ENTREJUEGOS

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Mens sana

TOOLKIT

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EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION TRAINING

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The following toolkit has been created through the collaboration of 9 associations during the Erasmus+ Training Course project “Mens Sana”, held in Fuente de Piedra (Málaga), Spain, from 14 to 20 April 2026. The workshops were developed by:



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1 ABOUT "MENS SANA”

"MENS SANA" is a Training Course within accreditation in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 which was as its main objective to equip youth workers with practical, non-formal education tools to support and improve the mental wellbeing of young people in their local communities.

The training was focused on experiential and participatory methodologies such as yoga, meditation, laughter therapy, body awareness techniques, emotional management strategies, and other holistic wellbeing approaches.

The Training was rooted in **Youth Goal 5 Mental Health & Wellbeing**: Achieve better mental wellbeing and end stigmatisation of mental health issues, thus promoting social inclusion of all young people.

It contribued to:

- Provide all professionals working with young people as well as family and friends with quality mental health first aid training.
- Focus on prevention measures that ensure young people are equipped with the knowledge and the skills required for better mental wellbeing.
- Fight stigma about mental health issues by developing awareness programmes.

Thus, through this project, we aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To strengthen youth workers’ competences in promoting mental health through non-formal education.
2. To provide practical, adaptable tools that can be implemented locally with young people.
3. To create a practical guide compiling the methodologies tested during the training.
4. To build a strong partnership with the long-term vision of developing a KA2 or a Sport project based on the results and the guide produced.

2 INTRODUCTION TO MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUTH WORK



Mental health in young people in Europe

- Mental health among young people in Europe is currently in a recognized state of crisis.
- Approximately 1 in 7 adolescents live with a mental health condition, with anxiety and depression accounting for the majority of cases.
- Alarmingly, suicide has become the leading cause of death for Europeans aged 15 to 29.



Mental health in young people in Spain

- **Problems:** Spain is facing a recognized mental health crisis among its youth, characterized by surging rates of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Primary drivers include the lasting impacts of the pandemic, heavy social media use, and deep anxieties regarding economic instability and future job prospects.
- **Perceptions by youth workers:** Mental health is a big problem currently but young people are getting more aware. They are demotivated but they are closed to talk about mental health problems.
- **Solutions proposed by youth workers:** Physical approach to the problems, using tools such us yoga or meditation.



Mental health in young people in Serbia

- **Problems:** Mental health among young people in Serbia represents a growing public health crisis, characterized by alarming prevalence rates, limited state resources, and significant social stigma. Major studies indicate that over 20% of adolescents exhibit symptoms of psychiatric disorders, with clinical depression and anxiety being the most widespread.

- **Perceptions by youth workers:** Young people are facing a lot of mental health problems and society is pretty closed to openly talk. Youth taking help only if they are forced not if they need it.
- **Solutions proposed by youth workers:** Once recognising the problem, we have to focusing to help, trying to normalise mental health problems and free mental health open talks.



Mental health in young people in France

- **Problems:** Mental health among young people in France has deteriorated significantly in recent years. Driven by post-pandemic trauma and systemic shortages of care, nearly one in three young French people face mental health disorders like anxiety and depression, prompting the government to declare youth mental health a national priority.
- **Perceptions by youth workers:** Young people are not acknowledging mental health problems but they are closed to talk about them.
- **Solutions proposed by youth workers:** Activities to spread awareness, sessions and lessons about mental health in high schools.



Mental health in young people in Croatia

- **Problems:** Mental health among young people in Croatia is a growing public health concern. Over 11% of Croatian adolescents aged 10-19 struggle with mental health issues, with notable challenges in anxiety, depression, and self-harm. Young women and university students frequently report higher levels of psychological distress.
- **Perceptions by youth workers:** Young people are facing big mental health problems but they are getting aware.
- **Solutions proposed by youth workers:** Young-elder people conversations and more interesting activities sponsored by the goverment.



Mental health in young people in Romania

- **Problems:** Mental health among youth in Romania is a growing concern, with an estimated 9% adolescents requiring specialized mental health services annually. The most prevalent conditions include anxiety disorders, ADHD, depression, and eating disorders, which are often exacerbated by widespread bullying, cyberbullying, and systemic resource shortages.
- **Perceptions by youth workers:** Young females internalizing mental health disorders and young males externalizing behaviours.
- **Solutions proposed by youth workers:** Free lessons about mental health in high schools



Mental health in young people in Türkiye

- **Problems:** Mental health among young people in Türkiye is a pressing public health concern, marked by increasing rates of depression, anxiety, and an alarming spike in adolescent suicides. Systemic hurdles like intense academic pressure, economic instability, and a severe shortage of mental health professionals significantly limit access to care.
- **Perceptions by youth workers:** Young people have persistent anxiety about future. Male youth are at higher risks of mental health problems.
- **Solutions proposed by youth workers:** Initiatives in schooling.



Mental health in young people in Czech Republic

- **Problems:** Mental health among young people in the Czech Republic has deteriorated, with UNICEF reporting that only about half of adolescents feel happy. Key challenges include a steep rise in anxiety and depression, widespread sleep deprivation, and significant social stigma that deters students from seeking early professional help.

- **Perceptions by youth workers:** No national policies and shortage of specialised facilities.
- **Solutions proposed by youth workers:** Youth work increasingly and integrating mental health awareness to support young people´s emotional well-being and social inclusion.



Mental health in young people in Hungary

- **Problems:** Mental health among young people in Hungary is a growing public health concern. Around 15.8% of Hungarian youth live with psychiatric conditions. High rates of depression, anxiety, chronic stress, and a concerning prevalence of self-harm and suicide attempts reflect a youth population under significant pressure.
- **Perceptions by youth workers:** Historically high suicide rates and social media anxiety.
- **Solutions proposed by youth workers:** Non-formal education activities.



Mental health in young people in Italy

- **Problems:** Mental health among young people in Italy is a critical concern, with over 700,000 under-25s experiencing anxiety and depression. The rate of psychological disorders among under-20s has surged significantly in recent years. Girls and university students, particularly in academic settings, are disproportionately affected, with stress, anxiety, and online dependency remaining major challenges. **Perceptions by youth workers:** State of mental health is getting worst.
- **Solutions proposed by youth workers:** Non-formal education throug NGO´s operating in that field.

3 MAPPING NEEDS AND CHALLENGES IN MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUNG PEOPLE

Needs in mental health in young people

- Free mental health sessions.
- Building awareness.
- Building trust.
- More professionals.
- Face to face communication.
- Self-confidence.
- More opportunities.
- Support.
- Understanding.
- Approach to young people.
- Resilience.
- Early interventions.
- Stigma reduction.
- Safe spaces.



Challenges in mental health in young people

- No listeners.
- Emotional regulation.
- To leave the comfort zone.
- Missing access and resources.
- Lack of awareness.
- Fewer help.
- Lack of opportunities.
- Mental health problems are still a taboo.
- Support people from our communities.
- Cultural, social and economic barriers.
- Lack of knowledge about mental health.
- Fear of not being understood.
- Being present instead of expecting and pressing.
- To listen without judgement.
- Demistifing first psychotherapy session.
- Young people don´t want to to be seen going to therapy.
- Lack of communication.
- Isolation.

4 INTRODUCTION TO NON-FORMAL TOOLS FOR MENTAL WELLBEING



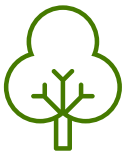
Mind-Body Practices

- Meditation
- Mindfulness
- Breathing
- Yoga
- Grounding



Physical Activities

- Sport
- Dance



Nature-Based Activities

- Gardening
- Planting
- Hiking



Creative and Artistic Activities

- Art Therapy
- Drawing
- Mandalas
- Arts & Crafts
- Music



Self-Reflection and Learning

- Journaling
- Reading
- Podcasts



Sensory and Relaxation Techniques

- Aromatherapy
- Massage

TOOL 1

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Forest Bathing (Shinrin-Yoku)



Forest bathing, known in Japan as Shinrin-Yoku, is the practice of immersing ourselves in nature using our senses. It is about slowing down, being present, and connecting with the natural environment.

It helps reduce stress, build self-awareness, improve mood, boost well-being, and support physical and mental health.

Objectives

- Encourage connection with nature.
- Reduce stress and anxiety.
- Improve mood and mental clarity.
- Enhance mindfulness and presence.
- Support physical and emotional health.
- Promote relaxation and inner balance.

Mental health benefits

- Lowers stress levels and blood presure.
- Reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- Improves mood, focus, and sleep quality.
- Enhances immune function and energy.
- Increases feelings of calm, hapiness, and vitality.

Structure of a typical session

Arrival and settling in (5-10 min)	Sensory awareness (10-15 min)	Slow walk (20-30 min)	Stillness and presence (10-20 min)	Reflection (5-10 min)	Closing and gratitude (5-10 min)
Arrive in silence, set intentions, and become aware of the surroundings.	Use your senses to explore sights, sounds, smells, textures, and the air.	Walk slowly and mindfully. pause often to observe and connect with nature.	Sit or stand quietly. Breathe deeply and be fully present in the environment.	Reflect on your exprience. Journaling or sharing (optional) can be helpful.	Close the session with gratitude and a gentle return.

Adaptations and variations

- Short version: 20-30 minutes in a nearby green space.
- Urban nature: parks, gardens, street trees.
- Indoor option: views of nature, plants, or nature sounds.
- Seasonal focus: observe changes throughout the year.
- Accesibility: adapt pace, terrain, and activities to participant´s needs.

Tips for facilitators

- Model calmness, presence and curiosity.
- Encourage silence and non-judgment.
- Invite participants to use all their senses.
- Avoid turning the experience into a hike.
- Respect nature and leave no trace.
- Create a safe and inclusive environment.
- Allow time for slow pacing and pauses.

Challenges and solutions

- Restlessness or impatience ----- Remind participants that slowing down is part of the practice.
- Distractions or busy thoughts ----- Invite focus on the senses and the present moment.
- Unfamiliarity with silence ----- Normalize silence and give simple guidance.
- Weather conditions ----- Dress appropriately and adapt the session if needed.
- Physical limitations ----- Offer seated or gentle options. Everyone can participate.

Evaluation

Ask participants to reflect individually or in groups:

- How did you feel before and after the activity?
- What did you notice during the experience?
- How can you connect with nature in your daily life?

Use a simple scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) to rate stress, mood, connection with nature, and well-being before and after the activity.

Additional resources

- Website and cards: https://forestpowercards.com/
- Website: https://www.forestryengland.uk/blog/forest-bathing

TOOL 2

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Grounding (Barefoot Walking)



Grounding (Barefoot Walking) is the practice of walking barefoot on natural surfaces (grass, soil, sand, or earth) to reconnect with the planet.

It helps calm the mind, reduce stress, regulate emotions, and improve overall well-being by bringing awareness to the present moment through physical sensation.

Objectives

- Reconnect with the body and nature.
- Reduce stress and anxiety.
- Improve mood and mental clarity.
- Enhance body awareness and presence.
- Regulate nervous system.
- Promote relaxation and emotional balance.

Mental health benefits

- Lowers cortisol levels and stress.
- Improves mood and reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- Enhances focus, attention, and sleep quality.
- Supports emotional regulation and resilience.
- Increases feelings of calm, connection, and well-being.
- May support improved circulation and inmune function.

Structure of a typical session

Arrival and intention (5 min)	Remove shoes and connect (5 min)	Barefoot walk (15-30 min)	Pause and sensory awareness (5-10 min)	Reflection (5-10 min)	Closing and gratitude (5-10 min)
Arrive, take a moment to settle, and set an intention for the experience.	Remove shoes, stand still, and feel the ground beneath your feet.	Walk slowly and mindfully., noticing sensations and surroundings.	Stop, breathe, and observe what you see, hear, feel, smell, and notice.	Reflect on your exprience. Journaling or sharing (optional) can be helpful.	Close the session with gratitude and a gentle return.

Adaptations and variations

- Short version: 10-20 minutes if time is limited
- Different surfaces: grass, soil, sand, pebbes, forest trails, or natural paths.
- Seasonal option: adapt to the weather and environment.
- Accesibility: choose safe and comfortable options for all participants.

Tips for facilitators

- Encourage slowness and presence,
- Invite curiosity and non-judgment.
- Remind participants to stay hydrated.
- Suggest comfortable clothing.
- Ensure the area is safe and clean.
- Respect personal boundaries and comfort levels.
- Create a calm and supportive environment.

Challenges and solutions

- Discomfort about walking barefoot ----- Start slowly and choose a soft or comfortable surface.
- It feels strange or unfamiliar ----- Normalize the experience and offer guidance and reassurance.
- Weather conditions ----- Check the forecast and adapt the session or surface.
- Distractions or busy mind ----- Encourage focusing on the senses and the present moment.
- Physical limitations ----- Offer alternative ways to connect, such us sitting or standing.

Evaluation

Ask participants to reflect individually or in groups:

- How did you feel before and after the activity?
- What did you notice during the experience?
- How can you connect with nature in your daily life?

Use a simple scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) to rate stress, mood, connection with nature, and well-being before and after the activity.

Additional resources

- Website: https://begrounded.co.uk/how-long-to-walk-barefoot-for-grounding/
- Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1fk3iM0j94

TOOL 3

Mens sana

Breathing



Breathing exercises are simple techniques that use the breath to promote relaxation, reduce estress, improve focus, and support emotional well-being.

Objectives

- Reduce stress and anxiety.
- Promote relaxation and calm.
- Improve focus and concentration.
- Regulate emotions.
- Increase energy and vitality.
- Support overall mental well-being.

Mental health benefits

- Lowers heart rate and blood presure.
- Reduce cortisol levels and stress.
- Improves mood and reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- Enhances sleep quality.
- Strengthens self-regulation and resilience.
- Supports mindfulnessand body awareness.

Structure of a typical session

Welcome and introduction (2-3 min)	Awareness of breath (2-3 min)	Breathing exercise (3-10 min)	Pause and integration (2-3 min)	Reflection (3-5 min)	Closing and gratitude (1-2 min)
Introduce the purpose and create a safe and comfortable space.	Invite participants to notice their natural breath without changing it.	Guide the chosen breathing technique (slow, deep, rhytmic, or patterned breath)	Sit quietly and notice how the body and mind feel now.	Reflect on the exprience. Journaling or sharing (optional) can be helpful.	Close the session with gratitude and a positive intention.

Adaptations and variations

- Short version: 1-3 minutes for a quick reset.
- Different techniques: box breathing, 4-7-8 breathing, belly breathing, alternate nostril breathing, etc.
- For individuals: use as a daily practice, before sleep, studying, or stressful moments.
- Accesible options: can be done sitting, lying down, or even while walking.

Tips for facilitators

- Use a calm and soothing voice.
- Encourage, don´t force.
- Keep instructions simple and clear.
- Allow silence and space.
- Respect personal boundaries and comfort levels.
- Invite participants to notice their experience without judgment.

Challenges and solutions

- Mind busy or distracted ----- Gently bring attention back to the breath.
- Feeling lightheaded or uncomfortable ----- Breathe naturally, not too deep. Pause if needed.
- Impatience or restlessness ----- Start with shorter practices and increase time gradually.
- Skepticism about benefits ----- encourage trying it for a few days and observing the effects.
- Emotional release or discomfort ----- Acknowledge the emotions and offer support. Remind they can pause anytime.

Evaluation

Ask participants to reflect individually or in groups:

- How did you feel before and after the activity?
- What did you notice during the exercise?
- How can you use this practice in your daily life?

Use a simple scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) to rate stress, mood, focus or well-being before and after the activity.

Additional resources

- Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9VMMzc5Ouo

TOOL 4

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Laughter Therapy

Laughter Therapy is a well-being tool that uses intentional laughter, playfulness, and positive social interaction to promote mental, emotional, and physical health.

The focus is not on humor, jokes, or comedy, but on creating opportunities for participants to experience laughter in a supportive and non-judgmental environment. Laughter can help release tension, improve mood, strengthen social bonds, and encourage a more positive outlook.

Objectives

- Reduce stress and emotional tension.
- Promote positive emotions and well-being.
- Encourage social connection and group cohesion.
- Improve self-confidence and spontaneity.
- Increase energy and motivation.
- Foster resilience and emotional balance.

Mental health benefits

- Enhances mood and emotional well-being.
- Encourages positive thinking.
- Promotes relaxation and emotional release.
- Strengthens social relationships and trust.
- Improves self-esteem and confidence.
- Supports resilience during challenging situations.
- Creates a sense of belonging and inclusion.

Structure of a typical session

Welcome and introduction (5 min)	Warm-Up and activation (5–10 min)	Laughter experience (10–20 min)	Group connection (5–10 min)	Reflection (5–10 min)	Closing and gratitude (2-5 min)
Introduce the purpose of the session and create a positive atmosphere.	Encourage relaxation, movement, and playful interaction.	Guide participants through activities that stimulate laughter and enjoyment.	Encourage shared laughter and positive social interaction.	Invite participants to notice how they feel after the experience.	End the session with appreciation and a positive takeaway.

Adaptations and variations

- Short version: 10–15 minutes as a quick energizer or well-being break.
- Low-energy version: includes gentle laughter and relaxation-focused activities.

Tips for facilitators

- Lead with enthusiasm and authenticity.
- Create a safe and inclusive environment.
- Never force participation.
- Respect personal comfort levels and boundaries.
- Focus on the experience, not the performance.
- Adapt activities to the group's energy and needs.
- Use encouragement rather than pressure.

Challenges and solutions

- Participants feel embarrassed ----- Start with simple, low-pressure activities.
- Difficulty engaging ----- Use gradual warm-ups and pair activities.
- Cultural differences regarding laughter ----- Explain the purpose and create a respectful environment.
- Participants feel self-conscious ----- Emphasize that there is no right or wrong way to participate.
- Low energy levels ----- Begin with gentle movement and positive interaction.

Evaluation

Ask participants to reflect individually or in groups:

- How did you feel before and after the session?
- What did you enjoy the most?
- Did you notice any changes in your mood or energy?
- How comfortable did you feel participating?
- Would you use laughter as a well-being tool in everyday life?
- What did you learn about yourself or others?

Use a simple scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) to assess mood, stress, energy, or well-being before and after the session.

Additional resources

- Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrMMWAEtaVM

TOOL 5



Mindful Writing

Mindful Writing is a reflective practice that combines writing with present-moment awareness.

It encourages participants to explore thoughts, emotions, and experiences through writing without judgment or concern for grammar, structure, or perfection.

The focus is on self-expression, self-awareness, and reflection rather than producing a finished piece of writing. This practice can help individuals process emotions, reduce mental clutter, and gain greater clarity about themselves and their experiences.

Objectives

- Encourage self-reflection and self-awareness.
- Promote emotional expression.
- Reduce stress and mental overload.
- Improve focus and mindfulness.
- Support personal growth and well-being.
- Develop healthy coping strategies.

Mental health benefits

- Increases emotional awareness.
- Helps process thoughts and feelings.
- Reduces stress and anxiety.
- Improves mental clarity and focus.
- Encourages self-compassion and reflection.
- Strengthens emotional resilience.
- Supports personal well-being and growth.

Structure of a typical session

Welcome and introduction (5 min)	Mindful preparation (2–5 min)	Writing practice (10–20 min)	Personal reflection (5–10 min)	Optional sharing (5–10 min)	Closing and gratitude (2-5 min)
Introduce the purpose of the activity and create a safe space.	Invite participants to pause, breathe, and focus on the present moment.	Encourage participants to write freely about their thoughts, feelings, or experiences.	Allow time to review and reflect on what was written.	Invite participants to share insights if they feel comfortable.	End with appreciation and a positive reflection.

Adaptations and variations

- Guided writing: based on prompts, questions, or themes.
- Digital writing: using computers, tablets, or mobile devices.
- Creative writing approach: combining reflection with storytelling, poetry, or creative expression.

Tips for facilitators

- Create a calm and non-judgmental environment.
- Emphasize process over outcome.
- Respect privacy and confidentiality.
- Allow participants to write at their own pace.
- Use open-ended prompts when needed.
- Encourage voluntary sharing only.
- Validate all forms of expression.

Challenges and solutions

- Participants do not know what to write ----- Provide simple prompts or guiding questions.
- Fear of making mistakes ----- Emphasize that writing is personal and informal.
- Reluctance to share ----- Make sharing optional and voluntary.
- Self-criticism ----- Encourage curiosity and self-compassion.

Evaluation

Ask participants to reflect individually or in groups:

- How did you feel before and after writing?
- What did you discover through the process?
- Did writing help you understand your thoughts or emotions?
- What was the most meaningful part of the activity?
- Would you use mindful writing in your daily life?

Use a simple scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) to assess stress, clarity, focus, or well-being before and after the session.

Additional resources

- Website: https://nadiacolburn.com/8-great-mindful-writing-prompts/
- Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdmLMQhysow

TOOL 6

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Mindfulness



Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to the present moment with openness, curiosity, and without judgment.

It encourages individuals to become more aware of their thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, and surroundings.

Rather than trying to change or control experiences, mindfulness helps participants observe them as they are. This practice can support emotional balance, reduce stress, and improve overall well-being.

Objectives

- Increase present-moment awareness.
- Reduce stress and emotional tension.
- Improve focus and concentration.
- Strengthen emotional regulation.
- Promote self-awareness and well-being.
- Encourage healthy coping strategies.

Mental health benefits

- Reduces stress and anxiety.
- Improves emotional awareness.
- Enhances concentration and attention.
- Promotes relaxation and calmness.
- Supports emotional regulation.
- Increases self-compassion and resilience.
- Improves overall well-being.

Structure of a typical session

Welcome and introduction (5 min)	Settling in (2–5 min)	Mindfulness practice (10–20 min)	Personal reflection (5–10 min)	Optional sharing (5–10 min)	Closing and integration (2-5 min)
Introduce the purpose of the practice and create a calm environment.	Invite participants to focus their attention on the present moment.	Guide participants through a mindfulness experience focused on awareness and observation.	Encourage participants to notice thoughts, emotions, and sensations.	Invite participants to share observations if they wish.	End the session with a positive reflection and practical takeaway.

Adaptations and variations

- Individual practice: used for personal well-being and self-care.
- Daily micro practices: short mindfulness moments integrated into daily routines.

Tips for facilitators

- Create a safe and distraction-free environment.
- Encourage curiosity rather than performance.
- Use simple and clear instructions.
- Respect individual experiences and comfort levels.
- Allow moments of silence.
- Avoid judging participants' experiences.
- Adapt the session to the group's needs and energy levels.

Challenges and solutions

- Difficulty concentrating ----- Remind participants that distractions are normal.
- Restlessness or discomfort ----- Use shorter practices and gradual progression.
- Unrealistic expectations ----- Emphasize the process rather than the outcome.
- Resistance to silence ----- Introduce brief periods of silence progressively.
- Self-judgment ----- Encourage acceptance and self-compassion.

Evaluation

Ask participants to reflect individually or in groups:

- How did you feel before and after the session?
- What did you notice during the practice?
- Did the activity help you focus on the present moment?
- What was the most meaningful aspect of the experience?
- Would you use mindfulness in your daily life?

Use a simple scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) to assess stress, focus, calmness, or well-being before and after the session.

Additional resources

- Webiste: https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/meditation/in-depth/mindfulness-exercises/art-20046356
- Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRuTfmbR7Ow

TOOL 7



Emotional Literacy

Emotional Literacy is the ability to recognize, understand, express, and manage emotions in ourselves and others.

It helps individuals develop awareness of their emotional experiences and improve their communication, empathy, and interpersonal relationships.

Objectives

- Increase emotional awareness.
- Improve emotional expression and communication.
- Develop empathy and understanding of others.
- Strengthen interpersonal relationships.
- Support emotional regulation and resilience.
- Promote positive mental health and well-being.

Mental health benefits

- Improves self-awareness.
- Enhances emotional regulation.
- Reduces emotional confusion and frustration.
- Strengthens empathy and social skills.
- Increases self-confidence in expressing feelings.
- Promotes healthy relationships.
- Supports resilience and emotional well-being

Structure of a typical session

Welcome and introduction (5 min)	Emotional awareness activity (5–10 min)	Exploration and discussion (10–20 min)	Communication and expression (10–15 min)	Reflection (5–10 min)	Closing and Positive Takeaway (2–5 min)
Introduce the topic and create a safe and supportive environment.	Encourage participants to identify and recognize emotions.	Facilitate reflection on emotional experiences and perspectives.	Provide opportunities to express emotions in constructive ways.	Invite participants to consider what they learned about themselves and others.	Summarize key insights and encourage continued emotional awareness.

Adaptations and variations

- Creative expression: using art, writing, storytelling, or role-play to explore emotions.
- Intercultural settings: exploring how emotions are expressed across different cultures.

Tips for facilitators

- Create a safe and respectful environment.
- Encourage active listening and empathy.
- Use inclusive and non-judgmental language.
- Respect different communication styles.
- Validate participants' emotional experiences.
- Encourage participation without pressure.
- Focus on understanding rather than evaluating emotions.

Challenges and solutions

- Difficulty identifying emotions ----- Use visual aids, emotion cards, or examples.
- Reluctance to share feelings ----- Allow voluntary participation and alternative forms of expression.
- Fear of judgment ----- Establish clear group agreements and confidentiality.
- Limited emotional vocabulary ----- Introduce new emotion words and discussion prompts.
- Cultural differences in emotional expression ----- Promote openness and respect for diverse perspectives.

Evaluation

Ask participants to reflect individually or in groups:

- What emotions did you identify during the session?
- Did you learn something new about yourself or others?
- How comfortable did you feel expressing your emotions?
- What skill or insight will you take away from this experience?
- How can emotional awareness support your well-being?

Use a simple scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) to assess emotional awareness, confidence in communication, or understanding of emotions before and after the session.

Additional resources

- Website: https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-worksheets/emotions/none

TOOL 8

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Art Therapy



Art therapy is a creative and therapeutic approach that uses the process of making art to improve mental, emotional, and social well-being.

It helps individuals express themselves, explore emotions, reduce stress, build self-awareness, and develop coping skills through creative expression.

Objectives

- Encourage self-expression and emotional release.
- Increase self-awareness and insight.
- Reduce stress, anxiety, and emotional tension.
- Improve self-esteem and confidence.
- Support processing of difficult experiences.
- Foster creativity, resilience, and personal growth.

Mental health benefits

- Provides a safe outlet for emotions.
- Helps reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Enhances self-awareness and emotional literacy.
- Improves focus and mental clarity.
- Increases self-esteem and sense of achievement.
- Supports traume processing and healing.
- Promotes relaxation and reduce stress.
- Encourages a sense of meaning and purpose.

Structure of a typical session

Welcome and introduction (5 min)	Creative warm-up (5 min)	Artistic creation (20-30 min)	Reflection (10 min)	Sharing (Optional) (5-10 min)	Closing (5 min)
Present the purpose and create a safe space.	Simple activity to encourage relaxation and creativity	Participants create freely using available materials.	Reflect on feelings, thougts, and experiences during the process.	Participants may share their work or insights if they feel comfortable.	Summarize key learnings and close with appreciation.

Adaptations and variations

- For individuals: use journaling, drawing, collage, or other personal art forms.
- For groups: create a collaborative artwork or themed project.
- Low energy days: use simple activities such us coloring or doodling.
- For emotional release: use abstract art, painting, or clay work.
- Digital option: use digital drawing tools or online creative platforms.

Tips for facilitators

- Encourage participation without pressure.
- Focus on the process, not the product.
- Avoid judging artwork.
- Create a relaxed and supportive atmosphere.
- Allow silence and personal space.
- Respect privacy and boundaries.
- Validate all forms of expression.
- Take care of your own energy and well-being.

Challenges and solutions

- Participants feel they are not good at art ----- Remind them that there is not right or wrong in art therapy.
- Emotions become overwhelming ----- Offer grounding options such as breathing or a break.
- Lack of motivation ----- Provide simple prompts or themes as inspiration.
- Group judgment or comparison ----- Set clear rules about respect and non-judgment.
- Limited materials -----Use wathever is available and encourage creativity with minimal resources.

Evaluation

Ask participants to reflect individually or in groups:

- How did you feel before and after the activity?
- What did you create and what does mean to you?
- How did this activity support your well-being?

Use a simple scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) to rate stress, mood, self-awareness, creativity, or well-being before and after the activity.

Additional resources

- Website: https://www.rmcad.edu/blog/brushing-away-stress-21-art-therapy-activities-for-self-expression-and-healing/

TOOL 9

Mens sana

Yoga



Yoga is a holistic practice that combines physical movement, breathing techniques, relaxation, and mindful awareness to promote overall well-being.

It encourages participants to connect with their bodies, focus on the present moment, and develop greater balance between physical and mental health. The emphasis is not on flexibility or physical performance, but on creating a positive relationship with the body, reducing stress, and supporting emotional well-being

Objectives

- Promote physical and mental well-being.
- Reduce stress and emotional tension.
- Improve body awareness.
- Encourage relaxation and mindfulness.
- Enhance concentration and focus.
- Support healthy lifestyle habits.

Mental health benefits

- Reduces stress and anxiety.
- Promotes relaxation and calmness.
- Improves emotional regulation.
- Enhances concentration and attention.
- Increases self-awareness and self-confidence.
- Supports resilience and overall well-being.
- Encourages a positive mind-body connection.

Structure of a typical session

Welcome and introduction (5 min)	Centering and breathing (5 min)	Gentle movement (10–15 min)	Yoga practice (10–20 min)	Relaxation and reflection (5–10 min)	Closing and integration (2–5 min)
Create a calm environment and introduce the purpose of the session.	Invite participants to focus on their breath and become present.	Guide participants through simple movements to warm up the body.	Facilitate a sequence of mindful postures and movements.	Allow participants to relax and notice physical and emotional sensations.	End the session with a positive reflection and mindful transition.

Adaptations and variations

- Beginner-friendly yoga: simple and accessible practices suitable for all experience levels.
- Chair yoga: adapted for participants with limited mobility or physical restrictions.

Tips for facilitators

- Create a safe and inclusive atmosphere.
- Encourage participants to respect their own limits.
- Offer alternative options for different abilities.
- Use clear and supportive instructions.
- Focus on well-being rather than performance.
- Promote mindful breathing throughout the session.
- Respect individual comfort levels and needs.

Challenges and soultions

- Participants feel self-conscious ----- Emphasize personal experience rather than performance.
- Different levels of flexibility or fitness ------ Provide adaptations and alternatives.
- Difficulty concentrating ----- Include simple breathing and mindfulness practices.
- Physical limitations ----- Offer seated or modified options.
- Misconceptions about yoga ----- Explain its well-being benefits and inclusive nature.

Evaluation

Ask participants to reflect individually or in groups:

- How did you feel before and after the session?
- Did you notice any changes in your body or mood?
- What part of the practice did you enjoy most?
- Did the activity help you relax or focus?
- Would you like to include yoga in your daily routine?

Use a simple scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) to rate assess stress, relaxation, focus, or well-being before and after the session.

Additional resources

- Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0L_YrMcwU3w

TOOL 10

Mens sana

Meditation



Meditation is a practice that involves focusing attention and developing awareness in order to promote mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

It encourages individuals to slow down, observe their thoughts and feelings, and cultivate a sense of calm and balance. The goal is not to stop thinking, but to develop a healthier relationship with thoughts, emotions, and experiences.

Objectives

- Promote relaxation and mental calmness.
- Increase self-awareness.
- Improve focus and concentration.
- Reduce stress and emotional tension.
- Support emotional regulation.
- Encourage personal well-being and self-care.

Mental health benefits

- Reduces stress and anxiety.
- Promotes emotional balance.
- Improves concentration and attention.
- Enhances self-awareness.
- Encourages relaxation and inner calm.
- Strengthens resilience and coping skills.
- Supports overall mental well-being.

Structure of a typical session

Welcome and introduction (5 min)	Settling in (2–5 min)	Meditation practice (10–20 min)	Silent reflection (3–5 min)	Optional sharing (5–10 min)	Closing and integration (2–5 min)
Create a calm environment and introduce the purpose of the session.	Invite participants to find a comfortable position and focus their attention.	Guide participants through a meditation experience focused on awareness and presence.	Allow participants to notice thoughts, emotions, and sensations.	Invite participants to share reflections if they feel comfortable.	End the session with a positive reflection and mindful transition.

Adaptations and variations

- Individual meditation: used for personal well-being and self-care.
- Youth-friendly meditation: adapted to shorter attention spans and interactive learning styles.
- Guided meditation: led by a facilitator through verbal instructions.

Tips for facilitators

- Create a quiet and welcoming environment.
- Use simple and accessible language.
- Encourage comfort and flexibility.
- Respect different experiences and reactions.
- Allow silence without pressure.
- Normalize distractions and wandering thoughts.
- Adapt the duration to participants' needs and experience.

Challenges and solutions

- Difficulty concentrating ----- Remind participants that distraction is normal.
- Restlessness or discomfort ----- Offer shorter sessions and comfortable seating options.
- Unrealistic expectations ----- Emphasize that meditation is a gradual practice.
- Resistance to silence ----- Introduce silent moments progressively.
- Feeling frustrated ----- Encourage patience and self-compassion.

Evaluation

Ask participants to reflect individually or in groups:

- How did you feel before and after the meditation?
- What did you notice during the practice?
- Did the activity help you feel calmer or more focused?
- What was the most meaningful aspect of the experience?
- Would you consider practicing meditation again?

Use a simple scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) to rate assess stress, calmness, focus, or well-being before and after the session.

Additional resources

- Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CscxGprl1yw

5 MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGE ANALYSIS

During this workshop, youth workers worked collaboratively in small groups to reflect on two key questions. Participants selected a mental health issue, such as stress and discussed its underlying causes based on their professional experience and observations. They then identified and shared practical well-being tools and non-formal educational activities that could support young people in dealing with these challenges. The exercise encouraged critical thinking, peer learning, and the exchange of good practices, while helping participants develop a broader understanding of mental health promotion and prevention.

STRESS AND HOW IT CAN BE REDUCED

What are the main causes and factors contributing to this specific mental health challenge?

- Busy and quick life.
- Relationships.
- Studies and work (high achievement).
- Unsupportive environment.
- Social and media expectations.
- To take a lot of small decisions during the day.
- To keep the apparence all the time to others.
- Situations that they think that are out of control.
- Overthinking.
- Trying to be perfect.
- Time management.
- Economy.
- Trying new things.
- Future.
- Climate change.
- Social interactions.

Which tools, activities, or approaches can help address or manage this challenge?

- Breathing.
- Sports.
- Hiking.
- Art.
- Dance.
- Journaling.
- Music.
- Grounding.
- Animal therapy.
- Connecting with nature.
- Spending time with trusted people.
- Do one task at a time.
- Crafts.
- Expressing more our feelings.
- Being honest with ourselves.
- Asking for help.
- Sekking support.
- Meditation.
- Rest.
- Quality sleep.

6 PRACTICAL WORKSHOPS

TOOL 1 FOREST BATHING

SESSION TITLE: Outdoor activities & nature-based well-being: Forest bathing

OBJECTIVE: To provide youth workers with a first-hand experience of forest bathing, increasing their awareness of nature-based approaches to mental health and equipping them with ideas for integrating this tool into youth work and non-formal learning settings.

DURATION	PARTICIPANTS	LOCATION	MATERIALS
2 hours	25-30 participants	Mediterranean forest, Sierra de la Camorra de Mollina (Málaga)	Comfortable clothing and footwear, water and basic first aid kit.

ARRIVAL & SETTLING IN (15 MIN)
Introduction of the activity and explain what forest bathing is. Set intentions.

SLOW WALK (30 MIN)
Walk slowly and mindfully. Pause often to observe and connect with nature.

SENSORY AWARENESS (15 MIN)
Use your senses to explore sights, sounds, smells, textures, etc.

STILLNESS & PRESENCE (10 MIN)
Sit or stand quietly. Breathe deeply and be fully present in the environment.

CLOSING & GRATITUDE (10 MIN)
Close the session with gratitude and a gentle return.



TOOL 2 GROUNDING (BAREFOOT WALKING)

SESSION TITLE: Outdoor activities & nature-based well-being: Forest bathing

OBJECTIVE: To provide youth workers with a practical experience of grounding through barefoot walking in nature, fostering mindfulness, stress reduction, and exploring its potential use in non-formal education and youth well-being activities.

DURATION	PARTICIPANTS	LOCATION	MATERIALS
10-15 min	25-30 participants	Mediterranean forest, Sierra de la Camorra de Mollina (Málaga)	Comfortable clothing, water and basic first aid kit. Optional: towel to dry feet, water for washing.

This grounding activity was implemented as part of a forest bathing session, allowing participants to deepen their connection with nature through direct sensory experience. By walking barefoot on natural surfaces, participants became more aware of their bodies, the surrounding environment, and the present moment.

Grounding can be used as a complementary practice within forest bathing to enhance mindfulness and sensory awareness, but it can also be facilitated as a standalone well-being activity in parks, gardens, beaches, or other natural settings. Its simplicity and accessibility make it a valuable tool for promoting relaxation, stress reduction, and connection with nature in youth work and non-formal education contexts.

INTRODUCTION TO GROUNDING (3–5 MIN)
Introduce the concept and purpose of grounding.

PREPARATION (2–3 MIN)
Remove shoes and connect with the ground.

BAREFOOT WALKING (10–15 MIN)
Walk slowly while noticing sensations and textures.

SENSORY AWARENESS PAUSE (3–5 MIN)
Pause and observe bodily sensations and surroundings.

REFLECTION & SHARING (5 MIN)
Reflect on the experience and its effects.



TOOL 3 BREATHING

SESSION TITLE: Mind & Body balance

OBJECTIVE: To provide youth workers with practical breathing techniques that promote relaxation, self-awareness, and stress management, while exploring their potential application as accessible well-being tools in youth work and non-formal education settings.

DURATION	PARTICIPANTS	LOCATION	MATERIALS
10-15 min	25-30 participants	A room	None

The facilitator introduces and guides participants through several breathing techniques, allowing them to experience different approaches to relaxation, focus, and emotional regulation.

Box Breathing (4–5 min)

Participants follow a simple four-step breathing pattern:

- Inhale for 4 seconds.
- Hold the breath for 4 seconds.
- Exhale for 4 seconds.
- Hold for 4 seconds.

This technique helps calm the nervous system, improve concentration, and reduce stress.



Alternate Nostril Breathing (Nadi Shodhana) (4–5 min)

Participants use their fingers to alternately close one nostril while breathing through the other.

- Inhale through one nostril.
- Exhale through the opposite nostril.
- Alternate sides following a slow rhythm.

This practice promotes balance, focus, and mental clarity.



4–6 Relaxation Breathing (4–5 min)

Participants practice extending the exhalation.

- Inhale for 4 seconds.
- Exhale for 6 seconds.

The longer exhalation helps activate the body's relaxation response and encourages a sense of calm.

TOOL 4 LAUGHTER THERAPY

SESSION TITLE: Laughter therapy

OBJECTIVE: To equip youth workers with practical laughter-based techniques that support mental health, resilience, and group cohesion, enabling them to integrate these methods into youth activities and non-formal learning environments.

DURATION	PARTICIPANTS	LOCATION	MATERIALS
1h 30 min	25-30 participants	A room	A ball of wool, music

INTRODUCTION

The facilitator introduces the concept of laughter therapy and explains the connection between laughter, social well-being, and mental health.



Ball of wool activity (10 min)

Participants stand in a circle. Holding a ball of wool, the facilitator shares a positive aspect of social well-being and then throws the ball to another participant while holding onto the end of the thread. The process continues until a web is formed, visually representing the connections between individuals and highlighting how social relationships contribute to emotional and mental well-being.

Emotional check-in (5 min)

Participants are invited to briefly express how they feel at the beginning of the workshop using body language, facial expressions, or a single word. This activity helps participants become aware of their emotional state and creates a supportive group atmosphere.

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WARM-UP & EMOTIONAL RELEASE

Breathing and vocal activation (5 min)

Participants stand in a circle and perform a sequence of conscious breathing exercises. During each exhalation, they vocalize sounds such as *"Ha"*, *"He"*, *"Hi"*, *"Ho"*, and *"Hu"*. The objective is to release tension, activate the diaphragm, and prepare the body for laughter.

Walking dynamics (5 min)

Participants move freely around the room while responding to the facilitator's instructions.

- From seriousness to contagious laughter: Participants begin walking with a serious facial expression. Gradually, they make eye contact with others, smile, and allow spontaneous laughter to emerge naturally through interaction.
- Exploring different emotional states: Participants walk around the room while adopting different emotions suggested by the facilitator, such as happiness, surprise, confidence, curiosity, excitement, or calmness.

Laughter movement sequence (5min)

Participants remain standing and perform coordinated movements combined with laughter sounds:

- *"Ha Ha" – hands raised upwards.*
- *"He He" – hands lowered.*
- *"Hi Hi" – hands to the right.*
- *"Ho Ho" – hands to the left.*
- *"Hu Hu" – hands backwards.*

The combination of movement and vocalization helps participants let go of inhibitions and enter a playful state.

LAUGHTER ACTIVATION – FUNNY GAMES AND DYNAMICS

Make others laugh (5 min)

Participants stand in two facing lines. One participant at a time attempts to make the person opposite laugh using facial expressions, gestures, or playful movements, without physical contact. The challenge is to maintain eye contact and resist laughing.

Mirror and shadow (5 min)

Participants work in pairs. One person acts as the leader while the other mirrors their movements and expressions. After a few minutes, roles are reversed.

The glass of laughter (5 min)

Participants pretend to hold an invisible glass filled with laughter. They "drink" from the glass and react as if the laughter spreads through their whole body, gradually becoming more contagious and expressive.

Shared laughter (Blindfold activity) (5 min)

Participants close their eyes or wear blindfolds while standing in a circle. One person begins laughing softly. As others hear the laughter, they gradually join in until the entire group is laughing together. The activity demonstrates the contagious nature of laughter and encourages trust within the group.

GROUP FLOW AND CONNECTION

Wheel of laughter (5 min)

Participants stand in a circle and connect with the person next to them through eye contact and shared laughter. After a short period, they move around the circle and connect with a new partner. The activity strengthens social bonds and group cohesion.

PEAK JOY

Laughter choreography (10 min)

Participants learn and perform a simple choreography combining movement, music, and laughter. The focus is on enjoyment rather than performance.

Train game with music (10 min)

Participants form a moving train and follow music around the room while completing playful tasks or challenges introduced by the facilitator.

Ear of laughter (5 min)

Participants lie down on the floor forming a chain figure, resting their heads on the belly of the companion next to them to amplify the laughter by vibration. One participant starts laughing, and the laughter gradually travels through the group like a wave until everyone is laughing together.

RETURN TO CALM AND RELAXATION

Hug dynamics (5 min)

Participants move around the room while music plays. When the music stops, they exchange a respectful hug, handshake, or alternative gesture of connection according to personal comfort levels. The activity promotes feelings of belonging and emotional safety.

Relaxing circle dance (5 min)

The group forms a circle and performs slow, coordinated movements accompanied by calm music. The objective is to gradually reduce energy levels and transition into a state of relaxation.

EVALUATION AND CLOSURE

Final emotional check-in (10 min)

Participants revisit the initial question: *"How do I feel right now after the workshop?"* Using body language, facial expressions, or a single word, participants reflect on their emotional state and any changes they experienced during the session.

The facilitator concludes by inviting participants to reflect on how laughter can be used as a simple and accessible tool for promoting mental health, reducing stress, and strengthening social connections in youth work settings.

TOOL 5 MINDFUL WRITING

SESSION TITLE: Art therapy and conscious letter

OBJECTIVE: To provide youth workers with a reflective mindful writing experience that promotes gratitude, self-awareness, emotional expression, and personal growth, while exploring writing as a tool for mental well-being and self-reflection in youth work and non-formal education.

DURATION	PARTICIPANTS	LOCATION	MATERIALS
1h 30 min	25-30 participants	A room	Papers, pens, candles, and incense.

This mindful writing session was facilitated in a calm and intimate atmosphere designed to encourage reflection, gratitude, and emotional connection. The activity took place at the end of the day, creating an ideal environment for participants to slow down, connect with their inner experiences, and engage in meaningful self-reflection.

The room was prepared to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Participants sat together in a circle, the blinds were lowered, and candles and incense were used to create a peaceful environment. The group, composed of youth workers from different countries, cultures, and backgrounds, shared a moment of silence, reflection, and emotional openness.

WELCOME & ATMOSPHERE CREATION (10 MIN)
Participants gathered in a circle while the facilitator introduced the purpose of the session and invited everyone to embrace a moment of calm, presence, and reflection.

MINDFUL PREPARATION (5 MIN)
Participants were encouraged to relax, focus on their breathing, and enter a state of silence and awareness before beginning the writing process.



LETTER OF HONOUR AND GRATITUDE (30 MIN)

Participants wrote a personal letter honouring their own life journey, acknowledging challenges they had overcome, expressing gratitude to people who supported them during difficult moments, and remembering loved ones who continue to inspire them even if they are no longer physically present.

SUNFLOWER REFLECTION ACTIVITY (15 MIN)

Participants completed a sunflower template by writing:

- Two names of the most important people in their lives.
- Two achievements they once thought impossible but successfully accomplished.
- Two positive qualities that best describe their personality.

PERSONAL REFLECTION (10 MIN)

Participants reviewed their writing and reflected on the emotions, memories, and insights that emerged during the activity.

VOLUNTARY SHARING & CLOSING (10 MIN)

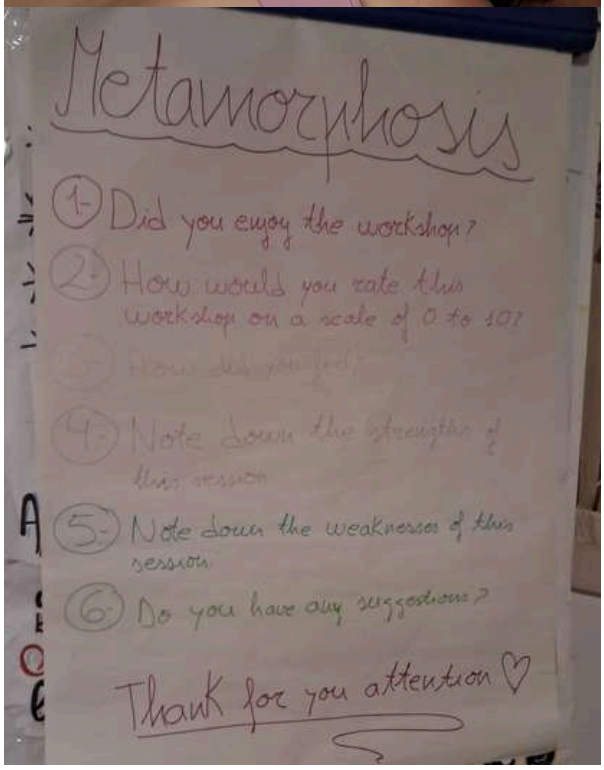
Participants were invited to share reflections or experiences with the group if they felt comfortable, followed by a moment of gratitude and appreciation to close the session.

EVALUATION (10 MIN)

The session concluded with a short evaluation in which participants reflected on the activity, its structure, and the writing process. They also considered the usefulness of mindful writing as a practical tool that can be adapted and implemented in youth work and non-formal education activities.







TOOL 6 MINDFULNESS

SESSION TITLE: Present with myself – Present with others: Mindfulness in working with youth

OBJECTIVE: To develop awareness of one's own thoughts, emotions, and bodily reactions, to respond more consciously and responsibly when working with young people.

DURATION	PARTICIPANTS	LOCATION	MATERIALS
1h 30 min	25-30 participants	A room	Paper and pens. Optional: soft background music for exercises.

INTRODUCTION AND CHECK-IN (10 MIN)

Circle question:
"How am I arriving here today – what am I bringing with me?"

- Brief introduction of the workshop objective.
- Setting a safe space (no judgment, permission to pass or take a break).

Focus: slowing down and arriving in the *"here and now."*



WHAT IS MINDFULNESS (10 MIN)

Mindfulness = paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, without judgment.
Mini discussion:

- When are we on "autopilot" in our work with young people?
- How does that affect the relationship?

Example: *"I'm listening to a young person, but already thinking about what I'm going to say."*

GUIDED PRACTICE: FOCUS ON BREATH (10 MIN)

Short practice:

- Focus on breathing (3–5 minutes).
- Instruction: notice thoughts, but don't follow them.

After the exercise: Pair sharing:

- What did I notice?
- Was it difficult to stay present?

EXERCISE: "WHAT IS HAPPENING INSIDE ME?" (20 MIN)

Individual reflection + sharing:
Ask participants to recall a challenging situation with a young person.
Guide them through questions:

- What was I thinking at that moment?
- What was I feeling?
- What was happening in my body?
- How did I react?

Then, in small groups (3 people) or individually, followed by group sharing:

- Sharing insights

Key focus: connecting inner experience with behavior

MINI INPUT: REACTION VS. RESPONSE (10 MIN)

- Reaction = automatic, fast
- Response = conscious pause + choice

Introduce a simple tool:
STOP technique

- S – Stop
- T – Take a breath
- O – Observe (thoughts, emotions, body)
- P – Proceed consciously

EXERCISE: MINDFUL LISTENING (20 MIN)

Work in pairs or fishbowl format:

- Person A speaks for 3–4 minutes about a topic (e.g., a challenge in their work)
- Person B:

- does not interrupt,
- does not give advice,
- only listens and observes themselves.

Switch roles
Reflection:

- How was it to just listen?
- What did I notice in myself while listening?
- How does this impact my work with young people?

INTEGRATION AND APPLICATION (10 MIN)

Questions for the group:

- Where can I apply mindfulness immediately in my work?
- What small change feels realistic?

"One thing I will try starting tomorrow."

CLOSING (5 MIN)

Short closing round:

- One word or sentence I am taking with me.

TOOL 7 EMOTIONAL LITERACY

SESSION TITLE: Express & Release: Creative Ways to Support Mental Health

OBJECTIVE: To strengthen youth workers' emotional literacy by developing their ability to recognise, understand, and express emotions, while promoting empathy, positive communication, and supportive relationships in youth work settings.

DURATION	PARTICIPANTS	LOCATION	MATERIALS
1h 30 min	25-30 participants	A room	Sticky notes, pens/markers, flipchart or whiteboard. Optional: emotion cards.

This session combined two interactive activities focused on emotional awareness, non-verbal communication, empathy, and positive emotional expression. Through playful and creative exercises, participants explored how emotions can be recognised and communicated while creating a safe and supportive atmosphere within the group.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION (5 MIN)

Introduce emotional literacy and its importance for communication, relationships, and mental well-being.

EMOTIONAL CHECK-IN (10–15 MIN)

Participants represent their current emotional state through an emoji drawn on a sticky note.

EMOTIONAL CHECK-IN AND RECOGNITION (15–20 MIN)

Participants begin by drawing an emoji on a sticky note representing how they currently feel. They then move around the room while displaying their emoji or expressing the corresponding emotion through their facial expressions and body language.

Other participants observe and try to identify the emotion being communicated. The activity encourages participants to explore the connection between emotions, facial expressions, body language, and non-verbal communication.

It also highlights that the same emotion may be expressed or interpreted differently by different people.





POSITIVE EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION (15–20 MIN)

Participants receive sticky notes and write messages, thoughts, or feelings addressed to one or more selected peers. Messages can express appreciation, recognition, encouragement, or other positive sentiments.

The activity creates an opportunity for participants to communicate emotions in a constructive and respectful way while recognising positive qualities in others.

It also encourages empathy, positive feedback, and supportive relationships within the group.

SHARING & REFLECTION (10 MIN)

Participants reflect on emotional expression, empathy, and the impact of positive communication.

CLOSING (5 MIN)

Summarise the main learning points and discuss how emotional literacy can be applied in youth work.

TOOL 8 ART THERAPY

SESSION TITLE: Creating Personal Bookmarks

OBJECTIVE: To use creative expression and mindful artistic activity as accessible tools for relaxation, stress reduction, self-expression, and mental well-being, while encouraging social connection and creativity among youth workers.

DURATION	PARTICIPANTS	LOCATION	MATERIALS
40 min	25-30 participants	Outdoor setting	Paper, crayons, watercolours, string.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION (5 MIN)

Introduce the activity and explain how creative activities can support relaxation, concentration, self-expression, and mental well-being.

CONNECTING WITH NATURE (5 MIN)

Participants settle in an outdoor environment and are encouraged to observe their surroundings and enjoy a calm atmosphere before starting the creative activity.

CREATIVE BOOKMARK MAKING (20 MIN)

Participants create and decorate their own bookmarks using paper, crayons, and watercolours, freely choosing colours, shapes, and designs according to their preferences.



SOCIAL INTERACTION & SHARING (THROUGHOUT THE ACTIVITY)

While creating their bookmarks, participants talk informally about the project, their experiences, and themselves, creating opportunities for connection and mutual exchange.

REFLECTION & CLOSING (10 MIN)

Participants reflect on how concentrating on a simple creative task affected their mood and discuss how drawing, colouring, or other creative activities could help them manage everyday stress.

TOOL 9 YOGA

SESSION TITLE: Yoga in Nature

OBJECTIVE: To introduce participants to simple yoga practices in a natural environment, promoting relaxation, body awareness, mindful breathing, and mental well-being while encouraging a positive connection with nature.

DURATION	PARTICIPANTS	LOCATION	MATERIALS
45 min	25-30 participants	Outdoor setting	Yoga mats or comfortable blankets.

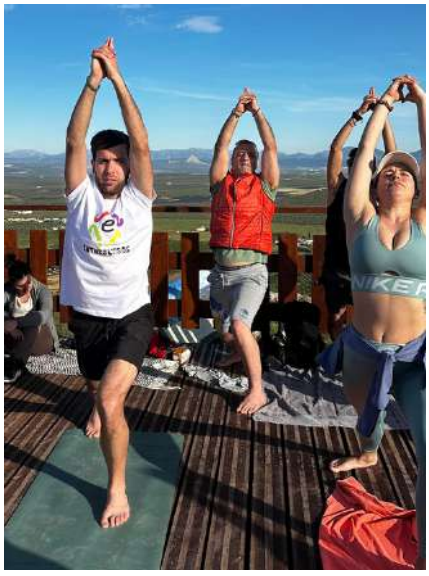
WELCOME & INTRODUCTION (5 MIN)
Introduce the basic principles of yoga and explain how mindful movement, breathing, and connection with nature can support physical and mental well-being.



BREATHING & GROUNDING (5 MIN)
Participants sit or stand comfortably, focus on their breathing, and become aware of their body and the natural environment around them.

GENTLE WARM-UP (5–10 MIN)
Guide participants through simple movements to mobilise the neck, shoulders, arms, hips, and legs.

BASIC YOGA POSTURES (15–20 MIN)
Introduce and practise accessible yoga postures such as Mountain Pose, Tree Pose, Cat-Cow, Child's Pose, Downward-Facing Dog, and Warrior Pose, encouraging participants to move slowly and respect their own limits.



RELAXATION & MINDFUL CONNECTION WITH NATURE (5 MIN)
Participants finish in a comfortable position, focusing on their breathing while listening to the sounds and noticing the sensations of the surrounding natural environment.

REFLECTION & CLOSING (5 MIN)
Invite participants to reflect on how the combination of movement, breathing, and nature affected their physical and emotional state.

TOOL 10 MEDITATION

SESSION TITLE: Meditation in Nature

OBJECTIVE: To introduce participants to simple meditation techniques that promote relaxation, present-moment awareness, emotional balance, and mental well-being, while providing a practical tool that can be easily incorporated into everyday life and youth work.

DURATION	PARTICIPANTS	LOCATION	MATERIALS
15-20 min	25-30 participants	Outdoor setting	Yoga mats or comfortable blankets.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION (5 MIN)
Introduce meditation as a simple practice for slowing down, focusing attention, and becoming more aware of thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations.

COMFORTABLE POSITION & GROUNDING (5 MIN)
Participants find a comfortable seated or lying position and focus on their body, breathing, and contact with the ground.

GUIDED BREATHING (5 MIN)
Guide participants to observe their natural breathing, gently bringing their attention back to the breath whenever their mind wanders.

MINDFUL MEDITATION (10–15 MIN)
Lead a simple guided meditation focused on body sensations, sounds, breathing, and thoughts without judging or trying to change them.



RETURN TO THE PRESENT MOMENT (3–5 MIN)
Participants gradually bring their attention back to their surroundings, moving their body gently and opening their eyes when they feel ready.

REFLECTION & CLOSING (5 MIN)
Invite participants to briefly reflect on their experience and identify how meditation could be used as a practical strategy for relaxation and emotional well-being.

7 PARTNERS

Entrejuegos is a sports and cultural association created in 2019 in Alameda (southern Spain) by a group of professionals and volunteers with a wide experience in the field of sport, education and leisure time. They work in non-formal education and Erasmus+ projects.

Budapest Association for International Sports (BAIS) is a volunteer-driven, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting physical activity, intercultural understanding, solidarity, environmental protection, and sustainability through sport-based non formal education. With a strong foundation in the Erasmus+ program since 2016, BAIS has organized and partnered on over 50 projects across Erasmus+ Youth and Erasmus+ Sports initiatives.

Atelier della Sostenibilità A.P.S. was established in 2024 in Turin as a non-profit organisation committed to promoting sustainability in all aspects of life. Rooted in non-formal education, the association empowers individuals at the local level, fostering personal and collective growth to create a lasting positive impact on society.

EDIT Centar is a non-profit association founded in 2005. The mission of EDIT is to empower individuals, social groups and organizations through education, development and information programs, in order to create the environment suitable for human being. EDIT center is involved in youth work since 2005 and over the 150 projects are implemented on local, regional and international level. One of the major results of the organization is opening a Youth Info center "Infopolis" accordant with European youth work principles.

Cross Borders is a newly established association in France, committed to promoting intercultural exchange, personal and professional development, and social inclusion through educational programs and Erasmus+ projects.

EUnity is a non-governmental organisation established in 2023, headquartered in Hluk and operating primarily from Brno, Czech Republic. They are dedicated to the education, well-being and personal development of young people, with a particular focus on those with fewer opportunities. They work in topics that matter most to today's youth: mental health, physical well-being, and the impact of social media on young people's lives.

Asociatia HESSA is a Romanian non-governmental, non-profit youth organisation established in 2023. They support young people to build a realistic professional pathway through career orientation, youth entrepreneurship education and personal branding. They combine local community work (workshops, networking events, mentoring) with European learning opportunities (Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps).

Udruga Mladih Korak is a non-profit, non government owned organization focused solely on youth work and developing a healthy understanding of basic and advanced rights and needs of a highly functioning individual in a democratic community which often exacts the need for a high level of expressing one´s thoughts and emotions concerning certain profound topics in everyday communication.

Association of Knowledge Sharing and Career Development works to support the education rights of young university students, to diversify the channels of access to information, to empower disadvantaged student sand to develop students' careers in line with their interests and abilities.

ENTREJUEGOS

ASOCIACIÓN DEPORTIVA

Y CULTURAL ENTREJUEGOS









Erasmus+