



NoT  
STRESSED

**TOOLKIT**

“What?! I'm not stressed!”

## TITLE:

Toolkit “What?! I'm not stressed!”

## PROJECT:

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- JUGEND, BILDUNG UND KULTUR EV, Germany
- Association for improvement of modern living skills “Realization”, Croatia
- Centre for Non-formal education and Lifelong learning, Serbia
- LINK DMT SRL, Italy
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## Table of Contents

SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT .....	3
INTRODUCTION AND STRUCTURE OF THE TOOLKIT .....	5
PART 1: CONCEPTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	6
1.1. The specificities of organising local workshops with youngsters with fewer opportunities dealing with stress and anxiety.....	7
1.2. Recommendations for youth workers working with youngsters on the development of stress management coping mechanisms.....	13
PART 2: WORKSHOPS.....	15
2.1. Stress and stressor recognition.....	16
2.2. Circle of emotions .....	19
2.3. Relaxation techniques.....	22
2.4. Negative thoughts about worry.....	25
2.5. Mindfulness.....	28
2.6. Creating a personal “relaxation plan” .....	31
2.7. Problem-solving skills.....	33
2.8. Accepting .....	36
2.9. The circle of life.....	38
2.10. Listen to yourself.....	41
2.11. Everybody is a sound maker .....	44
2.12. Stress relief through music .....	46
2.13. Photography versus stressors .....	48
2.14. Photography as a relaxation technique .....	51
2.15. Photography for prevention of stress among youth .....	54
References .....	56
PUBLISHERS:.....	57

## SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

Young people nowadays are dealing with stress way more than previously young generations did. When searching about general statistics worldwide, it shows that there is a higher rate of stress issues with young people comparing to adults. That is due to different issues such as peer conflict, bullying at education institutions, financial situations, career orientation that determine their future and income, and so on. With the Covid-19 pandemic being present in our lives for quite a significant period, mental health concerns increased even more.

“The psychosocial effects of COVID-19 disproportionately affect young people. Both immediate and long-term factors through which young people are affected include social isolation, changes to the delivery of therapeutic services and almost complete loss of all structured occupations (school, work and training) within this population group<sup>1</sup>.”

“Because of the COVID-19 related school closures and social distancing measures, millions of children have been confined at home. Although families, communities, and schools have attempted to adapt, at times successfully, many children and youth have been deprived of structured support, trapped in dysfunctional family settings, and are relying largely on peer relations through the unsupervised use of social media<sup>2</sup>.”

Living in an era where social networks highlight the importance of socialising and posting content for others to see the activity and surroundings, makes youngsters feel even more the need to belong and being included. Also, the amount of time spent on social networks enables them to see more of each other's lives and unconsciously compare with their own lives and achievements.

Our concerns are relevant for different level of youth work and respective stress elements - both for youngsters, as well as for youth workers on all levels of youth work - local, national, European and international - as pandemic influences significantly the way youth work and approaches to youngsters are organised nowadays.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to tackle this issue and mobilise youth workers in Europe to contribute to supporting young people's mental health. This can be done through empowerment of both young people who are dealing with stress and youth workers who tackle these topics and target groups. This project aims to work on the mentioned issues through empowerment of youngsters with fewer opportunities and youth workers by producing relevant educational materials and developing quality strategic partnership among European countries.

Project objectives:

- Empower youth workers for prevention and management of stress among marginalised youngsters, through development of inspiring and innovative Curriculum, LTTA and the Online course for youth workers' training.
- Empower youngsters with fewer opportunities in coping mechanisms and dealing with stress and anxiety, through innovative Toolkit with multidisciplinary approach workshops for beneficiaries.

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<sup>1</sup> Power, E., Hughes, S., Cotter, D., & Cannon, M. (2020). Youth mental health in the time of COVID-19. *Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 37(4), 301-305. doi:10.1017/ipm.2020.84

<sup>2</sup> Rousseau, C., & Miconi, D. (2020). Protecting youth mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: A challenging engagement and learning process. *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry*, 59(11), 1203-7. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344942775>

- Exchange good practices and further develop quality strategic partnership among partners from 5 European countries with different realities in regard to youth stress management and prevention.

Project activities are:

- A1 – Project Management
- M1 – Kick-off project meeting
- O1 Toolkit “What?! I’m not stressed!” - Toolkit for youth workers to implement different workshops with their beneficiaries of youngsters with fewer opportunities on stress prevention and management; with the multidisciplinary approach to the topic.
- M2 – Second project meeting
- O2 Curriculum “What?! I’m not stressed!” - Curriculum for empowering youth workers current and future ones to further educate, mentor and support youngsters with fewer opportunities in stress prevention and management, as well as to deal with their own stress in youth work they perform.
- M3 – Third project meeting
- O3 E-learning course “What?! I’m not stressed!” - an innovative and up-to-date digital tool / online course for relevant topics and with tools for prevention and management of stress that is happening in every day face-to-face and online situations amongst youth and in youth work nowadays.
- C1 - LTTA - Training of trainers in youth work for stress management among youth with fewer opportunities
- E1, E2, E3, E4, E5 – Open conferences in RS, IT, HR, DE, BE
- M4 – Final Evaluation meeting

Partners:

- JUGEND, BILDUNG UND KULTUR e.V., Germany
- Association for improvement of modern living skills “Realization”, Croatia
- Centre for Non-formal education and Lifelong learning, Serbia
- LINK DMT s.r.l., Italy
- Out of the Box International, Belgium
- Learning Wizard d.o.o., Croatia

## INTRODUCTION AND STRUCTURE OF THE TOOLKIT

This toolkit “What?! I'm not stressed!” explains fundamental stress-related concepts and combines various relaxation techniques. It can be helpful to youth workers interested in expanding their bag of tools and direct work with youngsters.

This toolkit combines various techniques related to music, photography, problem-solving, emotions and many others with the goal of providing comprehensive support in coping with stress. The combination of these techniques and scientific explanations behind their efficiency makes it a valuable resource for working with youngsters. The techniques described in the toolkit can be used with youngsters currently coping with stress as well as prevention and personal development activities.

The toolkit consists of two main parts. The first part of the toolkit is focused on providing detailed insight into the concepts of stress. This part contains fundamental information on reactions during stress, its symptoms, the physiological background of stress, stress effects, and its adaptive functions. Furthermore, this part provides information on Covid-19 impact on the mental health of youngsters as well as additional difficulties that youngsters encounter. At the end of the first part, there are useful recommendations for the implementation of the local workshops for youngsters with fewer opportunities dealing with stress and anxiety. The second part of the toolkit consists of 15 workshops that can be used in youth work. Each workshop description provides a detailed description of the activities as well as suggested support materials for its implementation. Special highlights can be put on materials for further reading where the youth workers can find additional information on the techniques used in workshops. The used techniques are specifically focused on reducing the unpleasant symptoms of stress and promoting relaxation and constructive coping with stress. Workshops are covering the topics of stressor recognition, emotions, relaxation techniques, negative thoughts about worry, mindfulness, problem-solving skills, life satisfaction, and stress relief through music and photography.

At last, we hope this manual will serve as an assistant in enriching the work of the youth organisations and a catalyst for sharing knowledge and practices for coping with stress. We hope that it will help the youth workers to encourage young people to look at the bigger picture, take initiative and improve their life satisfaction as well as spark inspiration for growth and personal development.

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PART 1: CONCEPTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1.1. The specificities of organising local workshops with youngsters with fewer opportunities dealing with stress and anxiety

### Effects of COVID-19 pandemic among youngsters

During the first wave of the pandemic, real-life social contact was severely limited and tainted with the fear of becoming ill or spreading the illness to other people. Given that socialising is a major stress relief for many people and is important for maintaining good mental health, not being able to see other people without feeling anxiety over the possible consequences of the interaction took a toll on mental health capacities on a global scale. According to the WHO the prevalence of mental health issues rose by 25% globally as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The exhaustion associated with the global pandemic environment has been dubbed pandemic fatigue, and it is a natural reaction to a prolonged state of health crisis. It is marked by a lack of motivation to follow health precautions or following them extremely rigidly, fatigue and low energy, information overload, as well as feelings of inefficiency, irritability and a general low mood<sup>3</sup>.

Parents and experts alike were worried by the detrimental effects the pandemic-related restrictions may cause to children and youth. Youth are already at risk of developing mental health problems, as 50% of all lifetime mental illness begins by the age of 14, and 75% by the age of 24.<sup>4</sup> Anxiety in youth often revolves around how others, especially peers, perceive them, as well as worries about academic performance, choosing a path in life and learning to navigate the world. UNICEF (2020) has reported a significant impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of adolescents and youth<sup>5</sup>.

Restricted social contact left many youths feeling isolated, lonely and frustrated. Some people pointed fingers at youth socialising, accusing them of spreading the disease to their elder family members. Teenagers who were fulfilling their need for peer contact may have felt significant anxiety due to the prospect of unwittingly infecting people they cared about. With the closing of schools and abrupt transition into online classes many students felt they weren't getting the education they needed, and methods of online schooling were often less than desirable, riddled with technical difficulties or employing unethical surveillance methods to protect against academic dishonesty. Youths living in abusive households may have lost valuable refuges with the closing of schools and other extracurricular activities. The economic impact of the pandemic may lead to a loss of job opportunities for youths entering the job market, and many jobs may offer reduced income. Additionally, today's youth may grow up to a world in which they will carry much of the long-term consequences of the pandemic and its associated crises. It is

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<sup>3</sup> WHO. (2022, March 2nd). COVID-19 pandemic triggers 25% increase in prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide. <https://www.who.int/news/item/02-03-2022-covid-19-pandemic-triggers-25-increase-in-prevalence-of-anxiety-and-depression-worldwide>

<sup>4</sup> Kessler, R. C., Berglund, P., Demler, O., Merikangas, K. R., & Walters, E. E. (2005). Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 62(6), 593-602.

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of adolescents and youth. <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/impact-covid-19-mental-health-adolescents-and-youth>



therefore crucial to empower today's youth to efficiently handle stress and anxiety so they may constructively face the challenges ahead of them.

These challenges may be additionally difficult for youth who are disadvantaged in different ways. Young people of lower socioeconomic status, those living in rural areas, those experiencing homelessness or joblessness, those living with disability or as a racial, ethnic, gender or sexual minority face specific additional stresses which may affect their quality of life. These individuals may be more vulnerable to stress and may have depleted capacities for dealing with stress, may lack motivation to enrol in programs aimed at developing their capacities, or may lack resources to meaningfully engage in those programs. Therefore, it is important to provide additional support to youth who are exposed to cumulative stress factors.

## Concept of stress and its effects

Stress is a normal generalised psychophysiological reaction to environmental threats and to the demands our surroundings put on us<sup>6</sup>. It is the reaction one experiences when faced with a stressful event (i.e. a stressor). A stressor can be any situation an individual deems important but feels they cannot overcome. People feel stress when they believe that their capabilities or capacities aren't sufficient to respond to the situation at hand<sup>7</sup>. These situations are often events that require adaptation in some way, such as large life events, for example going through a divorce or the birth of a child. Even events that are perceived positive can cause stress if they imply a need for adaptation. However, the experience of stress is not tied only to significant life events – it can also be caused by everyday challenges such as taking an exam or being in a hurry<sup>8</sup>. What people deem stressful is very individual, as every person has different experiences, finds different things important and has differing beliefs about their abilities. One can never know how stressful a given event is for someone or whether they find it stressful at all.

The symptoms of stress span the body, the mind, emotions, and behaviour<sup>9</sup>. A person who is experiencing stress may notice their heart beating faster, trembling, increased sweating, a loss of appetite, trouble sleeping, fatigue, or various pains in the body. They may also feel anxiety, fear, sadness, anger, irritability or numbness. These sensations can cause them to change their behaviour, often prompting them to isolate themselves, avoid certain activities, or engage in risky behaviour such as substance use. Stress also affects the mind - many people who experience stress notice a feeling of disorientation or derealisation, memory problems, or an inability to care for themselves or others or to make decisions. These symptoms make up the so-called stress reaction<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Contrada, R., & Baum, A. (Eds.). (2010). *The handbook of stress science: Biology, psychology, and health*. Springer Publishing Company.

<sup>7</sup> Spielberger, C. (1979.). *Stres i tjeskoba*. Zagreb: Globus.

<sup>8</sup> Hudek-Knežević, J. i Kardum, I. (2006). *Stres i tjelesno zdravlje*. Naklada Slap.

<sup>9</sup> Hayes, S. C., i Hofmann, S. G. (2018). *Process-based CBT: The science and core clinical competencies of cognitive behavioral therapy*. New Harbinger Publications.

<sup>10</sup> Hudek-Knežević, J. i Kardum, I. (2006). *Stres i tjelesno zdravlje*. Naklada Slap.

The physiological stress reaction includes activating the so-called 'fight or flight' response, which mobilises the energy needed to successfully overcome a challenge. Its purpose is to enable people to work quickly and effectively in order to subdue a threat, perform well at an evaluation and so on. Nervous system activation allows for heightened alertness and faster thinking, while hormone release facilitates the release of stored energy which may be required for confronting or fleeing from the threat at hand. Adrenaline causes an increase in blood pressure and pulse, as well as faster and deeper breathing to supply more oxygen to the muscles. The pupils widen, the mouth becomes dry, sweating increases, and blood is redirected from the visceral organs towards the muscles and brain. Cortisol increases the release of glucose and fat stores to supply more energy. These two hormones influence almost every organ in the body to prepare it for facing the potential threat and the body stays in this activated state until the brain sends feedback that the threat is over, when the stress reaction stops, and the body returns to homeostasis. This adaptive mechanism is useful in the short run<sup>11</sup>, but the processes involved use a lot of energy and it is therefore important for the body to return to homeostasis<sup>12</sup>. Prolonged stress can take a toll on the body because the 'fight or flight' reaction can exhaust our physical and mental resources and therefore it may not be adaptive in the long run. While it allows people to adapt to their surroundings and mobilises the body to react quickly, it also spends energy and fatigues the body and can decrease capacity to pay attention to other things that may be happening. The state of long-term exposure to stress is called chronic stress and it is associated with various bodily disorders, including tissue damage and a negative impact on the immune system.

The negative effects of stress appear when one's exposure to it is too intense or too long and when it surpasses the capacity of dealing with it. If one experiences many stressful situations within a short time, or if a stressful situation lasts for a long time, the body may stay in a long-term state of stress. Frequent and repeated stress can exhaust the body and can lead to harmful outcomes. A prolonged state of 'fight or flight' can have a negative impact on health, may reduce attention capacities, incite bad mood and have other consequences that can interfere with everyday life. In situations to which one cannot easily adapt, such as prolonged joblessness or illness, they are kept in a state of stress for longer than usual and their body cannot return to homeostasis to rest. This is when the risk of psychophysiological disorders can increase. These are diseases that are caused or exacerbated by emotional factors.

The most frequent of these disorders are cardiovascular, namely hypertension and coronary heart disease<sup>13</sup>. Symptoms related to the digestive system, such as nausea, vomiting, stomach pain or diarrhoea, are also often related to stress. The most common endocrine diseases connected to stress are hyperthyroidism and diabetes<sup>14</sup>. Long term stress can also negatively affect the immune system – herpes sufferers often find they have outbreaks during stressful periods in their life. Stress can lead to various mental issues as well, namely depression, panic attacks, anxiety and irritability. People often self-medicate during stress, which can open the door to substance abuse problems.

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<sup>11</sup> Dhabhar, F. S. (2014). Effects of stress on immune function: the good, the bad, and the beautiful. *Immunologic Research*, 58, 193–210.

<sup>12</sup> Dhabhar, F. S. (2014). Effects of stress on immune function: the good, the bad, and the beautiful. *Immunologic Research*, 58, 193–210.

<sup>13</sup> Havelka, M. (1995). *Health Psychology*. University of Zagreb – Faculty of Medicine.

<sup>14</sup> Havelka, M. (1995). *Health Psychology*. University of Zagreb – Faculty of Medicine.

A feeling of uncertainty about the future is often a source of anxiety and stress<sup>15</sup>. When one doesn't know what is going to happen, they can't know how to prepare for it. Knowing all the possible outcomes often doesn't help, but rather may trigger an anxiety spiral and cause more unpleasant feelings. Uncertainty was rampant during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the course of the illness, treatment options and transmission routes being largely unknown for much of the first pandemic wave, and with the constant changing of health and safety guidelines leaving people unsure of whether they were doing everything they could to protect themselves. The virus had presented a new, direct danger people hadn't faced before and they didn't know how scared they were supposed to be. Many people felt they were being more vigilant regarding any bodily symptoms that may point to a possible infection, which left them overanalysing sensations they might otherwise not have noticed. This constant state of alertness and anticipation meant that the 'fight or flight' reaction was being triggered more often than usual. People who hadn't experienced significant anxiety before were unsure how to deal with it, while people with anxiety disorders couldn't access important care resources. In this sense, the pandemic was (and is) a situation of chronic stress. The lack of motivation, fatigue, and irritability many people began to feel when the end of the pandemic still wasn't in sight after months of restrictions may be attributed to a reaction to stress.

**There are no perfect and definite ways to deal with stress.** Any activity that is performed with the intent of relieving stress-related symptoms may be considered a method of dealing with stress. Every person has techniques that work for them, which may be helpful in the moment, but not all of them are constructive in the long term. An example of this is substance use, which may provide a quick and effective release of tension, but may cause further, more serious issues down the line. It is therefore important to encourage using stress relief strategies that have favourable long-term outcomes and do not cause further detrimental effects.

Since stressors can trigger different reactions, different techniques are needed to cope with them. This manual describes techniques that affect emotional, physiological, behavioural and emotional reactions to stress. The workshops presented in the second part of this toolkit combine various techniques in order to support youngsters in coping with stress in a way that suits their personal preferences.

## The specificities of organising local workshops with youngsters

When organising local workshops with youngsters with fewer opportunities, it is essential to have in mind the specificities of this population. This includes the limitations they have on the accessibility of such opportunities, the needs and situation in their societies, and other related social aspects that impact their engagement in interactive activities as well as the surroundings that may cause stress among this group. Below are described several important aspects that youth workers and educators should involve in the processes of implementing and organising local workshops with youngsters with fewer opportunities.

### Creating connection and trust, encouraging active participation

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<sup>15</sup> Greco, V., & Roger, D. (2003). Uncertainty, stress, and health. *Personality and Individual differences*, 34(6), 1057-1068.

Youngsters can especially value social contact and creating connections with each other. In this stage of development, it can be important to have a sense of belonging and trust between each other. Therefore, it may be beneficial to ensure enough time for socialising, such as including breaks after each workshop or to combine stress-related workshops with workshops that aim to promote bonding between participants. In many cases, participants may feel hesitant to approach each other. During the COVID-19 pandemic, social contacts were restrained, and youngsters did not have many possibilities to spend time with each other in person, which may further increase caution when meeting new people. Also, some youngsters may have significant difficulties with social anxiety and feelings of distress in social situations. Speaking in front of the group, presenting their ideas or sharing unpopular opinions may be seen as stressful situations and it is desirable to approach these situations with understanding for the participants. The youth workers could include positive reinforcing actions after such activities (like praise, starting clapping or complimenting the activity). Such reinforcing actions may help to create a positive atmosphere and promote the feeling of trust between the participants. Furthermore, in a work with youngsters, a positive atmosphere can be expected. It is possible that some of them will include some jokes and humour in the workshops. These can be welcomed by the youth worker / trainer and useful for supporting good mood (as long as the humour is not too distractive).

### **Fostering interactivity and preventing distraction**

The youth workers should have a special focus on the level of interaction during the activities. Youngsters may prefer activities that make them engaged and included in the process. Therefore, it is not the best option to offer them solutions or answers, but to try to ask them about their opinion first and to encourage them to find alternative attitudes and opinions themselves.

The level of interaction during the workshops may be affected by the usage of mobile phones. Youngsters are used to interacting on social media and checking what is happening online rather often. Mobile phones can also affect levels of concentration in youngsters, and they might find it challenging to keep their attention on a specific task. Mobile phones can be distracting, and participants could feel the urge for checking the text messages, pictures and profiles of other people. The youth workers should not ignore the usage of mobile phones, but to include the usage of mobile phones as part of the activities (as in a few workshops described in part two) or ask the participants not to use mobile phones during specific activities with appropriate explanation.

### **Risk factor analysis**

When talking about a specific topic, the youth worker should have in mind the context of the participants. More specifically, what life challenges they might have in life (like studies, family interactions, partnership, career management, friendships and similar) and what surroundings they come from (country-specific problems, socio-cultural norms and similar). When addressing a specific topic, it is desirable to include examples and to connect them with the everyday context of the participants. This may promote a better understanding of the contents as well as implementing the newly gained knowledge into everyday life.

Also, it is good to have in mind that youngsters are becoming young adults. They have already been through various life experiences and gained different skills and knowledge. Their experiences and opinions should be treated with respect. The youth worker can expect that participants are able to engage in critical

thinking, taking other people's perspectives and taking responsibility for their actions. The youth worker can have in mind these abilities and challenge them further (for example by encouraging critical thinking). Also, youngsters can be creative in their answers and provide unconventional ideas. All of these abilities provide good foundation for carrying out activities.

When working with youngsters it is good to have in mind that some of them may be exposed to various risk factors. There are young people experiencing poverty, lack of job opportunities, lower socioeconomic status, living with a disability or as a racial, ethnic, gender, sexual or other minority, living in toxic families, having undeveloped social networks, experiencing community-level stressful or traumatic events, experiencing violence and similar. Youth exposed to these realities and other risk factors may face specific challenges. When dealing with sensitive topics, the youth worker should have in mind these factors and different contexts that youngsters are coming from and always talk about these topics with care and respect, not hurting anyone's dignity.

### **Protective factor analysis**

Besides the awareness and analysis of risk factors, there are various youth protective factors that support the organisation of workshops with local youngsters with fewer opportunities. Some of them include positive physical development, academic achievement/intellectual development, high self-esteem, emotional self-regulation, good coping skills and problem-solving skills, engagement and connections in two or more of the following contexts: school, with peers, athletics, employment, spirituality and art or culture<sup>16</sup>. Some of the workshops described in the second part of the manual deal with developing protective factors like problem-solving skills and emotional self-regulation. It is desirable to work on strengthening these protective factors since these factors can contribute to the positive affirmation of youth in society.



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<sup>16</sup> Risk and Protective Factors for Youth | Youth.gov. <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/youth-mental-health/risk-and-protective-factors-youth>

## 1.2. Recommendations for youth workers working with youngsters on the development of stress management coping mechanisms

Youth workers have an essential role in supporting and helping youngsters on developing stress management coping mechanisms. They are one of the main actors who address the needs of young people and are aware on the problems that they are facing. It is important to emphasise that young people's challenges are different ones from what adults' experience as they are still in the learning phase to develop the sense of responsibility, navigating social cues, identify and deal with boundaries in life, and so on. For these reasons and more, it is important that youth workers have the needed skills and information that help them in working with youngsters and fit their needs, interests, and build competences for the coping mechanisms in this regard. The following content comprises of a set of recommendations that youth workers should consider when working with youngsters on the development of stress management coping mechanisms.

**When working with young people, the youth worker can keep in mind the following:**

- It is good to pay attention to building a good rapport. Adolescents may respond to authority with rebellion, and it is good not to take it personally.
- The youth worker should respect youths' diversity and **be aware of differences in culture, religion, education, socio-economic background** and similar factors as they can influence how youths engage with him/her. Disadvantaged youths may come from varying backgrounds and may have had detrimental experiences that cause them difficulty when engaging with certain topics.
- It is good to respect youths' **privacy**. The youth worker should not force them to divulge personal information if they do not wish to. Also, the youth worker should not share their information with others, not even their family members.
- It is good to respect youths' **autonomy**. The youth worker can ask for consent when doing exercises, ask for their opinion, ask for their impressions, opinions, and plans to implement follow-up activities based on what they have learned in the workshop.
- It is recommended to have understanding for the **context**. Developmental level, personality, history and social environment may impact youths' readiness to participate in workshops and the way they understand the coursework.
- The youth worker should be aware that disadvantaged youth may have varying level of home care, and some may require additional support.
- When working with a young person with a disability, the youth worker should ask them if they require any accommodation and follows it with providing the needed support and accommodation.
- The youth worker should employ **good communication skills**. Adolescents will often look to people in authority for guidelines on how to interact with others. The youth worker should try to be a positive example, keep communication open and honest, and respect others' boundaries.
- The youth worker should maintain boundaries. It is good to be aware of the role of a teacher and not approach youths as a friend, counsellor, or parent.

- It is good to seek supervision if needed. Adolescents can be challenging to work with. It is good for a youth worker to be conscious of it and of when they may need to talk it out with a colleague or supervisor.

### **The youth worker should aim to convey the following messages to youngsters:**

- Leading a healthy lifestyle, eating well, sleeping enough, getting adequate exercise and regularly spending time with loved ones form a basis for good mental and physical health. No stress relief strategy can compensate for deficits in these basic areas of functioning, and all participants should aim to improve their habits in these areas
- No one cannot and do not have to completely remove anxiety from life. Anxiety is important for our survival, and it is an evolutionary mechanism that people cannot overcome. People can, however, learn to live with it, regulate it, and listen to what it is telling us.
- It is good to remember that stress and anxiety are different for everyone. No one should berate or embarrass someone if they are having trouble in a situation you find easy to overcome. For them it may be difficult.
- There are many techniques for dealing with stress and anxiety that one can try. Not all of them work for everyone. Many of them require some practice to reach full efficiency. It is beneficial to try out several techniques, evaluate how they fit into lifestyle and keep using those that are suiting the needs.
- If a certain technique has stopped being useful, one may wish to repeat the process outlined above and choose a different technique. Depending on life circumstances and the situation that someone is facing, the techniques that were most beneficial may change with time.
- Seeking professional help is nothing to be ashamed of. Dealing with stress and anxiety can be overwhelming and many people find they cannot deal with it alone. A professional may be able to identify the exact areas you are struggling in and offer invaluable support in overcoming the challenges you are facing.
- Exposure to short-term stress can be useful as it raises concentration, focus and level of energy. It may even be beneficial for cardiovascular system if a person is aware that it can be helpful and perceive it as useful excitement.
- Mindfulness is a basic human ability to be present. It is not a religion, but a state of being conscious and paying attention that enables us to observe, better understand and live fully in a present moment.



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PART 2: WORKSHOPS





## 2.1. Stress and stressor recognition

**Workshop Title:** “Stress and stressor recognition”

**Duration:** 90 minutes

**Background:**

This workshop is focused on providing a basic understanding of the terms related to stress and a detailed elaboration of reactions to stress. During the workshop, the difference between stressors and stress is explained. Knowledge on the differences is important because it helps participants to distinguish a stressful situation and a stressful reaction. Also, it helps them to realise that if something represents a stressor to one person it doesn't have to represent a stressor to another person. Furthermore, this workshop can help the participants to distinguish their own reactions to stress and divide them into categories. Categorisation of these reactions can help them to understand their reactions better and to recognise them faster. Activities will provide participants an opportunity to reflect on their own experience with stress, as well as encourage them to use the new information in their everyday life as a tool for successful coping with stress.

**Aim of the workshop:**

To gain understanding on the stress related concepts and various categories of reactions to stress.

**Objectives:**

- To create space for participants to reflect on own reactions to stress;
- To understand the difference between the stressors and the stress;
- To understand the diversity of stress reactions;
- To establish good communication and feeling of trust between participants;
- To promote the bio-psychological-social welfare of participants thanks to gained insights and their application to everyday life.

**Competences addressed:**

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence;
- Collaboration and communication;
- Citizenship competence.

**Methodology and methods:**

- Self-reflection
- Work in small groups;
- Work in pairs;
- Group discussion.

**Workshop flow:**

I. “Stress and I” (10 minutes)

The youth worker asks the participants to join the circle and sit. They are invited to think for about what would be stressful situations for them. After one or two minutes, participants are asked to form pairs and

share their thoughts with their partner. This method allows the participants to communicate their concerns and to realise that others might have similar difficulties as well. It also allows the participants to connect their past experiences with stress with the new information in the next activities.

## **II. “Map the stress” (55 minutes)**

After the reflection and work in pairs, the youth worker asks participants to sit in circle and to share what would be "stress" for them. Then some of the participants share different examples of the situations and stress reactions that they previously talked about. The youth worker writes them all down in two columns. At the end of enlisting examples, the youth worker writes the names of the columns: "Stressor" and "Stress" under which the categorisation occurred and asks the participants to tell the difference between the two terms. Furthermore, the youth worker broadens the participants' understanding and highlights the main differences between the stress and the stressors. It is expected that this part lasts approximately 10 minutes.

The next task engages participants to reflect further on the stressful reactions. Participants are divided into four groups - Thoughts, Emotions, Body reactions, and Behaviour. Each group is given a paper and are instructed to discuss and write some examples of the stressful reactions related to their category. Groups are given 20 minutes to discuss on this.

After that, each group presents their examples in the plenary and after each group, the youth worker provides additional information about each category of reactions – thoughts, emotions, body reactions and behaviour. Groups have up to 5 minutes for presentations.

At the end of this activity, participants are asked to pick which category of stressful reactions is the most relevant for them and to change their seats accordingly into the four new groups as a reflection on previously gained knowledge. This can take up to 5 minutes.

## **III. Group discussion (25 minutes)**

The youth worker invites participants to sit in a circle in order to start a discussion. This discussion has some of the elements of the debriefing which is beneficial for the closure of this workshop.

Group discussion can be beneficial for incorporating new-gained information into everyday life. The discussion is primarily focused on using the information about stressful reactions for early noticing of the occurrence of the stress. The youth worker begins the discussion for each topic with suggested questions listed below.

- What terms did we mention today?
- How did you feel during these activities?
- What do you think about the four categories of reactions?
- How could you use that model in your everyday life?
- How could this model be “a sensor” for your stress levels?
- Could it be used for stress prevention and why?

### **Materials needed:**

B1 size papers, Flipchart stand and flipchart papers, Markers

### **Background documents and further reading:**

- Fundamental information about stress: <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/~media/CCI/Mental-Health-Professionals/Anxiety/Anxiety---Information-Sheets/Anxiety-Information-Sheet---11---Stress-and-Anxiety.pdf>

- Information on stress and stressors: <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/~media/CCI/Mental-Health-Professionals/Anxiety/Anxiety---Information-Sheets/Anxiety-Information-Sheet---10---Coping-with-Stress.pdf>
- Fundamental information on anxiety: <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/~media/CCI/Mental-Health-Professionals/Anxiety/Anxiety---Information-Sheets/Anxiety-Information-Sheet---01---What-is-Anxiety.pdf>

**Recommendations for future youth workers multiplying this workshop:**

- If the participants are not willing to share their examples, their preferences should be respected, and they should not be pushed to share their impressions. If there is a lack of examples provided by the participants, a youth worker can provide additional examples.
- It is not necessary to use the flipchart, but it is desirable to have a tool for visual representation of the contents like PowerPoint presentation or similar.

## 2.2. Circle of emotions

**Workshop Title:** “Circle of emotions”

**Duration:** 90 minutes

**Background:**

This workshop is focused on the development of emotional intelligence. More specifically, the activities are focused on recognition of own and others' emotions as well as in naming these emotions. Youngsters can lack the needed vocabulary for expressing their emotions but also in recognising and adequately responding to others' emotions. It can be hard for them to name specifically how they feel. Naming emotions could help to raise understanding of the situation and own reactions to it. Also, becoming more aware of the own reactions and being able to express emotions, can provide relief to some. Activities in this workshop encourage participants to take a closer look in own and others' emotions and to practice its recognition.

**Aim of the workshop:**

To improve participants' knowledge on circle of emotions and improve their ability of recognising own and others' emotions.

**Objectives:**

- To broaden the vocabulary of participants in relation to the emotions and their importance;
- To practice active listening and taking other person's perspective;
- To practice expressing own emotions;
- To establish good communication and feeling of trust between participants;
- To promote usage of circle of emotions in everyday life activities and conversations.

**Competences addressed:**

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence;
- Analytical competences;
- Cooperation and communication;
- Citizenship competence.

**Methodology and methods:**

- Input;
- Brainstorming;
- Work in small groups;
- Work in pairs;
- Debriefing.

**Workshop flow:**

**I. Energetic emotions (10 minutes)**

The youth worker asks the participants to stand up and walk around the room. While they are walking, the youth worker asks them to make a face of surprise and to add some gestures and body movements

to show what this emotion looks like. After some time, the youth worker asks them to do the same for sadness, then anger, disgust and then fear and happiness at last. Participants can copy others' movements and gestures and after some minutes they are asked to come back to their seats.

## **II. Emotions like symptoms (25 minutes)**

Participants sit in a big circle and the youth worker provides an introduction to the topic of emotions. He/she emphasises that emotions are like symptoms and that they are the signs for interpretation of the situation, for example, that fear usually occurs when one could be in danger or when something threatens one. After this introduction, the participants are divided into 5 groups and each group has the task to brainstorm what could be functions of other basic emotions.

When the small-group discussions are finished, the participants are asked to present their conclusions to others.

## **III. Circle of emotions (35 minutes)**

Participants join the circle, and the youth worker asks them to list the names of all the other emotions which they can think of. It is expected that participants share different types of emotions like jealousy, playfulness, hope and so on. Each participant then receives a visual presentation of a "circle of emotions" where the emotions are grouped in bigger categories by colours. After this, they are divided into pairs and are instructed to do the following task: one member should tell some story or event that recently happened, and the other one should listen and try to recognise the emotions that they hear by using the circle of emotions. The recognised emotions are then shared with the member who told the story, and they together analyse whether something else needs to be included or excluded from the list. They switch roles after that, and then the other member of the pair shares their story and the first one identifies the emotions.

## **IV. Debriefing (20 minutes)**

When everyone is back in a big circle, the youth worker can start the discussion and the debriefing of the activities. The youth worker can use the following questions.

- How did you feel during today's activities?
- How easy or hard was it to recall the names of different emotions?
- How was it to identify others' emotions?
- How was it to hear emotions that others identified in your situation?
- What is the most important conclusion for you after this workshop?
- In which other situations could you use the circle of emotions? How?

### **Materials needed:**

B1 size papers, Markers, "Circle of emotions" handout.

### **Background documents and further reading:**

- Fundamental information on wheel of emotions: <https://www.6seconds.org/2022/03/13/plutchik-wheel-emotions/>
- Free Circle of emotions handout: <https://feelingswheel.com/>
- Basic information on emotions: <https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/emotion-wheel>
- Information of function of emotions: <https://openpress.usask.ca/introductiontopsychology/chapter/functions-of-emotions/>  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/anger-in-the-age-entitlement/201612/the-function-emotions>

**Recommendations for future youth workers multiplying this workshop:**

- In the first activity, the emotions can be randomly organised. It is not necessary to keep the suggested order, and some emotions can be repeated as well.
- In the third activity, the participants should be instructed to choose a situation which is not too important or disturbing for them. The best is to choose something of low to medium intensity.

## 2.3. Relaxation techniques

**Workshop Title:** “Relaxation techniques”

**Duration:** 90 minutes

**Background:**

Responding to own physiological reactions to stress can be demanding. It is likely that youngsters are not familiar with different body relaxation techniques that they can use when experiencing stressful reactions. This workshop presents techniques that can be easily implemented. Body relaxation techniques can be very effective and can result in instant relaxation. Participants have the opportunity to learn how to use them and to experience their effects immediately. Also, through the workshop implementation they are encouraged to use these techniques in everyday life and to choose which technique can suit them the best in a specific situation. Including these relaxation techniques into own relaxation plan can be very beneficial for coping with stress.

**Aim of the workshop:**

To learn how to practice relaxation techniques and to increase the awareness of the biological mechanism behind their effectiveness.

**Objectives:**

- To learn body relaxation techniques;
- To understand biological mechanism behind the techniques;
- To practice abdominal breathing;
- To learn about building a sense of control over stress;
- To learn how to establish a connection with the body during stress;
- To promote usage of relaxation techniques in everyday life.

**Competences addressed:**

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence;
- Citizenship competence;
- Teamwork;
- Communication.

**Methodology and methods:**

- Guided relaxation;
- Input;
- Group discussion.

**Workshop flow:**

**I. Energy meter (10 minutes)**

Participants stand up and walk around the room. The youth worker gives them instructions to walk like they have lots of energy. After that, to walk as they have almost no energy, then like they have a medium amount of energy and so on. The youth worker can use different terms for describing the amount of

energy. Furthermore, in the next round of energy levels, the youth worker adds additional tasks to the level of energy. For example, when the participants are supposed to walk like they have a lot of energy, they should also give each other "high fives", when they do not have a lot of energy - to wave at each other, and on a medium level - to say hi to each other.

## **II. "Breath it out" relaxation technique (20 minutes)**

Participants are instructed to sit comfortably and are informed that in the next activity the main topic will be breathing. The youth worker asks them to pay attention to their breathing now and not to change their natural style of breathing but to just observe it. He/she instructs them to observe how their body moves as they breathe, as well as their rhythm of breathing. Then they are instructed to start inhaling through their nose and exhaling through their mouth, and after that to start breathing with their belly. They can put their hands on the belly to feel the belly rising as they inhale and losing its bloating as they exhale. After a few minutes of breathing in that way, the youth worker introduces counting while breathing. Participants are guided to inhale in the 2/4 ratio where the inhale lasts 2 beats and exhale lasts 4 beats. After some time, the youth worker explains that each participant can use their own ratio, but the exhale should always be two times longer than the inhale and allows them to breathe as they prefer.

## **III. Relaxation through massage (15 minutes)**

After the breathing exercise, participants are guided through a self-massage exercise. They are instructed to massage their legs, knees, thighs, belly, shoulders, arms, neck, scalp and so on. After guiding the self-massage, the youth worker gives instructions to proceed with the massage in the way each participant feels like. Some may massage only hair, others only back or only legs while some can choose to massage few different body parts. During the massage, the youth worker explains that this activity activates a parasympathetic nervous system and shortly elaborates its connection with feeling calm and relaxed. Furthermore, it links its connection with oxytocin production and pleasant emotions. At the end of the exercise, the youth worker explains that this biological mechanism is similar in this, previous and the next exercise and that participants can choose between those techniques, depending on the situation and their preferences.

## **IV. Reflection "Body relaxation" (20 minutes)**

In the next activity, the youth worker guides participants through progressive muscular relaxation. Participants are instructed to first squeezing their feet muscles and then relaxing them. This process continues for each body part, starting from the feet to the head. Similar to what they did in previous activities, they proceed with legs, belly muscles, neck, arms, and palms, and continue with lips, nose, eyes, and ears until every face muscle has been squeezed and then relaxed. Participants should relax the muscles twice as long as they squeeze them tightly.

## **V. Debriefing (25 minutes)**

The youth worker starts a short debriefing session on the activities of this workshop. He/she uses the following questions, in the order presented below, to facilitate the group discussion:

- What relaxation techniques did we use today?
- How were you feeling after those activities?
- Which one did you like the best? Was there something that did not suit you?
- What do you think about using these techniques in your everyday life?
- In which situations can they be useful to you?



**Materials needed:**

B1 size papers, Markers.

**Background documents and further reading:**

- Fundamental information on breathing and its importance: <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/~media/CCI/Consumer-Modules/Panic-Stations/Panic-Stations---11---Breathing.pdf>
- Breathing retraining: <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/~media/CCI/Mental-Health-Professionals/Social-Anxiety/Social-Anxiety---Information-Sheets/Social-Anxiety-Information-Sheet---03---Breathing-Retraining.pdf>
- Progressive muscular relaxation script: <https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/progressive-muscle-relaxation-script>.
- Biological explanations of anti-stress effects of self-massage: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4290532/>

**Recommendations for future youth workers multiplying this workshop:**

- If some participants want to avoid touching specific body parts during these activities, their preferences should be respected.

## 2.4. Negative thoughts about worry

**Workshop Title:** “Negative thoughts about worry”

**Duration:** 90 minutes

**Background:**

The way of thinking about something can have a big effect on one's experience. The way of thinking can determine whether someone will be happy or frustrated about some situation and can even affect one's health. Thoughts can be a source of suffering which is disproportional to reality. Another important element is that people can be often unaware of their own thoughts and not approach them critically. This workshop challenges participants to reflect on different thoughts about worrying and to search alternatives. They will have the chance to brainstorm different information to create more realistic versions of listed thoughts. Negative thoughts about worry are often additional burden in stressful situations and it is beneficial to work on raising awareness about them.

**Aim of the workshop:**

To help participants' understanding to reflect on common thoughts about stress and worrying and restructure them into more constructive versions.

**Objectives:**

- To raise awareness of common myths related to stress;
- To practice active listening and taking other person's perspective;
- To establish good communication and feeling of trust between participants;
- To promote critical thinking.

**Competences addressed:**

- Team building;
- Communication;
- Personal, social and learning to learn competence;
- Digital competence.

**Methodology and methods:**

- Self-reflection;
- Work in small groups;
- Presentations.

**Workshop flow:**

**I. Self-reflection “Anxiety and I” (10 minutes)**

As an introduction to the topic, the youth worker asks the participant have they ever worried too much. Participants are sitting in a big circle and after few minutes of self-reflection, they start sharing their experiences. Youth workers can also ask them how did they know that that amount of worry was too much and did the situation they worried about was resolved positively or negatively?

## **II. Small groups on “Psycho-myths” (50 minutes)**

After the small discussion, participants are asked to form small groups. Each participant has to find their group by recognising the facial expression of the other participants. One group shows an angry face, the next one a happy face, some of the participants show sad faces, others a surprised face and finally a fearful face. In that way, participants are divided into five groups and each group represents one emotional expression. Since those are basic emotions, participants should easily recognise facial expressions. Participants should not share out loud which emotion they are displaying and searching for, but just observe the others, move around the room and join their emotional group.

After the group division, each group receives a paper with one common myth about stress or worrying that they will work on. The myths included are:

1. Each time I feel stressed, it makes damage to my body.
2. Worrying makes you crazy.
3. If you visit a psychotherapist, it is a proof that you are crazy.
4. Once I start feeling stressed or worried I will not be able to stop.
5. If I worry about some bad outcome, it makes that outcome less possible to happen.

The group can start working on these myths by listing the arguments that support the thesis and including various experiences with the topic (for example, I heard about it on social media). They use 15-20 minutes to finish this task and inform the youth worker when they are done. When all groups are done, the next step and task given by the youth worker is that they have to try to find alternative explanations. In this step, participants can reflect on arguments against these myths, they can use brainstorming, search the internet or use other available sources for arguments against them. Same as previously, they use approximately 20 minutes to finish this task. Then, in the final stage, they can write down their conclusion. At this point, the youth worker should visit each group to check their conclusion, before the following knowledge-sharing activity. A possible true version of these myths can include the following:

1. Short-term stress is not damaging the body and, in the most cases, it can be beneficial, especially if a person thinks so.
2. Worrying can be very uncomfortable, but it will not make you crazy.
3. Visiting a psychotherapist is not a proof of being crazy, but a sign that a person is willing and capable to engage in their wellbeing.
4. There are many techniques that can make us feel relaxed again (like breathing techniques).
5. Worrying about the outcome cannot make it less possible per se, taking action to prepare can help (but not even this is applicable in all situations).

## **III. Presentations (30 minutes)**

After the group work being done, the youth worker forms new mixed groups from the existing ones. The groups are formed in a way that there are 5 members from each group joining a new group so that each new group has a representative of the myths they were working before. So, these new groups will also have five members, one for each myth. Then, participants are instructed to present to each other in small groups the myth on which they were working. They are further instructed to shortly discuss on all three stages of reflecting on the myth: 1) arguments for; 2) arguments against; and 3) the conclusion. Each participant has approximately five minutes to discuss the topic and others can share if they do or do not agree with the final conclusion. It is good that the youth worker visits each group to check if the members understood the conclusions.

**Materials needed:**

- Pens, Papers.

**Background documents and further reading:**

- Fundamental information on understanding the beneficial side of stress:  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly\\_mcgonigal\\_how\\_to\\_make\\_stress\\_your\\_friend](https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend)

**Recommendations for future youth workers multiplying this workshop:**

- When visiting the groups, the youth worker should not provide “a correct answer” immediately (if there is a need for helping the group), but only instruct participants to do further research.

## 2.5. Mindfulness

**Workshop Title:** “Mindfulness”

**Duration:** 90 minutes

**Background:**

Mindfulness can improve psychological and physical well-being, reduce suffering caused by stress, mental problems and physical illness, develop inner peace and stability, cultivate compassion for self and others, and encourage the release and development of human potential. The mindfulness approach used is devoid of religious or spiritual context and as such is suitable for everyone. Members of any religious tradition can use this approach and it does not conflict with religious beliefs. Mindfulness can be used for accepting situations, emotions, own body and other people as they are, and taking the perspective of an observer. This workshop is focused on providing basic information on mindfulness and experiencing mindful moments.

**Aim of the workshop:**

To build skills of mindful observing and paying attention to the present moment.

**Objectives:**

- To gain basic understanding of mindfulness;
- To practice mindful listening and observing;
- To promote self-acceptance;
- To promote usage of mindfulness in everyday life.

**Competences addressed:**

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence;
- Analytical;
- Critical thinking.

**Methodology and methods:**

- Energiser - music mix;
- Brainstorming;
- Work in pairs;
- Guided visualisation;
- Group discussion.

**Workshop flow:**

**I. Energiser “Music mix” (15 minutes)**

The youth worker starts the first activity by explaining to participants that they will now play different songs and they can get up and start moving around the room. They can play different genres of music and choose songs which differ in rhythm. For example, rock, jazz, pop, classical music, and dance music can be included. Participants can change their body movements accordingly to the music genre.

## **II. What is mindfulness? (15 minutes)**

As an introduction to the topic, the youth worker asks the participants what mindfulness would be and what they know about mindfulness. The participants are seated in a big circle, and they start sharing their opinions and speak up freely. After they brainstorm on the definition of mindfulness, the youth worker invites participants to sit in pairs and to shortly talk about their experiences with mindfulness and similar experiences with meditation or some cognitive relaxation techniques. When both members of the pair have spoken, the youth worker can invite participants to share their experiences in the big circle also.

## **III. Guided visualisation "Experiencing mindfulness" (10 minutes)**

In this activity, participants are asked to stand up and walk around the room, while the youth worker provides further instructions. Participants are instructed to pay close attention to the different elements of the room they can see, like curtains, windows, and furniture, and to observe the shapes they see. Then, to pay attention to the sounds around them, to ask themselves what is the loudest sound they can see, and what other sounds are there. After the sounds, participants are asked to observe each other - different people that are also walking. At the last stage of this phase, they observe themselves walking and can try to imagine how would they look from above, like they are watching themselves from a helicopter.

## **IV. Small group work (20 minutes)**

After the guided visualisation, participants slowly stop the moving and are invited to take a seat and create small groups. While in the small groups, each participant receives a pen. They are instructed to continue observations. They focus their attention on the pen and are instructed to observe the different shapes of the pen and its colours. Then, participants observe small imperfections on the pen and are asked to notice their thoughts like: "I like this." and "I do not like this." to observe them, and to let these thoughts go (they can imagine a thought flying out in the air) and to move their attention to another characteristic of the pen.

Next, they move their attention to their breath and try observing the air getting into the nostrils, how their body moves while breathing and their thoughts like "This is good." or "This is bad." The youth worker reminds them to just observe these thoughts and eventually to let these thoughts go and just let breathing be as it is.

In the final phase, participants are observing their own body, their feet, knees, thighs, stomach, hands, and nails and are imagining their chests, face and hair. They are also observing the thoughts of "This is good or this I like." and "This is bad or this I do not like." The youth worker reminds them to observe these thoughts, and after some time to let these thoughts go and just observe their body as it is.

## **V. Reflection "Group discussion" (30 minutes)**

For a debriefing, participants sit in a big circle and the youth worker leads the discussion. Questions for a debriefing are listed below in the suggested order:

- What were we doing in this activity?
- How were you feeling during the activity? How do you feel now?
- What did you like? What did you not like?
- What was hard and what was easy for you?
- How was it "let go of thoughts"?
- What is the main conclusion you can take from this activity?
- How can you use it in your life?
- What else can you observe like this?

**Materials needed:**

Speakers, Laptop or other device to access to songs, pens.

**Background documents and further reading:**

- Fundamental information on mindfulness: <https://www.mindful.org/what-is-mindfulness/>
- Mindful walking practice: <https://www.mindful.org/daily-mindful-walking-practice/>
- Mindfulness benefits: <https://www.mindful.org/the-science-of-mindfulness/>

**Recommendations for future youth workers multiplying this workshop:**

- In the first activity, genres of the music can be repeated and mixed in a different order. On the other side, it is not advised to repeat the specific song.
- The youth worker can choose to play the music also during the second activity. In that case, a suggestion is to use relaxing instrumental music, which can be played in the background without distracting the main flow of the activity.

## 2.6. Creating a personal “relaxation plan”

**Workshop Title:** Creating a personal “relaxation plan”

**Duration:** 90 minutes

**Background:**

This workshop helps the participants to investigate various techniques for coping with stress. It is possible that youngsters are not familiar with different coping techniques even if they are available, free, and can be easily implemented. In this workshop, participants have the chance to investigate various relaxation techniques and discover what can help them in coping with stress and investigate the specific benefits of each technique. Furthermore, this workshop helps the participants to think about practical usage of these techniques and promotes using them in stressful situations. Participants will learn to reflect on which situations they can use them and to consider various obstacles that they could encounter in their implementation. Creating a personal relaxation plan can help them to build a bridge from learning relaxation techniques to using them in real life.

**Aim of the workshop:**

To reflect on own experience with relaxation techniques and learn to overcome obstacles for their usage in everyday life.

**Objectives:**

- To understand the importance of creating a personal relaxation plan;
- To connect relaxation techniques with stressful situations;
- To promote usage of relaxation techniques in everyday life.

**Competences addressed:**

- Team building;
- Civic competences
- Analytical;
- Personal, social and learning to learn competence.

**Methodology and methods:**

- Work in small groups;
- Individual work;
- Work in pairs and Discussion.

**Workshop flow:**

**I. Energiser “Theatre” (10 minutes)**

The workshop starts with a short energiser. In this activity, participants are impersonating famous characters. The youth worker gives them instructions to stand up and to move like a "lady in red", then like a "James Bond", like a "Beyoncé", "Roger Federer", "Nikola Tesla" and so on. The youth worker can come up with different famous characters. It is suggested to choose the ones from different contexts, like art, science, music, sports and so on.



## II. Small group work: Relaxation plan (50 minutes)

When the participants are sitting in the big circle again, the youth worker asks them to remember what techniques for coping with stress are they familiar with. It is expected that the participants will list out different techniques, like the ones related to emotions, relaxation, mindfulness and so on. Participants are then asked to form small groups of five and to create a list of those techniques and to broaden the list by investigating other techniques available on the internet. After creating the list of techniques for coping with stress, participants can create their own individual relaxation plan. To create such a plan, they can use the questions listed on the flipchart. The questions guide them to reflect further on the topic. The questions can include the following:

- What stressful situations do you often encounter?
- What are your reactions to them?
- What techniques could you use to help yourself in each situation?

After creating their own individual plan, each participant presents it to the others in the small group and asks them for further ideas. After the group helps one participant, the next one from the group presents its plan until everyone received help from the group.

## III. Relaxation plan “Pair up” (30 minutes)

When the work in the small groups is finished, participants continue to work in pairs. They discuss various obstacles that could stop them from incorporating their relaxation plan into their everyday life and are also trying to come up with different ideas for coping with them. They work on each plan for fifteen minutes. They can switch roles after the 15 minutes, or after each question. They can use the next questions to help ease the flow of the discussion.

- What do you need to engage in these activities?
- What can make it harder for you to implement these techniques?
- What could help you to overcome that obstacle (for each technique)?
- Can someone provide you additional help or motivation?
- What would you say now to your future self to motivate yourself to use those techniques?

### **Materials needed:**

Pens, Papers, Markers, Flipchart and flipchart papers.

### **Background documents and further reading:**

- Ideas for relaxation plan: [http://www.fosteringresilience.com/pdf/stress\\_management\\_plan.pdf](http://www.fosteringresilience.com/pdf/stress_management_plan.pdf)  
<https://parentandteen.com/managing-stress-coping-with-challenges/>  
<https://drspar.com/one-week-stress-management-plan/>
- Relaxation techniques: [https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240003927?gclid=CjwKCAjw1ICZBhAzEiwAFfvFhDkUJprFxD0X4s22XfAa3HiCHZISD8oOugBQTtxTfP1XSyDuCdEWRoCJakQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240003927?gclid=CjwKCAjw1ICZBhAzEiwAFfvFhDkUJprFxD0X4s22XfAa3HiCHZISD8oOugBQTtxTfP1XSyDuCdEWRoCJakQAvD_BwE)

### **Recommendations for future youth workers multiplying this workshop:**

- Participants can decorate their relaxation plan and can be advised to take it home and put in a visible place to remind themselves to use it.

## 2.7. Problem-solving skills

**Workshop Title:** “Problem-solving skills”

**Duration:** 100 minutes

**Background:**

Encountering problems is part of everyday life. While some problems are easily solvable, others can bring difficulties and unpleasant emotions. Young people can find themselves in problems which require focus and strategic thinking for solving them. There are many problem-solving techniques that can be used in such situations and provide guidance in solving a problem. This workshop presents a modified version of one of the basic problem-solving technique which can be helpful in different situations. Participants have the chance in this workshop to define their problem and to think it through by use of specifically created questions and through interactive methods and group works. Listening to someone else’s problem can provide a different perspective when analysing own problems. Furthermore, listening to others’ opinions and perspectives on an own problem can provide further guidance for its solving.

**Aim of the workshop:**

To improve the ability of solving problems and the skills of analysing stressful situations for constructive coping with stress.

**Objectives:**

- To learn about problem-solving techniques;
- To promote taking responsibility of own problems;
- To establish good communication and feeling of trust between participants;
- To practice active listening.

**Competences addressed:**

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence;
- Analytical;
- Creative and critical thinking;
- Communication and collaboration;
- Civic competences.

**Methodology and methods:**

- Work in pairs;
- Individual reflection and work;
- Debriefing.

**Workshop flow:**

**I. Work in pairs “Defining a problem” (20 minutes)**

At the beginning of the workshop, the youth worker shortly explains that the workshop will be focused on problem-solving skills. In the first activity, participants work in pairs and during the discussion in pairs,

each participant should pick one problem they want to reflect further on. To start the conversation, the youth worker instructs participants to use the following questions:

- Is that problem relevant for you now?
- Is the control over this problem in your hands?
- Is this problem solvable (are there options for what to do about this problem)?

Participants can work in turns, each for 10 minutes.

## **II. Individual work “Problem-solving process” (50 minutes)**

After the discussion about picking a problem and discussing it, the youth worker invites them to the big circle again. The youth worker explains that they can now reflect on the problem individually using certain steps. The steps can be written on the flipchart or shown digitally, for example on a PowerPoint slide. Steps should be followed in the following order:

1. Define a problem in a sentence.
2. List various ideas for solving it.
3. Choose three preferred solutions.
4. Write the pros and cons of each solution.
5. Listen to your intuition to choose the first solution that you want to try.
6. Write down an action point that can be the first step.
7. Add who will take care of that action point and until when.
8. Encourage yourself to engage in that action - visualise how would you feel when you succeed.

Participants are given 50 minutes for this part and can work inside or outside the working room.

## **III. Debriefing (30 minutes)**

After individual problem-solving, the participants gather in a big circle again. The youth worker starts the debriefing of the activity using the following questions.

- What did we do in this workshop?
- How did you feel during the work in pairs?
- How was it for you to work on solving your problem?
- Which steps did you find the most useful?
- Were some of the steps hard for you?
- What do you think about this technique?
- In which other situations in your life can you use it?

### **Materials needed:**

Papers, Pens, Flipchart and flipchart papers.

### **Background documents and further reading:**

- Fundamental information on problem-solving: <https://asq.org/quality-resources/problem-solving>
- Additional problem-solving techniques: <https://www.sessionlab.com/blog/problem-solving-techniques/>  
[https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC\\_00.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_00.htm)
- Obstacles in decision making: <https://29k.org/how-to-improve-decision-making>  
<https://www.proschoolonline.com/blog/hurdles-faced-effective-decision-making>  
<https://www.verywellmind.com/problems-in-decision-making-2795486>

**Recommendations for future youth workers multiplying this workshop:**

- If the participants do not manage to solve their problem during the workshop, the youth worker can encourage them to continue working on it some other time, to seek help from others, or to investigate other problem-solving techniques.

## 2.8. Accepting

**Workshop Title:** “Accepting”

**Duration:** 60 minutes

**Background:**

This workshop is focused on adding perspective to a specific problem. Participants will be introduced to the “3A model” which can help them to reflect further on their problems and to analyse them in a new way. This model also serves as an introduction to the topic of accepting the situations as they are. Accepting can be beneficial when the situation cannot be changed by the individual. To practice these skills, participants are guided through a visualisation exercise which also combines the elements of mindfulness, which was the topic in one of the previous workshops. It is expected that the described technique will help the participants to accept their comfortable and also uncomfortable emotions and states. The group discussion at the end of the workshop has the elements of a debriefing and suggested questions for a discussion should encourage participants to use new-gain technique in the everyday life.

**Aim of the workshop:**

To improve participants’ ability of observing the emotion without immediately reacting to it and to promote accepting the emotions as they are.

**Objectives:**

- To practice recognising own emotions;
- To highlight the importance of strategic thinking;
- To improve the ability of accepting own emotions;
- To promote observing the emotions in everyday life.

**Competences addressed:**

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence;
- Analytical;
- Creative and critical thinking;
- Communication and collaboration;
- Civic competences.

**Methodology and methods:**

- Energiser;
- Input;
- Guided visualisation;
- Debriefing.

**Workshop flow:**

**I. Energiser “Play time” (15 minutes)**

As an energiser, participants can play a traditional children's game. The goal of the game is to touch others' feet with your foot. At the beginning of the game, participants are gathered close to each other in a circle,

and they put their hands in the middle of the circle. On the count of one, two, and three they jump out of the middle of the circle. Participants play in turns and each participant has one jump to use. The participant whose foot is touched during those jumps is eliminated. The game goes on until there is only one participant left and the victory goes to him/her.

## **II. Accepting the emotions (20 minutes)**

Participants are gathered in a big circle and the youth worker announces the topic of the workshop. They continue with a brief explanation of the 3A model. 3A stands for Attack, Avoid and Accept. In a problematic or stressful situation, a person can either attack the stressor (which refers to doing something about it, like using problem-solving techniques) avoid it (which is not always possible or beneficial) or accept it. These elements can be written on a flipchart. In the following activities, the accent will be on accepting the emotions or the situation as it is. In the first technique, participants learn how to accept their own emotions. They are asked to close their eyes and to breathe naturally for a few minutes. Then, they are invited to imagine some low-to-medium stressful situation and how they usually feel in that situation. After that the youth worker instructs that they should focus just on this emotion. They have to try to imagine the shape of it, which colour is it, what texture it has and where is it in their bodies. They should just observe this emotion like they are observing an object and try to create a clear visualisation of it. At the end of the exercise, participants are guided to focus their attention on their breathing and their body moving with breath, then on the different sounds around them and finally to slowly open their eyes and observe the room they are in.

## **III. Debriefing (25 minutes)**

When the previous exercise is finished, the youth worker can start a debriefing. The youth worker can guide the debriefing and participants can share their impressions regarding each question. Questions for debriefing are presented below.

- What did we do during the exercise?
- How was it for you to imagine emotion as a shape?
- How did you feel after the exercise?
- Which parts of the exercise do you like the most?
- For what can this technique be used?
- In what situations in your life could you use it?

### **Materials needed:**

Flipchart and flipchart papers, Markers

### **Background documents and further reading:**

- Information on accepting distress and mindfulness of emotions script: <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/~media/CCI/Consumer-Modules/Facing-Your-Feelings/Facing-Your-Feelings---02---Accepting-Distress.pdf>
- Tolerating distress materials: <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/~media/CCI/Consumer-Modules/Facing-Your-Feelings/Facing-Your-Feelings---04---Tolerating-Distress.pdf>

### **Recommendations for future youth workers multiplying this workshop:**

- When participants are asked to imagine their emotion, the youth worker can come up with different questions about the look of the emotion to make easier for the participants to imagine it. Participants are not expected to provide answers to those questions out loud, but only to visualise the emotion.

## 2.9. The circle of life

**Workshop Title:** “The circle of life”

**Duration:** 90 minutes

**Background:**

This workshop is focused on assessing own life satisfaction. Each person has various areas of life, like friendships, health, self-reflection, work or school obligations and so on. Some of them can be highly developed while others can be neglected. In the optimal case scenarios, a person can have a good balance between different areas of life and achieving such balance can be helpful in coping with stress. In order to achieve such balance, it is necessary to become aware of these areas and their current state. In this workshop, participants have the opportunity to list important areas of their life and to assess their level of satisfaction with them. After the analysis, they are encouraged to take action to increase the balance between those areas. Specifically, participants are instructed to use SMART goals for creating steps for improving satisfaction in a specific area of life.

**Aim of the workshop:**

To reflect on different roles in life and life satisfaction, as well as creating personal SMART goals for improving satisfaction for a specific aspect of life.

**Objectives:**

- To reflect on everyday life activities and processes;
- To understand the components of SMART goals;
- To promote usage of circle of life and assessing satisfaction.

**Competences addressed:**

- Teambuilding;
- Personal, social and learning to learn competence;
- Communication;
- Analytical;
- Digital competence;
- Creative and critical thinking.

**Methodology and methods:**

- Individual reflection;
- Work in small groups;
- Work in pairs;
- Group discussion.

**Workshop flow:**

**I. The circle of life (40 minutes)**

In this activity, participants have the opportunity to reflect on the different roles in their life in order to increase their life satisfaction. The youth worker explains how this will be done and each participant

receives a paper and a pen. Participants are asked to draw a big circle on the paper and then divide it into eight pieces. The drawing of the circle should look like a sliced pizza or similar to a drawing of a bicycle wheel. The youth worker can ask the participants to think about different roles in their life and to come up with the eight most important roles to them. Participants are instructed to match up the roles with "pizza slices" by writing the role next to a slice. In the next step, participants add the number zero in the centre of the circle, and the number ten at the outer edge of the "slice", while the other numbers are written between those. They are required to estimate how satisfied they are with each role in their life from zero to ten and to fill up the according amount of the "slice". After they finish estimating their satisfaction, participants will have a clear image of the areas of their life they are the most and the least satisfied with.

Then, participants are invited to form pairs and work together for the next minutes. Each participant can choose two areas that have the lowest scores and discuss them further in pairs. Pairs can use some of the questions below to ease the flow of the discussion. The questions can be written on a flipchart by the youth worker and put in a visible place in the room. The questions for the task are:

- What are you not satisfied with regarding this role/aspect of life?
- What would an ideal version of it look like?
- How much of your time do you invest into this role/aspect?
- Why is this role/aspect important to you?
- What makes it difficult to you to engage more in this role/aspect?

## **II. The circle of life "SMART it up" (50 minutes)**

In this activity, participants form groups of five. They will work on SMART goals and create goals for improving their satisfaction with the roles/life aspects they were the least satisfied with. Each participant receives a small handout with an explanation of what one of the letters in the acronym "SMART" means. When all members of the group read the explanation for their specific letter, they share with the others what a specific letter refers to. It is desirable to follow the specific order in presenting the letter to the other members of the group. More specifically, the first one should be a participant who was reading about the letter "S", then "M", "A", "R" and at the end letter "T".

When all members of the group are informed about the meaning of each letter, each member should try to write such SMART goal for improving their satisfaction with a specific role/aspect. They can write one goal per role/aspect they were the least satisfied with. After writing the goals, participant can share in groups what they came up with and the others can share additional suggestions and their comments on the specific goal.

### **Materials needed:**

Papers, Pens, Handouts for SMART-explanations, Flipchart and flipchart papers.

### **Background documents and further reading:**

- Basic information on SMART goals: <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/smart-goals.htm>  
<https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/other/smart-goal/>
- Basic information on The Wheel of life: <https://www.thecoachingtoolscompany.com/wheel-of-life-complete-guide-everything-you-need-to-know/>  
<https://positivepsychology.com/wheel-of-life-coaching/>



**Recommendations for future youth workers multiplying this workshop:**

- The SMART handouts do not have to be printed on papers but can be distributed to participants in a digital way (for example via e-mail). Also, questions presented on a flipchart can be presented on a PowerPoint slide or some other digital tool.

## 2.10. Listen to yourself

**Workshop Title:** “Listen to yourself”

**Duration:** 90 minutes

**Background:**

This workshop is focused on providing the basics of expressive techniques. Participants get the opportunity to practice creative writing of a song as a form of stress relief. Expressing through songs can be useful when it is hard to process emotions and when a person cannot or does not want to talk directly with others about their situation. Writing a song can be beneficial since it can encourage further reflection about the situation and own reactions to it. Engaging in such an activity can be useful for coping with stressful reactions. On the other side, it is possible that this technique does not suit everyone's needs so there are other techniques presented. Participants are given the possibility to try out two other techniques and to use their writing skills. They can try the stream-of-consciousness style, which can be beneficial when the intensity of emotions is high, and the diary style, which is useful for elaborating on everyday experiences. These writing techniques can additionally support emotional processing.

**Aim of the workshop:**

To improve the ability of expressing own emotions and thoughts in stressful situations and to learn creative techniques for coping with stress.

**Objectives:**

- To practice emotional expression;
- To practice active listening and respecting other person's impressions;
- To stimulate creative thinking and creative writing;
- To promote usage of writing techniques as a form of stress relief.

**Competences addressed:**

- Personal competence;
- Multilingual competence;
- Cultural awareness and expression competence;
- Literacy competence;
- Social and civic competences.

**Methodology and methods:**

- Input;
- Creative writing – song creation;
- Presentations;
- Debriefing.

**Workshop flow:**

- I. Create your song (35 minutes)

Participants are seated in a big circle and the youth worker asks few questions for the introduction to the topic such as if they ever encountered difficulties in expressing themselves and was it ever hard for them to describe exactly how they feel. After participants' comments, the youth worker explains that during the workshop they will try to create their own song and that it can be helpful for processing emotions. Participants are instructed to think about some situation and what emotion is dominant in that situation and then to try writing a song about it. It can be lyrics for a song or more structured form like a haiku or some other poetry form.

## **II. Write it out (20 minutes)**

After writing a song, participants are instructed to try on a different technique that can be used for stress relief. Not everyone may prefer the same techniques, so the youth worker describes two other ones. Participants can think about some stressful situation that happened in the past, but that it is not that stressful for them now. They can choose to describe that situation in a stream-of-consciousness style or a diary style. The youth worker can provide additional instructions for both styles. In a stream-of-consciousness style, participants can write exactly what comes to their minds, including every small thought. They can include thoughts that are directly relevant to the situation they think about, as well as all the other less relevant thoughts that come to their mind.

In the diary style, participants can focus more on specifically describing what exactly happened and use detailed descriptions of the context, people involved, and actions that happened as well as adding their impressions and reflections on those events. If there is enough time, participants can try to use both of these techniques.

## **III. Presentations (20 minutes)**

After creating their pieces of art, the youth worker invites participants to join the big circle. The youth worker encourages the participants to share their songs and stories and they can choose what they want to share. It can be only a song or only a diary story, or all of the creations. If some participants do not feel like sharing, it is ok to allow them to skip the presentation part. Instead of presenting, they can share how they felt after the writing.

## **IV. Debriefing (15 minutes)**

After the presentations of participants' creations, the youth worker starts the debriefing session. This can help participants to better acknowledge the benefits of used methods and to see them as stress relief methods. The youth worker can use the following questions for starting the discussion:

- What techniques did we use today?
- How did you feel before, and how did you feel after the writing?
- Which technique suits you the best?
- For what could these techniques be useful?
- Do you think they can help to release tension after stressful events and how?
- In which other situations in your life could you use them?

### **Materials needed:**

Papers, Pens.

### **Background documents and further reading:**

- Benefits of journaling for stress relief: <https://www.verywellmind.com/the-benefits-of-journaling-for-stress-management-3144611>

- Information on connection between music and stress: <https://www.unr.edu/counseling/virtual-relaxation-room/releasing-stress-through-the-power-of-music>

**Recommendations for future youth workers multiplying this workshop:**

- In this workshop, participants can individually choose what they want to write about, but it is good to instruct them to choose a situation that is not highly relevant for them.

## 2.11. Everybody is a sound maker

**Workshop Title:** “Everybody is a sound maker”

**Duration:** 120 minutes

**Background:**

In this workshop, participants get the opportunity to create own musical instrument and to work jointly on creating a new song. Collaborative work may be beneficial for stress relief as well as improving social skills. By working together on creating a new song, participants can improve their skills of active listening, sharing own attitudes, taking initiative, supporting others, expressing unpopular opinion, and tolerance for differences. Furthermore, this workshop sends the message that engaging in playing music is not reserved only for those who have musical education or background, but that it is available for everyone. Engaging in playing music can lead to stress relief and it is good to include it in a personal list of relaxation tools.

**Aim of the workshop:**

To support usage of music as a relaxation technique and connect it with coping with stress in everyday life.

**Objectives:**

- To practice expression through music;
- To promote expression in non-native language;
- To practice active listening and taking other person’s perspective;
- To establish good communication between participants;
- To promote usage of music as a relaxation technique.

**Competences addressed:**

- Team building;
- Personal competence;
- Literacy competence;
- Multilingual competence;
- Cultural awareness and expression competence;
- Social and civic competences.

**Methodology and methods:**

- Individual work;
- Work in small groups;
- Group discussion.

**Workshop flow:**

**I. Individual work “Create your instrument” (40 minutes)**

Before the beginning of this workshop, the youth worker should prepare different objects and recycled materials. These objects should be different in shape and purpose. For example, some can be like a small

bowl, others like small containers or like small grains (for example buttons). At the beginning of the workshop participants are invited to create their musical instruments using recycled objects. More specifically, a final version of the instrument may be a bowl filled with buttons that are used as a percussion instrument. The youth worker gives them the mentioned instructions and gives them 30 minutes to do this task. After creating their instruments, participants are invited to test them. The youth worker asks them to play them as they are happy, then as they are angry and at last as they are nervous.

## **II. Small group work “Music band” (60 minutes)**

After testing their instruments, participants are given instructions for the next activity. They can form small groups of five to six participants. Each group has the task to come up with a song they play together using their instruments. It should be a song that is directly or indirectly connected with stress and participants should write the lyrics together, as well as come up with the instrumental background. They can also adapt some songs with which they are already familiar. Furthermore, they can use different genres of music, like rap, pop style and soon, as well as use different historical contexts.

## **III. Reflection “Presentations” (20 minutes)**

After creating their songs, participants are gathered in the big circle again. The youth worker invites them to present their work and encourages them to share their songs with the others. It is expected that each song will last a few minutes and the youth worker can start clapping after each presentation. Then, the youth worker asks participants to share how was it for them to cooperate on this task and what do they think about using music as a stress relief tool.

### **Materials needed:**

Papers, Pens, Buttons, grains, small containers, and other recycled materials.

### **Background documents and further reading:**

- Fundamental information on music therapy:  
<https://www.verywellmind.com/benefits-of-music-therapy-89829>  
<https://positivepsychology.com/music-therapy/>
- Music therapy techniques:  
<https://positivepsychology.com/music-therapy-activities-tools/>

### **Recommendations for future youth workers multiplying this workshop:**

- In the first activity, different materials can be used. Participants can even go outside and collect items from the nature, like small stones and seeds. The main point is that the created instrument is functional and provides sound.

## 2.12. Stress relief through music

**Workshop Title:** “Stress relief through music”

**Duration:** 90 minutes

**Background:**

This workshop is focused on reflecting on the influence that specific music has on the listener. There are many different genres of music and different people prefer different genres in different situations. Listening to music that is similar to one’s emotional state can provide them relief and help them to process their own emotions. Usually, when people experience sadness, they tend to choose sad music, and this can be helpful for emotional processing. On the other side, if people are not sad and they choose sad music, they can start feeling sadder than before when listening to it. This implies that the music can elicit emotions and it can be useful for managing own mood. In this workshop, participants will work on different activities that can help them to rate their mood while listening to different songs and this workshop itself can help them to become aware that they can use music to provide stress relief or to manage their own moods.

**Aim of the workshop:**

To reflect on personal experience of music listening and to highlight that music can elicit specific emotions.

**Objectives:**

- To reflect on own musical preferences;
- To learn about the power of music for stress relief;
- To promote usage of music for eliciting emotions.

**Competences addressed:**

- Personal competence;
- Multilingual competence;
- Analytical;
- Creative thinking;
- Social and civic competences.

**Methodology and methods:**

- Energiser;
- Musical rating - activity
- Group reflections and Discussion.

**Workshop flow:**

**I. Energiser (20 minutes)**

For the introduction to this workshop, the youth worker asks the participants to form small groups. They can form groups using musical genres. Each participant receives their genre and should not share it with the others out loud. Instead, participants should imitate that music genre, it can be imitating a performer, making characteristic sounds or moving in a specific way. After participants recognise the other members

of their group they sit and form small circles. The youth worker instructs the groups to share their experiences and reflect on the following questions:

- Are you listening to music when you feel like you would need some emotional support?
- What type of music do you prefer in those moments?
- Does listening to music help you to feel calmer and more relaxed?
- Do you prefer instrumental or songs with lyrics as an anti-stress technique?

## **II. Musical rating (30 minutes)**

After the discussions in the small groups, participants are invited to stand up and create a line across the room. They should stand next to each other to create a diagonal line. The line they create in that way will serve as a continuum from one to ten. The youth worker can explain to participants which corner/end of the continuum will serve as the lowest assessment, and which as the highest assessment. For checking the participants' understanding, the youth worker can ask the participants to choose where on this continuum they want to stand according to how they feel at that moment. The ones that are feeling the best will stand in the corner for the highest grades, and the ones who are feeling low can stand closer to the opposite corner. They stand diagonally to each-other, and all of the other participants can stand somewhere in between. When the participants understood how to use this continuum, the youth worker proceeds with the activity. The youth worker then plays different songs on the speakers and participants should choose how they feel about each song. The youth worker can play different songs, the very slow and sad ones, the energetic ones, instrumental only, dance music, electronic music and so on. For each song, participants determine how they feel listening to that song and express their feelings by standing on a specific part of the continuum. Participants are also instructed that they can change their standing point during the song. After the youth worker stops a specific song, a few participants are asked to share how come that they choose exactly this spot on the continuum.

## **III. Group reflection and Discussion (20 minutes)**

After listening to the music, the participants form a big circle again. The youth worker can start the group discussion about the previous activity. It is expected that during the discussion participants conclude that the music can elicit specific emotions. If one listens to cheerful or relaxing music, will likely begin to feel that way. The youth worker can use the following questions for the reflecting session:

- How did you feel during the previous activity?
- Did you feel different listening to the different songs?
- Would you agree that music can elicit emotions? Explain.

## **IV. Music as an anti-stress technique (20 minutes)**

The final activity in this workshop is focused on discussing the usage of music in everyday life as an anti-stress technique. Participants are invited to work in pairs and discuss together how much they listen to music now, what types of music they listen to, in which situation, do they listen to cheerful, relaxing or energetic music and so on. Participants discuss for 10 minutes and then share in the plenary.

### **Materials needed:**

B1 size papers, Markers, Circle of emotions handout

### **Background documents and further reading:**

- Fundamental information about connection between music and emotions: <https://www.unr.edu/counseling/virtual-relaxation-room/releasing-stress-through-the-power-of-music>



## 2.13. Photography versus stressors

**Workshop Title:** “Photography versus stressors”

**Duration:** 120 minutes

**Background:**

This workshop is connecting emotional expression and photography. In stressful situations, some people tend to ask for help and experience relief by talking to someone, while for others it can be hard to verbalize what is happening. In such situations, some may prefer to process things on their own and engage in other activities and art can be very beneficial in such situations. Using photography as a way of stress relief is not common and it can be useful to raise awareness of using it among youth, specifically among those who define themselves as an artistic type. In this workshop, participants get the opportunity to create photographs that are related to pleasant emotions as well as photographs of unpleasant emotions related to stress. This contrast between pleasant and unpleasant emotions can support faster identification of emotions related to stress. Broadening of own vocabulary related to various pleasant and unpleasant emotions can be beneficial for improving own emotional intelligence and processing of emotions. Also, this workshop encourages participants to share their impressions through photography and to receive feedback and hear others' opinions and attitudes.

**Aim of the workshop:**

To improve the ability of identifying pleasant and unpleasant emotions and expressing them through photography.

**Objectives:**

- To broaden the vocabulary related to the emotions;
- To practice expressing own emotions and attitudes;
- To promote usage of wheel of emotions in everyday life activities.

**Competences addressed:**

- Teambuilding;
- Analytical;
- Creative and critical thinking;
- Personal, social and learning to learn competence;
- Multilingual competence.

**Methodology and methods:**

- Energiser;
- Small group work;
- Work in pairs;
- Presentations;
- Reflection and discussion.

## **Workshop flow:**

### **I. Energizer (15 minutes)**

The workshop starts with a short energiser. The youth worker invites participants to walk around the room. While they are walking, the youth worker gives them further instructions. More precisely, when they hear a word the youth worker says, they should make a body posture according to this word and freeze in this posture for a few seconds. The youth worker can use different words in order to challenge participants' creativity. For example, the youth worker can use the words like "ball", "cold", "monkey", "surprise", "wind", "picture" and so on.

### **II. Small group work "Photo session" (45 minutes)**

After the energiser, participants are invited into the big circle again and the youth worker explains the next activity. The participants' task is to work in small groups and to take photographs related to comfortable emotions (like feeling calm, happy or peaceful) and uncomfortable emotions related to stress (like feeling pressured, anxious or helpless). They can choose precise emotion and take a picture that reminds them of that emotion. Also, they do not have to know which exact emotion they take picture of precisely, but only in such broad categories like pleasant related to relaxation and unpleasant emotions related to stress. They can take photographs of people (if they have their consent), pictures of objects, nature or so on. It would be beneficial if participants could use outdoor space for this activity.

### **III. Work in pairs "Detect the emotion" (30 minutes)**

When participants prepare their photographs, they are invited to work in pairs. Each participant shows the picture to their pair, and they should guess which emotion it is. It is expected that they will name various emotions related to stress, like feeling overwhelmed, threatened, unfocused, out of control, frustrated or hopeless. Also, it is expected that participants will broaden their view of the pleasant emotions and identify different states like feeling thankful, hopeful, valued, courageous and powerful. If it is difficult to define one emotion for each photograph, participants can pick two or more emotions that are the most suitable for that photo. Participants work in turns during this task.

### **IV. Discussion (30 minutes)**

After the presentations, the youth worker invites all participants to join the plenary for short discussion on the tasks. After getting an impression from each participant or pair, the youth worker starts the discussion on Photography Vs. Stressors, in relation to what stressors and situations that they used in the previous activity. The youth worker asks the groups how they can use photography to overcome stressors and stressful situations in everyday life.

## **Materials needed:**

Mobile phones, Cameras, Circle of emotions handout, Printer, Papers

## **Background documents and further reading:**

- Link between stress relief and photography: <https://www.ossweb.com/ways-photography-helps-you-to-manage-stress-and-anxiety.html>
- <https://wildromanticphotography.com/melbourne/tips-advice/what-are-the-benefits-of-a-photographer/>
- Phototherapy techniques: <https://phototherapy-centre.com/phototherapy-techniques/>

- Fundamental information on wheel of emotions: <https://www.6seconds.org/2022/03/13/plutchik-wheel-emotions/>
- Free Circle of emotions handout: <https://feelingswheel.com/>

**Recommendations for future youth workers multiplying this workshop:**

- For taking the pictures, participants can use their cameras or mobile phones. It can be advised to participants to take their own cameras before the workshop starts, but it is not necessary to have them.
- Before the third activity, pictures can be printed out. In that way, it would be easier for participants to discuss each photography. On the other side, it is not necessary if the conditions do not allow printing and participants can show photos to each other on the screen of the mobile phone or camera.

## 2.14. Photography as a relaxation technique

**Workshop Title:** Photography as a relaxation technique

**Duration:** 120 minutes

**Background:**

Photography is not often mentioned as a relaxation technique. For youngsters that prefer expressive techniques for stress relief it can serve as a useful way of relaxation. In this workshop, participants are encouraged to create a story and to retell it by using photography. This can be beneficial for processing of the events that happened in the story. Also, taking photography per se can be useful for relaxation. Taking photographs sometimes also includes walking in nature, investigating of the environment and reflecting on what is presented, and all of these activities may be beneficial for relaxation. Engaging in this workshop may encourage some of the participants to use photography more often in their free time. It is expected that participants will have different experiences with photography. While some will be more expert, it is possible that the others do not engage in that type of activity. This workshop can provide them an opportunity to share their experiences.

**Aim of the workshop:**

To encourage self-expression through photography and to raise awareness of using photography as a relaxation technique.

**Objectives:**

- To practice self-expression;
- To practice active listening and respecting other person's impressions;
- To practice expressing own emotions through creative techniques;
- To stimulate participants' creativity and analytical skills;
- To promote usage of photography as a relaxation technique.

**Competences addressed:**

- Teambuilding;
- Analytical;
- Personal, social and learning to learn competence;
- Literacy competence;
- Multilingual competence;
- Creative thinking.

**Methodology and methods:**

- Creative task – tell me your story;
- Presentations;
- Work in small groups;
- Debriefing.

## **Workshop flow:**

### **I. Creating through photography “Tell me your story” (60 minutes)**

At the beginning of this workshop, the participants are gathered in a big circle and the youth worker provides them with instructions for the first activity.

Their task is to create a story related to stress and to tell that story using photographs. They can choose to create a completely new story or tell a story from their experience. Also, it can be about some event that happened before and is over now, or something that is still relevant to them. They do not have to draft a story down, but it can be beneficial if they want to, since writing the storyline first can help to create the story. After the instruction, participants can go and take fresh photographs for their stories. It would be good if the participants could go outside to take the photos. The number of photographs that can be used to tell the story is not limited.

### **II. Presentations (30 minutes)**

After creating their stories, participants are gathered in small groups and each group should gather five to six participants. The youth worker can use the idea of making sounds to form the groups. Participants can choose what kind of sound they want to make and move around the room. They can snap their fingers, clap their hands, make "mmmm" or "sssss" sound, or something else they come up with. They can choose different sounds and change them during the activity. When the youth worker says "groups", the participants that make the same sound, can join to form a group.

After they form the groups, participants can present their work to each other, and each participant should have enough time to present their story. After each presentation, other participants can share their impressions about the story. When all members of the group are finished with presentation of the story, participants can comment if there are similarities between the stories. This can help them for analysing what they just heard, as well as using the time if other groups are not finished yet. The youth worker can visit each group to provide additional support if needed.

### **III. Reflection “Group discussion” (30 minutes)**

After presenting individual stories, participants are gathered in a big circle again.

The youth worker starts the debriefing in order to reflect on the experiences in the previous activities and to promote using the photography as a relaxation technique in everyday life. The youth worker can use the following questions to guide the discussion:

- How were you feeling when you were taking the photographs?
- How was it for you to tell the story through photography?
- What is your main conclusion on using photography as a therapy?
- How could photography be helpful for you in coping with stress?
- Would you recommend your friend to use this technique and what would you highlight as its benefit?

**Materials needed:**

B1 size papers, Markers

**Background documents and further reading:**

- PhotoTherapy Handbook:  
<https://www.spectrovisio.net/pdftiedostot/PhotoEuropeHandbook.pdf>
- Information on art therapy: [Can Art Therapy Relieve Stress? | Sage Neuroscience Center \(sageclinic.org\)](https://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav?path=/journals/0898-0101/vol34/iss01/10.1177/0898010115584221)  
[Art Therapy: Definition, Types, Techniques, and Efficacy \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/art-therapy-definition-types-techniques-and-efficacy-2794282)
- Guidelines for taking photographs: [How to Reduce Stress with Photography \(erickimphotography.com\)](https://erickimphotography.com/how-to-reduce-stress-with-photography/)

**Recommendations for future youth workers multiplying this workshop:**

- In the first activity, if the participants choose the story about their own experience, it should not be about a highly stressful situation, but a situation that has low-to-medium intensity for them.

## 2.15. Photography for prevention of stress among youth

**Workshop Title:** “Photography for prevention of stress among youth”

**Duration:** 90 minutes

**Background:**

Photography is used nowadays for many purposes and for expressing different emotions or situations in life. For many people, it is considered a stress relief activity and hobby, while for some even a profession. As photography is something very creative and entertaining, during this workshop, it will be promoted and encouraged for prevention of stress among youth. Participants have the opportunity to create a prevention poster using photographs during this workshop. Participants can create photos related to the stress (or lack of it). Together with the photographs they can highlight one key message on stress and include it on a poster. The message can be something they concluded or learned about stress and something they want to share with other youngsters. In that way, they can reflect on different stress techniques and attitudes and also share this knowledge for prevention of long-term stress. Furthermore, this workshop enables participants to sharpen their skills of teamwork. They are required to work in groups, to discuss different ideas, provide arguments for own opinion and respecting others’ opinions. They have to opportunity to take an initiative and also to work on the idea to its final version. At the end of the workshop, participants are asked to present their work which can further develop their communication skills.

**Aim of the workshop:**

To use creativity and group work for raising awareness of coping with stress.

**Objectives:**

- To reflect on gained knowledge about coping with stress;
- To promote raising awareness of coping with stress among youth;
- To improve participants’ presentation skills;
- To promote and stimulate taking initiative among youth through photography and creativity;
- To develop teambuilding and communication skills as essential for taking responsibility for execution of the task.

**Competences addressed:**

- Teambuilding;
- Citizenship competence;
- Entrepreneurship competence;
- Literacy competence;
- Social and civic competences.

**Methodology and methods:**

- Work in small groups;
- Presentations and discussion.

## **Workshop flow:**

### **I. Small group work “Creating a poster” (60 minutes)**

At the beginning of this activity, the youth worker announces the topic of the workshop. The goal of the first activity is to create a stress prevention poster. For creating a poster, participants can create new photos or use the ones from different magazines or newspaper. They can also use markers and other materials they find useful. Participants should work together in small groups.

The youth worker can form the groups by using the idea of "a star". Participants can move around the room and when the youth worker says "star", they should create a star by holding their hands. Each "star" can be formed of five to six participants. After a few turns of creating "stars", the youth worker ends the game, and participants should stay in the "star" they created at that point.

Then, the youth worker provides further instructions about the posters. He/she informs participants that the posters should contain a title, photographs and at least one main message that the participants want to highlight. They can arrange the contents in different ways and decorate the poster using different office materials.

### **II. Presentations (30 minutes)**

After creating posters, participants gather in a big circle. Each group can present their poster to the others and explain the idea behind the poster. After every presentation, the youth worker and other participants can give their comments, ask further questions about the poster. When all groups are finished presenting their posters, participants can hang their posters on the wall to create a small gallery. Participants can then “rate” the best elements of the posters and write their comments on a post-it paper which can be then put next to the rated element of the poster.

### **Materials needed:**

B1 size papers, Markers, Printed photographs, Printer and papers, Pencils, Duct tape, Patafix or similar, Office materials for decorating the posters, Magazines, newspaper, Post-it papers.

### **Background documents and further reading:**

- PhotoTherapy techniques: <https://phototherapy-centre.com/phototherapy-techniques/>
- PhotoTherapy Handbook: <https://www.spectrovisio.net/pdf/tiedostot/PhotoEuropeHandbook.pdf>
- Example of a stress prevention infographic: [Stress Tips for College Students #Infographic | by Ryan | Medium](#)

### **Recommendations for future youth workers multiplying this workshop:**

- The posters should be created on a paper big enough for several pictures, title, subtitles and a message. B1 size is suggested but it is not necessary to use exactly that size.



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