TOOL-UP
preventing burnout
Toolkit

TOOL UP – THE TOOLKIT

Preventing burnout in young leaders of no-profit organizations.

Developed during the Erasmus+ Training Course "Tool Up", held from the 22nd to the 31st of March 2025 in Firenzuola (FI),

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About this Toolkit

This digital toolkit collects the key theories, methods and practical activities explored during the *Tool Up* training course, an Erasmus+ mobility dedicated to preventing burnout, strengthening emotional resilience, and supporting young leaders working in European non-profit organisations.

Designed for youth workers, facilitators and community leaders, it offers practical tools to improve communication, understand internal and group dynamics, enhance participatory decision-making and promote a healthier balance between personal well-being and organisational responsibilities.

All tools included here are meant to be easily adaptable and accessible, supporting the daily work of those who guide, inspire and care for others.

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1. CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

1.1 Why this Toolkit

This toolkit was developed as part of *Tool Up*, an Erasmus+ Training Course designed to address a growing challenge within youth organisations: the increasing risk of burnout among young leaders. Many youth workers operate under chronic stress, juggling responsibilities, emotional labour, limited resources, and high expectations. These pressures affect not only their personal well-being but also the stability, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability of their organisations.

The aim of this toolkit is to offer accessible, practical, and experiential tools that help youth workers strengthen emotional resilience, improve communication, and cultivate organisational cultures that value balance, clarity, and collective care. It brings together embodied methods, sociocratic principles, inner work, and participatory practices experienced during the training course.

1.2 Objectives of the Tool Up Project

The *Tool Up* project focuses on equipping youth workers and young leaders with:

- Psychological and introspective tools to face work-related challenges.

- Skills for managing and developing their organisations, including communication and resource management.

- Methods to define clear visions, objectives, and organisational structures.

- Practices that promote a healthy work-life balance and prevent burnout.

- Competences for building inclusive, supportive and sustainable group environments.

These objectives reflect the official goals identified for the Erasmus+ mobility and respond to the real needs of the participating organisations across Europe

1.3 Who This Toolkit Is For

This toolkit is designed for:

- Youth workers, facilitators and community leaders

- Members of grassroots initiatives, NGOs and voluntary groups

- Educators involved in non-formal learning

- Anyone navigating leadership roles in social-impact contexts

It is particularly useful for those working in multicultural, resource-limited or high-pressure environments, where clarity, empathy and cooperative structures are essential for sustainability.

1.4 About the Trainers

The learning experience behind this toolkit was guided by **Genny Carraro** and **Giacomo Zoffoli**, whose combined expertise shaped the blend of embodiment, communication, sociocracy and process-oriented methods included here.

Genny Carraro is an international trainer, counsellor and consultant specialising in human resources, inclusion, and community processes. With extensive experience in social activism, personal development and youth work, she brings a strong grounding in Sociocracy, Nonviolent Communication, Processwork and Dragon Dreaming. Her facilitation style involves deep listening, intuitive group dynamics and experiential methodologies that help participants clarify visions, overcome challenges and foster sustainable relationships

Giacomo Zoffoli is a facilitator with a background in eco-social activism, community life and Erasmus+ project design. His work focuses on ecological awareness, inclusive leadership and community facilitation, informed by experiences in intentional communities, youth networks and organisations dedicated to sustainability. Through his involvement in European networks such as RIVE and Yes to Sustainability, he supports young leaders in navigating organisational challenges while cultivating resilience and collaboration

Together, they brought a balanced approach: grounded, experiential, and oriented toward personal and organisational well-being.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

2.1 CLIPS MODEL

Definition

The CLIPS Guide is a comprehensive manual designed to support community-led initiatives through a structured framework. It elaborates on the CLIPS model, focusing on the Individual, Community, Intention, Structure, and Practice layers, and offers concepts, methods, and facilitation support for group development and sustainability.

Challenge Addressed

The guide targets core challenges experienced by community projects:
- Misalignment of personal intentions versus collective vision
- Weak communication and conflict resolution practices
- Lack of clear governance, legal status, and economic roles
- Neglect of sustainability in day-to-day practice
- Insufficient integration of learning and reflection into communal life.

Historical Details

Authored by a multilingual team across Europe (Spain, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Estonia, UK)
Published in 2017, under a Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND license and co-funded by Erasmus+;
Represents distilled insights from years of ecovillage practice and international collaboration, forming core content in training and mentoring at GEN-Europe
More info here: clips.gen-europe.org

Approach

Structured along four core development layers and a fifth layer for practice implementation:

1. Individual – Explores member backgrounds, intent, skills, attitudes, and needs

2. Community – Builds identity, communication culture, rituals, meetings, conflict resolution

3. Intention – Crafts shared vision, mission, goals, and external positioning

4. Structure – Designs governance, decision-making, finance, legal status, leadership, feedback

5. Practice – Embeds sustainability in everyday life with practical actions

Final Thoughts

The CLIPS Guide brings together theory and practice in a coherent, accessible manual. Its greatest strength lies in translating structural concepts into living practices ensuring that sustainability is both understood and enacted.

2.2 COMMUNICATION DYNAMICS

Definition

Explore Communication Dynamics and Nonviolent Communication (NVC) as a practical framework to transform interpersonal exchanges into opportunities for empathy, clarity, and cooperation. It highlights how effective communication involves mastering verbal and non-verbal language, listening styles, and the art of giving and receiving feedback.

Challenge Addressed

This tackles key challenges in group and interpersonal dynamics:
- Miscommunication due to mixed verbal / non-verbal signals.
- Emotional reactivity and misinterpretation in conflict situations.
- Poor listening habits that lead to superficial or manipulative dialogues.
- Lack of skills in offering and receiving feedback constructively.
- Disconnection from one's own and others' needs, leading to unmet expectations and conflict.

Historical Details

NVC is developed by Marshall Rosenberg in the late 20th century. It is presented as a compassionate method to address conflict and foster mutual understanding.

Approach

1. Understanding Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication
   Recognizing that 90% of communication is non-verbal, the approach promotes congruency between what we say and how we say it.

2. Decoding Communication "Languages"
   Five communication styles are identified to help people better understand and navigate different interaction preferences:

   o Feelings, Power/Action, Meaning, Imagination, Resonance.

3. Listening Styles
   Differentiates between limited and empowering listening modes:

   o From Selective, Discerning, and Analytical listening (which can be judgmental or directive)

   o To Empathic, Active, and Appreciative listening (which foster mutual understanding and trust).

4. Feedback as a Learning Loop
   Encourages feedback as a self-regulating system for collective learning, where style matters more than content.

5. Nonviolent Communication (NVC)
   NVC offers a structured 4-step process to bridge empathy and assertiveness in dialogue: Observation → Feelings → Needs → Request

2.3 EMOTIONAL COMPASS

Definition

The Emotional Compass by Vivian Dittmar is a conceptual framework that re-frames five core emotions—Fear, Sadness, Shame, Joy, and Anger—as essential internal guidance systems rather than problems to suppress or avoid. Each emotion is presented with its transformative potential and constructive function in personal growth, emotional intelligence, and relational health.

This model emphasizes functional emotional literacy: every feeling has a vital message and energy, and when understood properly, can be harnessed to support a more conscious, empowered life.

Challenge Addressed

Modern societies often promote emotional repression or distortion. Emotions like fear, shame, sadness, or anger are frequently labeled as negative or weak. This leads to:
- Emotional avoidance or overreaction.
- Lack of self-awareness and poor boundaries.
- Destructive behaviors due to misunderstood emotional drives.
- Disconnection from authentic self-expression.

The Emotional Compass addresses the misuse and misinterpretation of emotions and invites a shift from suppression or reactivity toward conscious integration and response.

Historical Details

Developed by Vivian Dittmar, a German author, wisdom teacher and founder of the Be the Change Foundation.

It's presented in her book "The Power of Feelings", which blends psychological insight with spiritual and practical self-development.

The compass is informed by traditions in somatic psychology, nonviolent communication, systems theory, and humanistic psychology.

Gained popularity in emotional education, coaching, and intentional community settings for its simplicity and depth.

Approach

The model proposes that each primary emotion has a core message and a mature function when integrated with awareness. Rather than categorizing feelings as good or bad, the compass positions them as tools for navigating life with clarity and depth.

Emotion	Integrated Potential	Emotional Message
Fear	Creativity instead of paralysis	Fear guides us toward caution but also helps us face the unknown, discover

		new paths, and grow beyond limitations.
Sadness	Love instead of passivity	Sadness allows letting go and surrender, opening the heart, developing wisdom, and making peace with life's flow.
Shame	Self-reflection instead of self-abasement	Shame becomes a force for personal accountability and ethical alignment when accepted and reflected upon.
Joy	Appreciation instead of illusion	Joy connects us to meaning, purpose, humor, relationships, and vitality. It energizes leadership and charisma.
Anger	Clarity instead of destruction	Anger offers boundary-setting, clear action, decision-making, and vitality when expressed consciously and constructively.

2.4 PROCESS WORK

Definition

Process Work is a multi-level, awareness-based approach to inner and outer experiences. It focuses on unfolding and following the process (rather than imposing a fixed goal), assuming that every symptom, conflict, or experience contains meaningful information that wants to emerge.

"The process is always trying to happen, and every disturbance carries the seed of transformation."

Challenge Addressed

Process Work addresses a broad range of challenges:
- Internal conflicts (psychological symptoms, dreams, body issues)
- Interpersonal conflicts (relationship dynamics, power struggles)
- Group dynamics (rank issues, marginalization, diversity tensions)
- Social systems (oppression, collective trauma, leadership crises)

It is especially suited for situations involving complexity, polarity, or marginalization, where traditional linear or problem-solving methods fall short.

Historical Context

Developed in the 1970s–80s by Arnold Mindell, initially inspired by dreamwork and Jungian psychology. Evolved through integration of bodywork (somatics), physics (field theory), indigenous wisdom, and deep democracy. Applied globally in psychotherapy, conflict transformation, leadership, social justice, and trauma integration.

Approach

Process Work assumes that human experience happens across three levels of reality:

1. Consensus Reality – Everyday facts (who, what, where).
2. Dreamland – Subjective, symbolic, and emotional experiences (dreams, inner voices, projections).
3. Essence Level – Deep, subtle awareness experiences (intuition, timeless presence, archetypal states).

It views symptoms, conflicts, and body signals as messages from the unconscious or marginalized parts of the system that seek expression and integration.

2.5 SOCIOCRACY

Definition

Sociocracy is a governance system designed to create more inclusive, transparent, and effective decision-making in organizations, communities, and teams. Rooted in cybernetics and systems thinking, it balances equality and efficiency by ensuring that everyone's voice matters—while also enabling agile, purpose-driven action.

The name comes from Latin: socius (companion) + cratia (governance) → "governance by peers."

Challenge Addressed

Sociocracy addresses common governance problems:
- Top-down hierarchies that silence members.
- Consensus models that are slow or blocked by veto.
- Ineffective meetings or unclear responsibilities.
- Disempowerment in participatory environments.

It is particularly useful in cooperatives, NGOs, ecovillages, worker-owned businesses, and social movements seeking to balance power with efficiency.

Historical Context

Originated in the mid-20th century with Dutch educator and engineer Kees Boeke, who applied it in schools. Developed further by Gerard Endenburg (engineer) in the 1970s in the Netherlands, who formalized it for business use through Endenburg Elektrotechniek.

Approach

1. Consent Decision-Making

   o Decisions are made when there are no paramount objections.

   o Unlike consensus, consent focuses on "good enough for now, safe enough to try."

2. Circle Structure

   o The organization is divided into semi-autonomous circles (teams), each responsible for a domain.

   o Circles are linked by double linking: at least two members participate in both the circle and its parent circle, ensuring bi-directional flow of information and power.

3. Role Selection by Consent

   o Roles are filled through transparent nomination and consent, based on qualifications and trust.

4. Feedback and Continuous Improvement

   o Every decision is reviewed periodically.

   o Feedback is built into the process via evaluations and linked circles.

3. PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

3.1 ABSTRACT DRAWING & BACK TO BACK COMMUNICATION

Duration
60 minutes

For how many people
Any even number of participants (minimum 4).

Type of activity
Experiential / Communication Exercise / Icebreaker

Materials needed

- o Blank sheets of paper (2 per person)

- o Pens, pencils or markers (at least 1 per person)

Goals

- o Explore the complexity of verbal communication

- o Reflect on interpretation and misinterpretation

- o Highlight the importance of clarity, active listening, and feedback in communication

- o Build trust and cooperation within the group

Description
Each participant starts by creating an abstract drawing that expresses what "communication" means to them—no words, just shapes, lines, and colors if available. After the drawing is completed, participants form pairs and sit back-to-back. One person has 5 minutes to describe their drawing to the other, who must attempt to recreate it based only on the spoken instructions—no peeking. After 5 minutes, they switch roles.
When both rounds are completed, the pairs compare the original and recreated drawings. This is followed by a group debrief where participants reflect on:

- o How similar were the drawings?

- o What strategies worked or didn't?

- o How did it feel to explain vs. to draw?

- o What does this tell us about communication in general?

3.2 EMBODYING THE 4 LEADER ARCHETYPES

Duration
90 minutes (depending on group size and depth of exploration)

For how many people
Any even number (minimum 4).

Type of activity
Embodiment / Self-awareness / Leadership development / Partner exercise

Materials needed

- o   Large space where participants can move freely
- o   Blank paper (1 per archetype per person, so ideally 4 per person)
- o   Markers or pens for sketching

Goals

- o   Deepen self-awareness of different leadership styles within oneself
- o   Develop embodied intelligence and emotional connection to leadership roles
- o   Identify personal resources and internal "power anchors"
- o   Explore the integration of different leadership energies

Description
This activity explores the four archetypes of leadership we all carry: Mother/Father (nurturing), Warrior (action), King/Queen (authority), Visionary (inspiration). Participants work in pairs, taking turns. One person performs the exercise while the other supports, observes, and helps hold space.
The active participant gently moves their body and senses where in the space they want to settle. Once they choose a spot, they tune into one of the four archetypes and take on a posture that embodies it. They explore sitting, walking, speaking from this archetype and notice how it shifts their inner state.
When the embodiment feels clear, they create a Power Movement—a simple hand gesture that helps anchor this inner state. Then, they sketch a symbol representing that power and leave it in that physical space.
The process is repeated for all four archetypes.
In the final phase, the participant tries to find a posture or movement that integrates all four archetypes, and reflects on how it feels to hold that balanced leadership energy.

3.3 RE-MOVING DEBATE

Duration
45–60 minutes

For how many people
6–30 participants

Type of activity
Debate / Role-playing

Materials needed

- o Open space with enough room to move from one side to the other
- o List of prepared statements (printed or read aloud)
- o A visible randomizer (coin, dice, card draw, etc.) to assign positions

Goals

- o Encourage participants to explore diverse perspectives, even those they disagree with
- o Build empathy, rhetorical skills, and critical thinking
- o Reflect on nuanced issues around art, care, activism, and leadership
- o Foster non-judgmental discussion and collective reflection

Description
Participants stand in the middle of the room. A facilitator reads out a provocative statement related to art, activism, care, or leadership (e.g. *"Even when lacking motivation, as facilitator, the show must go on"*). Each participant is then randomly assigned to argue "in favor" or "against" the statement (e.g. via coin toss, drawing cards, etc.).
They physically move to the side of the room that represents their assigned position and take a moment to reflect or prepare. One by one or in open discussion, participants share their reasoning, *even if it doesn't reflect their real opinion*.
Suggested statements:

- o *It is essential to care for myself first in order to care for others.*
- o *A facilitator should never run a workshop if they don't have enough confidence or knowledge.*
- o *Work gives dignity to people.*
- o *Life in an association necessarily leads to workaholic behaviours.*
- o *Aiming for horizontality means aiming for no hierarchy.*

3.4 INNER CRITIC PUPPET

Duration
 90 minutes

For how many people
 Even number of participants

Type of activity
 Creative / Embodiment

Materials needed

- o Recycled materials: paper, fabric scraps, old clothes, cardboard

- o Scissors, glue, tape, string, markers

- o Quiet space for working in pairs

Goals

- o Recognize and externalize your inner critic

- o Explore where this voice comes from and how it affects you

- o Practice responding to it in an empowered way

Description
 First, everyone builds a puppet using recycled materials to represent their inner critic (20 minutes).
 Then, in pairs, one person does the exercise while the other supports them. They switch roles after.
 The person working with their puppet reflects on these steps:

- o Think of a critical or negative voice you often hear inside.

- o Whose voice is it? Where does it come from?

- o Pretend *you* are the critic. Say those things out loud using the energy of your puppet. Notice how it feels to be in the role of the critic.

- o Now respond to the critic

- o Imagine how you could catch and answer this voice when it shows up in daily life.

3.5 THEATRE OF MY LIFE – THE SMURFS

Duration
180 mins

For how many people
Minimum 8 – Maximum 28 participants

Type of activity
Embodiment / Role-play / Personal development / Group dynamics
Materials needed

- Smurf figures (or inspiring images) per person

- Flipchart or blackboard for explanations

- Paper and pens for notes

- Open space for movement and small group work

Goals

- Explore inner dynamics through 4 internal roles

- Understand personal and group decision-making

- Develop leadership and self-awareness

- Learn to mediate internal conflicts and align with personal values

Description
Participants explore 4 inner characters:

1. Public character – the outer mask, social role

2. Private character – emotions, passion, vulnerability

3. Mediator – the inner leader, decision-maker

4. Inner Counsellor – intuition, values, long-term vision

After choosing symbolic Smurfs (or images) to represent them, each participant builds their own "inner theatre" based on a personal challenge. Through individual reflection, dialogues between the characters, and a final live role-play (in groups of 4), participants explore how these parts interact and make decisions.

3.6 – SOCIOCRATIC ELECTION SIMULATION

Duration
45–60 minutes

For how many people
6–20 participants

Type of activity
Group decision-making / Participatory governance / Simulation

Materials needed

1. Pen and paper for each participant

Goals

- Learn how to hold a sociocratic election
- Practice consent-based decision-making
- Strengthen trust and transparency in group processes

Description
Participants simulate a sociocratic election, used to choose someone for a specific role or responsibility within a group. This is done in a circle using a structured, transparent process where each voice is heard equally.
Steps of the sociocratic election:

1. Clarify the role – The facilitator clearly explains what the elected person is expected to do.

2. Round of naming the necessary quality for that role

3. Silent reflection – Everyone thinks quietly about who they believe is best suited for the role (including themselves).

4. Nomination round – Each person says aloud who they nominate and why.

5. Change round – People can change their nomination if they wish, based on what they've heard.

6. Proposal & consent – The facilitator proposes a nominee. The group checks for objections. If no reasoned objection is raised, the decision is accepted by consent, not majority.

3.7 FINAL SHARING CIRCLE – THE WEB OF CONNECTIONS

Duration
30–45 minutes

For how many people
6–25 participants

Type of activity
Closing ritual / Group reflection / Symbolic sharing

Materials needed

- o 1 hula hoop

- o 1 long string or yarn per participant (all tied to the hula hoop)

Goals

- o Create a meaningful closure for the group's shared journey

- o Offer space for personal expression and collective presence

- o Use a physical metaphor to deepen awareness of connection, support, and responsibility

Description
Participants sit in a circle. In the center lies a hula hoop, and tied to it are as many strings as there are people in the group. Each participant holds one string. As everyone gently pulls on their string, the hula hoop rises into the air, suspended by the collective tension and care. If someone releases their grip, the hoop dips or tilts—making visible the impact of individual presence on the whole.
This becomes a powerful metaphor. The hula hoop represents the group, the shared space, the learning journey. The strings are the connections we've built—delicate but strong, only stable when we all contribute. The act of pulling together symbolizes co-responsibility, shared intention, and how each person's voice holds the circle. Participants are invited to speak one at a time. When someone wants to share, they gently pull on the string, lifting the hoop toward them—claiming space and signaling they're ready. Others listen in silence, holding the hoop with care. People can share a word of gratitude, a lesson learned, a moment they will carry with them, or simply remain in silence, if words feel unnecessary.

4. TESTIMONIALS

"A great project where knowledge finds a way into young youth leaders to strengthen the ties between organisations and also to prevent burn-out using out-of-the-box tools!"

"All this knowledge helps me have faith in creating new things with new people, and the importance of different viewpoints and listening. I am super grateful and felt it was just what I needed to give me more confidence to walk in the world. Infinite gratitude and possibilities. It has opened my perspective."

"The topic 'Burnout prevention in young leaders of non-profit organizations' is highly relevant and much needed. The project created a safe and empowering space for young changemakers to reflect, share experiences, and develop practical strategies for self-care and sustainable activism. It was truly inspiring to see youth leaders prioritizing their well-being while strengthening their commitment to social impact. A transformative and highly recommended experience."

"I appreciated the combination of balancing tools for managing organization and personal awareness. I appreciated all the content. Yet my highest appreciation goes into the illuminating perspective on personal power."

5. CREDITS, PARTNERS, & DIS-CLAIMER

Credits

Tool Up – Preventing Burnout in Young Leaders of Non-Profit Organisations was coordinated by Tra una luna e l'altra (Italy) as part of the Erasmus+ Programme – Youth Field, supported by the Italian National Agency for Youth (Agenzia Italiana per la Gioventù).

This toolkit was created collectively by the participants of the Training Course, bringing together youth workers, educators and community leaders from across Europe. All tools and reflections included here arise from their lived experience, creativity and collaborative work.

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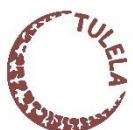
Tra una luna e l'altra (Italy)
A young grassroots organisation promoting sustainability, community building and creative self-reliance through workshops, ecological practices and non-formal education.

EcoFairly (France)
An NGO active in ecological education, permaculture, eco-building and youth volunteering, promoting sustainable lifestyles and community-based environmental action.

Asociación Cultural Bidaia (Spain)
A youth-led organisation offering cultural, artistic and social activities in rural Madrid, creating safe spaces, inclusive groups and Erasmus+ opportunities for young people.

Asociatia Puzzle OptimEast (Romania)
A youth NGO from Târgu Neamt promoting non-formal learning, leadership, inclusion and healthy lifestyles, with over 330 local and international youth events organised.

Monad Mind Foundation (Bulgaria)
A regenerative-education foundation running an off-grid eco-centre focused on sustainability, permaculture, personal transformation and nature-based youth programmes.
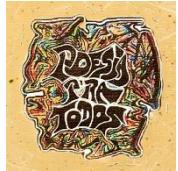
Associação Poesia p'ra Todos (Portugal)
An association based in Lisbon promoting artistic expression, social inclusion and community participation through poetry, performance and creative youth engagement.

Cosmic f (Greece)
A social cooperative supporting youth empowerment, inclusion and artistic creation, fostering community-based learning and alternative cultural initiatives.

Eine Welt e.V. (Germany)
A Leipzig-based NGO promoting global education, intercultural dialogue and youth participation, with long-term experience in Erasmus+ projects and community engagement.