



InnerGarden

NATURE-BASED PRACTICES
FOR HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT
OF YOUTH WORKERS

TOOLBOX

Created at InnerGarden

Erasmus+ mobility for youth workers

11th-20th July 2023, Gajrowskie, Poland



Co-funded by
the European Union



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About the project

InnerGarden was an international training course in the form of mobility for youth workers financed by the **Erasmus+** Programme of the European Union, that was organized in Gajrowskie, Poland on the days 11-20th July 2023 by **Freedom Universe** foundation. It gathered 27 participants from 9 European countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey.

The project was designed to present an innovative integrated approach to the holistic development of youth workers, which **combines elements from nature-based practices, positive psychology and education, ecopsychology, social work, and personal development.** By going through the whole process on their own, participants had a chance to experience benefits for their own development and learn how to provide similar experiences to young people and other youth workers.

TOOLBOX

This toolbox contains **methods and description of sessions** that were planned, prepared and conducted **by our participants** during the mobility. They are a mix of various methods that can be used in youth work.

Our project contained a practice day for participants who had a chance to design and implement **30-60 minutes long sessions** for the rest of the group in order to create and share new methods for holistic development of youth workers.

You are welcome to use it in your daily work and share it with others.

Supportive Presence

Authors:

Bea, Sylwia, Alexa

Objective:

- to gain a deep sense and experience of support through connecting with others in non-verbal ways
- to transform the feelings of separateness and loneliness, even when recalling our most painful and heavy life-experiences.
- to experience the common humanity component of self-compassion

Approximate duration:

- 45 min - 1,5 hour - the time of implementation will influence the depth of the experience, however even with 45 mins it has its impact

Resources needed / place / materials:

- Quite big space to the whole group to move around.
- An instrument (eg. tibetan bowl or bells) to indicate the time when a given task is over
- Speaker for background music (however can also be done in silence)



Description of the process:

As the introduction, the overall idea of the upcoming workshop is briefly discussed with the participants.

1) In the first part, people are asked to move/walk around the given space in order to really arrive to the present moment, to get into their bodies and feel them through. They can follow the slowly, patiently evolving instructions like shaking off their body and do body scan from the bottom to the top. When they feel connected to the present moment, to their own presence, the next step is to kindly ask them to start discovering and exploring the people around them. Enough time should be given to get into those connections gently and patiently. First, just asking them to initiate eye contact, then if they feel like, they can just stop in front of one another, take a deeper look into the eyes and explore what is inside, what they can tell, what they would like to share and how does it feel. Participants can move on, find another person and connect with them as well.

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This time, it can be also imagined that the person in front of the other has his/her own special journey, with all the ups and downs she/he also has gone through creating the sense of empathy and deep compassion. With the next person they will connect, they can experience the supportive presence of other also by touch, holding their hands and whatever feels comfortable to the partner in front.

2) In the second part, after the exploration of connections with other participants it is asked to make small groups (the size of the group is dependent on the time available (45 mins – 4-persons-groups; 1,5 hr – 6-persons-groups). Participants are invited to stand in circles and recall an experience in which they felt they don't matter. They are to come back with their memories to some life situation, the group of people, the time when they felt unfit. One person at a time, when ready, enters the circle and embodies the emotions that arise when recalling the situation. They are invited to take the body posture that resembles how they feel. When ready, they take step towards a chosen person from a circle. The person approached gives support by the chosen simple gesture and eye contact as long as the support is needed. The person who is experiencing support steps back into the center of the circle, when ready. Gets back to the emotions from recalled situation and takes a step towards another person in the circle, and does so until everyone from the team gives support. Another person goes in the circle.

It can be helpful to give a gentle bell/sound as a hint that it is time to change in teams (in order to make sure that there is time for everyone to experience support).

3) In the third part, still being in silence, the participants will become "Sun" and "Planets" for each other. There is a song played in the background (positive music, around 6min long). First person steps in the circle and becomes Sun, the rest are Planets and they are dancing around the Sun appreciating it's warmth and light, admiring it for simply being. The Sun can just BE and it is ENOUGH to be a MIRACLE. After a given sound sign (1/4 of song length) the sun exchanges roles and positions with one of the planets, until everyone will become the sun.

Once finishes, the groups can have some time to share, express gratitude or just be with each other.

Soul Mandala

Authors:

Maria, Natália, Jo

Objective:

- To promote integration and meditative moments through handicraft work
- To stimulate self-knowledge through creativity, meditation and connection with nature

Approximate duration:

- 45 minutes - 1 hour

Resources needed / place / materials:

- Sticks, colorful yarn, scissors

Description of the process:

- 1) Start with meditation to bring the participants to here and now and to think about the intentions for creating the mandala
- 2) Explain that they are free to choose colors that represent something to them, that they are free to create and express themselves
- 3) Explain how to build the mandala with the sticks and the yarn. You can find the tutorial here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X53ZXcHoR_c
- 4) Leave space and time for participants to build their mandalas. Silence is not mandatory but appreciated.
- 5) Sharing circle about the experience and their work.



Heavy head dance

Authors:

Gorazd, Villy, Mónica

Objective:

- To create a deeper connection between the participants, let them experience the feeling of having a lighter head as well as explore their boundaries and trust.

Approximate duration:

- 30 minutes

Resources needed / place / materials:

- A space (preferably indoors) where the participants can move freely and sit/lay down. Calm dancing music.

Description of the process:

Start by inviting the participants to walk around in the space and randomly get into couples. Invite them to look into each other's eyes for several seconds (10 s) and after that, hug diagonally (one hand over and the other hand under the other person's hand so that their hearts are in the closest proximity) for several seconds (15 s). This should create a deeper connection between participants. Repeat the process of finding partners until everyone has had the opportunity to be in a couple with everyone. After that, invite the participants to get into couples that they feel a connection with and are similar in height. For the next part, person A in the couple is going to hold the head of person B in the couple trying to reduce the weight of their head while person B explores the space dancing calmly. They are then invited to sit down and eventually lay down and stand back up while still trying to hold their head. The dance lasts for approximately 5 minutes in total. After that, Person A and B switch roles and repeat the heavy head dance.



Skin as a Gate

Authors:

Jacopo, Dora, Fruzsina

Objective:

- raising body awareness: skin as a sensing, living organ that separates and connects us
- experimenting with sensations: sight, touch, smell, taste, sounds
- experimenting with your boundaries and potential feelings of discomfort in a safe space, in a curious, self-compassionate way
- connection with nature, have a more immersive experience through the heightened use of our senses

Approximate duration:

- 45 minutes

Resources needed / place / materials:

- instrument (eg. gong), blindfolds (or scarf, etc)

Description of the process:

- 1) Quick intro about the skin as our biggest organ
- 2) Mindful barefoot walking on a sandy road - backwards after the half of the road.
- 3) Slow walking in the grassy fields - experimenting with different types of looking (half in, half out, 360 degrees looking, focused, unfocused), being mindful about how nature touches our skin
- 4) Put on a blindfold, get naked or undress as much as you wish, and discover nature around you and its interactions with your skin.
- 5) Sharing in pairs



The web of Interconnected Wholeness

Authors:

Sándor, Irene, Clara

Objective: To raise awareness about different parts of the human psyche and the elements of nature inside us.

Approximate duration: 40 minutes - 1 hour

Resources needed / place / materials:

- A spacious room/space where the group can move freely.
- A bell or instrument to announce the change of roles/time for reflection.



Description of the process: Divide the activity in three parts:

1) Use breathing exercises to bring attention to the body and into the present moment. The Wim Hof breathing consists of three rounds of thirty full breaths without pause between exhales and inhales then holding the breath for around 90 seconds after the last exhale and with a short recovery time between rounds

2) To integrate the human nature elements and archetypes of the eco-soul-centric theory of Bill Plotkin with the family constellations method of Bert Hellinger. First, divide the group into trios and each trio chooses one person to be the first spectator.

- The spectator's task is to assign a natural element, an archetype or emotion to each of their two mates and observe what's happening and what insights this experience can give them about their inner psyche and nature.

- The others' task is to receive the assigned element/archetype/emotion, let it flow through them and follow any inner urge for movement or making a sound.

Each session goes on for about 5 minutes, then it's advisable to (literally) shake the roles off as a lot of turbulence and heavy emotions might have risen to the surface and it's important to let them go. Then there is a 3 minute time for reflection in the trios. After the reflection, they switch roles until everyone has been a spectator once.

3) Sharing circle where everyone can share their questions/experiences/thoughts/insights and then close the session together.

Links: Wim Hof breathing: <https://www.wimhofmethod.com/breathing-exercise>

Collect your Inner Treasure

Authors:

Denitsa, Şebnem, Censu, Despina

Objective:

- To let people explore the wild and choose an object that they feel connected to, find a way to embody it in order reflect to their authentic self.

Approximate duration:

- 40 minutes

Resources needed / place / materials:

- Resources - All kinds of plants and natural resources that are available in the area.
- Place - natural space, eg. in the forest,
- Materials - paper, pens, wool, scissors.

Description of the process:

Invite the participants to let their inner child guide them through the unknown. Tell them it's their intuition, their curiosity that will send them on the right way and that the objects they might find in the forest are mystical. Ask them to find a natural object that is an embodiment of their teenage self. When they come back to the circle, invite them to make something creative out of it: it is the moment the Adult within themselves steps in and decides how to keep what was found in the forest. How to cultivate it for the present time and see how it will be reached by the Elder Self in future.

Let them create something artistic with the object and provided materials as well as let them share the stories behind each experience in the forest eg. what brought them to this place and what the place or object brought within themselves.



Dance, drink and come together

Authors:

Linda, Ieva, Loreta

Objective:

- Enhanced understanding of the East archetype of Nature Based Map of Human Psyche
- Processwork to implement the concept in every day life
- Shared intercultural experience - traditional Latvian dances
- Reflecting in couples and in a common circle

Approximate duration:

- 45 minutes

Resources needed / place / materials:

- Blankets to make a circle for sitting, speaker, music, tea



Description of the process:

Introduce the activity and its objectives. Show dance moves (it can be any dance, eg. folk dancing, that traditionally, is closely related to rituals). Participants dance and enjoy the music - allow to be loose, have fun, embody the music and follow movement.

After the active part, everyone gets comfortable, sitting in a circle. Quiet, peaceful music sets the background for an enhanced flow. The guidance is to close their eyes, take a few deep breaths together, and arrive at the present moment mindfully.

Dance, drink and come together

Authors:

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Then, participants are asked to observe the energy that is alive within them after dancing - how does it feel; how would they describe it; where can it be felt in the body? After paying close attention to this feeling, they are asked to reflect on how it feels to experience it and if it is familiar.

The guidance continues, leading participants to imagine a scene that represents this feeling - they are guided to explore how each of the senses experience this landscape. To maintain the flow, eyes are kept closed, and participants are asked to signal if they have finished creating the imaginary scenario by raising their hand. This approach alleviates any pressure to be the first or last.

Lastly, participants are guided to reflect on whether they miss this energy in their lives and to contemplate ways to cultivate it in their daily lives. Once everyone signals they are finished, they are asked to open their eyes and return to the physical space.

Participants pair up and share what their imagined place was, as well as their plans for cultivating this energy daily. Each participant is given 4 minutes, with the facilitator managing the time.

Calming tea is offered to accompany the final phase of shared reflection. It symbolizes the other aspect of the East - zooming out. Once the circle is opened, everyone is welcomed to share their highlights and provide feedback.

Sharing

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About the Organiser

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Freedom Universe is a non-governmental, non-profit organization based in Łódź, central Poland. It was established in December 2021. **The mission of our NGO is to create a society in which there is freedom of self-expression and presence of values such as authenticity, mutual understanding and support, acceptance and respect for diversity.** We want to create spaces for creative and artistic activities, lifelong learning and personal growth. It is important to us to empower people by raising the awareness that each person has the ability to create their own reality. Also, connection with nature fundamental for us as we care about sustainability and protecting mother earth.

Before the NGO was established, we were active for 2 years as an informal group. We work both locally and internationally. In Poland **we organize FRUN festival for over 900 people**, local events and workshops. Internationally we are involved in Erasmus+ projects. Our main fields of interest are personal development, arts and environmental issues. Young people are our main target group – we would like to offer them tools for their personal growth, developing self-awareness, creativity and soft skills such as leadership and communication.

Contact

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If you would like to find out more about the program, please visit
<http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmusplus/>



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