



Layers of Existence
training materials



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Introduction

This toolkit is based on the training course **“Layers of Existence”**, an experiential learning program **exploring the connection between body, breath, emotions, identity, and relationships.**

The purpose of this toolkit is to extract and share the core methods used during the training in a simple and practical way, so they can be applied by youth workers in different contexts across Europe.

The approaches presented here focus on embodiment — learning through sensing, moving, breathing, and relating. These methods support young people in developing self-awareness, emotional regulation, communication skills, and a stronger sense of connection with themselves and others. For youth workers, they offer practical tools to create more engaging, inclusive, and responsive learning environments.

This toolkit is designed for youth workers, facilitators, and beginners. No previous experience with body-based practices is required. The exercises can be adapted to different group sizes, settings, and needs, and used in workshops, youth exchanges, or ongoing activities.

Because some methods involve movement, breath, or physical interaction, a few basic principles should always be respected:

- **Participation is voluntary**
- **Clear consent is required for any physical contact**
- **Emotional responses should be respected without pressure**
- **Activities should be adapted to participants’ abilities and comfort levels**

This is not a theoretical manual, but a collection of practical tools. You are encouraged to adapt them, simplify them, and integrate them into your own practice in ways that best support your group.

How to Use This Toolkit



This toolkit is designed to be flexible and easy to apply.

You do not need to use all the methods or follow a fixed order. Instead, you can select and adapt exercises based on your group, context, and objectives. You can use a single method to support a specific moment (e.g. grounding, energising, reflection), or combine several methods to create a full workshop or training session.

Start Simple

If you are new to these approaches:

- Begin with 1–2 exercises
- Observe how your group responds
- Build confidence gradually

Before implementing an activity, we strongly encourage you to define a clear goal. The same method can lead to very different outcomes depending on:

- How you introduce it
- The instructions you give
- Your intention as a facilitator

Take time to prepare:

- What do you want participants to experience or learn?
- What is the purpose of this activity in your session?

Based on this, you can adjust the wording, focus, and depth of the exercise.

These methods are best understood through experience.

You are encouraged to try them, adapt them, and develop your own style.

There is no “perfect way” to facilitate — what matters is presence, clarity, and responsiveness to your group.

Grounding & Body Awareness

Alien Body Exploration

Purpose:

To increase body awareness and help participants arrive in the present moment.

Duration:

15–20 minutes

Group size:

Any

Reflection questions:

- What did you notice in your body?
- Did anything feel unfamiliar or surprising?
- Where do you feel tension or ease?

How to do it:

1. Invite participants to spread out in the space.
2. Ask them to imagine they have just arrived in their body for the first time — like an alien discovering a human body.
3. Guide them step by step:
 - First explore the skin (light touch, surface sensations)
 - Then explore muscles (tension, contraction, strength)
 - Then explore joints (rotation, range of movement)
4. Encourage slow movement and curiosity.
5. Optionally use music to support focus.
6. Gradually bring participants back to stillness.

Tree & Animal Exploration

Purpose:

To explore body expression, imagination, and connection between stability and movement.

Duration:

20–30 minutes

Group size:

Any

Reflection questions:

- How did it feel to be stable vs. mobile?
- Which role felt more natural?
- How did you relate to others without words?

How to do it:

1. Invite participants to move freely in the space.
2. First, ask them to become a tree:
 - Feel the roots (feet grounded)
 - Explore stillness and stability
 - Notice small movements (like branches in the wind)
3. Then introduce animals moving around the trees:
 - Participants can switch roles or observe
4. Encourage interaction between “trees” and “animals” (without speaking).
5. Let participants explore different qualities: slow/fast, heavy/light, grounded/free.

Simple Grounding Movement

Purpose:

To gently connect participants with their body and prepare them for further activities.

Duration:

10–15 minutes

Group size:

Any

Reflection questions:

- How does your body feel now compared to before?
- Where do you feel more relaxed?

How to do it:

1. Invite participants to stand comfortably.
2. Guide simple movements:
 - Stretch arms up and down
 - Roll shoulders slowly
 - Gently twist the torso
 - Bend forward and return slowly
3. Bring attention to breathing during movement.
4. End by standing still and noticing body sensations.

Breath & Regulation

Ujjayi Breathing

Purpose:

To calm the nervous system and bring focus to the present moment.

Duration:

10–15 minutes

Group size:

Any

Reflection questions:

- How does your body feel after this breathing?
- Did your mind become more calm or focused?

How to do it:

1. Invite participants to sit or stand comfortably.
2. Ask them to inhale slowly through the nose.
3. On the exhale, slightly contract the throat to create a soft “ocean-like” sound.
4. Keep the breath slow, steady, and controlled.
5. Continue for several minutes, guiding attention to the sound and rhythm of the breath.

6-4-6-2 Breathing Pattern

Purpose:

To regulate emotions and create balance in the nervous system.

Duration:

5–10 minutes

Group size:

Any

Reflection questions:

- Did you notice a shift in your state?
- Was it easy or challenging to follow the rhythm?

How to do it:

1. Invite participants to sit comfortably.
2. Guide the breathing pattern while using Ujjayi breath:
 - Inhale for 6 counts
 - Hold for 4 counts
 - Exhale for 6 counts
 - Hold for 2 counts
3. Repeat the cycle slowly for several minutes.
4. Encourage participants to stay relaxed and not force the breath.

Breathing of Expansion

Purpose:

To release tension and create a sense of mental and physical clarity.

Duration:

5–10 minutes

Group size:

Any

Reflection questions:

- How do you feel after the exercise?

How to do it:

1. Invite participants to sit with some space around them with a relaxed and vertical spine.
2. Inhale slowly through the nose while using the breathing pattern and gradually through the sides of the body raising straight arms in the air .
3. Exhale the same way while moving the arms down the body, as if “clearing” energy around them.
4. Repeat up to 8 times.
5. Encourage participants to imagine expansion of their body and space around with each inhale.

Trust & Connection

Purpose:

To develop trust, cooperation, and sensitivity in guiding and supporting others.

Duration:

20–30 minutes

Group size:

Groups of 3

Reflection questions:

- How did it feel to give up control?
- What made you feel safe or unsafe?
- How did you approach guiding someone else?

Human & Two Angels

How to do it:

1. Divide participants into groups of three.
2. One person becomes the “human” and closes their eyes.
3. The other two become “angels,” standing on either side.
4. The angels gently move the parts of human body using slow, attentive touch (e.g. shoulders, arms, upper back).
5. The human allows themselves to be guided without resisting or controlling.
6. After a few minutes, rotate roles so everyone experiences each position.

Safety note:

- Always emphasise the role of consent before starting.
- Keep movements slow and controlled.
- Facilitator should supervise to ensure safety.

Purpose:

To build connection, empathy, and awareness of others through movement.

Duration:

15–25 minutes

Group size:

Pairs

Reflection questions:

- When did you feel most connected?
- Was it clear who was leading?
- How did you adapt to your partner?

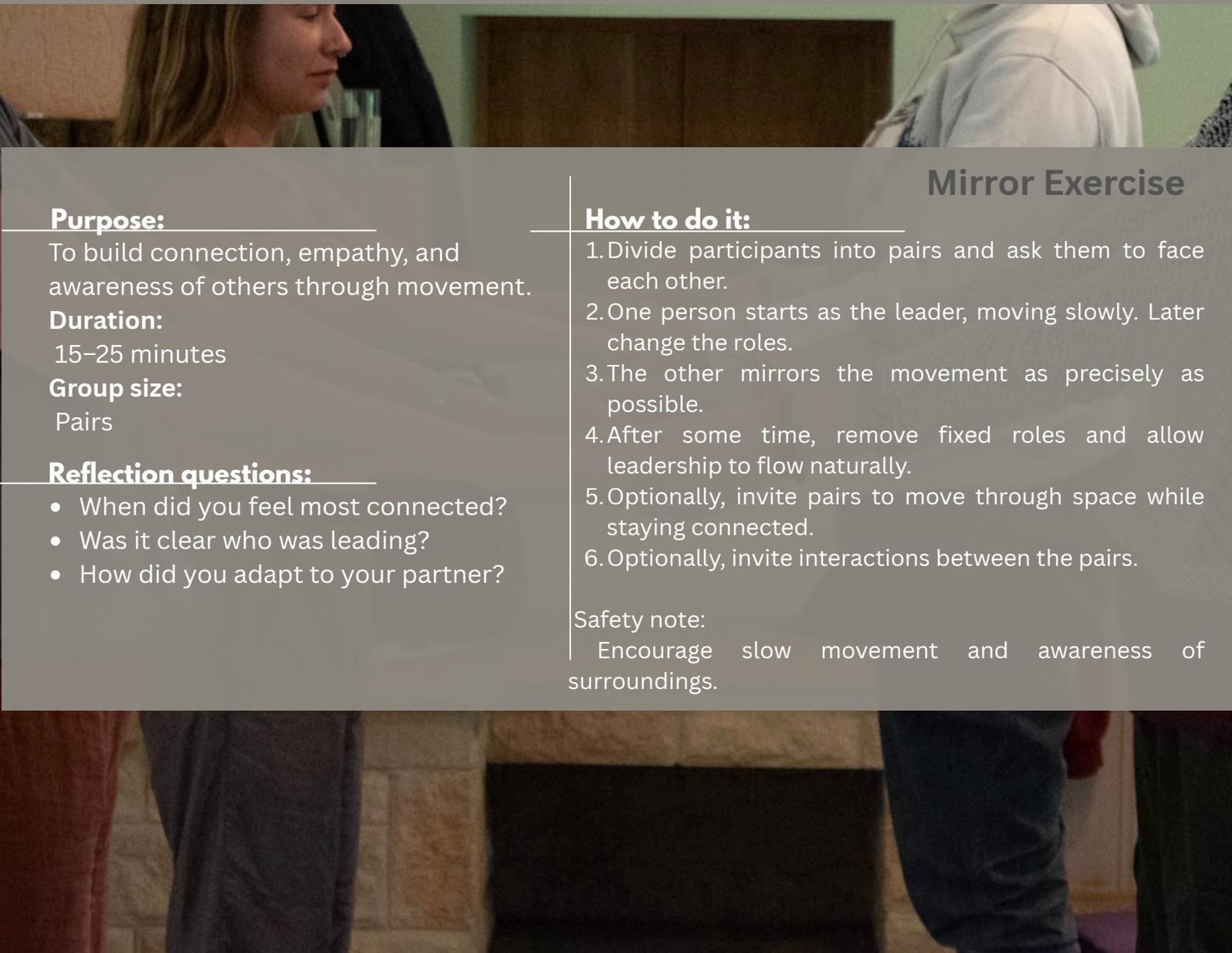
How to do it:

1. Divide participants into pairs and ask them to face each other.
2. One person starts as the leader, moving slowly. Later change the roles.
3. The other mirrors the movement as precisely as possible.
4. After some time, remove fixed roles and allow leadership to flow naturally.
5. Optionally, invite pairs to move through space while staying connected.
6. Optionally, invite interactions between the pairs.

Safety note:

Encourage slow movement and awareness of surroundings.

Mirror Exercise



Trust & Connection

One Finger Contact

Purpose:

To explore subtle communication and connection through minimal contact.

Duration:

15–20 minutes

Group size:

Pairs

Reflection questions:

- How much can you communicate with minimal contact?
- Did you lead, follow, or both?
- What changed when you reduced contact?

How to do it:

1. Participants form pairs.
2. Partners connect using only one finger.
3. With eyes closed, they begin to move together while maintaining contact.
4. Encourage exploration of:
5. Leading and following
6. Pressure and lightness
7. Direction and response
8. Gradually allow movement to expand through the body while keeping the connection point.

Safety note:

Keep movements slow and avoid pulling or forcing the partner.

Purpose:

To explore guidance, resistance, and cooperation in movement.

Duration:

20–30 minutes

Group size:

Pairs

Reflection questions:

- How did it feel to guide vs. to be guided?
- When did movement feel like cooperation?
- How did resistance affect the interaction?

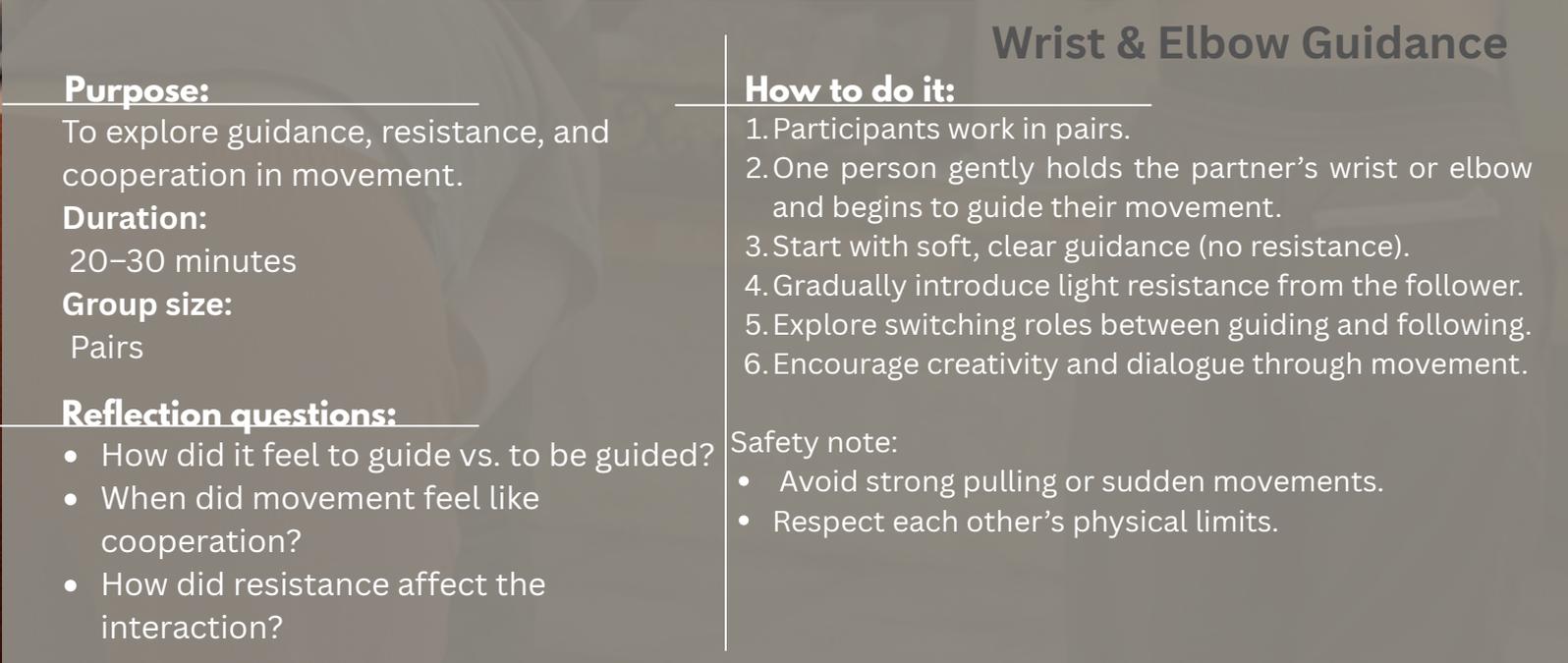
How to do it:

1. Participants work in pairs.
2. One person gently holds the partner's wrist or elbow and begins to guide their movement.
3. Start with soft, clear guidance (no resistance).
4. Gradually introduce light resistance from the follower.
5. Explore switching roles between guiding and following.
6. Encourage creativity and dialogue through movement.

Safety note:

- Avoid strong pulling or sudden movements.
- Respect each other's physical limits.

Wrist & Elbow Guidance



Communication & Perspective

Purpose:

To develop clear communication, active listening, and awareness of assumptions.

Duration:

20–30 minutes

Group size:

Pairs

Reflection questions:

- What was difficult in describing or understanding?
- What assumptions did you make?
- How did communication improve when questions were allowed?

Communication challenge

How to do it:

1. Divide participants into pairs and invite them to sit with their backs together.
2. One person receives a simple drawing/image (not shown to their partner).
3. Their task is to describe the image so the other person can recreate it.
4. The listener draws based only on the description.
5. In the first round, no questions are allowed.
6. In the second round, the listener can ask clarifying questions.
7. Compare the original and the drawing at the end.

Safety note:

Keep the atmosphere light — focus on learning, not “getting it right.”

Purpose:

To explore how information changes when passed between people and learn about the ways we communicate

Duration:

30–45 minutes

Group size:

Trios

Reflection questions:

- What changed between the original and the recreation?
- What details were lost or added?
- How do we interpret information differently?

Creator – Communicator – Recreator

How to do it:

1. Divide participants into three roles:
 - Creators (create a short performance or scene)
 - Communicators (observe the performance)
 - Recreators (do not see the original)
2. Creators perform a short scene.
3. Communicators observe and make notes to the best of their ability.
4. Communicators describe what they saw to the recreators.
5. Recreators attempt to reproduce the scene based only on the description.
6. Compare the original and recreated versions.

Safety note:

Encourage respectful observation — avoid judging others' interpretations.

Communication & Perspective

Spectrum Debate Line

Purpose:

To explore different opinions and develop openness to multiple perspectives.

Duration:

30–45 minutes

Group size:

Group of 10+

Reflection questions:

- Did your position change? Why?
- What influenced your thinking?
- How did it feel to stand in your opinion?

How to do it:

1. Create an imaginary line in the room:
 - One end = “Strongly Agree”
 - Other end = “Strongly Disagree”
2. Read a statement related to a relevant topic (e.g. social issues, values).
3. Participants position themselves along the line according to their personal opinion.
4. Invite participants to share their reasoning behind how they have placed themselves.
5. Allow participants to move if their opinion changes after hearing others.
6. Repeat with different statements.

Safety note:

- Set clear rules for respectful dialogue.
- Ensure no one is pressured to speak



Keywords Dialogue

Purpose:

To explore how people understand key concepts differently.

Duration:

20–30 minutes

Group size:

Pairs

Reflection questions:

- Did others understand the word differently than you?
- What shaped your perspective?
- What new questions came up?

How to do it:

1. Divide participants into pairs or small groups.
2. Give them a keyword (e.g. “education”, “justice”, “freedom”).
3. Ask them to:
 - Share what the word means to them
 - Discuss differences in understanding
 - Generate questions that arise from the discussion
4. Optionally, bring insights back to the larger group.

Safety note:

Remind participants there are no “right” definitions – focus on exploration.

Expression & Identity

Purpose:

To explore personal expression and increase awareness of how we use our voice.

Duration:

15–20 minutes

Group size:

Any

Reflection questions:

- What felt natural or uncomfortable?
- Did your voice change with emotion or movement?
- What did you discover about your expression?

Voice Exploration

How to do it:

1. Invite participants to stand or sit comfortably.
2. Begin with simple sounds (e.g. humming, vowels).
3. Gradually explore variations:
 - Volume (quiet → loud)
 - Speed (slow → fast)
 - Tone (soft → strong)
 - Emotion (joy, anger, calm, etc.)
4. Encourage participants to move while using their voice.
5. Optionally, invite short individual or group expressions.

Safety note:

No one should be forced to vocalise loudly or individually if uncomfortable.



Purpose:

To explore spontaneity, creativity, and expressing oneself without planning, and the shift between leading and following.

Duration:

30–45 minutes

Group size:

Groups of 4

Reflection questions:

- How did it feel to create without preparation?
- What helped or blocked your expression?
- How did you work as a group?

Improvisation in Groups

How to do it:

1. Divide participants into groups of 4.
2. All group is facing one direction so that the one in front is a leader and movement initiator. The other members are following the leader until the direction shifts and another person becomes the leader.
3. Give a simple prompt (e.g. a theme, emotion, or situation).
4. Ask groups to create a short improvised scene or movement piece.
5. Let each group evolve their story without any words.
6. Optional - Invite groups to interact.

Safety note:

Remind participants rather to focus on the group connection than to a performance



Expression & Identity

Purpose:

To build group cohesion and shared expression through movement.

Duration:

30–40 minutes

Group size:

Any

Reflection questions:

- How did it feel to contribute to a group creation?
- Did you feel part of something collective?
- What was challenging or enjoyable?

Collective Choreography

How to do it:

1. Participants stand in a circle.
2. One person creates a simple movement.
3. The next person repeats it and adds a new movement.
4. Continue building a sequence with each participant contributing.
5. Practice the full choreography together.

Safety note:

Keep movements simple and accessible for everyone. Do not try to be funny. Let the movement evolve from the previous rather than creating some personal idea.

Purpose:

To explore authenticity, presence, and behaviour within a group structure.

Duration:

120–... minutes

Group size:

Group of 10+

Reflection questions:

- What did you notice about yourself?
- When did you feel authentic or not?
- How did others influence your behaviour?

Parliament

How to do it:

1. Create a shared space and explain the rules clearly.
 - DO:
 - Observe yourself while observing others
 - Be present with all your senses
 - Stay aware of others
 - DON'T:
 - No talking
 - No judging
 - No intentional “performance”
 - No movement unless it arises naturally
2. Participants enter the space and explore within these constraints.
3. After the exercise, gather for reflection.

Safety note:

- This can be intense — allow time for reflection.
- Participants should be free to step out if needed.

Reflection & Integration

7-Minute Life Story

Purpose:

To build empathy, self-awareness, and understanding of others' experiences.

Duration:

45-60minutes

Group size:

Small groups (3-5 people)

Reflection questions:

- What was it like to share your story?
- What touched you while listening to others?
- What common elements did you notice?

How to do it:

1. Divide participants into small groups.
2. Each person has 7 minutes to share their life story.
3. Invite the first to open up as a support for others to open up
4. Others only listen without interrupting.

Safety note:

- Participants decide how much they want to reveal.
- Create a respectful and confidential space.



Meditation

Purpose:

To reflect on personal development and strengthen self-awareness.

Duration:

15-.25 minutes

Group size:

Any

Reflection questions:

- What did you notice about your past and future self?
- Did anything become clearer for you?

How to do it:

1. Invite participants to sit comfortably.
2. Guide them through a short meditation:
3. First, connect with their past self (memories, experiences)
4. Then, imagine their future self (goals, possibilities)
5. Encourage them to observe without judgment.
6. Slowly bring attention back to the present moment..

Conclusion

This toolkit brings together methods developed and tested during the “Layers of Existence” training. Each activity is an invitation to explore embodiment, connection, and awareness in a simple and accessible way.

The methods presented here are not fixed formulas. They are starting points. Their impact depends on how they are facilitated, adapted, and integrated into real contexts. As highlighted throughout this toolkit, your intention, presence, and sensitivity as a facilitator shape the experience as much as the activity itself.

Embodiment work does not require complexity. Often, the most meaningful moments come from simple practices applied with clarity and care.

By bringing these approaches into your work, you contribute to creating spaces where young people can:

- Feel more connected to themselves
- Understand others more deeply
- Express themselves more freely
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This toolkit is not an end point, but a resource you can return to, reshape, and grow with over time.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for any more details or practical references:

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