transform your vocabulary. The words you choose – both in conversation and in your own mind – have a deep impact on your mindset. Studies have found that positive self-talk improves psychological states, helps people regulate their emotions and more.

¹⁴ <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/positive-thinking-overview>

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Participants have to create, write down and audio record a 1 min. positive speech about their own future, by choosing some of the weaknesses identified when doing their personal S.W.O.T. analyses and transforming them into positive aspects. (15 min)

Then each participant plays their audio recording to the group. Cheers and applauses. (10 min).

STEP 2: DEBRIEF AND CONCLUSIONS (30 MIN)

Questions: How was it to transform your weaknesses (hard, easy, creative, challenging etc.? / Which version do you like the most: to think of your positive speech, to write it down, to record it or to hear it?

Conclusions: showing the same [resource](#) on the screen projector.

Shows and explains the main aspects of **How to harness the power of positive thinking**¹⁵

Want to learn how to think positively? The first step is realizing it's all up to you. When you become the master of your emotions, you can always determine your mindset regardless of outside influences. Taking responsibility for how you think, act and feel allow everything in your life to fall into place. Sometimes you can't control life's events – but you can control how you react to them. Once you empower yourself to change what's in your control – you – then you're ready to embrace the power of positive thinking.

STEP 4. CHALLENGE YOUTH WITH FUN

Method: Why am I here now?

¹⁵ <https://www.tonyrobbins.com/positive-thinking/>

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Objective: to motivate the young people to go deeper into their self-reflection process

Duration: 75 min



Materials and tools: paper, pens, colored wax crayons, old magazines, old newspapers, scissors, paper glue, 5 flipchart papers.

Learning outcomes: increased self-awareness; increased motivation to continue their personal development process; having more clarity on who they are.

Process:

STEP 1: THE TASK (50 MIN)

Preparation: The facilitator prepares in advance a collage example of themselves where they already answered the same 4 questions. Each participant must have one flipchart paper, a scissor, wax crayons, paper glue, magazines or newspapers. (5 min)

Giving the task: the facilitator explains that the method Why am I Here Now will have 2 main elements: self-reflection and collage. They must first reflect and write down the answers. Then divide the flipchart paper into 4 quadrants and answer the 4 questions by creating a collage for each of them, which will represent their best vision. The collage

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can be done combining cut off images and text but with some drawing and coloring using the wax crayons. (30 min)

The 4 questions:

WHY am I here now? – the main goals/purpose; why are you into personal development?

Why am I here now? – why you as a person and not someone else? What makes you special?

Why am I **HERE** now? – why in this activity/project, with these people?

Why am I here **NOW**? – why in this moment of your life?

Sharing: they create an art gallery and present to others their work of art. (15 min)

STEP 2: DEBRIEF AND CONCLUSIONS (25 MIN)

Questions: How was it to use the collage method? How is this different from just writing on paper? The instruments/tools inspired you to have more inspiration to find answers to the 4 questions or not? (15 min)

Conclusions: The simplest definition of motivation boils down to wanting (Baumeister, 2016). We want a change in behavior, thoughts, feelings, self-concept, environment, and relationships. (10 min)

“People often say that motivation doesn’t last. Well, neither does bathing — that’s why we recommend it daily”, by Zig Ziglar.

Facilitator is showing a video about The [Science Of Motivation](#)

STEP 5. PREPARATION FOR CHALLENGE

Methods: **Cake Roles**

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Objective: discovering their roles; identifying the time spent and effort level for each role.



Duration: 140 min



Materials and tools: A4 colored paper, pens, one flipchart paper, markers

Learning outcomes: increased awareness about their main roles (good and less good ones); increased ability to reflect on and analyze their roles; learning how to manage the time, effort, and other resources allocated to each role; ability to reflect on and find potential solutions for improving their relations from the perspective of each role.

Process:

Preparation: the facilitator can prepare in advance or draw on the spot while explaining the Cake roles model. (10 min)

STEP 1: INDIVIDUAL TASK (50 MIN)

- **Identification of the roles:** young people must think of roles they have in their lives and make a list (e.g.: daughter, son, sister, friend, grandson, wife, student, guitar player, householder, counselor, book reader, gamer, employee, gang member, etc.). (10 min)

- **Role time allocation:** if their time in a month is 100%, how much in % do they allocate to each role? After taking notes of the time allocated near each role, draw a round cake

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and include in it all your roles, by dividing the cake into slices (the size of each slice has to be per the time allocated to each of them) (10 min).

- **Role effort allocation:** they must create another role cake now, but allocation % according to the level of effort (personal energy, other resources) they think they put into each role (10 min).

- **Debrief in plenary** - Q&A method: How was it to identify your roles (e.g. hard, easy, confusing, etc.)? How about the time and effort allocation to each role? Do the 2 cakes look the same or different? Why? (20 min).

STEP 2: GROUP TASK – they work in the same small groups of 3 in all tasks (75 MIN)

- **Sharing** their 2 cakes and compare their cake of roles; looking for similarities and differences among the participants; (15 min)

- **Role development and Role management:** thinking if they are satisfied with the roles they have; if they would like to get rid of some roles or to have other missing roles; also thinking and discussing what is the main reason/goal for being in each role. (20 min)

- **Group support:** asking for potential solutions to improve the time and/or effort role allocation (from the others' experience or theory); finding tips & tricks on how to get rid of a particular role or to get in a missing role. (20 min)

- **Debrief in plenary** - Q&A method: How was it to share something so personal? Did you ever think before of how much time and effort you put into your roles? Can you share some of the reasons or goals for being in different roles? Did you find any practical solutions to your role management? (20 min).

STEP 3: CONCLUSIONS (5 MIN)

The facilitator explains that all roles should be treated with the same importance but they must be aware of the benefits and downsides of each role to make conscious choices. The key to managing their roles more efficiently is to constantly ask themselves what they want to achieve in that role. What is the purpose, the main gain,

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the interest they have when they interact with different people from each role? Am I ok or not in this role? If it's a role I cannot escape from (like student son, etc.) how can I improve it?

STEP 6. ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Method: “Acting Intelligent” - role-playing of the 4 intelligences (PQ, EQ, IQ, SQ)

Objective: identifying the 4 main types of intelligence and use them in their personal development process



Duration: 90 min



Materials and tools: drawing or projection of the 4 types of intelligences

Learning outcomes: knowledge and understanding of the 4 types of intelligence; ability to create a scenario and role play; motivation to develop all types of intelligence.

Process:

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Preparation: The facilitator introduces the theory that belongs to **Stephen R. Covey**¹⁶'s book "The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness", published in 2004. (10 min)

The four magnificent parts of our nature consist of body, heart, mind, and spirit. Corresponding to these four parts are four capacities or **intelligence** that all of us possess:

- **physical intelligence** (PQ) = our ability to maintain and develop our physical body
- **emotional intelligence** (EQ) = our ability to analyze, reason, think abstractly, use language, visualize, and comprehend with our mind.
- **mental intelligence** (IQ) = our self-knowledge, self-awareness, social sensitivity, empathy and ability to communicate successfully with others from our heart.
- **spiritual intelligence** (SQ) = our drive for meaning and connection with the infinite through our spirit.

STEP 1: THE TASK (45 MIN)

- **Creating the play:** the young people must prepare for 10-15 min. max role play having as characters the 4 types of intelligence; they have to invent and write a scenario as if each of the 4 intelligences are 4 different young people; for each role they have to emphasize the main aspect (e.g.: for the body character they will have to act as it's all about the body and how that body is acting in society) (30 min)
- **Playing:** the group of young people performs the play with all 4 roles in it. (15 min)

STEP 2: DEBRIEF AND CONCLUSIONS (35 MIN)

- **Debrief – Q&A method:** How did you work together? Who wrote the scenario? How did you choose the characters you played? In your personal life which of the 4 types do you identify the most with? Can you give us some examples? How about your friends

¹⁶<http://www.franklincoveysouthasia.com/asp/programfollowup/images/pcl/pdf/PersonalDevelopmentChallenge.pdf>

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and family – do they use or work on developing all 4 types? How did you feel playing that role? What did you learn from this activity? What would motivate you to develop more than the 4 types of intelligence? (20 min)

- **Conclusions:** the facilitator prepares a presentation based on the theory of “Developing the Four Intelligences/Capacities: A Practical Guide to Action” from book chapter [Personal Development Challenge](#), book - “The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness”, by Stephen R. Covey. (15 min)

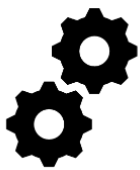
STEP 7. MANAGING THE CHALLENGE

Methods: Creative visualisation of one's future.

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Objective: Create personal development goals and plans.

Duration: 105 min



Materials and tools: depending on the chosen PDP model - paper, markers, creative materials such as post-its, stickers, colored pens or phone, and Internet for the online model.

Learning outcomes: the ability to think strategically; awareness of the importance of SMART goals; motivation to reflect, plan, and act regularly on their personal development process.

Process:

STEP 1: THE TASK (10 min)

- **Creative visualization:** the participants are being asked to find a comfortable position (it can also be lying down on the floor), to close their eyes and let themselves be guided through a series of affirmations and questions they must answer on their minds. Play some ambient relaxation music in the background. The facilitator must use a warm and clear voice and read the scenario below. Is important to leave some seconds between phrases and not rush the process so the participants have enough time to visualize and reflect in their minds.

Scenario: Imagine yourself 10 years from now. You are an adult, a healthy person, you have a great body, you are an educated person, you know many topics and areas of life. You can communicate very well, negotiate peacefully, prevent conflicts and find

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solutions to problems. You can control your emotions but you also developed a very nice sense of empathy. People like you and you like other people. You are great at working with others but you can also work on your own. You take care of your free time and relax in your own way on weekends. You have a job that you like or your own business. You have, or you want to have a family of your own. You live in the house or apartment you always dreamed of. You even have a pet. Is it a dog? Or a cat? Or maybe a turtle, or a fish?

You always look for ways to improve yourself, to be tolerant, patient and non-judgmental. You always seek to become a better person, to evolve as a human being, to help yourself but also help others. You are always working on developing your 4 main capacities: your body, your mind, your heart and your spirit. You are at peace and you feel safe. You know you have friends and family that could help you if you need it. You know that the power to control your own life is within yourself. You are the creator of your own future! (10 min)

STEP 2: Personal Development Plan (PDP) (55 min)

Preparation: the facilitator prepares in advance and shows to the young people a creative and easy-to-understand PowerPoint or a Canva presentation about the Personal Development Plan, based on the model of Tony Robbins: [Seven Steps To Create Your Perfect Personal Development Plan](#) (10 min).

Giving the task:

- help them create **Personal Development Goals** ([examples of PDG](#)) – specific areas in which they need to develop to achieve their performance objectives, career goals or to improve a personal aspect. A personal development objective could be about developing a specific skill or behavior, or increasing knowledge in a particular area. For this, they can go back to their SWOT analyses and pick from their areas to develop or improve. (15 min)

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- invite the participants to start creating their own PDP using Tony Robbins's **Personal Development Plan Template**. They can choose to work on their own or in pairs to support each other and offer ideas or inspiration. (30 min)

STEP 3: DEBRIEF AND CONCLUSIONS (40 MIN)

- **plan sharing**: 2 participants share their plans and receive constructive feedback from the facilitator and the other participants; (15 min)

- **debrief** – Q&A: How was it to work on your PDGs and PDP? Are they realistic? Is there room for improvement? What would motivate you to put into practice your PDP and reach your PDGs? (15 min)

- **conclusions**: open discussion on the topic of **Youth personal development** can happen in a lot of different ways. They include self-led learning, communication training, actions to develop skills, self-motivation, and group activities. (10 min)

Some of the **issues young people can address** through personal development include: Increasing self-awareness / Learning new skills, including communication, visioning and goal setting, life planning, etc. / Developing self-respect and self-esteem / Building strengths and talents / Identifying employability / Enhancing quality of life / Improving health / Enriching social abilities / Fostering independent living skills such as educational planning, money management, bill paying, etc. / Managing transitions and rites-of-passage.

STEP 8. MONITORING

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Methods: presence list; observation sheet; questionnaires; interviews; testimonials; Blob sheets.

Objective: collecting quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate the process of personal development of the young people involved in the previous activities.

Duration: 10-20 min



Materials and tools: paper, pen, printed or online templates of the monitoring methods

Learning outcomes: increased awareness of the importance of collecting quantitative and qualitative data to be analyzed further in the evaluation stage.

Process:

Depending on the type of activity and the profile of the young people, the facilitator will decide the appropriate instrument/method to be used at the end of each of the previous activities. It is mandatory to give enough time and space to participants to somehow record their evaluation results and deliver it to the facilitator at the end of the activity. Evaluation tool: online or on the paper questionnaire, Blob pages, small reflection groups, journaling etc.

STEP 9. EVALUATION

Methods: Reflection groups

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Objective: to analyze the achievement of the learning outcomes at the end of the activity; to modify, adjust, change or improve elements of the activity based on the evaluation results.



Duration: 10-20 min



Materials and tools: quiet space for reflection and talking; recording sheet of evaluation results (can be also recorded in audio mode).

Learning outcomes: improved skills for self and group reflection; increased awareness of the importance of reflection for producing positive change.

Process:

At the end of each of the previous activities (if done on separate days) or at the end of a working day (if you include more activities on the same day) the facilitator must give space and time to the participants to reflect on their learning process.

The evaluation process has to be based on the **Kolb Cycle of Learning** and you must use questions like:

- Concrete experience: What did we do today? What was it about?
- Reflective observation: How was your experience? How did you feel today? How did you feel going through this process of personal development?
- Abstract conceptualization: What did you learn from these activities? Which conclusions could we draw?

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- Active experimentation: How would you use what you learned in your daily life and your near future? How this activity could help you plan your personal development objectives or plan? What can be done to improve their learning experience in future activities?

Reflection groups: divided into groups of 3, participants are invited to evaluate the activity using the questions above (either printed in advance or written on a flipchart paper) and record their answers on paper or audio (anonymously).

Some activities could trigger big and visible changes while others might not have any immediate effect on the young people you will work with. Do not get discouraged! Just do not give up, go along with the flow, be assertive in your behavior towards them, and always have in mind that no matter what they do or say, they will still be impacted somehow.

They might just need a longer time to process their experience, reflect on it and show or verbalize later on what they felt, what they learned and how they will use it further.

EXTRA RESOURCES for further development of competences

[Be Extraordinary for Teens](#) – free online course to discover what you really want in life, unlock your hidden talents, *by Vishen Lakhiani*

[Creating Friendship and Deep Connections for Teens](#) – free 10-day journey, they'll discover how to build friendships that go deep, and navigate any social conflict, *by Gahmya Drummond-Bey*

[I am the future of work / now what?!](#) - The conversation starts here and young people need to be a part of it.

[ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally](#), *by Salto-Youth*

[How to improve Self-Esteem](#) – *by Marias Peer*

Personality [test 1](#) and [test 2](#) - Getting to know ourselves from another perspective

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About the author:



**Colour Your Dreams
Association**

Mihaela Amariei works in the educational field by collaborating with young people and adults for the past 22 years. She is a long-life learner and she integrates the concept of well-being in her work. She believes in having a holistic approach in one's educational path, from idea to fruition, and having a long-term positive impact on yourself and the lives of the ones you work with.

Mihaela is an **international trainer and educational design developer** in the youth field, since 2008. She has practical experience in the youth field through developing & writing project proposals, managing youth projects, creating strategic partnerships and networks, coaching and mentoring other peers in the youth field. She is creating and providing educational activities in a non-formal context, using innovative, interactive and participatory educational designs and methods, tailored to meet the needs of the participants and organizations involved.

Colour Your Dreams Association was built around the need to contribute towards the facilitation of inclusion of youth with disabilities, having an integrated approach by targeting capacity building at the level of youth workers, youth and community stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, but also NGOs and public authorities.

The association organizes and carries out activities for lifelong learning initiating actions, programs and projects of non-formal education for the development of skills of children, young people and adults in areas such as personal development, communication, counseling and career guidance, financial education, coaching, creativity, time management, social inclusion, ICT, cultural, artistic, sports, entrepreneurship, health promotion, environmental protection and sustainable development. Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/cydassociation>

CONCLUSIONS

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This methodology for youth workers aims to be supportive and provide practical guidelines for all facilitators and professionals who dedicate their efforts to the field of integration and development of skills, to promote forms of active citizenship and job placement paths to young people who, residing in rural areas and often disadvantaged, have less access to educational resources and employment opportunities.

Thanks to the combination of experiences and suggestions of six European partners, it is the result of the contributions of experienced youth workers and experts in various educational areas, from psychology, outdoor education, philosophy, sports, art and personal development, as well as experts in coaching and support projects for young people.

We strongly believe in the potential of a multidisciplinary and synergistic approach in the design of training for youth workers and activities for the young people. Every facilitator should try to use as many educational approaches as possible, based on the youngster's profile and style of learning and needs but also should try to use areas that could be new and could be beneficial for the young's people development.

The methodology is designed and structured to be immediately usable and easy to use thanks to the numerous didactic ideas and exercises presented in the six thematic areas.

The real integration of young people in rural areas implies knowing how to recognize the specific needs and characteristics of this population, enhancing their knowledge, skills and talents, to change their attitude and behavior for the better, to generate learning paths appropriate to the reality, condition and position of the young people to strengthen their skills and help them implement innovative initiatives in their communities.

It should be noted that users/facilitators may have different levels of education or experience in the six areas of this methodology. It is important to remember that every community knows, better than anyone else, their problems, their needs, and also knows the solutions for them, but it does not always know the path to follow and the future it

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intends to achieve. Therefore, these views and concerns should be considered and included in any training process in the field of social development as well as an in-depth analysis of the pathways and techniques to be applied to promote rural development in an integrated way.

The use of creative, innovative, reflective and playful methodologies is essential for the participation and empowerment of rural youth, as well as the use of group dynamics, to develop their skills and better involve them in the training course.

The concepts and methods discussed here allow facilitators to design their own objectives and acquire the discipline of planning, selecting the thematic contents, techniques and materials they deem most appropriate depending on the context in which they operate, for a training offer varied and flexible, aimed at guaranteeing young people in rural areas an additional educational opportunity, to develop the ability to learn, motivate them to discover themselves and their potential.



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