HANDBOOK

A practical resource to support youth workers, educators, facilitators, and organisations in designing and delivering inclusive non-formal education (NFE) and outdoor-based activities.

Chapter 1:

Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the Handbook

What this handbook is
This handbook is a practical resource created within the Beyond Limits project to support youth workers, educators, facilitators, and organisations in designing and delivering inclusive non-formal education (NFE) and outdoor-based activities. It compiles newly developed, adapted activities created during the project and provides clear instructions, accessibility adaptations, and examples of how to integrate inclusive digital tools into youth work practice.

Why it was created
The handbook was developed in response to a clear gap identified among youth workers: many professionals are highly motivated to work with young people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, but lack the practical skills, confidence, and adapted methods needed to make their sessions accessible and inclusive.

Youth workers often face barriers such as:
- limited knowledge of how to adapt NFE for mixed-ability groups,
- uncertainty about how to support sensory, physical, or cognitive needs,
- lack of ready-to-use tools that combine inclusion, digital accessibility, and outdoor/non-formal learning.

This handbook addresses these challenges by offering structured, field-tested activities and concrete adaptations that enable equal participation, empower diverse youth, and support the creation of inclusive learning environments.

What problem it solves
The handbook provides solutions to:
- barriers to participation for youth with sensory, physical, cognitive, social, or emotional needs;
- lack of practical inclusive tools in youth work;
- difficulties in adapting NFE methods to diverse learning profiles;
- limited use of assistive and digital accessibility tools;
- gaps between inclusive intentions and everyday practice.

By offering clear, adaptable activities, the handbook helps youth workers feel more confident and prepared to include every young person in their sessions—especially those belonging to vulnerable or marginalised groups.

1.2. Who This Handbook Is For

This handbook is designed for:
- Youth workers who want to make their programmes more accessible and inclusive;
- Teachers and specialists working with young people with disabilities or fewer opportunities;
- Facilitators and trainers delivering workshops, outdoor activities, or NFE sessions;
- Organisations engaged in youth work, social inclusion, outdoor education, or community development.

The content is suitable for both beginners and experienced practitioners who wish to improve or expand their competence in inclusive facilitation.

1.3. How to Use This Handbook

Step-by-step approach
- Start with the principles of inclusive facilitation.
- Choose an activity that fits your group's aims and context.
- Review the adaptations section to match the activity to your participants' needs.
- Incorporate the suggested digital tools when relevant.
- Use the reflection questions to support learning and group processing.

Selecting the right activities
- Consider the age, abilities, and interests of your group.
- Pay attention to sensory, physical, or cognitive challenges.
- Choose activities that match your session goals (communication, teamwork, emotional learning, etc.).
- Always prepare alternative participation options.

What this handbook is NOT
- It is not a clinical or therapeutic manual.
- It is not a diagnostic resource or medical guide.
- It does not replace specialised support for young people with specific health or educational needs.

It is a non-formal education toolkit—a practical, flexible resource to help you make your sessions more inclusive, creative, safe, and engaging.

Many of the young people we work with face multiple barriers—disabilities, unstable home environments, anxiety, or social exclusion. This can lead to unpredictable moments or emotional crises, requiring us to respond with calm, clarity, and care. Still, young people often turn to us for support, and this trust allows us to guide them toward the right services, tools, and safe spaces. The work can be demanding, but seeing a young person feel understood, included, and more confident makes every effort worth it. Our team also relies on supervision and external guidance when needed to stay grounded and maintain high-quality support.

Mariana, Youth worker - Bulgaria.

Four Group Rituals That Build Connection and Trust

Building connection in a diverse group doesn't happen by accident — it happens through consistent, predictable moments of human warmth. For young people who face disabilities, social exclusion, emotional difficulties, or unstable home environments, these moments are not "extras"; they are essential. Rituals create rhythm, safety, and a sense of belonging. They help young people settle, trust the space, and trust the adults guiding them.

Inclusive youth work thrives when participants feel seen, valued, and emotionally safe. Neuroscience shows that connection is not built through long conversations or dramatic breakthroughs, but through short, repeated interactions that signal: "**You matter here. You belong here.**"

The following four rituals are small, simple, and easy to apply — yet they have a profound impact on group dynamics. They calm the nervous system, build trust, strengthen motivation, and create a foundation where every young person can participate fully. They also support youth workers by reducing tension, preventing escalation, and setting a tone of respect and warmth.

These rituals are especially powerful in mixed-ability groups, where young people may communicate differently, process emotions at different speeds, or need reassurance before engaging in learning. Rituals turn the group into a predictable, welcoming environment — an environment where inclusion happens naturally.

1. The Warm Start

A simple greeting ritual where each young person is welcomed by name, eye contact, and warmth:
"I'm glad you're here." "Good to see you." "How's your morning been?"
Science: Greeting activates the social engagement system (Porges, 2011), reduces anxiety, and prepares the brain for focus.

2. Peer Spotlights

A weekly moment where young people acknowledge a peer's effort, kindness, or contribution —
no points, no rewards, just genuine appreciation.
Science: Peer recognition activates the brain's social reward circuitry (Lieberman, 2013), releasing dopamine and oxytocin and fulfilling the need for belonging (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

3. Emotional Check-Ins

A quick daily ritual where participants name their emotions using visuals, colours, or symbols.
Science: Labeling emotions reduces amygdala activation and improves self-regulation (Lieberman et al., 2007; CASEL, 2021).

4. Micro-Moments

Small, meaningful responses to bids for connection — a look, a sigh, a question, a drawing.
These tiny interactions create safety and repair.
Science: Trust builds through micro-responses, not big gestures (Gottman, 1999). Each moment of "turning toward" increases oxytocin and strengthens relational safety.

Chapter 2:

Inclusive Facilitation Principles

Inclusive facilitation is at the core of the Beyond Limits project. Youth workers cannot create accessible, empowering learning environments without understanding the principles that guide inclusive non-formal education. This section outlines the foundational approaches that support equal participation, dignity, and meaningful engagement for all young people—especially those with disabilities and from vulnerable groups.

Create a POSITIVE and INCLUSIVE learning ENVIRONMENT

2.1. Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

UDL is a framework that ensures everyone can participate by offering multiple ways of engaging, multiple ways of understanding, and multiple ways of expressing learning.

Key UDL principles for youth work:

Multiple means of representation:
Provide information in different formats — visual (slides, drawings), verbal, written, tactile, and digital.

Multiple means of action & expression:
Allow participants to choose how to participate (verbal discussion, drawing, gestures, digital input, teamwork).

Multiple means of engagement:
Use activities that can be adapted for comfort levels, sensory needs, pacing preferences, and cultural backgrounds.

2.2. Trauma-Aware & Psychologically Safe Environments

Many young people — with or without disabilities — carry hidden stressors, trauma histories, or social fears. Inclusive facilitation must therefore prioritise:

Safety before participation.

Predictable session structure

Clear instructions

No sudden changes without communication

Ability to opt out without explanation

Respecting personal boundaries and sensory thresholds

Empowerment, not exposure.
Activities aim to include everyone without forcing personal disclosure or emotional vulnerability.

Choice and control.
Participants choose how much they share, how they join an activity, and what pace they engage with.

Regulation over performance.
Use grounding techniques, gentle transitions, and emotional check-ins to keep the group regulated and focused.

2.3. Accessibility Considerations for Different Needs

Visual impairments
- High-contrast printouts, large font, tactile elements
- Verbal explanation of visual materials
- Clear orientation in the physical space
- Option for digital readers, speech-to-text, or audio description

Hearing impairments
- Written instructions and visual cues
- Facilitator facing participants while speaking
- Subtitles, captioning apps, or live transcription tools
- Minimal background noise

Sensory sensitivities (autism, ADHD, anxiety, trauma, etc.)
- Avoid harsh lights, loud music, or fast transitions
- Clear structure and predictable sequencing
- Allow breaks, movement, or sensory tools (earplugs, fidgets)
- Provide "quiet zones"

Physical and motor impairments
- Accessible space (seating, pathways, materials)
- Options for seated participation
- Alternative tools (large-grip markers, clipboards, digital input)
- Adjust timing to reduce fatigue

Cognitive and learning differences
(attention, memory, executive functioning, dyslexia, dyspraxia)
- Short, simple instructions given one step at a time
- Use demonstrations, icons, timers, and visual sequencing
- Repetition without pressure
- Provide assistive digital tools

2.4. Role of the Facilitator

Inclusive facilitation is an active and intentional process where the facilitator creates a learning environment that feels safe, accessible, and welcoming for every young person. This role goes beyond delivering activities: it requires noticing non-verbal cues, adjusting the pace, offering alternative ways to participate, and responding with empathy and clarity. The facilitator models respect, sets the emotional tone of the group, and ensures that each participant, regardless of ability, background, or communication style, has a meaningful place in the session. They maintain psychological safety, prevent exclusion within the group, and encourage cooperation, curiosity, and connection. Ultimately, the facilitator acts as a guide who supports autonomy, builds trust, and ensures that inclusion is not an intention but a lived practice throughout every activity.

An inclusive facilitator pays close attention to the group and responds in real time to what is happening in the room. This means noticing non-verbal signs of stress, discomfort, or confusion and adjusting the pace, structure, or level of difficulty when needed. Being observant allows the facilitator to create a learning flow that feels supportive rather than overwhelming.

Holding the space is another essential part of the role. The facilitator provides emotional containment, offering calmness and structure when participants feel unsure or dysregulated. They set a tone of warmth and respect, making every young person feel welcome, accepted, and safe to participate. Through inclusive language and behaviour, the facilitator models the values the group is expected to follow.

Enabling participation is central to inclusive practice. A skilled facilitator offers alternative ways of joining the activity without drawing unnecessary attention to anyone's needs. Participants are encouraged to communicate their preferences or limits discreetly and are supported in making choices that honour their comfort and autonomy. The goal is to ensure dignity for every person, regardless of ability, background, or communication style.

Finally, the facilitator actively supports **healthy group dynamics.** They prevent exclusion, dominance, or isolation within the group and encourage teamwork by highlighting everyone's strengths. By modelling empathy, patience, and openness, the facilitator helps create a culture where young people support one another and feel a genuine sense of belonging.

The foundational psychological processes driving inclusion, the transformation of identity, and group formation involve basic human motivations, cognitive mechanisms, and interpersonal dynamics, as explored in the sources.
The three essential processes that combine to transform lone individuals into group members are inclusion, collectivism, and identity.

Inclusion: The Drive to Belong

The primary psychological process driving inclusion is the need to belong, defined as a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and impactful interpersonal relationships.

Key Processes of Inclusion:

- Evolutionary Foundation: Evolutionary theory suggests that the tendency to join groups is part of human nature because early humans who were affiliated with groups were more likely to survive and reproduce, benefiting from shared resources, superior surveillance against predators, and mutual protection.

- Sociometer Theory: This theory posits that self-esteem functions as a psychological sociometer that monitors an individual's degree of acceptance by others. When people experience a dip in their self-esteem, they are prompted to search for and correct characteristics that might put them at risk of social exclusion, thus maintaining inclusion.

- Reactions to Exclusion (Ostracism): When the need to belong is thwarted by deliberate exclusion (ostracism), individuals experience negative feelings such as frustration, anxiety, loneliness, and shock. Reactions to exclusion motivate re-inclusion and can manifest as:
  ○ The fight-or-flight response, motivated by a desire to gain control, which may involve confronting group members or engaging in aggressive and self-defeating behaviors.
  ○ The tend-and-befriend response, which involves seeking social reconnection through increased nurturing, protective behaviors, heightened sensitivity to social cues, and a willingness to work harder for the group.

Identity: Transforming the Self

The processes driving identity involve shifting from an individualistic, self-focused perspective to a group-level perspective (collectivism), which in turn transforms one's sense of self.

- Individualism to Collectivism: Membership requires a move from individualism (emphasizing independence, uniqueness, and personal rights) to collectivism (emphasizing interdependence, concern for the effect of one's actions on others, and the primacy of the group). Collectivists' identities emphasize connections to other people, whereas individualists emphasize their personal qualities.
- Social Identity Theory (SIT): SIT describes how group memberships influence an individual's self-concept and self-esteem, specifically through two cognitive processes:
  - Social Categorization: The automatic classification of people, including oneself, into social categories (e.g., nationality, profession, group membership). This process is followed by self-categorization, where individuals classify themselves into a group, potentially leading to self-stereotyping (applying group prototypes to oneself).
  - Social Identification: This occurs when an individual accepts the group as an extension of the self. As identification increases, the sense of self becomes depersonalized, incorporating fewer idiosyncratic elements and more characteristics common to the group.
- Motivation and Self-Worth: Individuals are motivated to think well of themselves (maintain self-esteem) and, because their groups form a significant part of their self, they seek to maintain their self-worth by evaluating their groups positively (high collective self-esteem).

Group Formation: Personal, Situational, and Interpersonal Drivers

- Attachment Style: Individual orientations to relationships, defined by levels of anxiety and avoidance of closeness, influence engagement in groups.

2. Affiliation and Situational Factors (When do people come together?):
- Social Comparison: Affiliation is more likely in ambiguous, confusing, or stressful circumstances because people seek others to compare their reactions and gain cognitive clarity.
- Social Support: People affiliate under stress because groups provide social support, including belonging, emotional support, advice, and tangible assistance.

3. Attraction and Interpersonal Bonds (What generates lasting groups?): Once people affiliate, attraction sustains the group through several principles:
- Proximity Principle: Individuals tend to like those physically located nearby due to increased familiarity and interaction.
- Similarity Principle (Homophily): People are attracted to individuals who are similar to them in attitudes, values, or demographics ("birds of a feather flock together").
- Complementarity Principle: Individuals may be attracted to those whose qualities complement their own, such as dominance seeking submission, creating originator compatibility.
- Social Exchange Theory: This theory suggests people join and remain in groups that provide the maximum number of valued rewards while incurring the minimum number of possible costs (the minimax principle).

Five stages of group development?

The most well-known successive-stage model of group development, theorized by educational psychologist Bruce Tuckman, identifies five predictable, sequential stages that groups typically pass through during their existence. This theory suggests that groups move from an aggregate of individuals into a cohesive, functioning unit by confronting and resolving challenges at each phase

1. Forming (Orientation Stage)

Major Processes/Characteristics: Members become oriented toward one another and the group. This stage is often characterized by tension, guarded exchanges, and low levels of interaction

Focus: Members are uncertain about their roles, what they should be doing, and who is leading. They monitor their behavior to maintain social poise and exchange basic personal information (self-disclosure) to get acquainted. This stage involves dependency and inclusion issues, and the acceptance of the leader and group consensus.

Communication: Communication is tentative and polite

Group formation is typically driven by a combination of personal qualities, situational opportunities for affiliation, and interpersonal attraction.

1. Personal Qualities (Who joins groups?):

- **Personality Traits: The trait of extraversion (sociable, outgoing, active) is a particularly influential determinant of group-joining proclivities. Other traits in the Five-Factor Model (FFM), such as agreeableness and conscientiousness, influence the type of group people join.**

- **Social Motivation: People join groups to satisfy basic social motives or needs:**

  - **Need for Affiliation: A strong desire to be with other people.**

  - **Need for Intimacy: A preference for close, warm relations focused on friendship and camaraderie.**

  - **Need for Power: An elevated desire to maintain and enhance one's capacity to influence others, leading individuals to seek positions of authority within groups.**

2. Storming (Conflict Stage)

Major Processes/Characteristics: Tension over goals, procedures, and authority begins to rise. This stage is marked by a "lack of unity".

Focus: Conflicts surface, including personal conflicts (members discover they do not get along), procedural conflicts (over goals and methods), and competition for authority, leadership, and prestigious roles. Members may display hostility or form coalitions. In groups with official leaders, conflict often centers on challenging the leader's authority.

Outcome: Once stable patterns of authority, attraction, and communication develop, these conflicts subside

3. Norming (Structure Stage)

Major Processes/Characteristics: The group becomes more stable, organized, and unified. Unity and cohesion increase, and membership stabilizes.

Focus: Norms and roles are established, regulating behavior and reducing role ambiguity. Members become more trusting, supportive, and cooperative, leading to increased satisfaction and a heightened "we-feeling".

4. Performing (Performance Stage)

Major Processes/Characteristics: The group moves beyond disagreement and organizational issues to concentrate on the work to be done. The group's focus shifts to goal achievement, emphasizing performance and production.

Focus: The group functions as a unit, engaging in decision making, problem solving, and mutual cooperation. Groups typically become more efficient and productive later in their life cycle, once they reach this mature stage. However, not all groups reach this productive stage.

5. Adjourning (Dissolution Stage)

Major Processes/Characteristics: The group terminates its existence, marking the end of the developmental sequence.

Focus: This stage involves the completion of tasks, the reduction of dependency among members, and the termination of roles. Dissolution can be planned (e.g., a committee filing a final report) or spontaneous (e.g., failure or lack of satisfaction). Even planned dissolution can be stressful, leading to distress or regret among members

Chapter 3:

Using technology in youth work with sensory disabled people

Visual Impairments

App	Platform	Cost	Key Function	Use in Activity
Be My Eyes	iOS & Android ([Dr Dave Chaffey : Digital Insights](#))	Free	Live help from volunteers / AI for object-recognition	Use for "exploration" stations: blind youth lead a helper or peer using the app.
Seeing AI	iOS (Android maybe) ([Wikipedia](#))	Free	Camera-based object/text recognition	Use for "decode the clue" tasks: blind youth use it to read cards, then teach peers how it works.
Speech Central	iOS & Android ([speechcentral.net](#))	Free (with extra features)	Reads aloud text/files – helpful for reading accessibility	Use when giving written resources: ensure visually impaired have access via this app.
OsmAnd Maps & Navigation	Android & iOS ([Wikipedia](#))	Free version available	Offline maps & navigation with voice guidance	Use in outdoor movement tasks: blind youth use the navigation tool to guide group or pair.
Accessible Editor	Android ([The American Foundation for the Blind](#))	Free	Large-font text input + speech output	Use when working with text creation tasks in your training: allows visually impaired youth to input/edit text easily.

What to Check / Clarify for Each App (to make your activity bullet-proof)

Does the app work offline or with minimal internet? For field/outdoor NFE sessions this matters.

Does the youth need to practice beforehand? Don't assume instant proficiency—build in a 5-10 minute familiarisation step.

Tools for sensory-processing

App	Platform	Cost	Key Function	How to Integrate into Your Activity
Live Transcribe	Android	Free	Real-time transcription of spoken speech into text.	Use at group discussion stations: deaf youth use the app to follow what is being said and participate fully.
InnoCaption	iOS & Android	Free (for users with hearing loss) (innocaption.com)	Real-time captioning of phone calls and voice calls.	Use in "remote conversation" activity: pair participants across countries, deaf youth use InnoCaption to ensure they're fully included.
Make It Big	iOS & Android	Free (innocaption.com)	Enlarges typed text, easy to display text to others; useful for hearing and deaf.	Use as a quick visual communication tool: youth can type messages and display large text to peers when sound isn't viable.
Signly	iOS (likely)	Free / low cost (AbilityNet)	Uses sign language videos for interpreting written/visual info (e.g., for deaf users).	Use when creating materials: show how visual information can be supplemented with sign-language video via Signly.

What to Check / Clarify for Each App (to make your activity bullet-proof)

Language accuracy & context: Speech-to-text tools often struggle with accents, background noise, multiple speakers. Build contingency plans.

Training & familiarisation: Allocate a short time for participants (and youth-workers) to try the app before mission-critical usage.

Hearing Impairments

App / Tool	Platform	Cost	Sensory-function addressed	How you could integrate in your session
BrainWorks	iOS	Free (some features paid) ([Sunshine and Hurricanes](#))	Sensory breaks, regulation (for kids with sensory processing disorder)	Use in warm-up or "re-set" moments: participants can choose a BrainWorks sub-activity when they need sensory downtime during a long session.
Fluidity HD	iOS (maybe Android) ([Gympanzees](#))	Free / low cost	Visual-tactile soothing: flow colours, touch responsive	Use as a "calm down station" in your training: any youth (including those with tactile or sensory sensitivity) can use it to regulate before moving to next group work.
Sensory Light Box	iOS/Android (as part of lists) ([bridgingapps.org](#))	Free/low cost	Visual stimulation for those with low-vision or sensory tolerance for light/movement	Use when you design sensory-rich stations: ensure you have an option to switch to "low movement, low brightness" for youth who are sensory-sensitive. This app is a test of how visual sensory stimuli affect people.
Sensory Chat (podcast)	iOS/Android (audio) ([sensoryintegrationeducation.com](#))	Free	Auditory + sensory-education for caregivers & practitioners	Use in your facilitator training: assign "Sensory Chat" episode as pre-work reading/listening so your youth-workers understand broader sensory processing needs before session.

What to Check / Clarify for Each App (to make your activity bullet-proof)

For youth with sensory processing differences you must check: minimal flashing, adjustable sound volume, calm transitions. Apps such as those in "inclusive apps that stop sensory overload" highlight this need.

After using the tool in a session, embed a short reflection: e.g., "How did using this calm-down app or station change your sense of inclusion?" Then adjust your next session accordingly.
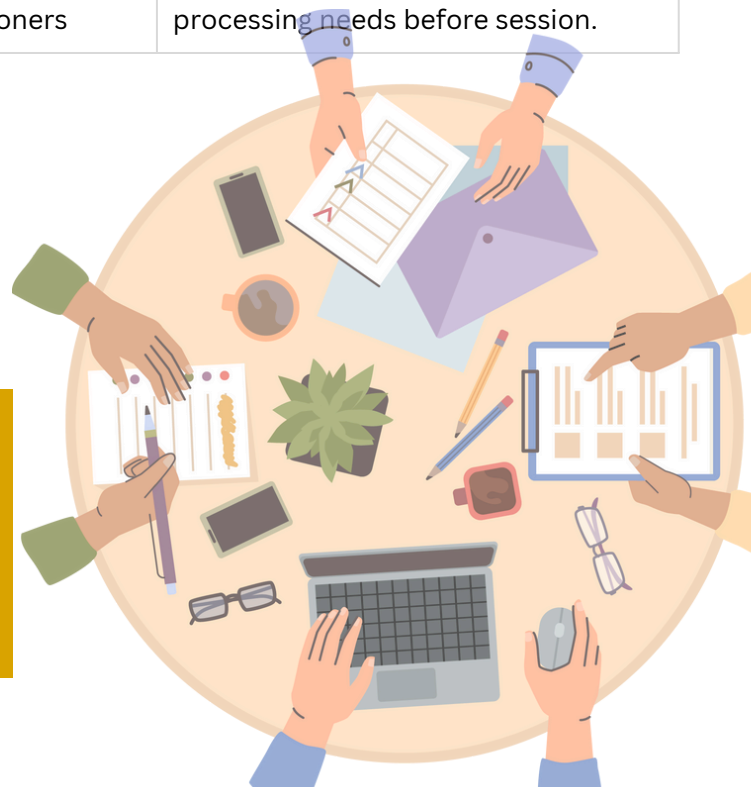
Chapter 4:

Toolkit Adapted NFE activities

Beyond Limits - Inclusive Youth Work

Board Game Remix: Team Strategy Challenge

This activity uses adapted elements from popular board games (Jenga, Uno, Dixit, Codenames, Monopoly) to help participants explore how group dynamics form under pressure, competition, cooperation, and shared decision-making.

Duration: 60–75 minutes total

Group Size: max 24, split into 3 rotating teams

Materials:

- 1 set of Jenga
- 1 deck of Uno
- 1 set of Dixit or similar storytelling cards
- Flipchart sheets
- Markers
- Timer
- Optional: tablet/phone to project rules visually

Step-by-Step Process

Phase 1 – Introduction

The facilitator explains that each famous board game has been adapted into a group challenge rather than an individual competitive game. Participants will rotate through three stations, each targeting a different aspect of group dynamics:

- Jenga = Communication and Calm Coordination
- Uno = Managing Emotions + Fast Decision-Making
- Dixit = Creative Collaboration + Understanding Perspectives

Clarify rules:

- Teams rotate every 10–12 minutes
- The goal is not to win, but to observe how they work together
- They should pay attention to roles, behaviours, challenges, and emotions

Phase 2 – Main Activity

Station 1: Jenga – "Silent Strategy Tower"
Challenge: Build the tallest possible tower without speaking.

- Everyone must pull at least one block
- Speak = penalty block removed
- 10 minutes

Focus: Non-verbal communication, coordination, calm decision-making

Station 2: Uno – "Team Uno Relay"
Challenge: Make every move by team agreement within 15 seconds.

- Disagreement = draw penalty card
- Try to finish with the fewest penalties

Focus: Negotiation, emotional regulation, conflict resolution

Station 3: Dixit – "One Story, Many Minds"
Challenge: Agree on one title/sentence for each card shown

- Everyone participates
- Full consensus is required
- 3–4 rounds

Focus: Inclusion, creativity, perspective-taking

Phase 3 – Reflection / Debriefing

Which station felt easiest or hardest for your team — and why?
How did roles form in your group? Who led? Who stepped back?
What moments of tension or misunderstanding appeared?
How did your team handle disagreement?
Which communication strategies worked? Which didn't?
How did emotions influence teamwork (frustration, excitement, confusion)?
If you repeated the activity, what would your team do differently?

Adaptations for Sensory Disabilities

1. For participants with visual impairments:

Create simple descriptions of the cards and stick them together. If there is support person, he/she can read the descriptions out loud. Otherwise you can use "Seeing AI (Microsoft)"

- Scans objects, text, colours
- Reads them aloud instantly
- Very good for simple cards like UNO

2. For participants with hearing impairments:

Provide written rules for each station
Use gesture-based start/stop signals
Ensure the facilitator faces the group for instructions
Reduce background noise during play

3. For participants with motor limitations:

Allow the participant to choose alternative tasks
Provide larger, easier-grip Jenga pieces if available
Use digital Uno/Dixit cards that can be tapped instead of held
Allow extra time for turns

Choice Corners – Learning Choice Walk

The goal of this activity is to review and reinforce previously learned material through movement, active decision-making, and group discussion. Participants will: Review and reinforce key content; Practice critical thinking and decision-making; Build confidence in expressing knowledge.

Duration: 15 minutes total

Group Size: 15–25 participants

Materials:

- Open room divided into two sides, use paper tape or rope to divide sides
- Projector / slides or printed statements
- Clear labels for each side (Option A / Option B)

Step-by-Step Process

Phase 1 – Introduction

Facilitator explains: "The room has two sides, each representing a response option. A statement, definition, or example will appear on the screen. Participants choose the correct or preferred answer by walking to one side.

Phase 2 – Main Activity

The facilitator shows a slide or reads a prompt (e.g., a definition, concept example, or true/false option). Participants decide which answer they believe is correct and walk to the corresponding side of the room.

If appropriate, ask volunteers from each side to briefly explain their reasoning.

Clarify the correct answer and continue to the next round.

Repeat for multiple questions to review content.

Phase 3 – Reflection / Debrief

Questions:
What helped you choose your answer?
Which questions were challenging and why?
What new insight did you gain?

Adaptations for Sensory Disabilities

Provide written options and visual symbols for clarity;
Allow seated participants to point, hold up cards, or use digital voting;
Reduce noise and create clear movement paths;
Pair participants for support if needed.

Safety & Wellbeing Notes

Ensure clear space to move safely

Avoid rushing and collisions

Provide a no-choice / neutral zone if someone prefers to observe

Facilitator Tips

Keep pace dynamic and energetic
Encourage explanation and respectful disagreement
Use a mix of easy and challenging prompts
Can be extended with discussion rounds or small-group problem solving

Beyond Limits - Inclusive Youth Work

Hidden Envelopes - Collaborative Challenge

Purpose / Goal
To encourage teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and knowledge sharing by collaboratively exploring different topics and assembling accurate information.

Duration: around 60 minutes total

Group Size: Ideal: 18–30 participants

5Materials Needed

- 11 numbered hidden envelopes placed around the room (depending on how many topics/participants you have)
- Information cards inside each envelope
- List of 6 topic areas (one per group)
- Paper, pens, flipchart (optional)
- Digital tools if relevant

Step-by-Step Process

Phase 1 – Introduction

Facilitator explains the challenge:
There are some hidden envelopes nubered 1 to 11 (or how many you chose).
Participants must search the room and collect all envelopes before starting.

Phase 2 – Main Activity

Step 1 – Envelope Search
Participants search the room to find envelopes numbered 1–11 hidden in different places.
Once all are collected, everyone sits down.

Step 2 – Group Division
Divide participants into 6 groups, each assigned one thematic topic.

Groups open all envelopes and extract only the information relevant to their topic.

Step 3 – Collaboration & Exchange
Groups compare findings with others, discuss and organize the content.
If needed, negotiate to ensure each group has the correct and complete information.

Step 4 - Quick Check
Facilitator goes around and sees what groups have done so far. Gives feedback/solutions so groups can self-check their answers. Solutions can be shared on the paper, by group chat, or on ppt.

Step 5 – Final Check & Correction
Groups correct and improve their flipcharts/presentations.
Groups are encouraged to add their knowledge about the topic and be creative.

Step 6 - Presentation
Each group presents what their topic should look like based on the gathered materials.
The whole group reflects, building the final shared understanding.

Adaptations for Sensory Disabilities

1. For participants with visual impairments:

Use BrailleBlaster — free, open-source Braille transcription software to create the content in the envelopes also available to be read for those who are blind. Place them in the envelopes.
Braille conversion handles basic text reliably, but special content (images, diagrams, tables, mathematically formatted text, special punctuation) often requires manual proofreading or specialised transcription

2. For participants with hearing impairments:

Share instructions before the activity, not only verbally.
Use visual pacing cues (timer on screen, hand signals for start/stop).
Replace verbal cues ("Start!" / "Stop!") with visual signals
If the group is large, assign one person to tap the participant's shoulder gently when search starts or ends.
Short written cards for "We think this belongs to your topic"
A shared table with labeled piles (Topic 1 / Topic 2…)
A digital chat for exchanging text (simple WhatsApp or group doc)

3. For participants with motor limitations:

Place envelopes at accessible height (waist–chest level).
Keep all envelopes in clear, unobstructed zones—no floor-level hiding, no shelves.
Allow participants to direct a partner in searching if they cannot move around easily (maintains agency).
Ensure wide pathways, no clutter, no bags on floor.

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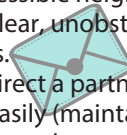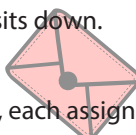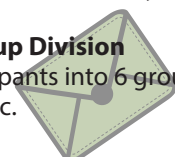
Mortal Combat
Knee Tag Challenge

Purpose / Goal
To boost energy, encourage physical movement, sharpen focus, improve reaction time, and build playful competitiveness in a safe environment.

Duration: 10–15 minutes total

Group Size: Ideal around 20

Materials Needed

- Open space
- Music (optional)

Step-by-Step Process

Phase 1 – Introduction

Facilitator explains: The goal is to touch others' knees while protecting your own.
Play safely, avoid pushing or hitting.
Use light touch only.

Phase 2 – Main Activity

Round 1 – Partner Knee Tag
Participants form pairs with someone similar in height.
On the signal, they try to touch each other's knees as many times as possible.
At the same time, they defend their own knees using hands and body movement.
Use a timer and set it to 1 min.

Round 2 – Free Movement
Everyone spreads out around the space.
Same goal: touch as many knees as possible while protecting your own.
Keep moving, avoid collisions.
Set timer for 1 min (see how this applies to your group)

Round 3 – Attack Only
Same as Round 2, but now players cannot use hands to defend.
Focus only on attacking and moving quickly.
Continue up to 1 min.

Reflection / Debrief

What strategy worked best for you?
How did it feel when defense was removed?
How did cooperation and awareness influence success?

Adaptations for Sensory Disabilities

1. For participants with visual impairments:

NO free running for visually impaired participants — risk of collision is too high.
Use pair-based versions only, with one partner who is trained to maintain safe spacing and verbal cues.
The partner ensures the visually impaired participant always knows orientation: "My knees are here.", "Left side.", "Step forward."
Mark the play zone with tactile boundaries (e.g., rope, yoga mat edges) so participants know where movement ends.

Instead of chaotic running, you can use one of these adaptations:
Option A — Stationary Knee Tag
Participants remain rooted in place, turning and shifting weight but not moving around the room.
Option B — Small-radius movement
The pair moves only within a 1–2 meter circle, clearly defined.

2. For participants with hearing impairments:

Replace All Audio Signals with Visual Cues
- A raised colored card for start
- A lowered card / crossed arms for stop
- A projected countdown timer
- Optional: brief light flash if room setup allows

Pair the participant with someone who can:
- Tap lightly on the shoulder to signal start/stop
- Indicate direction of movement (gesture)
- Help avoid collisions during free-movement rounds

3. For participants with motor limitations:

Replace Running With a Controlled, Seated or Static Version. Free-movement Knee Tag is not safe for participants with motor limitations. Use pair-based stationary Knee Tag instead:
- Both participants remain standing in place
- OR one or both sit on chairs/wheelchairs
- They attempt to tap each other's knees without needing to move around the space

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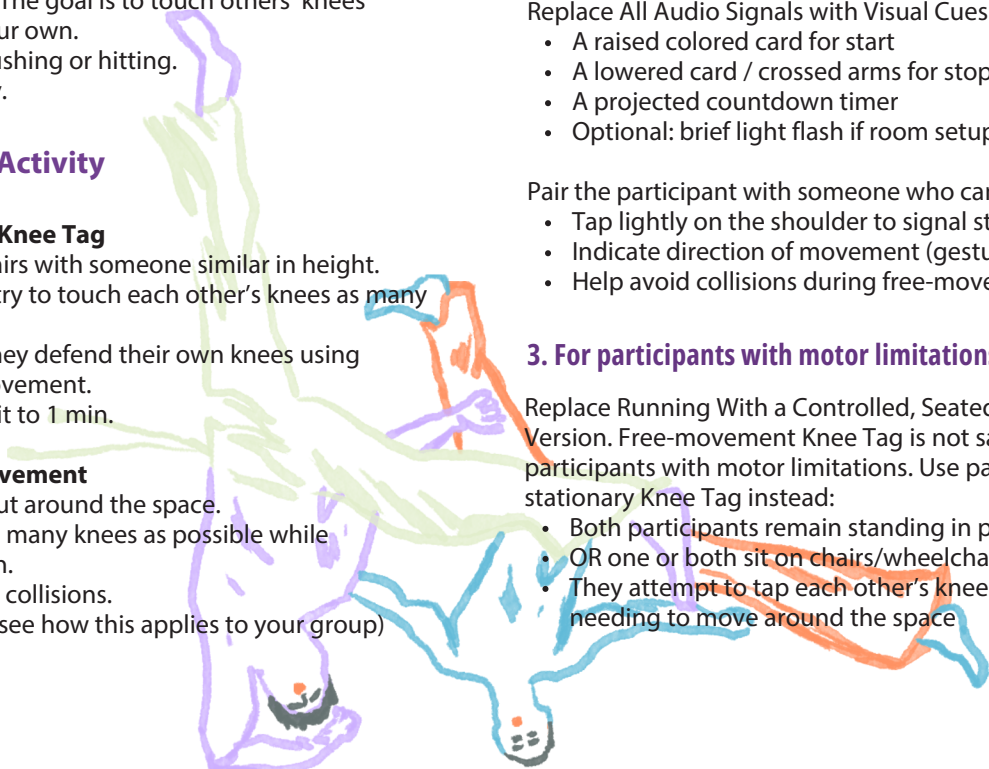
Solution Islands Problem Solving Theater

Purpose / Goal
To help participants practice creative problem-solving, empathy, teamwork, and quick thinking through short improvisational scenes based on real-life challenges.

Group Size: ·Ideal: 15–25 participants divided into 3–5 "islands"

Duration: 40–55 minutes

Materials Needed
Sheets with different problem scenarios (school, work, addiction, family, motivation, etc.)
A list of 20 possible solutions per group
Space for impro scenes
Optional: props, timer, flipchart

Step-by-Step Process

Phase 1 – Introduction
The facilitator explains: Participants will split into "islands" (3–5 groups). Each island receives:
  • One scenario about a person facing difficulties
  • A list of 20 possible solutions
Each island chooses 3–4 solutions they believe are the best. They must create a short impro theater scene (max 30 seconds per solution) that shows the solution without saying it directly. The rest of the group watches and raises their hand when they guess which solution is being presented.

Clarify:
Scenes must be short, expressive, and fun.
No scene should exceed 30 seconds.
This can be done cooperatively or competitively (islands earn points for correct guesses).

Phase 2 – Main Activity
Step 1: Split into islands (2 min).
3–5 groups depending on size.
Step 2: Distribute scenarios and solution lists (1 min).
Step 3: Selection phase (5–7 min).
Each island chooses 3–4 solutions they consider the best.

Step 4: Preparation (10–12 min).
Groups prepare short impro scenes (30 seconds max each).
Encourage creativity, teamwork, and humor.
Step 5: Presentations (10–15 min).
Islands perform their scenes one by one.
After each 30-second scene, the audience guesses the solution by raising hands.

Optional competitive mode:
1 point for the performing group if the audience guesses correctly
1 point for audience members who guess correctly
Bonus point for clarity/creativity

Reflection / Debriefing

1.1. Which solutions did you choose and why?
2.2. Was it easy or difficult to express a solution through body language and short scenes?
3.3. How did your group decide on the best solutions?
4.4. What does this activity show about teamwork and decision-making?
5.5. How can these problem-solving skills transfer to real life?

Adaptations for Sensory Disabilities

1. For participants with visual impairments:

Use Balabolka — a free, widely recommended text-to-speech (TTS) application to create in advance audio format or read them aloud privately before group work begins.
Allow participants to choose non-visual roles (narrator, director, dialogue actor) rather than roles relying on visual gestures.
When preparing scenes, groups must create sound-anchored cues instead of relying on subtle body movements (e.g., knocking, clapping once for "start," using a recognizable prop sound).
During presentation, require groups to describe essential visual actions verbally, not only perform them.

2. For participants with hearing impairments:

You can use Google Live Transcribe. It provides real-time speech-to-text captioning on Android devices — very helpful for making spoken instructions, group discussions, or impro-theatre guessing accessible. This is how participants with hearing impairments will be active part of the whole group journey.

3. For participants with motor limitations:

Impro scenes can be performed seated, with upper-body expressions and voice instead of locomotion.
For movement-based games, use symbolic gestures (hand movement, object placement) instead of stepping, running, or tagging.
Let participants take roles such as:
  • Director or narrator in impro scenes
  • Idea organizer or negotiator in group problem-solving
  • Timekeeper, note-giver, or strategy advisor
This keeps them fully included without physical strain.

Marshmallow Challenge

Purpose / Goal
Practice teamwork and shared problem-solving
Learn to assign roles and collaborate under time pressure
Build awareness of different strengths in a group
Encourage creativity and communication

Group Size: 3–4 per team for smooth teamwork

Duration: 30-40 minutes

Materials Needed
- 20 sticks of spaghetti
- 1 meter of masking tape
- 1 meter of string OR 3–5 rubber bands
- 1 marshmallow (standard size)
- 1 pair of scissors (shared between 2–3 teams or 1 per team)
- Access to 1 measuring tape (shared between groups; no need per team)

Step-by-Step Process

Phase 1 – Introduction
The facilitator explains: Teams have one goal: build the tallest free-standing structure that can support a marshmallow on top for at least 5 seconds. You have exactly 18 minutes!
They must use only provided materials.
The marshmallow must go on top, not integrated into the structure.

Phase 2 – Main Activity
1. *1-minute planning round*
   - *Quick strategy talk only: no building yet.*
2. *Build (18 min)*
3. *Prototyping principle: encourage teams to test early and often.*
4. *Final 60 seconds:*
   - *Teams must place the marshmallow on top without support from hands.*
5. *Measurement:*
   - *After 5 seconds of stability, the facilitator measures height.*

Reflection / Debriefing
1. Was there a leader on your team? Who was it and who decided who the leader would be?
2. If you had no leader, do you think having designated someone a leader would have helped?
3. If you had a leader, how did he/she do?
4. How helpful was everyone on your team in challenging the process of building the tallest structure? Did anyone appear to be an expert?
5. Did any team members tune out of the activity — out of frustration with other members or for some other reason? What could you have done to keep all members of the group fully engaged?
6. Did you feel everyone's ideas were well received during the activity?
7. How did you feel as the time limit was approaching? Did pressure increase? If yes, was that helpful or not?
8. In retrospect, what could you have done better?
9. Did you celebrate small wins? If yes, how did you do this?

Adaptations for Sensory Disabilities

1. For participants with visual impairments:

Before the team starts, let the participant touch and explore all materials and the workspace so they build a clear mental map. Keep explanations short and concrete.

Use tactile-friendly material alternatives (if possible)
If classic spaghetti is too fragile, offer adaptations:
- Thick straws
- Wooden sticks
- Pipe cleaners (easy to bend and "feel" structure)
These increase accessibility without reducing challenge.

2. For participants with hearing impairments:

The group can place a phone in the center of the table with automatic, real-time subtitles.
Free apps that work well:
- Google Live Transcribe (Android)
- AVA (iOS & Android – free version available)
- Otter.ai Live Notes (browser + mobile)
These apps convert spoken words into readable text instantly, allowing the participant to follow planning discussions and contribute equally.

3. For participants with motor limitations:

Shift the Focus From Physical Building to Strategic Leadership Motor limitations do not reduce cognitive contribution. Invite the participant to take roles such as:
- lead designer/strategist (deciding structure shape and plan)
- stability assessor (visually or verbally identifying weak points)
- time manager
- team communicator/organizer
If fine motor skills are limited, the team may:
- choose simpler joint methods
- build larger, easier-to-handle structures
- place fragile or complex pieces with support

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Picture Your Emotion

Purpose / Goal
Build emotional literacy by naming and representing feelings; Practice grounding and internal focus; Strengthen self-regulation by externalizing emotions safely; Encourage symbolic thinking through images and metaphors

Group Size: Individual activity, but can be done in parallel in a group setting.

Duration: 10–15 minutes

Materials Needed
- Paper
- Pens / markers / colored pencils
- Dixit cards or any evocative image deck
- Optional: textured materials for tactile exploration

Step-by-Step Process

Phase 1 – Introduction
Explain the essence clearly:
- "Focus on the emotion that is most present right now —not the story, just the feeling."
- Encourage participants to close their eyes for 10 seconds, sense body cues, and identify a starting emotional tone.

Important frame from evidence-based SEL work:
There is no right or wrong image; the drawing is a container, not a diagnostic tool.

Phase 2 – Main Activity
Drawing (5–7 min)
- Any style is allowed: abstract shapes, colors, lines, symbols.
- Drawing remains private unless voluntarily shared.

Symbol Matching (Dixit card selection)
- Participant chooses one card that resonates with their current emotional experience.
- This activates symbolic association, which helps emotional naming.

Reflection / Debriefing

Optional sharing—never forced.

Reflection prompts:

What emotion surfaced?
Did the drawing help clarify something that words alone couldn't?
Why did the card you selected resonate with your feeling?
Did you notice any physical sensations connected to the emotion?

Adaptations for Sensory Disabilities

1. For participants with visual impairments:

Tactile drawing tools (e.g., raised-line boards, WikiStix, clay lines)
Image cards can be verbally described by facilitator or peer
Allow audio recording instead of drawing

2. For participants with hearing impairments:
Offer the activity steps in:
- written form (paper or slide), or
- a note on a shared screen/board.

If the participant wants to share their reflection, let them choose how:
- spoken
- written
- typed
- or shown through their drawing/card

3. For participants with motor limitations:

If drawing is physically difficult, the participant can choose an alternative form of expression:
- verbal description of the emotion
- digital drawing (using a tablet or phone, if that's easier)
- selecting a color or symbol instead of drawing
- pointing/indicating shapes or lines they want someone to draw for them

The focus is on emotional expression, not the drawing itself.

If the participant wants to draw but needs support, offer:
- thicker markers
- pencil grips
- larger sheets
- stabilizing surfaces

Beyond Limits - Inclusive Youth Work

Tic Tac Toe Team Challenge

Purpose / Goal
To encourage teamwork, strategic thinking, and problem-solving in a fun and interactive way.
Being aware of how individual actions can impact a team's success or failure.

Group Size: Min: 4 participants (2 teams of 2), Max: 12 participants (2 teams of 6)

Duration: 25-30 minutes

Materials Needed
- 9 pieces of paper arranged in a 3x3 grid on the ground
- Markers (different colors for each team) or 2 of 3 different for both teams objects
- Optional: Cones or tape to mark boundaries

Step-by-Step Process

Phase 1 – Introduction
What the facilitator explains:
- The rules of Tic Tac Toe: Participants must aim to place their markers in a row of three (either horizontally, vertically, or diagonally) before the opposing team does.
- Each team gets a unique marker (one team uses colored markers, the other uses Scotch roles to mark the paper).
- Players will take turns, running to the grid and placing their markers on any of the nine pieces of paper. After all markers are down, players can move markers around to achieve their goal.
- The first team to align three markers in a row wins.

Clarifying rules / expectations:
- Players must take turns; only one player from each team can be on the field at a time.
- Once all markers are down, players can move the markers on the paper to try to form a row.

Phase 2 – Main Activity

a) Start the game: At the signal, the first participant from each team runs to the grid and places their marker on any

piece of paper. The next player on each team does the same.
b. Take turns: The players alternate until each team has placed their marker
c. Move markers: Once all the markers are down, participants are allowed to move any marker (from either team) in an effort to make a row of three.
d. Blocking opponents: You can block opponents tree in a row
e. Check for a winner: The first team to make a row of three, either horizontally, vertically, or diagonally, wins the round.
- Timing per step:
- Roles (if any):
  - Teams members need to make fast decisions to make strategic moves and plan their next actions.
Movement or transitions:
- Players should be moving quickly between their team's starting area and the grid to place markers.

Phase 3 – Reflection / Debriefing
Key reflection questions:
- What did you learn about pressure and fast thinking?
- How did you feel when the game was won or lost? What would you do differently next time?
Emotional check-in prompts:
- How did you feel about the competition? Was it stressful or fun?
- Were there moments of frustration, and how did you manage them as a team?
Group discussion structure:
- Open the floor for a brief discussion, where participants can share their thoughts on teamwork, strategy, and the game dynamics.
- Allow time for each team to reflect on their experience and what they might try differently next time.
Closing messages:
- Reinforce the importance of communication and teamwork.
- Highlight the fun of the game and how strategic thinking can be applied to other team challenges.

Adaptations for Sensory Disabilities

1. For participants with visual impairments:

Provide tactile markers (e.g., textured stickers or objects) for the grid and make sure all pieces are distinguishable by touch. Offer verbal descriptions of the grid and marker placements. Ensure lighting is sufficient for those with partial sight.

2. For participants with hearing impairments:

Provide written or visual instructions for clarity.
Use gestures or visual signals to indicate when turns are up or when to stop.
Avoid background noise and ensure everyone can see the facilitator's lip movements for clarity.

3. For participants with motor limitations:

Ensure that the markers are easy to handle (e.g., large markers or pre-cut shapes for easy attachment).
Allow additional time for movement between turns.
Provide adapted tools if necessary (e.g., grabbers for placing markers on paper, clipboards for steady support).

Beyond Limits - Inclusive Youth Work

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Adaptations for Sensory Disabilities

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Offer verbal descriptions of the grid and marker placements.
Ensure lighting is sufficient for those with partial sight.

2. For participants with hearing impairments:

Provide written or visual instructions for clarity.
Use gestures or visual signals to indicate when turns are up or when to stop.
Avoid background noise and ensure everyone can see the facilitator's lip movements for clarity.

3. For participants with motor limitations:

Ensure that the markers are easy to handle (e.g., large markers or pre-cut shapes for easy attachment).
Allow additional time for movement between turns.
Provide adapted tools if necessary (e.g., grabbers for placing markers on paper, clipboards for steady support).

Beyond Limits - Inclusive Youth Work

Four Quadrants: Visual Self-Portrait for Team Connection

Purpose / Goal This activity uses simple visual expression to help participants open up, connect, and understand one another on a deeper level. It aims to:
- Break the ice in a new or existing group
- Reveal strengths, needs, challenges, and aspirations within the team

Group Size: works well in pairs, triads, or full-group format.

Duration: 25–45 minutes

Materials Needed
- Flipchart-size paper / or A4 (one per participant)
- Markers or colored pencils
- Optional: online whiteboard (Miro, Mural, Google Jamboard) for digital adaptation

Step-by-Step Process

Phase 1 – Introduction
Explain the activity briefly:
- Each participant will create a visual self-portrait, divided into four quadrants.
- In each quadrant, they draw—not write—their response to four reflective prompts.
- The focus is expression, not artistic skill.

Provide the four questions you chose for this group.
Possible sets you can use (choose one depending on context):

Set A — General Icebreaker
1. What do I bring to the group?
2. What do I need from the group?
3. What is a hobby or passion of mine?
4. What is my vision for this group?

Set B — Deeper Team Awareness / Organizational Context
1. What do I bring to this organization?
2. What do I need from this team?
3. What legacy do I want to help create here?
4. What is one life event that fundamentally shaped me?

Set C — Stress & Communication
- A current challenge I am facing outside of work…
- The things that stress me most at work…
- What I need you to understand about me when I'm under stress…
- What helps me most when I'm overwhelmed…

Set D — Custom / Emotional Openness
Participants can create their own four questions if the facilitator wishes to increase ownership and creativity.

Phase 2 — Main Activity
1. Give each participant a large sheet of paper and markers.
2. Ask them to divide the page into four equal quadrants.
3. Assign one question per quadrant.
4. Participants draw their responses (abstract shapes, symbols, metaphors, scenes).
5. Allow 5–10 minutes for individual work.
   - Emphasize speed, intuition, and honesty. No erasing, no perfectionism.

Phase 3 – Reflection / Debriefing
Participants now share their quadrants. You may:
- Have the whole group sit in a circle and share sequentially
- Use breakout groups of 3–4 for more intimacy
- Invite participants to hang their quadrants on the wall and do a gallery walk

Suggested prompts:
Emotional & Personal Insight
- Which drawing was easiest or hardest to create? Why?
- What surprised you about what you ended up drawing?
- Did you learn something new about yourself through this process?

Team Dynamics & Understanding
- What did you discover about others that you didn't know before?
- How do our strengths and needs complement each other?
- Which patterns or themes do you see across the quadrants?

Adaptations for Sensory Disabilities

1. For participants with visual impairments:

Allow participants to use tactile drawing tools (Wikki Stix, raised-line paper) or reflect verbally on the four questions instead of drawing. A peer can draw under the participant's direction if preferred

2. For participants with hearing impairments:

Provide written instructions and prompts. Use gestures and visual cues when giving timing updates. Sharing can be done verbally or in writing

3. For participants with motor limitations:

Provide thick markers, grips, or digital drawing options. Participant may direct someone else to draw on their behalf. Or share verbally instead of drawing

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Artistic Life Map

This creative reflection activity invites participants to explore their personal journey through symbolic associations. Using book, song, or movie titles as metaphors, participants map their past, present, and future identities.

Group Size: 6–18 for meaningful sharing and psychological safety

Duration: 25–45 minutes

Materials Needed
- Paper or a printed worksheet
- Pens, pencils, or markers

Optional: Printed book/film/music covers; Magazines for collage; Digital device (if working online or preferring typed responses)

Step-by-Step Process

Phase 1 – Introduction
The facilitator explains:
- The activity uses media titles (songs, books, movies) as symbolic representations of your life story.
- Each participant will choose three titles:
  ◦ one for their past,
  ◦ one for their present,
  ◦ one for their future or hoped-for direction.
- Participants may draw, write, collage, or use digital media to create their Life Map.

Clarify expectations:
- There are no right or wrong answers.
- Participants choose how much they share.
- Symbolic expression is encouraged—literal accuracy is not required.

Phase 2 — Main Activity
Step 1 — Past Title (3 minutes)
Participants reflect silently and choose one title that captures a memory, period, or emotional theme from their past.

Step 2 — Present Title (3 minutes)
Participants choose a title that represents their life right now.

  ◦

Step 3 — Future Title (3 minutes)
Participants choose a title symbolizing their hopes, direction, or desired growth.

Step 4 — Artistic Life Map Creation (5–10 minutes)
Participants create a visual map showing the three titles. They may:
- write the titles
- add colors, symbols, or images
- draw simple metaphors
- use collage elements
- design the map digitally if preferred

Participants may sit, stand, or work in any comfortable format.

Phase 3 – Reflection / Debriefing

Which title was easiest or hardest to choose, and why?
What emotions came up during the process?
How did the titles help you understand your past, present, or future differently?
If your future title could talk, what message would it give you?

Closing Message:
"You are the author of your own story. Every chapter belongs to you—past, present, and future."

Adaptations for Sensory Disabilities

1. For participants with visual impairments:

- Offer aloud reading of instructions and example titles
- Allow participants to choose audio-based titles (songs, spoken texts)
- Provide tactile drawing tools or high-contrast markers
- Allow verbal creation of the Life Map

2. For participants with hearing impairments:

- Provide all instructions in writing
- Use written prompts during the reflection
- Ensure facilitator visibility and minimize background noise

3. For participants with motor limitations:

- Allow verbal or digital responses
- Provide adaptive markers or accessible typing tools
- Extend the time for title selection and map creation

Walking in Someone Else's Shoes

This activity blends embodiment, role exploration, and structured movement to help participants build empathy by temporarily inhabiting another person's internal world, explore how beliefs, mindsets, and invisible experiences shape behavior, increase awareness of biases, assumptions, and different life perspectives.

Group Size: 10–16 ideally but suitable for all size groups

Duration: 35–45 minutes

Materials Needed
- Character cards (with short backstories, beliefs, emotional tendencies)
- Open space for movement; Timer

Optional: Soft music for embodiment, Tape or rope to mark a line on the floor

Step-by-Step Process

Phase 1 – Introduction
"Today we're going to explore perspective-taking by stepping into someone else's internal world."
"You will embody a character and reflect on how their beliefs influence their reactions."
"The goal is empathy and insight, not performance."
Distribute character cards and give participants 1 minute to read silently.

Phase 2 — Main Activity
A. Mindfulness Embodiment (7 min)
Participants stand or sit comfortably, eyes closed.
Facilitator guides:
- Slow breathing
- Softening shoulders and grounding feet
- "Imagine stepping inside your character's life—how they walk, breathe, feel."
- "What do they worry about? What do they hope for?"
- "How does their body carry their beliefs or experiences?"
This phase builds emotional attunement before movement.

  ◦

B. Step-Forward Line Activity (10 min)
Participants stand together on a marked line.
Explain the rules:
- You will hear statements about internal beliefs, experiences, attitudes, or tendencies.
- Step forward only if it applies to your character.
- No talking, laughing, or explanations. Silence increases emotional depth.
Possible statements include:
- "Your character hides their emotions."
- "Your character feels misunderstood."
- "Your character grew up with limited support."
- "Your character feels confident socially."
- "Your character tries to control everything."
- "Your character often doubts themselves."
After each statement, give participants a moment to notice where others are standing.
As the activity unfolds, participants visually see differences, isolation, belonging, privilege, or struggle emerging across the line.

Phase 3 – Reflection / Debriefing

Sit in a circle.
• Key questions:
 • "How did your character feel?"
 • "What did the distance between people show you?"
 • "What beliefs shaped your character?"
 • "Did anything relate to your own life?"

Optional: Bunker scenario (ethical dilemma with characters).

Adaptations for Sensory Disabilities

1. For participants with visual impairments:

- Provide character cards in audio or verbal form
- Describe spatial positions on the line
- Use light physical guidance if the participant agrees

2. For participants with hearing impairments:

- Provide written instructions
- Show each statement visually
- Use calm gestures and eye contact

3. For participants with motor limitations:

Replace stepping forward with:
- raising a hand
- showing a colored card
- turning slightly
- or using a wheelchair-accessible gesture
- Provide multimodal instructions
- Allow participants to modify embodiment according to comfort
- Permit verbal or written character reflection instead of movement

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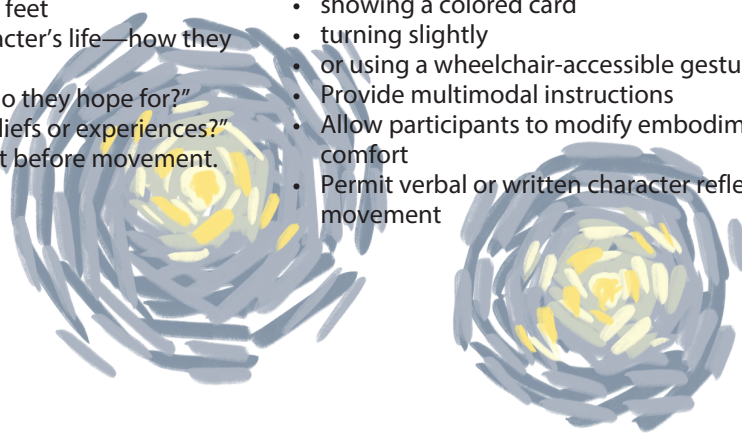
Stepping Into Their Shoes: Exploring Stigma Through Perspective-Taking

This activity uses imagined scenarios and embodied movement to help participants: Step into the perceived lived experience of people from marginalized or stigmatized groups; Build empathy and awareness of how stigma shapes daily life, opportunities, and emotional wellbeing; Reflect on prejudice, stereotypes, privilege, and inclusion in a structured, contained way.

Group Size: 12–20 for both movement and deep discussion

Duration: 50-70 minutes

Materials Needed
- Printed scenario cards (one per participant; several participants can share the same scenario type)
- Pens (optional, for notes)
- Open space large enough for participants to stand and step forward safely
- Flipchart or whiteboard + markers (for debrief notes)

Step-by-Step Process

Phase 1 – Introduction
Facilitator explains:
"This activity explores how stigma and social position can shape opportunities, emotions, and everyday experiences."
"Each of you will receive a short scenario describing a person from a marginalized or stigmatized background (e.g., ethnic minority, LGBTQ+, disability, mental health challenges, ex-convict, etc.)."
"You will imagine life from this person's perspective and then respond to statements as if you were them."
"There are no right or wrong answers. The aim is perspective-taking, not accuracy."

Set ground rules:
- The stepping exercise is done in silence.
- Participants step forward only if they feel their assigned character would say "yes" to a statement.
- They mentally count how many steps they take.
- The activity is not a guessing game about "which group has it worst" – it's about noticing differences, bias, and systems.

Phase 2 – Main Activity

Step 1: Distribute Scenarios (3–5 minutes)

Each participant receives one scenario card (several participants may receive the same scenario).
Examples of *vague scenario descriptions* (basic facts only):

1. Scenario A – Racial Minority:
  "You are 27, recently moved to a large city, and belong to an ethnic group that is often stereotyped."
  Questions:

* What is your everyday routine like?
* How do others respond to you in public spaces?
* What hopes do you carry for your future?

2. Scenario B – Ex-Convict:
  "You are 32 and have recently completed your sentence for a non-violent offense."
  Questions:

* How do you feel about job searching?
* How do people treat you when they learn about your past?
* What support systems do you have?

3. Scenario C – Physical Disability:
  "You are 19, use mobility aids, and live in a mid-sized town."
  Questions:

* What barriers do you face moving around your day?
* How do strangers treat you?
* What gives you confidence?

4. Scenario D – Mental Health Challenge:
  "You are 40, employed part-time, and living with an invisible mental health condition."
  Questions:

* What assumptions might others make about you?
* How do you navigate stressful situations?
* Who do you turn to for support?

5. Scenario E – LGBTQ+ Identity:
  "You are 22 and openly part of the LGBTQ+ community."
  Questions:

* How comfortable do you feel expressing affection in public?
* What is your relationship like with your family?
* Where do you feel fully accepted?

(You may add more scenarios based on context.)

Participants take 5–7 minutes to imagine this person's life and privately answer the guiding questions.

Beyond Limits - Inclusive Youth Work

<div style="border:1px solid">

Stepping Into Their Shoes: Exploring Stigma Through Perspective-Taking

</div>

Continuation

Step 2: Stepping Exercise (10–15 minutes)

Participants stand in a large circle.

Facilitator reads statements such as:
• "You feel safe walking alone at night."
• "You trust the police."
• "People assume positive things about you during first impressions."
• "You can easily access most public spaces."
• "You expect to be treated fairly during a job interview."
• "You can show affection to a partner in public without fear."
• "You are rarely judged based on your appearance."
• "Your family fully accepts who you are."
• "You can openly talk about your struggles without stigma."

Participants step forward *one step* if they think their scenario person would say "yes" to the statement.
They must keep track of how many steps they took.

Silence is maintained.

Phase 3 – Reflection / Debriefing

1. Reveal Phase (5–10 minutes)

Facilitator says:
"Everyone with scenario A, please raise your hand."
One participant reads aloud the scenario.
Then participants with that scenario say:
• How many steps they took.
• Why they made certain choices.
Repeat for all scenario types.

2. Whole Group Reflection (10–15 minutes)

Key reflection questions:
• What did you feel during the activity?
• Were you surprised by the differences in movement among scenarios?
• Which statements felt emotionally heavy or complex?
• How did it feel to imagine life from this perspective?
• What forms of stigma did you notice or rethink?
• What privileges or disadvantages became visible?

Emotional check-in prompts:
• One word to describe how you feel now.
• Something you want to release or keep from this exercise.

Discussion structure:
• Start with individual reflections.
• Move to pair sharing.
• Then open full-group discussion on stigma and inclusion.

Closing message:
"We cannot ever fully understand another person's life, but we can choose empathy, awareness, and action. Today's activity is a reminder of the impact stigma has—and our responsibility to challenge it."

Adaptations for Sensory Disabilities

1. For participants with visual impairments:

• Prepare a large-print version (font size 18–22) OR
• Read the scenario aloud privately before starting OR
• Provide an audio recording of the scenario on their phone.

Ask the participant:
• "Would you prefer to raise your hand, say 'yes,' or tap your foot instead of stepping forward?"
• This removes risk and keeps full participation.

2. For participants with hearing impairments:

• Print all instructions
• Print every stepping statement
• Give the participant 1–2 minutes to scan the list before starting
• They should never be waiting to "figure out" what was said.
Use visual cues instead of verbal cues
• For example:
• hold up a card with "STEP?" written on it when it's time to decide
• raise your hand or point forward
• nod to confirm the end of each statement

3. For participants with motor limitations:

Ask how they prefer to participate in movement-based parts. Say: "In the stepping section, would you prefer to raise a hand, show a colored card, tap the table, or give a verbal 'yes' instead of stepping?" - Let them choose the method that works best.

Replace physical stepping with a movement-free signal. Whatever the participant selected becomes their "step forward." Examples:
• Raise one hand
• Hold up a green card
• Tap their knee or table
• Say "yes" or nod
• Click a button on their phone (yes/no app)

If they cannot or prefer not to do movement at all
Offer an observer-empathy role, saying:
"You can reflect on how your character would have responded without signaling each step. You'll still join the reflection with the group."

Special congratulations to the entire team who contributed to this Handbook and developed the materials within.
Your dedication, creativity, and expertise shaped every page.

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