

PEER POWER TO EMPOWER

HANDBOOK



Co-funded by
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About the Project



01

01. About the Project

Peer Power to Empower is a two-year Erasmus+ cooperation partnership (2024–2026) focused on tackling the growing challenge of youth anxiety, especially among young people with fewer opportunities. The project introduces a peer-to-peer **program**, developed to empower young people by strengthening three key characteristics: **competence, confidence, and connection (we call it the “3Cs” for this program)**.

The program is **grounded in the Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach, which views young people as resources to be developed rather than problems to be solved**. Instead of talking directly about anxiety, the project empowers youth through experiential learning activities that foster resilience, social skills, and mutual support.

Project Partners

The project is implemented by three organisations from Croatia, Slovenia, and Italy, each bringing unique expertise:

- **Udruga Amazonas (Croatia)** – Applicant and coordinator, experienced in social support, youth empowerment, and mental health interventions. They bring strong expertise in psychosocial work and developing innovative methodologies for youth.
- **Zavod Aspira (Slovenia)** – Specialised in educational methodology development, creativity, and youth participation. Aspira contributes to the design of effective learning approaches and youth work methods.
- **HumaCapiAct (Italy)** – A research centre focused on VET, adult and youth education, and e-learning. They ensure the project’s digital dimension through online training tools and a structured e-learning platform.

Together, the partners combine expertise in mental health, education, creativity, and digital innovation to deliver sustainable support for youth.

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Objectives of the project

The overall aim is to **reduce anxiety among young people with fewer opportunities** by empowering them with the 3Cs.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Develop and implement the **3C peer-to-peer program** led by trained youth leaders and volunteers.
2. Provide **training and mentoring** for youth workers to support volunteers in delivering the program.
3. Create a **digital e-learning platform** to ensure wider access and sustainability of the program.

Activities of the project

To achieve these objectives, the project includes several key activities:

- **Designing the 3C Program** – A structured set of experiential workshops focused on competence, confidence, and connection.
- **Developing implementation guidelines** – Clear instructions and boundaries to help non-experts deliver the program effectively.
- **Training youth workers** – Preparing them to mentor young volunteers who will run peer-to-peer workshops.
- **Piloting the program** – Testing it in schools and communities in Croatia, Slovenia, and Italy with young people facing challenges.
- **Creating a digital platform** – An online space with resources, guidelines, and training for youth workers across Europe.

Expected results of the project

The project will deliver concrete and sustainable results:

- A **tested and replicable 3C peer-to-peer program** for youth.
- A **manual/handbook** with structured workshops and guidance for implementation.
- An **online training course for youth workers**, enabling them to mentor volunteers in different contexts.
- A **digital platform** where all materials will be accessible.
- At least **12 youth leaders/volunteers were trained, and 90 young people with fewer opportunities were empowered** across the three countries.

Role of mentors and volunteers

Mentors (youth workers)

Mentors are experienced youth workers or professionals who will:

- **Guide volunteers** throughout the program, ensuring they understand their tasks and responsibilities.
- **Provide supervision and feedback** before, during, and after workshops.
- **Ensure safe boundaries** by reminding volunteers of their responsibilities as peer leaders and what requires professional support.
- **Encourage reflection**, helping volunteers process their experiences and grow in confidence and competence.

Mentors act as role models and anchors of support. Their role is not to lead every activity, but to stand behind volunteers, creating a safe framework for them to explore and grow.

Volunteers (peer educators)

Volunteers are young people motivated to make a difference in their communities. Their role is to:

- **Lead peer-to-peer workshops** with other young people, focusing on competence, confidence, and connection.
- **Offer support and encouragement**, showing that learning and growth are possible through shared experience.
- **Develop leadership and facilitation skills**, while building resilience, empathy, and communication.
- **Be ambassadors of the 3C approach**, inspiring others by example.

Volunteers are not expected to be mental health professionals. Their strength lies in **being peers** who can connect, listen, and support others in a relatable way.





How to Use this Handbook

This handbook is designed **as a practical resource for mentors and volunteers participating in the “Peer Power to Empower” programme.**

Part I – Theoretical framework

Introduces the growing importance of youth mental health, the Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach, and the rationale behind the 3C methodology. Understanding these concepts helps mentors and volunteers recognise why the programme focuses on strengthening Competence, Confidence, and Connection as key protective factors for young people's wellbeing.

Part II – Practical implementation

Provides step-by-step guidance for implementing the programme through experiential peer-to-peer workshops. Each workshop includes learning objectives, preparation guidelines, activity instructions, reflection questions, and recommendations for facilitators.

Mentors are encouraged to use the handbook **as a training and supervision tool.**

Volunteers can use it as a practical guide **for planning and delivering workshops.**

By combining the theoretical foundation with practical activities, the handbook aims to support youth workers and volunteers in creating safe learning environments that promote resilience, wellbeing, and meaningful peer support.

IMPORTANT!

Although the activities are presented in a suggested order, **they may be adapted to the needs, age, and experience of the participants, provided that the core principles of safety, participation, inclusion, and experiential learning are maintained.**

Theoretical Framework



02

02. Theoretical Framework

Understanding Youth Anxiety in a Changing World

Youth anxiety has become one of the most significant mental health challenges worldwide. Recent evidence indicates increasing levels of anxiety symptoms among adolescents, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic and in response to growing academic, social, and digital pressures (**Kauhanen et al., 2022; World Health Organization [WHO], 2024**). Research has shown that factors such as school pressure, societal expectations, uncertainty about the future, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have all contributed to this growing trend (Kauhanen et al., 2022). **In particular, the pandemic worsened mental health issues for at-risk youth and those already struggling with anxiety** (Kauhanen et al., 2022).

In the Croatian context, alarming trends have also been observed. **More than 20% of 16-year-old students reported marijuana use (ESPAD Group, 2020), while nearly 20% of adolescents experience severe depressive symptoms and one in three report severe anxiety (Novak et al., 2021).** Other contextual factors, such as societal instability, overprotective parenting, and the intergenerational consequences of past conflicts, may further contribute to anxiety levels among Croatian youth.

Recent findings from the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD 2024) indicate that the risk landscape for young people is changing. While the use of some traditional substances has continued to decline in many European countries, new challenges have emerged, particularly in relation to excessive social media use, problematic gaming, gambling, and other online behaviours. **These findings suggest that young people's mental health is increasingly influenced by digital environments and behavioural risks alongside more traditional psychosocial stressors (ESPAD Group, 2024).**

Beyond reducing exposure to risk factors, current evidence highlights the importance of strengthening protective factors that promote positive mental health. **Supportive relationships, a sense of belonging, self-confidence, opportunities to develop competencies, emotional regulation skills, and meaningful participation in family, school, and community life all contribute to greater resilience and lower levels of anxiety among adolescents (Masten, 2001; Rutter, 2012; World Health Organization [WHO], 2024).**

Globally, anxiety disorders remain among the most common mental health conditions affecting young people, with significant consequences for educational achievement, social participation, and overall quality of life (Costello et al., 2011). If left unaddressed, anxiety may contribute to early school leaving, social withdrawal, and long-term mental health difficulties (Neil & Christensen, 2009). **Despite the availability of effective interventions, many young people experiencing anxiety still do not receive appropriate support or treatment (Merikangas et al., 2011).**

These findings underline the need for preventive, strengths-based approaches that move beyond treating symptoms and instead focus on developing young people's personal and social resources. Positive Youth Development (PYD) provides such a framework by fostering the "5 Cs" - Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring - which support resilience, healthy development, and psychological wellbeing. Participation in PYD programmes has been associated with improved mental health outcomes, including lower levels of anxiety and greater overall wellbeing (Kozina et al., 2021).

By strengthening the 5 Cs, youth workers can play a key role in promoting protective factors, empowering young people to cope with challenges, and supporting their transition into healthy, resilient, and engaged adults.

Positive Youth Development as an Approach to Addressing Youth Anxiety

What is Positive Youth Development?

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a strengths-based approach that focuses on young people's capacities, resources, and potential rather than their problems or deficits. Instead of asking "What is wrong with young people?", PYD asks "What strengths can be developed to help young people thrive?"

Act for Youth describes Positive Youth Development (PYD) as:

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is an **approach based on research that helps communities create opportunities and support so that young people can reach their full potential**. PYD is not about just one program, nor is it about forcing young people to change. Instead, it's about creating an environment where young people can thrive, and often, it involves adults changing the way they work with youth.

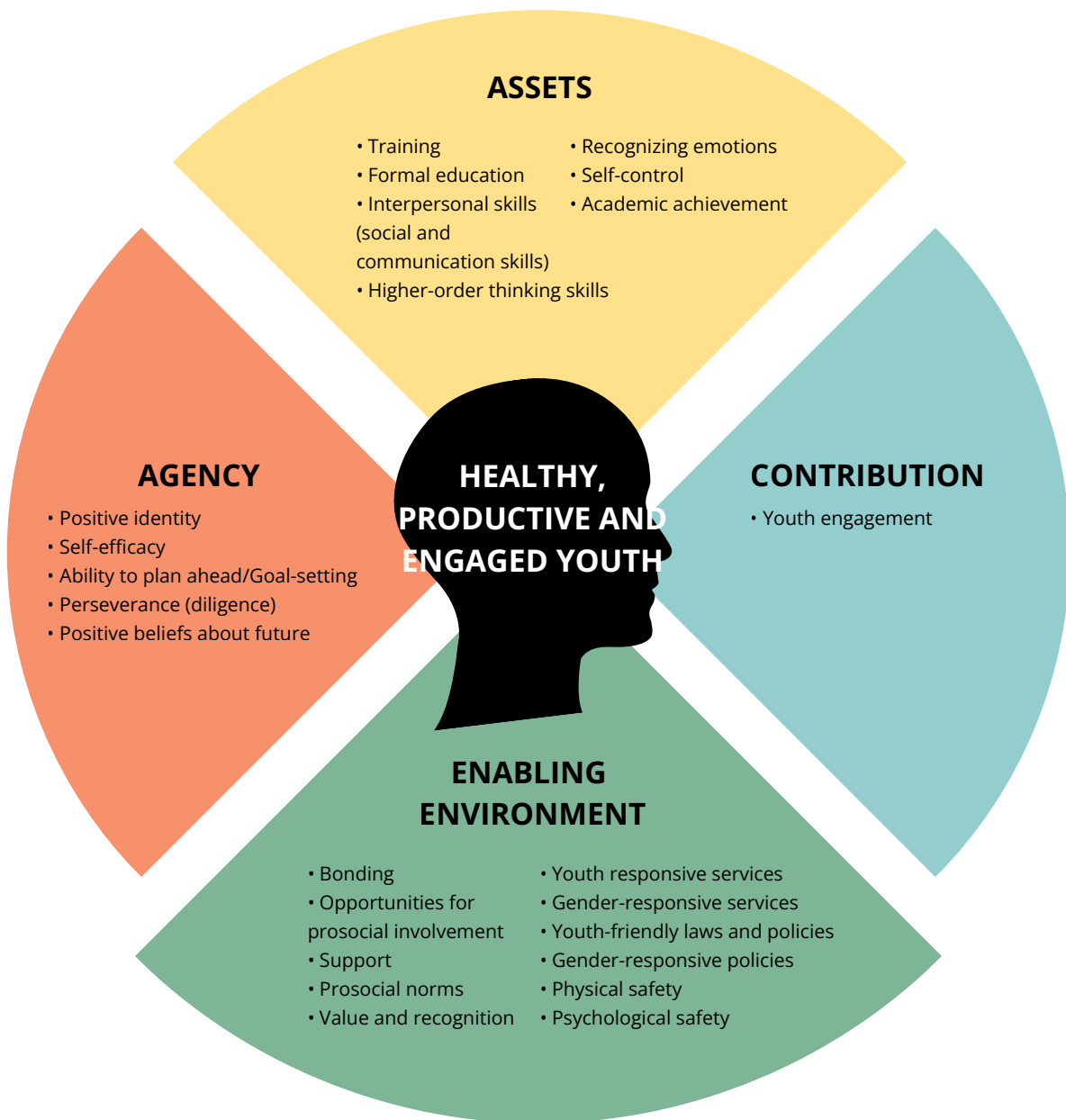


Fig 1. Positive youth development domains framework.

In its most complete form, **PYD is a collaborative effort where communities, along with young people, work together to create environments, relationships, and experiences that promote growth and positive change.** Most often, PYD is implemented by organizations and programs that work with youth to improve their effectiveness and help young people achieve better outcomes.

PYD is based on the following principles:

1. **Focus on positive outcomes:** Instead of just preventing or fixing problems, the aim is to create positive outcomes, such as helping young people develop skills, build connections, and make meaningful contributions to their communities.
2. **Strength-based approach:** To help young people recognize their strengths, both internal (personal abilities) and external (support from others), and provide opportunities for them to grow. Encourage positive relationships and environments that support their development, both within and outside of our programs.
3. **Youth engagement and voice:** Focus on working with young people, not just for them. Engage youth in decision-making and ensure their voices are heard. Involve them in meaningful roles, respect their opinions, and create partnerships where both youth and adults share responsibility.
4. **Inclusive strategies:** Support and opportunities for all young people, not just those labeled as "at-risk" or "gifted." While some youth may need extra help to meet basic needs like safety and belonging, strategies that work for everyone are often especially helpful for those who are marginalized or underserved.
5. **Collaborative, long-term community engagement:** Work together with different parts of the community to create a culture that supports young people. This includes providing services to meet basic needs, offering long-term relationships, ensuring safe and structured environments, and creating opportunities for young people to learn, grow, and contribute. Provide support that adapts to the changing needs of young people as they grow and develop.



"5 Cs" as Core of PYD Model

The "5 Cs" model is a key framework in Positive Youth Development (PYD), designed to guide young people in building resilience, improving mental health, and achieving positive life outcomes.

Each of the five Cs - **Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring** - plays a vital role in helping youth navigate challenges, including anxiety and stress, by fostering personal growth, emotional well-being, and a sense of belonging.

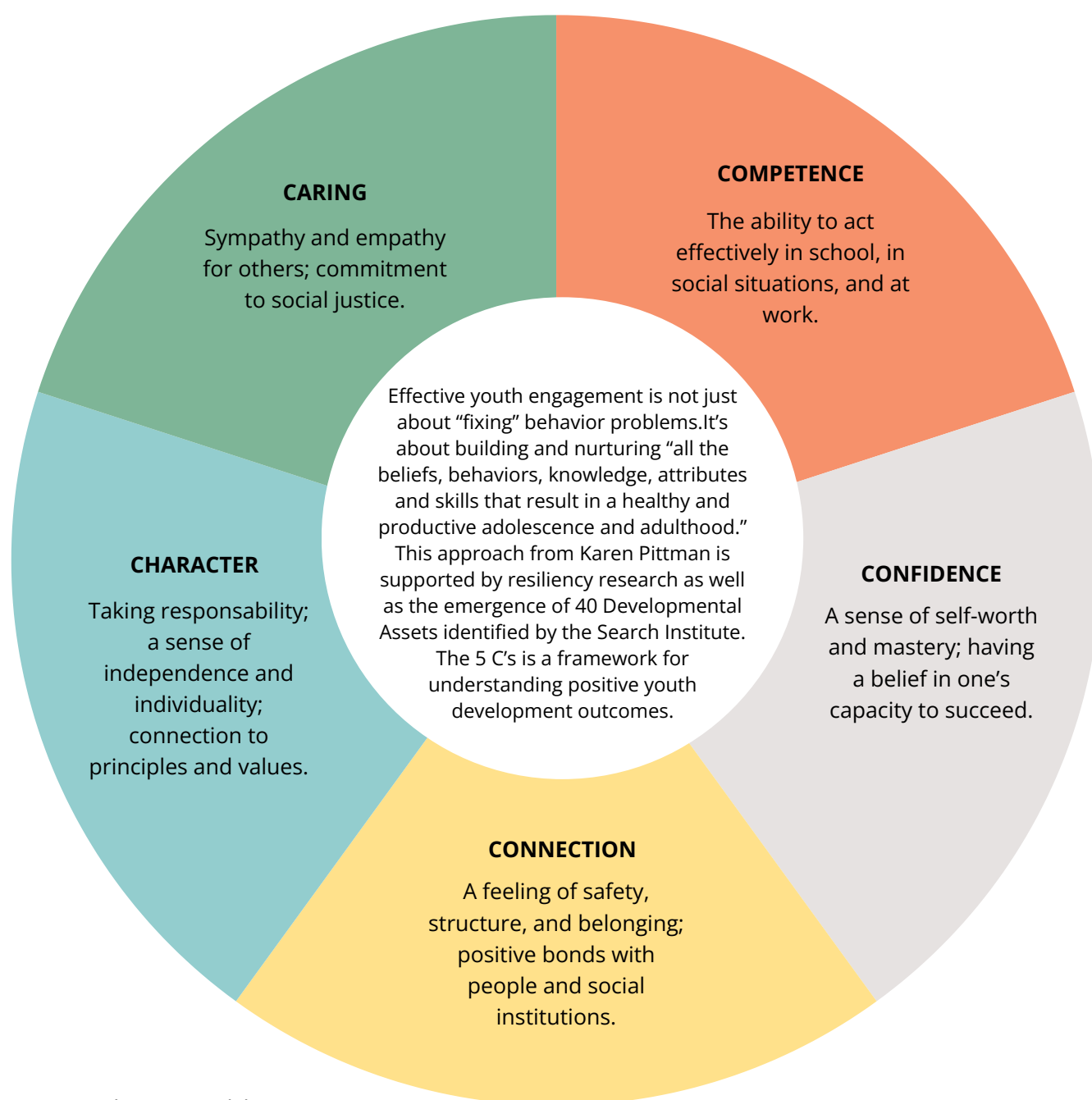


Fig 2. The 5 Cs model.

1. Competence

Competence refers to a young person's ability to perform well in different areas of their life, such as academics, social situations, and physical activities.

It involves acquiring skills and knowledge that enable youth to feel capable and effective in their environment.

When youth develop competence, they experience a sense of achievement and mastery, which significantly boosts their self-esteem and protects them from feelings of inadequacy and anxiety (Lerner et al., 2005). Research suggests that competence is directly linked to reduced anxiety, as youth who feel effective in their environments are better equipped to manage challenges (Scales et al., 2000).

2. Confidence

Confidence involves having a positive self-image, strong self-esteem, and belief in one's ability to succeed.

When young people are confident, they feel assured in their abilities to face obstacles, take risks, and recover from setbacks (Phelps et al., 2007).

Confidence is essential for mental health, as it helps youth manage stress and anxiety. Studies have found that confident youth are less likely to be overwhelmed by negative emotions and are better able to cope with life's difficulties, including societal pressures and academic challenges (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

3. Connection

Connection emphasizes the importance of positive relationships with family, friends, mentors, and community.

Strong social connections provide a sense of belonging, which acts as a protective factor against anxiety and depression (Catalano et al., 2002).

When youth feel supported and understood by those around them, they are more likely to feel secure and less isolated. Research shows that youth with strong connections to their peers and adults report lower levels of anxiety and are more likely to engage in behaviours that promote their emotional and social well-being (Wiium & Dimitrova, 2019). These connections are crucial for reducing loneliness and providing a safety net during stressful times.

4. Character

Character refers to the development of personal values, integrity, and ethical decision-making. It helps youth navigate moral dilemmas and societal pressures, making choices that align with their values (Lerner et al., 2011).

A strong sense of character gives young people the ability to persevere in the face of challenges, which is particularly important for mental health.

Youth with strong character are more resilient to anxiety, as they have a clear sense of right and wrong and the inner strength to cope with life's ups and downs (Bowers et al., 2010). Character development encourages youth to adopt positive behaviors and engage in responsible actions that reduce stress and anxiety.

5. Caring

Caring is the ability to empathize with others, show compassion, and engage in prosocial behaviors.

Youth who demonstrate caring attitudes and actions tend to experience stronger emotional resilience and a greater sense of fulfillment.

By caring for others and receiving care in return, youth develop deeper emotional connections, which buffer against feelings of anxiety and emotional distress (Phelps et al., 2007). Caring relationships provide a sense of security and emotional support, essential for young people in coping with mental health challenges.

Together, these five components form the foundation of PYD and help youth develop the emotional resilience needed to manage stress, overcome obstacles, and thrive. PYD programs focusing on the 5 Cs have shown to improve mental health outcomes, including lower anxiety levels, by promoting positive youth development and emotional well-being (Kozina et al., 2021). For youth workers in Europe, integrating these principles into their programs is a powerful way to support young people in overcoming anxiety and building a resilient future.



Evidence Supporting Positive Youth Development

Research supporting Positive Youth Development (PYD) is extensive and continues to grow, with many studies highlighting the positive impact of PYD programs on various aspects of youth development, including mental health and anxiety.

For example, studies by Lerner et al. (2005) and Benson et al. (2006) show that young people who develop core competencies such as competence, confidence, and strong interpersonal connections are better equipped to manage life challenges, including stress and anxiety. Roth & Brooks-Gunn (2003) also found that youth involved in PYD programs reported improved well-being and lower levels of mental health issues, including anxiety.

Other studies have reinforced the importance of the five key traits in the 5 Cs (Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring) in reducing anxiety and helping youth navigate modern-day challenges. Phelps et al. (2007) found that **building positive relationships and offering opportunities for skill development can improve youth's ability to manage stress**, while Scales et al. (2000) and Catalano et al. (2002) showed that fostering a sense of belonging and connection within communities helps reduce feelings of anxiety.

Research in Europe also supports the effectiveness of PYD in reducing youth anxiety. Studies from countries like Ireland, Norway, and Slovenia (e.g., Wiium & Dimitrova, 2019; Kozina et al., 2019) **suggest that PYD programs not only lead to better social outcomes but also strengthen mental health, increasing resilience and helping youth cope with anxiety**. The 4-H Study and the Positive Youth Development Cross-National Project - which has studied youth in over 20 countries - confirm that youth who engage in PYD programs report greater competence and confidence, which directly help them manage anxiety and other stressors (Lerner et al., 2011; Kozina et al., 2019).

The shift from a deficit-based approach to a strengths-based model is particularly beneficial for addressing youth mental health challenges, including anxiety. PYD focuses on creating environments where youth feel supported and valued, building emotional resilience. Dimitrova & Wium (2021) emphasize that this approach helps reduce anxiety by fostering a positive identity and sense of purpose among young people.

Despite these promising findings, gaps remain in understanding how to tailor PYD interventions to specific cultural contexts. Wium et al. (2019) pointed out the need for more research on how anxiety manifests in different societies and how PYD can be adapted to diverse cultural settings. Additionally, **with the increasing role of digital interactions among youth, more research is needed to understand how online engagement influences the development of the 5 Cs and mental health outcomes.**

In conclusion, PYD provides a strong framework for helping youth manage anxiety and other mental health challenges. By promoting competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring, **PYD not only supports youth in navigating stressful situations but also fosters long-term resilience.**



Relationship Between Connection, Confidence and Competence and Anxiety

1. **Research in Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain** consistently showed that **connection was a negative predictor of anxiety**, meaning that stronger social connections were associated with lower levels of anxiety.
2. **Confidence** was also found to be a **negative predictor of anxiety**, while caring showed a positive correlation with anxiety in Slovenia and Spain (Geldhof et al., 2019).
3. **Further studies** have supported these findings. For example, Kozina et al. (2021) examined the impact of the 5Cs on adolescents' well-being and mental health in Portugal. They found that **higher confidence was linked to fewer mental health symptoms and greater well-being**.
4. **In Malaysia**, Abdul Kadir et al. (2021) discovered that **both confidence and connection positively influenced youth well-being**, reinforcing the importance of these elements for mental health.
5. **In Slovenia**, the 5Cs framework revealed that **both confidence and connection were significant predictors of reduced anxiety**, emphasizing the relevance of these components in interventions aimed at preventing and reducing anxiety (Kozina et al., 2021).



Why is the “3C Methodology”?

The evidence presented above demonstrates that Positive Youth Development provides a strong theoretical foundation for promoting young people's mental health and wellbeing.

Although all five dimensions of the 5Cs contribute to positive development, research consistently highlights **Competence, Confidence, and Connection** as the dimensions most strongly associated with resilience, psychological wellbeing, and lower levels of anxiety (Kozina et al., 2021; Wiium & Dimitrova, 2019).

For this reason, the **Peer Power to Empower** project adopts these three dimensions as the core pillars of its methodology. Rather than treating **Character** and **Caring** as separate programme components, these dimensions are integrated throughout the programme's values, facilitation principles, peer-learning approach, and workshop activities.

The 3C methodology should therefore be understood as a practical adaptation of the broader Positive Youth Development framework. It translates research evidence into a structured peer-to-peer programme that is feasible for youth workers and volunteers while maintaining the core principles of Positive Youth Development.

The following chapters translate these theoretical principles into practical workshop activities that enable mentors and volunteers to strengthen Competence, Confidence, and Connection through experiential learning and peer support.



Guidelines for Working with Youth with Fewer Opportunities



03

03. Guidelines for Working with Youth with Fewer Opportunities

Term Definition

Inclusion, as emphasized by the European Union in programs such as Erasmus+, focuses on actively engaging young people who face additional challenges in accessing opportunities.

In the EU context, inclusion means creating environments where all young people - regardless of socio-economic status, cultural or linguistic background, health, or geographic location - can participate fully, feel welcomed, and benefit meaningfully from learning, social, and mobility experiences (European Commission, 2023; State Education Development Agency, 2023). It is not only about physical presence but also about ensuring **meaningful engagement**, where participants can contribute, learn, and develop skills.

The term **“young people who face additional challenges in accessing opportunities”** refers to **youth with fewer opportunities**, as defined by the EU, which includes individuals encountering barriers due to economic, social, cultural, geographical, or health-related reasons (European Commission, 2023; Lerner et al., 2005). These barriers may include:

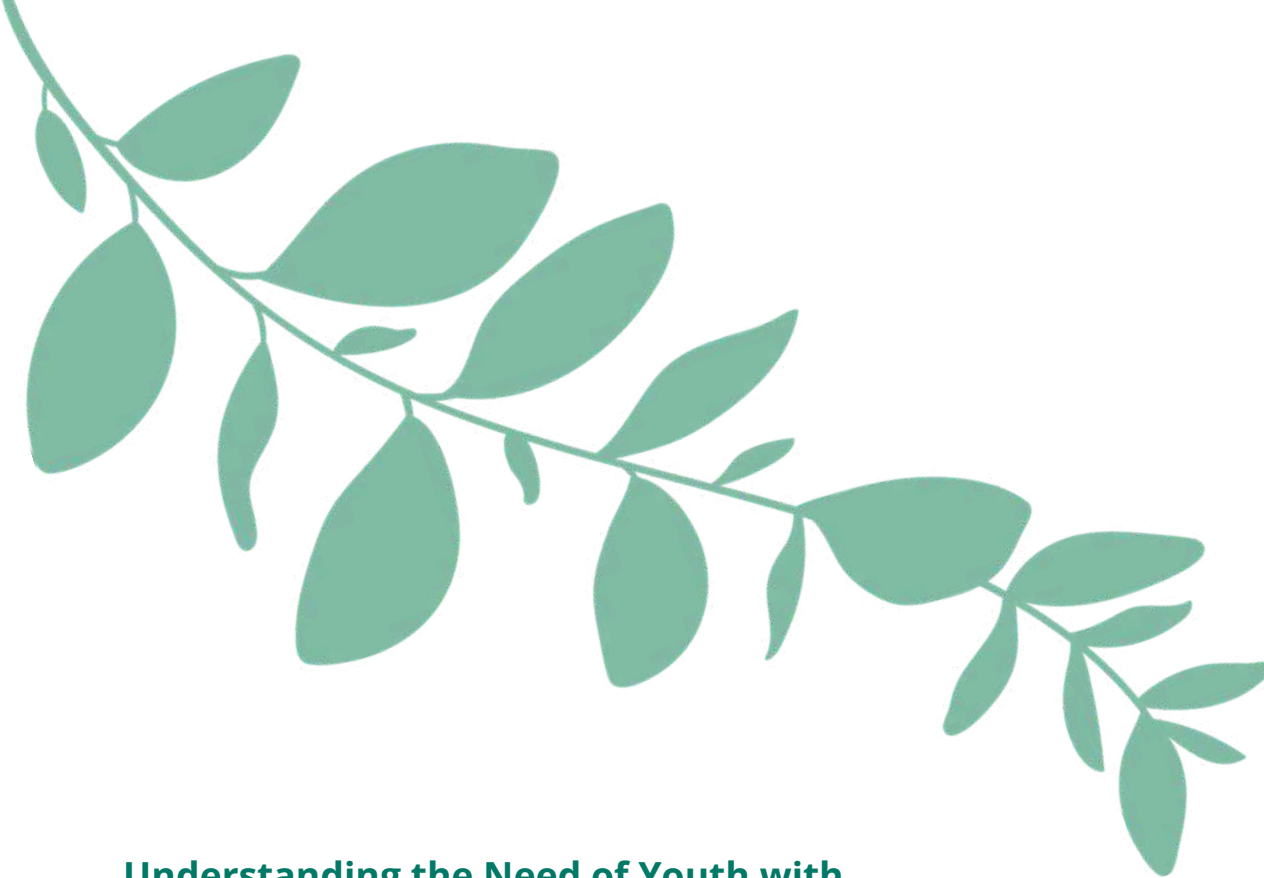
- **Disabilities** – physical, mental, or sensory conditions limiting access to activities or resources (Lerner et al., 2005).
- **Educational barriers** – limited access to formal or informal learning opportunities (Rhodes, 2011).
- **Cultural or linguistic differences** – affecting integration, communication, and participation (Lerner et al., 2005).
- **Health-related challenges** – chronic illness or mental health conditions impacting daily functioning (Denham et al., 2012).

- **Social and economic obstacles** – including poverty, low income, or family responsibilities (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008).
- **Geographical barriers** – living in remote or underserved areas (State Education Development Agency, 2023).
- **Discrimination** – based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics (Lerner et al., 2005).

Examples of youth groups with fewer opportunities:

- Individuals with disabilities or chronic health conditions.
- Migrants, refugees, or young people from ethnic minorities.
- Students who work alongside studying, are young parents, or are from underrepresented study fields.
- Young adults not in education, employment, or training (NEETs).
- Those facing socio-economic difficulties or other factors leading to social exclusion (Rhodes, 2011; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008).

The goal of inclusion is to **reduce inequalities and ensure equitable access to learning and mobility opportunities**, enabling youth to participate actively and benefit fully from programs like Erasmus+. This aligns with **Positive Youth Development (PYD) principles**, which emphasize building on strengths, fostering autonomy, and supporting competence and connectedness (Lerner et al., 2005; Salto-Youth, 2023).



Understanding the Need of Youth with Fewer Opportunities

Creating a safe and inclusive environment is essential when working with youth with fewer opportunities (Lerner et al., 2005; Rhodes, 2011; European Commission, 2022).

Safety in youth work refers to establishing physical, emotional, and psychological conditions where participants feel protected, respected, and supported in expressing themselves (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). A sense of safety enables youth to take interpersonal risks, such as sharing personal experiences, expressing opinions, or trying new skills. Without this foundation, participants may hesitate to engage, act defensively, or struggle to participate meaningfully (Rhodes, 2011). Observing and articulating thoughts, feelings, and bodily experiences in a supportive environment fosters personal growth and social competence (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951).

Inclusion involves actively removing barriers and creating opportunities for all young people to contribute, be heard, and develop their potential. It requires recognizing and valuing differences in background, culture, language, abilities, gender, and life experiences, ensuring that no participant feels marginalized (Lerner et al., 2005; Salto-Youth, 2023; European Commission, 2022). Inclusion also entails adapting activities, communication, and support so that every participant can engage meaningfully, fostering belonging, competence, and agency (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Many of these young people have experienced environments where trust was violated - such as inconsistent caregiving, neglect, or prior negative experiences with adults - **which can make them cautious, hesitant, or resistant in group settings** (Rhodes, 2011; Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

These behaviors can be recognized through observable signs:

- **Anxiety or nervousness at the start of the session,**
- **Reluctance to share opinions,**
- **Physical withdrawal,**
- **Closed body language (e.g., crossed arms, avoiding eye contact),**
- **Seeking constant confirmation before taking action,**
- **Hesitating to engage in group activities.**

These young people may experience challenges such as **social exclusion** (being marginalized or isolated from peers, education, or community resources), **low self-efficacy** (limited belief in their ability to influence outcomes), or **residual effects of trauma and unstable home environments** (long-lasting emotional, behavioral, or psychological impacts from past trauma or family instability) (Lerner et al., 2005; Rhodes, 2011).

Because youth differ widely in abilities, learning styles, prior experiences, and motivation, especially those with fewer opportunities, facilitators need to adapt activities to ensure that everyone can engage meaningfully. **Some young people may possess stronger verbal skills, while others prefer visual or kinesthetic learning styles.** Learning styles refer to the preferred ways an individual processes and engages with information, such as auditory (listening), visual (seeing), or kinesthetic (doing) (Kolb, 1984). **Recognizing and accommodating these differences is essential for creating an inclusive and supportive environment that fosters confidence, participation, and personal growth.**

Because of these experiences and differences, safe and inclusive environments are essential. Safety and inclusion reduce anxiety, support participation, and allow meaningful learning. By providing equal access, valuing diversity, and supporting active engagement, facilitators help young people build confidence, resilience, and social skills, promoting their well-being and personal growth (Rhodes, 2011; Lerner et al., 2005).

Practical Guidelines for Supporting Safety and Inclusion

1. Build trust and psychological safety

Goal: Make youth feel safe to speak up, share experiences, and try new things (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Rhodes, 2011).

Practical steps:

- Start with icebreakers, paired activities, or small-group discussions to help participants open up slowly.
- Understand that silence, hesitation, or small disruptions often show protective behaviors, not unwillingness to participate (Brown, 2012; Lerner et al., 2005).
- Stay calm, validate feelings (“I see this is challenging”), and offer other ways to participate like writing, drawing, or working in pairs.
- Listen actively (pay close attention and focus on what someone is saying), show empathy (understand and care about how they feel), and make participants feel included (let them know their ideas matter and they belong) (Klem & Connell, 2004; Brown, 2012).

2. Adapt activities to participants’ needs

Goal: Make sure all youth can take part and feel they can contribute, despite differences in abilities, learning styles, experiences, or motivation (Kolb, 1984; Salto-Youth, 2023).

Practical steps:

- Offer multiple ways to participate: Some youth express themselves better by talking, others by writing, drawing, acting, or moving.
- Change the pace or format of activities: You don’t need to fully customize each task, but you can adjust speed or how it’s done so it works for everyone.
- Give choices in activities: Let participants decide how they want to take part (e.g., drawing, writing, or discussing). This helps them feel in control and more engaged (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

3. Foster social connection and peer support

Goal: Help youth to work together, practice empathy, and build positive relationships (Lerner et al., 2005).

Practical steps:

- Include tasks that require teamwork, like group projects, problem-solving challenges, or creative activities.
- Use small groups or pairs to practice listening, understanding others, and supporting peers.
- Highlight and appreciate participants' contributions to build confidence and positive peer connections.
- Repeat opportunities for collaboration so youth can practice teamwork and shared responsibility.

4. Provide structure, predictability, and clear communication

Goal: A predictable environment helps youth feel safe, reduces anxiety, and allows them to focus on learning (Courtney, Kay, & Hillier, 2006; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008).

Practical steps:

- Explain session goals, the order of activities, and what you expect clearly.
- Use visual agendas, timers, or signals to show transitions between activities.
- Include short breaks or quiet moments for reflection to help youth stay focused and process their thoughts.
- End sessions with reflection: ask questions like "What did you practice today?" or "How could you use this skill outside the workshop?" to consolidate learning (Moon, 2004; Lerner et al., 2013).

Key takeaways for peer educators

- ✓ Focus on **creating a safe and inclusive environment** first.
- ✓ **Offer multiple participation options** rather than fully adapting each task individually.
- ✓ Encourage **collaboration and peer support** to strengthen social bonds.
- ✓ Keep workshops **structured and predictable** to reduce anxiety and enhance learning.
- ✓ Use **reflection and validation** to help participants internalize skills and build confidence.

A Guide for Youth Volunteers



04

04. How to Be a Peer Educator - a Guide for Youth Volunteers

Young people learn not only from teachers, parents, and professionals but also from one another. Friendships, shared experiences, and everyday interactions shape attitudes, behaviours, values, and wellbeing throughout adolescence. **Peer education builds upon this natural process by empowering young people to become active facilitators of learning, dialogue, and positive change within their own communities.**

In recent years, peer education has become an important approach in youth work, health promotion, and mental wellbeing initiatives across Europe and beyond. **Research demonstrates that young people are often more willing to discuss sensitive topics such as stress, mental health, relationships, discrimination, or identity with peers whom they perceive as understanding their experiences and speaking their language (White & Shute, 2007).** This creates unique opportunities for learning based on trust, mutual respect, and participation rather than authority.

At the same time, contemporary peer education has evolved considerably. It is no longer viewed simply as a method of sharing information but as an approach that promotes participation, empowerment, resilience, and social connectedness. **International organisations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, the Council of Europe, and the European Commission increasingly recognise peer education as an effective strategy for strengthening young people's wellbeing, life skills, and active citizenship.**

It is important to remember that peer educators are **not expected to be experts, teachers, or therapists.** Their greatest strength lies in creating safe and supportive learning environments where young people can think critically, learn from one another, build confidence, and discover their own strengths.

1. Who is a peer educator?

Peer education is a participatory approach to learning in which individuals of similar age, social background, or life experience support one another's learning and personal development. Rather than relying on traditional teacher-centred instruction, peer education encourages dialogue, collaboration, shared experiences, and mutual respect.

At the same time, contemporary peer education has evolved considerably. It is no longer just about sharing information. The effectiveness of peer education is grounded in social learning theory, which suggests that people learn through observing, interacting with, and modelling others (Bandura, 1997). Young people are often more receptive to messages delivered by peers because they perceive them as authentic, relatable, and non-judgemental.

Modern peer education extends beyond the transfer of information. Contemporary approaches emphasise developing critical thinking, emotional literacy, resilience, self-efficacy, and active participation. Peer educators therefore become facilitators who help create opportunities for reflection, discussion, and collaborative problem-solving rather than simply delivering knowledge.

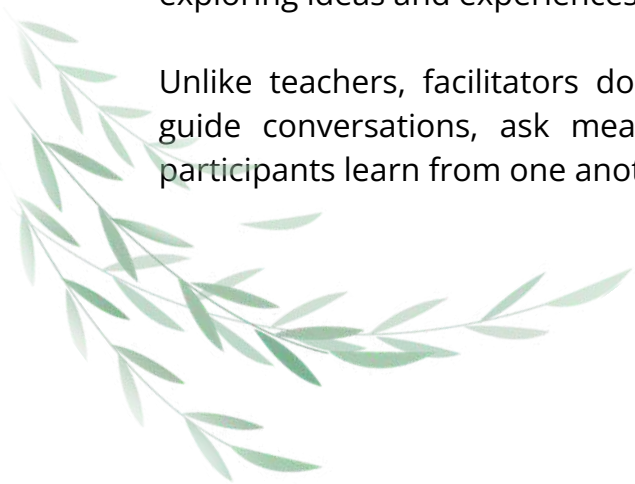
Research consistently shows that peer-led programmes can improve knowledge, confidence, social connectedness, and help-seeking behaviours when peer educators receive appropriate training, supervision, and organisational support (White & Shute, 2007; Hart et al., 2023).

1.1. The role of a peer educator

A peer educator is not expected to have all the answers.

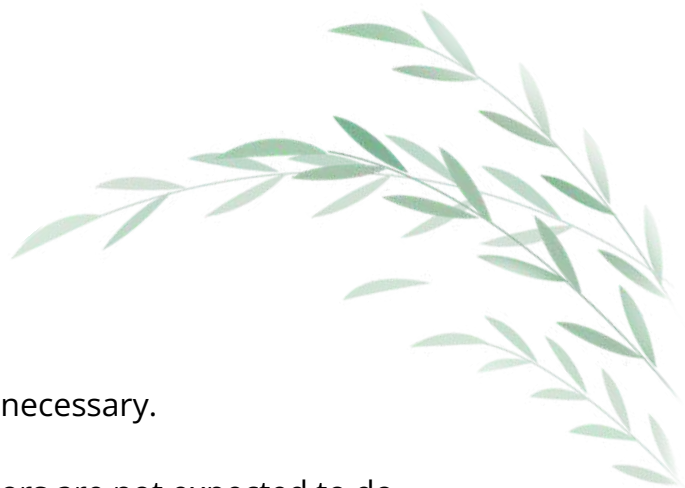
Instead, their primary role is to facilitate learning, encourage participation, and create psychologically safe environments where participants feel comfortable exploring ideas and experiences together.

Unlike teachers, facilitators do not position themselves as experts. Instead, they guide conversations, ask meaningful questions, encourage reflection, and help participants learn from one another.



A peer educator therefore acts as a:

- facilitator of learning;
- positive role model;
- active listener;
- promoter of inclusion;
- supporter of participation;
- connector to further sources of support when necessary.



Equally important is recognising what peer educators are not expected to do. They are not psychologists, counsellors, social workers, or mental health professionals. Their responsibility is to promote learning and wellbeing - not to diagnose problems or provide therapy.

When participants ask difficult questions, remember that it is acceptable to say:

"That's an important question. I don't know the answer right now, but we can find reliable information together."

Admitting uncertainty demonstrates honesty and builds trust.

1.2. Creating safe learning environments

Learning happens most effectively when participants feel psychologically safe.

Psychological safety refers to a shared belief that participants can ask questions, express opinions, make mistakes, and share experiences without fear of embarrassment or ridicule (Edmondson, 1999).

Peer educators strengthen psychological safety by:

- greeting participants warmly;
- learning and using participants' names;
- encouraging equal participation;
- responding respectfully to every contribution;
- acknowledging different opinions;
- treating mistakes as learning opportunities;
- modelling openness and curiosity.

Creating psychological safety is especially important when discussing topics related to mental health, relationships, identity, discrimination, or personal wellbeing.

Remember - Young people rarely participate fully until they feel emotionally safe.

Trust always comes before learning.

1.3. Youth participation and empowerment

Modern youth work views young people as active partners rather than passive recipients of information.

Meaningful participation means that young people influence discussions, contribute ideas, evaluate activities, and share responsibility for learning.

Peer educators can encourage participation by:

- inviting participants to make choices;
- using collaborative activities;
- encouraging peer feedback;
- involving participants in decision-making;
- recognising every contribution.

Participation promotes autonomy, responsibility, confidence, and motivation.

As the Council of Europe (2020) highlights, participation is not simply being present - it is having genuine opportunities to influence learning and decisions.

2. Understanding group processes

2.1. Why group dynamics matter

Peer education is built on relationships. While the quality of workshop content is important, meaningful learning depends largely on the quality of interactions between participants. Understanding how groups develop enables peer educators to create supportive environments where everyone feels safe to participate, share experiences, and learn together.

Groups are dynamic systems. Every participant brings different experiences, expectations, personalities, and communication styles. These individual differences shape how the group develops over time. Rather than expecting immediate trust and cooperation, effective facilitators recognise that every group passes through predictable developmental stages.

Research in developmental psychology and youth work consistently demonstrates that learning is enhanced when participants experience belonging, trust, psychological safety, and active participation (Edmondson, 1999; Council of Europe, 2020).

2.2. Stages of group development

Bruce Tuckman's (1965) model remains one of the most widely used frameworks for understanding group development. Although originally developed for adult groups, it is equally relevant in youth work and peer education.

1 - Forming

The forming stage begins when participants first meet. During this stage, young people often feel curious but also uncertain. They may ask themselves:

- Will I fit into this group?
- Is it safe to speak?
- Will people judge me?
- What is expected from me?

Participants usually behave politely, observe others, and wait for guidance from the facilitator.

Facilitator's role

During this stage, peer educators should focus on:

- welcoming participants;
- learning names;
- explaining workshop objectives;
- creating group agreements;
- using energisers and icebreakers;
- encouraging participation without pressure.

The priority is building trust rather than covering as much content as possible.

2 - Storming

As participants become more comfortable, different opinions, personalities, and expectations begin to emerge. Some participants become very active, while others remain quiet. Small disagreements or resistance may appear. This is a normal and healthy stage of group development.

The facilitator should:

- remain calm;
- acknowledge different perspectives;
- encourage respectful discussion;
- reinforce agreed group rules;
- avoid taking sides.

Conflict should be viewed as an opportunity for learning rather than something to eliminate immediately.

3 - Norming

During this stage, trust increases.

Participants become more willing to cooperate, listen to each other, and support quieter members of the group.

The facilitator can gradually shift responsibility by encouraging participants to:

- lead small discussions;
- summarise ideas;
- facilitate short activities;
- give constructive feedback.

The workshop becomes increasingly collaborative.

4 - Performing

In the performing stage, the group works confidently and independently.

Participants contribute ideas openly, solve problems together, and support one another. The facilitator's role becomes less directive and more supportive. Instead of leading every discussion, facilitators encourage participants to take ownership of the learning process.

Research on Positive Youth Development suggests that opportunities for meaningful participation strengthen confidence, competence, and civic engagement (Lerner et al., 2005).

2.3. Working with different age groups

Young adolescents and older adolescents differ in their cognitive, emotional, and social development.

- Younger Adolescents (12–15 years)

According to Piaget (1972), younger adolescents are still developing abstract reasoning.

They benefit from:

- shorter activities;
- movement;
- games;
- visual materials;
- concrete examples;
- clear instructions.

Frequent changes in activity help maintain attention.

- Older Adolescents (16–19 years)

Older adolescents increasingly value:

- independence;
- critical thinking;
- discussion;
- debate;
- personal reflection;
- collaborative decision-making.

Facilitators should provide opportunities for participants to analyse situations, express opinions, and connect learning with their own experiences.

Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development suggests that young people learn most effectively when they are supported just beyond their current level of competence by peers and facilitators.

2.4. Managing challenging group situations

Every facilitator encounters challenges.

The goal is not to avoid them but to respond thoughtfully.

Situation	Why it happens	Facilitator response
Nobody speaks	Low trust	Use pair discussions first.
One participant dominates	High confidence or need for recognition	Thank them and invite others to contribute.
Side conversations	Low engagement	Introduce movement or interactive tasks.
Conflict	Different perspectives	Facilitate respectful dialogue.
Low energy	Fatigue	Use an energiser or shorten activities.
Emotional disclosure	High trust	Listen, validate, and follow safeguarding procedures if necessary.

Key Messages



Successful facilitators understand that group development takes time.



Rather than expecting immediate participation, they intentionally build trust, create psychologically safe environments, encourage collaboration, and adapt activities according to participants' developmental needs.



Understanding group dynamics enables peer educators to transform a collection of individuals into a supportive learning community.

3. Communication and facilitation skills

Communication is the most important tool available to peer educators. Participants are unlikely to remember every activity or presentation. However, they will remember how the facilitator made them feel. Young people participate most actively when they experience respect, empathy, authenticity, and genuine curiosity. For this reason, effective facilitation depends less on speaking well and more on listening well.

3.1. From teaching to facilitating

Traditional teaching often focuses on delivering information. Facilitation focuses on supporting learning.

Instead of asking: *"How can I explain this better?"*

Facilitators ask:

- How can participants discover this themselves?
- What questions will stimulate discussion?
- How can everyone contribute?

The facilitator becomes a guide rather than an expert.

Experiential learning research demonstrates that young people retain knowledge more effectively when they actively participate, reflect, and apply learning to real-life situations (Kolb, 1984).

3.2. Active listening

Carl Rogers (1957) described empathic listening as one of the foundations of supportive relationships.

Active listening means:

- giving full attention;
- maintaining appropriate eye contact;
- avoiding interruptions;
- observing emotions;
- paraphrasing key ideas;
- asking open questions.

Example:

Participant: *"I'm worried I won't be good enough."*

Instead of saying: *"Don't worry."*

Try: *"It sounds like you're feeling uncertain. What makes you feel that way?"*

This response validates feelings while encouraging reflection.

3.3. Asking powerful questions

Questions stimulate thinking more effectively than giving advice.

Useful questions include:

Open questions

- What surprised you?
- What did you notice?
- How did you feel?

Reflective questions

- What did you learn about yourself?
- Why do you think that happened?

Future questions

- What could you try next time?
- What support would help you?

Scaling questions

"On a scale from 1 to 10, how confident do you feel?"

These questions encourage self-awareness and problem-solving.



Key Messages



The most effective facilitators are not those who speak the most but those who create conversations in which every participant feels heard, respected, and encouraged to contribute.



Communication is not about delivering perfect answers. It is about creating relationships that make learning possible.

4. The role, ethics and responsibilities of peer educators

4.1. Understanding mental health

Mental health is an essential component of overall health and wellbeing. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), mental health is a state of wellbeing in which people realise their abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life, learn effectively, work productively, and contribute to their communities.

Adolescence is a period of rapid biological, psychological, emotional, and social development. During these years, young people experience significant changes related to identity, friendships, education, family relationships, and future aspirations. While these transitions can increase vulnerability to stress, they also provide opportunities for developing resilience, emotional competence, and healthy coping strategies.

Peer education contributes to mental health promotion by creating supportive environments where young people feel respected, connected, and empowered. Workshops provide opportunities to develop emotional awareness, strengthen protective factors, reduce stigma surrounding mental health, and encourage help-seeking when needed.

Experiencing stress, sadness, anxiety, disappointment, or uncertainty is a normal part of life. These emotions do not necessarily indicate a mental health disorder. Peer educators should therefore normalise emotional experiences while promoting healthy coping strategies, resilience, and supportive relationships.

Protective factors such as supportive relationships, participation, self-efficacy, emotional competence, and a sense of belonging significantly improve young people's wellbeing and resilience (Lerner et al., 2005; World Health Organization, 2022).

4.2. The role of peer educators

Peer educators play an important role in promoting mental wellbeing, but they are not mental health professionals. Their primary responsibility is to facilitate learning, create emotionally safe spaces, and encourage young people to support one another.

Peer educators should:

- create psychologically safe learning environments;
- encourage respectful dialogue;
- promote resilience and healthy coping strategies;
- reduce stigma related to mental health;
- encourage help-seeking;
- recognise when additional professional support may be needed.

At the same time, peer educators should **not**:

- diagnose mental health conditions;
- provide therapy or counselling;
- promise complete confidentiality if someone may be at risk of harm;
- assume responsibility for solving participants' personal difficulties.

Understanding these boundaries protects both participants and facilitators while ensuring that support remains appropriate and ethical.

4.3. Creating emotionally safe conversations

Young people participate more openly when discussions are characterised by empathy, trust, inclusion, and respect.

Facilitators can strengthen emotional safety by:

- establishing clear group agreements;
- respecting different perspectives;
- encouraging voluntary participation;
- acknowledging emotions without judgement;
- allowing participants to choose how much they wish to share;
- modelling openness and respect.

Rather than encouraging personal disclosure, facilitators should focus on exploring coping strategies and shared learning.

Rather than encouraging personal disclosure, facilitators should focus on exploring coping strategies and shared learning.

For example, instead of asking: **"Has anyone experienced depression?"**

Consider asking: **"What are some healthy ways people cope with difficult emotions?"**

This approach promotes discussion while respecting personal boundaries and protecting participants' privacy.

4.4. Responding to personal disclosure

Sometimes participants choose to share personal experiences involving stress, anxiety, bullying, family conflict, discrimination, grief, or other emotionally difficult situations.

When this happens, peer educators should:

1. Stay calm.
2. Listen without interrupting.
3. Thank the participant for sharing.
4. Acknowledge their emotions.
5. Avoid giving advice or trying to solve the problem.
6. Consider whether referral or additional support may be required.

Helpful responses include:

- *"Thank you for trusting the group."*
- *"That sounds like a very difficult experience."*
- *"I'm glad you felt able to share that."*
- *"You don't have to face difficult situations alone."*

Avoid responses such as:

- *"I know exactly how you feel."*
- *"Everything will be fine."*
- *"You should just..."*
- *"That happened to me too."*

Such responses may unintentionally minimise or redirect attention away from the participant's experience.



4.5. Recognising when to refer

Peer educators should recognise situations that require professional support.

Possible warning signs include:

- repeated expressions of hopelessness;
- discussions of self-harm or suicide;
- reports of abuse or neglect;
- severe emotional distress;
- behaviour suggesting immediate danger to self or others.

In these situations, facilitators should follow organisational safeguarding procedures and immediately inform the designated mentor, project coordinator, safeguarding officer, or another responsible professional.

Remember - Referral is not failure - it is responsible care.

Protecting safety always takes priority over confidentiality.

4.6. Ethics and professional boundaries

Ethical practice is fundamental to effective peer education. Young people often trust peer educators because they perceive them as approachable and relatable. Maintaining professional boundaries protects both participants and facilitators.

Peer educators should:

- treat every participant with dignity and respect;
- communicate honestly and respectfully;
- avoid favouritism;
- recognise the limits of their competence;
- maintain appropriate professional relationships;
- seek supervision when uncertain.

Healthy boundaries ensure that supportive relationships remain safe, respectful, and sustainable.

4.7. Confidentiality and safeguarding

Confidentiality encourages openness and trust within peer education.

At the beginning of every workshop, facilitators should explain confidentiality using a simple agreement such as:

"What is shared in this room stays in this room. What is learned in this room leaves this room."

However, confidentiality has important limits.

If a participant shares information suggesting that they or someone else may be at risk of serious harm, facilitators must follow organisational safeguarding procedures.

Participants should understand these limits before sensitive discussions begin.

A helpful explanation is:

"I respect everyone's privacy. However, if I believe someone may be unsafe, I have a responsibility to seek help from the appropriate person."

Clear communication strengthens trust while protecting participants.

4.8. Respect for diversity and inclusion

Youth groups include participants with different cultures, identities, abilities, religions, languages, experiences, and perspectives.

Inclusive facilitation means:

- respecting diversity;
- using inclusive language;
- avoiding stereotypes and discrimination;
- adapting activities when needed;
- ensuring every participant has opportunities to contribute.

Diversity enriches learning by exposing participants to multiple perspectives and experiences.

4.9. Self-care for peer educators

Supporting others can be emotionally rewarding but also demanding.

Peer educators should actively care for their own wellbeing by:

- participating in supervision or mentoring;
- discussing challenging situations with co-facilitators;
- maintaining healthy work-life boundaries;
- engaging in activities that promote their own wellbeing;
- recognising when they need additional support.

Self-care is not selfish - it is an ethical responsibility that enables facilitators to continue supporting others effectively.

Key Messages



Supporting young people's mental wellbeing is not about having all the answers. It is about creating safe, respectful, and inclusive spaces where young people feel heard, valued, and connected.



Peer educators strengthen resilience by promoting participation, empathy, hope, and supportive relationships while recognising the limits of their role and encouraging professional support whenever necessary.



By acting with integrity, compassion, and professionalism, peer educators contribute to healthier, more inclusive, and more resilient communities where young people can thrive.

A Guide for Mentors



05

05. Guidelines for Mentors - How to Be a Mentor?

Peer to peer empowerment is a program where young people, through the implementation of a series of psychosocial workshops, actively contribute to the empowerment of their peers. The term "peer to peer" highlights the similar age and generational affiliation between volunteers and participants. This can contribute to a more relaxed, open communication, less fear of making mistakes and greater engagement. Participants may perceive peer educators as more equal or even as positive role models. Peer educators, on the other hand, may have a greater awareness of the problems young people face and are able to present topics in a more understandable way (Bilgiç & Günay, 2018, Feng et al., 2024). However, because of the young age and limited experience of peer educators, support from older and more experienced mentors is essential. Mentors help volunteers feel more prepared, navigate problems they encounter and resolve concerns that might arise. The mentor's experience offers a sense of security and guidance that volunteers can rely on as they take on a new role as peer educators. In the following section we will explore some of the important factors when stepping into the role of mentors.

Before the workshop cycle

Effectively empowering young people through psychosocial workshops requires thoughtful preparation and strong organization, particularly in the context of peer-to-peer education. That is why volunteer preparation should start well before the workshop cycle begins. Who takes on the mentor role may vary depending on the institution (e.g. school, NGO, company etc.) - it can be either a project team member or an external professional. Depending on that, the tasks that the mentor's role includes might vary. In the next few pages, we explore a few points that are important before the start of the first workshop.

1. Introducing the volunteers to the institution and the program

While this handbook does not deal with the topic of volunteer coordination, we do want to emphasize a few important aspects. For a volunteer to be ready to contribute their time, they should recognise the values and the mission of the organisation, as well as the objectives of the program, as something meaningful and important. It's important for the volunteer coordinator and/or mentor to take time to introduce the organisation and the specifics of the *Peer to peer empowerment* program (its objectives, list of tasks and responsibilities, organisational and logistical elements etc.).

When volunteers are well-informed, it can support their motivation and long-term involvement, as well as foster more effective collaboration with mentors – factors that can contribute to the overall success of the program (Forčić et al., 2007).

2. Meeting the volunteers

A mentor is the first person volunteers should contact in situations they need help, and one of the factors that increases the likelihood of help-seeking is a formed relationship between them and their mentor. This is why fostering an open, supportive and non-judgmental atmosphere is necessary from the very beginning.

The first step in the mentoring process should be organising a **pre-workshops meeting** with the volunteers. It is recommended that several important objectives are covered in the initial meeting.

2.1. - Introducing each other

First meeting is an opportunity to lay the foundation of your cooperation. Learning more about your volunteers, their profession, experience and character, can give you insights into their skills and personal strengths. For example, past participation in Erasmus projects might have given them experience in group work and familiarity with icebreakers they can use if needed, background in psychosocial work might make them more comfortable talking about topics of the program etc. Even though this is not something you should assume, you can use those presumptions as a base for opening a discussion with the volunteers. Which bring us to the next point.

2.2. - Discuss the workshops and potential challenges

Before the workshop cycle starts, it's helpful to review the content of the workshop, clarify activities and their purpose as well as discuss worries, potential challenges and ways to prevent or address them. By getting familiar with the workshops yourself, you can think of situations that may arise and use your experience to offer practical suggestions and guidance, which can be especially valuable for less experienced or more anxious peer educators.

2.3. - Informing Volunteers: practical details and target group

If you work at the institution hosting the workshop or coordinate the collaboration with them, make sure volunteers have all key practical details: the location, who to contact on arrival or if issues arise, what materials are available and where to find them, and what to do if someone can't attend (e.g., due to illness). Also agree on communication channels and future meetings.

Another important information is the characteristics of the group they will be working with. Depending on the context, the mentor's familiarity with the group might vary. If you have details about the group, share them with your volunteers. Information such as participants' age, education level, whether they are part of a minority or at-risk groups, or participants with disabilities, may be particularly useful. Information like these can help volunteers adapt activities when needed (e.g., using a more inclusive version for a participant with a disability).

2.4. - Creating a safe space for questions and mistakes

Although mentors are there to answer questions and provide support, volunteers may still hesitate to ask for help due to fear of mistakes or judgment, worries about seeming incompetent, shame, or a belief they should cope alone. That's why it's important to build a non-judgmental environment from the first meeting. For more on psychological safety, see Volunteer support in practice: Creating a safe space.



2.5. - Create group rules

To support smooth collaboration, agree on a few basic rules from the start (e.g., punctuality, phone use, respectful communication, and how to handle cancellations/rescheduling).

One especially important agreement is confidentiality. Volunteers and the mentor should agree that anything personal or sensitive shared in mentoring meetings stays within the group. This helps build trust and emotional safety and can also be a good opportunity to stress the importance protecting workshop participants' privacy, especially when they share vulnerable experiences.

Use the first meeting to build trust and a supportive mentor-volunteer relationship, go over the workshop plan and possible challenges, share key practical details, and agree on a few clear rules (especially confidentiality) so volunteers feel comfortable, safe, and ready for new challenges.

During the workshop cycle

After the initial preparation, the next key step is supporting peer educators between workshops. Relying only on volunteers to reach out when they need support can be risky. As mentioned earlier, young volunteers may hesitate to ask for support because of various personal reason, because they might worry about bothering the mentor or think that the problem they have encountered is not serious enough to organize a meeting. Regular, pre-arranged check-ins ensure they get timely guidance early on and prevent problems from escalating.

It's recommended that peer educators and mentors have a brief check-in after each workshop (video, phone, or in person). A well-structured 20–30 minute talk is often enough to reflect on what happened, address concerns, and offer support and encouragement.

Over the 6 workshop cycle, it's helpful to schedule at least **one longer face-to-face meeting** to revisit the volunteer's experience so far, explore emotions, and discuss more complex challenges. Less experienced volunteers may think they only need mentoring when problems arise, so mentors should encourage them to also bring up resolved challenges or interesting situations and moments for reflection. Those topics alone can often lead to very interesting and insightful discussions.

Meeting	Suggested Time	Duration	Purpose
First meeting (in person)	Before the 1st workshop	60-90 min	Build trust, set expectations, review practical details, discuss workshop content and possible situations
Short check-ins (video call / in person)	After the 1st and 2nd workshops	20-30 min	Provide quick support, brief reflection, adjust workshop approach if needed
Midway support meeting (in person)	After the 3rd or 4th workshop	60-90 min	Deeper reflection, broader feedback, explore emotional responses, strengthen motivation
Short check-ins (video call / phone call / in person)	After the 4th and 5th workshops	20-30 min	Provide quick support, brief reflection, adjust workshop approach if needed
Final meeting (video call / in person)	After the 6th workshop	45-60 min	Reflect on the entire experience, celebrate progress, gather feedback, discuss next steps

Fig 3. *Suggested schedule of communication between the mentor and peer educators*

The suggested mentoring schedule is shown in Figure 1, but it should be adapted to volunteers' needs and the project context. If workshops are running smoothly - or if volunteers are already experienced - check-ins after the 4th and 5th workshops can be shorter or less frequent and used mainly to confirm everything is on track. Regardless, mentors should ensure ongoing guidance is available and volunteers receive the support they need.

After the workshop cycle

A final meeting after the last workshop is an important moment to reflect on the whole experience and close the program. It's a chance to acknowledge volunteers' progress and growth (professional and personal), do some simple reflection activities, and gather feedback (e.g., via a short questionnaire/worksheet). Feedback and insights during the reflection can help improve both mentoring and the next program cycle.

The final meeting is also a good time to share what comes next (whether the program will continue and how volunteers might be involved again) and to end with a proper, heartfelt goodbye.

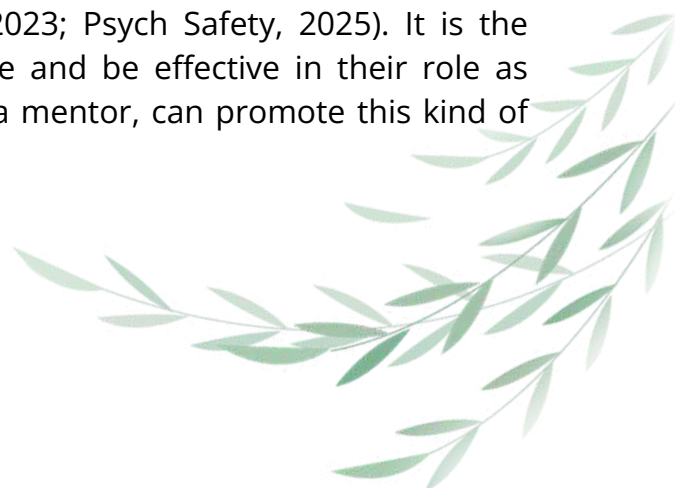
Apart from having the last meeting, we also suggest that you as a mentor take a moment to reflect on key challenges and lessons learned, and write down observations and suggestions. These notes can improve future cycles by helping prepare the next volunteers, highlighting what to watch for, and preventing recurring issues, while also supporting mentor's development over time.

Volunteer support in practice

So far, we've highlighted the importance of creating a positive environment and guiding volunteers through challenges, but we haven't explored what that actually looks like in practice. The next section presents practical strategies that can help you enhance your mentoring abilities.

1. Creating a safe space

Psychological safety is a belief that one can ask questions, seek for help, present ideas and admit and discuss mistakes without fear of being judged, embarrassed or punished (American Psychological Association, 2023; Psych Safety, 2025). It is the foundation for young people to feel comfortable and be effective in their role as educator. Here are a few ways in which you, as a mentor, can promote this kind of environment.



1.1. Make it clear that all questions are welcome.

Go beyond phrases like “there are no stupid questions” by explicitly normalising not knowing everything and stressing that asking for clarification often prevents bigger issues. For example: *“In this program, there are no wrong questions. If something isn't clear, ask - it means you care.”* Remind volunteers that even “obvious” questions can come from misunderstanding or a different perspective, not from incompetence.

1.2. Respond to mistakes constructively.

Mistakes can feel discouraging, but they're valuable learning moments. Avoid anger or criticism and instead, normalize mistakes, encourage self-compassion, and use them as an opening of a constructive discussion, for reflection and growth. Skip shameful phrases like “that's not right” or “I wouldn't have done it like that” and use sentences that praise attempts or normalize the situation, and encourage exploration of alternative possibilities; *“You did what seemed best in the moment - looking back, what could you try differently?”* or *“I'm glad you tried; let's think of another approach together.”*

1.3. Be honest about your mistakes and limitations.

Teaching by example is a vulnerable but a powerful tool. Don't be afraid to admit when you've made a mistake or don't know an answer. Instead of guessing, tell volunteers you'll get back to them with an answer - this prevents misinformation and models responsible practice. Inform yourself more through research or consultation with someone who has more experience and show young educators that learning is an ongoing process.

1.4. Encourage discussion and ideas sharing.

While mentoring can involve giving advice, it's often more effective to help volunteers think through issues and find solutions themselves. Invite the group to share ideas, ask for their perspectives, and highlight that different viewpoints are very valuable. When volunteers discuss and find solutions themselves, it can strengthen both their skills and the feeling of confidence.

1.5. Be authentic.

A natural, relaxed style can help build trust. If it feels genuine, using warmth, appropriate humor, or simple interactive activities can make mentoring feel safer and more supportive.

2. Active listening

Strong communication - especially active listening - is essential for quality mentorship. Active listening is a learnable skill that focuses on fully understanding both the message and emotions behind what someone says: giving full attention, listening without rushing to respond, paraphrasing, asking questions, noticing body language, and showing empathy. It's a skill that helps prevent misunderstandings, encourages learning and self-reflection and makes people feel heard, which is why it can be a helpful tool during mentorship. It's also a skill that takes some practice (Viezzler, 2023). If you are already familiar with active listening and feel confident using it in practice, you can skip to the next section; if not, the following paragraphs offer a brief overview and practical tips.

2.1. Body language

First important part of active listening is body language. During the conversations with the volunteers it's important to remove any distractions (e.g. mobile phones), face towards the speaker and keep an eye-contact. Body posture should be relaxed but focused towards the other person. Giving small verbal and non-verbal expressions (e.g. "mhmm") can also be reassuring that you are present and encourage the speaker to continue.

2.2. Avoid assumptions and jumping to conclusions

Interrupting, finishing someone's sentences, or quickly jumping in with your own thoughts can unintentionally shut down the conversation. It may prevent volunteers from sharing important details and can leave them feeling rushed or dismissed. Assumptions and quick conclusions often reflect our own perspective rather than the reality of the volunteer's situation. By slowing down, listening with curiosity, and asking clarifying questions, you create space for peer educators to fully express themselves and avoid misunderstandings.

2.3. Use paraphrasing

A useful active listening technique is paraphrasing - repeating what the other person said in your own words (rather than repeating their exact phrasing) while preserving the original meaning. It helps us check if we understood what the speaker wanted to say, to summarise key points, encourage the speaker to speak or share more, and can and can gently reframe the message to reveal another perspective. Here is a few examples:

Example 1:

V: "I thought I'd feel more confident by now, but I still get nervous before each session."

M: "It sounds like you're surprised that the nerves haven't gone away yet, even though you expected to feel more at ease after a while."

V: "Yes, even though currently I feel myself relax a bit after the first few activities."

M: "It seems to me that even though you still feel unease in the beginning, it is getting a bit better because you start to calm down earlier in the workshop."

Example 2:

V: "One of the girls kept refusing to join the group she was assigned to, and I didn't know if I should allow her to change it."

M: "I would like to understand the situation better. The girl wanted to change the group. Can you please can you walk me through what happened and why she wanted to switch" (Clarification to prevent assumptions, encouraging to continue)

V: "Yes, when I assigned groups she raised her voice and said that she is not going to be in that group, because she would have to work with her ex best friend. I worried that if I let her switch, everyone would want to, so we kept arguing and lost time."

M: "If I got it correctly, you were worried that allowing her to switch would lead to that situation repeating in the future. That's why you set a boundary that she isn't allowed to do it and are now wondering if it was a right thing to do because it made you lose time. Is that right?" (making sure we understand the meaning of the message).

Some other phrases you can use are: *"I want to make sure I got it right..."*, *"Let me summarize what you said..."*, *"Sounds like..."*, *"Let me see if I've understood this..."*, *"What I hear you saying is..."*, *"When you say ___, do you mean...?"*, *"If I got that right, you felt that..."*.

It's also important to check whether your interpretation is accurate. Even if you get it wrong, that's okay - it simply opens space for clarification and deeper understanding.

Paraphrasing may feel unnatural at first, but with practice it becomes a useful tool not only in mentoring, but in everyday communication. It signals genuine effort to understand the other person and helps you stay engaged in the conversation.

3. Questions as learning tools

One of the best ways to learn is by experiencing things first hand. However, it turns into knowledge only when we take time to reflect on it - what happened, what went well, and what challenges came up – while trying to incorporate it with our existing knowledge (Association for Experiential Education, 2024). This is why reflection is central to mentoring and to regular check-ins.

3.1. Use open ended questions, and questions that encourage reflection

Open-ended questions invite longer, more elaborated answers and usually start with how, what, or why (e.g., "What were some challenges you faced during today's workshop", "How did you feel in that situation?"). They demand an active reflection and a greater presence in the conversation. **Closed-ended questions**, on the other hand, typically lead to short yes/no replies (e.g., "Did you have any challenges during the workshop?", "Was everything okay?"). This can result in missed details and unhelpful back-and-forth in order to gain any kind of information.

Open-ended questions are useful throughout mentoring. From workshop preparation the (e.g. *What activity do you think could be challenging?*) and regular check-ins (e.g. *"What is something you realized today, that will be important for future workshops?"*, *"Can you describe to me some moment when you weren't sure what to do?"*) to problem solving (*"What are other ways you could have reacted in the moment?"*, *"How can I help you right now?"*) and encouragement (*"What made you feel proud of yourself during the workshop?"*).

When discussing challenges, these types of questions help volunteers think through situations and find solutions themselves (or explore options together), which, as mentioned earlier, builds confidence and strengthens future problem-solving. Though direct mentor advice is sometimes still necessary.



3.2. Use how and what questions instead of why

Although “why” questions are common, they can sometimes sound accusatory or criticizing and might cause the other person to start defending themselves, feel shame or justify their actions. Using “how” and “what” questions can sound softer and hence lead to more open, curiosity-driven conversations.

For example, instead of: “Why didn’t you speak up?”, use: “What made it difficult to speak up in that moment?” . Instead of: “Why didn’t you follow the plan?”, you can ask: “How did things unfold differently from what you expected?” or “What made it hard for you to follow the plan?”

Small wording changes like this can significantly affect the overall atmosphere.

4. Providing emotional support

Facilitating workshops without much experience can be exciting and rewarding, but also stressful and overwhelming. A key mentoring task is helping peer educators navigate these emotions. Here are a few tips what you as a mentor can do when emotions come up.

4.1. Listen without judgement or minimizing

Volunteers may react very differently in the same situations. Some feel confident and ready, others anxious or they struggle to cope with groups and mistakes. There is no right or wrong way to feel so the best thing you can do as a mentor is to give them space to share how they feel and support them without deciding what is “normal.” Sentences like “You shouldn’t worry about it” or “It’s not a big deal”, usually won’t stop the person from worrying but will lead to them shutting down, so it’s best to avoid them.

4.2. Validate and normalise their emotions

Sometimes acknowledging how someone feels is more helpful than trying to “fix” things; especially when the situation can’t be changed. Rushing into solutions often comes from our eagerness to help but it can make volunteers feel unheard and dismissed. So when emotions come up, it is better to use **reflection of feelings**.

Reflecting feelings is similar to paraphrasing, but it focuses on emotions. It can include:

- **Summarizing** what happened – *“So what I’m hearing is that participants were giving answers you didn’t expect so you felt a bit lost during the discussion part of the workshop, did I get that right?”*
- **Naming the emotion** – *“I can imagine that was frustrating”*
- **Validating/normalising** – *“That makes sense. It’s completely normal to feel unsure the first few times.”*

You can also gently check for emotions they haven’t named yet, especially in preparation (e.g., “Some volunteers worry whether the group will accept them - does that resonate with you?”).

Here are a few examples of reflection:

V: “I always feel like I’m not doing enough. Even if the session goes well, I keep thinking about all the things I could’ve done better.”

Instead of: “Oh you’re doing fine, you’re being too hard on yourself.”

Try saying: “It sounds like you put a lot of pressure on yourself, and even when things go well, you focus on what could have been improved. That must be exhausting - sounds like you care deeply about doing a good job.”

Note: If you would like to encourage the volunteer, after giving them space to talk about how they feel you can also add something like: “From my perspective you are doing a really good job and don’t give yourself enough credit.”

V: "I felt like I messed up the instructions, and they all just looked confused."

M: " It sounds like that really threw you off. I can imagine it felt frustrating. That's a normal reaction - giving clear instructions takes practice, and it's good you're noticing what you want to improve."

Emotional support isn't about solving every problem - it starts with being present and showing understanding. Reflecting and validating emotions builds trust and helps volunteers feel safe to explore both their strengths and challenges. It's okay not to have all the answers; even a brief moment of empathy can make a big difference, especially when the learning process feels overwhelming.

4.3. Allow silence

After you ask a question, silence may follow, and while it can feel awkward, it serves a purpose. In emotional moments, it gives volunteers space to breathe and process; in problem-solving, it helps them think and generate their own ideas instead of relying on quick answers. Try to sit with the pause - most silences are shorter than they feel.





5. Giving feedback

Giving feedback can feel uncomfortable, but it's an essential part of mentoring. One common approach is the "The feedback sandwich": start with genuine positive feedback, address one area for improvement with a concrete suggestion, and end with an encouraging note. Or to put it more simply - highlight a strength, offer a clear tip, and finish positively (Prochazka et al., 2020).

Some examples would be:

- "I like how patient you stayed, even when the group was a bit distracted. It might help to change your tone or add a short energizer to bring their focus back in situations like this. Your calm approach is a big strength, and these small tweaks will make you even more effective"
- "It's good that you think about the long-term effects of your decisions; allowing the girl to switch the group could result in others doing the same. I think giving her two choices and ending the negotiation sooner could be more helpful in situations when you don't have time. But well done that you were able to stick with your boundaries"

This can make feedback feel supportive, especially when the other person is sensitive to criticism or when the relationship is still developing.

That said, some authors note it can sound insincere or dilute the message if used mechanically (Henley & DiGennaro Reed, 2015; James, 2014). Taking that into consideration, here are some other tips to keep feedback effective and authentic:

5.1. Focus on the behavior, not the person

Describe specific actions instead of labels which can seem like a personal critic- instead of: "You seem disorganized", try using: "I noticed that the materials weren't ready at the start of the workshop."

5.2. Offer clear suggestions for the future

Phrase your feedback as a suggestion what the person can change to improve. Be specific about what to try next time, and check how the volunteer sees your suggestion (or invite them to brainstorm alternatives).

5.3. Be genuine

Take time to notice what the young educator did well so you can name specific strengths and encourage effective behaviours. Generic compliments (e.g. "*Presentation was good*") can sound like a cliché rather than sincere feedback.

5.4. Use a neutral, supportive tone

Pay attention to your tone and non-verbal cues (avoid sounding angry or shameful) so that the feedback feels calm, respectful, and encouraging.

Overall, effective feedback is direct, specific, and balanced: recognise what went well, identify areas for improvement, and provide clear suggestions for action. And don't forget to generally praise volunteers when they do something well. Positive reinforcement can be more impactful than focusing on mistakes.

Final words

Mentoring volunteers can be a challenging task, especially if you are encountering it for the first time. It takes preparation, presence, problem-solving and building and maintaining supportive relationships with volunteers. You won't have every answer or handle every situation perfectly, and that's okay. Stay responsible, prepare as well as you can, and reach out to more experienced colleagues when you need support. With each cycle, you'll gain confidence and your mentoring skills will grow, so put effort and care into the role, but be kind to yourself as you learn. Good luck!

Guidelines for Workshop Facilitators



06

Links for Workshops

Competence Workshops

My Plan B [link](#)

Strong Voice [link](#)

Confidence Workshops

My Response [link](#)

Confidence in You [link](#)

Connection Workshops

Boost Your Signal [link](#)

Got Your Back [link](#)

COMPETENCE WORKSHOPS



01. MY PLAN B

90 minutes

Materials

Pens; flipchart or whiteboard + markers; A3 poster with workshop ground rules + marker; Ball of yarn (for Wool Web activity); "What's on my plate" worksheets (one per participant); Printed scenario cards with Plan A reactions (for Plan B activity); Evaluation forms (one per participant).

Main goal

To help young people become more aware of their stressors and reactions, and to strengthen their sense of competence by practising more helpful, planned responses to everyday challenges.

Objectives

- To raise awareness of current responsibilities, emotions, and stressors
- To identify personal sources of support and joy that help balance stress.
- To reflect on how stress and habits influence reactions.
- To practise creating more helpful, flexible responses in real-life scenarios.

Required Competences for Peer Educators / Youth Volunteers

- Ability to create a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere (respect, confidentiality, listening).
- Basic facilitation skills (guiding group discussions, keeping time, giving clear instructions).
- Sensitivity to emotional topics and ability to normalise feelings without "fixing" everything.
- Ability to manage group dynamics (dominant participants, silence, giggles, etc.).

01. MY PLAN B

Challenges and Solutions

I - Low Participation / Silence

Challenge: Participants are quiet, give very short answers, nobody wants to start.

Solution: Start with your own simple example, use easy questions ("one word", "show with fingers 1-5"), give them a moment to think, and normalise that it's okay to be shy.

II - One or two people dominate the discussion

Challenge: A few participants talk all the time, others stay quiet.

Solution: Gently interrupt and invite others: "Thank you, I'd also like to hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet." Use pair or small-group work so more people get a chance to talk.

III - Joking, making fun, or not taking it seriously

Challenge: Some participants laugh at others' answers or make disrespectful comments.

Solution: Calmly remind them of the ground rules (respect, no judging), say that everyone's experience matters, and redirect the focus back to the activity.

IV - Strong emotions or sensitive topics

Challenge: Someone becomes upset, emotional, or shares something very heavy.

Solution: Thank them for sharing, validate their feeling ("That sounds really hard"), don't push for more details, offer to talk after the workshop, and, if needed, inform the responsible adult/teacher/counsellor.

V - Time management – running out of time

Challenge: Group work and discussions take longer than planned; you don't reach all parts of the workshop.

Solution: Watch the time, give clear time warnings ("2 more minutes"), gently close discussions and move on, and prioritise key steps (instructions, sharing basics, short reflection) over long debate.

01. MY PLAN B

1. Introduction to the Program (1 min)

Goals: Introduction of the program and the participants.

Both of the facilitators/volunteers introduce themselves shortly and the program:

"Welcome everyone! Today we are starting a series of six workshops, each will last for 90 minutes. The goal of the workshops is to discuss and improve some skills that are useful and important in your everyday life, friendships, school, work etc. Through different activities we will cover three important areas: feeling of competence, confidence and connection.

So, let's get started! First we will get to know each other better!"

2. Wool Web - getting to know each other and rules activity (20 min)

Goals:

- Introduction of the participants.
- Fostering group cohesion.
- Emphasizing the importance of creating a safe space.

Materials:

- A big ball of yarn.
- A3 poster for workshop ground rules.
- Marker for poster.

• Creating the web (10-15 min)

Introduction: *"We will pass this yarn ball around. When you get the yarn, you will share something about yourself and toss the yarn to someone else in the circle. Before throwing the yarn to the next person be sure you are still holding a piece of the string. Together, we will create the connection of our group" Demonstrate the yarn throwing."*

Option A

(If the group knows each other)

"When you get the yarn, you will share 2 things shortly:

1. Your name
2. Weird thing that you're good at

Option B

(If the group does not know each other)

"When you get the yarn, you will share 2 things shortly:

1. Your name
2. One thing that brought you here today

01. MY PLAN B

Once everyone has shared, pause and invite them to take a look at the web together. One of the facilitators/volunteers will say something like:

"This is the web of our class — each of us contributes to the whole group and each of us is important for our workshops to be successful. Someone will bring motivation and new ideas, others emotional thoughts, jokes, calmness etc (you can mention some of the things they mentioned in the activity). All these things are valuable, and I am excited to meet each of you and see how you will contribute to our group's net."

While one facilitator is slowly collecting the yarn back together (or gently placing the web in the centre), the other facilitator shows the prepared poster with the workshop rules.

- Group safety and rules discussion **(5-7 min)**

One of the facilitators/volunteers share:

"During these workshops, we will share our thoughts and experiences. To feel safe doing that, it helps to have some clear ground rules for how we want to treat each other in this group. We have prepared a few basic workshop rules, and we'd like to show them to you now."

The facilitator briefly reads the rules from the poster:

Workshop ground rules (on the poster):

1. Everyone has the right to have their own opinion.
2. No judging or putting others down.
3. When one person speaks, everyone else listens.
4. Be mindful to leave time and space for others to speak.
5. We respect the agreed time (for activities, breaks, sharing).
6. We respect privacy and confidentiality – what is shared in the group stays in the group.

Facilitator short reflection:

"These are the rules we suggest for our workshops. They are here to help us create a safe and respectful space for everyone. Is there anything important you feel is missing, or something you would like to add or slightly change?"

01. MY PLAN B

Allow 1–2 quick comments if participants want to adjust or add something (optional, very short).

Facilitators closing part:

"Thank you. We'll keep this poster visible in all our workshops, and we'll try to follow these rules together. If at any point you feel that we are not following them, it's okay to kindly remind the group. By being here and continuing with the workshop, we are all agreeing to respect these rules and to take care of this group together."

3. What's on my plate (20 min)

Goals:

- To bring awareness to responsibilities, emotions, and stressors that currently take up space in daily life.
- To recognize personal sources of support and joy that help balance stress.
- To connect with peers through sharing of the personal challenges and their normalisation.

Materials:

- What's on my plate worksheet (one for each participant) - Appendix 1.1.
- Pens.
- Flipchart board.
- Marker for the board.

Description:

- One of the facilitators introduce the first topic - competence (2 min)

*"Sometimes life can feel really challenging, and those challenges can cause stress. When we feel able to handle these challenges, we're more likely to manage stress effectively. **Feeling capable in a particular area - knowing you have the skills or strategies to deal with a task or problem - is what we call feeling competent.** During the next two workshops we will explore some skills that can help you feel more in control of your own life."*

To start, let's first bring our minds into the present. We all came to these workshops with many other things happening in our lives. We have some responsibilities, worries, we are parts of different relationships, hobbies. Imagine your life right now as a plate."

01. MY PLAN B

What's currently on it? What takes up space in your thoughts and energy, both pleasant and unpleasant?

You'll now create your own plate using words to represent what's going on in your life - your responsibilities, emotions, stressors, support systems, and the things that bring you joy."

Note to facilitators: During this activity, remind the participants that they don't have to draw/write or share anything that they don't want to. They can draw symbols and only share the thing they feel comfortable sharing with their pair.

One facilitator introduces all the steps of the activity, while the other is giving the working sheets to participants.

- Filling out the plate **(5 min)**

Distribute one "plate" sheet per participant. Allow 5 minutes for individual filling out.

- Sharing **(10 min)**

Split participants in pairs and encourage them to share both of their „plates“ with each other.

On the board, write down questions that can encourage sharing in pairs:

- "What's taking up the most space on your plate right now?"
- "What helps when your plate feels too full?"

After 5 minutes, tell them that half of the time has passed. After 9 minutes encourage them to finish their thoughts because there is one minute left until the end of the exercise.

Optional: Invite a few participants to share insights in the large group.

01. MY PLAN B

- Discussion to wrap up the activity (3 min)

*"Thank you for sharing and for being open – even just with your partners.
When our plate is very full, our body and mind send us signals that we are stressed.*

*In one word or one short sentence: **what are some signs of stress you notice in yourself when your plate is too full?** It can be how you feel, what happens in your body, or how you behave."*

- (Second facilitator writes a few key words on the flipchart, e.g. "tired", "headache", "angry", "can't focus", "can't sleep", "avoid things". Take about 3–4 answers. After participants have shared their answers distribute them into the categories of signs of stress written on flipchart - mental, emotional, physical, behavioural)

"You've already mentioned many important signs. We can put them into four simple groups: Mental, emotional, physical, behavioural"

- (This can be additional examples if you want to fill out or mention:
Mental: hard to focus, lots of worrying or racing thoughts, feeling overwhelmed.
Emotional: feeling nervous, sad, irritated, or easily frustrated.
Physical: headaches, tense muscles, tiredness, trouble sleeping, or stomach problems.
Behavioural: pulling away from others, procrastinating, working too much, or using food/phone/screens to cope.)

*"It's important not to ignore these signs. **They tell us we might need to slow down, ask for support, take something off our plate, or add something that helps us relax and recharge.** In the next activities/workshops, we'll look at what we can actually do when our plate feels too full – how to respond to difficult situations in ways that help us feel more in control.*

Thank you for taking the time to look at what's on your plate today."

01. MY PLAN B

4. Main activity: Plan B (40 min)

Goals:

- To reflect on how stress, habits, and emotions influence our first reactions, and how we can manage them better.
- To build problem-solving skills by working through real-life scenarios in groups.
- To strengthen creativity, communication, and teamwork while coming up with new solutions.

Materials:

- Scenario + Paper A cards - Appendix 1.2.

Description:

- Introduction (5 min)

“One skill that is important for feeling more competent to deal with challenges in different areas of life is our ability to solve problems. We can face many different problems; from small everyday ones like fixing a broken chair, to big ones like choosing our carriers, communicating issues in relationships etc.”

How do you decide what to do to solve a problem that you are facing? What helps you solve it? How do you feel/react when a problem seems unsolvable?

Note to facilitators: some of the things participants might say is that they solve problems by thinking of different options, listening to their intuition, asking for help from a friend, trying to look at the problem from an outside perspective or remove yourself from the situation for a while to calm down etc. Lead a short discussion towards different strategies when faced with problems - some that are more thought through, and others that are more impulsive and unplanned. You can also talk about why or when each of these is (un)helpful.

“Life rarely goes exactly as planned. Sometimes unexpected challenges show up, and how we react can really make a difference. Also, sometimes our first reactions are not the ones that are best for us.

In this activity, you'll work in small groups to explore two responses to a challenge — your first reaction (Plan A), and a more supportive or creative response (Plan B).”

01. MY PLAN B

- Group work (**10 min**)

While one facilitator is dividing the group into 4 groups and giving instructions. After that the second facilitator is giving the scenario to each group.

Instructions for participants:

- Read the scenario and the Plan A reaction together in a group.
- Think about why Plan A is an unhelpful reaction and create a more helpful, flexible response (Plan B).
- Prepare to present both versions as a short skit (max 1 minute) or a summary. One person presents.

- Presentation (**20 min**)

Each group comes to the front, reads the scenario and Plan A and then presents their skit or summary. They can choose what is more comfortable for them.

After each group presents, invite the rest of participants together to discuss the presented Plan B.

Ask them:

What makes Plan B better than Plan A?

Is there anything you would do differently in Plan B?

Note to facilitators: Through the discussion, help participants recognise unadaptive ways of dealing with challenges and recognize more helpful ones. Discuss what situations does Plan B prevent (e.g. argument, misunderstandings), or what situations it helps make possible (e.g. feeling better without attacking the other person, not creating more damage).

Scenarios:

Note! Scenarios and Plan A reactions that you will give to participants can be found in the appendix. Here, you can find the scenario and an explanation of what makes the plan A unhelpful, as well as some ideas for more adaptive reactions. This can help you as a facilitator during discussions.

01. MY PLAN B

For high school students (ages 16–17):

1. You and a close friend were supposed to meet up, but they cancelled at the last minute.

Plan A Behaviour: silent treatment, snarky social media post, escalating conflict rather than talking — result: damaged friendship and loneliness.

Plan B: Postponing sending an answer until the emotions have calmed down, expressing how the cancellation made you feel, asking how you can avoid it next time etc.

2. You missed the deadline to submit an important assignment.

Your teacher doesn't allow late submissions, and you're worried about how this will affect your grade.

Plan A Behaviour: lying or avoiding, not taking responsibility or asking for an extension — result: worse relationship with teacher and missed learning.

Plan B: contacting the teacher in advance to see what options you have, apologising, analysing what made you late and how you can avoid it next time.

3. Your parents planned a summer family trip without asking you.

You were hoping to spend the break with your friends, but now you have to go away for several days.

Plan A Behaviour: reacting with anger, name-calling, avoiding communication, withdrawing into the phone during the trip instead of trying to find ways to enjoy — result: increased conflict with parents, missed chance to enjoy parts of the trip, and damaged trust in the relationship.

Plan B: communicate your other plans and try to find a compromise, go to the family trip but discussing with the family how you can avoid this situation from happening again, trying to make the best out of the situation and use it to bond with your family, plan some other way of spending time with your friends

4. It's a really busy month at school; you have three written exams and two oral ones.

You are tired and scared that you won't be able to do everything in time.

Plan A Behaviour: procrastination, venting instead of preparing, planning how to cheat, avoiding responsibility — result: increased stress, falling behind with studying, and risk of failing or damaging relationships with teachers.

Plan B: asking someone for help with studying, organizing your time by creating schedules, creating a list of things to do and everyday goals, contacting teachers to see if it's possible to postpone some of the assignments, taking extra care of your health (including exercise, healthy food and enough sleep) etc.

01. MY PLAN B

For young adults (ages 18–21):

1. You and your friend were supposed to meet up, but they cancelled at the last minute.

Plan A behaviour: silent treatment, snarky social media post, escalating conflict rather than talking — result: damaged friendship and loneliness.)

Plan B: Postponing sending an answer until the emotions have calmed down, expressing how the cancellation made you feel, asking how you can avoid it next time etc.

2. You got a summer job that you're not really excited about.

You took it because you need the money, but you're not looking forward to the work.

Plan A Behaviour: ignoring inner signals, lack of engagement at work, using avoidance/coping through phone and sleep, instead of trying to find other ways to make your days better and regain control over the things you can control — result: exhaustion, dissatisfaction, missed opportunities to learn skills or build connections, and lower overall well-being

Plan B: listen to yourself, take a risk and decline the job to look for another one, quitting if it starts to affect your mental health, talking with your superiors to see if you can be transferred to different tasks/departments, trying to have a fulfilling private life so that you can cope with this life phase more successfully (asking support from friends, taking up hobbies, eat healthy, sleep well and exercise etc.)...

3. Your roommate never cleans up after themselves.

You nicely asked them to clean something once or twice, and they did it, but they still always leave the apartment messy.

Plan A Behaviour: taking on extra work, passive aggression instead of direct conversation — result: built-up resentment and worse household tensions.

Plan B: Have a serious conversation where you express how you feel (avoiding attacking them), coming up with the solution together, creating a schedule that will be visible, expressing your biggest concerns and being willing to compromise (lower your standards a little bit), trying to understand the life habits of the other person.

4. You are texting someone you like but they usually don't reply for hours.

You are tired and scared that you won't be able to do everything in time.

Plan A Behaviour: overthinking, constant checking, seeking reassurance through social media, reacting with passive-aggressive behaviour — result: increased anxiety, unhealthy communication pattern, possible tension or misunderstanding in the relationship

Plan B: calming yourself down with comforting self talk, trying to find other alternatives for this behaviour (business, texting habits...), communicating that you noticed it takes the person long to answer and check the reason behind it - expressing how it makes you feel and openly listening to the explanation, directly asking if they are interested in continuing dating etc.

01. MY PLAN B

5. Final reflection (10 min)

To conclude the workshops wrap up it with open questions for participants:

- How does your plate overfilling affect your plan A and B reactions?
- How could you use Plan B thinking in your real life when things don't go as planned?
- How do you think feeling more competent in problem-solving could affect other areas of your life (school, relationships, work)?

*"Today we explored the first characteristic of three - **competence**. We saw how challenges can fill up our plate and how stress can push us toward quick, automatic reactions - our Plan A. But we also practiced slowing down, creating a Plan B, and using problem-solving, flexibility, and support to respond in ways that actually help us.*

Building competence doesn't mean we won't face challenges - it means we can recognize them, trust in our skills, and know that we have more than one way to handle them.

For next time, I invite you to notice situations in your daily life where you could use a Plan B approach. Even small moments of pausing and choosing differently are steps toward feeling more competent and in control."

6. Evaluation Time (3 min)

Goals:

- Give feedback on the workshop.

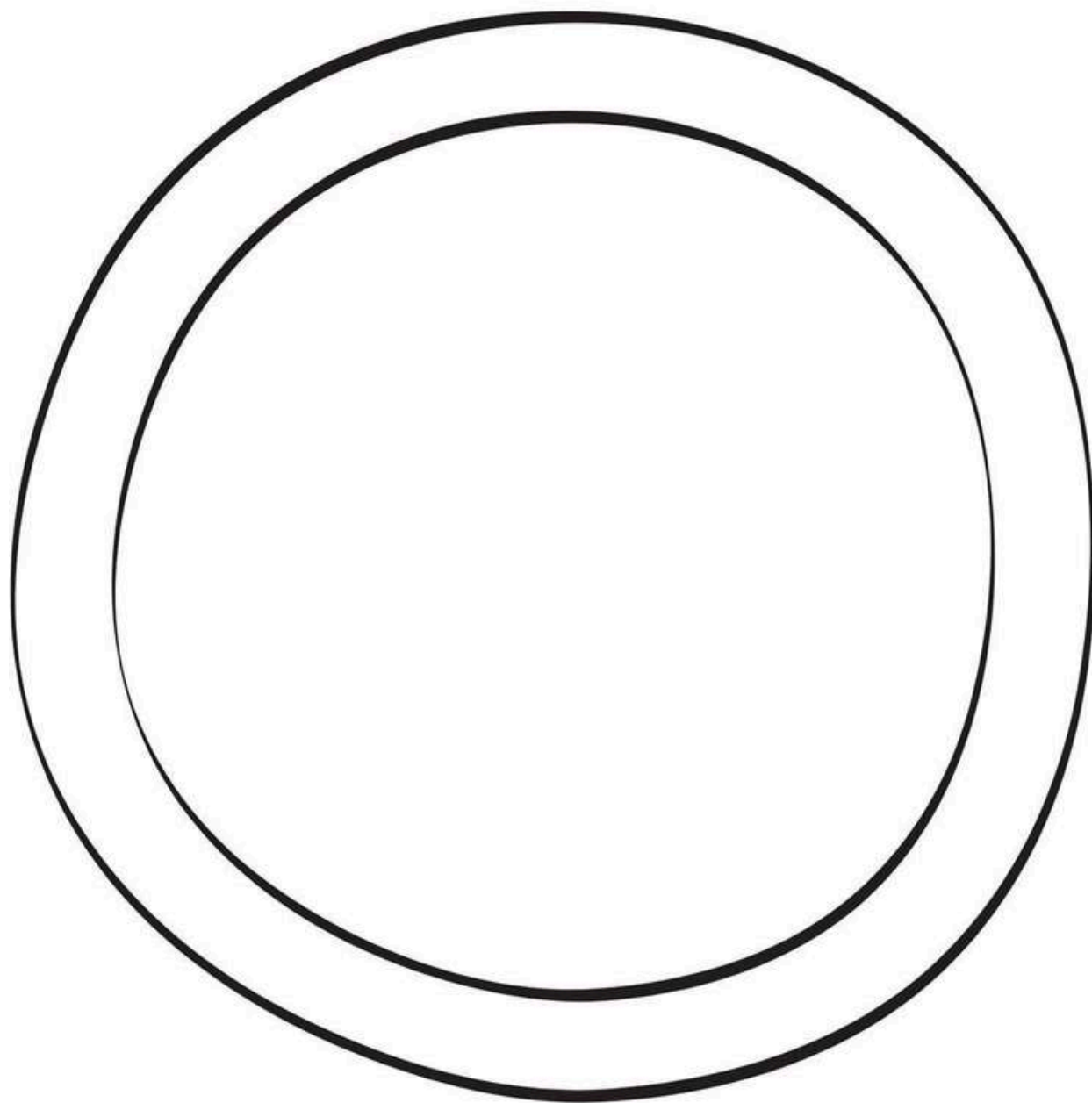
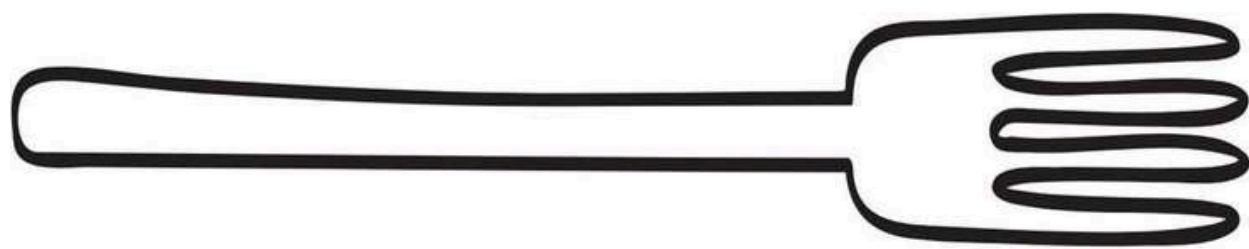
Materials:

- Evaluation form (one per participant) - Appendix 1.3.

Description:

Distribute the evaluation sheets to each participant.

"To finish today's workshop, we'll spend a few minutes filling out the evaluation. This is your chance to share your thoughts about the activities, what you found helpful, and any suggestions for improvement. Your feedback is important and will help us make future workshops even better. We will do this after every workshop. We encourage you to be honest so because we want to take your opinions in consideration."



Appendix 1.2.

For high school students (ages 16–17):

1. You and a close friend were supposed to meet up, but they cancelled in the last minute.

Plan A: It made you angry because this is the third time they cancelled in the last month. Thoughts about how they put themselves first keep going through your mind. You sent them a passive aggressive message and then decided to ignore their response.

2. You missed the deadline to submit an important assignment.

Your teacher doesn't allow late submissions, and you're worried about how this will affect your grade.

Plan A: You got anxious about the conversation with your teacher, so you avoided contacting him. Today was the deadline but you still didn't send him the assignment. You will send it to him in a few days when you finish and if he asks anything pretend that you didn't know today was the deadline.

3. Your parents planned a summer family trip without asking you.

You were hoping to spend the break with your friends, but now you have to go away for several days.

Plan A: You get frustrated by them insisting you have to go with them. You tell them they are stupid for not asking you what you would like, before organising the trip. You storm out of the apartment, closing the doors behind you loudly. During the trip you are moody and often spend time on your phone talking to your friends.

4. It's a really busy month at school; you have three written exams and two oral ones.

You are tired and scared that you won't be able to do everything in time.

Plan A: You are overwhelmed. You don't have any motivation to start and spend hours scrolling on your phone instead of studying. You and your friends keep talking about how horrible your professors are and how you won't show up in school. You start feeling like there is no point in even trying to study.

For young adults (ages 18–21):

1. You and your friend were supposed to meet up, but they cancelled at the last minute.

Plan A: It made you angry because this is the third time they cancelled in the last month. Thoughts about how they put themselves first keep going through your mind. You sent them a passive aggressive message and then decided to ignore their response.

2. You got a summer job that you're not really excited about.

You took it because you need the money, but you're not looking forward to the work.

Plan A: Your gut feeling was telling you not to do it, but you didn't want to risk not finding another job. You don't feel motivated and can't wait to go home every day. When you get home, you usually just scroll on your phone and go to sleep.

3. Your roommate never cleans up after themselves.

You nicely asked them to clean something once or twice, and they did it, but they still always leave the apartment messy.

Plan A: You will clean everything by yourself and not tell them anything — it's easier than arguing. Later you'll make a sarcastic comment or a joke hoping they will understand that they need to change their habits.

4. You are texting someone you like but they usually don't reply for hours.

Plan A: You are worried that they are ignoring you on purpose and start to wonder if you did anything wrong. You keep checking to see if they answered and decide to send a follow-up text. You go through their social media to check if they were active. When they do reply you decide to also not reply to them for the next few hours.

Appendix 1.3.

Workshop Evaluation Form

Please rate the following statements from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

1. The overall workshop met my expectations.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. The trainer was well-prepared and engaging.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. The activities were useful and relevant.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. If I could change something about the workshop, it would be ...

5. What I can use from the workshop in my everyday life is ...

6. My favourite moment during this workshop was ...

Thank you for your time & feedback



02. STRONG VOICE

90 minutes

Materials

Pens – one per participant; How to Say No worksheet (Appendix 2.1) – one copy per participant; Flipchart (or whiteboard) and markers - *used during the reflection after Communication Styles in Motion to summarize characteristics of passive, assertive, and aggressive communication*; Evaluation form (Appendix 2.2) – one copy per participant.

Main goal

To help participants **strengthen their ability to express themselves assertively and take initiative in group and real-life situations**, through experiential learning, teamwork, and self-reflection.

Objectives

- Recognize and distinguish between passive, aggressive, and assertive communication styles.
- Understand how assertive communication supports healthy relationships, self-respect, and effective collaboration.
- Increase awareness of their personal boundaries and how to express them confidently and respectfully.
- Practice saying “no” and expressing opinions or needs assertively in a safe, supportive environment.

Required Competences for Peer Educators / Youth Volunteers

- Good facilitation skills, especially in youth-centered communication and group dynamics.
- Ability to create a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment.
- Experience guiding reflection and encouraging peer support.
- Ability to manage time effectively in activities and adapt to group needs.
- Basic knowledge of communication styles.
- Modeling and supporting assertive communication and respectful boundaries, encouraging assertive communication.
- Recognizing, addressing, and mediating conflicts effectively.

02. STRONG VOICE

Challenges and Solutions

Challenge: Uneven participation or dominance by some participants.

Solution: Assign rotating roles (leader, timekeeper, note-taker) and use pair and small group work to involve everyone. Encourage quieter participants with gentle prompts and positive reinforcement.

Challenge: Participants may feel anxious or frustrated during surprise challenges.

Solution: Normalize feelings of frustration; frame obstacles as learning opportunities to practice flexibility, problem-solving, and teamwork). Facilitate group discussion focused on coping strategies and resilience.

Challenge: Participants may struggle to say “no” or assert themselves.

Solution: Model assertive communication and give clear, step-by-step examples. Encourage students to try and leave their comfort zone and see this activity as acting out a role. Praise small improvements.

Challenge: Participants may push boundaries or tease each other during exercises.

Solution: Set clear ground rules about respect and safety at the start. Intervene promptly and use reflection questions to reinforce the importance of respecting boundaries.

Challenge: Difficulty connecting workshop skills to real-life situations.

Solution: Include guided reflection questions that ask participants to identify one real-life scenario where they could apply assertiveness, initiative, or boundary-setting skills. Prepare examples that are relatable to young people.

02. STRONG VOICE

1. Introduction (2 min)

Goals:

- Quick revision of the last workshop.
- Introduction to the topic.

Description:

"Welcome back everyone!"

*Last time we talked about **what's on our plate** – all the things that fill our day and our head. We also said that when our plate is too full, it's easier to react in a quick, automatic way – our **Plan A**. Then we practiced looking for a **Plan B** – a different reaction that helps us more.*

Today we're going to build on that.

*We'll talk about **how to stand up for ourselves in a calm way** – how to say what we think and feel, how to say "no", and how to set boundaries without hurting others. These skills can help us feel more in control in school, at home and with friends.*

So let's start!"

2. Wool Web - getting to know each other and rules activity (20 min)

Goals:

- Raise the energy of the group.
- Introduce the topic.
- Experience and recognize the difference between passive, aggressive, and assertive communication styles through a body-based activity.

Description:

Ask everyone to start walking freely around the room. Encourage them to make eye contact, smile, and move naturally.

After about 20 seconds, tell them: *"In this activity, we'll explore how we express ourselves and communicate boundaries in different ways — not through words, but through our tone, posture, and presence."* Tell them to pair up with the person nearest to them. Each pair decides who is **Person A** and who is **Person B**.

- Explain that in each round, one person will lead, and the other will follow **(5-7 min)**

02. STRONG VOICE

Round 1:

Say: "Person A, start walking around the room in any direction. Person B, your job is to follow them closely behind. When I clap, you switch roles. The person who was leading, is now the one who follows, and the person who was following now has to lead around the room."

Do a couple of rounds just to get them used to following and switching.

Round 2:

In this round, the participants have the same task, except this time, the student being followed turns around to their partner and gives them a high five (with both hands). Then they switch and now Person A is following Person B and the process repeats. Repeat this a few times and move to round 3.

Round 3:

This time, when the facilitator claps, the student being followed, turns around and says "Stop". Don't give instructions on how to say "stop", they should do it however it feels natural to each participant. They switch roles and repeat the process. After a few switches, move to round 4.

Round 4:

In this round, instruct the participants to turn around and say "Stop" in an aggressive way. Demonstrate it by raising your voice, taking a threatening body posture, stepping closer to the partner etc. This can be outside of the comfort zone for some of the participants, so make sure to demonstrate it confidently and encourage them to try to do it the best they can, to get into the role, embody it and act it out. Allow both people in the pair to try it out through a few switches.

Round 5:

This time, instead of saying "stop" in an aggressive manner, they should do it in a very shy and quiet (passive manner). Again, demonstrate it and allow both sides to experience it a few times.

Round 6:

For the last round, ask participants to say "stop" in a firm and confident, but not attacking way. Demonstrate it by saying stop clearly, seriously, assertively, not quiet or too loud with a confident body posture.

02. STRONG VOICE

- Reflection of the activity (10-15 min)

Facilitator:

"Let's take a few minutes to reflect on what you just experienced. There were no right or wrong ways of saying stop — the goal was simply to notice how different ways of communicating feel, both for the person speaking and the person listening."

Guide the discussion using the following questions:

- How did this exercise feel?
- Which way of saying **"stop"** felt the most natural to you?
- Which way felt the most uncomfortable? Why?
- How did you feel when your partner was passive? How did you feel when they were aggressive? How did you feel when they were assertive?
- Which way of communicating do you think was the most effective? Why?
- Can you relate any of these communication styles to situations in your everyday life?

(While participants are sharing, the second facilitator writes key words on the flipchart under three headings: **Passive**, **Assertive**, and **Aggressive**.)

After participants have shared several examples, summarize their observations:

Facilitator script:

"What you experienced today are three different communication styles.

*When we avoid expressing our thoughts, feelings, or needs because we are afraid of conflict or rejection, we are communicating **passively**.*

*When we express ourselves by ignoring or disrespecting the other person's needs or boundaries, we are communicating **aggressively**.*

*When we clearly and confidently express our thoughts, feelings, and boundaries while also respecting the other person, we are communicating **assertively**.*

*Assertive communication is about finding a balance — **I matter, and you matter too**. It allows us to protect our own boundaries while maintaining respectful and healthy relationships. It doesn't mean being loud or always getting what we want. It means expressing ourselves honestly, calmly, and respectfully."*

02. STRONG VOICE

Facilitator closing:

"During the rest of today's workshop, we'll practice what assertive communication looks like in everyday situations and how we can use it when setting boundaries or saying 'no'."

3. How to Say No (12 min)

Goals:

- To increase awareness of personal boundaries and how they relate to assertive communication.
- To build confidence in saying "no".
- To introduce a simple strategy for saying "no" assertively.

Materials:

- How to Say No worksheet (Appendix 2.1)

Description:

- Introduce the topic by asking participants **(5 min)**
 - How easy or difficult is it for you to say "no" when you don't want to do something?
 - What usually makes saying "no" difficult?
 - What worries people about saying "no"?

Allow a few participants to share their thoughts.

Then continue:

Facilitator:

"We've just seen that assertive communication means expressing our needs while respecting the other person. One of the most common situations where we need to communicate assertively is when we want to say no."

Saying 'no' can feel uncomfortable. Many people worry about disappointing others, hurting someone's feelings, or creating conflict. That's completely normal. The good news is that saying 'no' is a skill, and like any skill, it becomes easier with practice."

The handout I'm giving you offers a simple structure that can help when saying 'no' feels difficult."

02. STRONG VOICE

Distribute the worksheet.

Ask participants to spend **2–3 minutes** reading the **No Formula** individually. While reading, ask them to:

"Circle or underline one idea that you think would be most helpful for you when saying 'no'."

After they finish, briefly discuss (5 min)

- Which step stood out to you?
- Which step do you think would be the hardest to use?
- Is there anything on the handout that surprised you?

Invite a few short answers.

Conclude:

Facilitator:

"Reading about assertiveness is one thing—but using it in real life is something we need to practise. In our next activity, you'll have the chance to try the No Formula in different everyday situations and notice what feels natural and what you want to improve."

4. Circle of Refusal (25-30 min)

Goals:

- To practice using assertive verbal and nonverbal communication when rejecting requests or setting boundaries.
- To strengthen self-confidence in maintaining one's position under social pressure.
- To increase awareness of emotions and body signals that appear when saying "no".

Description:

Facilitator:

"Now it's time to practise assertiveness. Remember, your goal isn't to convince the other person or make them happy. Your goal is simply to communicate your boundary clearly, calmly, and respectfully."

The other person may try to persuade you by negotiating, joking, making you feel guilty, or insisting. Your task is not to argue or explain endlessly—you simply repeat your boundary using the No Formula and confident body language."



02. STRONG VOICE

The activity is carried out in a circle. One participant turns to the person on their left and makes a request. The other participant responds by refusing assertively. The first participant then continues to apply gentle social pressure (e.g. negotiating, teasing, guilt-tripping or insisting) two to four times, while the other person maintains their boundary using the **No Formula** and assertive body language.

Example:

"Can I touch your hair?"

"No, I'd rather not."

"Come on, just for a second."

"No. Please stop asking. I'm not comfortable with that."

Before beginning, demonstrate the activity. One facilitator makes the request while the other demonstrates an assertive refusal. Depending on the group size, divide participants into one or two circles (maximum 10 participants per circle). One facilitator should support each circle.

Remind participants:

"Keep the situations realistic, playful and respectful. Avoid personal or sensitive topics. Remember, we're practising communication skills—not trying to win the conversation."

If one participant continues pushing for too long, gently stop the interaction and move to the next pair.

- Reflection & Closing **(10 min)**

Invite participants to remain seated in the circle.

Facilitator:

"Let's take a few minutes to reflect on what we experienced. There are no right or wrong answers - we're simply interested in what you noticed about yourself during the activity."

Possible reflection questions:

- How did it feel to say "no" repeatedly?
- What was the easiest part of being assertive?
- What was the most challenging part?
- What helped you stay firm when the other person kept insisting?
- Which part of the **No Formula** do you think will be most useful in your everyday life?

02. STRONG VOICE

Allow several participants to share voluntarily.

Closing message

Facilitator:

"Today we explored what assertive communication feels like - not just by talking about it, but by experiencing it.

We learned that being assertive means expressing our thoughts, feelings and boundaries honestly while also respecting the other person's rights and feelings. Saying 'no' doesn't mean rejecting people - it means taking care of yourself while maintaining respectful relationships.

Remember, assertiveness doesn't mean saying 'no' to everything or putting yourself before everyone else. Healthy relationships involve kindness, cooperation and compromise, but they also require healthy boundaries. The goal is to find a balance between caring for others and respecting yourself.

Like any skill, assertiveness becomes easier with practice. Every time you communicate your needs clearly and respectfully, you're strengthening your confidence and your ability to build healthy relationships.

Thank you for your openness and participation today."

5. Evaluation Time (3 min)

Goals:

- Give feedback on the workshop.

Materials:

- Evaluation form (one per participant) - Appendix 2.2.

Description:

Distribute the evaluation sheets to each participant.

Facilitator talk: *"To finish today's workshop, we'll spend a few minutes filling out the evaluation. This is your chance to share your thoughts about the activities, what you found helpful, and any suggestions for improvement. Your feedback is important and will help us make future workshops even better."*

Appendix 2.1. - How to say no?

Saying “no” is an important skill for setting boundaries, breaking people-pleasing habits, and giving your own needs space. It helps you stay in control of your life and protects your well-being.

Many people struggle with saying “no” because they genuinely care about others and worry, they’ll seem selfish. But declining a request when you don’t want something isn’t unkind - it’s an act of self-care.

In situations when someone is not accepting “no” as an answer, using this structure can help you to stand your ground:

The “No” Formula

- 1. Say a clear “no”**
- 2. Give a brief explanation** (optional)
- 3. Suggest an alternative** (optional)
- 4. Repeat the same short sentences**
- 5. Name the impact (how you feel, what you need or a consequence)**

1. Start with a clear “no”

You don’t need long introductions or excuses - a simple, clear “no” is not rude, it is honest.

“No, thank you. I am not interested.”

“Sorry, I’m not available.”

2. Offer a brief explanation (not mandatory)

If you want to provide context, keep it **short and factual (1 sentence is enough)**. **Avoid over-explaining** or giving too many details, as that can lead to negotiation.

“I need to focus on something else at the moment.”

“I have already eaten.”

3. If appropriate, offer an alternative

This is useful when you want to maintain the relationship but still set a boundary. Only offer alternatives if you genuinely want to - not out of guilt.

"I can't help today, but you might try asking."

"I am too tired to go out today, but maybe we can arrange it next week?"

4. If they push further, repeat your message

Some people may try to persuade you or ignore your boundary. Stay consistent, simply **repeat your "no" using the same short explanation**.

Repetition makes you seem determined and keeps you in control without getting into long debates. Resist the urge to start giving more explanations or to over apologize.

"I understand, but I really don't want to do it."

"I'm sorry, but I can't come."

5. If the pressure continues: name the impact & set a clear boundary

If someone repeatedly ignores your "no," use an **assertive message** to communicate how their behaviour affects you and what you need from them.

You can use this structure:

"When you____, I feel____. Please / I need you to____."

"When you push me to change my mind, I feel pressured. Please respect my decision."

"You keep insisting after I've said no and it makes me uncomfortable. I need you to stop asking or I will leave."

Example:

A friend keeps insisting you take a shot at a party.

Friend: Come on, just one shot! Everyone's doing it.

You (step 1 – say "no" + brief explanation): No, thank you. I don't really feel like drinking right now.

Friend: Just one won't hurt! Don't be such a buzzkill.

You (step 2 – reiterate "no"): Sorry, I can see you are excited but I'm not doing it.

Friend: C'mon, live a little! You'll regret missing out.

You (step 3 – redirect to another solution): I said I don't want to. I can join your toast with my soda though.

Friend: You're no fun.

You (step 4 – express feelings/assertive message): I feel really uncomfortable when you are pushing me to drink. I told you it will upset my stomach so please respect my choice that I don't want to. I will be happy to join the toast without the shot though.

Appendix 2.2.

Workshop Evaluation Form

Please rate the following statements from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

1. The overall workshop met my expectations.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. The trainer was well-prepared and engaging.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. The activities were useful and relevant.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. If I could change something about the workshop, it would be ...

5. What I can use from the workshop in my everyday life is ...

6. My favourite moment during this workshop was ...

Thank you for your time & feedback

CONFIDENCE WORKSHOPS



03. MY RESPONSE

90 minutes

Materials

Mood Check-In - sticky notes, markers, large paper or board for a mood map;
Emotion Reflection Journal - markers, paper, sheet with questions (optional);
Stress scenario situations - stress scenario sheets, markers, pens;
Evaluation sheet.

Main goal

To help young people **recognize, reflect on, and manage their emotions, build self-confidence and reduce anxiety** in everyday social and academic situations.

Objectives

- Increase emotional awareness and vocabulary through mood mapping and reflection.
- Foster peer support and positive relationships by sharing emotions safely.
- Identify common anxiety-provoking scenarios relevant to youth.
- Introduce and practice practical emotional regulation strategies.
- Empower participants to apply learned strategies in real life.

03. MY RESPONSE

Challenges and Solutions

Challenge: Youth leaders may lack confidence in managing strong emotions in the group.

Solution: Prepare with a clear script, stay calm, encourage peer support, and keep the space safe. Have a referral plan for additional support.

Challenge: Participants might feel reluctant to share feelings openly.

Solution: Use visual tools (emoji drawing) to ease expression and promote sharing in pairs before larger groups.

Challenge: Emotional regulation techniques may feel unfamiliar or awkward at first.

Solution: Practice together in a supportive way and emphasize trying one or two strategies rather than perfection.

Challenge: Time management with multiple activities.

Solution: Follow the suggested timings and be flexible to prioritize reflection and emotional safety.

03. MY RESPONSE

1. Introduction (2 min)

One of the facilitator make a short introduction:

"In the last workshop, we looked at what's on our plate – all the things that fill our day – and how, when it's too full, we react automatically, our Plan A. We also explored passive, aggressive, and assertive communication, and practiced saying a clear and respectful 'no', because assertiveness means: I matter, and you matter too.

*Today we're **moving into the confidence part of our program**. We'll focus on noticing and managing our emotions in stressful situations, so we can feel more in control, less anxious, and more confident. This workshop will help us practice noticing emotions in ourselves and others, which is a key part of self-confidence."*

2. Activity - Mood check-in activity (10 min)

Goals:

- Help participants notice and show how they feel right now.
- Support them to think about their feelings and talk with others in a safe way.
- Build trust and positive connections between participants.

Materials:

- Sticky notes.
- Markers or pens.
- Big paper or board with two lines (Happy ↔ Sad, Calm ↔ Anxious).

One of the facilitator introduce the topic:

"Emotions are signals to our body and mind that let us know how we're feeling and what's important to us. There is no such thing as positive or negative emotions. (Very important to notice)

There are only pleasant and unpleasant emotions. So those signals are important to understand ourselves better. At the same time, they can be like colors on a palette, like on continuum— sometimes bright and light, sometimes dark and heavy.

When we learn to recognize and understand our emotions, we can manage them better. This helps us feel more confident and less anxious."

03. MY RESPONSE

Another facilitator:

1. Give each participant a sticky note and a marker.
2. Ask them to draw an emoji that shows how they feel right now - no words, just a visual representation
3. On a large paper (it can be on the floor) or board (usually in classrooms), draw two axes, for example:
 - Horizontal: Happy $\longleftrightarrow$ Sad
 - Vertical: Calm $\longleftrightarrow$ Anxious
4. Let participants place their emoji where they feel it belongs on the map.
5. Place them in pairs; participants should guess and discuss why their partner chose that emoji.

Then they take turns sharing their answer to the question - "Why this emoji today?" (This encourages emotional reflection and supports building positive relationships.)

Facilitator wraps up by saying:

*"Our moods are constantly shifting throughout the day, and that's completely normal. **By noticing our feelings and understanding why we feel a certain way, we can choose how to respond instead of just reacting.** This ability to regulate our emotions helps us feel more confident in ourselves, make better decisions, and handle challenges without feeling overwhelmed. Remember, every time you pause and check in with your emotions, you're practicing a skill that strengthens both your emotional awareness and your self-confidence."*

3. Activity - Emotion reflection journal (20 min)

Goals:

- Help participants think more deeply about their emotions (build self-awareness).
- Support them to connect feelings, thoughts, and actions.
- Practice sharing and listening in pairs to build trust and confidence.

Materials:

- Paper (journals, notebooks, or loose sheets).
- Pens, markers, or colored pencils.
- Board or big paper with reflection questions written down (optional handouts).

03. MY RESPONSE

One facilitator:

*"Now that we've noticed our emotions, it helps to take some quiet time to think more deeply about them. **Reflecting on our feelings helps us understand ourselves better - that's self-awareness. Self-awareness means noticing your thoughts, emotions, and reactions in different situations.** When we are aware of how we feel and why, we can make better choices, respond to challenges calmly, and trust ourselves more — and this is exactly what builds our self-confidence."*

Instruction:

- Individual reflection and drawing **(10 min)**

Ask participants to write and/or draw their emotions from the previous activity, based on these questions (Write down on the board or flip chart)

- What happened today that made me feel this way?
- How did my body feel when I had this emotion? (*optional for high school participants - Do you feel it in your chest, stomach, shoulders?)
- What was I thinking at that moment?
- Did this feeling change how I acted or what I did?
- If this feeling was a color or shape, what would it look like?

Give them a note to be creative and honest - there are no right or wrong answers!

- Partner sharing **(10 min)**

Give them instructions to share their reflections in pairs, with a note for equal time to talk and active listening without judgment. Each pair has 5 minutes for sharing.

4. Activity - Stress scenario situations (40 min)

Goals:

- Identify common anxiety-provoking scenarios relevant to youth.
- Introduce and practice practical emotional regulation strategies.
- Empower participants to apply learned strategies in real life.

Materials:

- Stress scenario sheets.
- Markers, pens.

03. MY RESPONSE

One of the facilitators will place 4 real-life scenarios around the room, while other will give instructions:

You will walk and choose the scenario you relate the silently. You have 3 minutes. And when you form groups based on the chosen scenario; it can't be fewer than three in a group. If there are two, then give them instructions to pick the second choice.

- Step 1 - forming the group **(5 min)**

1. Place 4 stress scenario cards around the room. (They can go on the floor if they are not in classrooms, while in the classroom they can be placed on the edges of the room placed on tables, one each).
2. Give participants an introduction to walk and choose the scenario they relate to most silently. They have 3 minutes, let them know when time is over.
3. And then they form groups based on the chosen scenario; it can't be fewer than three in a group. If there are two, then give them instructions to pick the second choice.

- Step 2: Group reflection on scenario situations **(15 min)**

Once they form the group, one facilitator give each group a sheet (Appendix 2) with questions they need to discuss, within 15 minutes.

Group questions for discussion:

- Have you experienced this? What feelings came up?
- What thoughts did you have?
- Where in your body did you feel stress or anxiety? (*For high school participants - Do you feel it in your chest, stomach, or shoulders?)
- **What do you usually do to cope with this situation? *Note for facilitator* - Make sure that each group present this one and put focus on it).**

Facilitators go around the room and ensure everyone speaks and create a non-judgmental space, and check how it is going.

03. MY RESPONSE

- Step 3: Group presentations (**max 20 min**)

Group sharing:

- After group discussions, ask each group to choose one representative to present their answers shortly.
- Encourage them to **focus especially on coping strategies** - what works for them and how.
- As groups present, **one of the facilitator write down coping strategies on the board/flipchart.**
- Keep it short and simple, so that participants can later see a wide range of strategies in one place.

After each group presents facilitators can add **3 basic techniques** (Grounding 5-4-3-2-1, Tense & Release, Mini Shake-out) on the board with a short explanation and show them, and invite group to try as well:

1. Grounding

5-4-3-2-1 Instructions for participants:

Look around you and name:

- 5 things you see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you hear
- 2 things you smell
- 1 thing you taste

Goal for participants:

To bring their attention back to the present moment and reduce feelings of anxiety or being overwhelmed.

2. Tense & Release

Instructions for participants:

- Squeeze fists, shoulders, or legs tightly for 5 seconds.
- Slowly release the tension.
- Repeat 2–3 times if needed.

Goal for participants:

To release physical stress stored in the body and promote a sense of relaxation.

03. MY RESPONSE

3. Mini Shake-out

Instructions for participants:

- Shake arms, shoulders, or legs for a few seconds.
- End with one deep breath in and out.

In addition, facilitators may choose to add a few **lighter, everyday strategies** that young people are more likely to use, for example:

- Listening to music or dancing to a favorite song
- Going for a short walk or moving the body
- Talking to a friend or sending a message
- Taking a short break and drinking water
- Drawing, doodling, or writing thoughts down
- Spending time outside in fresh air

Facilitator note: These can be introduced not as a “lesson,” but as examples to add to what participants already share. That way, they feel their own ideas are the most important.

5. Reflection (10min)

- Which strategy would you actually try the next time you feel stressed?
- Which reaction surprised you today?
- What helps you slow down before reacting?

Facilitator closing words:

“Remember, noticing your feelings and choosing how to respond is a powerful skill you are building. The good news is that you can actually choose how to respond! You have tools and strengths inside you, so keep practicing and supporting each other. This is a first step toward feeling more confident. In the next workshop, we will move another step deeper into confidence and learn how to embrace it!”

03. MY RESPONSE

6. Evaluation Time (3 min)

Distribute the evaluation sheets to each participant.

Facilitator:

"To finish today's workshop, we'll spend a few minutes filling out the evaluation. This is your chance to share your thoughts about the activities, what you found helpful, and any suggestions for improvement. Your feedback is important and will help us make future workshops even better."

Appendix 3.1.: High-school students (15–17) (cut each and put on table)

Feeling nervous to talk to someone new

Imagine being in class or at a school event and noticing someone who seems really interesting. You want to talk to them, but the moment you think about it, your heart starts racing. Your mind fills with thoughts like: *What if I say something stupid? What if they laugh at me? What if I get rejected?* The fear of embarrassment feels stronger than your wish to connect, so you decide to stay quiet instead. Later, you might regret not trying, which can leave you feeling frustrated and disappointed in yourself.

Being ghosted by someone you like

You've been texting with someone you like — joking, sharing stories, maybe even making plans to meet. Suddenly, without any explanation, they stop replying. At first, you think they're just busy, but as the days pass, nothing changes. You replay every message in your head, wondering if you said something wrong. Feelings of hurt, confusion, and even self-blame start to build. Silence from the other person feels heavy, leaving you with the impression that you're not important or not good enough.

Worrying about school exams and future plans

As exams get closer, the pressure begins to rise. Grades, college applications, and expectations from parents and teachers all start to weigh on you. Even friends talk about their plans, which makes you feel like you should already have everything figured out. Stress and worry make it hard to concentrate on studying, and sometimes you can't sleep properly. You wake up tired and anxious, feeling as though the responsibility is too much to handle.

Feeling pressure and comparison on social media

Scrolling through Instagram, TikTok, or Snapchat, you see classmates posting about trips, achievements, or perfect selfies. Suddenly, your own life feels boring or not good enough. You start comparing yourself, thinking: *They look better, have more friends, are doing more exciting things.* Even if you know deep down that people usually post only the best parts of their lives, the comparisons still hurt. After a while, it becomes hard to enjoy your own experiences because you're constantly measuring yourself against what you see online.

Appendix 3.2.: Older youth (18–21) (cut each and put on table)

Meeting new people in a new place

Starting college, a new job, or moving to a different city means stepping into the unknown. You don't know anyone, and every new social situation feels like a test: *Will they like me? Do I belong here?* Instead of feeling excited, social events can feel stressful and intimidating. You might try to act confident, but inside you're nervous and unsure. If connections don't happen quickly, feelings of loneliness and self-doubt can grow.

Dating and relationship stress

Romantic relationships now feel more intense and serious. Arguments or misunderstandings can feel overwhelming, and breakups can deeply affect your confidence. You may constantly worry about saying or doing the wrong thing, or about losing someone you care about. Strong emotions — like jealousy, sadness, or anger — can take over and make it hard to focus on school, work, or other parts of your life. Balancing everything at once can feel exhausting.

Career and study pressure

The future feels like it's approaching quickly, and questions about careers, studies, and the "right" path can be stressful. You may feel pressure to succeed or to live up to your family's expectations. At the same time, seeing peers who seem to know exactly what they're doing makes you compare yourself and feel left behind. Worries about failing exams, missing opportunities, or not finding a job can make it difficult to relax or stay motivated.

Social media and comparison stress

Even as a young adult, social media creates pressure to look successful. You see peers celebrating achievements, relationships, or experiences, and it can feel like you're not moving fast enough in life. Comparing yourself to others can spark feelings of doubt, insecurity, and frustration. Over time, this constant comparison can drain your energy and self-confidence, even when you are actually doing fine in reality.

Appendix 3.3.:

Group questions for discussion:

- Have you experienced this? What feelings came up?
- What thoughts did you have?
- Where in your body did you feel stress or anxiety? (*For high school participants - Do you feel it in your chest, stomach, or shoulders?)
- **What do you usually do to cope? What works and what doesn't?**

Appendix 3.4.

Workshop Evaluation Form

Please rate the following statements from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

1. The overall workshop met my expectations.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. The trainer was well-prepared and engaging.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. The activities were useful and relevant.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. If I could change something about the workshop, it would be ...

5. What I can use from the workshop in my everyday life is ...

6. My favourite moment during this workshop was ...

Thank you for your time & feedback



04. CONFIDENCE IN YOU

90 minutes

Materials

Introduction - Flipchart or whiteboard, marker (no materials needed for participants);
Inner critic - A4 paper or notebooks for each participant, markers, pencils, colored pens, sticky notes (optional, for writing negative thoughts) - **Facilitator tip:** You can prepare an example "inner critic" character or a card with sample messages (e.g., "I'm not good enough");

My confidence shield - A4 paper for each participant, markers, colored pens, or crayons, flipchart or whiteboard for group reflection;

Evaluation - Evaluation sheets for participants, pens.

Main goal

To help young people notice negative thoughts, practice being kind to themselves, explore their strengths, and build confidence while feeling more in control of their emotions.

Objectives

By the end of the workshop, participants will:

- Identify their inner critic, understand its messages, and practice responding with self-compassion.
- Recognize and reflect on their personal strengths and qualities, and receive positive feedback from peers.
- Express confidence physically, explore different emotions through posture and gestures, and observe diverse expressions of confidence.
- Articulate what confidence means to them, connect their inner strengths with actions, and practice empathy and peer support.

04. CONFIDENCE IN YOU

Challenges and Solutions

Challenge: Some youth may feel shy sharing their thoughts.

Solution: Make it clear that sharing is optional and private reflection is always okay.

Challenge: Staying focused or doing mindfulness/reflective exercises can be hard.

Solution: Encourage participation gently, keep exercises short, and normalize different comfort levels.

Challenge: Limited time for all activities.

Solution: Focus on the main parts of each activity, skip details if needed, and adjust timing on the spot.

Challenge: Some participants may feel awkward showing emotions or confidence with their bodies.

Solution: Model first as facilitators, encourage creativity, and let participants join at their own pace without pressure.

Challenge: A few participants may joke or distract others to avoid uncomfortable feelings.

Solution: Acknowledge the joke lightly, then kindly bring the group back to the activity and remind them of the goal.

04. CONFIDENCE IN YOU

1. Introduction (1 min)

Facilitator introduction:

"Last time we explored emotions, stress and ways to respond instead of reacting automatically. Today we're taking the next step by exploring confidence. We'll look at the thoughts that sometimes hold us back, discover our strengths, and practise ways to build confidence in ourselves and others."

2. Activity - Inner Critic (35 min)

Goals:

- To help participants notice their inner critic and recognize how it influences their thoughts, emotions, and behaviour.
- To increase self-awareness by identifying automatic negative self-talk.
- To introduce self-compassion as a healthier way of responding to difficult thoughts.
- To strengthen self-confidence by practicing kinder and more supportive self-talk.

Materials:

- A4 paper or notebooks (one per participant).
- Markers, pencils, or coloured pens.

• Introduction (5 min)

Facilitator:

"Before we start, I'd like you to think about a few everyday situations."

"Imagine you studied hard for a test but didn't get the grade you hoped for. What's the first thing you might say to yourself?"

(Pause and invite one or two answers.)

"Or maybe you send a message to someone and they don't reply for hours. Or you compare yourself to someone on social media. What thoughts usually pop into your mind?"

04. CONFIDENCE IN YOU

Allow participants to share a few examples. If needed, offer prompts such as:

- *"I'm not good enough."*
- *"I always mess things up."*
- *"Everyone else is better than me."*
- *"I'll never get this right."*

Continue:

*"Many of us have thoughts like these from time to time. They often appear automatically and can feel completely true in the moment. This is what we call our **inner critic** - the voice that judges us, doubts us, or tells us we're not good enough."*

The important thing to remember is that everyone has an inner critic. It doesn't mean something is wrong with you. It's simply one part of how our minds work, especially when we're stressed, worried, or afraid of making mistakes."

Today we're going to get to know that voice a little better - not to get rid of it, but to learn not to believe everything it says."

To do that, we're going to imagine what our inner critic might look like if it became a character. It could be a monster, an animal, a strict teacher, a robot, a tiny mosquito, or anything else that comes to mind. There are no right or wrong answers."

Facilitator note: Guide participants step by step. Do not give all instructions at once.

- Step 1: Drawing Your Inner Critic **(10 min)**

Instructions for participants:

- Draw your inner critic as a character, animal, monster, object, or abstract shape.
- Give it a name.

Tell participants they have **10 minutes**. Inform them when there are **5 minutes** and **1 minute** remaining.

Optional: Play quiet background music while participants are drawing.

04. CONFIDENCE IN YOU

- Step 2: What Does Your Critic Say? **(5 min)**

Facilitator script:

"Now think about what your inner critic usually says to you. What are the messages or thoughts it repeats? Write them down on the back of your paper. Remember, these are your critic's thoughts - not facts. This is simply an opportunity to notice them."

Examples:

- "I'm not good enough."
- "I'll never get this right."
- "I always mess things up."

Instructions for participants:

Write down the thoughts your inner critic commonly tells you.

Facilitator note: Ask participants to write these thoughts on the back of their paper so they don't feel pressured to share them later unless they want to.

- Step 3: How Does It Make You Feel? **(3 min)**

Facilitator script:

"Now read those thoughts quietly to yourself. Notice how they make you feel. Do you notice anything happening in your body? Maybe tension in your shoulders, butterflies in your stomach, a heavy feeling in your chest, or something else. Simply notice what is there."

Instructions for participants:

Write down:

- How these thoughts make you feel.
- Where you notice those feelings in your body.

04. CONFIDENCE IN YOU

- Step 4: Talk to Your Critic Like You Would to Your Best Friend (5 min)

Facilitator script:

"Now imagine your best friend came to you and said exactly the same things you just wrote down."

(Pause.) "Would you answer them the same way your inner critic speaks to you?"

(Pause.) "Probably not."

"Instead, you would probably try to comfort them, encourage them, or remind them that making mistakes are a normal part of learning."

Instructions for participants:

Write down one or more supportive responses you would give to a friend experiencing these thoughts.

Example:

"It's okay to feel nervous. You're doing your best, and that's enough for today. I believe in you."

- Step 5: Pair Sharing (5 min)

Facilitator script:

"Turn to the person next to you and briefly introduce your inner critic by sharing its name or character. If you feel comfortable, you can also share one supportive sentence you wrote in response."

You do not need to share the negative thoughts unless you want to. Listen actively, respectfully, and remember that sharing is always voluntary."

Instructions for participants:

Share with your partner:

- The name or character of your inner critic;
- One supportive response you wrote (optional).

04. CONFIDENCE IN YOU

- Reflection & Wrap-up (5–7 min)

Guide a short group discussion using some of the following questions:

- What surprised you about your inner critic?
- Was it easier to be kind to a friend than to yourself? Why do you think that is?
- What is one kind sentence you could tell yourself the next time your inner critic appears?

Facilitator closing words:

"Today we met a part of ourselves that everyone has - our inner critic. Although it often sounds convincing, it doesn't always tell the truth.

We also discovered that we already know how to respond with kindness—we do it naturally when we support a friend. The challenge is learning to offer that same kindness to ourselves.

Confidence doesn't grow because we never make mistakes. It grows when we learn to respond to ourselves with understanding instead of constant criticism. Every time you notice your inner critic and choose a kinder response, you're strengthening your confidence and building a healthier relationship with yourself."

Facilitator note: Responding to personal disclosures

Some participants may choose to share very personal or self-critical thoughts during the discussion. If this happens, acknowledge their courage without exploring the issue in depth in front of the group.

Possible responses include:

- *"Thank you for sharing that with us. I imagine it wasn't easy to say that out loud."*
- *"Thank you for trusting the group with your experience."*
- *"It sounds like those thoughts have been difficult for you. Thank you for sharing them."*
- *"Many people experience thoughts like these, and you're not alone in feeling this way."*

Avoid trying to solve the problem or beginning an individual counselling conversation during the workshop. After the session, check in privately with the participant to see how they are feeling and whether they would like additional support. If needed, follow your organisation's safeguarding or referral procedures.

04. CONFIDENCE IN YOU

3. Activity – Confidence Sculptures (10 min)

Goals:

- To energise the group after a reflective activity.
- To explore how confidence can be expressed through body language.
- To reinforce the connection between posture, body language, and self-confidence.

- Facilitator introduction (1 min)

Facilitator:

"We've just explored the voice that sometimes holds us back. Now let's shift our focus to something different - how confidence can be expressed through our bodies.

Sometimes changing the way we stand, move, or carry ourselves can also influence how we feel. Let's explore what confidence looks like together."

- Step 1: Create a Confidence Sculpture (5 min)

Divide participants into groups of 4–5.

Facilitator:

"Together, create one frozen sculpture that represents confidence. Think about posture, facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, and how you use the space. There is no right or wrong answer - be creative."

Allow groups **5 minutes** to create and practise their sculpture.

- Step 2: Gallery Walk (4 min)

Instead of presentations, ask each group to freeze in their sculpture while the others walk around and observe.

Facilitator:

"Walk around the room and quietly observe each sculpture. As you look at them, think about one question:

'What makes this sculpture look confident?'"

04. CONFIDENCE IN YOU

After everyone has seen all the sculptures, invite a few participants to share their observations.

Possible prompts:

- What body positions did you notice?
- What made the sculptures look confident?
- Were there similarities between the groups?

Summarise in one minute:

"Even though every group created something different, many sculptures probably included similar elements - standing tall, open posture, eye contact, taking up space, and looking forward. Our body language not only communicates confidence to others, but can also influence how confident we feel ourselves."

4. Activity – My Confidence Shield (25 min)

Goals:

- To help participants identify and reflect on their personal strengths.
- To increase self-confidence by recognising personal qualities and resources.
- To reinforce confidence through positive feedback from peers.

Materials:

- A4 paper (one per participant).
- Markers, coloured pens or crayons.

• Facilitator introduction (2 min)

"Earlier today, we explored the voice that sometimes brings our confidence down. We also experienced how confidence can be expressed through our bodies."

Now we're going to focus on something different - our strengths. Confidence isn't about being perfect or never making mistakes. It also comes from recognising the qualities, skills and experiences that help us deal with challenges."

In this activity, you'll create your own Confidence Shield - a reminder of the strengths you already have."

04. CONFIDENCE IN YOU

- Step 1: Creating My Confidence Shield **(10 min)**

Give each participant an A4 paper and coloured pens. Ask them to write **My Confidence Shield** in the centre. Invite participants to write or draw **4-5 personal strengths, qualities or skills** around the title.

If participants need inspiration, display or read the following prompts:

- When was the last time I felt proud of myself?
- What is something I have achieved recently, even if it seems small?
- What do my friends, family or teachers appreciate about me?
- What personal quality helps me when things become difficult?

Remind participants:

"There are no right or wrong answers. Your strengths don't have to be extraordinary. They might be kindness, humour, curiosity, persistence, creativity, honesty, courage or simply being a good listener."

- Step 2: Sharing in Pairs **(10 min)**

Invite participants to work in pairs.

Facilitator:

"Share one or two strengths from your Confidence Shield with your partner. After listening, your partner's task is to add one additional strength they see in you."
Remind participants to be specific and genuine.

Examples:

- *"I think you're very supportive."*
- *"You're someone who stays calm under pressure."*
- *"I noticed you're really creative."*
- *"You're easy to talk to."*

After both partners have shared, invite participants to add their partner's suggestion to their shield if they wish.

04. CONFIDENCE IN YOU

- Reflection & Closing **(5 min)**

Guide a short group discussion.

Possible reflection questions:

- What was it like to think about your own strengths?
- How did it feel when someone else recognised a strength in you?
- Which activity today helped you understand confidence the most?
- What is one thing you would like to remember about yourself after today's workshop?

Facilitator closing words of the whole workshop

"Today we explored confidence from different perspectives. We noticed the voice that sometimes holds us back, experienced how confidence can be expressed through our bodies, and recognised the strengths we already carry within ourselves."

Confidence isn't something people either have or don't have. It grows through experience, practice and the way we speak to ourselves. Every time you notice your strengths, treat yourself with kindness and take a small step outside your comfort zone, you're building your confidence."

We hope your Confidence Shield reminds you that you already have many qualities that can help you face challenges. Thank you for your openness, creativity and participation throughout today's workshop."

5. Evaluation Time (3 min)

Distribute the evaluation sheets to each participant.

Facilitator:

"To finish today's workshop, we'll spend a few minutes filling out the evaluation. This is your chance to share your thoughts about the activities, what you found helpful, and any suggestions for improvement. Your feedback is important and will help us make future workshops even better."

Appendix 4.1.

Workshop Evaluation Form

Please rate the following statements from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

1. The overall workshop met my expectations.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. The trainer was well-prepared and engaging.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. The activities were useful and relevant.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. If I could change something about the workshop, it would be ...

5. What I can use from the workshop in my everyday life is ...

6. My favourite moment during this workshop was ...

Thank you for your time & feedback

CONNECTION WORKSHOPS



05. BOOST YOUR SIGNAL

90 minutes

Materials

The Listening Experiment - Chairs for pairs or circle, timer, optional: secret instruction cards, whiteboard/flipchart for debrief;

Compassion Drawing - A4 paper per participant, colored pencils, markers, or pens, optional (younger participants): symbolic paper or objects, flipchart/whiteboard for reflections.

Main goal

Help young people build stronger, more supportive relationships by practicing listening and compassion. This will help them feel more connected, accepted, and emotionally strong.

Objectives

By the end of the workshop, participants will:

- See how listening carefully can improve connections and make people feel valued.
- Try out different ways of listening and notice the difference between just hearing and really paying attention.
- Understand what compassion means and how it helps relationships feel safe and caring.
- Think about their own needs to be heard and how they can support others.

05. BOOST YOUR SIGNAL

Challenges and Solutions

Challenge: Participants may feel awkward or shy during silent or emotional parts.

Solution: Normalize discomfort, use gentle humor, validate feelings. Offer opt-out options.

Challenge: Emotional vulnerability during drawing activity.

Solution: Frame the activity clearly beforehand, and offer debrief time. Be available for emotional support.

Challenge: Uneven participation in pairs.

Solution: Rotate pairs if needed, model active participation. Use facilitators as partners if some are left out.

Challenge: Time management.

Solution: Use a timer, pre-warn about transitions, be flexible with discussion timing.

05. BOOST YOUR SIGNAL

1. Introduction (3 min)

One of the facilitator makes introduction:

"Welcome back! In our last workshop, we explored confidence. You practiced noticing your thoughts, understanding your inner critic, recognizing your strengths, and expressing confidence in your body. These activities helped you reflect on yourself, your abilities, and how to respond to challenges with self-awareness and courage.

*With today's workshop, we are starting the last two workshops focused on **connection**. Our first activity will be about **listening**.*

*Listening isn't just about hearing words - it's about making someone feel understood and valued. When we truly listen, we build **trust**, empathy, and stronger connections with others. Today, we'll explore what it means to listen actively and practice how we can connect more meaningfully with the people around us."*

2. Activity 1: The listening experiment (25 - 30 min)

Goals:

- Notice listening habits,
- Experience how interruptions feel, and practice full presence.

Materials:

- Chairs for pairs or circle.
- Timer.
- Secret instruction cards (Appendix 5.1.).
- Whiteboard/flipchart for debrief.
- Paraphrasing worksheet.

Instructions:

- Step 1: Pair Setup (2 min)

- Divide participants into pairs.
- Assign roles: Person A and Person B.
- Give both a paper with the instructions for the first round, they need to read for themselves.

05. BOOST YOUR SIGNAL

- Step 2: Round 1 – First Listening Experience **(3 min)**

Do not share this instructions at loud, they will read it on paper!

Person A: Share a personal challenge or a story with the other person. It can be anything that comes to mind.

Note for facilitator to share: The story can be anything, it doesn't need to be deep or personal.

Person B: Your task for this round:

- While your partner is speaking, constantly interrupt them.
- Give advice or shift the focus of the conversation back to yourself.
- Do this naturally, without telling your partner what you are doing.
- Keep going until the facilitator stops the round.

- Step 3: Group Debrief **(5 min)**

Facilitator asks the whole group:

- *"How did it feel when someone wasn't really listening to you?"*
- *"How natural or uncomfortable was it to interrupt or shift the focus?"*

- Step 4: Round 2 - Listening practice **(3 min)**

Tell participants to stay in the same pairs. Give them new, Round 2 instructions.

Do not share this instructions at loud, they will read it on paper!

05. BOOST YOUR SIGNAL

Person A: Your task for this round:

- Listen to the other person without interrupting or saying anything.
- Be focused on the story and give non verbal signs that you're listening (eye contact, nodding, sounding "mhm").
- Keep going until the facilitator stops the round.

Person B: Share a personal challenge or a story with the other person. It can be anything that comes to mind.

- Step 5: Group reflection (5 min)

Facilitator asks:

- *"How did it feel to speak without interruption?"*
- *"As a listener, what was challenging about staying silent?"*
- *"What makes a good listener in your eyes?"* - **while participants are sharing, another facilitator is writing the answers on the board flipchart**

- Closing the activity (5 min)

Bring the group's attention to the flipchart where you collected answers to:
"What makes a good listener in your eyes?"

Facilitator:

"Let's look at everything you shared. Which of these qualities do you feel are the most essential for a good listener? Raise your hand for the ones you think matter most."

One facilitator circle **3-5 qualities** that receive the most votes.

Other facilitator:

"Now, take a moment and choose one of these qualities that you personally want to practice today or this week. Pick the one that feels most important or most challenging for you."

(Pause for 5-10 seconds so they can choose.)

05. BOOST YOUR SIGNAL

Ask participants to turn to the same partner from the exercise.

"Please share with your partner which quality you chose and why you picked it. Keep it very short - just about 30 seconds each.

This is simply a personal commitment, not a discussion." Give them one minute total.

After pairs finish sharing, bring everyone back together.

The facilitator wraps up the activity: *"Thank you. With this, we close the listening exercise.*

Take your one chosen quality with you into the next conversations today.

Real change starts with small moments of intentional listening."

3. Activity 2: Compassion Drawing (40–45 min)

Goals:

- To explore compassion, empathy, vulnerability, and resilience through creative expression and reflection.
- To increase awareness of how our actions can affect other people.
- To encourage participants to respond to themselves and others with understanding and care.

Materials:

- A4 paper (one per participant).
- Coloured pencils, markers, or pens.
- Optional (for younger participants): symbolic objects instead of detailed drawings.
- Flipchart or whiteboard for reflection.

- Step 1: Drawing Your Safe Place (10–15 min)

Facilitator introduction:

"In the previous activity, we experienced what it feels like to be truly listened to. Feeling heard helps us feel safe and connected.

Now we'd like you to think about a place where you feel safe, calm or accepted. It can be a real place or an imaginary one. This drawing isn't about artistic ability - it's simply a way of expressing what safety means to you."

05. BOOST YOUR SIGNAL

Facilitator note: Give instructions step by step rather than all at once.

Instructions for participants:

- Draw a place where you feel safe, peaceful, or deeply connected.
- Your drawing can be realistic or symbolic.
- There are no right or wrong drawings.

Timing: approximately 10 minutes for younger participants and up to 15 minutes for older participants.

- Step 2: Sharing Your Safe Place **(10–15 min)**

Facilitator script:

"If you feel comfortable, we'd now like to hear about your drawing.

Tell us what this place represents and why it makes you feel safe or connected.

Remember, sharing is always optional. You decide how much you would like to share, and everyone else's role is simply to listen respectfully."

Instructions for participants:

- Share your drawing with the group.
- Explain why this place is meaningful to you.

- Step 3: Symbolic Change **(3 min)**

Facilitator script:

"The next part of the activity is symbolic.

Sometimes, even the places, relationships, or experiences that make us feel safe can be affected by difficult situations or by the actions of other people.

05. BOOST YOUR SIGNAL

In a moment, I will ask you to take the drawing of the person sitting next to you and make a small symbolic change to it. This could mean gently tearing a small piece, lightly crumpling one corner, folding one corner of the paper, or making another small mark.

This activity is not about ruining someone's drawing. It is about noticing our reactions and reflecting on what it feels like when something meaningful to us is changed.

If making this change feels uncomfortable or goes against your values, you may choose not to do it. There is no right or wrong decision, and we will reflect on your experience afterwards."

Instructions for participants:

- Exchange drawings with the person next to you.
- Make one small symbolic change to the drawing (e.g.: tear a small piece, crumple or fold one corner, or make a small mark).
- If you choose not to alter the drawing, simply return it unchanged.
- Return the drawing to its owner.

Facilitator note: If someone refuses to alter the drawing

Some participants may feel uncomfortable tearing, crumpling, or changing another person's safe-place drawing. If a participant refuses, do not pressure or persuade them to complete the task.

You may quietly offer a less intrusive alternative, such as:

- Making one very small symbolic mark,
- Lightly folding one corner of the paper,
- Adding one small line or scribble.

If they still prefer not to participate in this step, simply say:

"That's completely okay. You don't have to do anything that doesn't feel right to you. Your decision is also part of today's learning."

Their choice can later become part of the group reflection.

05. BOOST YOUR SIGNAL

- Step 4: Repair or Rebuild (5 min)

Facilitator script:

"Now take your drawing back and spend a few minutes looking at it.

If it was changed, you may repair it, add something to it, or leave it exactly as it is. There isn't one correct response.

Sometimes difficult experiences leave a mark, but they can also remind us of our ability to heal, adapt, and move forward - with our own strengths and with the support of others."

Instructions for participants:

- Repair, add to, or leave your drawing as it is.
- Reflect on what your drawing represents now.

- Step 5: Group Reflection (15 min)

Facilitator: "Let's reflect together on what this experience was like."

Possible reflection questions:

- What surprised you most during this activity?
- How did it feel when your drawing was changed - or when it wasn't?
- If you chose not to alter someone else's drawing, what influenced your decision?
- How did it feel to repair your drawing, or to decide not to repair it?
- How does this experience relate to compassion?
- What can we do in everyday life when something important to another person has been hurt or affected?

Facilitator closing words:

"Today we explored compassion in a different way. Compassion is not only about being kind when things are easy. It also means recognising when someone is vulnerable, respecting their feelings, and choosing to respond with care.

Some of you chose to make the symbolic change, while others chose not to. Both choices can teach us something about empathy, compassion, and our personal values.

05. BOOST YOUR SIGNAL

In everyday life, we cannot always prevent difficult situations from happening. But we can choose how we respond - to ourselves and to other people. Every time we respond with understanding instead of judgment, we strengthen our relationships and create safer spaces for those around us."

4. Evaluation Time (3 min)

Distribute the evaluation sheets to each participant.

Facilitator:

"To finish today's workshop, we'll spend a few minutes filling out the evaluation. This is your chance to share your thoughts about the activities, what you found helpful, and any suggestions for improvement. Your feedback is important and will help us make future workshops even better."

Appendix 5.1.

ROLE/PERSON A

Round 1

Share a personal challenge or a story with the other person. It can be anything that comes to mind.

Round 2

Your task for this round:

- Listen to the other person without interrupting or saying anything.
- Be focused on the story and give non verbal signs that you're listening (eye contact, nodding, sounding "mhm").
- Keep going until the facilitator stops the round.

ROLE/PERSON B B

Round 1

Your task for this round:

- While your partner is speaking, interrupt them.
- Give advice or shift the focus of the conversation back to yourself.
- Do this naturally, without telling your partner what you are doing.
- Keep going until the facilitator stops the round.

Round 2

Share a personal challenge or a story with the other person. It can be anything that comes to mind.

Appendix 5.2.

Workshop Evaluation Form

Please rate the following statements from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

1. The overall workshop met my expectations.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. The trainer was well-prepared and engaging.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. The activities were useful and relevant.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. If I could change something about the workshop, it would be ...

5. What I can use from the workshop in my everyday life is ...

6. My favourite moment during this workshop was ...

Thank you for your time & feedback



06. GOT YOUR BACK

90 minutes

Materials

Support map - Blank paper (one per participant), pens, coloured pencils;
Final reflection - Papers or other markings to represent gallery stations, post-its, pens, speaker and a phone to play music;
Evaluation - Evaluation forms, last workshop questionnaires, pens.

Main goal

To raise awareness of the value of seeking and giving support, and to recognize personal support networks, in order to empower young people to cope with challenges and manage anxiety more effectively.
Also, to look back on the learning process throughout the workshops as a way of meaningfully closing the program.

Objectives

- Raise awareness of the importance of active seeking for help and offering support to loved ones, and of recognizing subtle as well as direct signals of need.
- Support participants in mapping their personal support systems and recognizing the value of supportive relationships. Encourage reaching out which reduces isolation.
- Encourage reflection on personal growth, competence, confidence, and connection developed throughout the full workshop cycle.
- Promote group cohesion and mutual empowerment through sharing, affirmations and the embodiment of confidence.

06. GOT YOUR BACK

Challenges and Solutions

Challenge: Some may be shy, worried about being judged or embarrassed to act out during the “fainting” or confidence runway.

Solution: Demonstrate the activity yourself first with humor and reassurance, remind them it’s just acting, and emphasize safety. Allow them to opt for a smaller movement if they feel uncomfortable.

Challenge: Time management given many activities in 90 minutes.

Solution: Keep a close eye on the clock, set clear time limits, gently but firmly move activities forward and be ready to adapt pace and activities depending on group engagement.

Challenge: Hesitation to share personal reflections because of a fear of judgment or not wanting to expose personal struggles.

Solution: Emphasize that sharing is voluntary, model openness as a facilitator (give your own small example), and validate every contribution. Allow drawings or symbols instead of words for more privacy.

Challenge: Group energy drop during long reflection segments.

Solution: Quickly make important conclusions and move on to more energetic activities or an energizer. If you missed important points, address them in the ending reflection.

06. GOT YOUR BACK

1. Introduction to the workshop (2 min)

Welcome participants and briefly remind them of what you did in the last workshop.

"Welcome back everyone. Over the past workshops, we have explored teamwork, communication, confidence, and understanding our emotions. Today, we will focus on one very important part of our well-being; and that is the people we have in our community and the support we provide each other. Since it's our last workshop, we will also dedicate a bit more time to closing of the program and saying goodbye."

2. City support walk (25 min)

Goals:

- To recognize that people ask for help in different ways - sometimes openly, sometimes subtly, and sometimes not at all.
- To reflect on the importance of both asking for help and offering support in everyday life to build trust and connection.

Description:

- Introduction (2 min)

Divide participants into 3 to 5 groups. Each group is assigned one of the numbers.

Explain to participants that they will be walking around the space as if they were in a city. They can imagine the streets, the buildings, the river. Allow them to walk for a minute or two, imagining the scenery, smiling and saying hello to neighbours they pass on the streets.

Ask them to stop walking and give them new instructions.

06. GOT YOUR BACK

Round 1 - Dramatic round (5 min)

They should continue walking around the city. At some moment you will call out one number. The participants of that group will start fainting. They will do it theatrically by making a sound and raising their hands. All the other participants need to catch them before they fall and support them/ help them be better! Demonstrate the dramatic fall and emphasize to the participants to be careful and not hurt themselves while pretending to fall. Instruct participants to start.

Allow them to walk for a little while, then say one number. When everyone got help, allow them a few seconds to pretend they are helping them regain consciousness. Then tell them to proceed walking. Repeat the process a few times.

Round 2 - Realistic round (5 min)

After a few repetitions change the instructions. In this round, participants whose number you call have to faint, but more subtly. They can still raise their hands but this time without a sound. Fainting should be noticeable but not exaggerated so it's a bit harder for other participants to catch them. Demonstrate and tell them to start.

Round 3 - Quiet round (5 min)

In the third round the fainting has to be subtle (without hands raising) and voiceless so that other participants need to put a lot of attention into noticing who is not feeling well. Demonstrate and tell them to start.

After a few rounds praise everyone for being great helpers and as a group give an applause for their acting skills. Proceed to reflection.

- Reflection and wrap-up (10 min)

Possible questions to lead group discussion:

- *How did it feel to "faint" in different ways - dramatic, subtle, or quiet? When was it easier or harder to get help?*
- *How easy was it to notice when others were "fainting"? What helped you pay attention?*
- *How can you connect this activity to everyday life?*

06. GOT YOUR BACK

- *In real life, why can asking for help be difficult - and why is it important to communicate our needs or that we need support?*
- *How can we notice and support others who may be struggling silently, and create a culture where asking and offering help feels normal?*

Use this activity to highlight the different ways people may ask - or avoid asking - for help when they are struggling. Discuss why it can sometimes feel uncomfortable to reach out for support, and how staying silent can affect well-being. Encourage participants to think about how we can notice when others are going through a hard time, why it's important to actively offer support, and what practical ways we can do so.

Facilitator script:

"Great job, everyone! Today's activity showed us two important things: first, asking for help is a sign of strength. It can be hard but it's very important to have people who know that we are struggling because it's an important step to getting better. Second, sometimes people may need support even if they don't say it out loud. Noticing subtle signs that someone is struggling and stepping in can make a big difference.

In real life, this might look like noticing a friend who seems stressed at school, a sibling who seems down at home, or a classmate who looks overwhelmed with their workload. By practicing both noticing others and reaching out when we need support, we build stronger connections, trust, and confidence in ourselves and in our communities."

3. Support map activity (15 min)

Goals:

- To explore personal support networks and identify close, occasional, and potential relationships.

Materials:

- Blank paper (or with light grid), pens or coloured pencils

Description:

Facilitator script:

"Support is key when facing challenges. Let's map out the people, places, and activities that help you feel safe, calm, or strong."

06. GOT YOUR BACK

- Instructions **(10 min for drawing)**

Ask participants to draw a circle in the centre of their paper - this represents themselves. Around the centre circle, they draw outer circles representing different sources of support. These can be people (friends, family, mentors), places (home, youth centre), or activities (sports, art, music). Label or illustrate each circle.

Instruct the participants to highlight three people who they feel they can always ask for support or talk to when they are feeling down.

Optional: Draw lines between support circles to show connections.

- Sharing and reflection **(5 min)**

Invite participants to pair up and briefly share their Support Maps. After a few minutes facilitate brief group discussion with questions;

- Who are your people of trust?
- How can knowing your support system help you in tough times?
- In which ways can you ask for help when you feel like it's hard to do it? (e.g. write it down, send a text that they need help)
- Why is asking for help a sign of strength?

Facilitator script:

"Support networks help us feel less alone and more capable. Your map is a reminder that help is always nearby. "Sometimes asking for help means reaching out to professionals, not just friends or family. At the end of today's workshop, you'll receive a small handout with contact information for local psychological support services, in case you or someone you know ever needs it. Also, if you need any other kind of information, don't hesitate to ask us after the workshop."

06. GOT YOUR BACK

4. Final Reflection (25 min)

Goals:

- Review and consolidate learning.
- Encourage self-awareness and emotional reflection.
- Promote peer appreciation and positive feedback.
- Boost self-confidence.

Materials:

- Papers or other markings to represent gallery stations.
- Post-its.
- Pens for each participant.
- Speaker and phone to play music.

Description:

- Quick Introduction (3 min)

Remind participants that together they will look back on all the workshops to become aware of what they have learned, how they have grown, and what was important to them.

Emphasize that this reflection is an opportunity to listen to themselves and others, and that all contributions are welcome.

- Reflection Gallery (10 min)

Place four posters around the room, each labeled with one theme.

- Competence: Something new I learned or a skill I developed.
- Confidence: A time I felt more confident.
- Connection: An experience of connecting with the group or a group member.
- A moment that helped me feel less anxious or face a fear.

Facilitator script:

"Today we'll create a reflection gallery to remind ourselves of our time together and the things we learned during it. The room will have three areas - one for Competence, one for Confidence, and one for Connection. Each represents a key theme of our workshops."

06. GOT YOUR BACK

Give each participant several sticky notes or small papers and markers.

Invite them to “walk through the gallery” and leave their reflections at each station. They can use words, drawings, symbols, or emojis to represent their meaningful moments.

Encourage participants to take their time, move freely between stations, and add as many notes as they wish.

Facilitator note: Play soft background music to create a reflective atmosphere.

- **Wrap up (5 min)**

Once everyone has contributed, walk together through the “gallery” as a group, reading and noticing the different experiences and themes that emerged.

Invite participants to comment on their reflections or share one lesson or experience that was especially important to them.

To close the program, facilitators highlight common themes like personal growth, mutual support, sense of community, and anxiety reduction.

- **Confidence Runaway (5 – 10 min)**
- **Preparation (3 min)**

Give each participant a post-it note and invite them to write one strength they've seen in the person sitting to their right during these six workshops. Think of something that really stood out - a quality, skill, or positive behaviour that made a difference.

Instruct them to hand the post-it to the person.

- **Runaway (5 min)**

- Form two lines facing each other.
- One student at a time walks down the centre while the rest of the group cheers.

Play some fun and energetic music in the background.

- When a student arrives at the end, they read the strength that the other participant wrote for them and they do a powerful pose.
- The rest of the group cheers even louder.
- If there is time, you can repeat the runway twice.

06. GOT YOUR BACK

5. Evaluation time (10 min)

Distribute the evaluation sheets to each participant.

Facilitator talk:

"To finish today's workshop, we'll spend a few minutes filling out the evaluation. This is your chance to share your thoughts about the activities, what you found helpful, and any suggestions for improvement. Your feedback is important and will help us make future workshops even better."

*First, you will fill out the evaluation for this, last workshop.
The other evaluation will be for the whole program.*

6. Goodbye (1 minute)

Goals:

- Say goodbye and hand out mental health support contacts.

Materials:

- Mental health contacts handout.

Description:

At the end of the final workshop, take a moment to warmly thank the group for their participation and energy throughout the program. Offer a heartfelt and encouraging goodbye and distribute the mental health support handout.

Please make sure to prepare small handouts in advance with contact information for local psychological support services and distribute them to participants at the end of the workshop.

Appendix 6.1.: Last workshop questionnaire for the whole programme

Post-Workshop Evaluation

At the end of the program, we kindly ask you to complete this short evaluation questionnaire. The questions below help us assess the quality of our program and improve it further. The evaluation is completely anonymous, so we ask you to answer each question as openly and honestly as possible.

You can respond to each question by selecting a number from 1 to 6, where:

- 1 – strongly disagree
- 2 – mostly disagree
- 3 – somewhat disagree
- 4 – somewhat agree
- 5 – mostly agree
- 6 – strongly agree

General Impressions

1. The workshops in this program were interesting to me. 1 2 3 4 5 6
2. The workshop facilitators were well prepared. 1 2 3 4 5 6
3. I would recommend this program to a friend. 1 2 3 4 5 6
4. After participating in the program, I can notice some positive changes in myself. 1 2 3 4 5 6

If yes, please describe some of the positive changes you have noticed:

5. Participating in the program has helped me feel better about myself. 1 2 3 4 5 6
6. Participating in the program has helped me feel better in relation to other people. 1 2 3 4 5 6

7. Competence

a) In the workshops, I have learned some ways in which I can strengthen my sense of competence. 1 2 3 4 5 6

b) Participating in the program has helped me feel more competent in different areas of my life (problem-solving, communication, managing emotions, etc.). 1 2 3 4 5 6

c) Please list at least five competences you have become aware of or have strengthened during the program:

8. Confidence

a) In the workshops, I have learned some ways in which I can strengthen my self-confidence. 1 2 3 4 5 6

b) Participating in the program has helped me feel more confident. 1 2 3 4 5 6

c) Please list at least five personal strengths you have become aware of during the training:

9. Connection

a) Participation in the program has increased my awareness of the importance of close relationships and mutual support. 1 2 3 4 5 6

b) Participation in the program has helped me form - or, if we already knew each other, strengthen - my relationship with at least one member of the group. 1 2 3 4 5 6

c) Please list at least four ways in which you can nurture relationships with your peers and/or people close to you:

10. Most valuable part of the program

What was the most valuable part of the program or workshops for you? Please briefly describe what helped you the most, was the most useful, or left the strongest positive impression.

Thank you for your participation and the effort you put into completing this evaluation and all the workshops!

Appendix 6.2.

Workshop Evaluation Form

Please rate the following statements from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

1. The overall workshop met my expectations.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. The trainer was well-prepared and engaging.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. The activities were useful and relevant.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. If I could change something about the workshop, it would be ...

5. What I can use from the workshop in my everyday life is ...

6. My favourite moment during this workshop was ...

Thank you for your time & feedback

Evaluation Results



07

07. Evaluation of the Piloting of the Peer-to-Peer Empowerment Programme

To evaluate the clarity and usefulness of the guidelines, as well as the quality and relevance of the workshops, the programme was piloted by all three partner organisations. Each organisation implemented the programme with two different youth groups.

The workshops were implemented in a variety of settings, including schools, civil society organisations, and youth centres. Each workshop cycle was facilitated by two youth leaders, who received ongoing support from a mentor in their respective country throughout the implementation process. Overall, 12 youth leaders and 6 mentors were involved in the piloting phase. In total, 100 young people with fewer opportunities between the age of 16 and 30 participated in the cycle of 6 workshops.

Evaluation of the piloting consists of three parts:

- a) participant's evaluation of each workshop
- b) final evaluation of the program
- c) feedback from youth leaders and mentors



Evaluation of the workshops

After each workshop participants completed a short anonymous questionnaire consisting of three Likert-type scale items (1= *strongly disagree*, 5= *strongly agree*) and three open-ended questions. The same questionnaire was used after every workshop. The statements used in the survey, as well as the mean ratings of participants' answers can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Average participant scores for each workshop

Number of the workshop	The overall workshop met my expectations.			The trainer was well-prepared and engaging.			The activities were useful and relevant		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
1	4.28	0.77	64	4.73	0.51	64	4.48	0.79	50
2	4.37	0.72	57	4.75	0.51	57	4.52	0.74	42
3	4.63	0.67	49	4.82	0.44	49	4.81	0.47	36
4	4.76	0.47	51	4.88	0.33	51	4.80	0.46	40
5	4.57	0.75	53	4.79	0.41	53	4.82	0.45	39
6	4.80	0.45	50	4.90	0.36	50	4.77	0.49	39

M= mean score, *SD*= standard deviation, *N*=number of participants

Participants in all the youth groups reported that all six workshops met their expectations, that the facilitators were well prepared and interesting and that the activities they participated in were useful and relevant. Low or moderate standard deviations also indicate that participants shared similar views regarding the statements.

Open Ended Feedback

Overall, participants responded very positively, with most reporting that they would not change anything about the workshops. Those who suggested improvements mainly recommended including more interactive activities instead of lecture-style explanations, allowing additional time for discussion, and providing even more practical exercises and advice.

Participants highlighted gaining valuable skills and insights such as understanding the importance of calming down before an impulsive or emotional reaction, feeling more confident in setting boundaries, increasing awareness of personal stress triggers and learning how to manage them better. They also reported feeling less alone in their worries, becoming more open to seeking help and expressing emotions, and more aware of others who may be struggling.

When it comes to their favourite moments, participants particularly valued opportunities for drawing, reflection, interactive games and sharing different perspectives and experiences in pairs or within group discussions. They also reported feeling less alone in their worries, becoming more open to seeking help and expressing emotions, and more aware of others who may be struggling.

A few of their responses for each question are presented below:

Suggested improvements

- *"I'd try to introduce the subject through games."*
- *"Even more tasks, less explaining like a lecture, more explaining in the types of interesting tasks."*
- *"Absolutely nothing, every activity hit the nail on the head."*

Practical takeaways

- *"How to set my boundaries more confidently."*
- *"I can recognize when I'm getting annoyed. Usually, I just explode, but now I can feel it coming and I can just walk away for a second."*
- *"Seeing that I'm not the only one who stays awake at night worrying about the future makes me feel better."*

Favourite aspects

- *"Knowing that this is a place where nobody judges me."*
- *"Drawing what we currently feel inside ourselves."*
- *"Just laughing and having a good time."*
- *"When we realized we all get nervous for the same stuff."*

Final evaluation of the program

At the end of the pilot implementation, 74 participants completed an anonymous evaluation questionnaire assessing their overall experience, perceived personal changes, and the extent to which the programme supported the development of competence, confidence, and connection. The questionnaire combined Likert type scale items (from 1 - *strongly disagree* to 6 - *strongly agree*) with open-ended questions.

Overall satisfaction

Participants reported high satisfaction with the examined aspects of the program. On average, they rated the workshops as interesting ($M = 5.23$) and the facilitators as well-prepared ($M = 5.64$). Most of the participants also agreed that they would recommend the program to a friend ($M = 5.14$). The frequencies of responses are presented in Figure 1.

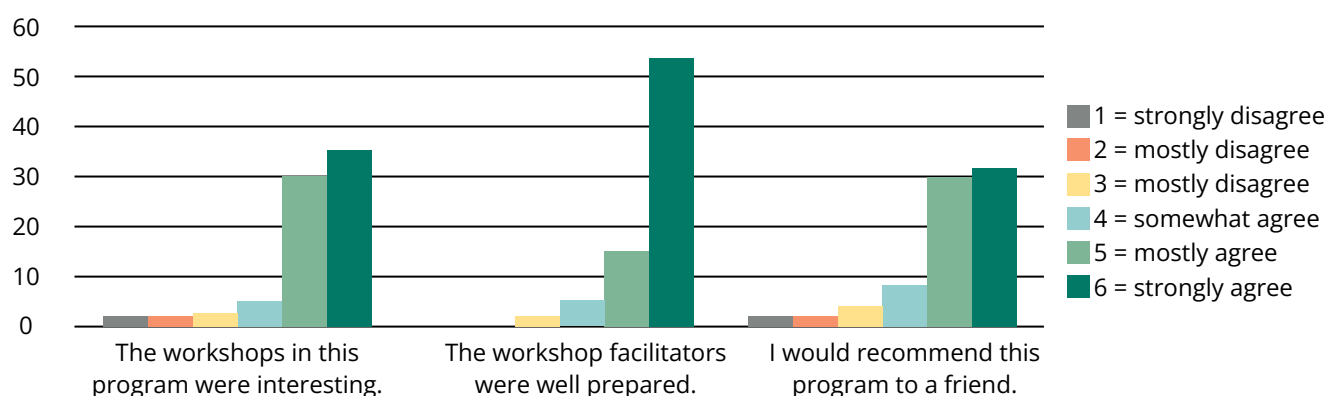


Fig. 3. *Frequencies of Responses to the Programme Satisfaction (N=74).*

Perceived Personal Impact

We also explored whether participants perceived any personal changes following their participation in the programme. Overall, 86.5% agreed, to some extent, that they had noticed positive changes in themselves ($M = 4.86$). In addition, 89.1% reported that the programme had helped them feel better about themselves ($M = 5.07$) and 89.2% that it helped them feel better in their relationships with others ($M = 5.12$). The frequencies of responses across agreement levels are presented in Figure 2.

Participants most frequently reported increased self-confidence, improved communication, and a stronger sense of belonging within the group. Many described feeling more comfortable expressing their thoughts, speaking in front of others, and setting personal boundaries. They also highlighted becoming more aware of themselves and others, improved emotion regulation and stress management, and better overall mood and well-being. Some of their answers are:

"I feel less scared to speak up in front of everyone."

"I feel like I actually belong in the group."

"Greater awareness of how I communicate with myself and others"

"I am more assertive, emotionally literate and grateful"

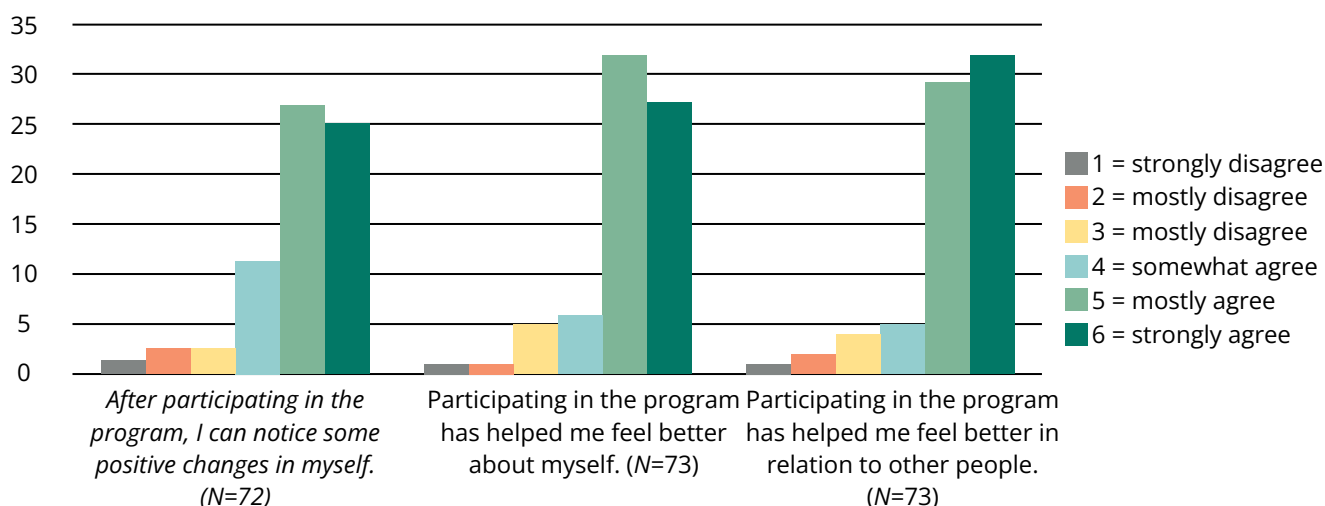


Fig. 4. Frequencies of Participants' Responses to the Perceived Personal Impact Items.

These findings suggest that young people perceived meaningful personal benefits from the programme, particularly in relation to self-confidence, communication, emotional well-being, and peer relationships.

Programme outcomes

Participants were also asked to reflect on perceived changes in competence, confidence, and connection following their participation in the programme. Overall, the responses were highly positive. Frequencies of their responses can be seen in Figures 3, 4 and 5.

When it comes to aquired knowledge, 91.9% of participants agreed, to some extent, that they had learned new ways to strengthen their sense of competence ($M = 4.89$), while 90.6% reported learning strategies to build their self-confidence ($M = 5.09$). In addition, 90.60% expressed feeling more competent in different areas of life following the programme ($M = 5.11$), and 89.2% reported increase in perceived self-confidence ($M = 5.08$).

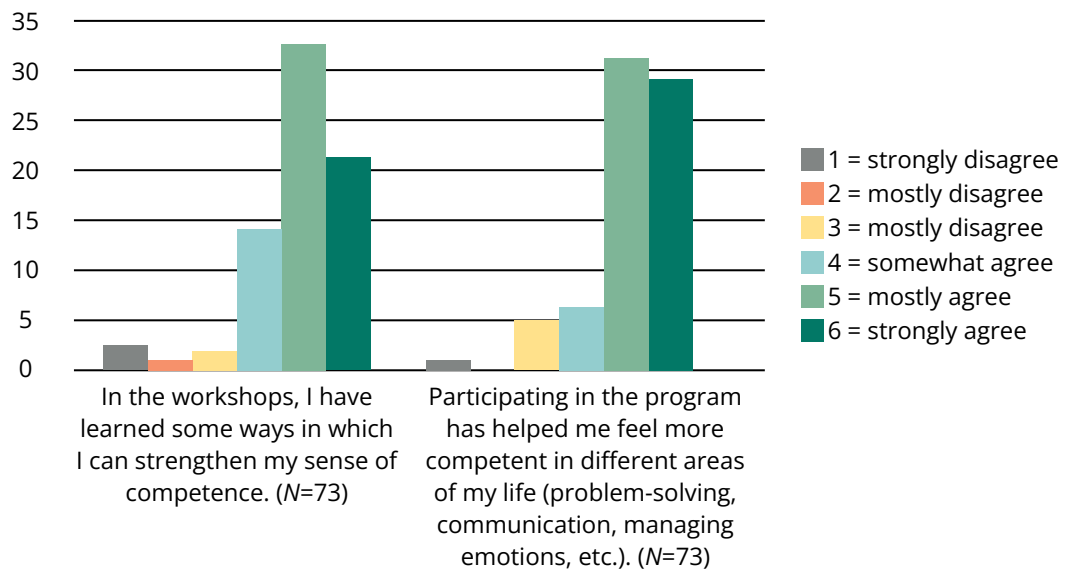


Fig. 5. Frequencies of Participants' Responses on Competence Items.

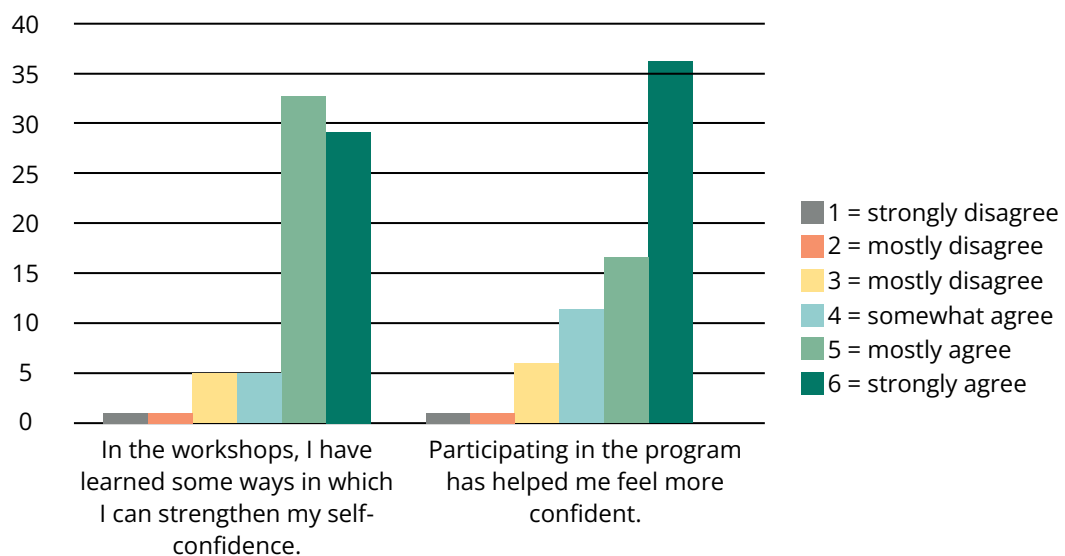


Fig. 6. Frequencies of Participants' Responses on Confidence Items (N=74).

Participants also reported positive changes in the area of connection. Overall, 87.8% agreed, to some extent, that participating in the programme had increased their awareness of the importance of close relationships and mutual support ($M = 5.00$). Furthermore, 86.6% reported forming or strengthening a relationship with at least one other participant during the programme ($M = 5.10$).

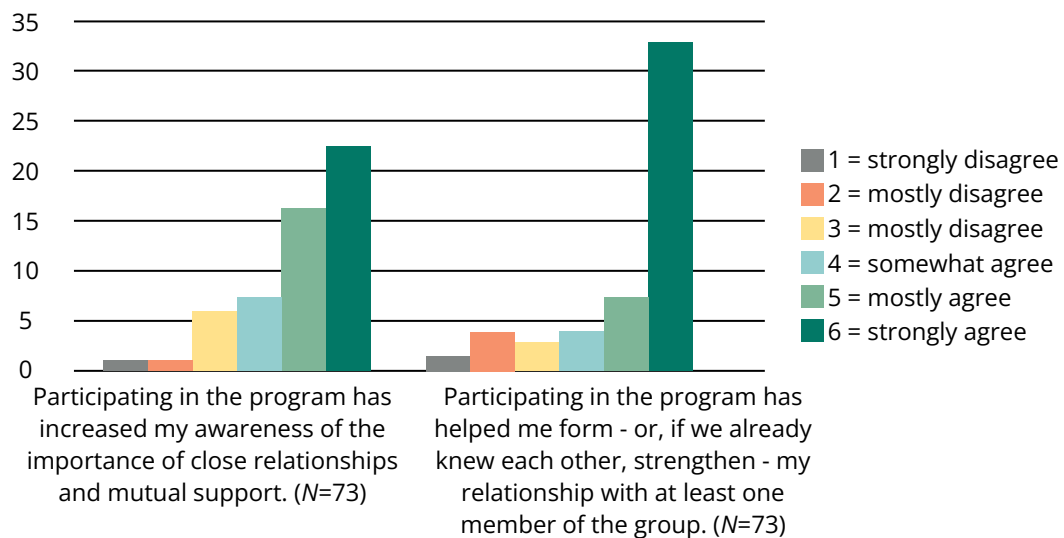


Fig. 7. Frequencies of Participants' Responses on Connection Items.

Feedback from youth leaders and mentors

Feedback from the peer educators and mentors who piloted the programme was also an important part of the evaluation. The workshop guidelines were considered clear and comprehensive, although some suggested reducing repetition. The theoretical background was seen as useful but mainly as supporting material, while practical experience of participating in the workshops beforehand was identified as the key factor in building confidence to facilitate them. Mentors emphasised the importance of ongoing support, reflection after each workshop, and constructive feedback throughout the implementation process.

Conclusion

Overall, our findings suggest that the programme was well received by participants. The workshops were perceived as engaging and enjoyable, with interactive activities and opportunities for discussion standing out as particularly valuable. Participants also reported a subjective sense of increased competence, confidence, and connection, highlighting practical skill alongside the positive experience of belonging to a group where they felt accepted and understood. Still, these findings should be interpreted with caution, as they are based on participants' self-reports and reflects their subjective perceptions. In addition, not all participants completed the evaluation, either due to attrition or because they chose not to complete the questionnaires. Even though this is common, it can still be the source of bias. Nevertheless, the consistently positive feedback suggests that the programme has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to young people's personal and social development. The pilot implementation provides a strong foundation for the continued delivery of the programme and for future evaluations using more objective measures of its effectiveness.

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08

02. Theoretical Framework

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03. Guidelines for Working with Youth with Fewer Opportunities

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