



From consumption to connection

a Handbook

What's Ahead



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About the Project

People between 18 and 30 are living with precarious work, unaffordable housing, extended study and constant reachability through a phone.

Being overwhelmed is not the exception in this group; it is the baseline.

When the body is overwhelmed it needs regulation – something that brings it back to a bearable state. The market understands this need very well and answers it fast: an order, a click, a delivery, a scroll. They just work briefly, cost money many people do not have, and generate waste.

Meanwhile professional support is hard to reach – waiting lists are long, private treatment is expensive, and in between a person is left alone with whatever is weighing on them.

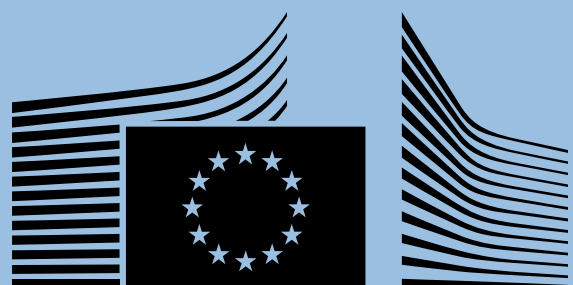
From Consumption to Connection was designed by five young people who had all been in that gap themselves. Between January and June 2026 the project ran four five-hour workshops outdoors: forest bathing and the senses, making things from materials found in nature, ethical foraging with a shared meal, and writing in nature. Running through all four were short somatic exercises for noticing tension in the body before it turned into an action, sharing circles, and one simple portable practice – the 24-hour pause before buying.

The workshops were free, held in public green space, and designed to be genuinely accessible: quiet participation was welcome, sharing was always voluntary, a meal was included, and at least one location was wheelchair accessible. We reached 60 young people during the workshops directly.

The project's lasting output is this handbook: methods, safety and accessibility protocols, complete workshop scripts, published free and openly so that youth centres, schools and other organisations can run the programme without us.

One thing we said plainly throughout, and will say here too: none of this addressed why people are overwhelmed in the first place. Rent, precarious work and an advertising economy built around the moment of distress are structural, and a breathing exercise does not touch them. What the programme offered was something else to reach for in the moment.

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Theory of change

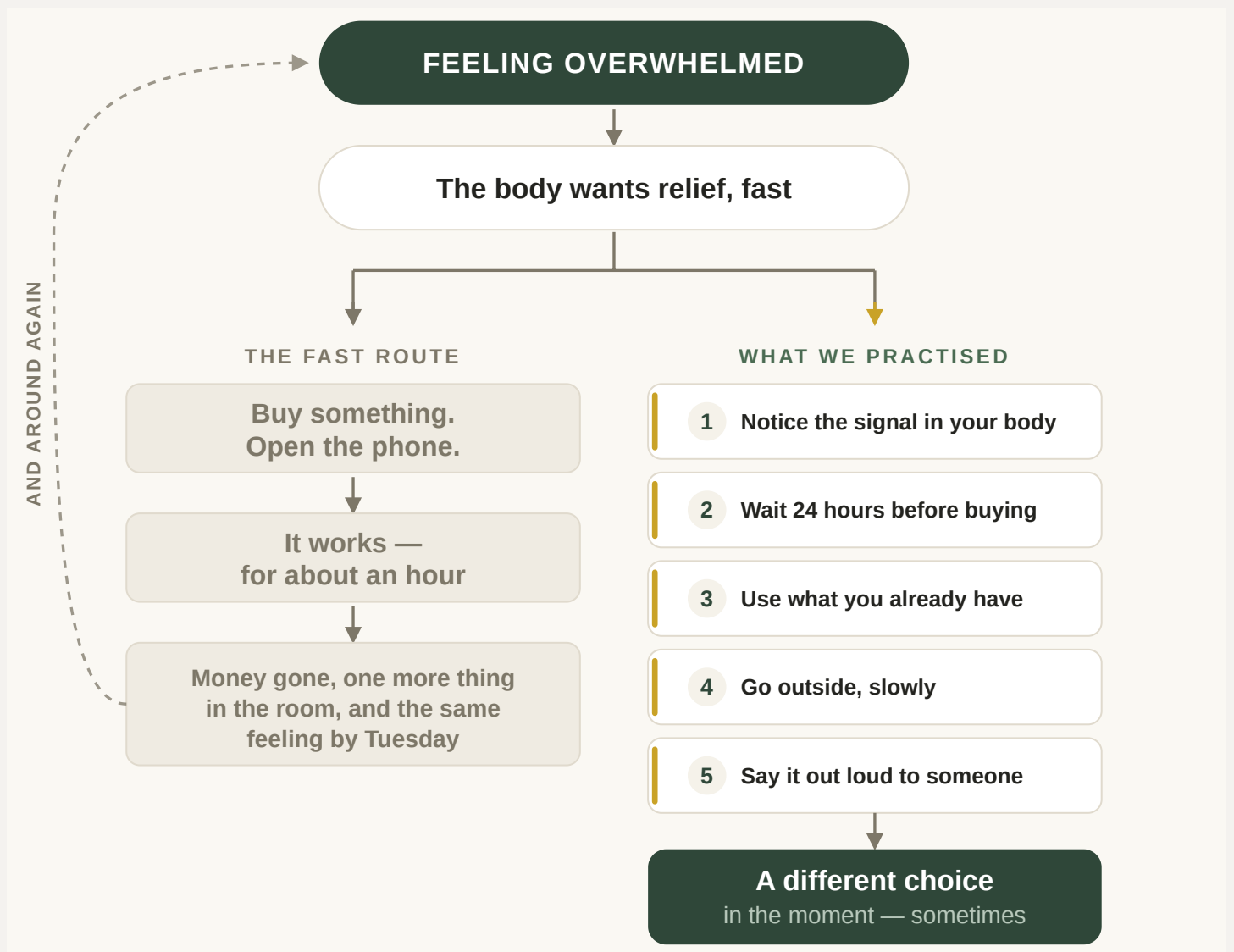
The problem

People aged 18 to 30 live with a combination of precarious work, unaffordable housing, extended study, and constant reachability through a phone. Being overwhelmed is not the exception in this group; it is the baseline.

An overwhelmed body needs regulation — something that returns it to a bearable state. The market understands this need very well and offers fast, cheap, immediately available answers: an order, a click, a delivery, a scroll. They work. That is why we use them. The problem is that they work briefly, cost money many people do not have, and generate waste.

In parallel, professional support is hard to access: waiting lists in public services are long and private treatment is expensive. In between, a person is left alone with whatever is weighing on them.

The logic of the programme



The weak link is not knowledge. Participants already know that impulse buying is not a solution. The weak link is **noticing the moment** — catching the tension before it becomes an action — and **having an alternative available** at that moment. This is why somatic exercises run through all four workshops rather than forming a topic of their own.

The methodology

I. Forest bathing (japanese: *shinrin-yoku*)

What it is. Slow, unstructured movement through woodland with attention directed to the senses. More than just a walk. The pace is markedly slow — one to two kilometres in two hours is normal. The facilitator offers “invitations”: short tasks that direct attention, separated by long silent gaps.

Why. Learning to stay with the boring, the non-productive and hone mindfulness. The first twenty minutes are uncomfortable for most. Working with the habit of taking phones into your hand. That discomfort is the content: it is the same restlessness that in other circumstances drives a purchase or a scroll. Experiencing it and surviving it is direct evidence that it passes on its own.

What we know. Studies show reduced self-reported tension and improved mood immediately after exposure. Physiological markers point the same way with smaller and less consistent effects.

When it is inappropriate. With acute anxiety, long silent gaps can turn into rumination. For people with low tolerance for unstructured time they produce more stress than relief. The answer is not exclusion but a parallel structured version: a clear task in every segment, no empty time.

Most common mistake. The facilitator talks too much. A two-hour walk should contain at most fifteen minutes of facilitator speech. Second mistake: moving too fast because the facilitator finds silence awkward.

2. Ethical foraging

What it is. Identifying and gathering a small number of very safe, common plants, with the emphasis on rules of taking rather than on quantity gathered. Followed by preparing a simple seasonal meal together.

Why. Working against consumptions. Obtaining without buying, spending attention and time instead of money. Teaching **restraint**. Gathering under the rule “take less than you could” is practice in exactly the skill that is missing in an impulse purchase.

Ethical rules. Not in protected areas. Not endangered species. Never more than a tenth of what grows in one spot. Never with roots. Not beside roads, not at field edges, not where dogs are walked. Do not gather anything you cannot identify with certainty.

We work from a **short, closed, seasonal list** of plants with no dangerous look-alikes.

Seasonal list for April-May (month 4 of the project): stinging nettle, dandelion, ribwort plantain, chickweed, young yarrow leaves, elderflower (if in bloom, late May). All six are common, easily recognised and free of dangerous look-alikes if the described features are followed.

Adapt this list to your region and season.

An ecological caveat we tell participants. Foraging is sustainable with few people over a large area. If everyone in a city did it in the same park, it would be stripped within a month. Which means foraging **is not a solution to consumption**, but it can be used as an exercise. A good example of how a “green” individual solution does not scale the way the problem it addresses does.

Most common mistake. The group gets enthusiastic and gathers too much. The limit must be stated twice and checked in the bags.

3. Writing in Nature

What it is. Free writing from a prompt, without correction, without any demand for quality, within a fixed time window. We use three variants: free writing, writing from the perspective of a natural element, and a short form built from gathered words.

Why. Writing makes an internal state visible and therefore manageable. For our topic it is useful mainly because it lets participants articulate what exactly they are looking for in a purchase. The answer is rarely “the object” and often “a sense of control”, “a sense of treating myself”, “a sense that something is moving”. Once that is said, other routes to the same thing become findable. Writing is also the most direct form of a **pause before buying**: five minutes of writing are five minutes in which the purchase did not happen.

What we know. Expressive writing has a surprisingly solid evidence base for mood improvement, although effect sizes are small. It works better for people who already have verbal facility. Which doesn't mean people who aren't *great writers* cannot participate. Stream of consciousness is what we are aiming at.

When it is inappropriate. There aren't many contraindications. Participants could have a hard time opening up, so we encourage keeping their notes to themselves. We repeated throughout the exercises: “There is no right or wrong. What surfaces don't need to be filtered.”

Most common mistake. Asking people to read aloud. Writing is safe because it is for nobody. If it is clear from the outset that it will have to be read, people write for an audience and the effect disappears. Rule: **you write for yourself, you share only if you want, and you may share the experience of writing rather than the content.**

Safety protocol

Every workshop has two facilitators. One takes care of the execution of the programme, the other oversees the safety of participants.

Before the workshop. Visit the site in person within two weeks. Note: ground conditions, water, roads, where an ambulance could reach, phone signal, nearest toilet. Check whether the area is protected and what is permitted there. Check the forecast 24 hours and 3 hours ahead — postpone for storms, strong wind or below 15 °C (especially when exercises are done sitting down it's preferred even above 20 °C) . February outdoors needs shorter stillness, more movement, hot drinks twice and a heated fallback within half an hour.

Bring or ask participants to bring with them. First aid kit · thermos · emergency blankets · sitting pads · printed participant list, in a waterproof folder · warm clothes · rubbish bag.

Three recurring risks. *Ticks* — long trousers, repellent, body-check reminder afterwards; mention the vaccination recommendation in the invitation. *Allergies* — asked on registration; anyone with an anaphylactic allergy carries their own auto-injector and we know where it is. *Cold ground* — sitting pads matter even at 20 °C.

Important disclaimer on psychological safety to give participants: "This is not therapy and I am not a therapist, I am a facilitator. Some exercises will be pleasant and some will not. At any point you can skip one, sit to the side or raise a hand if it becomes too much. What we say in the circle stays between us. The only exception is if I learn that someone is in danger then I will not keep it to myself, and I will tell you directly." Honour the opt-out consistently, including when someone uses it clumsily.

When someone is overwhelmed. Signs: sudden withdrawal, crying that doesn't subside, shaking, fast shallow breathing, a blank unresponsive gaze, not answering to their own name.

1. Second facilitator goes; the first keeps the group moving. Don't turn attention towards the person.
2. A few metres away, still in sight. Don't ask what happened.
3. "Are you here with me? I'm here for you. Let's breathe together." Slowly.
4. Support without touch: lean on a tree, sit, feel the ground. Touch only if they seek it.
5. Hot drink, blanket, time.
6. Then: "What would help? Going back, staying here, or going home?" Find what (s)he needs.
7. If they go home, not alone until they're steady. Ask who's there. Offer to call someone they trust.

Beyond our competence: refer on, don't handle: suicidal thoughts or self-harm, active eating disorder, signs of abuse, psychotic content, acute substance misuse. If suicidal thoughts come up: ask directly, stay with them, don't promise confidentiality, offer to call together, call emergency services if there is immediate danger, and tell the project lead the same day. Don't carry it alone.

Consent and data. Written consent before each workshop; photography is a separate yes/no, and nothing is photographed during writing, somatic work or the circle regardless. Health data stored separately, destroyed within 30 days. Evaluations are anonymous.

Any incident — first aid, interruption, an emergency call, or any mention of risk: look after the person, tell the lead the same day, form within 24 hours, team debrief within three days.

Programme

# Month	Title	Location	Core method
1	Forest Bathing & the Senses	woodland hill or city park (silent part)	forest bathing, senses
2	Making Things from What We Find	city park	land art, "use what you have"
3	Foraging and a Shared Meal	away from roads and pollution	foraging, restraint
4	Writing in Nature	city park or woodland	writing, the pause before buying

Each runs **5 hours**, including breaks and food. Group of 12-15. Two facilitators. Because the workshops are free we advise to book more than 15 people, as there can be up to 30% of no-shows.

The timeframe of each workshop is similar: every workshop uses the same frame:

0:00-0:40 arrival, framing, introductions, somatic warm-up

0:40-2:15 core method, part one

2:15-3:00 break with food

3:00-4:30 core method, part two

4:30-5:00 sharing circle, evaluation, reflection, goodbye

WORKSHOP 1 · Forest Bathing & the Senses

0:00–0:20 · Arrival and framing. Hot drink on arrival. Safety framing in full. Practicalities: toilet, quiet spot, timings. Then the phones:

"For the next two hours I suggest we go without phones. This isn't a rule and it isn't a test — if you need yours, keep it, just silence it. What interests us is what happens in the first twenty minutes without it. Observe. That's our subject today."

0:20–0:40 · Introductions on the move. Walking in pairs, swapping every four minutes: *What's your name and how did you get here? When did you last buy something you then didn't need? What are you most hoping won't happen today?* The third question tells you a lot and releases tension.

0:40–0:50 · The threshold. Stop at the edge of the woods: "From here we go slowly. In two hours we'll cover maybe a kilometre. It will probably be boring. Boring is information. When you feel restless, don't fix it, notice where in your body it sits." Each person crosses separately. Silence from here.

0:50–2:15 · Four invitations. No facilitator speech in between.

We ask the participants to watch what's moving around them. Listen to their surroundings. Find something and stay with it. Find space in the woods and sit there a while.

2:15–3:00 · Break with food. Talking allowed, phones still in the box but no pressure.

3:00–4:15 · Sense stations. Fours, ten minutes each, rotating. *Sight:* five shades of brown, named as something other than a colour. *Hearing:* one person with lowered eyes points to quiet claps. *Touch:* five textures ranked most to least pleasant, nothing picked from living plants. *Smell:* crush a leaf, bark, soil — what does it bring back?

4:15–4:45 · Circle. *What did you notice — about the forest, or about yourself?* No comment on individual contributions; one short link at the end.

4:45–5:00 · Close. Phones back, evaluation slip, invitation to return.

Adaptations — Limited mobility: 300 m on firm path, more sitting, same invitations. Needs structure: printed sheet of the four invitations with times. Low tolerance for silence: offer a silent pair. Cold or rain: shorten invitations 1 and 3, more walking, stations under shelter.

Watch for — The group walking like a guided tour; walk at the back, demonstratively slowly. Someone breaking the silence; quiet word first, short walk with the co-facilitator second.

WORKSHOP 2 · Making Things from What We Find

0:00–0:20 · Arrival and framing. Safety framing in full, then one rule for the day:

"We use only what has already fallen. We don't pick from living plants and we don't move stones out of water. At the end we return the material roughly where we took it from. There'll be nothing to take home today, except a photo if you want one."

0:20–0:40 · Introductions. Name, and one object you have with you today that you've used for more than five years. It's an introduction and an entry into the topic at once. Then somatic exercise A or C, depending on the mood of the group.

0:40–1:10 · Silent gathering. Everyone walks alone and picks three to five objects from the ground that somehow match how they feel today. No explaining. Silence.

1:10–2:15 · Composition and gallery. Thirty-five minutes making a small arrangement on the ground — palm-sized to towel-sized. Anyone who prefers works at a table or bench; equally valid. Then twenty minutes walking past every piece **in silence: no comments, no guessing whose is whose, no praise.** Back in the circle, one question: *what did you notice in someone else's work?* — not who made it.

2:15–3:00 · Break with food.

3:00–4:00 · Four elements. A short introduction to what they might mean in a person: earth (steadiness), water (adaptability), fire (courage), air (curiosity). Groups of four find their own spot and build one piece containing all four. Forty-five minutes, all creative decisions theirs. Then each group invites the others over and says whatever they want to say — or says nothing and shows it.

4:00–4:20 · Consumption. Sit down. One question, then let it run: *you've spent hours making something without buying anything and without producing anything to take away — how did that compare to buying something?* If it doesn't open: *what do you actually get in the moment you click "buy"?* If it doesn't come from the group, the facilitator says it: "use what you have" is thrift for one person and the only option for another; repair often costs more in time than a purchase costs in money, and someone working two jobs doesn't have that time. We're not claiming everyone is capable of everything — only that the option is worth knowing.

4:20–4:45 · Circle and dismantling. *Which of the four qualities do you feel you're missing today?* Then take the pieces apart together and return the material. Not tidying up — part of the exercise. Someone will find it hard, and that's as it should be.

4:45–5:00 · Close. Pocket card, 24-hour pause, evaluation. Ask returners whether they still have their card and record it.

Adaptations — Wheelchair or difficulty walking: work at a table, gathering route under 100 m, objects fetched by someone else if agreed. Rain: covered areas, gathering cut to 15 minutes. A group embarrassed about making things: start with the group piece, then the individual one — shared

responsibility reduces stage fright. Low literacy or another first language: this workshop doesn't disadvantage them, which is its greatest strength. If you target-invite for one workshop, make it this one.

Watch for — Praising a piece; a ranking appears instantly. Groups negotiating for all forty-five minutes and making nothing; remind them of the time after fifteen.

WORKSHOP 3 · Ethical Foraging

Before the day — Check the status of the area and get permission for the cooking spot. Check the site isn't beside a road, at a field edge, or on a dog-walking route. Check every registered participant's allergies. Prepare reserve ingredients in case the gathering is thin. **A person with reliable plant knowledge must be present — without one, the workshop runs with no eating.**

Bring — Plant cards · cloth bags · scissors · burner or kettle, pot, strainer · board and knife · water for washing · cups and plates · bread, oil, salt, eggs or cheese · first aid kit with antihistamine · fire blanket · sitting pads.

0:00–0:25 · Framing and the rules. Safety framing, then the gathering rules spoken in full and handed out printed:

Only the six plants on the cards. If you're not 100% sure, don't pick it — asking isn't embarrassing. Never more than a tenth of what grows in one spot. Never with roots. Not beside roads, field edges or dog paths. No mushrooms, ever, even if you know them. No wild garlic today — it has dangerous look-alikes; if you bring some, we won't use it. Everything is checked before it goes in the pot.

0:25–0:45 · Introductions. Name, and one plant someone in your family used. Almost everyone has a grandmother with a tea; it's the most relaxing question in the programme. Then somatic exercise A.

0:45–1:30 · The six plants. Nettle, dandelion, ribwort plantain, chickweed, yarrow leaves, elderflower if it's out. For each: where it grows, three identifying features, what it's for, what it can be confused with and how to avoid that, who shouldn't use it. Then in pairs: find one from the list and show it to the group **without picking it.**

"If everyone in this city gathered here it would be stripped within a month. Foraging works because few people do it. Which means this isn't a solution to consumption — it's an exercise in taking less than you could. That's the point today, not how much ends up in your bag."

1:30–2:10 · Gathering. Forty minutes. **Limit: one cupped hand per species** — deliberately low. Check as you go, not at the end.

2:10–2:30 · Inspection. Everything laid out on a cloth and gone through together. Anything doubtful is set aside, no negotiation. Do this calmly and publicly — being unsure should look normal.

2:30–3:30 · Cooking. Nettle soup or tea; dandelion and chickweed salad with oil and salt; bread and a spread; plantain shown for use on skin, not in food. Groups: one washes, one chops, one cooks, one sets up. Handwashing water, separate board for anything that was on the ground.

3:30–4:10 · Eating and talking. Seated in a circle. One question during the meal: *that was nearly free but cost us four hours — what does that say about the price of things?* It usually goes towards time being money, self-sufficiency being a privilege, buying things because we have no time. All true; don't correct it with moral arguments.

4:10–4:45 • Circle. *What are you taking away, besides what's in the bag?*

4:45–5:00 • Close. Pocket card, 24-hour pause, evaluation, tick check reminder — in April, mandatory.

Adaptations — No plant expert: identification and drying only, tea from a known bought source. Pollen allergies: no elderflower or yarrow; nettle is safer; check daisy-family allergy before dandelion.

Inaccessible terrain: run it in a city park as a survey — identification without taking, meal from bought ingredients. Wheelchair: gather along a firm path, cook seated at a table.

Watch for — Over-gathering. And the cooking overrunning so the circle gets ten minutes; the circle matters more than the soup being perfect.

WORKSHOP 4 · Writing in Nature

Bring — Notebooks and pencils for everyone (**we bring them, we don't expect participants to**) · firm boards · sitting pads · slips for gathering words · food and tea · first aid kit · pocket cards · talking object · string and pegs.

0:00-0:20 · Arrival and framing. Safety framing, then the framing for writing:

"Three things before we start. None of this is read aloud unless you want it read. It doesn't matter how it's written — spelling, grammar, tidiness, none of it counts. And if writing isn't your thing, draw, record a voice note, or tell a partner. Those are equally valid, not substitutes."

0:20-0:40 · Introductions. Name, and one word for how you arrived today — meant physically, not in terms of transport. Then somatic exercise B with calibration.

0:40-0:55 · List without censorship. Five minutes: everything bought, ordered or badly wanted in the last month. No thinking, no judging, nobody will see it. Three minutes more: one word beside each for how you felt just before.

0:55-1:40 · Free writing. Everyone finds a spot within calling distance. Prompt: "*When I buy something, what I actually want is...*" Fifteen minutes, hand doesn't stop; if you don't know what to write, write that until something else arrives. Warn at the halfway point and three minutes before the end. Then everyone reads their own back, and writes five minutes more on "*and I don't get it because...*"

1:40-2:15 · Pairs. Ten minutes each. Share the content, one sentence, or only how it felt to write. The listener doesn't advise; one question at the end if they want.

2:15-3:00 · Break with food.

3:00-3:20 · Another perspective. Pick one thing nearby — a tree, a stone, an ant, a bench. Ten minutes writing as it: what does it experience in a day, what does it fear, what does it love? This rescues anyone who found the first prompt too heavy, because it moves attention off the self.

3:20-4:00 · Gathered words. Walk and collect twelve words, one per slip — seen, heard, smelled, or simply arriving. Build a text of at most six lines using at least eight of them; adding words is allowed. Alternatives: arrange the words on the ground with natural materials, or record them aloud.

4:00-4:25 · Exhibition. Texts pegged on a string or laid on the ground, **anonymously**. Everyone walks past in silence. Then: *what in someone else's line hit you?* — not who wrote it.

4:25-4:45 · Closing the cycle. As the last workshop of the project, three questions: *What are you taking from today? What will you probably forget? What would you like to survive from these months?* The third opens the conversation about continuing. If the group wants to carry on, help with a place, a time and one person who sends the message — and **don't take over the organising**. What we organise dies with the project; what they organise survives or doesn't, but it's theirs.

4:45-5:00 • Close. Everyone takes their text home. Final questionnaire, follow-up announced for four weeks' time, ask who wants a Youthpass.

Adaptations — Dyslexia, low literacy, another first language: the alternatives are offered **to everyone at the start**, never to an individual as a special case. Wet weather: write under shelter, shorten the word-gathering. Strong emotional response: writing opens more than conversation does — keep the co-facilitator free.

Watch for — Asking people to read aloud because the exhibition is "better" heard; it breaks the rule you set, and the group notices. And fifteen minutes being too long for a group unuse

Credits

Od navade do narave / From Consumption to Connection

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