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Context and objectives of the project

The idea for our project was born from the awareness that, even when they gather in associations, young people are often distracted by their phones. We therefore decided to submit an anonymous, unannounced questionnaire to them about their relationship with social networks. What emerged was, in our opinion, alarming. There isn't a single young person who doesn't have at least one social media channel. Among the many responses, the one that surprised us the most was that they all stated they spend one to two hours a day on social media (time they could use more healthily) and that no one would do without it! When asked if they had influencers they followed more than anyone else and why, the most common response was: for fun, because they are curious about their beautiful and enriching lives, and because they aspire to this as well.

This analysis highlights the urgent need to recreate opportunities for young people to meet and engage in face-to-face conversations. Social media is a place where young people spectacularize their lives through a filtered image to gain consensus. And when the desired feedback isn't received, a host of problems can arise, such as increased anxiety and, in rare cases, depression. The most vulnerable users find themselves living in an illusion of seemingly unattainable well-being. Social media impacts young people's mental health. Not to mention the numerous cases of cyberbullying, online reputation, and gambling, which severely impact self-esteem.

Hence the need to intervene to raise young people's awareness of the risks of prolonged exposure to or improper use of social media and the importance of in-person socialization. Sport lends itself well to this goal as a valuable tool for promoting psychological, physical, and social well-being.

Activities

The logical thread we decided to follow was: the first few days were filled with introductory games, followed by group-building activities aimed at discussing the problem of youth depression. From the topic of depression, we explored social networks, exploring whether and why they can contribute to anxiety and depression. We then introduced sports-related activities because we firmly believe in their power to prevent and/or combat these ailments. We analyzed their benefits, both personally and socially. The final day was dedicated to project follow-up and the Youthpass self-assessment.

The group-building activities consisted mainly of brainstorming, roundtable discussions, workshops, and rule games. Below, you will find the main activities we conducted.

On youth anxiety and depression.

After discussing the problem in front of a European map, especially in relation to their own country, using the word café technique, the young people addressed three topics: symptoms of depression, possible causes, and consequences. At the end of the discussion, the young people, divided into three groups, created a poster, writing down their findings.

On the relationship between anxiety and depression and social networks

We conducted research on social networks (images, posts, and reels that push for perfection, victory at all costs, luxury, etc.). The debriefing focused on whether what they saw, present every day on social media, had ever instilled in them anxiety or a sense of personal dissatisfaction.

We staged several role-playing games aimed at understanding the potential risks associated with social networks. The young people, divided into groups, acted out situations related to cyberbullying, online reputation, and gambling, and were able to develop a conclusion that would allow them to resolve the situations.

They pretended to have to reach a goal, but only after overcoming a series of obstacles (in the game, these obstacles included mathematical calculations, problems to solve, logic games, physical obstacles, and so on). The lesson the young people learned from this game was that in everyday life, we always face obstacles, but the important thing is to never give up and, in some cases, to accept defeat. The debriefing also included a focus on social media, where the constant pursuit of approval often leads to anxiety, dissatisfaction, and insecurity.

On their relationship with social media

We arranged the young people to stand in the center of the room and, after reading the sentences about the internet/social networks aloud one at a time, asked them to move toward one wall or the other (to the right meant agree, to the left meant disagree). This helped us understand the young people's attitudes and opinions on certain online topics and, through debriefing, raised their awareness of the appropriate use of social media.

Test: "Are you addicted to social media?"

Sports Activities

A mixed-team soccer game, during which the group jointly announced new rules to be followed. This activity fostered skills such as cooperation, decision-making, and all the values that sport fosters, such as respect, cooperation, team spirit, and acceptance of defeat.

"Education by, for, and through sport" through basketball. Education for sport: The guys were divided into two teams while the moderator explained only the basic rules of basketball. Education by sport: some rules to be followed were introduced. Education through sport: Each guy was given a role card to follow, but without revealing to the others what role they were playing.

These were the main activities the guys engaged in, which helped them understand the importance of sport from a personal and social perspective. So much so that, when they attended the “Sport and Youth Depression” workshop, they shared positive thoughts about sport as a valuable tool for combating depression.



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