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Partners

Migdal, Solidarus, Young Folks LT

Artists and Youth Workers from Latvia, Germany and Lithuania contributed to the completion of methods.

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

“Art of Identity: Partnerships for the Quality of Youth Work and Youth Exchanges” - the project has been designed to strengthen the capacities of partner organizations, enhance the quality of youth work, and promote meaningful collaboration in addressing the challenges young people face in identity formation and social inclusion. The initiative focused on supporting the development of inclusive, solidarity-based communities that embrace diversity and promote shared European values.

The primary goal of the project was to equip youth workers and partner organizations with innovative methods and practical tools for integrating art practices into youth work and non-formal education. Through collaborative activities, training sessions, and creative learning approaches, participants have been exploring how artistic expression can support self-awareness, intercultural dialogue, social participation, and mutual understanding among young people.



By encouraging creativity, inclusion, and active engagement, we had an opportunity to learn how to create safer and more supportive space where young people can reflect on their identities, connect with others across cultural differences, and contribute to building more open, democratic, and cohesive societies.

METHOD 6 The Alchemy of the Edge

1. Title: The Alchemy of the Edge: The Beauty in the Breaking

2. Art Form / Medium: Mosaic / Sculptural Craft & Deconstruction

3. Objectives / Outcomes:

- To help youth move from a "passive" role (accepting a perfect, given square) to an "active" role (shaping their own unique pieces).
- To physically demonstrate that "shards" and "waste" are not trash, but essential ingredients for a larger communal story.
- To use the physical resistance of the tile as a metaphor for the effort required to change one's path or set a boundary.
- To show that even when things "shatter" unexpectedly, the pieces can still be used to build something strong.

4. Target Group: Youth (16+); 10–12 participants. Context: Resilience training or personal development workshops.

5. Duration: 150 minutes (2.5 hours)

- 20 min: The Confrontation (Breaking the Square).
- 90 min: Topographical Mapping (The "Turning Point").
- 20 min: The Waste Ritual.
- 20 min: Structured Reflection.

6. Materials Needed:

- Standard square tiles (uniform size/color).
- Professional mosaic nippers (one per participant).
- A large glass "Alchemy Jar" for the whole group.
- Substrates (wooden boards or plexiglass).
- High-quality glue/silicone.
- Cement grout
- Dry napkins
- Sponges



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- Blank "Echo Cards" and pens, pencils

Facilitator's Technical Brief

Internal guide for the facilitator to ensure the workshop runs smoothly.

The process begins by choosing a design and a base to build it on. The artist decides on the "flow" of the lines and picks materials—like shiny glass or matte ceramic—based on how they want the light to hit the surface. Using handheld cutting tools called nippers, they break large sheets of material into small, custom shapes. This step is all about learning how to break the material correctly to get the exact shapes needed for the project.

Each small piece is then glued onto the base, a task that requires looking at both the individual fragment and the overall picture at the same time. The artist must leave small, even gaps of about 2–3mm between the pieces. These spaces are very important because they provide room for the filler that will eventually hold the entire artwork together.

Next, the artwork is covered in a thick, sandy paste called grout. This step transforms a collection of loose, separate pieces into one solid, waterproof, and strong slab. The grout acts like a type of cement, filling in all the empty spaces and locking every part of the story firmly into place.

In the final stage, the artist cleans and polishes the surface. By using a damp sponge to wipe away the thin layer of leftover grout, the original colors and textures of the materials shine through again. Now that the pieces are unified, the mosaic just needs a few days to fully dry and harden into a permanent bond.

Please refer to the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmKhBr4bDqY&t=179s>

Facilitator's "Red Flag" Checklist

- Too much water: If you see a participant using a soaking wet sponge, stop them immediately. It ruins the grout's chemistry.
- Touching tiles: Walk around during the glueing phase. If you see tiles touching, gently remind them about "Breathing Room."
- The "Glue Lake": If glue is rising above the tiles, have them scrape it out before it dries, otherwise, they'll have "ghost spots" where the grout couldn't reach.



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7. Method Steps:

#	Title	Description	Time
1	The Confrontation	Give everyone a "perfect" square tile. They must use nippers to break it into a shape that feels "unique" to them. The Script: "This square represents something 'given'—a rule or a path you didn't choose. Your job is to break it. Shape it into something that feels like <i>you</i>." In resilience training, youth often feel "failure" if a tile shatters into tiny dust. Use this: • The "Unexpected Shard" Rule: Tell them, "There are no mistakes in the snap. If the tile shattered, it didn't fail—it just gave you more material for the Alchemy Jar. Take a new tile and try a different angle. The struggle is the point." • The Help-Hand: If a participant is physically struggling with the nippers, don't do it for them. Place your hand over theirs to help them feel the "snap" together.	20 min
2	The Map	Participants create a design with two sides: The "Inherited" Side: Use whole, unbroken tiles. The "Crafted" Side: Use only pieces you have hand-cut. 1. The Rules of the Shard	90 min



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		<i>"Alright everyone, we're about to move from the 'thinking' phase to the 'making' phase. Mosaic is a bit different from painting—it's louder, messier, and you have to break things to make them work. Here are the three golden rules:</i> <i>• Rule 1: The Snap. When you use these nippers, don't be shy. Give them a quick, sharp squeeze. If you're nervous, the tile will just crumble. If you're decisive, it'll snap exactly where you want it. Always cut inside your box—nobody wants a flying shard in their eye.</i> <i>• Rule 2: The Breathing Room. When you glue your pieces down, do not let them touch. Leave a small gap—about the width of a matchstick—between every single piece. We need that space for the grout later. No gaps means no grout, and no grout means your mosaic won't survive the trip home.</i> <i>• Rule 3: Less is More. Use just a tiny dot of glue. If your tile is 'swimming' in a lake of glue, it's going to slide around and ruin the design."</i> 2. The Mud Phase <i>(Say this once everyone has finished glueing and the pieces are dry)</i> <i>"Now for the messy part. We're going to cover your beautiful work in what looks like grey mud (the grout).</i> <i>Don't panic when your design disappears. This grout is the 'social glue'—it fills the gaps and holds everything together. I've mixed it to feel</i>	
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		<i>like peanut butter. Smear it on, push it into the cracks with your fingers, and make sure every hole is filled."</i> 3. The Reveal <i>"The last step is the most satisfying. Grab a sponge, but make sure it's barely damp—if it's dripping, you're just washing your hard work away.</i> <i>Wipe the surface gently to find your tiles again. Once you see them, stop with the sponge and switch to these dry napkins. Give it a good polish. You're buffing away the 'fog' to let the identity you built shine through. Scrub until the glass is bright and the grout lines are smooth."</i>	
3	The Waste Ritual	Participants collect the "dust" and tiny shards from their cutting and pour them into a communal glass jar in the center.	20 min
4	The Reveal	The group observes the "Alchemy Jar"—how the discarded pieces create something beautiful when combined. Observe how the "leftovers" of individual work create a beautiful, sparkling layer in the jar when combined.	20 min

8. Reflection / Debrief Questions:

Facilitator Rule: Choose only one track. Pick 3 questions maximum from that track to keep the energy from dropping.

Track A: The "Agency" Track (Focus on Choice)



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1. The Snap: "How did it feel to take a 'perfect' square and intentionally break it? Was it scary or satisfying?"
2. The Effort: "Which side was harder to build—the 'Inherited' side (whole tiles) or the 'Crafted' side (your pieces)? Why?"
3. The Turning Point: "In your mosaic, where do the whole tiles meet the broken ones? What does that line represent in your life?"

Track B: The "Resilience" Track (Focus on the Shards)

1. The Waste: "Looking at the Alchemy Jar, how does it feel to see your 'leftovers' mixed with everyone else's?"
2. Reframing: "If the shards in the jar are our 'mistakes' or 'failures,' why do they look so beautiful when we see them all together?"
3. The Future: "Next time something in your life 'breaks' unexpectedly, how can you remember the Alchemy Jar?"

9. Facilitator Tip: Focus on the sound of the nippers. The act of breaking is cathartic. If someone is struggling to cut a piece, use that as a metaphor for a "hard boundary" they are trying to set in their real life.

Facilitators Tip:

- Choose Mirrors & Echoes for groups that need to build Connection.
- Choose Alchemy of the Edge for groups that need to build Self-Worth.

10. Credits / Origin:

Method description by Daria Bielinska, based on work by Jelena Markune



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