



Project 2022-1-BG01-KA220-SCH-000085347
Healthy at school. Supporting the well-being and mental health
of students and teachers / HAS, Erasmus+



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Methodology for supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers

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Erasmus+





Title „Methodology for supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers “

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I Project information

This document is part of Project 2022-1-BG01-KA220-SCH-000085347 „Healthy at school. Supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers/ HAS “, Erasmus+ program, with the financial support of the European Commission.

Project period: 01/11/2022 - 31/10/2024 (24 months)

Leading organization: Association of Psychologists in Bulgaria, Varna, Bulgaria

Partner organizations: Hristo Botev School, Bulgaria; IMS Private School, Cyprus; and WYZSZA SZKOLA BIZNESU I NAUK O ZDROWIU (WSBINOZ), Poland.

The mission of the project is to modernize and strengthen the capacity of the education and training system to address the main challenges in today's world, to improve mental and physical health and well-being (incl. of teachers/trainers and students/trainees), to promote social, civic, and intercultural competencies, and intercultural dialogue. This mission is achieved through the development of the products in accordance with the individual needs of both trainees and trainers, and partner schools at the organizational level.

The project's aim is also to help deal with the unfavorable learning conditions caused by the difficulties in online learning, social distancing, and immobility. It focuses on the improvement of basic skills as a prerequisite for the prevention of early school leaving, incl. from vulnerable groups.

The main project objectives are:

- Increasing the knowledge of mental health, safety and management of psychosocial risks;
- Overcoming the consequences of social isolation and immobility;
- Overcoming and preventing stress and difficulties in online/distance learning and teaching;
- Increasing students' motivation to learn;
- Improving the mental health and wellbeing of teachers and students;
- Increasing the motivation for teaching and career development of teachers;
- Providing opportunities for career and personal development, increasing the professional capacity and basic skills of teachers and other educational staff;

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- Greater effectiveness of activities for vulnerable groups in the field of inclusion and diversity education;
- Creating mutual assistance and intervention groups;
- Promoting common values, civic engagement and participation.



II Introduction

1. Purpose, tasks, users and expected results of the Methodology

The current product – “Methodology for supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers” is developed under Work Package 2 “Building community among partners via promotion the well-being and mental health of students and teachers”, Activity 3 (WP2 A3) of project “Healthy at school. Supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers / HAS”, funded under the Erasmus+ programme.

This product is developed based on the results obtained from WP2A1 “Research on the on the attitudes of students and teachers on well-being and mental health” (activity under project “Healthy at school. Supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers”), which suggested that teachers/trainers and students/trainees are in need of acquiring better tools for supporting their well-being and mental health. The product will also serve as a basis for the development of products WP3A1 Needs research and assessment of the strengths of HR in educational organizations, WP3A2 Strategy for planning the professional development of employees in accordance with individual needs and WP3A3 Training program for staff in educational organizations. How to increase the capacity of staff.

The main **target groups and users** of the product are students/trainees aged 7-20 (incl. with fewer opportunities) and teachers/trainers/educators from different educational/training organizations. The product can also be beneficial for: non-teaching school/university staff, counselors, pedagogical advisers, psychologists and other experts who are working with students and teachers.

The specific **purpose** of the Methodology is connected to the objectives of the project, and is divided into several **goals/aims**:

- to increase the skills and knowledge of trainees / students and trainers / teachers;
- to improve basic skills to prevent early school leaving (ESL), including for students from vulnerable / marginalized groups;
- to strengthen the capacity of the education and educational experts to improve the mental health, physical health and well-being;
- to promote social, civic, and intercultural competencies, and intercultural dialogue.

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Related to the goals, are also the **tasks** of the WP3A3 Methodology, which are as follows:

- to increase key competencies (through the development of Tools and Modules) in order to improve two main aspects in the target group of teachers and students: health (both physical and mental) and well-being;
- to improve and strengthen the awareness of the connection between the emotional state and the general mental health of the individual;
- to create an appropriate model for building and maintaining relationships with others.

As part of the Methodology more attractive programs (minimum three) were included according to the needs of trainers and trainees, including innovative approaches for working with them, as well as new or improved practices/methods (minimum three) that meet the needs of target groups with fewer opportunities (i.e., vulnerable groups). The resource is freely available and translated into four languages – Bulgarian, English, Greek and Polish which are the languages of the partnership, consisting of “Hristo Botev” Primary School (Bulgaria), Association of Psychologists in Bulgaria (APB), IMS Private School (Cyprus) and WYZSZA SZKOLA BIZNESU I NAUK O ZDROWIU – WSBINOZ (Poland).

The final version of the Methodology was applied to a pilot group of teachers/trainers and students/trainees aged 7 - 20 who received certificates of participation after. They were chosen at random without taking into account discriminatory and protected factors such as gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious beliefs, ethnical background, origin, race, political beliefs, socioeconomic status (SES), presence of a disability, be it physical or mental, and other characteristics.

After the pilot implementation, the participants completed a feedback form (two separate feedback forms for the target groups of teachers and students) to evaluate the contents and overall effectiveness of the resource. The feedback forms included questions assessing whether the information in the Methodology was easy to understand, interesting and suitable/relevant; whether it incorporates ways to improve the mental health, physical health and well-being and to overcome the consequences of distance learning; whether it improves school performance and communication between teachers and students; whether the pilot course is well-organized; whether the Methodology improves the skills to deal with the consequences of distance learning; whether it is an effective tool to support mental health and



well-being; whether it increases the ability to work with students with fewer opportunities; whether it increases the skills to prevent early school leaving (ESL) and social isolation; whether the programs and methods you are innovative and valuable, etc.

An understanding of the need for self-preservation was further be achieved. Individual approaches were identified for dealing with learning disabilities / special educational needs (SEN), early school leaving of students (ESL), and low skills in teaching and learning in the digital environment (i.e., distance learning), especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The **expected results** of the WP2A3 Methodology are as follows:

- Overcoming and preventing the consequences for students / trainees and teachers /trainers of distance learning in an electronic environment by promoting and improving well-being and mental health;
- Increasing the capacity for coping and prevention as well as resilience skills;
- Development of key competencies to improve physical health, mental health, and well-being;
- Greater effectiveness to overcome the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic by creating common values, civic engagement, and civic participation;
- Overcoming the consequences of social isolation and immobility (lack of exercise and movement);
- Overcoming and preventing stress and burnout;
- Increasing students' motivation to learn;
- Greater effectiveness for vulnerable groups in the field of inclusion and diversity education.



2. Structure and approach of the Methodology

Stage 1: Planning and developing the Methodology

Setting goals: Formulating clear goals and objectives that are aimed at supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers.

Selection of approaches and tools: Developing methods and tools that can be used to support mental health, such as programs, trainings, modules, resources and more.

Stage 2: Implementation of the Methodology

Implementation of the plan: Putting into action the chosen methods and programs to support well-being and mental health.

Trainings and Training Sessions: Organizing trainings for students and teachers to develop stress management techniques, emotion management skills and other relevant topics.

Stage 3: Performance evaluation and monitoring

Evaluation of progress: Measuring the effectiveness of the implementation of the methodology through the collection of data, evaluation tests and feedback from participants.

Review and Adjustments: Reviewing the results and adjusting the methodology depending on the feedback received and identified weaknesses or improvements needed.

Stage 4: Communication and dissemination of the Methodology

Sharing the successes: Communicating the results achieved and successes of the Methodology with the school community and other stakeholders.

Dissemination of the Methodology: Providing an opportunity to share and disseminate the successful Methodology with other educational institutions or organizations.

The Structure of the Methodology includes a theoretical part and a practical part. The theoretical part comprises of: introduction, explanation of the purpose, tasks, users and expected results of the product, structure and approach of the Methodology, current context of mental health and well-being among students and teachers (in Bulgaria, Poland and Cyprus), indicators of well-being and mental health, current context and challenges in Bulgaria, Poland

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and Cyprus, and Tools for supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers.

The Tools are divided into two parts:

- Part 1 - Programmes and innovative approaches for working with trainers and trainees;
- Part 2 - Practices and methods aimed at students with fewer opportunities.

The first part is based on Maslow (1954)' s hierarchy of needs model (the main approach applied in the current Methodology). Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational psychological theory comprising a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as a pyramid. From the bottom of the hierarchy upwards, the needs are: physiological (food, air and clothing), safety (security), love and belonging needs, esteem, and self-actualization. Needs lower down in the hierarchy must be satisfied before people can attend to higher needs. Maslow's theory differs from more purely physiological representations of human motivation because motivation is seen as being not just concerned with tension reduction and survival but also with human growth and development (McLeod, 2023). This five-tier model can be divided into deficiency needs and growth needs. The first four levels are often referred to as deficiency needs, and the top level is known as growth or being needs.

Deficiency needs are concerned with basic survival and include physiological needs (food, sex, air, and sleep) and safety needs (such as the need for security and freedom from danger). Behaviors associated with these needs are seen as 'deficiency' motivated, as they are a means to an end. Deficiency needs arise due to deprivation and motivate people when they are not met. Furthermore, the motivation to fulfill such needs will become stronger the longer they are denied. For example, the longer a person goes without food, the hungrier they will become.

Maslow (1943) initially stated that people must satisfy lower-level deficit needs before progressing to meet higher-level growth needs. However, he later clarified that satisfaction of a need is not an "all-or-none" phenomenon, admitting that his earlier statements may have given "the false impression that a need must be satisfied 100 percent before the next need emerges" (Maslow, 1987, p. 69).

Growth needs, on the other hand, are more psychological needs and are associated with the realization of an individual's full potential and the need to 'self-actualize'. These needs are



achieved more through intellectual and creative behaviors. They do not stem from a lack of something but rather from a desire to grow as a person. Once these growth needs have been reasonably satisfied, one may be able to reach the highest level, called self-actualization. Growth needs are achieved more through intellectual and creative behaviors.

Every person is capable and has the desire to move up the hierarchy toward a level of self-actualization. Unfortunately, progress is often disrupted by a failure to meet lower-level needs. Life experiences, including divorce and loss of a job, may cause an individual to fluctuate between levels of the hierarchy. Therefore, not everyone will move through the hierarchy in a uni-directional manner but may move back and forth between the different types of needs.

According to Maslow (1943, 1954), human needs are arranged in the form of a hierarchy, with physiological (survival) needs at the bottom, and the more creative and intellectually oriented 'self-actualization' needs at the top:

- **Physiological needs** – these are biological requirements for human survival, e.g., air, food, drink, shelter, clothing, warmth, sex, and sleep. Our most basic need as humans is for physical survival, and this is the first thing that motivates our behavior. Once that level is fulfilled, the next level up is what motivates us, and so on. If these needs are not satisfied, the human body cannot function optimally. Maslow considered physiological needs the most important as all the other needs become secondary until these needs are met.
- **Safety / existential needs** – people want to experience order, predictability, and control in their lives. Safety needs can be fulfilled by the family and society (e.g., police, schools, business, and medical care). For example, emotional security, financial security (e.g., employment, social welfare), law and order, freedom from fear, social stability, property, health and well-being (e.g., safety against accidents and injury).
- **Love and belongingness needs** – belongingness refers to a human emotional need for interpersonal relationships, affiliating, connectedness, and being part of a group. Examples of belongingness needs include friendship, intimacy, trust, acceptance, receiving and giving affection, and love. This need is especially strong in childhood

and can override the need for safety as witnessed in children who cling to abusive parents.

- **Esteem needs** – they include self-worth, accomplishment, and respect. Maslow classified esteem needs into two categories: (i) esteem for oneself (dignity, achievement, mastery, independence) and (ii) the desire for reputation or respect from others (e.g., status, prestige). Esteem presents the typical human desire to be accepted and valued by others. People often engage in a profession or hobby to gain recognition. These activities give the person a sense of contribution or value. Low self-esteem or an inferiority complex may result from imbalances during this level in the hierarchy. Maslow indicated that the need for respect or reputation is most important for children and adolescents and precedes real self-esteem or dignity.
- **Self-actualization needs** – they refer to the realization of a person’s potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth, and peak experiences. This level of need refers to what a person’s full potential is and the realization of that potential. Maslow (1943, 1987) describes this level as the desire to accomplish everything that one can, and “to become everything one is capable of becoming”. Individuals may perceive or focus on this need very specifically. For example, one individual may have a strong desire to become an ideal parent. In another, the desire may be expressed athletically. For others, it may be expressed in paintings, pictures, or inventions. Although Maslow did not believe that many of us could achieve true self-actualization, he believed that all of us experience transitory moments (known as ‘peak experiences’) of self-actualization. Such moments, associated with personally significant events such as childbirth, sporting achievement and examination success), are difficult to achieve and maintain consistently.

We have chosen Maslow’s (1962) hierarchy of needs theory as our approach in the Methodology because it has made a major contribution to teaching and classroom management in schools. Rather than reducing behavior to a response in the environment, Maslow adopts a holistic approach to education and learning.

He also looks at the complete physical, emotional, social, and intellectual qualities of an individual and how they impact learning. Applications of Maslow’s hierarchy theory to the work of the teacher are obvious. Before a student’s cognitive needs can be met, they must first

fulfill their basic physiological needs. For example, a tired and hungry student will find it difficult to focus on learning. Students need to feel emotionally and physically safe and accepted within the classroom to progress and reach their full potential.

Maslow suggests students must be shown that they are valued and respected in the classroom, and the teacher should create a supportive and positive environment. Students with a low self-esteem will not progress academically until their self-esteem is improved.

The framework of the Methodology includes 5 main Programs which are according to Maslow's theory of needs: Physiological needs, Existential (safety) needs, Social (love and belongingness) needs, Self-affirmation (esteem) and Self-improvement (self-actualization) needs.

The first Program "Physiological needs" consists of the following modules:

- Module 1 - Diet and physical activity and their impact on the physical and mental health of trainers and trainees;
- Module 2 - Sleep and its influence on concentration and attentional stability
- Module 3 - Skills and methods for relaxation and mental relief.

The second program "Existential needs" comprises the following modules:

- Module 1 - Sense of safety and self-preservation instinct during the pandemic;
- Module 2 - Safety in the workplace during the pandemic;
- Module 3 - Family environment and dynamics of family relationships;
- Module 4 - Skills and methods for coping with stress and burnout.

The third program "Social needs" contains the modules:

- Module 1 - Sense of belonging and community during the pandemic;
- Module 2 - Social isolation during distance learning;
- Module 3 - Skills for effective communication between trainers and trainees.

The fourth program "Self-affirmation need" is composed of:

- Module 1 - Self-affirmation and its impact on mental health and well-being;
- Module 2 - Achievement needs of trainers and trainees;
- Module 3 – Skills and methods for increasing self-esteem and building authority



Lastly, the fifth program “Self-improvement needs” is made of three modules:

- Module 1 - Emotional intelligence as a path to self-realization;
- Module 2 – Need for creativity;
- Module 3 - Skills and methods for personal and professional development.

The second part of the Tools for supporting the wellbeing and mental health of students and teachers, contains three practices and methods aimed at students with fewer opportunities (as a more vulnerable group) which are as follows:

- Practice 1 Increasing the social inclusion of students with fewer opportunities;
- Practice 2 Preventing early school leaving of students with fewer opportunities;
- Practice 3 Supporting the wellbeing of students with learning difficulties.

The abovementioned information refers only to the theoretical part of the Methodology. The practical part includes main principles of supporting the wellbeing and mental health of students and teachers (how to apply the Methodology) which is divided into two sections: Application of the Methodology to students and Application of the Methodology to teachers.

With the abovementioned structure and approach, we aim at including as diverse topics as possible to be able to support different aspects of the mental health and well-being of students and teachers.



3. Why do mental health and well-being matter?

Mental health encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being (CDC, 2021). It influences how people think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how a person handles stress, relates to others, and makes life choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood to older adulthood, because it affects everything – the ability to cope, be resilient, adapt, and solve problems, the ability to be a happy, productive, and well-adjusted human being.

There are many reasons why mental health is important. For example, it affects physical health. Mental illnesses are linked with stress which lowers the immune system (leaving the individual vulnerable to different diseases). Specifically, major depressive disorder can lead to suicidal ideation and even suicidal attempts. It is also well known that anxiety disorders can be detrimental to physical health (WebMD, 2021). They can cause the body to release stress hormones that speed up the heart rate and breathing, raise blood sugar, and send more blood to the arms and legs. Over time, this can negatively affect the heart, blood vessels, muscles, and other.

Mental health is also important because it affects the coping skills of the individual. Mental illness can lead to hopelessness and sadness, worthlessness, loss of interest, guilt, anxiety and worry, fear, and loss of control, all of which lower the general well-being of the person. In addition to this, relationships with others can suffer (due to isolation) and school or work performance may decrease (task completion and time management can be negatively impacted). It may become difficult to concentrate, focus or organize different aspects of life.

Without mental health and well-being, life can easily become overwhelming. Unfortunately, in extreme cases, self-harm can occur. Destructive behaviors such as alcohol and drug abuse may appear and take a physical toll on the person. Overall, life can fall apart if mental health is not taken seriously.

Mental health determines how the person operates psychologically, emotionally, and socially among others. Thus, it's important to guard and improve psychological wellness using appropriate measures. Whether or not the person is young or old, the importance of mental health for overall well-being cannot be overstated. When psychological well-being is negatively impacted, it can cause negative behaviors that may not only affect health but can

also compromise the communication and relationships with other people. There are numerous benefits to good mental health, according to Plumptre (2023), such as:

- **Effectively coping with life stressors / good coping skills:** when a person's mental and emotional state is good, the challenges of life can be easier to overcome. Healthy coping mechanisms and skills are typical for a stable mental state and replace dysfunctional behaviors like alcohol and drug abuse, social isolation, fighting, tantrums, and other.
- **Having a positive self-image and improved self-esteem:** mental health is linked to personal feelings about oneself. Overall mental well-being greatly influences self-esteem. Confidence can often be a good indicator of a healthy mental state. A person whose mental health is flourishing is more likely to focus on their positive sides and qualities and will generally strive for living a healthy and happy life.
- **Building and maintaining healthy relationships:** If a person has good mental health, they are more capable of providing their friends and family with quality time, affection, and genuine support. When you are not in emotional distress, it is easier to show love to relatives, peers, and other people you care about.
- **Improved productivity:** Having depression or other mental health issues can negatively impact productivity levels. If one feels mentally strong, it's more likely that they will be able to work more effectively and efficiently and provide higher quality work.
- **Good quality of life:** When mental well-being is thriving, quality of life can increase. This can lead to improved participation in the community and social life. For example, volunteering in soup kitchens, at food drives, shelters, and other options. One may also be more motivated to participate in new hobbies, make new friends, and travel to new places.

These benefits show that promoting mental health and well-being for all is important to building prosperous societies. As for any other person, mental health and well-being are especially important for educators (teachers, trainers, etc.) who have one of the most demanding jobs in the world. According to Agarwal (2023), teachers often forget to focus on their mental well-being, and tend to ignore their stress and anxiety levels (which can then pass on to their students). Unfortunately, students of educators experiencing burnouts, are found to



have higher levels of cortisol - a stress hormone – which can negatively affect their physical health. This is the main reason why all teachers should pay more attention to their mental health and well-being. Whether it is memory problems, sleep management, lesson planning, or curriculum completion, a teacher facing stress can end up having a detrimental impact on their students.

There are numerous reasons why teachers' mental health and well-being are important:

- **Teachers' mental health and well-being have a direct impact on students' emotional state and learning environment:** All students strive to find role models and a teacher plays an important role in that. A teacher with good mental health and well-being is optimistic and positive which directly impacts the learning environment whereas a stressed teacher is more likely to have a negative impact on the students' learning environment and lead to poor student outcomes.
- **Teachers' mental health and well-being have an impact on the mental health development of students:** According to the **Child Mind Institute (2023)**, half of mental illnesses begin before the age of 14. Schools can play an active role in the intervention and expand their capacities to create learning environments prepared to support students with mental health conditions. This requires a teacher to cultivate the skills and knowledge that help them identify risk factors and symptoms, and provide a helping hand to respond to students before the situation escalates to depression, anxiety, or acts of self-harm.
- **Mental health and well-being of teachers greatly influence the effectiveness of their teaching and the learning outcomes of their students.** It is the responsibility of teachers to deliver a positive learning environment to their students. Only a mentally healthy teacher can bring the positive energy to the lessons which results in increased effectiveness and learning outcomes.
- **Mental health and well-being of teachers have a direct impact on the personal and professional life of educators:** For teachers, the excessive workload of learning to operate e-learning platforms, conducting classes, gradings, and planning lessons usually takes a toll on their mental health and well-being. This can result in inappropriate anger, diversion of attention, stress, and anxiety. These issues influence



other personal aspects as well, which ultimately affects mental health. Mental well-being ensures that teachers not only give their best at work but also at home.

But, what about students' mental health and wellbeing and why are they important? Those aspects are found to enhance intrinsic motivation, decrease disciplinary problems, increase academic achievement, improve school satisfaction and lead to flourishing of students (Buecker et al., 2018). Simply put, those who feel better can learn better.

Research has found that “inducing positive emotions (such as joyfulness, love, or appreciation) enlarges cognitive perspectives and enhances the ability of individuals to attend to more information, make richer interpretations, and experience higher levels of creativity and productivity” (Cameron, 2012). The best learners are those who have the skills, resources, and environments necessary for them to experience wellbeing and reap the benefits of feeling good and learning more.

Facets of wellbeing, such as gratitude, hope, and emotional regulation, have been found to improve academic performance across several areas. For example, students with high levels of hope can make adaptive attributions and overcome failure by making corrections. Thus, failure ceases to be a long-term detriment to their self-worth. Similarly, gratitude increases students' satisfaction with school and propels them in making and pursuing intrinsic goals. In addition, emotional regulation helps students get along with peers and teachers, exhibit prosocial behaviors, and adjust to new classrooms (Furlong, Gilman, & Huebner, 2014). Thus, well-being gives students a competitive advantage both inside and outside the classroom.

In addition to well-being, good mental health is also important to students because it means they can learn better and be more likely to realize the full potential of their abilities. Students' mental health in school is a crucial part of the education system. Ultimately, students with positive mental health can build relationships more effectively, make decisions, and work together. Moreover, they may have a greater interest in their studies, retain information more effectively, and progress steadily toward graduation as they grow socially, emotionally, and academically. These positive effects support the individual student and their larger community as they enter adulthood.

In conclusion, mental health and well-being are important aspects of the life of every person, including students and teachers.



III Current context of mental health and well-being among students and teachers (Bulgaria, Poland, Cyprus)

1. Indicators of well-being and mental health

Well-being is defined as the extent to which a person has a high quality of life, can achieve desired outcomes in life and can contribute to society (Miranti et al., 2017). Stable well-being is often defined as a state in which “

individuals have the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge.” (Braun et al., 2002). It is multidimensional, capturing all important aspects of life, including mental health, physical health, economic well-being, social well-being and liveability.

Well-being can be measured objectively and subjectively. There is a range of well-being frameworks that use objective and subjective indicators. Some use only objective indicators: examples include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) — Human Development Index (life expectancy, educational attainment, income). Others combine both objective and subjective measures, for example, the later versions of Measures of Australia’s Progress (MAP) from the ABS in Australia, and the OECD wellbeing framework. Just as economic measures of income are sometimes considered to infer a state of well-being, subjective measures of mental health are sometimes used to infer a person’s state of well-being. For example, Huppert and So (2013) considered well-being as the opposite end of the spectrum to the common mental disorders (depression, anxiety).

Objective measures of well-being use currently available indicators such as education, labour force status, or homelessness. Subjective measures of well-being ask a respondent a specific question. Examples of ways to subjectively measure well-being include questions on life satisfaction such as ‘In general, how satisfied are you with your life?’; and questions on self-assessed health such as ‘In general, would you say that your health is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?’.

Despite growing interest in the measurement and monitoring of well-being, and because it is still a relatively new field, it remains a contested concept with multiple definitions proposed in the literature (Diener et al., 2009).



Nevertheless, a rapidly growing field examining subjective well-being has been developed. Subjective well-being considers an individual's own interests, needs or preferences and Kahneman and Krueger (2006) have argued that indicators of subjective well-being provide a more nuanced appraisal than objective measures such as income, expenditure, educational attainment or lifespan.

An indicator of well-being is basically the information that shows the condition of the domain (in this case, a specific aspect of well-being within the overall framework). An indicator belongs to at least one domain, but can also be relevant to multiple domains. For indicators of well-being, we are focusing on seven core well-being domains: safety, social and community, health, economic, home, education and skills.

Main well-being indicators that apply across the life cycle:

Economic indicators - they are usually objective, although they can include the subjective indicator of financial hardship:

- **Income** (household and personal income):

Household income is categorized as having high useability, while personal income has medium useability. This is because household income is discussed in the key frameworks more frequently and is relevant to more stages of the life cycle than personal income, which may only be relevant for those of working age. Household income measures also assume some sharing of income across members of a household, which is more appropriate when measuring well-being, as this is how families normally operate. In older adult frameworks, the discussion of income also typically includes the age pension and superannuation. The reliability of the academic evidence for this indicator is considered medium, with sometimes contradictory findings across multiple studies on the relationship between income and well-being. These contradictory findings are likely to be in part a consequence of different approaches to the measurement of both income and well-being across these studies or the development level of the country investigated. In general, a weak positive association between income and well-being is a common finding in the literature with some arguing this means the indicator is not well-validated as a measure of well-being (Rojas, 2004).

- **Financial hardship/stress:**

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The financial hardship literature includes information on the inability to do various activities and pay for items, including the inability to pay utility bills on time, the inability to heat one's home, the need to seek assistance from welfare or community organizations or family and friends, and having to pawn or sell an asset. This type of information is subjective, coming from survey questions such as, "If all of a sudden [you/members of this household] had to get \$2000 for something important, could the money be obtained within a week?" with the answer being Yes, No or I Don't Know. The frequency with which this financial indicator is discussed in the literature is medium, but the reliability is high as the literature has found consistent and frequent evidence of better health status (which includes psychological well-being evidence such as anxiety and depression) for an individual who does not experience financial hardship (O'Neill et al., 2006). Individuals who experience financial hardship also tend to suffer from elevated levels of psychological distress because financial hardship can have important effects on (and be affected by) factors such as a person's health, family relationships, self-esteem and their coping skills.

- **Employment:**

Labor market indicators are usually associated with well-being. Perhaps the most common labor market indicator is employment. Interestingly, there is mixed evidence for the reliability of this indicator. Dolan et al. (2008) argued employment has clearer evidence of an association with well-being than unemployment. Being employed has been preferred in terms of well-being than having no job at all. Satisfaction with work also matters for overall well-being. Tait et al. (1989) found a positive correlation between job satisfaction and life satisfaction. On the other hand, the literature identifies that happiness in working life spills over into non-working life (Dockery, 2010), so that being in a job affects overall well-being. However, it is not only being in a job that matters. The type of employment or the quality of work also matters. For example, people may be employed but we are not sure about the types of jobs they are doing, so this may not reflect their overall well-being. Dolan et al. (2008) in their summary concluded there was a medium level of evidence on the relationship between work (either part or full-time) and well-being (some found part-time work has been associated with lower well-being while others did not find a significant difference between the two). Further, some people may be underemployed, or working in precarious conditions or working long hours, which has a negative effect on wellbeing (OECD, 2011).



- **Unemployment:**

There is academic evidence that unemployment has a strong association with poorer well-being outcomes. In 2014, the ONS found unemployed people rated their life satisfaction significantly lower on average than employed people. The average life satisfaction of unemployed people was 6.7 out of 10 compared with 7.6 for employed people.

Unemployment or loss of employment is also associated with mental health issues. Unemployment has been associated with a loss of self-esteem, and the unemployed are more likely to suffer depression, anxiety and social stigma (Flatau et al., 2000). Long-term unemployment is associated with a greater incidence of suicide.

- **Working hours:**

There is mixed evidence of an association between working hours and well-being in the academic literature. The impact of working long hours is found to be damaging. Caruso (2006) and Golden and Wiens-Tuers (2006) found long working hours were related to a wide range of risks to workers, families, employers and the community including increased work stress, fatigue, sleep deprivation, obesity, injuries and chronic disease.

- **Household wealth:**

Headey et al. (2008) have found wealth affects current well-being (such as life satisfaction and standard of living satisfaction) and is a major determinant of the longer-term prospects of households and individuals. It is also confirmed household wealth has been shown to improve individual well-being by providing a safety net that protects against negative income shocks.

Home indicators

- **Overcrowding:**

Overcrowding, which compares the number of rooms in a dwelling and persons who live in the dwelling, is frequently included as an indicator in key well-being frameworks and has been found to have high academic evidence in the literature. Overcrowding has been found to affect well-being and is associated with higher levels of psychological distress among adults (Lepore et al., 1991) and poorer educational outcomes for children (Solari and Mare, 2012).

Overcrowding can be a subjective concept and may be influenced by cultural norms. For instance, living in large family groups may be culturally acceptable for some. Nevertheless, the relationship between overcrowding and well-being is still negative.



- **Homelessness:**

There is a high level of evidence that homelessness is associated with low well-being. The impact of homelessness on well-being is mainly through worse mental and physical health. Homelessness is traumatic, disempowering and socially isolating. Among youth and children, homelessness has a strong association with mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, behavioural disorders and alcohol and drug-related issues (Vostanis, 2002). In the case of children, homelessness is correlated not only with mental health problems and developmental delays but also with educational outcomes, poor health and poor nutrition.

Health indicators

- **Self-reported health status:**

Okun et al. (1984) found health and subjective well-being were positively and significantly correlated. Health status as a universal concept is determined by more than the presence or absence of any disease. It also measures functioning, physical illness and mental well-being. Okun et al. (1984) found self-reported physical health had a significant correlation with subjective well-being and people with lower life satisfaction on average had poorer health. The ONS (2013) argued this variable had the strongest association with all the measures of personal well-being.

- **Disability:**

There is strong evidence for disability as a well-being indicator. Oswald and Powdthavee (2008) identified that people with a disability had on average lower life satisfaction than those without a current or past disability, even several years after the disability. Lucas (2007) also argued the period of disability matters and that long-term disability was associated with lasting changes in subjective well-being.

- **Smoking behaviour:**

The evidence for the association between smoking and reduced well-being in terms of poorer health outcomes is high, although the association may not always be direct. When looking at a direct association between smoking and well-being, Venning et al. (2013) found young adolescents who experienced high well-being were less likely to smoke or drink alcohol. Smoking is associated with a range of other issues in adolescence such as problematic alcohol use, academic and sleep problems, all of which are associated with lower levels of well-being.



Lawrence et al. (2009) also found mental illness was correlated with both higher rates of smoking and higher levels of smoking among smokers.

- **Mental health:**

There is evidence for a strong association between poor mental health and low overall well-being in the academic literature. Mental health is often incorporated as a well-being indicator in key frameworks. Life satisfaction is actually a component of mental health and is quite strongly correlated with depression (Headey et al., 1993). This is in line with Guney et al. (2010) who found there is a negative and significant association between life satisfaction and mental health measures, such as depression, anxiety and hopelessness scales.

Mental health is important for people across the life cycle. Among children, it has been linked to “suffering, functional impairment, exposure to stigma and discrimination, and increased risk of premature death”. Children with conditions such as ADHD, depressive disorder or conduct disorder experience poorer psychosocial growth and development, have higher healthcare requirements, poorer education and occupational attainment, and higher involvement with the justice system (Bhatia & Bhatia, 2007). On the other hand, depression in childhood and adolescence creates a significant burden for individuals, families and societies by increasing morbidity, increasing mortality and negatively affecting the quality of life during times of significantly depressed mood (Lynch & Clarke, 2006).

- **Overall life satisfaction/happiness:**

Overall life satisfaction and happiness are two indicators that directly measure individual well-being using self-assessment. They are typically considered well-being outcomes, but given the interactions between all aspects of well-being, they also act as determinants of a person’s subsequent well-being.

Life satisfaction captures a profound assessment of how things are going in one’s own life and allows an evaluation of which life circumstances and conditions (work, family, etc.) are important for subjective well-being (Kahneman & Krueger, 2006). It has also been argued that life satisfaction is a determinant of future health outcomes. For example, Diener and Chan (2011) argue life satisfaction is a significant determinant of health and longevity.

- **Time devoted to leisure:**



Leisure activities need are usually freely chosen based on individual interests. Having time devoted to leisure is found to increase overall psychological well-being, and leisure during adolescence predicted well-being 15 years later (Sacker & Cable, 2006).

Types of leisure activity may also matter. For example, active participation in voluntary organisations is positively and significantly associated with higher life satisfaction. Voluntary activities such as charity, church and art-related activities, matter most for life satisfaction. Holder et al. (2009) examined the relationship between leisure and well-being among children. Active leisure (e.g., physical activity) was positively correlated with well-being but passive leisure (e.g., television and video games) was negatively correlated.

- **Participation in sports activities:**

Steptoe and Butler (1996) found active leisure activities (e.g., physical activity such as sports) were positively associated with well-being while in contrast passive leisure activities (e.g., television and video games) were negatively associated with well-being. The greater involvement in physical activities is associated with academic adjustment, psychological competencies and a positive peer context, with the results strongest for the older group of youth (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005). Physical activity improves an adolescent's psychosocial well-being by reducing symptoms of depression, stress and anxiety, and through improvements in self-confidence, self-esteem, energy levels, sleep quality and ability to concentrate. These findings are relevant for children, adolescents and adults.

Education and skills indicators

- **Educational attainment:**

Educational attainment is one of the most frequently used objective indicators of well-being. Some studies find a positive relationship between each additional level of education and subjective well-being, while others show middle-level education is related to the highest life satisfaction (Stutzer, 2004). Frey and Stutzer (2002) find high educational attainment does not guarantee happiness, but it does help people cope better with life challenges. However, the relationship between education and well-being is complex. At the national level, educational attainment has been found to have a greater association with well-being in low-income countries than in higher-income countries.

- **Cognitive skills:**

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Cognitive skills are defined as academic personal beliefs, and these are usually found to be correlated with life satisfaction. Studies have argued there is a correlation between school success and subjective well-being (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002). The link between lack of literacy skills and later social exclusion has been well established, with poor literacy associated with loss of employment opportunities, lower income and consequent disadvantage in housing and health.

Happiness is consistently found to be related to the three literacy scores (reading, writing and arithmetic), the magnitude of the association being highest for reading literacy (Kirkcaldy et al., 2004). The results from surveys among British university students suggested reciprocal relationships between health, health behaviour and educational achievement (El Ansari & Stock, 2010).

- **Those not in education, employment or training (NEET):**

Participation is important in education, employment or training is important, and has an impact on well-being. Research on adolescents has found that students who leave school prematurely and do not subsequently become employed have lower levels of self-reported activity, perceived competence and life satisfaction, and increased depressive affect. Studies have also found unemployed school-leavers have higher levels of depression, external locus of control and decreased self-esteem compared with employed school-leavers (Proctor et al., 2009).

Social and community indicators:

- **Social network/support:**

The benefits of social support include positive mental health and behavioural outcomes in childhood and later life, reduced school dropout rates and an increased likelihood of gaining meaningful employment (Ferguson, 2006). Social support may also have positive psychological and emotional effects, helping people to better cope with stress and illness.

Previous studies have linked social support to measures of subjective well-being and this is relevant across the life cycle. Particularly for children, a strong social network may protect them from the adverse effects of socioeconomic disadvantage. Access to friends and neighbours to discuss issues has also been found to be helpful in managing life challenges

(Ferguson, 2006). Supportive teachers are also linked to higher life satisfaction among children (Suldo & Huebner, 2006).

- **Feelings of loneliness:**

Although not the same as feeling lonely, living alone has been found to be negatively correlated to well-being. All household types where two or more people live together give higher ratings for life satisfaction than those living alone (ONS, 2013). Young and older adults who reported the greatest amount of loneliness experienced significantly lower well-being (measured by positive affect) than those who reported the least amount of loneliness.

- **Volunteering:**

The evidence of the relationship between volunteering and well-being is high. Adults who volunteer have been found to experience better mental health and a greater quality of life through participating socially and engaging in the community. This is associated with increased life satisfaction, reduced likelihood of depression, improved morale and self-esteem, and larger social networks (Morrow-Howell et al., 2003). In the case of youth, volunteering has positive effects on educational and occupational achievement, functional ability and mortality, and it reduces the likelihood of engaging in problem behaviours such as school truancy and drug abuse (Wilson, 2000).

- **Relationship with partner:**

Kim and McKenry (2002) argued the effect of the quality of marital (cohabiting) relationships on psychological well-being was significant. Nevertheless, the strong effect of marital status remained unchanged after controlling for relationship quality, with marriage leading to greater well-being than cohabiting relationships.

Hawkins and Booth (2005) found if people were married but unhappy, it was more damaging to their well-being than divorcing, as people in low-quality marriages are less happy and have lower levels of life satisfaction, self-esteem and overall health than individuals who divorce and remain unmarried.

- **Sense of belonging to the local neighbourhood:**

O'Brien and Ayidiya (1991) have found that feeling part of the local community/neighbourhood is associated with a higher subjective quality of life. This is similar to the finding of Oktay et al. (2009) who found there is a positive relationship between life satisfaction and feelings of attachment to the local neighbourhood. However, it is not the



frequency of engaging in neighbourly behaviour that is directly associated with wellbeing, but an increased sense of community. This highlights the importance of building a sense of community among residents in a neighbourhood.

- **Access to the natural environment:**

In accordance with the literature that argued active participation is better than passive participation, spending time in natural environments has an impact on well-being. Compared with exercising indoors, Thompson Coon et al. (2011) have found that exercising in natural environments was correlated with higher feelings of revitalization and positive engagement, increased energy and declines in tension, confusion, anger and depression.

Safety indicators

- **Feeling safe:**

Feeling safe or free from fear has been found to be highly correlated with mental health status and well-being. Those who feel safe have ranked significantly higher on all five dimensions of the SF-36 measure of health, which includes mental and social well-being. (SF-36 is a short-form survey measuring the quality of life across eight domains: physical functioning; role limitations due to physical health; role limitations due to emotional problems; energy/fatigue; emotional well-being; social functioning; pain; and general health).

Feeling fear is more likely to restrict people's behaviour and make them feel isolated and distressed. People may perceive themselves to be in poorer health, and this decreases personal well-being and makes people anxious (Skogan and Maxfield, 1981).

- **Self-reported victimization:**

Studies have found that there is an association between victimisation and poor health outcomes for both genders. Hanslmaier (2013) found victimisation has been associated with lower life satisfaction. Turner et al. (2006) found that sexual assault, child maltreatment, witnessing family violence, and other major violence exposure contributed to levels of both depression and anger/aggression. Further, cumulative exposure to multiple forms of victimisation over a child's life course represents a substantial source of mental health risk and are risk factors for poorer adult health. They are also associated with a significantly higher risk of medical, psychological, behavioural and sexual disorders.



The majority of indicators for children and youth are from the health domain (Miranti et al., 2017). There are many indicators that overlap between children and youth, such as oral health, overweight and obesity, nutrition, tobacco smoke, parental socioeconomic status and safe schools, which includes relationships at school and freedom from bullying. This suggests the importance of these variables for both child and youth development.

As for indicators for mental health, the Six-factor model of psychological well-being developed by Carol Ryff (1989) can be particularly useful for their identification. This is one of the first systematic models of psychological well-being and remains one of the most scientifically verified and empirically rigorous today.

Ryff (1989) determines six factors which contribute to an individual's psychological well-being / mental health. Psychological well-being consists of self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, a feeling of purpose and meaning in life, and personal growth and development. The indicators are defined as follows:

- **Autonomy:** the person is independent and regulates their own behavior regardless of social pressures.
- **Environmental mastery:** The person makes effective use of opportunities and has a sense of mastery in managing the environment and activities, including managing everyday affairs and creating situations to benefit personal needs.
- **Personal growth:** the individual continues to develop, is open to new experiences, and recognizes improvement in their behavior and self over time.
- **Positive relations with others:** the individual engages in meaningful relationships with others that include empathy, intimacy, and affection.
- **Purpose in life:** the individual has a strong goal orientation and conviction that life has meaning.
- **Self-Acceptance:** this reflects the individual's positive attitude about their self.

In conclusion, the abovementioned indicators for well-being as well as Carol Ryff's model of psychological well-being / mental health provide a powerful framework through which to analyze and organize one's life, and to generate ideas about how to live better and have good mental health and well-being levels.

2. Current context and challenges in Bulgaria

Employment:

The Bulgarian economy performed relatively well during the COVID-19 and energy crises. High employment rates, coupled with strong increases in wages and social benefits and the government energy support measures, sustained consumer spending. The country has made some progress on labour market indicators in SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), with employment rates on the rise, surpassing the EU average, and shares of long-term unemployed and young people not in employment, education or training falling, although the latter is still significantly above the EU average. The recent positive labour market trend has not spread equally across all groups in society. In particular, the employment rate of the low-skilled remains below the EU average. Similarly, young people aged 15-29 not in education, employment or training (NEET) and Roma still face substantial difficulties in accessing the labour market. The share of NEETs also remains relatively high, particularly among Roma.

Bulgaria outperforms the EU on several Partnerships for the goals indicators, in particular on the employment rate (73.2% of the population aged 20-64 compared to 67.0% in 2016), the long-term unemployment rate (2.6% of the active population in 2021 compared to 5.0% in 2016).

Negative demographic trends are a major challenge for Bulgaria and risk further aggravating labour shortages. The working age population (15-64 years old) decreased by 958 501 (19.1%) between 2011 and 2021. The inactive population stood at 21.0% in 2022, slightly above the EU average (20.6%).

The employment rate of recent graduates from vocational education and training (VET) remains a challenge. Important VET measures were adopted recently, including with the support of EU funding, especially dual VET (work-based learning), although it is too early to see results. In addition, quality and equity in education, particularly for Roma and in rural areas, remains a challenge.

Legislation to gradually increase the minimum income and expand its coverage over 2022-2024 has been amended. This is a step to achieving a broader reform by the end of 2023.

Bulgaria's labour market performed strongly in 2022, but challenges remain for young people, not in employment, education or training (NEET), low-skilled people and the Roma.

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While economic growth slowed down in 2022, the employment rate rose from 73.4% in 2021 to 76.7% in 2022, 1.9 percentage points (pps) above the EU average and 2.8 pps higher than in 2019. However, the employment rate (20-64 age group) for low-skilled people (ISCED 0-2) stood at 50.2% in 2022, below the EU average (57.2%), and is 39.7 pps lower than the rate for high-skilled people (89.9% for ISCED 5-8).

Unemployment:

In 2021, the unemployment rate was as low as 3.5% in the capital region and as high as 11% in the least developed region (Severozapaden). Nominal labour productivity per hour worked reaches only 53.4% of the 2021 EU level (in purchasing power standards). The unemployment rate fell to a historic low of 4.3% in 2022. At the same time, the share of young people (aged 15- 29) NEET remained high (15.1% in 2022 versus 11.7% in the EU).

The socio-economic consequences of the pandemic have been asymmetrically felt. In contrast to the upward trend during 2015-2019, the employment rate dropped in 2020 in all regions. In 2021, employment (partly) recovered in some regions; while it continued to decrease in Severen Tsentralen (-2.2% pp), Yuzhen Tsentralen (-1.2 pp) and Yugoitztochen (-0.9 pp). Unemployment rates went up in 2020 for all regions and continued to increase in 2021 in most regions. Only in the capital region, the unemployment rate showed a significant recovery.

Overall the unemployment rate in Bulgaria is lower than in the EU but there are wide regional variations. In 2021, the unemployment rate was 5.3 % in Bulgaria (7.0% in the EU), but as low as 3.5% in the capital region and as high as 11% in the least developed region of Severozapaden, where the employment rate was also particularly low (65% against the national average of 73%). The unemployment rate in rural areas amounts to 8.8%. Employment in high technology sectors and R&D expenditure are also much lower in some of the less developed regions.

Household income – Salary:

The average salary in Bulgaria for 1st Quarter of 2023 is 1882 BGN (approx. 962 EUR) per month. In comparison, the average monthly salary in the European Union for the same period is 2161 EUR.



Despite improvements, Bulgaria still faces high levels of poverty and income inequality, notably among vulnerable groups. In 2021, the income of the richest 20% of the population was 7.5 times more than the poorest 20%.

Education:

Economic inactivity and low education levels are important factors behind poverty and income inequality. Nonparticipation in the labour market is particularly high among young people and the low-educated people. Low educational outcomes also hurt Bulgaria's growth potential. Underachievement in basic skills, as measured by the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), is twice as high as the EU average. The rates of low achievement in basic skills are particularly high among students from disadvantaged backgrounds, suggesting that socio-economic factors greatly affect educational outcomes. Tertiary educational attainment is also low (for those aged 25-34).

Significant challenges remain in several other social SDGs, in particular in education. Bulgaria is moving away from the SDG objectives in SDG 4 (Quality education), where it already ranks among the worst performers in the EU.

Bulgaria received its first payment under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) on 16 December 2022. This first payment request covers reforms of the education system at all levels. This includes pre-school, primary and secondary school and higher education. In particular, Bulgaria amended the Pre-school and School Education Act and related secondary legislation. This included making preschool education mandatory from the age of four, amending the Higher Education Act to introduce a revised accreditation system for higher education institutions, and adopting the National Map of Higher Education to support a more balanced higher education offer across the country.

Low educational outcomes pose bottlenecks to productivity and potential growth. The share of adults with at least basic digital skills lags badly behind the EU average together with adult participation in learning, where Bulgaria has set an ambitious national target for 2030. While decreasing in recent years, the rate of early school leavers remains a challenge and is especially high for Roma and people in less developed, rural and remote areas. Participation in early education and care remains low and is significantly below the EU average (18.7% versus 36.2% in 2021).



In addition, almost half of young Bulgarians lack basic skills in reading, mathematics or science, in the face of growing teacher shortages. Teachers in Bulgaria are also some of the oldest in the EU. About half of the schoolteachers are aged 50 or over. To improve the attractiveness of the profession, increasing salaries has been a priority. Teacher shortages exist particularly in certain subjects (e.g. STEM-related, English) and in rural areas, where the concentration of students from disadvantaged backgrounds is higher. Meanwhile, teachers with higher levels of education or experience, tend to be concentrated in urban areas, where the workforce is also to a lesser extent aged. A high percentage of young teachers leave the profession after the first year of teaching.

Progress has been made in making preschool education mandatory from 4 years of age, alongside the adoption of strategic documents and legislation in higher education, social services and mental health.

The percentage of young people aged 15-29 not in education, employment or training (SDG 8) has fallen (17.6% in 2021 compared to 22.4% in 2016) but remains high and above the EU average (13.1% in 2021). The country has already implemented some RRP measures to target digital skills including higher education reform to promote specialised ICT training in secondary education.

Despite improvements, challenges remain in ensuring access to quality and inclusive education, particularly for Roma. There has been some progress, but the provision of quality early childhood education and care remains low for 0-3-year-olds (18.7% vs 36.6% in the EU in 2021). The employment rate of recent vocational education and training (VET) graduates (64.8% in 2022) is still well below the EU average (79.7%). The Bulgarian Recovery and resilience plan (RRP) is tackling some of these challenges through the creation of STEM centres in schools across the country. The ESF+ also provides comprehensive support to address school segregation, boost dual VET and pilot dual education in higher education.

Increasing quality and equity in school education remains a major challenge. Underachievement in basic skills, as measured by PISA (47.1% in reading, 44.4% in mathematics and 46.5% in sciences), is twice as high as the European averages. There has been no substantial progress over time.



In 2022, the rate of early leavers from education and training (18-24 years old) decreased by 1.7 pps to 10.5%, but remains above the EU-level target (9%) and EU average (9.6%). It is particularly high for the Roma and in rural areas (19.1%).

Digitalisation in education and training is underway, but digital skills are low. Only 52% of Bulgarians aged 16-19 have at least basic digital skills, one of the lowest rates in the EU (average 69%). The pandemic exposed the challenges in digital education, but at the same time accelerated reforms and investments.

Tertiary educational attainment is low. Only 33.8% of Bulgarians aged 25-34 held a university degree in 2022, compared with an average of 42% in the EU. The percentage of STEM graduates is one of the lowest in the EU.

Despite efforts, the labour market relevance of education and training is insufficient. Overall, only about half of higher education graduates work in positions requiring higher education. Efforts to improve quality continue with the implementation of the Strategy for Higher Education (2022-2030). Several measures have been taken to modernise vocational education and training (VET), but its alignment with the labour market could be further improved. Bulgaria continues to have one of the lowest participation rates in adult learning in the EU (1.8% in 2021, significantly below the average of 10.8%), particularly among low-skilled adults.

Health and mental health:

A healthy population and an effective, accessible and resilient health system are prerequisites for a sustainable economy and society. Life expectancy in Bulgaria continues to be the lowest in the EU.

Key indicators point to the ineffectiveness and lack of resilience of the health system. Its health system is characterised by limited and unequal access to healthcare services across the country, which is exacerbated by shortages of healthcare professionals. In addition, healthcare spending is low overall and mostly concentrated in inpatient care (hospitals), with little focus on outpatient care and prevention.

Bulgaria also took the first steps towards strengthening social cohesion and modernising mental healthcare services. Measures include legislation to gradually raise the minimum income and expand its coverage in 2022-2024, together with legislation that regulates minimum quality standards for the provision of social services. In the area of healthcare,



Bulgaria adopted the National Strategy for the Mental Health of Citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2030 and an action plan, which aims to address the key problems of its psychiatric care system.

In the area of healthcare, Bulgaria adopted the National Strategy for the Mental Health of Citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2030 and an action plan, which aims to address the key problems of its psychiatric care system. In addition, Bulgaria has also improved on access to healthcare (SDG 3; 1% of those aged 16 or over with self-reported unmet needs for medical care in 2021 compared to 2.8% in 2016).

Through its recovery and resilience plan (RRP), Bulgaria plans to invest EUR 372 million (5.9% of the RRP's total value) in healthcare. Pending investments include the modernisation of hospitals and medical facilities providing paediatric, oncological or psychiatric care. Bulgaria adopted a national strategy on mental health for 2021-2030 and a related action plan, which aims to address the key problems of the psychiatric care system in the country. Furthermore, the RRP envisages an update of several other strategies, including the national cancer plan and the national paediatric strategy. Bulgaria is also preparing an update of its regulatory framework for e-health.

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Working hours:

According to “Teachers and Teaching conditions” (TALIS, 2018) survey, teachers in Bulgaria report spending more individual time planning and preparing lessons (7.5 hours/week, ranking 10th place out of 50 countries). However, according to the same survey teachers spend a shorter time on administrative tasks (such as marking attendance – 5.8%, ranking them 47th place, out of 50). A lot of time is spent on actual teaching and learning (83.8%, ranking them 8th).

Teachers and Teaching conditions (TALIS, 2018) - <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=BGR&treshold=10&topic=TA>

3. Current context and challenges in Poland

Employment:

With a result of 73.6% for 2020, Poland is one of the EU Member States that has achieved an employment level for people aged 20–64 in line with the targets set by the European Commission for 2020. In 2021, this indicator increased to 75.4%, compared to the EU average of 73.1%. The main indicators describing the situation in the labor market in the country have improved, and the distance from the EU average has been steadily decreasing (European Commission – Labor Market Information Poland, 2023).

Unfortunately, the positive growth tendencies slowed down in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions imposed on economies as a result. However, contrary to concerns about the expected labour market crisis, only a slowdown in the growth of its main indicators was observed.

In 2021, the economic activity rate for people aged 15–64 was 72.8% and it increased by 1.8 percentage points compared with the previous year. At the same time, the employment rate for this group increased by 1.6 percentage points to 70.3%. In 2018, the employment rate for people aged 20–64 was 72.2%, in 2019 it increased to 73%, in 2020 – to 73.6% and in 2021 it was 75.4% (Public Employment Services Portal – labour market).

According to Trading Economics (2023), employment rate in Poland has increased to 72 % in the first quarter of 2023 from 71.80 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022.

Unemployment:

In 2021, the unemployment rate in Poland was 3.4%, with a 0.2% increase per year. Regarding the unemployment rate, while upon its entry in the EU Poland was the country with the highest unemployment rate in the whole European Union, the unemployment rate has remained below the EU average since 2012, and Poland has ranked among the countries with the lowest unemployment rate for several years. The unemployment rate improved in 2020 compared to in 2019, despite the COVID-19 pandemic which had a negative impact on the economy (European Commission – Labor Market Information Poland, 2023).

According to Eurostat (2022), in 2022 Poland was the second country with the lowest unemployment rate in the European Union, reaching the rate of 2.7% against 6.1% in the EU and 6.6% in the euro area.



During the period 2014–2019, the unemployment level continued to decrease in Poland. In 2018, the number of unemployed people decreased to less than 1 million at the end of the year and affected 968 900 persons (a drop by 10.4% compared to 2017), while the registered unemployment rate decreased to 5.8%.

A record low number was registered as unemployed at labor offices in October 2019 (840 500 people). At the same period, the registered unemployment rate was 5.0%. At the end of the year, the number of unemployed people was 866 400, while the unemployment rate was 5.2%. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed on the economy, at the end of 2020, the number of unemployed people registered at labour offices increased to 1 046 400, and the unemployment rate increased to 6.3%.

Once the economy began to recover after the lifting of lockdowns and economic restrictions, the situation in the labour market improved significantly in 2021. Measures proposed by the Polish government as part of the ‘Anti-Crisis Shield’ contributed to the resolution of the problem. Thanks to the measures, the registered unemployment rate has slowed down since March 2021.

At the end of June 2022, the unemployment rate was low – 4.9%, and it was lower by 1.1 percentage points compared to the previous year. When comparing the unemployment rate at the end of June 2022 to the number of unemployed persons registered at the end of February 2020 (before the state of epidemic emergency), the level of unemployment decreased by 101 800 persons (11.1%), and the registered unemployment rate was lower by 0.6 percentage point (European Commission - Labor Market Information Poland, 2023)

At the end of June 2022, there were 113 300 unemployed people registered at labour offices and entitled to unemployment benefits, which represented 13.9% of registered unemployed persons. Until now, the group of unemployed people entitled to benefits decreased by 23 800 persons, i.e. by 17.3%.

It is important to mention that territorial disparities in terms of unemployment have been considerable in the country for a long time. This is due to imbalances in both the socio-economic development of regions and their geographical location. The territorial disparities, measured by the difference between the lowest and highest unemployment rate, varied. At the end of June 2022, the difference between the lowest and highest unemployment rate in



provinces was 4.9 percentage points. (Wielkopolskie Province 2.7%, Warmińsko-Mazurskie Province 7.6%).

According to CEIC, Poland's unemployment rate dropped to 5% in June 2023, from 5.1% in May 2023.

Household income – Salary:

The average salary in Poland is 7,560 PLN (Polish Zloty) per month. That's roughly around USD 1,820 according to the exchange rates in June 2023.

The average or mean salary is usually calculated by adding salaries for a select group of employees and dividing the sum by the number of employees.

According to Salary Explorer (2023), a Polish employee earns an average salary of 90,800 PLN per year. As per the latest exchange rate in June 2023, this amounts to USD 21,864 or 20,265 EUR/year.

NEETs:

NEETs are people who are no longer in education or training, but also do not have a paid job. The NEETs are usually in the population aged 15-24. In Poland this age range may be misleading due to the national legislation, which impose schooling obligation on youth till the age of 15, and education obligation till the age of 18. As a consequence, Eurostat shows no data for persons aged 15-17.

However, data for people aged 18-24 and 25-29 are available and show the dynamics in youth chances on the labor market in Poland. There are 3 different stages of NEET rate fluctuation defined. These 3 stages reflect the integration with the EU, emigration and economic recovery process (2004-2008), the economic crisis (2009-2013), and the economic recovery and implementation of the youth focused policies (2013-now).

It is important to mentioned that in the last 5 years the NEET rate in Poland decreased significantly. In 2018, the NEET category amounted to 11.7% among people aged 18-24 and 17.2% among people aged 25-29 (Eurostat, 2018). For 2023, the NEET rates are around 11% among people aged 15-29.

Education:

In Poland, compulsory education begins at the age of 6 and ends at 15. Early childhood education (ECE) starts at age 3 and 2% of children under 3 are enrolled in early childhood education. The enrolment rate among children aged 3-5 has increased significantly in all



OECD countries. In Poland, 88% of all children in these age groups are enrolled in early childhood education, which is slightly above the OECD average.

The average age of graduation from general upper secondary programmes is 20 years in Poland. In the country, the average age of graduation from vocational upper secondary education is 20 years, which is below the OECD average at 22 years (OECD, 2022).

Among OECD countries, between 2000 and 2021, people aged 25-34 with tertiary attainment increased on average by 21 percentage points (OECD, 2022). In Poland, the share increased by 26 percentage points (from 14% in 2000 to 41% in 2021). Poland is one of the 12 OECD countries where tertiary education is still less common than upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education as the highest level of attainment among people aged 25-34. Upper secondary attainment is seen in the country as a minimum qualification for successful labour market inclusion. Although the general increase in educational attainment has seen a parallel decline among people aged 25-34 without upper secondary attainment, 14% of young adults across the OECD still left school without an upper secondary qualification. In Poland, the share is 7%, which is lower than the OECD average.

In almost all OECD countries, women make up the majority of those graduating from general upper secondary education. In Poland, the share of women is 60% (OECD average 55%). In contrast, men are overrepresented among graduates of vocational upper secondary programs in the country where they make up 62% of all vocational upper secondary graduates, above the OECD average (55%).

In Poland, 57% of persons aged 18-24 are still in full- or part-time education or training at either upper secondary or tertiary level (above the OECD average of 54%). Part of these students (8% of those aged 18-24) combine their education or training with some form of employment in, compared to the 17% OECD average.

As regards financial resources invested in education, between 2008 and 2019, funding for educational institutions grew by 30% in Poland. However, over the same period of time, the increase in GDP was higher with 47%. As a consequence, expenditure on educational institutions as a share of GDP fell by 0.6 percentage points over the same time period. Public spending on primary to tertiary education was 9.4% of total government expenditure in Poland, lower than the OECD average (10.6%). Also, relative to GDP, public spending on primary to tertiary education (3.9%) is lower than the OECD average (4.4%). In 2019, on



average Poland spent 9 611 USD per student. Its cumulative expenditure on educating a student from the age of 6 to 15 was 87 741 USD, which was significantly below the OECD average of 105 502 USD (OECD/Eurostat, 2022). In Poland, the values per student are 8 949 USD at primary level and 8 689 USD per student at secondary level.

As regards teachers, between 2015 and 2021 in Poland, salaries of teachers at lower secondary level with 15 years of experience increased more than the OECD average, by 18%. The average number of teaching hours per year required from a teacher in public educational institutions in Poland tends to decrease as the level of education increases. Based on official regulations, annual teaching hours in Poland are 1 095 hours per year at pre-primary level, 611 hours at primary level, 489 hours at lower secondary level and 483 hours at upper secondary level (OECD, 2022). At the upper secondary level, 66% of the working time of teachers is formally dedicated to non-teaching activities in Poland, compared to an average of 56% across OECD countries.

Continuing professional development is compulsory for all teachers of general programs in most countries, but Poland is an exception to this. At secondary level, professional development activities are compulsory for teachers in some circumstances.

According to the Education and Training Monitor (2022), a high proportion of students with disabilities in Poland remain in segregated educational settings. While the proportion of students with SEN in mainstream schools increased between 2010 and 2018, the level of segregation and disparities in educational attainment remains high. The related urban-rural divide is also significant: in 2018, 12.2 % of people with disabilities of working age living in cities completed higher education compared to 3.9% of those living in rural areas (European Commission, 2021a). In 2018/2019, 46% of students with SEN in primary schools attended mainstream classes, 19% were in inclusive classes, and 33% in special primary schools.

While 32.2% of people with disabilities completed tertiary or equivalent education, slightly above the EU average, the disability equality gap is wider, at 17.7 pps (EU 14.4 pps). Furthermore, the European Disability Expertise report highlights the outstanding recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities concerning quality inclusive education (European Commission, 2021a).



As for early childhood education and care, according to the Education and Training Monitor (2022), participation of children in ECEC continues to increase, but gaps persist in rural areas and some regions. In 2020, the rate reached 90.8%, up by 0.5 pps from 2019. Over the past decade, the rate increased by 14.4 pps from 2011, being now closer to the EU average (93%). The participation of 5- and 6-year-olds is high at 97%, but the rate for 3-year-olds (78.5%) is still below the EU average despite an increase of 11.4 pps since the introduction of the entitlement to a place in a kindergarten (2017). The rate is particularly low in rural areas.

As for school education in Poland, according to the Education and Training Monitor (2022), long periods of school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic have been a challenge for students and teachers, but the achievement gap has not yet been measured. From January 2020 to May 2021, schools taught remotely much longer than in other OECD countries. Overall, learning in upper secondary general education was disrupted for 272 days, including full and partial school closures (OECD, 2021c).

Regarding early school leaving in Poland, in 2021, the rate of early leaving from education and training was comparatively low. The overall rate remains significantly below the EU average (5.9 vs EU 9.7%). The gender gap stands at 2.8 pps: the rate for boys was 7.2%, for girls 4.4% (OECD, 2022).

Health and mental health:

In 2020, Poland temporarily lost 1.4 years of life expectancy compared to 2019 due to deaths as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2021). The Polish health system has been suffering from low levels of public financing for many years; this is reflected in workforce shortages and access problems such as long waiting times and high out of pocket payments.

Life expectancy in Poland in 2020 was 76.6 years – four years lower than the EU average (OECD, 2021). High excess mortality due to the COVID-19 pandemic caused life expectancy to fall by 1.4 years between 2019 and 2020, which was among the largest decreases observed in the EU. Ischaemic heart disease, stroke and lung cancer were the main causes of death before the pandemic, but COVID-19 accounted for a significant share of deaths in 2020.

As regards health risk factors, almost half of all deaths in Poland are driven by behaviors, such as smoking, binge drinking and physical inactivity. Obesity rates have been growing and almost 1 in 5 adults is now obese. While alcohol consumption among adults has been rising,



smoking rates among both adults and adolescents have been decreasing. However, the growing popularity of e-cigarettes among youth is an issue (OECD, 2022).

Over the last ten years, spending on health in Poland has remained below the EU average. Moreover, mortality from both preventable and treatable causes in Poland is above the average for the EU. A troubling fact is that 2 in 5 adults in Poland have a chronic health condition. 39 % of Polish adults reported having at least one chronic condition in 2019 – a higher proportion than the EU average (36 %).

As regards mental health, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in mental disorders among all age groups in Poland, which is considered a major public health issue (Kobos et al., 2022). The increasing severity of anxiety, depression and irritation was accompanied by higher loneliness levels. Loneliness, anxiety, depression and irritability are important factors to consider in a population of younger people and people who believe that their physical and mental health is worse than before the pandemic.

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4. Current context and challenges in Cyprus

Employment:

The labour market continues to improve, although challenges remain, notably skills mismatches. At 77.9% in 2022, the employment rate (for people aged 20-64) is well above the EU average, with employment up by 2.9% in 2022. This puts Cyprus on track to meet its national 2030 employment target. The employment rate for the high-skilled was 86.9% in 2022, 24 pp above the rate for low-skilled workers. There are also widespread labour shortages for lower and medium-skilled jobs in certain sectors of the economy, such as the hospitality industry, trade, transport and manufacturing (European Economy, 2023).

Unemployment:

According to Eurostat (2023), the seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate in Cyprus fell slightly to 7.3% in February 2023, compared to 7.4% in January 2023. However, the rate had increased from 6.1% in February 2022. In February 2023, the youth unemployment rate was 14.5% in the EU and 14.4% in the euro area. There were 2.799 million young people under the age of 25 unemployed in the EU, of whom 2.283 million were in the euro area (Eurostat, 2023).

NEETs:

Despite a relatively high employment rate, there is still limited outreach to young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) and other vulnerable groups to increase their labour market participation. Amid solid GDP growth in the post-COVID-19 period, the employment rate in Cyprus at 78.0% in 2022 was well above the EU average of 74.9%. However, the proportion of young NEETs (aged 15-29) stood at 14.9% in 2022 and above the EU average of 11.7%, with almost no change compared to 2020. In addition, the youth unemployment rate (15-24 age group) remained high and increased to 19.3% in 2022, 4.8 percentage points (pps) above the EU average. Meanwhile, the gender employment gap remained relatively wide at 12.1 pps in 2022 (versus 10.6 pps in the EU) after a decrease of 0.1 pps from 2021.

Household Income – Salary:

According to Salary Explorer (2023), the average salary in Cyprus is around 2,160 EUR per month, or 2,387 USD per month, according to the April 2023 exchange rate.

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These average monthly earnings include benefits like transport and housing.

In addition to this, it's common to give Cypriot employees a 13th-month bonus in December. Management-level employees may also receive a performance-based bonus of up to three times the average salary for their designation.

Household Income:

The weak growth of household real disposable income and energy poverty are still challenges for Cyprus, along with the high share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in certain groups of the population. Cyprus' growth of real gross disposable household income (GDHI) per person was one of the slowest in the EU in 2021. Its growth was below the EU average and was flagged as a 'critical situation' on the Social Scoreboard. To tackle this, Cyprus introduced a universal statutory minimum wage, which took effect on 1 January 2023. It is set at EUR 940 and is expected to have 40 000 direct beneficiaries. In particular, the minimum wage will help young people and female workers. This should also help alleviate the risk of poverty for beneficiaries, especially in-work poverty, which is one of the highest in the EU for non-EU-born people (European Economy Report, 2023).

Education:

Early leaving from education and training (ELET) has almost doubled since 2015, driven by high rates among foreign-born pupils. The early leaving rate is much higher among non-EU-born young people, at 26.1% (EU: 22.1%), with a decreasing trend (-1.2 percentage points (pps) since 2020). By contrast, the rate of native-born early leavers was 3.4% in 2022 versus the EU average of 8.3%. The highest proportion of early leavers in 2022 was reported in urban areas. About two-thirds of early leavers are boys. With one of the EU's highest ratios for asylum applicants to inhabitants, integrating asylum seekers into the education system is a key challenge. The proportion of young people (aged 18-34) among recently arrived asylum seekers is especially high (62% in 2018). In order to address the problem, Cyprus provides support to students at risk of dropping out of secondary education under a project financed by the EU's Technical Support Instrument. Early warning systems are in place, but data collection is insufficient and the method most used relies on school-by-school reporting.

Accessible and affordable early childhood education and care (ECEC) remains a challenge despite coordinated efforts. The participation in early childhood education and care from age 3 to the starting age for compulsory primary education is at 91.1%, below the EU average



(93%) and the EU-level target for 2030 (96%). Disadvantaged families often cannot afford to pay for their children to participate. Cyprus has committed itself to expanding capacities and improving the affordability of ECEC through EU funding. In addition, the country supports families on income and social criteria under the scheme “Subsidy of Tuition of Children up to 4 years old”, co-funded by ESF+.

Cypriot pupils perform worse than their European peers in reading, maths and science, and socio-economic disparities are strong. Cyprus has a high proportion of pupils performing low in reading, maths and science and a low proportion of top performers compared with other EU countries, as measured by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2018. Even in the top socio-economic quartile, one in three students show low performance, one of the EU’s highest rates.

There are very significant differences in terms of educational attainment, as well as poverty and social exclusion. More than 52.7% of the overall population (aged 25-64) has a tertiary degree but this drops to 42.8% in the towns and suburbs and 33.2% in rural areas. In 2021, the share of early leavers from school and training was highest in the towns and suburbs at 11.2% (European Economy Report, 2023).

Health:

Despite its recent decline, life expectancy in Cyprus remains among the highest in the EU. Before 2020, and against an overall EU trend of increasing life expectancy, life expectancy appeared to be plateauing in Cyprus. In 2020, both COVID-19 deaths and excess mortality rates were low in Cyprus compared to other EU countries, but in 2021, infection rates were much higher. Life expectancy hence fell in 2021.

The share of spending on prevention in total healthcare expenditure remains far below the EU average. However, a slight increase in the share of total spending on preventive care was reported in 2020 (1.7%, up from 1.1% in 2019), reflecting similar EU-wide trends. In 2020, spending on prevention in Cyprus amounted to 1.7% of total spending on healthcare (compared to 3.4% for the EU overall).

Disability:

Poverty and social exclusion remain the big challenges for people with disabilities, so financial inequalities need to be tackled. The state should work closely and in consultation with the organizations of people with disabilities and their representatives for designing and



applying policies and schemes aiming at the inclusion of people with disabilities and the protection of their rights in all cases. Data from EU-SILC indicate the poverty risk rate for working-age persons with disabilities in Cyprus was 20.8 % in 2018, compared to 12.2 % for other persons of similar age - an estimated disability poverty gap of approximately 9 percentage points. For people aged over 65, the disability poverty gap was 9.7 points (25.3 % for older persons with disabilities and 15.6 % for other persons of similar age). The data also indicate the respective rates of AROPE and break these down by gender as well as age.

According to the Country Report Cyprus 2020 ‘strong economic growth and the introduction of a guaranteed minimum income have had a significant positive impact on poverty and inequality in Cyprus’. However, social protection is underfunded compared to the EU average. Specifically, disability benefits are included in the list of functions that receive relatively fewer resources. People with disabilities, children and non-EU-born migrants face a high risk of poverty and social exclusion. As a response, the government increased and expanded care and mobility benefits for people with disabilities, but still not for all types of disabilities (e.g. users of mental health services are excluded).

Smoking:

Prevalence of smoking is the percentage of men and women ages 15 and over who currently smoke any tobacco product on a daily or non-daily basis. It excludes smokeless tobacco use. The rates are age-standardized (Macrotrends, 2019).

Cyprus's smoking rate for 2020 was **35.10%**, a **0.4% decline** from 2019.

Homelessness:

Homelessness and housing exclusion (HHE) are infrequent in Cyprus. The rarity of the problem is the main reason explaining why HHE has never been prioritised in the social policy agenda. As a result, HHE is not systematically documented and monitored, with very few and scattered data regarding the number and profile of homeless persons. The lack of data drastically impedes the analysis of the problem and the formulation of appropriate policies.

Acute forms of HHE, such as street children or homeless people sleeping rough, are very rare social phenomena in Cyprus. According to the Pancyprian Welfare Council (2004) the historically minimal levels of homelessness in Cyprus can be explained in terms of a number of cultural, historical, political and economic factors such as the vibrant economy; deep-rooted traditional values which place a high value on housing and secure accommodation;



families' preference for land and housing investment; strong informal networks; strong religious values; and a series of housing policies that have actively promoted and subsidised home-ownership.

Participation in Sports Activities:

According to a Eurobarometer study from 2014, 14% of adults reported engaging in vigorous-intensity physical activity at least 4 days out of the past 7, with 84% of them doing more than 30 minutes each time. Moreover, 12% of adults reported that they carried out moderate-intensity physical activity on at least 4 of the past 7 days, with 63% doing so for longer than 30 minutes on each occasion.

Data from the WHO Global Health Observatory (GHO) from 2010 for the Cypriot adult population (aged 18+ years) show that 64.7% meet WHO's Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health (2010), with males being significantly more active (70.7%) than females (58.5%).

Additionally, in a study carried out by the University of Cyprus, data was commissioned and collected by the Centre for Leisure, Tourism and Sports (University of Nicosia) for the Cyprus Sport Organisation.

The results indicate that: (1) almost half of the Cypriot population participates in leisure sports, (2) participation in leisure sports decreases with age, (3) participation in leisure sports tends to be driven by health benefits, (4) most Cypriots participate in leisure sport at no cost, (5) television is the most common means reported for spectatorship, and (6) some Cypriots plan their vacations around leisure sports experiences. The results indicate the relevant importance of the leisure sport culture in Cyprus while also reflecting on age and cost-related factors that may influence participation in leisure sports.

Volunteering:

There is a long history and tradition of voluntary activity in Cyprus. Notions of altruism, expressions of kindness and "helping one another" have been features of Cypriot society since ancient times and still feature to this day. As in any other country, socio-economic, cultural, religious, political and other factors have all shaped the scope and the nature of voluntary activity on the island.



In this context, there are many voluntary organisations that exist to supplement the services provided by the state or to advocate (mainly to the state) for particular societal groups or common interests.

The Pancyprrian Volunteerism Coordinative Council (PVCC) maintains a register of voluntary societies – which does not include foundations, clubs or other forms of voluntary organisations. Since 1974 when recording started up to 2009 a total of 3,227 societies were registered.

Promotion and support of volunteering and voluntary organisations is a long-standing objective of the government. Funding for the PVCC and grant-in-aid schemes are the means for achieving this objective. More specific goals and priorities are defined on an annual basis by the PVCC in collaboration with government services and ministries as well as its membership (Study on Volunteering in the European Union Country Report Cyprus).

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IV Tools for supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers

1. Part 1 - Programmes and innovative approaches for working with trainers and trainees

The programmes and innovative approaches for working with trainers and trainees described in detail below serve as a valuable tool for supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers. They are developed according to the current needs of trainers and trainees from countries in the EU, which were presented in the previous chapters outlining the current context and challenges in Bulgaria, Poland and Cyprus.

Through the application of the programs the following outcomes will be achieved:

- Development of skills key competencies of trainers and trainees to improve physical health, mental health, and well-being;
- improving skills to prevent early school leaving (ESL) among students and professional burnout and stress among teachers;
- strengthening the capacity of the education and educational experts to improve the mental health, physical health and well-being;
- promoting civic participation, social, civic, and intercultural competencies, and intercultural dialogue;
- improving and strengthening the awareness of the connection between the emotional state and the general health of the individual;
- including innovative and sustainable solutions for building and maintaining relationships with other people;
- overcoming the consequences of social isolation and immobility (lack of exercise and movement);
- Greater effectiveness to overcome the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and distance learning by creating common values, civic engagement, and civic participation;

The final version of the programs included in the Methodology will be applied to a pilot group of 60 trainers (20 per educational organization) and 120 students aged 7 - 20 (40 per

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educational organization), who will receive certificates of participation after. They will be chosen at random without taking into account discriminatory and protected factors such as gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious beliefs, ethnical background, origin, race, political beliefs, socioeconomic status (SES), presence of a disability, be it physical or mental, and other characteristics.

After the pilot implementation, the participants will complete a feedback form (two separate feedback forms for the target groups of teachers and students) to evaluate the contents, programs and overall effectiveness of the resource.

1.1. Program 1 - Physiological needs

The first program focuses specifically on physiological needs, in line with Maslow (1943, 1954)'s hierarchy of needs. According to the model, human needs are arranged in the form of a hierarchy, with physiological (survival) needs at the bottom, and the more creative and intellectually oriented 'self-actualization' needs at the top.

Physiological needs are basic for human survival and include air, food, water, shelter, clothing, warmth, sex, and sleep. These are the primary motivators of human behavior. If these needs are not satisfied, the body cannot function properly. Physiological needs are the most important and all other needs become secondary until these needs are met.

The Program Physiological needs consists of 3 modules focusing on: Diet and physical activity and their impact on the physical and mental health of trainers and trainees (Module 1); Sleep and its influence on concentration and attentional stability (Module 2) and Skills and methods for relaxation and mental relief (Module 3).

1.1.1. Module 1 - Diet and physical activity and their impact on the physical and mental health of trainers and trainees

This module addresses the direct impact of diet and physical activity (engaging in sports, exercise, etc.) on the physical and mental health of trainers and trainees. It presents valuable exercises to promote healthy eating and physical activity among these target groups, with the main goal of supporting the health and well-being of students and teachers.

The exercises are included because studies suggest a growing mental health crisis among students and teachers. Research shows that action to improve physical health could also help



mental health – for example through a healthy diet and through exercise/physical activity. Here's what contemporary research suggests:

A healthy diet:

According to Khalid et al. (2017) there are significant associations between a healthier diet – broadly defined as positive eating behaviours, consumption of fruit and vegetables, and avoiding typically 'unhealthy foods' - and lower depression. Similarly, there are significant associations between 'unhealthy diet' and depression (unhealthy diet can predict the occurrence of depression two years later). In addition, junk food and snacking between meals was found to be associated with increased odds of mental health problems. Interestingly the negative implications of following an unhealthy dietary pattern (like excessive junk food) on depression and anxiety is frequently reported (Jacka et al., 2011).

These findings are in line with previous research that indicates a healthy regular eating pattern may have a protective role in the overall mental health of young people –and even just one aspect can have a significant protective effect. For example, O'Sullivan et al. (2008) compared skipping breakfast entirely to a breakfast comprising foods such as high fiber cereal and fruit with orange juice and/or milk. This suggested a possible dose-response relationship between increased breakfast quality and improved mental health in adolescents.

Physical activity/exercise:

Evidence also links physical activity and exercise with improvements in mental health. A study by Ahm and Fedewa (2010) found that with increased levels of physical activity significant reductions in depression, anxiety, psychological distress, and emotional disturbance in children was evident, with a combination of aerobic and resistance type exercise having the greatest effect. On the opposite, less physically demanding activities like yoga had little impact on mental health symptoms.

A study by Chekroud et al. (2018) reported that individuals who exercised between 30 and 60 mins, 3-5 times per week had around 1.5 fewer days of poor mental health per month compared to individuals who did not exercise. Popular team sports, cycling and aerobic and gym activities were the most beneficial. Interestingly, more is not always better, as engaging in exercise more than 23 times per month or longer than 90 mins. was associated with worse mental health.



One important finding is that the impact of exercise on mental health is similar to that of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and emotion regulation. Exercise may improve an individual's ability to tolerate the negative effect or high levels of arousal, as during exercise individuals experience these sensations in a non-threatening context. This has potential to improve the ability to tolerate and cope with these sensations - similar to those experienced with anxiety and forms of psychological distress. Research therefore highlights how physical activity and exercise can positively influence mental health (Smith & Merwin, 2021).

Whilst reducing the risk of poor mental health among young adults and children is no simple task, evidence suggests there is room for progress from both a nutritional and physical activity/exercise perspective. Activities to prevent sedentary behaviours and encourage more physical activity are also needed.

It is clear that a healthy diet and physical activity can have a positive influence on the mental health of trainers and trainees. The support and promotion of a healthy lifestyle can prevent symptoms associated with poor mental health - even facilitating physical and mental well-being later in life. That is why, we included the below exercises to promote a healthier lifestyle among trainers and trainees.

Most of the activities in this module require little time, preparation or equipment. They can be modified to fit the knowledge and skills of a variety of age groups. These exercises provide a way for trainers / teachers to reinforce nutrition and fitness concepts for students in classrooms, after-school programs or clubs. Some activities can involve older students as "teachers" for the younger students. The exercises are based on Garden-Robinson et al. (2022)'s activities to promote healthy nutrition and physical activity habits.

RERERENCES:

<https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/publications/activities-promote-healthy-nutrition-and-physical-activity-habits-among>

Exercises for trainees:

Exercise 1

NAME OF EXERCISE	EXPLORING CHOOSEMYPLATE.GOV
AIMS	Students to become aware of the new guidelines for healthy eating and physical activity.
TARGET GROUP	Students age 8 and older. In after-school or club settings with a variety of age groups, consider pairing together older and younger children.
DURATION	20 to 30 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	Unlimited.
USED METHODS	Didactic materials, website, animated tour, handouts, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Successfully promoted good nutrition and physical activity among students.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Computer lab with Internet access.
LOCATION	At the Local library, school or other facility with multiple computers and Internet access.
REFERENCES	North Dakota State University; https://www.ndsu.edu/ Exploring MyPlate
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	www.ChooseMyPlate.gov
INSTRUCTION	<p>Preactivity Talking Points:</p> <p>“Who has heard of MyPlate? What is it? What do the colors stand for? ChooseMyPlate.gov has tips to help us stay healthy. It’s for people of all ages.”</p> <p>Directions:</p> <p>Familiarize yourself with the MyPlate site before the activity. See the fact sheets at NDSU Extension</p>

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website. Have students go to the website www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.

First, explain parts of the site and have them take the animated tour of MyPlate to obtain background information. Then, have students determine their personal plate by using the “Daily Food Plans.” If possible, have them print their individual plans. Optional handouts under the “For Kids” section include a printable poster, coloring page and worksheet.

Post-activity Review:

“Raise your hand if you’re supposed to eat 1½ cups of fruit a day according to your Daily Food Plans. How about 2 cups? Who needs 3 cups of vegetables? Your plan may be a little different from your friend’s plan, depending on how old you are, if you are a boy or a girl and how much physical activity you get. That is what makes MyPlate so useful. It is designed just for you. You also can use the website to track your daily nutrition and activity using the Food Tracker. The website is a good tool for you and your family. You can help your parents find their Daily Food Plan, too.”

Exercise 2

NAME OF EXERCISE	TOSSED SALAD
AIMS	To learn more about eating vegetables as part of a healthy diet.
TARGET GROUP	Age 8 and older.
DURATION	15 to 30 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	10 players minimum.
USED METHODS	Didactic materials, website, discussion
EXPECTED RESULTS	Students having a better knowledge on healthy eating and diet.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Masking tape or chairs (if indoors). See the Vegetable section on the MyPlate website.
LOCATION	Outside in a large, grassy area or indoors in a large, open area. This activity is a good supplement to a lesson on fruits and vegetables.
REFERENCES	North Dakota State University https://www.ndsu.edu/ ; Exploring MyPlate
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	www.ChooseMyPlate.gov Vegetable section on the MyPlate website.
INSTRUCTION	<p>Preactivity Talking Points:</p> <p>(As an opening, consider having everyone state his or her favorite vegetable and why – or ask for a few volunteers.)</p> <p>“Eat a variety of vegetables every day for good health!</p> <p>Any vegetable or 100 percent vegetable juice counts as a member of the vegetable group. Vegetables may be raw or cooked; fresh, frozen, canned or dried/dehydrated; and whole, cut up or mashed. Vegetables are organized into five subgroups:</p> <p>1) dark green, 2) orange, 3) dry beans and peas, 4) starchy</p>

vegetables and 5) others.

Who can name a green vegetable? How about an orange one? A kind of bean? A starchy vegetable? Eat a rainbow of vegetables and fruits every day. They are a part of a healthy diet and provide the nutrition your body needs to stay healthy and strong.”

Directions:

Players should start out standing or sitting in a circle. One player will not have a spot and will be in the center. The teacher/trainer will walk around the circle and “label” each participant with a vegetable name. At least two people should be labeled with each vegetable; for example, label three as a “green bean.” (Alternatively, you can have the children draw their vegetable names out of a hat.) The player in the center will call out the names of the vegetables. When the people labeled with that vegetable are called, they must rush to another spot in the circle. The player in the center attempts to “steal” a spot along the circle. Whoever doesn’t have a spot then will be in the center and that person calls out the next vegetable. The center player may call out “Tossed Salad!” once while in the center and everyone must switch spots.

Post-activity Review:

“Eating vegetables helps you stay healthy. What vegetables do you like to eat? How can you get more vegetables in your diet? Does anyone have a salad with evening meals? Adding a tossed salad is a great way to add a variety of vegetables to your diet. How about adding veggies to your sandwiches? How about carrots and broccoli for a snack? Do you choose some vegetables every day for lunch at school?”

Exercise 3

NAME OF EXERCISE	SANDWICH SENSE-ATIONS
AIMS	Students (and teachers) using their five senses (and their imaginations) to explore a variety of foods.
TARGET GROUP	Students of all ages. Older students can help younger students using scissors.
DURATION	15 to 20 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	Unlimited.
USED METHODS	Practical art activity, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Explored a variety of foods through the 5 senses to promote healthy eating habits among students.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Paper pictures of foods (cut out from magazines or print from computer clip art), colored paper, crayons, scissors, paper plates.
LOCATION	A room with tables and chairs or desks.
REFERENCES	Garden-Robinson J, Curley B, Helbling A; Activities to Promote Healthy Nutrition and Physical Activity Habits Among Children (2022) https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/publications/activities-promote-healthy-nutrition-and-physical-activity-habits-among
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	N/A
INSTRUCTION	Preactivity Talking Points: “What are the five senses? (Sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch) You can see all the colors of foods. You can hear the crunch of a carrot. You can smell freshly popped popcorn and your favorite type of pizza. These are all examples of foods reaching different senses.

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Can you think of some examples? We will be making paper sandwiches using ingredients that trigger our senses.

Directions:

The children will create their sandwiches out of paper pictures of different ingredients, or they can use crayons, markers or colored paper to create their own pictures to cut out. Each sandwich should have at least five ingredients, such as these:

- Breads: wheat bread, white bread, rye bread, hamburger buns, etc.
- Meats/Beans: turkey, chicken, meat loaf, sliced roast beef, tuna, refried beans, hamburger patty, etc.
- Veggies: mushrooms, onion, lettuce, peppers (green, yellow, red), pickles, sprouts, zucchini, spinach leaves, tomato slices, olives, etc.
- Fruits: pineapple, banana, sliced apples, raisins, etc.
- Cheese: Swiss, cheddar, American, etc.
- Other ingredients: mayonnaise, mustard, ketchup, jelly.

The children can cut out and color the food pictures or create them using colored paper or crayons/markers. Give each child a paper plate to fan out his or her ingredients for display.

Post-activity Review:

“Which foods affect the five senses? Which ingredients in your sandwich affect your sense of smell? Sight? Hearing? Touch? Taste? Foods affect your senses. Eating a variety of colors, textures and flavors of foods makes your meals enjoyable.”

Exercise 4

NAME OF EXERCISE	FRUIT (OR VEGETABLE) WALK
AIMS	Students getting some physical activity while learning about fruits.
TARGET GROUP	Children of all ages.
DURATION	10 to 20 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	One participant per spot in the circle.
USED METHODS	Physical activity, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Promoted physical activity and healthy eating (diet) among students.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	CD player, music, pieces of paper with numbers or masking tape, slips of paper numbered to correspond with spots on floor and pieces of fruit. If possible, bring exotic fruits (mangoes, unusual types of apples). Since the fruit may be eaten right away, wash the whole pieces of fruit with running water and wrap in plastic or place in a plastic bag to keep them clean. Do some research about the fruits you brought, and be ready to share some key points at prize time. Alternatively, you can have a vegetable walk with a variety of cleaned, cut-up vegetables with Ranch dip as “prizes.”.
LOCATION	In an open area. Designate “spots” to stand around a circle using pieces of numbered paper, or mark the spots with tape labeled with a number.
REFERENCES	Garden-Robinson J, Curley B, Helbling A; Activities to Promote Healthy Nutrition and Physical Activity Habits Among Children (2022) https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/publications/activities-promote-healthy-nutrition-and-physical-

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<p>LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)</p>	<p>activity-habits-among</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>INSTRUCTION</p>	<p>Preactivity Talking Points:</p> <p>“Raise your hand if you like to eat fruit. What is your favorite? What color is the Fruit Group on MyPlate? (red)</p> <p>Fruit is a great snack to bring for school or after school. Any fruit or 100 percent fruit juice counts as part of the Fruit Group. Fruits may be fresh, canned, frozen or dried, and may be whole, cut up or blended into a smoothie. Most fruits are naturally low in fat, sodium and calories.</p> <p>Fruits contain nutrients, such as potassium, fiber, vitamin C and folate (folic acid). Different fruits contain different vitamins, so try to eat a variety of colorful fruits every day.”</p> <p>Directions:</p> <p>Players are to start out standing one person per numbered spot. The leader will announce the way the children should move around the circle – Examples: “Gallop and move counterclockwise around the circle;” “Skip clockwise around the circle;” “Hop clockwise around the circle;” “Walk slowly counterclockwise around the circle.” (The leader should announce the change in activity each round.)</p> <p>Start playing music. As the music plays, the children move around the circle the way they were instructed. When the music stops, the children should stop on the nearest numbered spot. After everyone stops on a</p>



number, the announcer will pull out a slip of paper. The child standing on the spot corresponding to the slip drawn wins a piece of fruit and leaves the circle. (If possible, provide an interesting “tidbit” about the piece of fruit.)

Continue playing until everyone is a winner or you run out of time. If you draw a slip and no one is standing on the corresponding spot, draw another slip until you have a winner. Fruit ideas – Apples, pears, kiwi, bananas, peaches, plums, strawberries, etc. Try exotic or dried fruit, such as cranberries or raisins. Or, you may want to purchase the prepackaged, shelf-stable individual servings of exotic fruits. If possible, provide every participant with some fruit to enjoy.

Post-activity Review:

“Fruits are a healthy part of our diet. What are some good times to enjoy fruits? (Any time!) What are some different colors of fruits? (Red, green and yellow, etc.)”

Exercise 5

NAME OF EXERCISE	PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CHARADES
AIMS	Students (and teachers) to be aware of the amount of physical activity they need every day and some different ways to meet their physical activity needs.
TARGET GROUP	Children of all ages.
DURATION	10 to 20 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	Unlimited.
USED METHODS	Physical activity, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Promoted physical activity and sports among students.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Pieces of paper with charade ideas listed on each, and a hat, basket or bowl for drawing. Some examples to list on the slips of paper are: golfing, ice skating, playing soccer, badminton, tennis, dancing, riding a bike, sledding, water skiing, horseback riding, canoeing, jogging, yoga, etc.
LOCATION	A classroom.
REFERENCES	Garden-Robinson J, Curley B, Helbling A; Activities to Promote Healthy Nutrition and Physical Activity Habits Among Children (2022) https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/publications/activities-promote-healthy-nutrition-and-physical-activity-habits-among
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	N/A
INSTRUCTION	<p>Preactivity Talking Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Getting enough physical activity helps you feel good and look good. Do you know how much physical activity you should try to get every day? (An hour a day)” • “How many of you watch TV or play video games?”

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What's the most "screen time" (TV, video games) that you should have every day, according to doctors? (two hours) We will be playing "Activity Charades" today, so you'll have a chance to move and guess some fun ways to get physical activity."

Directions:

- Explain the game of charades to the group. Without using words, a person "acts out" an activity and the audience tries to guess what the "actor" is doing.
- Have each volunteer draw a slip of paper with an activity written on it and then act it out. This also can be played in teams. The idea is to have fun.

Post-activity Review:

- "What are ways you can stay active every day? Can you think of a way to make video games be "active games"?" (Stand and jump while you play!)"
- "Let's each set a physical activity goal.
 - How many minutes of physical activity do you think you do during the day?
 - Are you meeting the one-hour goal?
 - What are some ways to get more activity during the day?"



Tips for trainers (according to CDC, 2010):

Positive modelling by teachers / trainers is important to support the healthy diet and physical activity of students. It helps to show leadership and commitment that others can be inspired by. Teachers can act as positive and healthy role models for students, parents and the community. Keep in mind that students learn by watching and copying the behaviour of others. A teacher / trainer who makes healthy choices – including healthy eating and regular physical activity – can have a good influence on the health of students, others and most importantly, themselves. Schools and teachers can model healthy eating and being physically active at school by:

- Packing a healthy lunch and taking the time to eat it;
- Being active and consuming healthy foods and beverages;
- Participating in opportunities for physical activity such as walking clubs, point-of-decision prompts that encourage use of stairwells, increased access to healthy foods, educational activities such as lectures or written materials, skill building activities, or reward programs;
- Providing healthy snacks at school and staff events (staff meetings, parent-teacher meetings, etc.);
- Using non-food rewards (pencils, skipping ropes) instead of lollipops and sweets;
- Walking rapidly during yard duty;
- Joining in the activities during physical education classes, recess or lunchtime;
- Using public transport for school excursions;
- Taking activity breaks during classes;
- Supporting physical activity opportunities during and after school;
- Sharing physical activity interests with students;
- Sending a note to parents that students will be allowed to bring water bottles to class.
If bottles are filled at home, ask parents to use only plain water;

Using student rewards that support health:

Students are at risk of associating food with emotions and feelings of accomplishment when food is used in the classroom as a reward. This reinforces the practice of eating outside of meal or snack times and encourages students to eat treats even when they are not hungry. This



practice may create lifetime habits of rewarding or comforting oneself with unhealthy eating. To avoid it, do not use food or beverages to reward student achievement or good behavior; use nonfood items, activities and opportunities for physical activity to reward students for their achievements, such as stickers, books, extra time for recess or walks with the principal or teacher. Do not withhold food, beverages, or physical activity time to discipline.

Making celebrations and fundraisers healthier:

- Encourage parents to provide healthy foods and beverages for birthday and classroom parties if food is served;
- Send a note to parents suggesting healthier options, such as fruits, vegetables, or whole grain snacks;
- Consider nonfood celebrations such as guest speakers, an extra recess period, or class games;
- Use healthy foods, physical activity events, or nonfood items for fundraising activities;
- Consider selling items such as produce, wrapping paper, candles, or student artwork.
- Organize events that engage students, families, and the community, such as basketball or golf tournaments, bicycle rides, walk-a-thons, dance-a-thons, car washes, or auctions are healthy fundraising alternatives.

Creating a physically active classroom:

- Incorporate movement into academic lessons or add short bursts of activity (5-20 min.) to regularly planned break times;
- Read a book aloud while students walk at a moderate pace around the room, and then ask students to identify the verbs or action words in the book by acting them out through physical activity;
- Take students for a walk indoors or outdoors as part of a science lesson;
- Include content about fitness, movement skills and the importance of physical activity as part of math, science or writing lesson plans;
- Work with the physical education teacher to get ideas, information, and resources to help students stay physically active throughout the school day.

Making recess part of each school day:

- Schedule at least 20 minutes of recess per day for school students, in addition to their regularly scheduled physical education class.
- Encourage students to play during recess.
- Provide equipment, such as jump ropes and sports balls.
- Organize games, such as four-square, active tag, or flag football.
- Provide opportunities for students to be active indoors when the weather is bad or times when outdoor play space is unavailable.

NOT using physical activity as punishment:

- Do not punish students by forcing them to participate in or by withholding opportunities for physical activity;
- Do not punish students by requiring them to run laps or do push-ups;
- Do not exclude students from physical education class or recess.

Children may have negative feelings toward physical activity if they are forced to participate in physical activity as punishment. Further, withholding students from physical education or recess for bad behavior or poor academic performance deprives them of the health benefits of physical activity and the chance to develop essential physical activity skills. Physical education and recess may even improve students' behavior, attention, and grades.

Including healthy eating and physical activity topics in health education:

- Teach students about healthy eating and physical activity recommendations;
- Encourage students to participate in 60 minutes or more of physical activity every day, consume a healthy diet and reduce sedentary screen time (e.g., TV, video games, computer usage, smart phone use);
- Encourage students to identify their own healthy behaviors and set personal goals for improvement;
- Incorporate health education into other subjects such as math and science;
- Extend healthy lessons outside of school by assigning homework for families to complete together;
- Meet with the school nurse to promote consistent health messages in your classroom;



- Ask the school nurse, or other health services staff, to lead a specific health lesson.

Encouraging students to participate in physical activity programs:

- Support students in participating in sport programs, interscholastic sports, physical activity clubs, or walk-and-bike to school programs;
- Promote school-led physical activity events, such as walk to school days, fun runs, and field days;
- Volunteer to organize or provide adult supervision to before and after school physical activity programs.

When trainees / teachers commit to good health practices, they are better equipped to support student participation in physical activity and healthy eating habits. They can be positive role models for students by being physically active and have a healthy diet in and out of school. For trainers, getting involved in physical activity and have healthy eating habits can reduce stress and improve mental health; lower risk of chronic conditions; increase job satisfaction and productivity and decrease absences (CDC, 2019).

When trainers / teachers are role models for physical activity and healthy diet, students also benefit and experience: learning and behavior improvements; a healthier school environment; increased school connectedness and more physical activity opportunities. Thus, supporting the physical, social, and emotional health of teachers is beneficial to both trainers and trainees.

By implementing the abovementioned exercises for trainees and tips for trainers, the module ensures that the mental health and wellbeing of teachers and students is supported through the promotion of healthy diet and physical activity.

1.1.2.Module 2 - Sleep and its influence on concentration and attentional stability

This module addresses the direct influence of sleep as a basic physiological need (according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs) on concentration and attentional stability. It presents beneficial exercises, tips and approaches to promote healthy sleeping habits among trainees and trainers in order to support their well-being, mental health, concentration and attention span at school / work. The exercises are included because studies suggest a significant relationship between sleep quality and concentration and attentional stability of both students and teachers. It must be considered that the need for sleep varies significantly among



individuals and throughout life. According to CDC (2022), children aged 6–12 need 9–12 h. of sleep per 24 hours; adolescents aged 13–18 need around 8–10 h. of sleep; and adults aged 18 – 60 need 7 or more h. per night for optimal health. In contrast, sleep deprivation occurs when sleep is insufficient to maintain adequate alertness, performance, and health, either because of reduced total sleep time (decreased amount) or sleep fragmentation due to frequent awakenings, impairing the architecture of the sleep stages (decreased quality).

Chronic sleep deprivation develops when an individual routinely sleeps less than the amount needed for optimal functioning (AASM, 2014). This may impair physical health and cognition, affecting memory, attention, concentration and executive functions (Lo et al., 2016), thereby negatively impacting work and academic life and the quality of life (Alotaibi et al., 2020).

RERERENCES: Mota Albuquerque, P., Ribeiro Franco, C. M., & Sampaio Rocha-Filho, P. A. (2023). Assessing the impact of sleep restriction on the attention and executive functions of medical students: a prospective cohort study. *Acta neurologica Belgica*, 1–7.

It is quite evident that good quality sleep can have a positive influence on the attention and concentration of trainers and trainees. Thus, we included the below exercises to promote healthier sleeping habits among these target groups. Most of the activities in this module require little time, preparation or equipment. They can be modified to fit the knowledge and skills of a variety of age groups. These exercises provide a way for trainers / teachers to improve their quality of sleep and that of their students in order to improve concentration and attentional stability. The exercises are based on The American Academy of Sleep Medicine’s activities “Sleep Recharges You” to promote healthy sleeping habits.

Sleep is the power source that recharges students during the night so they can thrive during the day. Teachers / trainers can help children and teens develop healthy sleeping habits via the “Sleep Recharges You” activities by The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (a collection of free lesson plans, classroom activities, and resources about sleep and health). These tools can help students understand the importance of sleep and its influence on concentration and attentional stability. This is important as by the time they reach high school, getting a good night’s sleep, is not high on the list of priorities of teens and it should be. 8 out of 10 teens don’t get enough sleep on school nights, and this can negatively affect their concentration, attention, physical and mental well-being.

Exercises for trainees:

Exercise 1

NAME OF EXERCISE	SLEEP WELL – WHATS’ YOUR SLEEP IQ?
AIMS	To understand the importance of developing healthy sleep habits. To learn facts on the physical and mental benefits of proper sleep, challenge students to evaluate their own sleep behaviors, and provide tips to help them develop a personalized plan for a good night’s sleep. To raise student awareness about the importance of good sleep habits for their academic success, mental well-being, and physical health. To provide tips to help students improve their sleep habits.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 9-12
DURATION	One school hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Didactic materials, lesson plans, activity sheets, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Students to have understood the importance of good sleeping habits.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Download, photocopy, and distribute the activity sheets. Use the resource links for additional information.
LOCATION	Classroom.
REFERENCES	American Academy of Sleep Medicine https://sleepeducation.org/ www.yimiclassroom.com/sleep by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, Young Minds Inspired.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	https://yimiclassroom.com/lesson-plans/sleep/

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INSTRUCTION

In this activity, students evaluate their understanding about sleep and correct any misconceptions. Ask students to share health facts that they know or believe about sleep. Next, pass out the activity sheet and have students take the quiz in **Part 1**. Review and discuss the correct answers, then have students complete **Part 2**. **Answers:** Part 1: 1. True. 2. False. A “yo-yo” sleep schedule disrupts circadian rhythms (the body’s internal clock), which can lead to lower academic performance, worsen mental health issues, and lead to risky behaviors. 3. False. Studies show that teens do not go to bed much later when school start times are delayed, so teens do get more sleep when school starts later. 4. True. 5. True. Not only is driving while sleepy almost as dangerous as driving while drunk, but teen or young adult drivers have the highest risk of being involved in a drowsy driving crash. 6. False. Because most teens get insufficient sleep on school nights, daytime sleepiness during school hours is common. 7. True. But teens need more sleep than adults. 8. False. Energy drinks — and other sources of caffeine — boost alertness for a short period but don’t eliminate the body’s need for rest and recovery. In addition, caffeine and other stimulants can cause anxiety, insomnia, and other health issues. 9. False. A lack of sleep impedes retention of information no matter how hard you study. 10. True. Part 2: Answers will vary.



Activity sheets for Exercise 1

PART 1: Have you ever been told that it’s important to get a good night’s sleep? You might think it’s just adults nagging you to go to bed at a decent hour — but there’s real science behind that request. How much do you really know about sleep health? Write “true” or “false” on the line before each statement.

- _____ 1. Teens need 8 to 10 hours of sleep per night.
- _____ 2. There is nothing wrong with staying up late on school nights and sleeping late on non-school days as long as you are getting enough sleep.
- _____ 3. Later school start times don’t help teens get more sleep because they just go to bed later.
- _____ 4. Teens who don’t get enough sleep on a regular basis have a greater risk of depression.
- _____ 5. Driving while sleepy is almost as dangerous as driving while drunk.
- _____ 6. Falling asleep in class demonstrates a lack of motivation, not sleepiness.
- _____ 7. Teens need less sleep than young children.
- _____ 8. Energy drinks are a healthy option to help teens stay awake.
- _____ 9. If you study all night before a test, you will remember the information better.
- _____ 10. Research shows that people who get insufficient sleep have less empathy for others and are less helpful than those who get enough sleep.

PART 2: Now that you know the science behind sleep, which facts surprised you the most? Write them below. Then come up with one way you can spread the word about the importance of healthy sleep habits.

How I can help spread the word about sleep health:

Exercise 2:

NAME OF EXERCISE	WHO NEEDS SLEEP? YOU!
AIMS	To learn about sleep recommendations and tips for establishing healthy sleep habits. Students to analyze their own sleep habits. To identify positive changes, that they can make to their bedtime routines.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 9-12
DURATION	One school hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Didactic materials, lesson plans, activity sheets, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Improved knowledge of students on sleep recommendations and learned tips for establishing healthy sleep habits. Analyzed sleep habits of students. Identified positive changes, that they can make to their bedtime routines.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Download, photocopy, and distribute the activity sheets. Use the resource links for additional information.
LOCATION	Classroom.
REFERENCES	American Academy of Sleep Medicine https://sleepeducation.org/ www.ymiclassroom.com/sleep by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, Young Minds Inspired
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	https://ymiclassroom.com/lesson-plans/sleep/ by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, Young Minds Inspired
INSTRUCTION	In this activity, students will learn about sleep recommendations and tips for establishing healthy sleep habits. Tell students that now that they will analyze their own sleep habits. Pass out the activity

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	<p>sheet and have the students complete Part 1. For Part 2, have the students work individually or in small groups and use peer suggestions and feedback to identify positive changes they can make to their bedtime routines. Answers will vary.</p>
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Activity sheets for Exercise 2

PART 1: Studies show that, on average, teenagers need between 8 and 10 hours of sleep per 24-hour period. This means those hours cannot be “saved” for a later day — your body needs those hours of sleep each day, every day, for optimum physical and mental health. There are things you can and should do to ensure a good night’s sleep. Read the 10 tips below. How many do you already do? Which ones do you think you could try? Check the appropriate box.

I DO	I CAN TRY	SLEEP TIP
		Try to get some physical activity every day.
		Avoid caffeine after school — including sodas, coffee, and energy drinks.
		Have meals around the same time every day and avoid eating too close to bedtime.
		Keep indoor lights dim at night.
		Put away your smartphone and other electronic devices at least 30 minutes before bedtime.
		Give yourself some time to relax and unwind before going to bed.
		Set a bedtime that will allow you at least 8 hours to sleep and keep as close to it as you can.
		Get bright light every morning when you wake up to signal to your brain that it’s time to be alert.
		Stick to your sleep schedule as closely as you can on weekends.



PART 2: How can you establish healthy sleep habits to recharge your body and mind? Use the calculator found at www.sleepeducation.org/healthy-sleep/bedtime-calculator to assess when you need to go to bed, knowing that this can be a challenge if your school start time is very early. Then, select some of the tips from the list above that you think will work best for you, and write about how you can implement them below.

My wake time: _____ My target bedtime: _____

Tips: _____

The next set of exercises are focused on middle school students. These engaging, standards-based activities will teach students in grades 6-8 about the many physical and mental benefits of proper sleep. Students will evaluate their own sleep behavior, discover tips for healthy sleep habits, and create posters to share these tips with their peers. The activities also include ideas to extend the learning to the home to involve family members.

Exercise 3:

NAME OF EXERCISE	SLEEP RIGHT, SLEEP TIGHT – REAP THE BENEFITS OF SLEEP
AIMS	To make students more aware of the health benefits of a good night's sleep. To encourage students to reap the numerous and important benefits of a good night's sleep.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 6-8
DURATION	One school hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Didactic materials, lesson plans, activity sheets, survey, infographic, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Made students more aware of the health benefits of a good night's sleep. Encouraged students to get a good night's sleep for better well-being.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Download, photocopy, and distribute the activity sheets. Use the resource links for additional information.
LOCATION	Classroom.
REFERENCES	American Academy of Sleep Medicine https://sleepeducation.org/ www.ymiclassroom.com/sleep by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, Young Minds Inspired
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	https://ymiclassroom.com/lesson-plans/sleep/ https://sleepeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/sleep-recharges-youinfographic.pdf
INSTRUCTION	Project the #SleepRechargesYou infographic on a smartboard, or have the students navigate to it on their own devices. Discuss each section. Ask students if they were aware of the health benefits of a good



night's sleep. Has what they've read changed the way they think about sleep? Pass out the activity sheet and have the students take the sleep survey and complete Part 2 of the activity. Then encourage the students to share the results of their survey in a class discussion, including whether they think they are getting enough healthy sleep. If not, what changes can they make to reap the numerous and important benefits of a good night's sleep?

Extension Activity: Encourage the students to give the sleep survey to family members. Do their parents get enough sleep? What about younger siblings? What can the family do to encourage the household members to get enough sleep?



Activity sheets for Exercise 3:

PART 1: Take this survey to find out more about your sleep habits. Mark each question Yes or No.

1. Do you often feel tired at school? YES / NO
2. Are you too sleepy to complete homework at night? YES / NO
3. Are you still tired when you wake up in the morning? YES / NO
4. Have you ever felt yourself falling asleep at school? YES / NO
5. Do you ever fall asleep when you get home after school? YES / NO
6. Do you stay up late at night on school nights? YES / NO
7. Do you ever get sleepy riding in the car or on the bus? YES / NO
8. Are your weekend sleep habits different from weekdays? YES / NO
9. Do you drink caffeine (energy drinks, coffee) to stay awake? YES / NO
10. Do you get less than 8 hours of sleep at night? YES / NO

PART 2: If you answered “yes” to any of the questions above, it’s possible that you aren’t getting enough sleep. Tweens need 9 to 12 hours of sleep each night, and teens need 8 to 10 hours of sleep. What could you do at bedtime to ensure you get a good night’s sleep? What would be your ideal sleep routine? Write your ideas on the lines below.

Exercise 4

NAME OF EXERCISE	JUST THE (SLEEP) FACTS!
AIMS	To improve students' sleep patterns and evaluate their sleeping behaviors.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 6-8
DURATION	One school hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Didactic materials, lesson plans, activity sheets, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Improve sleep patterns of students and promoted healthy sleeping habits.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Download, photocopy, and distribute the activity sheets. Use the resource links for additional information.
LOCATION	Classroom.
REFERENCES	American Academy of Sleep Medicine https://sleepeducation.org/ www.ymiclassroom.com/sleep by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, Young Minds Inspired
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	https://ymiclassroom.com/lesson-plans/sleep/
INSTRUCTION	Ask students to share ways they stay healthy. Ask them if “getting a good night’s sleep” is high on their list of healthy habits — or if it’s even on their list at all. Why or why not? As students share their thoughts, ask questions to facilitate the discussion, such as: How many hours of sleep do you think is enough? Do you think we all need the same amount of sleep each night? Why do you think a good night’s sleep is important for our health? Pass out the

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activity sheet and go over the instructions. Ask students to predict how they'll do when tracking their sleep. Remind them to bring their completed sleep trackers back in one week. At that time, ask the students to share their results, and then brainstorm ideas about how they can improve their sleep.

Extension Activity: Collect the class data from the tracking sheets. Post the numbers and have students work individually or in small groups to create a bar graph or pie chart using the data, and then analyze it. What's the average? Does the class get enough sleep? If not, how many more hours of sleep do they need per week? Per day?



Activity sheets for Exercise 4:

PART 1: *It's a fact:* Sleep is a vital part of your overall good health. In fact, a lack of sleep can be just as detrimental to your mind and body as a snack-happy diet and a couch-potato lifestyle. Students your age need 8 to 12 hours of sleep each night — 9 to 12 hours for tweens and 8 to 10 hours for teens. But only 4 out of 10 middle school students and 3 out of 10 high school students get enough healthy sleep on school nights. A lack of sleep can have consequences beyond dosing off on a group video call. It can lead to health problems such as obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and even mental health struggles such as attention and behavior issues. On the other hand, getting a good night's sleep benefits the body (helps with weight control, improves sports performance), mind (improves memory, sharpens focus, helps you make good choices), and mood (more patience, optimism, and energy)!

Are you getting enough healthy sleep? Use the chart below to track your sleep for one week. Then, bring it back to class.

Night/ Time	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Bedtime							
Wake time							
Hours of sleep							

Sources:

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Sleep in Middle and High School Students (2020), <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/features/students-sleep.htm>

American Academy of Sleep Medicine, Educator resources, <https://sleepeducation.org/get-involved/campaigns/sleep-recharges/educator-resources/>



PART 2: If you consistently get 8 to 12 hours of healthy sleep per night, good job! If not, you're not alone.

How can you improve your sleep — and your health? Write your ideas below and then test them out to see if you can hit the recommended amount of healthy sleep each night.

Exercise 5

NAME OF EXERCISE	GETTING YOUR SHUT-EYE
AIMS	To improve students' sleeping habits through creative activities.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 6-8
DURATION	One school hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Didactic materials, lesson plans, activity sheets, posters, discussion, informational skits.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Improved sleeping habits of students and increased knowledge on proper sleep.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Download, photocopy, and distribute the activity sheets. Use the resource links for additional information.
LOCATION	Classroom.
REFERENCES	American Academy of Sleep Medicine https://sleepeducation.org/ www.ymiclassroom.com/sleep by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, Young Minds Inspired
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	https://ymiclassroom.com/lesson-plans/sleep/ American Academy of Sleep Medicine YouTube Channel (AASM Sleep Education), Video "Why Are Teens So Sleepy?": www.youtube.com/watch?v=8J32CMnLRZ4
INSTRUCTION	Now that students know how important a good night's sleep is to their physical and mental health, how can they best achieve it? It starts with healthy, consistent sleep habits. Show students the video "Why Are Teens So Sleepy?" www.youtube.com/watch?v=8J32CMnLRZ4

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Ask students to share some of the facts they learned from the video, in particular from the “10 Tips for Better Sleep” section at the end. Then pass out the activity sheet and go over the instructions. When the students are finished, encourage them to share their answers. Next, place students into pairs or small groups and have them write and illustrate posters featuring a series of catchy sleep tips aimed at their peers, combining good sleep habits with the consequences of getting too little sleep. For example, “Put down the electronics 30 minutes before bed to help avoid waking up dazed and confused!” Display the posters around the school to share the news about the importance of healthy sleep habits.

Extension Activity: Using what they’ve learned, have the students create fun, informational skits comparing a sleep-deprived student to a healthy-sleeper — taking a test, answering a question in class, showing up for practice or an after-school activity. They can perform the skits for their peers in other classes to help spread the word of the importance of healthy sleep!



Activity sheets for Exercise 5:

PART 1: Now that you know the importance of a good night’s sleep — for both physical and mental well-being — here is a list of tips for establishing healthy sleep habits.

- Set a bedtime that is early enough for you to get at least 8 hours of sleep (or 9 hours for tweens).
- Establish a relaxing bedtime routine.
- Make your bedroom quiet and relaxing. Keep the room at a comfortable, cool temperature.
- Limit exposure to bright light in the evening.
- Turn off electronic devices at least 30 minutes before bedtime.
- Don’t eat a large meal before bedtime.
- Avoid consuming caffeine in the afternoon or evening.
- Engage in physical activity every day.
- Limit afterschool naps to 30 minutes or less and avoid naps after 4:00 pm.
- Give yourself time to relax and unwind before going to bed.
- Get some bright light in the morning when you wake up.
- Stick to your sleep schedule as closely as you can on weekends.

Choose two or three tips you **do not** currently follow, and then write about how you can change your sleep habits for the better by incorporating those tips into your bedtime routine.

Now, add at least one healthy sleep habit that is unique to you. For example, maybe you like to listen to white noise (a constant background noise that drowns out other sounds) to fall asleep, or maybe window shades that block light suit you, so no light gets into your room.

The last set of exercises for trainees are focused on students from Grades 3-5. These standards-based activities will teach your students in grades 3-5 about the numerous physical and mental benefits of proper sleep. They include tips for establishing good sleep habits and ideas to extend the learning by involving family members as well. All the activities can be adapted to an in-school or remote learning environment.

Exercise 6

NAME OF EXERCISE	SLEEP SMARTS!
AIMS	To learn about the mental and physical health benefits of getting enough good sleep.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 3-5
DURATION	One school hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Didactic materials, lesson plans, activity sheets, physical activity, brainstorming, quiz, poster / art activity, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Increased knowledge of students on the mental and physical health benefits of getting enough good sleep each night.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Download, photocopy, and distribute the activity sheets. Use the resource links for additional information.
LOCATION	Classroom.
REFERENCES	American Academy of Sleep Medicine https://sleepeducation.org/ www.ymiclassroom.com/sleep by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, Young Minds Inspired
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	https://ymiclassroom.com/lesson-plans/sleep/
INSTRUCTION	Grab students' attention by doing jumping jacks or lifting hand weights. When students ask what you are doing, tell them you are improving your health. Then ask them to brainstorm other ways to stay healthy. After they have shared a few ideas, point out that getting enough quality sleep is also important for physical and mental health. But how much do

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	<p>students really know about the importance of sleep? Tell students that today, they are going to learn about the mental and physical health benefits of getting enough good sleep each night. Pass out the activity sheet, and have them take the quiz in Part 1. When they have finished, review the answers. Were students surprised by some of them? Why or why not? For Part 2, ask students to choose an interesting “sleep smarts” fact from the quiz, and use it to create a mini poster, public service announcement, or sleep smarts slogan on the back of the sheet or on a separate piece of paper. Display the art on a bulletin board or in a digital slideshow. Encourage students to take home and share the quiz with their parents/caregivers to test their knowledge as well. Answers: Part 1: 1. d; 2. d; 3. a; 4. d; 5 d. Part 2: Answers will vary.</p>
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Activity sheets for Exercise 6:

PART 1: Show off your sleep smarts! Take this quiz to find out what you know about getting a good night's sleep.

1. Healthy sleep is important for good physical health because...
 - a. it can help you fight off infections.
 - b. it can help you maintain a healthy weight.
 - c. it can help you avoid some diseases, such as heart disease.
 - d. All of the above
2. Healthy sleep is good for the mind because...
 - a. it helps to balance your emotions.
 - b. it helps to improve your memory and focus.
 - c. it helps to keep you alert so you can react quickly.
 - d. All of the above
3. Most children ages 6 to 12 need ____ hours of sleep each night.
 - a. 9 to 12
 - b. 6 to 7
 - c. 7 to 8
 - d. 8 to 9
4. Too little sleep may...
 - a. make you feel sleepy.
 - b. make you cranky.
 - c. make you feel clumsy.
 - d. All of the above
5. Your brain is busy when you sleep! Scientists think that while you're sleeping, your brain...
 - a. sorts and stores information.
 - b. solves problems.
 - c. gets rid of waste.
 - d. All of the above

PART 2: Choose one of the “sleep smarts” facts from the quiz to share with others. Create a mini poster, public service announcement, or sleep smarts slogan on the back of this sheet.

Exercise 7

NAME OF EXERCISE	DO THE (SLEEP) MATH
AIMS	To encourage students' healthy sleeping habits through fun games.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 3-5
DURATION	One school hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Didactic materials, lesson plans, activity sheets, game, infographic, group work, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Encouraged students' healthy sleeping habits through fun games.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Download, photocopy, and distribute the activity sheets. Use the resource links for additional information.
LOCATION	Classroom.
REFERENCES	American Academy of Sleep Medicine https://sleepeducation.org/ www.ymiclassroom.com/sleep by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, Young Minds Inspired
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	https://ymiclassroom.com/lesson-plans/sleep/
INSTRUCTION	Start this activity with a game. Call out two different animals, and ask the students to guess which one gets the most sleep, and respond by making a specific movement. For example: elephant and tiger. Say to the students, "If you think the elephant gets more sleep, wave your arm like an elephant's trunk. For tiger, make claws with your fingers." Use the infographic on the activity sheet as your guide, but do not show it to the students. Then pass out the

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	<p>activity sheet. Read the directions to Part 1 and 2, and have students answer the questions. This can be done individually or in small groups. Invite students to share which animal's sleep hours surprised them the most, and why. Students can use the infographic to write their own word problems. Answers: Part 1: Answers will vary. Part 2: 1. cat; 2. brown bat; 3. 34 hours; 4. $\frac{1}{4}$.</p>
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Activity sheets for Exercise 7:

PART 1: Healthy sleep is important for mental and physical growth. Are you getting enough sleep? On average, 6- to 12-year-old kids need between 9 and 12 hours of sleep each night.

1. What time do you usually go to bed on a school night? _____
2. What time do you usually get up on a school day? _____
3. How much sleep are you getting on school nights? _____
4. Are you getting between 9 and 12 hours of sleep each night? If not, what time should you go to bed to get a good night's sleep? _____

PART 2: How do your sleep habits compare to those of different animals? Use the infographic to answer the questions below.

1. Which animal gets four times as much sleep as a horse?
2. If you get 10 hours of sleep per night, which animal gets double the amount of sleep you get?
3. Old MacDonald had a farm. If a horse, pig, dog, and cat lived on the farm, what is the total number of hours of sleep they would get altogether each night?
4. The forests of Sumatra are the only place in the world where you can find elephants and tigers (along with rhinos and orangutans) living together, but they have very different sleep habits. What fraction of time does an elephant sleep compared to a tiger?

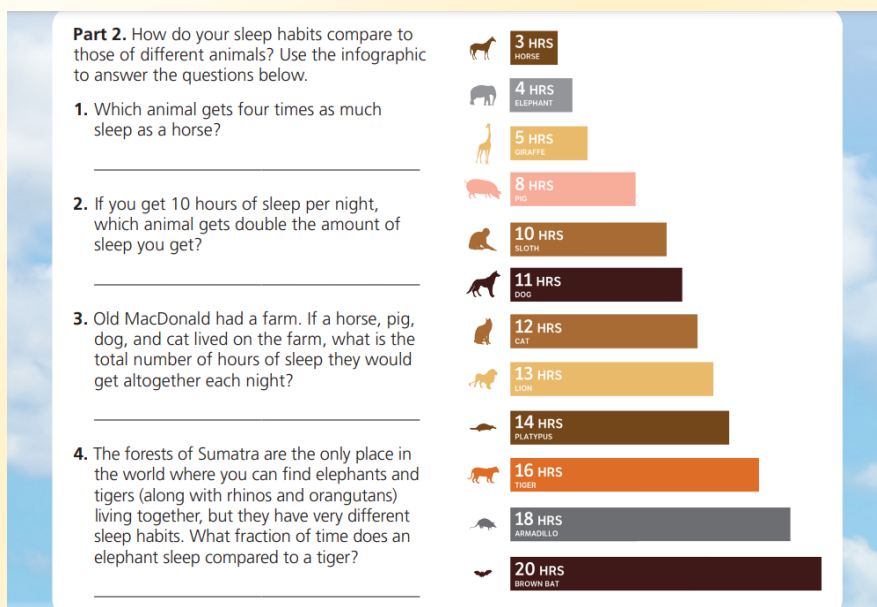


Figure 1, Source: <https://ymiclassroom.com/lesson-plans/sleep/>

Tips for trainers (according to WGU Education Blog):

Knowing how to get better sleep is critical to helping teachers feel more relaxed and energized, but finding the method that works best may require some experimenting. here are some ideas for teachers struggling to get better sleep:

- **Use a Meditation or Relaxation App** - When it's time for bed, many teachers struggle to wind down and forget about the school day. Using an app such as Calm or Headspace can help take your mind off of the day's stress, allowing you to relax and focus on the present. These apps offer sleep stories, mindfulness strategies, guided meditations, and other relaxation music or sounds. Both Calm and Headspace are free for teachers.
- **Read a Book** - Unlike listening to a book or reading on a screen or tablet, reading an actual book before bed offers unique relaxation and sleep benefits. Reading can be preferable to other activities because it works your brain without active physical stimulation. Reading has also been found to reduce stress by 68 % and is more effective at doing so than drinking tea or listening to music. The type of book you choose before bed matters. For teachers, avoiding professional development or teaching-related books before bed will help keep your mind from wandering back to job stressors or thinking about your school day.
- **Schedule Worry Time** - Writing a to-do list and scheduling time to worry can help. Writing down a list of everything you need to do the next day is recommended. For teachers, this might include returning a parent call or email, grading papers, completing student behavior tracking forms, or preparing for a committee meeting. Writing down a to-do list will keep your mind from feeling like it needs to stay active during the night trying to remember everything. If your mind is racing due to worry or stress: first, make a list of your problems and possible solutions. Second, set aside a time during the day for worrying. Then, if you find yourself dwelling on problems at night, you can remind yourself these worries have already been addressed, and you can think about them again during your worry time.
- **Regulate Light Exposure** - The CDC reports that exposure to natural sunlight—particularly early in the day—sets the internal clock to feel more awake but will also cause you to feel tired later in the day and fall asleep earlier. Manipulating light

exposure can help set your circadian rhythm to better control your sleep schedule. As the weather gets nicer, teachers might want to take a quick walk outside during lunch, head out for recess with their class, or stand in the sun for a few minutes before students arrive. If you have difficulty falling asleep, the CDC recommends keeping light levels dim at least two hours before bed. The same goes for blue light exposure from computers or phone screens. Exposure to blue light before bed can trick your body into thinking it should stay awake, so you will want to limit blue light before you go to sleep.

- **Create a Sleep Routine** - Parents know it can be virtually impossible to get a child to sleep without first going through their nightly routine. Regular sleep routines train the body to know when it's time for bed—and they work for adults, too. Creating your own sleep routine may take some experimenting, but like children, developing a regular bedtime routine will signal to your mind and body it is time to relax and prepare for sleep. Plan your evening backward. Start with the time you want to go to bed, and then schedule the amount of time needed to complete all your evening tasks—leaving at least a half-hour before bed to indulge in your nightly routine. Whether you choose a warm bath, a cup of tea, reading, or listening to an audiobook, the key is following the same routine each night, including going to bed at the same time.
- **Exercise at the Right Time for Your Body** - When looking for tricks on how to get great sleep, increasing your exercise is a no-brainer—but timing makes a difference. Getting 30 min. of exercise during the day will help your sleep that night, but knowing how your body responds to exercise is important. Some people find exercise to be like taking a hot shower that raises their body temperature and wakes them up. Others find when their body temperature cools down, usually 30–90 min. after exercise, they feel sleepy. Exercise also raises endorphin levels, which creates brain activity that can keep some people awake. These people should avoid exercise in the evening to ensure the endorphins have time to wash out of the body and the brain has time to wind down before attempting to fall asleep. Regardless of the strategy you choose, knowing what works for your body and learning how to get great sleep will help teachers feel rested, relaxed, and able to conquer the day.



By implementing the abovementioned exercises for trainees and tips for trainers, the module ensures that the sleep quality and healthy sleeping habits of teachers and students are supported to ensure better concentration and attentional stability.

1.1.3. Module 3 - Skills and methods for relaxation and mental relief

This module aims to develop the skills and competencies of trainers and trainees for applying practical methods for their relaxation and mental relief. The module contains beneficial exercises / activities, tips and approaches to support the mental well-being of the target groups. The exercises are included because studies suggest that students and teachers have increased stress levels ever since the distance learning period and the COVID-19 pandemic started (Lizana & Lera, 2022). The activities take into account the reality that the teaching profession is one of the most stressful jobs in the world (and unfortunately, this pushes many educators out of their profession), and the demands on students are also increasing with the introducing of electronic learning environments (Deng et al., 2022). Thus, both students and teachers are in need of acquiring effective techniques for relaxation and mental relief.

The below included exercises are important as excessive stress levels can cause health issues such as headaches, high blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes, skin conditions, asthma, arthritis, depression, and anxiety. In addition to this, they lead to poor performance at work and at school, along with a decrease in the quality of life and relationships with other people (family, friends, acquaintances, etc.)

Most of the exercises / activities in this module require little time, preparation or equipment. They can be modified to fit the knowledge and skills of a variety of age groups. These exercises provide a way for trainers / teachers and trainees / students to improve their skills for relaxation and mental relief. The exercises are based on Britannica Education Classroom Relaxation Exercises, available at: <https://britannicaeducation.com/blog/classroom-relaxation-exercises/>

RERERENCES:

Lizana, P. A., & Lera, L. (2022). Depression, Anxiety, and Stress among Teachers during the Second COVID-19 Wave. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 19(10), 5968, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19105968>.

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Deng, Y., Cherian, J., Khan, N. U. N., Kumari, K., Sial, M. S., Comite, U., Gavurova, B., & Popp, J. (2022). Family and Academic Stress and Their Impact on Students' Depression Level and Academic Performance. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 13, 869337.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2022.869337>

Britannica Education (2017) - Chill Out! Classroom Relaxation Exercises for All Ages -

<https://britannicaeducation.com/blog/classroom-relaxation-exercises/>

Exercises for trainees:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Musical Mats
AIMS	To release excess energy and teach body awareness of yourself and others.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 3-5
DURATION	5 minutes
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Game, physical activity.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Released excess energy and taught body awareness of yourself and others.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	This activity requires music and a visually identified space; for example, a yoga mat or squares on the floor created with blue painter's tape. The mats or squares should be set up in a circle. Use the resource links for additional information.
LOCATION	Classroom or another place with free space.
REFERENCES	Britannica Education (2017), Chill Out! Classroom Relaxation Exercises for All Ages
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	https://britannicaeducation.com/blog/classroom-relaxation-exercises/
INSTRUCTION	This activity is a bit like musical chairs. When the music plays, the students hop from one mat to the next. When the music stops, they freeze on a mat, strike a pose, and take a deep inhale and exhale. There are lots of variations for what students should do when they strike a pose. They could strike the same pose each time; for example, standing up straight, hands together at their heart, eyes closed. They could strike a different pose each time that you cue them. Or you

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	<p>could print a variety of poses on pieces of paper and put the paper visuals at the top of each mat. When the students land on that mat and freeze, they strike the pose that's shown on the paper.</p> <p>Remember to take a deep inhale and exhale with each freeze/stop of the music.</p>
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Exercise 2

NAME OF EXERCISE	Breath Awareness
AIMS	To teach breath awareness and relax students.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 3-5
DURATION	1-5 minutes
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Breathing exercise.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Successfully taught awareness of the breath and developed relaxation skills of students.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	No materials needed.
LOCATION	Classroom or another place with free space.
REFERENCES	Britannica Education (2017), Chill Out! Classroom Relaxation Exercises for All Ages
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	https://britannicaeducation.com/blog/classroom-relaxation-exercises/
INSTRUCTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This breathing exercise asks students to lie on their bellies so that they can feel where the breath is in their body. If students can't lie on their bellies, have them place their left hand over their belly and their right hand over their chest. 2. If students are lying on the ground, they should be lying flat on their stomach and can use their hands as a pillow. If they are not lying on the ground, have them sit upright, both feet planted firmly on the ground, hands in position (left hand over their belly and their right hand over their chest). 3. Ask students to close their eyes if they are comfortable doing so.

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	<p>4. Tell students to inhale through their nose in two parts. The first part of their inhale is into their belly. If they are on the ground, they can feel their belly press into the earth. If they are seated upright, they can feel their belly press into their hand. The second part of their inhale is into their chest, so if they are lying on the ground, they feel their chest press into the earth and if seated they press their chest into their hand.</p> <p>5. Students also exhale through their nose in two parts. First, they exhale from their chest, feeling their chest rise away from the earth or fall away from their hand. Then, the second part of their exhale is from their belly, away from the earth or from their hand.</p> <p>6. Have students repeat these five to ten times.</p>
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Exercise 3:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Rise and Shine (Legs-up-the-Wall)
AIMS	To boost energy, provide mental relief and improve focus. To boost blood circulation, which helps to rebalance the body and mind after sitting for long periods. For sixth to eighth grade students, who are growing at a rapid rate, this pose is great to treat fatigue. Students can do this pose when they are studying for long periods and need to refresh and regain focus.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 6-8
DURATION	5 minutes
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Physical activity
EXPECTED RESULTS	Boosted energy of students and achieved mental relief.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	No materials needed.
LOCATION	Classroom, gym or another place with free space.
REFERENCES	Britannica Education (2017), Chill Out! Classroom Relaxation Exercises for All Ages
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	https://britannicaeducation.com/blog/classroom-relaxation-exercises/
INSTRUCTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have students find a space along the wall where they can lie down. 2. Have each student begin by sitting upright along their wall space. Their right hip is touching the wall and their legs are extended out in front of them, parallel to the wall. All of the students are looking straight forward, toward their toes. 3. Have students slowly lie back onto the ground as they

swing their legs up the wall. Their right hip will rotate along the wall to eventually touch the ground. Their legs will rotate upward along the wall so that they are making an L-shape, with their back on the ground and legs straight up along the wall.

4. Once in position, in an L-shape, have students leave their legs straight up in the air as their feet are pressed flat into the air, as if they were standing on the ground.

5. Ask students to close their eyes if they are comfortable doing so.

6. Let students know that they should breathe naturally and not try to control their breath.

Have students stay in that position for five minutes.

7. To exit the posture, have students use their legs to gently push themselves away from the wall about two feet. Have students roll onto their left side so they are in a fetal position. You can let students know that if they try this posture at home, they should roll onto their left side if they plan on returning to activities or studying and should roll onto their right side if they plan to go to sleep afterward. Have students take three deep inhales and exhales in the fetal position and then gently and carefully use their arms to push themselves into a seated position.

Exercise 4:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Protection Hands
AIMS	To provide a simple, subtle way to draw inward and relieve anxiety...without anyone else noticing!
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 6-8
DURATION	1 min.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Physical activity
EXPECTED RESULTS	Achieved relief and decreased anxiety.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	No materials needed.
LOCATION	Classroom, gym or another place with free space.
REFERENCES	Britannica Education (2017), Chill Out! Classroom Relaxation Exercises for All Ages
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	https://britannicaeducation.com/blog/classroom-relaxation-exercises/
INSTRUCTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This exercise is a hand position. Students will open their palms up, then place their thumbs inside their palms and wrap their fingers around their thumbs. Their hands will look like clenched fists, as if they were going to throw a punch...except their thumbs are on the inside of their fingers and their awareness is drawn inward instead of outward. 2. Teach your students the hand position and share its benefits. Have students sit with their hands in position, left fist resting on their left thigh and right fist on their right thigh. 3. Have students close their eyes if they are comfortable doing so and take a deep, slow inhale through their nose

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	<p>and a long, slow exhale. Repeat this five times.</p> <p>4. Let students know that they can do this any time, in any place. They can do this with one fist and with their eyes open. They can do this if they are nervous before a test, if they are feeling anxious about something or someone, or if they want to bring their focus back in to themselves.</p>
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Exercise 5:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Centering Breath
AIMS	To balance mind chatter and the left and right hemispheres of the brain. To reduce stress and anxiety and provide relaxation and mental relief.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 9-12
DURATION	3-5 minutes
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Physical activity
EXPECTED RESULTS	Reduced stress and anxiety levels and provided relaxation and mental relief.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	No materials needed.
LOCATION	Classroom, gym or another place with free space.
REFERENCES	Britannica Education (2017), Chill Out! Classroom Relaxation Exercises for All Ages
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	https://britannicaeducation.com/blog/classroom-relaxation-exercises/
INSTRUCTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have students sit up straight in their chairs, each foot planted into the ground, hands resting on each thigh (palms can face upward toward the sky or downward toward the ground). 2. Have students close their eyes if they are comfortable doing so and take three clearing breaths, slowly inhaling and slowly exhaling through their nose. 3. Ask students to gently open their eyes as you show them how they will hold their right hand as they practice this breath. Have students fold the tips of their

	<p>index and middle fingers inward until they touch their palm, at the base of the right thumb. Align the length of the pinky and ring fingers with the thumb on the right hand.</p> <p>4. Have students bring their right hand up toward their face. They will place their ring and pinky fingers over their left nostril and their thumb over their right nostril.</p> <p>5. Have students close their eyes again as they leave their right hand in this position and their left hand on their left thigh.</p> <p>6. Have students gently close their mouth. Have them close off their right nostril with their thumb. Ask students to inhale for three breaths through their left nostril, then use their ring finger to close their left nostril and exhale for three breaths through their right nostril. Students will repeat this by inhaling through their right nostril for three counts, then closing off the right nostril with their thumb and exhaling through their left nostril. This is one cycle.</p> <p>7. Have students repeat for three, six, or nine cycles.</p>
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Exercise 6:

NAME OF EXERCISE	“Not Mine” Meditation
AIMS	To teach emotion regulation and mindfulness.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 9-12
DURATION	1-5 minutes
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Mindfulness meditation.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Improved emotion regulation and skills for relaxation.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Timer.
LOCATION	Classroom, gym or another place with free space.
REFERENCES	Britannica Education (2017), Chill Out! Classroom Relaxation Exercises for All Ages
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	https://britannicaeducation.com/blog/classroom-relaxation-exercises/
INSTRUCTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have students sit up straight, each foot planted into the ground, hands resting on each thigh, palms toward the sky. Then have students gently make a fist with each hand, while still leaving their hands resting on their thighs. Have students close their eyes if they are comfortable doing so. 2. This is a mindfulness meditation, so students do not need to breathe in a controlled way. They should sit still and breathe naturally. 3. As students notice a feeling or a thought float into their awareness, they should squeeze their left fist if they feel negative about that feeling or thought. They should squeeze their right fist if they feel positive about



	<p>that feeling or thought. Regardless of which fist they squeeze, they should repeat “not mine” in their head and release the thought or feeling.</p> <p>4. Set a timer and do this meditation for a few minutes. You can start this meditation by doing just one minute and slowly add a minute each time you do this with your students. Meditation takes practice, and the more you do it, the easier it is to sit for longer periods.</p>
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Exercise 7:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Grounding with the Senses
AIMS	To reduce anxiety and stress, and improve relaxation skills.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 9-12
DURATION	1-5 minutes
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Grounding technique.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Reduced anxiety and stress levels, and improved relaxation skills.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	When you first introduce the exercise, bring in something to taste (such as chocolate). You could also get creative and bring in different fabrics to feel.
LOCATION	Classroom, gym or another place with free space.
REFERENCES	Britannica Education (2017), Chill Out! Classroom Relaxation Exercises for All Ages
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	https://britannicaeducation.com/blog/classroom-relaxation-exercises/
INSTRUCTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This activity engages the five senses and asks students to see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. When you first introduce the exercise, bring in something to taste (such as chocolate). You could also get creative and bring in different fabrics to feel. 2. Tell students the benefits of this exercise before you start. When you are in fight-or-flight mode, this is a quick way to ground yourself. 3. To start, ask students to find three things in the room. Notice their color, texture, size, and use.



	<p>4. Second, have students sit quietly and listen. What sounds do they hear? Are they loud or soft? Are they high pitched or low pitched?</p> <p>5. Third, have students inhale through their nose. What do they smell? Have students silently describe the smell. You could also bring in something that has a certain smell, such as lavender, and try this portion of the exercise with that.</p> <p>6. Fourth, find something to taste. This is where chocolate comes in handy! Have students place a chocolate in their mouth and slowly let it melt instead of quickly chewing it. How does it taste? What is the consistency? How long does it take to melt?</p> <p>7. Lastly, students will find something to touch. It could be the soft fabric on their shirt, their smooth desk, the way their hands feel when clasped together. Or it could be something you bring in, such as a sheepskin or silk or a stress ball! Notice the texture and qualities of whatever you're touching.</p>
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Exercises for trainers

Based on Robinson, L. (2023, November 8). Relaxation techniques for stress relief. HelpGuide.org. <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/relaxation-techniques-for-stress-relief.htm>

1. Deep breathing

With its focus on full, cleansing breaths, deep breathing is a simple yet powerful relaxation technique. It's easy to learn, can be practiced almost anywhere by anyone, and provides a quick way to get stress levels in check. Deep breathing is the cornerstone of many other relaxation practices, too, and can be combined with other relaxing elements such as music. All you really need is a few minutes and a place to sit quietly or stretch out.

How to practice deep breathing:

- Sit comfortably with your back straight. Put one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach;
- Breathe in through your nose. The hand on your stomach should rise. The hand on your chest should move very little;
- Exhale through your mouth, pushing out as much air as you can while contracting your abdominal muscles. The hand on your stomach should move in as you exhale, but your other hand should move very little.;
- Continue to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try to inhale enough so that your lower abdomen rises and falls. Count slowly as you exhale;
- If you find it difficult breathing from your abdomen while sitting up, try lying down. Put a small book on your stomach, and breathe so that the book rises as you inhale and falls as you exhale.

2. Progressive muscle relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is a two-step process in which you systematically tense and relax different muscle groups in the body. With regular practice, it gives you familiarity with what tension—as well as complete relaxation—feels like in different parts of your body. This can help you react to the first signs of the muscular tension that accompanies stress. And as

your body relaxes, so will your mind. Progressive muscle relaxation can be combined with deep breathing for additional stress relief.

Practicing progressive muscle relaxation:

- Start at your feet and work your way up to your face, trying to only tense those muscles intended.
- Loosen clothing, take off your shoes, and get comfortable.
- Take a few minutes to breathe in and out in slow, deep breaths.
- When you're ready, shift your attention to your right foot. Take a moment to focus on the way it feels.
- Slowly tense the muscles in your right foot, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10.
- Relax your foot. Focus on the tension flowing away and how your foot feels as it becomes limp and loose. Stay in this relaxed state for a moment, breathing deeply and slowly.
- Shift your attention to your left foot. Follow the same sequence of muscle tension and release.
- Move slowly up through your body, contracting and relaxing the different muscle groups.

It may take some practice at first, but try not to tense muscles other than those intended.

3. Body scan meditation

This type of meditation focuses your attention on various parts of your body. Like progressive muscle relaxation, you start with your feet and work your way up. But instead of tensing and relaxing muscles, you simply focus on the way each part of your body feels, without labeling the sensations as either “good” or “bad”.

How to practice body scan meditation:

- Lie on your back, legs uncrossed, arms relaxed at your sides, eyes open or closed. Focus on your breathing for a few mins until you feel relaxed.
- Turn your focus to the toes of your right foot. Notice any sensations you feel while continuing to also focus on your breathing. Imagine each deep breath flowing to your toes. Remain focused on this area for 3 to 5 sec.

- Move your focus to the sole of your right foot. Tune in to any sensations you feel in that part of your body and imagine each breath flowing from the sole of your foot. After 1-2 minutes, move your focus to your right ankle and repeat. Move to your calf, knee, thigh, hip, and then repeat the sequence for your left leg. From there, move up the torso, through the lower back and abdomen, the upper back and chest, and the shoulders. Pay close attention to any area of the body that causes you pain or discomfort.
- After completing the body scan, relax for a while in silence and stillness, noting how your body feels. Then slowly open your eyes and stretch.

4. Visualization

Visualization, or guided imagery, is a variation on traditional meditation that involves imagining a scene in which you feel at peace, free to let go of all tension and anxiety. Choose whatever setting is most calming to you, whether it's a tropical beach, a favorite childhood spot, or a quiet wooded glen.

Practicing visualization:

Close your eyes and imagine your restful place. Picture it as vividly as you can: everything you see, hear, smell, taste, and feel. Just “looking” at it in your mind's eye like you would a photo is not enough. Visualization works best if you incorporate as many sensory details as possible. For example, if you are thinking about a dock on a quiet lake:

- See the sun setting over the water
- Hear the birds singing
- Smell the pine trees
- Feel the cool water on your bare feet
- Taste the fresh, clean air

Enjoy the feeling of your worries drifting away as you slowly explore your restful place. When you are ready, gently open your eyes and come back to the present. Don't worry if you sometimes zone out or lose track of where you are during a visualization session. This is normal. You may also experience feelings of heaviness in your limbs, muscle twitches, or yawning. Again, these are normal responses.



5. Self-massage

Try taking a few minutes to massage yourself at your desk between tasks, or on the couch at the end of a hectic day. To enhance relaxation, you can use aromatic oil, scented lotion, or combine self-massage with mindfulness or deep breathing.

A five-minute self-massage to relieve stress:

A combination of strokes works well to relieve muscle tension. Try gentle chops with the edge of your hands or tapping with fingers or cupped palms. Put fingertip pressure on muscle knots. Knead across muscles, and try long, light, gliding strokes. You can apply these strokes to any part of the body that falls easily within your reach. For a short session like this, try focusing on your neck and head:

Start by kneading the muscles at the back of your neck and shoulders. Make a loose fist and drum swiftly up and down the sides and back of your neck. Next, use your thumbs to work tiny circles around the base of your skull. Slowly massage the rest of your scalp with your fingertips. Then tap your fingers against your scalp, moving from the front to the back and then over the sides.

Now massage your face. Make a series of tiny circles with your thumbs or fingertips. Pay particular attention to your temples, forehead, and jaw muscles. Use your middle fingers to massage the bridge of your nose and work outward over your eyebrows to your temples.

Finally, close your eyes. Cup your hands loosely over your face and inhale and exhale easily for a short while.

6. Mindfulness meditation

Mindfulness has become extremely popular in recent years. Rather than worrying about the future or dwelling on the past, mindfulness switches your focus to what's happening right now, enabling you to be fully engaged in the present moment.

Meditations that cultivate mindfulness have long been used to reduce stress, anxiety, depression, and other negative emotions. Some of these practices bring you into the present by focusing your attention on a single repetitive action, such as your breathing or a few repeated words. Other forms of mindfulness meditation encourage you to follow and then release internal thoughts or sensations. Mindfulness can be applied to activities such as walking, exercising, or eating.



Using mindfulness to stay focused on the present might seem straightforward, but it takes practice to reap all the benefits. When you first start practicing, you'll likely find that your focus keeps wandering back to your worries or regrets. But don't get disheartened. Each time you draw your focus back to the present, you're strengthening a new mental habit that can help you break free of fretting about the past or stressing about the future.

A basic mindfulness meditation:

- Find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted or distracted.
- Sit on a comfortable chair with your back straight.
- Close your eyes and find a point of focus, such as your breathing—the sensation of air flowing into your nostrils and out of your mouth or your belly rising and falling—or a meaningful word that you repeat throughout the meditation.
- Don't worry about distracting thoughts that go through your mind or about how well you're doing. If thoughts intrude your relaxation session, don't fight them, just gently turn your attention back to your point of focus, without judgment.

7. Rhythmic movement and mindful exercise

The idea of exercising may not sound particularly soothing, but rhythmic exercise that gets you into a flow of repetitive movement can produce the relaxation response. Examples include: Running, Walking, Swimming, Dancing, Rowing, Climbing. For maximum stress relief, add mindfulness to your workout. While simply engaging in rhythmic exercise will help you relieve stress, adding a mindfulness component can benefit you even more.

As with meditation, mindful exercise requires being fully engaged in the present moment, paying attention to how your body feels right now, rather than your daily worries or concerns. Instead of zoning out as you exercise, focus on the sensations in your limbs and how your breathing complements your movement.

If you're walking or running, for example, focus on the sensation of your feet touching the ground, the rhythm of your breath, and the feeling of the wind against your face. If you're resistance training, focus on coordinating your breathing with your movements and pay attention to how your body feels as you raise and lower the weights. And when your mind wanders to other thoughts, gently return your focus to your breathing and movement.

Additional tips:

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- Learning the basics of these relaxation techniques isn't difficult, but it takes regular practice to truly harness their stress-relieving power. Try setting aside at least 10 to 20 minutes a day.
- Set aside time in your daily schedule. If possible, schedule a set time once or twice a day for your practice.
- Make use of smartphone apps and other aids. Many people find that smartphone apps or audio downloads can be useful in guiding them through different relaxation practices, establishing a regular routine, and keeping track of progress.
- Expect ups and downs. Sometimes it can take time and practice to start reaping the full rewards of relaxation techniques such as meditation. The more you stick with it, the sooner the results will come. If you skip a few days or even a few weeks, don't get discouraged. Just get started again and slowly build up to your old momentum.

RERERENCES:

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/relaxation-techniques-for-stress-relief.htm>

1.2. Program 2 - Existential needs

The Program “Existential needs” is also developed according to the Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Model (1943). Existential needs (also known as safety needs) are essential for people as they want to experience order, predictability, and control in their lives. Those needs include: emotional security, financial security (e.g., employment, social welfare), law and order, freedom from fear, social stability, property, health and well-being (e.g., safety against accidents and injury).

The Program “Existential needs” consists of 4 modules focusing on: Sense of safety and self-preservation instinct during the pandemic (Module 1); Safety in the workplace during the pandemic (Module 2); Family environment and dynamics of family relationships (Module 3) and Skills and methods for coping with stress and burnout (Module 4). The modules are very important for trainees and trainers as all those mentioned areas suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic (in particular, the overall sense of safety). The aims are to promote feelings of security / safety in different contexts, to improve family dynamics and relationships, and to develop important skills for coping with stress and burnout (in both target groups).

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1.2.1. Module 1 - Sense of safety and self-preservation instinct during the pandemic

This module addresses the sense of safety and self-preservation instinct among trainers and trainees during the COVID-19 pandemic. It presents valuable exercises to promote feelings of security / safety in different contexts (in both target groups). The module supports the overall goal of the programs, namely supporting the mental health and well-being of students and teachers.

Drawing from Maslow (1943)'s hierarchy of needs, safety is a fundamental need for all humans that ought to be satisfied before one can enjoy other needs such as the feeling of love and attachment to others, feeling good about one's achievement, and achieving one's full potential.

The exercises are included because studies suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected teachers' and students' health and well-being and has also contributed to fear about their safety. For example, Quansah et al. (2022) revealed that teachers perceived the teaching environment during COVID-19 as largely unsafe, increasing their level of anxiety and fear. Admittedly, being preoccupied with extreme concerns about one's safety within one's working or academic environment may affect overall productivity. Within the school environment, COVID-19 has negatively impacted both teaching and learning and has activated the self-preservation instinct (this instinct is concerned with one's own physical body and its health, stability, protection, and ultimately that it continues to live, it is essential for physical well-being and self-regulation).

The anguish people experienced is a normal human response to a serious crisis such as COVID-19. The insecurity (incl. financial, about work, health and school) affected individuals' mood, relationships and general psychological and emotional health, leading to powerlessness, hurt, anger and depression. Recognizing and accepting these feelings is a vital step.

Thus, both trainees and trainers need better ways to cope with the physical and psychological reactions even after the end of the pandemic. That is why, we included the below exercises. Most of the activities in this module require little time, preparation or equipment. They can be modified to fit the knowledge and skills of a variety of age groups. These exercises provide a way for trainers / teachers to increase their sense of safety.



RERERENCES:

McGill University of Canada, Resilience, Pediatric Psychology, and Neurogenetics

Connections Lab, Emotional Regulation Lesson Plans,

https://www.mcgill.ca/connectionslab/files/connectionslab/emotional_regulation_lesson_plan_s.pdf

ELUNA Recourse Center, USA, Activity: Safe Place, <https://elunanetwork.org/resources/art-activity-safe-place>

Exercises for trainees:

Exercise 1:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Safe Place
AIMS	To “build” a safe place. A safe place is extremely important, especially when it comes to students who may feel as though they have no control over their environment. A safe place can be described as anywhere a student feels comfortable.
TARGET GROUP	No age restriction.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Brainstorming, art activity, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Built “safe place” and enhanced the feelings of safety and calmness of students.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Poster board or paper; Crayons, markers, colored pencils, anything to write or draw with Imagination.
LOCATION	Classroom, or another place with free space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL (IF AVAILABLE)	Inspired and adapted from: ELUNA Recourse Center, USA, Activity: Safe Place, https://elunanetwork.org/resources/art-activity-safe-place
INSTRUCTION	Brainstorm with students about what they believe their safe place is. Invite them to create an illustration of their safe place. There should be little-to-no restrictions as to what their safe place can be. The illustration can include pictures, collages, or words to describe their safe place. For example, they may write “no yelling” as a rule. If comfortable, have them share their illustration. Ask, “Why is this your safe place? What makes this

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	<p>place so special to you?”</p> <p>Encourage them to hang their drawing up and share with the class. Explain that when they feel unsafe, threatened, angry, sad, anxious, or overwhelmed, they can go to their “Safe Place.” If the safe place is in their imagination, encourage them to envision their safe place.</p> <p>Additional Ideas: There are no limitations as to what a safe place is, as long as students feel as though they can “go” to this place when they are feeling overwhelmed. Encourage a mix of imaginative ideas which make their own personal safe place safe to them.</p>
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Exercise 2:

NAME OF EXERCISE	EMOTION REGULATION
AIMS	To build awareness about emotions (incl. feelings of safety) and about the way that our thinking can regulate our emotions; To introduce different cognitive emotion regulation strategies to reduce feelings of unsafety and anxiety; To learn the differences between the positive and negative strategies that we use to regulate our emotions; To recognize the use of good and bad strategies in everyday situations.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 3 – 5.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Brainstorming, discussion, art activity, worksheets.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Built awareness of students about emotions (incl. feelings of safety) and about the way that our thinking can regulate our emotions; Introduced and learned different cognitive emotion regulation strategies; Reduced feelings of unsafety and anxiety.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	2 pieces of paper cut into circles per student; Crayons.
LOCATION	Classroom, or another place with free space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired and adapted by: https://www.mcgill.ca/connections-lab/files/connections-lab/emotional-regulation-lesson-plans.pdf McGill University of Canada, Resilience, Pediatric Psychology, and Neurogenetics Connections Lab, Emotional Regulation Lesson Plans
INSTRUCTION	PART 1: Highlight to the class that life is full of

stressful experiences (discuss the pandemic). “We have different ways to deal with the stressors in our lives. One way is by managing the emotions that we feel in relation to these stressors. One of the ways that we deal with stressful experiences is to manage the emotions that we feel in relations to these stressors. This means that we try to control our emotions. Can anyone give me an example of a stressful experience that they have had? What emotions did this experience make you feel? Regulating our emotions is complex and it involves having control over different things: The way that we experience our emotions; The way that we think about our reactions to the stressful experience; The feeling we get in our body after experiencing stressors; and our behavior. The way that we control our emotions can also have positive or negative consequences. When we control our emotions in a good way, we feel better about ourselves (increased self-esteem) and about the future (optimism).”

PART 2: CLASSROOM EXAMPLE WITH STUDENT PARTICIPATION

“Let’s practice thinking about stressful experiences that can make us feel and think negatively. When Suzy was 9 she got a hamster for her birthday. She called her hamster Bubbles and she loved him a lot. Last week, 4 years later, her hamster died. She was really sad and wouldn’t leave her room for days.

- o What was the stressful event in this story?
- o How did it make Suzy feel?
- o What thoughts did Suzy have? Were they positive

and happy thoughts? Were they negative and unhappy thoughts?

o What could Suzy do to make herself feel better? Can she change her mind and think happier thoughts?”

PART 3: WORKSHEET ACTIVITY

“Let’s practice recognizing different experiences and emotions that we have. First, I would like you to draw something for me. “Give each student two paper circles and a crayon.

“On the first piece of paper I would like you to draw a happy face. On the second piece of paper, I would like you to draw a sad face.“

Each time you describe a situation, ask students to hold up the appropriate face to show how they would feel. Here are some examples:

- How would you feel if your best friend invited you to a party?
- How would you feel if you and your friends built a beautiful sandcastle together?
- How would you feel if you went to the park with your family on a beautiful sunny day?
- How would you feel if you fell down and hurt your knee?
- How would you feel if you got into trouble because your friends told the teacher that you did something wrong?

Exercise 3:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Rumination
AIMS	To understand the concept of rumination (which can contribute to feelings of unsafety). To learn how to change thoughts to a more positive emotion regulation strategy.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grade 6 and above.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Brainstorming, role play, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Learned about the concept of rumination (which can contribute to feelings of unsafety). Learned how to change thoughts to a more positive emotion regulation strategy.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	No materials required.
LOCATION	Classroom, or another place with free space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired and adapted by: https://www.mcgill.ca/connections/connectionslab/files/connections/connectionslab/emotional_regulation_lesson_plans.pdf McGill University of Canada, Resilience, Pediatric Psychology, and Neurogenetics Connections Lab, Emotional Regulation Lesson Plans
INSTRUCTION	INTRODUCTION: “Today we will learn the strategy of rumination. What does rumination mean (to spend a lot of time thinking about something that happened)? Has anyone ever spent a long time thinking about a stressful or negative event (for example, the pandemic)? How did it make you feel? What are some things you can do to make yourself feel better? It is important to notice when we start

ruminating because it can be very hard to stop. If we notice when we are ruminating then we can change our thinking strategy, and use a more positive strategy (for example, positive refocusing: thinking about something that makes you feel good) Telling a friend or an adult what is on our mind can also help us feel better.

PART 2: Learn to recognize the stressful event and the accompanying emotion. Understand how to think about the situation and how to replace a negative strategy with a positive one.

- Case Example: Michelle and Jessica were best friends. They ate lunch together, they played together during recess, and they told each other all of their secrets. One day a girl in their class told Michelle that Jessica had told her one of Michelle's secrets. Michelle was so angry at Jessica! How could she have shared her secret? Jessica realized her mistake and apologized to Michelle right away. She had forgotten that it was a secret and she was very sorry. Michelle was still angry. She didn't care if it was a mistake. Jessica was very sad and she tried everything to get Michelle to forgive her. Even after a week, Michelle was still upset. She didn't want to be best friends with Jessica anymore. She didn't keep her secret! Jessica was still very nice to Michelle but since Michelle ignored her, she started playing with some other classmates and soon she had a new group of friends. Michelle was even angrier. It wasn't fair that Jessica had left her and gotten new friends. Whenever one of them would

invite her to play she would refuse. She was mad at all of them. Now Michelle had no best friend and no one to play with. This made her very sad. It was all Jessica's fault! This never would have happened if Jessica had been a good best friend.

o Why happened to make Michelle upset?

o How did he/she feel after it happened? How did she feel after Jessica apologized?

o What were the consequences?

o What would happen if she used positive refocusing or acceptance instead?

PART 3: Practice Activity Role play:

Scenario that will illicit negative emotion (i.e., Friends saying something that made you feel emotionally unsafe, bad grades)

Role play with rumination outcome first

Change strategy to positive refocusing

o After practicing the skit, discuss

Wrap-up session.

Exercise 4:

NAME OF EXERCISE	REFOCUS OF PLANNING
AIMS	To understand the concept of refocusing on planning to deal with difficult situations and help with feelings of unsafety. To learn how to refocus on planning in various situations.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grade 6 and above.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Case example / story, brainstorming, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Learned the concept of refocusing on planning to deal with difficult situations and help with feelings of unsafety. Learned how to refocus on planning in various situations.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Blackboard, worksheet.
LOCATION	Classroom, or another place with free space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired and adapted by: https://www.mcgill.ca/connections/connectionslab/files/connections/connections/emotional_regulation_lesson_plans.pdf McGill University of Canada, Resilience, Pediatric Psychology, and Neurogenetics Connections Lab, Emotional Regulation Lesson Plans
INSTRUCTION	INTRODUCTION: “Today we will learn the strategy of refocusing on planning (planning ways to cope with a negative experience). Can anyone tell me what it means to make a plan? (To decide on the steps that need to be taken to achieve our goal). When do people make plans? Have you planned anything in the last week/month? Did it help you achieve your goal more easily?”

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When we have stressful or negative situations, we can sometimes do things to make them better: Think of what we can do best; Think about how we can best cope with the situation; Think about how to change the situation; Think about a plan of what we can do best. If we refocus on planning, it will be easier to cope with the stress and get through the difficult situation. When we plan, we are taking actions to deal with the problem. It is important to remember that if we think about a plan, we have to stick to it and act out the plan.

ACTIVITY: Learn to recognize the stressful event and the accompanying emotion. Understand how to think about the situation and how to apply the refocusing on planning.

- Case Example: Matthew and John both failed their history test. Matthew was upset and angry; he never wanted to take a test again. John was upset too, but he decided to try studying in different ways and do better next time! The teacher told them their next test would be about Ancient Egypt. Matthew stopped paying attention in class and stopped studying. He decided history was boring, and he just wasn't good at it. John thought pyramids and mummies were interesting so he found a book about them with lots of pictures! He learned about so many interesting things, he read more books and found a cool history movie too. He even asked his parents to take him to see an exhibit about Egypt at the museum. It was very exciting to see it all in real life! On the day of the test Matthew felt very nervous and upset. He hated tests

and he hadn't studied at all because he thought he would do poorly either way. John was nervous too, but he was also excited. He wanted to share all of the facts he had learned, and he really hoped there would be questions on his two favourite topics: mummies and pyramids! Matthew didn't know many of the answers and did poorly again. He was even more angry and upset. He thought it wasn't fair because he just didn't like history! John got almost all of the questions right! He was so happy he didn't even mind that he got some of them wrong. He made sure to ask what the right answers were, so now he knew even more about Ancient Egypt! He never knew how much he liked history.

o Talk about the different outcomes Are they happy, are they sad? Which way of dealing with the stressful situation was more positive? Discuss: “I would like you to think about how homework or tests make you feel? Do they make you feel nervous or upset? Let’s think about how we can turn negative feelings into positive ones. What steps could you take to make it more fun and easier?”

o Ask for suggestions and help students brainstorm

- **Practice Activity (not mandatory)**

“Imagine that this summer we are planning to have a big summer carnival with the entire school. What are some fun summer activities that you would like to do at a summer carnival?”

In groups of 2 or 3 have the children brainstorm about fun activities that they like to do outside in the summer and their preferred location for these



	<p>activities. Have each group give you their ideas and write them on the board as you go.</p> <p>“Now that we have planned this carnival, we realized that sometimes it rains in the summer. We won’t be able to do the carnival outside if it rains. The principal of the school has gotten very upset about the rain and has asked our class to refocus and plan some activities that we can do in a different location (not at the beach or in the park)”</p> <p>With the entire class figure out a new location for the carnival (indoors or under a tent) then go through the list of activities and plan for the activities that with be able to be moved indoors (circle with a color), plan for the activities that will not be able to move indoors (cross out with another color), and brainstorm other summer carnival ideas that could happen indoors.</p>
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Exercise 5:

NAME OF EXERCISE	CATASTROPHIZING
AIMS	To understand the concept of catastrophizing (which can contribute to feelings of unsafety) and to learn how to recognize catastrophizing and change thoughts to a more positive emotion regulation strategy.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grade 6 and above.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Case example / story, brainstorming, role play discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Learned the concept of catastrophizing (which can contribute to feelings of unsafety) and how to recognize catastrophizing and change thoughts to a more positive emotion regulation strategy.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	No materials required.
LOCATION	Classroom, or another place with free space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired and adapted by: https://www.mcgill.ca/connections-lab/files/connections-lab/emotional-regulation-lesson-plans.pdf McGill University of Canada, Resilience, Pediatric Psychology, and Neurogenetics Connections Lab, Emotional Regulation Lesson Plans
INSTRUCTION	INTRODUCTION: Today we will learn the strategy of catastrophizing. What does catastrophizing mean (to think that and experience is a complete disaster, or that it is worse than in reality)? Has anyone ever thought that an experience was really stressful and then realized that there was nothing

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to worry about in the first place? (i.e., Doing a homework assignment or writing a quiz) What are some of the things you think about when you are catastrophizing? When we have stressful or negative situations, and we catastrophize: We think that the experience is much worse than what other people are experiencing; We keep thinking about how terrible the situation is; We think that this experience is the worst thing that could ever happen (we feel unsafe). What are the consequences of having these thoughts? Do they make us feel good or bad? What are some things you can do to make yourself feel better? It is important to notice when we start catastrophizing. This way we can change our thinking strategy, and use a more positive strategy. Can anyone tell me what positive strategy they could use instead of catastrophizing? For example, refocus on planning: take steps to deal with the situation and make it seem less serious.

ACTIVITY:

- Case Example: Jeremiah has a small quiz tomorrow in math class. He has been studying for this quiz for a couple days. He even asks his mom to quiz him at home and does very well. He still however feels really unprepared. He spends all night tossing and turning and worrying about this quiz. He thinks that if he doesn't do well, his teacher will think he's stupid. He does not get any sleep. When he gets to school the next day, he is really tired and has trouble staying awake during the quiz. In the end Jeremiah does not do as well on the quiz even

	<p>though he knew all of the answers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">o What was the experience that Jeremiah was stressed about?o How did it make him feel?o Did Jeremiah have to be so worried about the quiz?o What were the consequences of Jeremiah's negative strategy?o What positive strategy could he have used in this situation? <p>- Practice Activity Role play:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Scenario that will illicit negative emotion (i.e. Losing a game, getting a scrape, having a quiz)<input type="checkbox"/> Role play with catastrophizing outcome first<input type="checkbox"/> Change strategy to refocus on planning <ul style="list-style-type: none">o After practicing the skit, discuss<input type="checkbox"/> Wrap up session.
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Activities for trainers:

Based on Jackson, T. (2016, November 4). Activities for getting in touch with your safe place.

<https://tonijacksoncounselling.com/2016/11/01/activities-for-getting-in-touch-with-your-safe-place/>

When we get in touch with our safe place, it can be an empowering experience, bringing us a sense of calm, safety and connection with ourselves. When we refer to a ‘safe place’ or a sense of safety, the priority always has to be physical safety. If you are not physically safe – if you do not have a safe home, enough food, or you are in danger of being harmed, these things ideally need to be attended to before addressing an emotional sense of safety (Rothschild, 2010).

For those who either grew up in an unsafe environment – whether it be physical or psychological – or have experienced some level of trauma or abuse, they can often feel that the world is not a safe place. For one person, feeling unsafe might mean being afraid to express themselves for fear of judgement or ridicule; for someone else, it might mean feeling in physical danger a lot of the time (even when they are not); whilst for someone else, it may be a much more vague, yet powerful sense of just not feeling okay. Knowing how to access a sense of calm and safety for ourselves, means that anytime we begin to feel overwhelmed, anxious, stressed or fearful, we have tools we can use to ‘put the brakes on’. We have the ability to calm our emotional, physiological and cognitive responses.

Following are some activities that can assist trainers in connecting with and strengthening their sense of feeling safe in the world. They are based in both mindfulness and art therapy. These are simple ways that educators can nurture themselves and feel more in control of their sense of self.

Grounding Exercise:

- To begin, make sure you are sitting or lying somewhere quiet, where you are unlikely to be disturbed.
- This exercise works best if you either close your eyes, or drop your head and turn your gaze inward.

- Take a big, long, slow, deep breath in, through your nose. Imagine the air going all the way down to your belly.
- Then, slowly, slowly breathe the old air out, through your mouth. See how slowly you can breathe the air out.
- Do this slow breathing, in through your nose and out through your mouth, 3 times.
- Now, notice your feet on the floor, connected to the earth.
- Notice the weight of your body connecting with the chair.
- Notice the back of the chair, supporting the back of your body.
- You are supported.
- Take another 3 long, slow, deep breaths.
- What can you hear in your immediate surroundings?
- When you are ready, you may open your eyes.
- Before rushing straight into the next moment, you may like to take your time. Give yourself some space. Let yourself remain in the present and feel what it is like to be right here, right now.

‘Where is your Safe Place?’ – Art Therapy Activity

This activity is to help trainers find a place inside themselves where they feel safe and calm. It could be a happy memory of childhood, or a time you experienced something really profound, or a particular person you feel really safe with – anything you want. Spend some time imagining what that special place is for you, before you paint or draw that place. The picture can look however you want – there is no right way and it doesn’t have to look perfect – it is about the feeling and the meaning it has for you. This exercise provides us with a means of connecting with our inner strength. It is another way we can ‘put on the brakes’.

- Begin this activity with the Grounding Exercise described above. Maybe while you have your eyes closed, you might like to really get a feel for your ‘safe place’ memory. Try to remember as much detail as possible – where you were, what time of day, what season, who were you with, what could you see around you, what could you hear and smell, how exactly did you feel? What colours and shapes do you associate with your safe place? Do you have a sense of where in your body your safe place lives?

- Then, when you have a clear sense of your safe place, create an image of it, using paints, oils pastels, pencils or whatever you have.
- Once you have finished your image, take some time to reflect on what it was like to do the exercise. How do you feel? What did you notice?
- Now that you have a clear sense of your safe place, it will be available to you whenever you wish to connect to that place inside of yourself.

More Safe Place Ideas:

Trauma expert Babette Rothschild (2000), also suggests oases and anchors as effective tools in gaining a sense of safety.

- An oasis is any activity you enjoy doing that requires your concentration over a period of time, for example knitting, gardening, learning a new language, or cooking from a recipe.
- An anchor, is an external something that exists in reality (rather than an internal resource), that provides you with some form of support. It is an object, place or person which creates a sense of calm in your mind and body. For example, it might be your home, your partner, your dog, or swimming at the beach. The ‘Safe Place’ activity above, is a kind of anchor. It is something, when focused on, that you can draw on when you feel overwhelmed or unsafe.

Countdown to Calmness Activity

When we ground ourselves, we are more able to use our wise mind to radically accept things as they are, rather than desperately trying to change them. This exercise combines counting down from 5 while using your senses in a mindful way.

5. Acknowledge 5 things you see around you.
4. Acknowledge 4 things you can touch/feel around you.
3. Acknowledge 3 sounds around you.
2. Acknowledge 2 things you can smell around you.
1. Acknowledge 1 thing you can currently taste.

By implementing the abovementioned exercises for trainees and trainers, the module ensures that the sense of safety and self-preservation of teachers and students is supported.

1.2.2.Module 2 - Safety in the workplace during the pandemic

Module “Safety in the workplace during the pandemic” addresses the sense of safety in the workplace of trainers / teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It presents valuable exercises to promote feelings of safety and security in the workplace environment. The module supports the overall goal of the programs in the Methodology, namely supporting the mental health and well-being of educators.

The exercises are included because studies suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected teachers’ feelings of safety and security in the workplace. For example, the results from BCTF Health and Safety Membership Survey (2021) suggest that:

- health and safety measures in schools are still inadequate;
- more than half of teachers (57.8%) do not feel safe working in person;
- more than two-thirds of all teachers working in-person (72.8%) report that their workload has increased in comparison to before the COVID-19 pandemic;
- a third of teachers report that their experience of the COVID-19 pandemic has made it more likely that they will leave teaching as a profession in the next two years.

Thus, adequate measures are needed to support the feeling of safety in teachers / trainers at their workplace (such as schools, universities, other educational organizations, etc.). That is why, we included the below exercises.

Most of the activities in this module require little time, preparation or equipment. These exercises provide a way for trainers / teachers to increase their sense of safety in the workplace.

RERERENCES:

The Psychological Safety, Workshop Activities to Build Psychological Safety (2020),

<https://psychsafety.co.uk/three-simple-exercises-to-build-psychological-safety-in-your-team/>

The Psychological Safety, The Circle of Safety Workshop (2021),

[https://psychsafety.co.uk/the-psychological-safety-in-out-](https://psychsafety.co.uk/the-psychological-safety-in-out-exercise/?_ga=2.203115031.706713650.1686920604-1972748854.1686920604&_gl=1*mv17kz*_ga*MTk3Mjc0ODg1NC4xNjg2OTIwNjA0*_ga)

[exercise/?_ga=2.203115031.706713650.1686920604-](https://psychsafety.co.uk/the-psychological-safety-in-out-exercise/?_ga=2.203115031.706713650.1686920604-1972748854.1686920604&_gl=1*mv17kz*_ga*MTk3Mjc0ODg1NC4xNjg2OTIwNjA0*_ga)

[1972748854.1686920604&_gl=1*mv17kz*_ga*MTk3Mjc0ODg1NC4xNjg2OTIwNjA0*_ga](https://psychsafety.co.uk/the-psychological-safety-in-out-exercise/?_ga=2.203115031.706713650.1686920604-1972748854.1686920604&_gl=1*mv17kz*_ga*MTk3Mjc0ODg1NC4xNjg2OTIwNjA0*_ga)

[_6B2CS8Z0DW*MTY4NjkyMDYwMy4xLjEuMTY4NjkyMjM3MS41OS4wLjA](https://psychsafety.co.uk/the-psychological-safety-in-out-exercise/?_ga=2.203115031.706713650.1686920604-1972748854.1686920604&_gl=1*mv17kz*_ga*MTk3Mjc0ODg1NC4xNjg2OTIwNjA0*_ga)

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Fearless Culture, USA, <https://www.fearlessculture.design/blog-posts/exercises-to-promote-psychological-safety-in-your-organization>

It's a long and worthwhile journey to build high levels of safety in organizations (including educational organizations), and much of the hard work involves excellent leadership, clarity of direction, effective support, vulnerability, curiosity and much more. There are some simple exercises that can be carried out to directly build safety in the workplace. Here are four effective exercises and practices to build safety at the workplace, cohesion and performance (even in the context of a pandemic).

- **Values and Behaviours Exercise**

Possessing a common set of values and behaviors provides trainers with a great deal of safety and security. Carry out this exercise with the educators to establish and refine the main values that all of them endorse. It's important that the team work together to define these values. From these values, extrapolate the behaviours, that reflect these values. Sharing common expectations of behaviour is fundamental for safety at the workplace (even in the context of the pandemic), because team members will know what is expected of themselves, and what is expected of each other.

As a result of carrying out this Values and Behaviours exercise:

- Educators will understand better what is expected of them and other employees;
- Team cohesion and performance will significantly improve.
- Trainers will be aligned to the values of the organisation.
- Boundaries regarding acceptable behaviours will be agreed upon.
- The degree of psychological safety of team members will increase.

- **Hold a “Fear Discussion”**

This exercise encourages showing vulnerability and builds safety at the workplace by making openness a norm for the workers. It also provides some actionable outcomes to deal with real-world risks and threats (incl. the COVID-19 pandemic).

Instruction: On a white board, flip chart or jam board, create three columns – one for “Fear”, one for “Mitigations” and one for “Target Norm”. In the fear column, write down some of the fears that the trainers possess, such as “missing deadlines” or “making mistakes”, “catching COVID-19”. Ask everyone to contribute and encourage discussion.

Then, the team come up with mitigations to these fears, which consist of practical things team members can do to reduce the risk of the fears becoming real. Or, in case those fears are inevitable, instead write down ways that the impact can be reduced.

Finally, discuss and write down the “Target Norm” – this is your team’s utopia, where for example, “we never miss a deadline”. This helps the team cohere around common goals and aspirations, which is essential to building safety at the workplace.

Template:

FEAR	MITIGATION	TARGET NORM

Figure 2, Source: <https://psychsafety.co.uk/>

- **Run Retrospectives Exercise:**

Carrying out regular retrospectives to find the systemic root cause of problems is one of the most valuable things to do to build sense of safety and security in the workplace. Even if someone has made a mistake, it's important to find out how and why the mistake was made, without apportioning blame. It's also important to carry out retrospectives for success too – they're not just applied when things go wrong! Celebrating success as a team is just as important as facing failure as a team.

Ensure that any retrospective is given enough time and is carried out in an appropriate setting. Highlight, discuss, and deep dive into the things that went well, the things that need to be changed, any lessons learned or anything still to be discovered. Identifying root causes of problems without apportioning blame is crucial to safety in the workplace.

Template:

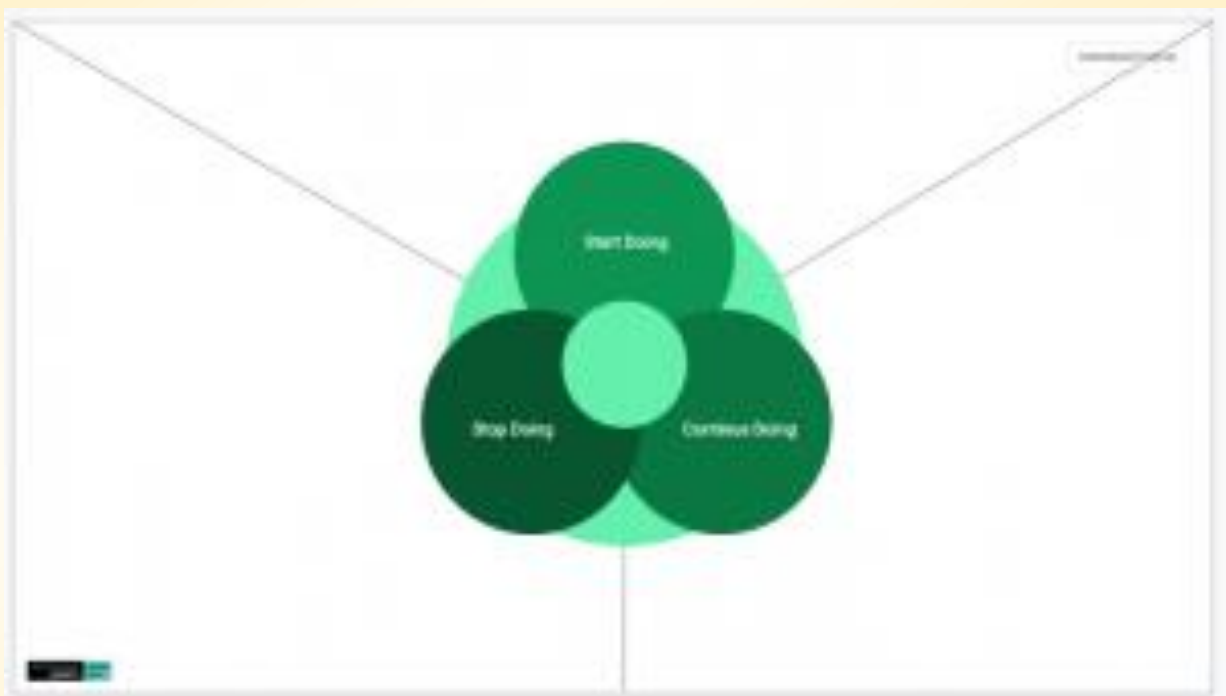


Figure 3, Source: <https://psychsafety.co.uk/>

- **The Circle of Safety Exercise:**

Whilst there are some standard and ubiquitous approaches to building safety at the workplace, such as icebreakers, retrospectives, and other, this is an opportunity for educators to identify practices and behaviours to facilitate safety that are unique to them.

Instruction: Draw a large circle on a whiteboard or virtual board, and ask participants to add examples of behaviours or practices that represent safe or unsafe working environments (you can provide examples with COVID-19 pandemic measures). Time-box this exercise to 5-10 minutes, depending on team size. Add more time if you feel it's required.

“Safe” practices go in the “IN” circle, unsafe practices go outside of the circle. Demonstrate the exercise with a couple of your own ideas, such as “trusting each other” inside the circle. The outside area is somewhat easier to think about – practices that damage safety are fairly easy to identify, such as aggression, not following COVID-19 measures, or not following through on a commitment. Try to make sure these are as specific as possible for the team's own context.

Spend some time presenting back the “in” and “out” behaviours and practices to the participants, highlight and discuss any disagreements, and offer another round if there are further ideas to add. Spend as long as is required on this exercise, whilst people are engaged and enjoying it.

Finally, discuss with the team how these practices can be maintained, how the team can hold each other accountable for them, etc. It's important to remember that this is a living, evolving document for the team – and it's ok to change it!

Template:

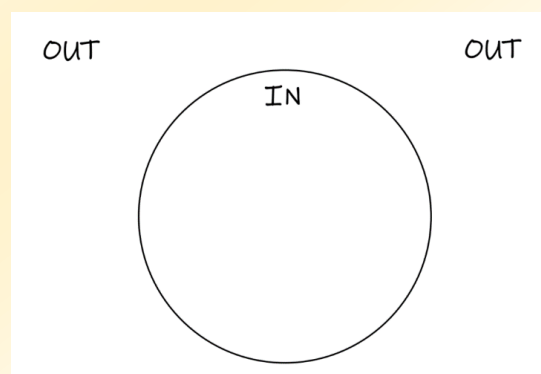


Figure 4, Source: <https://psychsafety.co.uk/>

- **Anxiety Party (An Effective Exercise to Promote Safety at the workplace)**

Don't get caught up with the name; anxiety parties are an excellent way to promote safety at the workplace — they make teams more vulnerable and effective. The Anxiety party is a structured time where trainers could be vulnerable and get their anxieties out in the open.

Instruction:

- First, everyone spends 10 minutes individually writing down their biggest anxieties (they can include the past pandemic situation, performance worries, health anxieties related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and other). Then, people are given two minutes to rank issues—from most to least worrying.
- Next, each person gets to share the anxiety that worries them the most. Colleagues score the issue based on how much it troubles them from a zero (“It never even occurred to me that this was an issue”) to five (“I strongly believe this area needs to be improved”).
- After reviewing all fundamental anxieties, it may turn out that most are baseless—people usually worry about pointless things. Getting people's feedback in the form of a score makes the anxiety go away.
- Many anxieties can be well-founded, though. Start by addressing the issues that get a 4 or a 5. Discuss with the team what needs to happen and whether it requires an individual or collective behavioral changes.
- This exercise can be done once or twice a year with the educators.

This activity is a great way to promote workplace safety in educators. Realizing that one might worry about something that means nothing for the whole team can be liberating. On the other hand, it makes people comfortable with getting feedback and fixing well-founded anxieties.

- **Uncover the “stinky fish” exercise**

The “Stinky Fish Canvas” is a quick way to uncover silent problems. It’s a metaphor for the issues that teams carry around with them but which they either don’t want or don’t care to talk about. The problem is that the longer we hide them, the stinkier our issues get. Turn the act of sharing your stinky fish into a regular team practice. This canvas was inspired by the namesake exercise by Hyper Island.

Share your stinky fish with the group. Compare notes. Address silent issues, fears, anxiety, and uncertainties (incl. regarding the pandemic and COVID-19). It’s okay to be worried or afraid about the future; it’s not okay to watch the fish rot and do nothing about it.

What Is the Stinky Fish Canvas?

Identifying the stinky fish is an effective exercise for both individuals and groups to face the issues that are getting in their way of success. The Stinky Fish Canvas helps teams identify four types of issues:

- What everybody is thinking but no one is saying (the so-called silent problems)
- The uncertainties that make people feel that they lost control (the unknowns)
- Things that are making people feel nervous or lose their focus (the anxieties)
- The emotions that get in the way and paralyze us (fear)

This exercise can be used to address overall team tensions or during a particular difficult period.

Instruction:

- Introduce the goal of the exercise. Set a safe space for people to be candid and speak up. Clarify that the intention is to uncover silent problems so that the team can solve them. It’s not a venting session, though.
- Share one canvas with each participant. Let each one fill theirs on their own; providing post-its and markers so people can write things without filtering and also move things around.
- Ask people to put all of the canvases up on the wall.
- One by one, allow all participants to share theirs.
- Discuss commonalities, tensions, and contradictions. Prioritize the key issues that the team wants to address. Use color dots for voting. Give each participant three votes (the

issue that's hurting us the most, the one that's the easiest to fix, and the one that will help us the most).

- You can then move on to brainstorming solutions or table them and follow up.

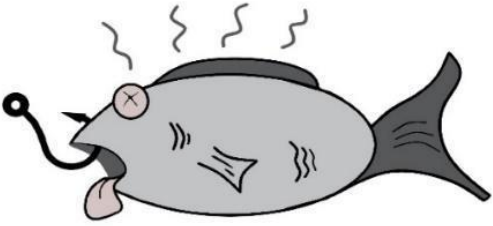
Depending on the complexity or sensitivity, you might need to set the right context for this activity to be more successful. Wrap up the session by reminding the team about the importance of speaking up. It's vital to build a practice of addressing issues before they become a stinky fish.

Template:

UNCOVER THE STINKY FISH

Speaking up is the first step to solve silent problems

Team name
Date

<p>What are your uncertainties?</p>	<p>What's making you feel afraid or anxious?</p>
	
<p>What is everybody thinking and no one is saying?</p>	<p>What are the past issues we can't get over?</p>

This work is adapted from Hiper Island's Stinky Fish icebreaker.
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Created by Gustavo Razzetti
FearlessCulture - V.1.1

www.fearlessculture.design




Figure 5, Source: www.fearlessculture.design/blog-posts/uncover-the-stinky-fish-canvas

Tips for organizations to ensure safety in the workplace for trainers (including during and after the COVID-19 pandemic)

Source: Get Impactly Inc., <https://www.getimpactly.com/post/psychological-safety-exercises>

Creating psychologically safe work environments is critical to not only basic human decency, but retention of employees.

✓ Check-in on Your Employees

Check in on your employees' first thing in the morning to ensure they feel valued and heard. According to Emily Axelrod "How you enter a space and how you leave a space is as important as what happens in the space."

You should invite each member to share what (mindset) they're bringing to the table before the work conversation starts — one at a time. Such a practice forms an imperative step among the psychological safety exercises and allows people to be fully present and feel listened to. It reinforces collective trust, gives everyone a voice, and reminds us that we're human.

✓ Encourage All to Speak

Encouraging employees to speak is an important part of exercises for psychological safety. Oftentimes, only half the employees actively engage in team meetings or casual conversations. In most organizations, 80% of the conversations are dominated by only 20% of the participants. Not only are the employees supposed to feel safe, equally important is making them feel heard. An encouraging conversation can have moving effects. It can make the employees aloof from fears, yield greater performance and most of all, foster a healthy mindset.

✓ Constructive Feedback

Giving feedback on an employee's work encourages the motive of furthering exercises for psychological safety and forms a healthy culture. In addition to helping motivate and make them feel valued, feedback also helps trainers to develop their skills and competencies. All of this positively impacts work performance. The feedback does not necessarily have to be based on work stuff. It could be based on the smallest things, including their dressing sense, kindness, or helping nature. It's clear that positive feedback is highly motivating and facilitates the growth of a healthier, more supportive and safe working environment.

✓ Give Recognition

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An educational organization that acknowledges its employees' work is sure to be successful in making its psychological safety exercises a success. Appreciating the hard work of your employees encourages them to elevate their performance level. This is known as positive reinforcement under operant conditioning in the field of psychology.

✓ Be Respectful

Mutual respect, understanding, and empathy form the basis for a psychologically safe working environment. These traits help generate a cooperative workforce and bring to force a welcoming space.

✓ Give Voice to the Unheard

Take note of employees who are least active in group settings or meetings and have a one-on-one talk with them to address the issue. Even in the meeting, ask them for their opinion which will not only bring forth innovative ideas but also create a sense of belonging, invaluable for fostering a psychologically safe environment.

✓ Empathy is Key

More often than not, we know nothing about what is going on with our colleagues. Co-workers should be able to empathize with each other on work as well as personal problems. This practice will build trust and empower the silence to uncover. The more we get to know and understand our colleagues, the more we can trust each other.

By implementing the abovementioned exercises and tips, the module ensures that the sense of safety in the workplace of educators (even in the context of a pandemic) is supported.

1.2.3.Module 3 - Family environment and dynamics of family relationships

This module focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and distance learning period on the family environment and dynamics of family relationships of trainers and trainees. It presents valuable exercises to promote better quality of family environment and family relationships in the context of distance learning and even after the pandemic (in both target groups). The module supports the overall goal of the programs, namely supporting the mental health and well-being of students and teachers.



Whether biological or chosen, it's our family members that we rely on for support. But like all relationships, there are dynamics at play. Family dynamics can significantly impact mental health in both positive and negative ways.

Family dynamics can strongly influence how we see ourselves, others, and the world around us. Plus, they influence our behaviors, well-being, and work relationships. Our families are where we first learn to relate to others. Various factors influence our family dynamics, including: Family members' ages, Family members' personalities, The relationship between the parents of a family, The job requirements of working parents, Secure or insecure family attachments and other.

The exercises are included because studies suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected teachers' and students' family relationships and family environment and reduced their overall quality. For example, Calvano et al., 2021 suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic brought about worldwide challenges that had a profound impact on family dynamics, relationships and routines. This is a relevant finding because of all influences on the development of children and adolescents, the family system is among the most proximal and important ones (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

The results from another study (Cassinat et al., 2021) indicated that family chaos increased with the onset of pandemic-related shutdowns and that the level of chaos within a family during the shutdowns had implications for changes in family relationship qualities. Specifically, higher levels of family chaos during the pandemic mitigated observed increases in parental knowledge and were associated with declines in parental autonomy granting. Family chaos during pandemic-related shutdowns also was associated with increases in maternal-child conflict, paternal-child conflict, and sibling conflict as well as decreases in paternal-child intimacy, sibling intimacy, and sibling disclosure. Overall, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with increased strain and commotion within many households, and these changes had implications for multiple family relationships.

Thus, both trainees and trainers need better ways to improve the quality of the family environment, dynamics and relationships, especially in the context of distance learning and the pandemic, and even after their end to mitigate the consequences. That is why, we included the below exercises. Most of the activities in this module require little time, preparation or equipment. They can be modified to fit the knowledge and skills of a variety of age groups.



These exercises provide a way for trainers / teachers to increase the quality of their family relationships, dynamics and family environment.

RERERENCES:

Cassinat, J. R., Whiteman, S. D., Serang, S., Dotterer, A. M., Mustillo, S. A., Maggs, J. L., & Kelly, B. C. (2021). Changes in family chaos and family relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic: Evidence from a longitudinal study. *Developmental psychology*, 57(10), 1597–1610.

Exercises for trainees:

Exercise 1:

NAME OF EXERCISE	A Circle of Respect
AIMS	To understand the concept of respect in family relationships and not only.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 4 – 12.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Brainstorming, poster, art activity, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Students to have understood the concept of respect in family relationships and not only.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Flip chart, art supplies (pencils, markers, etc.).
LOCATION	Classroom, or another place with free space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Western Health, Healthy Relationships Resource Kit https://westernhealth.nl.ca/ (inspired from and adapted)
INSTRUCTION	<p>With students sitting in a circle, introduce the concept of respect as part of healthy relationships (including family relationships. You might also mention the importance of respecting the environment in which we live.</p> <p>Have each student contribute an idea about respect (e.g., what it means to them, an example of a respectful behaviour, talk about how it feels to be respected, how they show respect to friends and family, how teachers show respect to students etc.). If students cannot think of ideas you may need to provide some prompts by asking questions about their behaviour and experiences. The responses can be flip charted (students can help with this) and left with the</p>

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	<p>class or group as a reminder of the activity. Students could also be encouraged to create a poster or drawing to show their interpretation of respect.</p>
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Exercise 2:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Giving Compliments & Preparing Healing Bracelets for family members
AIMS	To become better able to give and receive compliments to strengthen family relationships.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 4 – 12.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Role play, art activity (preparing bracelets), discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Improved skills to give and receive compliments to strengthen family relationships.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Beads, Wire (for the bracelets)
LOCATION	Classroom, or another place with free space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Western Health, Healthy Relationships Resource Kit https://westernhealth.nl.ca/ (inspired from and adapted)
INSTRUCTION	In this activity students will have an opportunity to practice giving and receiving compliments to family members. Tell them that when they are stressed out, paying someone a compliment or doing something nice for others can help relieve their own stress. Compliments are a way of praising someone or showing appreciation and admiration for who they are as a person or for the things they do. While it is good to give and receive all types of compliments, the ones that have the greatest impact are those that emphasize a person's ability or good qualities. Provide the

students with examples of these types of compliments.

Write each student's name on a separate card and place the cards in a bag or box. Ask each to select one card. Ensure that no one has their own name. The participants will do two things for the person whose name is on the card they

have selected. First, each is asked to write a compliment for the person whose name is on the card she has chosen (e.g., "You are funny"). Tell the students not to write superficial or "surface" comments (e.g., "I like your hair"), but rather ones that capture the person's abilities or qualities. Explain how students can apply the same strategy for family members.

Second, using the materials provided, each participant will create a healing bracelet for their family member. Distribute: Colour Meanings to help them choose colours (bearing in mind that the qualities represented

by a given colour may vary between cultural contexts and groups). Once this is completed, the card and the bracelet are placed in an envelope to be given to the family member.

After the activity, have a brief discussion about why it is important to be able to accept a compliment.

Colour Meanings:

Red: Pleasure, desire, vitality, will to win, love of sports and the survival instinct. The "warm" colours red, orange and yellow are considered stimulating colours.



	<p>Orange: Creativity, confidence, intuition, friendliness and the entrepreneurial spirit.</p> <p>Yellow: Enthusiasm, cheerfulness, sense of humour, fun, optimism and intellectuality.</p> <p>Green: Perseverance, patience, growth and healing. Green is also related to work, wealth and career.</p> <p>Blue: Freedom, strength and new beginnings. Blue skies mean optimism and better opportunities. Blue is cooling and relaxing. Blue symbolizes water, the source of life.</p> <p>Indigo: Wisdom, self-mastery and spiritual attainment. Indigo has an inward rather than an outward orientation.</p> <p>Violet: The psychological quality of transformation, transmutation and the balance of power and love. Additional meanings include charisma, charm and tolerance.</p>
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Exercise 3:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Ad for a Family Member
AIMS	To support the positive family environment of students via identifying and encouraging good personal qualities.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 7 – 12.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	5-6 participants per group.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming, practical activity.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Supported the positive family environment of students via identifying and encouraging good personal qualities.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	List of qualities.
LOCATION	Classroom, or another place with free space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired from and adapted by: Western Health, Healthy Relationships Resource Kit https://westernhealth.nl.ca/ Kramer S, Qualities of Friendship, http://www.susankramer.com/friendshipqualities.html
INSTRUCTION	This is a small group activity where groups are instructed to use their creativity in developing an “Advertisement for a family member”. You will need to divide the participants into small groups (5-6 participants per group). Encourage students to think about the qualities they would like a family member to have and how those qualities would contribute to the development of a healthy relationship. Acknowledge that not everyone

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values the same qualities so groups may have very different ideas. Encourage individuals within a group to come to an agreement about the qualities while noting the qualities there was disagreement about. Groups can be encouraged to be creative in the development of the ad. They might simply write it and read it out to the larger group. Some groups might use a poster or act out a scenario as in a TV commercial.

As the trainer you might assign different approaches to each group to keep things interesting. Explore why some people value different qualities when appropriate in the larger group discussion. You can provide a list of qualities or at least have it available if groups have trouble coming up with ideas.

Detailed Instructions:

Introduce the activity to the group.

“A list of qualities of a family member will be created using group or individual brainstorming. You will be assigned to a small group to develop an advertisement for a family member. Discuss your ideas within your small group and come to an agreement on the five most important qualities. If there is disagreement make note of this but you need agreement to include the quality in the ad. Once you have agreed on the qualities you will include, develop the ad and a creative way to present back to the larger group so that it is entertaining or interesting. Finally think about how those qualities would contribute to the development of a healthy relationship and have someone in the group present that information. Be prepared to give reasons for your decisions about the five most important qualities. You

will have about 30 minutes to do all of this.”

Option 1: Have each participant take 2 minutes to create their list of qualities.

Option 2: Have the whole group brainstorm a list of qualities, set a goal of listing 10 or 15 qualities.

- Divide participants into small groups using a method you are comfortable with.

- Have each group choose a discussion leader and a recorder/reporter. Explain that the leader’s job is to help make sure everyone participates in the discussion.

The recorder/reporter takes notes of key points and reports back to the larger group. This role will be different depending on how the group decides to present their ad to the rest of the participants.

- Provide the leader with the participant handout and a time frame for the discussion depending on the time you have available. Leave 15 mins or so for the large group discussion after the small group activity.

- As the groups work through the discussion you as the facilitator will circulate the room to encourage people to stay on task. Check in with each group when the allotted time is half used. Give a two-minute warning to encourage groups to finish up their discussion in the allotted time.

- Have the groups take turns sharing their Advertisement with the larger group.

After all groups have presented their Ad ask a question to each group about how they made the decision to include those qualities. Explore how participants see these qualities as contributing to healthy relationships.

Note the similarities and differences in the qualities



	<p>and the ads. Note that respect for differences of opinions and ideas is part of respect and healthy relationships. Ensure that you provide some positive comment to each group. You may want to comment on the respectful work required by participants in developing the advertisement.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Thank participants for the opportunity to work with them. Encourage them to note these positive qualities in their family member and to compliment each other occasionally! If there is time you could explore ideas for building on this activity in future sessions. The participants might come up with some ideas.</p> <p>List of Qualities (edit for relevant age group)</p> <p>Honest; Kind; Caring; Fair; Compassionate; Assertive; Easy going; Respectful; Common interests; Good Listener; Pleasant or Cheerful; Fun to be with; Supportive; Helpful; Loyal; Trustworthy; Dependable; Has good boundaries; Respectable/Respectful; Intelligent.</p>
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Exercise 4:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Family Circle
AIMS	To explore some of the reasons that conflicts arise between teenagers and their parents and to discuss strategies for resolving them.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 7 – 12.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Explored some of the reasons that conflicts arise between teenagers and their parents and acquired strategies for resolving them.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Family Circle Cards, Paper, Pens or Pencils.
LOCATION	Classroom, or another place with free space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired and adapted by: Western Health, Healthy Relationships Resource Kit https://westernhealth.nl.ca/ Just for the Health of It! Health Curriculum Activities, The Centre for Applied Research in Education. www.phdirect.com
INSTRUCTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divide the class into eight groups and ask the group members to sit in a circle. 2. Have one group member choose a Family Circle Card, then return to his or her group. Tell the group members the topic that was chosen. 3. Tell students they have 5 minutes to write down as many examples of conflict for the given category that they can think of (ex.: for the category of appearance, students might write parents hate my long hair,

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parents don't like boys wearing earrings, teens want to wear jeans with holes in them to school and parents disapprove).

4. When all groups have completed the task, have each group tell which category was chosen and give their examples.

5. Next, discuss the nature of these conflicts and ask students for ideas for resolving conflicts. Choose the best strategies and write them on the board.

Healthy Relationships Resource Kit

Family Circle Cards

Conflict Appearance	Conflict Homework & School Work
Conflict Choice of Friends	Conflict Boyfriend or Girlfriend
Conflict Music & Interests	Conflict Rules & Curfew
Conflict Chores & Neatness	Conflict Cell Phone/Computer Use & Time Away from Family

Figure 6, Source: <https://westernhealth.nl.ca/>



Exercises for families (applicable to the families of trainees and trainers):

References: Strengthening Family Ties: A Workbook of Activities Designed to Strengthen Family Relationships. Utah State University, 2000.

Healthy families have a balance of doing things together and doing things alone. Family members have their own individuality, but they also have learned that the real test of their commitment to their family is in the amount of time they spend together.

Spending time together in family activities can promote unity and build relationships of trust among family members. This trust develops as a family works together, having common goals and values. These trusting family relationships can help families survive the tough times (such as the pandemic and distance learning), as well as strengthen and support individual family members through their own personal struggles.

The balance of individuality and unity can be difficult to maintain. When family members behave without considering others in the family, it weakens the sense of family unity, stability, and trust. One way to improve family unity and build trust is to plan and participate in regular family activities. The below activity can help to foster more family identity, and build relationships of trust.

Exercise 5:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Spotlights
AIMS	To recognize differences in individuals. To celebrate each family member's uniqueness. To give each member of the family an opportunity to be in the spotlight, and also provide a chance to interview another family member to learn his/her talents, likes, dislikes, and accomplishments.
TARGET GROUP	Trainers and their families or trainees and their families.
DURATION	About 10 minutes to interview, 5 minutes to present.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	No restriction.
USED METHODS	Interview, brainstorming, game, collage.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Recognized differences in individuals. Celebrated each family member's uniqueness. Gave each member of the family an opportunity to be in the spotlight, and also provided a chance to interview another family member to learn his/her talents, likes, dislikes, and accomplishments.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Lists with family members' names and a hat.
LOCATION	At home or some other family-friendly space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1456&context=extension_histall Based on and inspired by Strengthening Family Ties: A Workbook of Activities Designed to Strengthen Family Relationships. Utah State University, 2000.
INSTRUCTION	Strong families recognize differences in individuals. Through this activity you can celebrate each person's uniqueness. The plan is to give each member of the

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family an opportunity to be in the spotlight, and also provide a chance to interview another family member to learn his/her talents, likes, dislikes, and accomplishments.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

Put the names of family members in a hat and ask someone to draw two names. The first will be the interviewer and the second the interviewee. Instruct the interviewer that he/she has until _____ (specify date and time) to accomplish the interview. Provide him/her with a few sample questions such as the ones provided below, or you can create your own.

/ What is your favorite thing to eat?

/ What subjects did you like to study in school?

/ Do you have a favorite sport you like to play or watch?

/ What would you like to be when you grow up?

/ What is the best birthday present you ever received?

Rules:

1 Use polite audience etiquette.

2 Practice listening.

3 Do not be critical.

On the given date and time, whether it be at the dinner table with dessert or at a special family picnic, the interviewer presents a spotlight for a special family member. Continue the spotlight until everyone in the family has had a chance to be in the spot light, including mom and dad, and maybe even grandma and grandpa. Other ideas include making the spotlight an anonymous surprise to see if other family members can guess who it is at the presentation, or



	<p>making a collage representing the answers to questions to display on the refrigerator until next family member is spotlighted.</p> <p>SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Did you learn anything you did not already know?• Who is going to be in the spotlight next?
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Healthy families enjoy being together and make the effort to plan activities and do things together. Doing things together as a family builds family relationships and in turn, family strength. People sometimes say that it's not the quantity of time that is important, but the quality of time.

In addition to strong family relationships, healthy families also make use of support networks. Support networks are connections that a family has with people outside of the family, such as relatives, neighbors, friends, social groups, community officials, and church members. Through these support networks, family members are able to interact with others and expand their circle of friends. These networks also can provide great strength and support when families are in need of help.

Exercise 6:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Family Traditions
AIMS	To help the family see what traditions already exist in their family and decide what new ones might be started to ensure family stability.
TARGET GROUP	Trainers and their families or trainees and their families.
DURATION	Half hour discussion time and time to do the traditions, depending on what you choose.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	No restriction.
USED METHODS	Discussion, practical activity.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Helped the family see what traditions already exist in their family and decided what new ones might be started to ensure family stability.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	A piece of paper to list the traditions in your family.
LOCATION	At home or some other family-friendly space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1456&context=extension_histall Based on and inspired by Strengthening Family Ties: A Workbook of Activities Designed to Strengthen Family Relationships. Utah State University, 2000.
INSTRUCTION	Traditions give us a feeling of security — an important thing for adults and children. They help us feel that the world is a good place and life is worth living. They can be especially important when there are transitions in family life — a job change, a move, an illness, or divorce. They provide a feeling that even though some things have changed, there are still things that we can count on. Traditions give a feeling of “rightness.” The

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purpose of this activity is to help the family see what traditions already exist in their family and decide what new ones might be started to ensure family stability.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Give everyone in your family a piece of paper and ask them to list the traditions in your family. These can include some things done every day and others done only once a year.

2. Compare lists. You might be surprised to hear what traditions others think are important. Add any others you are reminded of as you talk together.

3. Evaluate. Are there some everyone would like to do more? Are there some that are no longer enjoyable.

4. Add to the list. Is there something you would like to become a new tradition? It can be anything your family does that says, “Our family is special”. Starting new traditions can be especially important when the family situation has changed — such as when a new stepfamily has been formed.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- Did the traditions you chose help you feel good about your family?
- Do you plan to continue the traditions you chose in your future families?
- If everything did not happen as you wanted, what can you change about the tradition to make it better?
- Decide if there is an age limit to the traditions you choose. Make sure that the traditions are not outgrown by different family members. Re-evaluate the traditions periodically.

Exercise 7:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Circle of Friends
AIMS	To build a circle of friends for the family, to increase family support.
TARGET GROUP	Trainers and their families or trainees and their families.
DURATION	60 to 90 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	No restriction.
USED METHODS	Discussion, plan, practical activity.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Built a circle of friends for the family, increased family support.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Lists and pencils /pens.
LOCATION	At home or some other family-friendly space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1456&context=extension_histall Based on and inspired by Strengthening Family Ties: A Workbook of Activities Designed to Strengthen Family Relationships. Utah State University, 2000.
INSTRUCTION	<p>It is important to have friends to turn to when you need to talk about the things that are happening in life. These friends can be there to support you throughout your whole life. The purpose of this activity is to get together and have fun with your circle of friends.</p> <p>ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:</p> <p>Have each member of the family plan to host an activity for a group of friends. It is important that parents also take time to foster individual or couple friendships. Identify about two to four of your good friends. Then call them and invite them for an activity. This could include dinner, a picnic, playing a sport with them that</p>



they enjoy, like golf, or doing something your group enjoys like shopping, rollerblading, or just spending time together talking.

Let your friends know that you appreciate them and that their friendship is important to you. Having a good friendship takes time and effort. Family members of all ages can plan different activities that their friends enjoy doing.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How did it feel to get your friends together?
- Did you have a good time doing your activity?
- What specific qualities do you like about your friends?
- Do you plan to meet again and make it a scheduled event?

Tips for trainers:

Source: Perry E, *Family dynamics can lift you up (or drag you down)* (2021),
<https://www.betterup.com/blog/family-dynamics>

Let's take a closer look at some of the most common characteristics of healthy family dynamics:

✓ Open communication

Each member of the family should be encouraged to speak for themselves, rather than there being one person whose word is the law. There should be open communication rather than one person acting as an interpreter or message carrier.

✓ Emotional support

Emotional support is when everyone is allowed to communicate their anxieties, fears, and sorrows. Emotional support also enhances each family member's ability to care for themselves. For example, a child who is being bullied at school feels comfortable enough to tell their family what is happening. Or an individual who has just been laid off feels comfortable asking their partner for help in looking for a new job.

✓ Shared responsibility and authority

Shared responsibility and authority mean one or both parents aren't responsible for everything. They also are not the only ones involved in making decisions. The hallmarks of shared power and responsibility include respect and inclusivity. It also means creating opportunities for children or other family members to lead.

✓ Expressing interest in each other's lives

By taking an interest in each other's lives, family members make each other feel valued and included. For example, family members ask each other about their day when they eat dinner together, and they support each other's important events.

✓ Providing support and discipline to children

This characteristic of healthy family dynamics sees parents taking an active role in the children's lives. Parents should discipline children in a positive way by replacing punishments that frighten them with strategies that encourage better behavior. For example, instead of demanding them to brush their teeth, use encouraging language. "I know you don't want to brush your teeth, but we can do it together."

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✓ Shared respect

Allowing everyone to have a voice is an important part of family dynamics. If conflict does arise, family members work to resolve it rather than punishing those whose opinions differ.

✓ Creating a safe, loving environment

A safe and loving environment is one in which parents set good examples, stay positive and display affection. These family dynamics help members nurture relationships and build strong human connections.

How to step back from toxic family dynamics:

Some family dynamics are toxic and can deeply affect your emotional and mental well-being. Ways to step back from dysfunctional family dynamics include:

✓ Setting boundaries in your family relationships

Some behaviors are not acceptable within a family. You need to set boundaries that let family members know which behaviors are not acceptable. The key to setting boundaries is to be firm but kind. Listen to what your family members have to say, but seek to take care of yourself.

✓ Expressing your concerns

Each family member should communicate their feelings about the family dynamics. They also should offer possible solutions. Everyone should be able to express their feelings without being criticized or interrupted by other members.

✓ Practicing self-care

The negative effect on your self-esteem could lead to you forgetting about self-care. One element of a self-care plan is taking time out for yourself, so you can do things that make you feel good about yourself. Another element of self-care is to identify and deal with toxic family members.

✓ Seeking professional help

Dealing with toxic family dynamics isn't easy. You may experience feelings of guilt or shame. Or you may avoid dealing with confronting members of your family in an effort to keep the peace. You might not know where to begin. Seeking professional help from a counselor or family therapist can provide you with the support you need to take those first steps.

✓ Developing your emotional regulation skills

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- Toxic family dynamics can affect our emotional regulation skills. Reacting impulsively to emotions at work that mimic toxic family dynamics is one example. Emotional regulation involves regulating your actions and responses triggered by emotions. You can develop your skills through self-awareness, mindful breathing, and self-compassion.

- ✓ Determining the root of toxic behavior

Identifying toxic behaviors and communicating your concerns about them isn't enough. You should try to determine the root of those behaviors, too. Some toxic behaviors that affect family dynamics exist because no one sets any boundaries. Other behaviors may be a result of mental health concerns.

- ✓ Understand your family dynamics

For many of us, our family dynamics include both positive and negative elements. Understanding past and present family dynamics is an essential part of personal transformation.

By implementing the abovementioned exercises and tips for trainees and trainers, the module ensures that the quality of family environment, dynamics and relationships of the target groups is improved.

1.2.4. Module 4 - Skills and methods for coping with stress and burnout

Module 4 “Skills and methods for coping with stress and burnout” focuses on activities related to developing skills and acquiring methods for coping with stress and burnout (for both trainees and trainers). It presents valuable exercises to deal with these issues among the main target groups and supports the overall goal of the programs included in the Methodology, namely supporting the mental health and well-being of trainers and trainees.

The exercises are included because studies suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic and the distance learning period has greatly affected trainers and trainees' feelings of stress and burnout (the levels have risen significantly since then). For example, Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. (2023) suggest that teachers worldwide experienced a high rate of professional burnout and stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. This had implications not only for the teachers themselves, but also for the quality of the education they were able to provide to students. In addition to this, Toubasi et al. (2023) had similar findings for students who experienced stress and academic burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic and the distance learning period.



Thus, adequate measures are needed to support the mental well-being of students and teachers (in particular, decreasing the levels of stress and burnout caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the period of distance learning). That is why, we included the below exercises.

Most of the activities in this module require little time, preparation or equipment. These exercises provide a way for trainers and trainees to decrease their levels of stress and burnout (professional or academic).

RERERENCES:

Ozamiz-Etxebarria, N., Legorburu Fernnandez, I., Lipnicki, D. M., Idoiaga Mondragon, N., & Santabárbara, J. (2023). Prevalence of Burnout among Teachers during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Meta-Analysis. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 20(6), 4866.

Toubasi, A. A., Hasuneh, M. M., Al Karmi, J. S., Haddad, T. A., & Kalbouneh, H. M. (2023). Burnout among university students during distance learning period due to the COVID-19 pandemic: A cross sectional study at the University of Jordan. *International journal of psychiatry in medicine*, 58(3), 263–283.

Exercise 1:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Peer Sharing (Co-listening)
AIMS	Students have the opportunity to share thoughts and feelings within a safe and structured activity. The aims are to teach and practice listening skills and reduce stress.
TARGET GROUP	Students from grades 3 - 12
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Taught and practiced listening skills and reduced stress in students.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	No materials are needed for this activity.
LOCATION	Classroom or other open space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	School Health Programs Department Stress Reduction Activities for Students (2014) https://www.edutopia.org/sites/default/files/resources/s-tw-glenview-stress-reduction-activities.pdf (based on and inspired by)
INSTRUCTION	This is a two-part activity that provides students an opportunity to: 1) relieve stress by talking about what they are thinking or feeling in the moment, while being intentionally listened to, and; 2) talk about opportunities and solutions related to the topic at hand to help move beyond current feelings of stress and/or tension. The activity involves one student talking while his/her partner(s) listens without comment. Set the stage with students by establishing rules for

safe sharing. For example: Be respectful, no teasing, information shared is not talked about once activity ends (stays in the classroom), respect all feelings, ideas, opinions. Before beginning, model the activity using yourself and student volunteers to clearly demonstrate the activity.

Part One:

1. Students should be in pairs; have students find a partner (e.g. you can number off students 1, 2, 1, 2...).
2. Student #1 talks while student #2 simply listens (e.g. ask Student 1 to share how they are feeling today and why? Or how they are feeling at the moment Or about any concerns or worries they are experiencing).
3. After 1-3 minutes the students switch roles and student #2 talks while student #1 listens for another 1-3 minutes (Student #2 now talks about the same question, e.g. how they are feeling today and why?).

Part Two:

4. After the pairs are done sharing, group students in triads (groups of three; again, you may number off students 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3 ...).
5. Student #1 talks while students #2 and #3 listen (e.g., ask Student 1 to talk about opportunities and solutions related to current issue or stressors he/she is experiencing or concerned about).
6. Every 1-3 minutes switch until each student in the group has a turn to talk.
7. OPTIONAL: Students may share with whole class their experience of sharing thoughts and feelings while being listened to and what it is like to listen intentionally without comment.



	<p>8. Check in with students to see if they feel any sense of relief, calmness, focus or less stressed as a result of the activity.</p> <p>Extension:</p> <p>Teacher may follow-up by having students practice peer sharing at other times. Encourage students to practice this method on their own amongst themselves for mutual support.</p>
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Exercise 2:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Silent Ball
AIMS	Students to utilize a fun, safe, quiet physical activity to relieve tension/stress.
TARGET GROUP	The activity can be adapted for all levels, but is particularly useful with elementary and middle school students.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Physical Activity, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Learned a fun, safe, quiet physical activity to relieve tension/stress.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Use one or more Nerf ball(s), gator skin ball(s), or lightweight ball(s). If you do not have one in your classroom, please see your physical education instructor or appropriate staff person at your school site.
LOCATION	open space
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	School Health Programs Department Stress Reduction Activities for Students (2014) https://www.edutopia.org/sites/default/files/resources/s-tw-glenview-stress-reduction-activities.pdf (based on and inspired)
INSTRUCTION	The teacher introduces the idea that physical activity is an excellent stress management tool and explains the rules of silent ball: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> x The teacher is the only referee regarding bad passes and missed catches x Talking or making sounds is an out

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- x Missed catch or bad pass is an out
- x A “good” throw is within arm’s length of the intended catcher and does not include “fast balls” (model good throws for students).
- x Students that are out must remain quiet at their desks and not interfere with the game in any way

Instructions:

1. No one can talk or make a sound; that is the object of the game.
2. Students may stand by their desks or position students in any arrangement to facilitate tossing the ball to each other around the classroom.
3. Make a good throw to a classmate; explain that students cannot throw back to the person who threw to them.
4. If student misses the ball or makes a bad pass, student is out and must sit at his/her desk until the next round.
5. Play until all students are seated; last two are the champs!

Extension:

The teacher may follow-up by using this activity with the class at other times, such as a rainy day. It may be useful to calm and focus students in transitions (e.g. after returning from lunch/recess to the classroom), to break up an extended/lengthy lesson or as an incentive for successful completion of a task/lesson.

Have follow-up discussion with students regarding the health benefits and stress management benefits of fun, safe physical activities. Guiding questions:

- x Activity provides a way for the body to relieve



	<p>tension and frustration; what are your favorite physical activities? (e.g., basketball, running, hiking, swimming, dancing, etc.)</p> <p>x How does it feel to be tense/frustrated/stressed? Where in your body do you feel tension or stress?</p> <p>x How does it feel to be relaxed and calm? How does your body feel when you are relaxed and calm?</p> <p>x Which of these activities can you do alone?</p> <p>x How do you feel after doing your favorite physical activity?</p>
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Exercise 3:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Paper Mosaics
AIMS	Students to learn to make paper mosaics as a creative stress reduction activity.
TARGET GROUP	The activity can be adapted for all levels, but is particularly useful with elementary and middle school students.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Art Activity, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Students to have learned to make paper mosaics as a creative stress reduction activity.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	One 8.5"x11" or 9"x12" piece of colored construction paper; Colored construction paper scraps or discarded magazines; Pencil; Scissors; Glue; Pictures of mosaics from books, internet and/or teacher's samples.
LOCATION	Classroom.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	School Health Programs Department Stress Reduction Activities for Students (2014) https://www.edutopia.org/sites/default/files/resources/s-tw-glenview-stress-reduction-activities.pdf (based on and inspired by)
INSTRUCTION	The teacher introduces the concept of mosaics as a creative, calming and fun stress reduction strategy. Show students pictures of mosaics from books or from the internet. Ask students about their own experiences in making mosaics or seeing mosaics in their community/city. Point out very simple "mosaics" students can easily relate to, for example, bathroom

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ceramic tiles (this gives a clear picture of how “paper tiles” will be arranged on their drawings). The teacher reviews materials to be used and general rules applied to this type of activity in the classroom.

Instructions:

1. Students clear their desks of books, folders, etc.
2. Using a pencil, students draw the outline of an object, shape or scene on a 8.5”x11” or 9”x12” piece of paper.
3. Students then cut small colored square paper “tiles” from the scrap construction paper or the magazines (tear out pages you would like to use and then cut the pictures up into little square “tiles”).
4. Explain to students that each outline should be filled with tiles of the same color.
5. Working with one shape/area/figure at a time, students apply glue to the inside of their outlined shapes, and then place the paper “tiles” in the shape/outline, leaving a small space between each paper “tile” (for some shapes, students may have to cut “customized tiles” to effectively fill in the shape).
6. Students repeat the glue and placement of “tiles” in each shape/outline of their drawings until the mosaic is complete.

Extension:

Follow-up by having students share their mosaics with the class and facilitating a discussion about what students liked and found challenging about the activity. Make connection between the activity and stress reduction and discuss the impact of the activity with students.

Templates:

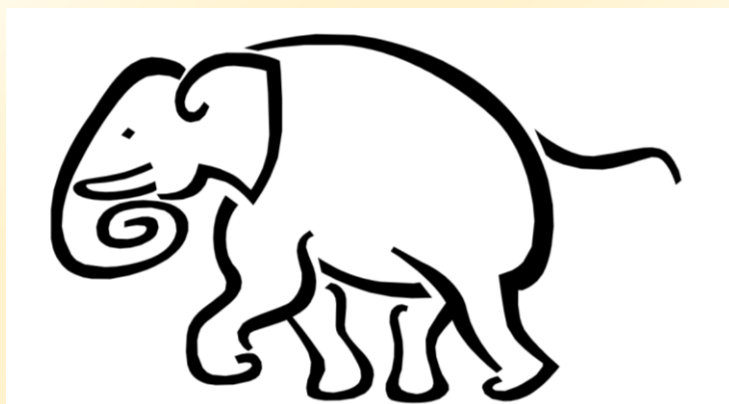


Figure 7, Source: <https://www.edutopia.org/sites/default/files/resources/stw-glenview-stress-reduction-activities.pdf>



Figure 8, Source: <https://www.edutopia.org/sites/default/files/resources/stw-glenview-stress-reduction-activities.pdf>

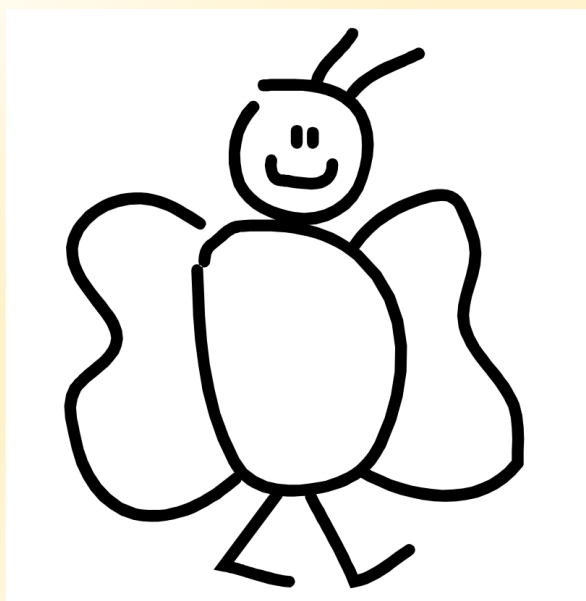


Figure 9, Source: <https://www.edutopia.org/sites/default/files/resources/stw-glenview-stress-reduction-activities.pdf>

Exercise 4:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Simple meditation to prevent burnout
AIMS	Students to learn meditating to prevent school / academic burnout.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Meditation activity.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Students to have learned meditating to prevent school / academic burnout.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Seated exercise in a chair or on the floor.
LOCATION	Classroom.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	School Health Programs Department Stress Reduction Activities for Students (2014) https://www.edutopia.org/sites/default/files/resources/stw-glenview-stress-reduction-activities.pdf (based on and inspired by)
INSTRUCTION	<p>Introduce students to the activity by talking about the widespread practice of meditation throughout the world. Check in with students by show of hands how many have done meditation before (e.g. in martial arts practice, at a temple, in a church). Explain to students that through this activity they will calm their body, mind and spirit.</p> <p>OPTIONAL: Have students take their heart rate before the activity begins and then after the meditation exercise.</p>

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Instructions:

Warm up (Optional: take heart rate and note it)

1. Begin by sitting comfortably, balanced, and relaxed (if seated in a chair, feet on the ground). Breathe easy and from the abdomen /” belly breathing” (not chest breathing).

2. Practice a few deep breaths with the group.

3. Rotate the head in easy, slow circles; change direction and rotate in slow, easy circles.

4. Look up; tilt your head way back. Look down; put your chin on your chest.

5. Drop your arms and hands to the side and shake them gently and easily.

6. Raise your feet off the floor and gently and easily shake the knees.

7. Straighten your spine while meditating.

Practice (repeat two times)

8. This is done SILENTLY.

9. When teacher says, “Close your eyes”, close your eyes. [Once your eyes are closed, simply relax your mind and do not make an effort to think about anything; slowly your mind will clear and relax].

When teacher says, “Open your eyes”, open your eyes.

10. Now, sit straight up, relaxed, and balanced.

11. “Close your eyes” (two minutes elapse)

12. “Open your eyes”

13. Check in with students: how was that? (Students may give thumbs up or thumbs down.) Now everyone practice it again.

14. Repeat exercise: “Close your eyes”...two minutes



	<p>elapse... “Open your eyes” (Optional: take heart rate and compare to heart rate before meditation)</p> <p>15. Check in with students</p> <p>Extension:</p> <p>Teacher may follow-up by having students practice meditation at other times during class. Encourage students to practice meditation on their own to develop the habit of using meditation for stress reduction, burnout prevention and overall health.</p>
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Exercises for coping with stress and burnout for trainers:

Exercise 1: Creating Affirmations

An affirmation is simply a statement of what you want. They are most effective if they are personal, positive and in the present tense. Also, they need to be practiced, so try saying them several times a day, out loud if possible.

Here are a couple of examples:

I am healthy.

I work well with many different kinds of people.

I have friends who love me.

I try hard.

I am a loving son, daughter, etc.

Now you write 3 positive affirmations for yourself. Remember – personal, positive and present tense!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Exercise 2: I Am Grateful

This exercise is particularly helpful as the day is wearing on and your sense of stress and frustration is rising. It is also an excellent sequence for relaxing and putting yourself in a pleasant frame of mind before you drift off to sleep.

A. Use a short form of progressive relaxation:

1. Curl fists, tighten biceps.
2. Wrinkle forehead, face like a walnut.
3. Arch back, take a deep breath.
4. Pull feet back; curl toes while tightening calves, thighs, and buttocks.

B. Reflect back over your day so far and select three things for which you feel grateful.

These do not have to be major events. For example, you may be grateful for the warm shower you took this morning, a colleague helping you, your child giving you a hug and telling you he loves you, a lovely sunrise, and so on. Take a moment to relive and enjoy these experiences.



C. Continue to think back over your day. Recall three things you did that you feel good about. Remember, these don't have to be major feats. For example, you may feel good about saying no to something you really didn't want to do, taking time for yourself to exercise or relax, doing something you had put off, or being supportive to someone you like. Take a moment to re-experience those positive moments.

Exercise 3: A Balanced Life Style

1. Calculate the number of hours you spend on studying.
2. Calculate the number of hours you spend socialising (including coffee breaks).
3. Calculate the number of hours you spend exercising.
4. Calculate the number of hours you spend doing paid work.

Now go back and calculate the same items, this time using the number of hours you would ideally like to spend on each item.

If you think there is an imbalance between what is ideal for a balanced life style and what you actually do, consider the following questions: What needs to change in your lifestyle? What might be the difficulties in changing? What help might you need to make changes?

Adapted from Davis, M., Eshelman, E.R. & McKay, M. (1995). The relaxation and stress reduction workbook, 4th edition. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.



Tips for teachers:

Based on Aguilar E, 5 Simple Activities to Help Teachers De-Stress and Boost Their Resilience, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., <https://www.wiley.com/learn/jossey-bass/5-simple-activities-to-help-teachers-de-stress.html>

Schools are stressful places. Regardless of whether you teach in a private school or in an underfunded school, teaching is emotional work and is inherently stressful and can lead to burnout. Resilience can substantially and dramatically increase your ability to manage the physical, emotional, or cognitive demands of teaching. And we can do a lot to boost our own individual resilience, improve our well-being, and reduce stress. Here are five simple ideas for self-care that can enhance your resilience so you can better manage the physical and emotional stressors of being an educator.

✓ Think of Three Good Things

Every night for one week, set aside 10 minutes before you go to sleep. Write down three things that went well today and why they went well. It is important that you have a physical record of what you wrote. The three things need not be earthshaking in importance (“First period was calm and focused”), but they can be important (“I was invited to present on a panel of science teachers”). Next to each positive event, answer the question “Why did this happen?”. At the end of the week, review the good things that happened each day, and write a summary story of the week.

✓ Experience the Zen of Coloring

There are lots of studies on the effectiveness of art therapy in reducing stress, and coloring seems to offer some similar benefits. Doodling is a way for people to organize their thoughts and to focus. But coloring offers that relief and mindfulness without the paralysis that a blank page can cause. It’s soothing. You don’t have to make too many decisions. There’s repetitive motion and limited space. Coloring patterns is like walking labyrinths. And in the end, you’ll have something pretty. You can quickly and easily find a page to color online. Print it out and color it to get a taste of this experience!

✓ Create a Joy Collage

This activity can help you gain insight into joy, which for many of us is an elusive emotion. Collect some magazines and a piece of heavy paper or cardboard, grab a bottle of glue, and

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find a place where you can spread out. Now, go through the magazines, tearing out images that represent joy for you. If you want, you can use scissors to cut them out, or you can tear the paper with your fingers, which can create a nice effect. Then, paste your collection of images onto the heavy paper or cardboard. The key to getting the most from this activity is not to spend too much time thinking about the images—go with your quick reactions. Let this be playful and fun and let yourself be drawn to whatever image speaks to you of the experience of joy.

✓ Write Morning Messages

Being anchored in the present moment helps you practice appreciation and see the bright spots. It also goes the other way: practicing gratitude can help you stay anchored in the present. We often think that happiness comes from big wins or achievements, but the sum total of all the little things is often greater than the big things. Focus on the little things by sending at least one thank-you email or text each morning for a week—two short minutes to take stock of the present and appreciate those who are making it better.

By implementing the abovementioned exercises and tips for trainees and trainers, the module ensures that the stress and burnout levels of both target groups are decreased.

1.3. Program 3 - Social needs

Program 3 “Social needs” refers to the third level of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Model (1943). Social needs (also known as belongingness needs) refer to a human emotional need for interpersonal relationships, affiliating, connectedness, and being part of a group. Examples of belongingness needs include friendship, intimacy, trust, acceptance, receiving and giving affection, and love. This need is especially strong in childhood and can override the need for safety as witnessed in children who cling to abusive parents.

The Program “Existential needs” consists of 3 modules focusing on: Sense of belonging and community during the pandemic (Module 1); Social isolation during distance learning (Module 2); and Skills for effective communication between trainers and trainees (Module 3).

The modules are very important for trainees and trainers as all those mentioned areas were affected negatively during the COVID-19 pandemic (in particular, due to the social isolation and distance learning which affected negatively communication, relationships and the sense of belonging). The aims are to increase the sense of belonging and community among trainers



and trainees, to deal effectively with social isolation among students and teachers which is due to distance learning, and to develop skills and competencies among the target groups for communicating effectively.

1.3.1. Module 1- Sense of belonging and community during the pandemic

This module addresses the direct impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and distance learning on the sense of belonging and community among trainers and trainees. It presents valuable exercises to promote feelings of belongingness among these target groups, with the main goal being supporting of the well-being and mental health of students and teachers.

The exercises are included because recent research has suggested that online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative influence upon feelings of belonging and community of students, and that these negative feelings have been driven by a growing experience of isolation (Sutcliffe & Noble, 2022). In addition to this, the sense of belonging is strongly linked to the mental health status and well-being of the individual. Also, a sense of belonging could be crucial for the social cohesion, loyalty, commitment, and solidarity of people living in a community. That is why, we included the below exercises to promote it and also increase the sense of community among the target groups (specific attention is paid to students' sense of belonging in their academic environment and how school-related experiences and activities could affect it).

Most of the activities in this module require little time, preparation or equipment. They can be modified to fit the knowledge and skills of a variety of age groups. The exercises are based on ACT for Youth Center for Community Action, Activities to Foster a Sense of Belonging, <https://www.actforyouth.net>

REFERENCES:

Mark Sutcliffe, Kallie Noble, Belonging, trust and social isolation: the move on-line during the time of COVID – A longitudinal study, *Heliyon*, Volume 8, Issue 9, 2022, e10637, ISSN 2405-8440.

Exercises for trainees:

Exercise 1:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Finding Commonalities
AIMS	To find common things between students in order to foster sense of belongingness and community.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	15 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	small groups of 3-5
USED METHODS	Brainstorming, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Found common things between students, fostered sense of belongingness and community.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	One sheet of newsprint for each group; Markers; Bell or noisemaker; Prize.
LOCATION	Classroom.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Based on and inspired by Activities to Foster a Sense of Belonging - ACT for Youth actforyouth.net : https://www.actforyouth.net
INSTRUCTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Break into small groups of 3-5. 2. Have each group designate a recorder by finding out whose birthday is next. 3. Tell participants that this is a competition among groups to see who can come up with the longest list. The topic of the list is: “Things We All Have in Common.” 4. Tell participants that when you ring the bell, they can begin. At that time, they need to come up with a list of everything they can discover that they have in common with one another. Give a couple examples: brown eyes, like to read mysteries. Tell them they’ll have 5 minutes, and to continue to add to the list

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	<p>until you ring the bell again.</p> <p>5. Give them 5 minutes.</p> <p>6. Now find out who's the winner. Ask first, "who had 5 or more?" Then "who had 8 or more?" and so on until you've established a winning group. Give small prizes to the winning group. This activity can be done in pairs as well.</p>
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Exercise 2:

NAME OF EXERCISE	As the Wild Wind Blows/Thunder
AIMS	To get to know each other and find out what students have in common; to build a sense of belonging.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	20 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class
USED METHODS	Game, discussion
EXPECTED RESULTS	Got to know each other and found out what students have in common; built a sense of belonging.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Chairs, pieces of paper.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Based on and inspired by Activities to Foster a Sense of Belonging - ACT for Youth actforyouth.net : https://www.actforyouth.net
INSTRUCTION	Introduce the activity by saying that this a game for getting to know each other and finding out what people have in common. Set up for the game is similar to Musical Chairs. Have participants arrange chairs in a circle (or they can stand on pieces of paper) with plenty of room in between them. There should be one less chair/paper than there are people playing the game. One person is “it” in the center of the circle. They start off with the statement: “The wild wind blows for _____,” filling in the blank. For example, somebody may say “...anyone who’s wearing white socks.” Then anyone in the group who is wearing white socks has to get up and find another



	<p>chair to sit in. The person who is “it” must find a chair as well, and no one can sit in a chair that was immediately to their right or left. The person who ends up without a chair is “it” next and makes the next “The wild wind blows...” statement.</p> <p>If the person in the middle cannot think of anything to say, they can also call “Thunder” and everyone in the circle must get up and find another chair/place.</p>
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Exercise 3:

NAME OF EXERCISE	On the Bus
AIMS	To focus on similarities and build a sense of community in which students belong.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	20 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Game, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Focused on similarities and built a sense of community in which students belong.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Masking tape.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Based on and inspired by Activities to Foster a Sense of Belonging - ACT for Youth actforyouth.net : https://www.actforyouth.net
INSTRUCTION	<p>Have participants form 2 facing lines. Draw a line in the middle with masking tape. One side represents the first part of each statement, the other side represents the second part of the statement. Read each statement and have people move to the side that best represents their preference. Add or delete statements as appropriate for your participants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning person or night owl • Big picture or detail-oriented • Craves sweets or salty foods • Bath or shower • Rock or rap music • Communicate by text or Instagram

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ideal vacation – city or country• Comedies or dramas• Day off – go for a hike or read a book• Ideal car – SUV or Hybrid• Loner or people person• \$1000 – save it or spend it• Prefer spring or fall• In school – prefer science or history• Swim or bike• Go out for breakfast or dinner• Read the news or watch the news• Under stress – more likely to do exercise or eat chocolate <p>Ask at end of activity what they learned about each other. Focus on similarities.</p>
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Exercise 4:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Have you ever...
AIMS	To focus on similarities and build a sense of a belonging among students.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	15 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Game, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Focused on similarities and built a sense of a belonging among students.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	List of questions.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Based on and inspired by Activities to Foster a Sense of Belonging - ACT for Youth actforyouth.net : https://www.actforyouth.net
INSTRUCTION	<p>Similar to “On the bus” have participants form two lines facing each other. You will ask a series of questions, “Have you ever...?” If participants answer yes to the question, they go to this side (point at the yes side). If they don’t agree with the question, they go to the other side. Create a list of 20 questions that may be appropriate for the group. To build trust, begin with less risky questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever traveled out of the city / country? • Have you ever learned more than one language? • Have you ever gone camping? • Have you ever been in a school bus? • Have you ever eaten cereal out of a bag?

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have you ever slept until noon? <p>Have participants notice who shares different experiences with them. Debrief what they learned about themselves and each other.</p>
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Exercise 5:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Feeling connected
AIMS	To build caring mindfulness practices to enrich their relationships, build a sense of belonging and community in the classroom.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Game, mindfulness practice, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Built caring mindfulness practices to enrich their relationships, built a sense of belonging and community in the classroom.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Paper plates and clips or paper plates punched in and with a string to hang around neck, plate hanging at the back.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Based on and inspired by UNESCO (2022). Asia-Pacific Early Childhood Care and Education: Teacher Training Handbook for Social and Emotional Learning.
INSTRUCTION	<p>PART 1: Positive strokes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Play music and participants walk around the room ‘mindfully’. 2. When the music stops, they choose a partner and compliment/appreciate the person on something they have observed the last few days. 3. Alternately use big paper plates clipped on each participant’s back. As the music plays, each participant writes positive appreciations on each person’s paper plate.

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4. When the music stops, each person takes their paper plate and reads it. (Ensure each person has few positive strokes, positive appreciations may be more than just physical and try to reflect on competencies.)

PART 2: Feeling connected (Pavey, Greitemeyer and Sparks, 2011; Great Good in Action, n.d.).

Humans have a strong drive to be kind but that drive is usually stronger when they feel connected to other people. To help foster that feeling of closeness, this exercise asks you to think about a time when you felt a strong connection to another person and to describe the experience in writing.

- Try to think of a time when you felt a strong bond with someone in your life.

- Choose a specific example of an experience you had with this person where you felt especially close and connected to them. This could be a time you had a meaningful conversation, gave or received support, experienced a great loss or success together or witnessed a historic moment together.

- Once you've thought of a specific example, spend a few minutes writing about what happened. In particular, consider the ways in which this experience made you feel close and connected to the other person.

- Some participants are invited to share in the whole group.

- Share kindness examples done randomly:

- Compliment the first three people you talk to.

- Write a handwritten note to a teacher.

- Say 'good morning' to the person next to you on the

elevator (or bus, or subway, or street).

° Pick up litter. Spend 10 minutes cleaning a park/beach or your neighbourhood.

° Place uplifting notes in library books, on restroom mirrors, on someone's locker or on a co-worker's computer screen.

° Dedicate 24 hours to spreading positivity on social media.

° Send flowers to a friend.

° Set an alarm to go off three times. When the alarm sounds, stop what you're doing and call, text or email someone simply to tell them how awesome they are.

° Invite participants to add to the list from what they have practiced in the recent past.

By reflecting on times when you've felt a strong connection with others and by striving to cultivate more of these experiences, you are fueling your drive to practice kindness and compassion.

Tips for trainers (Encouraging a sense of belonging and community in schools):

Source: A guide for teachers. A guide for school leaders, (2023), Australian Education Research Organisation, <https://www.edresearch.edu.au/resources/encouraging-sense-belonging-and-connectedness-primary-schools>

A positive sense of belonging at school has fundamental benefits for children and young people and benefits for their learning and engagement with school. These tips are based on the best available evidence on fostering a sense of belonging in school environments. Sense of belonging to one's school is referred to as school connectedness and is the extent to which students feel a part of their school and feel valued and cared for by their school community.

It is recommended you integrate the practices into everyday classroom and whole school practices rather than treat them as standalone practices. You can support belonging in all interactions with your students using a variety of approaches. To make the most of recommendations, align your classroom and whole-school practices. A positive sense of belonging at school has benefits for students, including:

- Feeling valued and accepted;
- Feeling capable of succeeding at school;
- Their cultural identity being welcomed and valued;
- they can 'be themselves' within appropriate boundaries.

A positive relationship with the school community can shape a student's emotional, behavioural, and cognitive engagement with schooling and influence academic outcomes.

Benefits for learning and engagement at school include:

- lower absenteeism;
- higher levels of effort, interest and motivation;
- positive homework behaviour;
- being more likely to like school;
- trusting and respecting their teachers;
- enjoying challenging learning activities;
- being concerned about and helping others.

Belonging and connectedness in practice (Classroom approaches):

Fostering relationships between students

Peer support can play a significant role in students' sense of belonging by supporting the need for relatedness and acceptance and reinforcing a sense of trust in others. For school students, developing relationships with their peers can occur through informal interactions or during the learning process.

Informal gatherings such as shared lunches, where students bring their meals and eat together have been shown to improve relationships between students and have also improved students' sense of belonging. This time allows students to learn about each other's personalities and recognize their abilities, strengths and positive qualities.

Games centered on value-sharing and recognizing others' experiences facilitate bonding, fostering student relationships and improving their sense of belonging. Examples of these games include:

- 'Find me out' where students need to find someone with a named similarity (for example, height) and then ask them a pre-set question about themselves (such as if they have a pet).
- 'Values bingo' where students fill in bingo cards with their values such as love, belonging, power, fun and freedom. Students then look for other like-minded individuals in the room, recognising those with similar values to them.
- 'Someone like me', where the student in the centre of the circle reveals something about themselves and other students who have had a similar experience move to take someone else's spot (including the person in the middle) before the game starts again.

Providing activities where students have ownership and say

Student-centred activities can foster connectedness for students as they promote mutual reciprocity, understanding and gaining insight into the personalities of others, recognising their strengths and positive qualities.

'Real-life' curriculum activities such as Kids café, where students prepare, sell and serve healthy food to the school community, are some examples that have been shown to contribute to inclusive participation and increased acceptance of diversity for students.

Reflection questions for teachers:

- What does belonging look like for students in your classroom? How do you adjust your practices for students if they need more support?
- How can you or your colleagues assess the quality of your interactions across the school year?
- How can you build connections with students outside your classroom?
- How will you support students' transitions into school or across year levels to foster connectedness and belonging?
- How will you incorporate the practices, in a way which does not undermine learning?

In conclusion, by implementing the abovementioned exercises for trainees and tips for trainers, the module ensures that the sense of belonging and community of students are increased (even in the post-pandemic context).

1.3.2. Module 2 - Social isolation during distance learning

Module 2 “Social isolation during distance learning” focuses on activities for coping with social isolation among trainers and trainees which is caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the period of distance learning. The module aims to develop the skills of the target groups in this area, presents valuable exercises for improving social connectedness and supports the overall goal of the programs included in the Methodology, namely supporting the mental health and well-being of trainers and trainees.

The exercises are included because studies suggest that the distance learning period has greatly increased the levels of social isolation among trainers and trainees. According to Filho et al. (2021), the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shutdown it triggered led to a great degree of social isolation among educational staff and students. The study revealed that 90% of the respondents have been affected by the shutdown and unable to perform normal work or studies at their institution for between 1 week to 2 months. Thus, more innovative methods of supporting communication and connectedness are needed in order to allow staff and students to better cope with social isolation in cases of new or recurring pandemics. That is why, we included the below exercises.



Most of the activities in this module require little time, preparation or equipment. These exercises provide a way for trainers and trainees to decrease their levels of social isolation and improve their connectedness.

In this section students will work to understand social isolation, identify and empathize with those who may feel socially isolated, and recognize the importance of connecting with people who feel socially isolated.

Exercise 1:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Stories of social isolation.
AIMS	Students to examine the importance of reducing social isolation by discussing stories and images of peers who have been socially isolated.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	20 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Story, images, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Students will have examined the importance of reducing social isolation by discussing stories and images of peers who have been socially isolated.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Stories of Social Isolation.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Mark Barden& Nicole Hockley, Sandy Hook Promise, Start with Hello, SHP. EDUCATOR GUIDE FOR GRADES 6-12 https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/promise/pages/1983/attachments/original/1539707805/SWH_EducatorGuide_Eng_10-15-18_Final-.pdf?1539707805
INSTRUCTION	Distribute one or several of the “Stories of Social Isolation” resources. Ask students to read, watch, or review the assigned story. Ask students to refer to their assigned story as they discuss some or all of the following questions: Based on your story, what are some signs that someone is socially isolated? How do the signs from your story compare to other stories or to the perceptions that you had prior to reading your story?

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	<p>Based on your story, what does it feel like to be socially isolated? Is there a certain group of people that is more socially isolated than others? Why do you say that? Imagine that you know the person/people from your story of social isolation. What is one thing you might do to help? Sometimes, our advice to socially isolated people is that they should try harder to be social, or do more to “put themselves out there.” Do you think this is fair advice? When you give advice like this, what role do you play? How could you take a more active role in helping someone who feels socially isolated? How do you think someone who is socially isolated would feel if you tried to make them feel less lonely? Why? You don’t have to help someone who is socially isolated, so why should you?</p>
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Template 1 for Exercise 1

FEELING LONELY IN A NEW CITY

Over the winter I moved from New York City to Portland, Oregon. The reasons for my move were purely logical. New York was expensive and stressful. Portland, I reasoned, would offer me the space and time to do my work. Upon arriving, I rented a house and happily went out in search of “my people.” I went to parks, bookstores, bars, on dates. I even tried golfing. It wasn’t that I didn’t meet people. I did. I just felt no connection to any of them. Once social and upbeat, I became morose and mildly paranoid. I knew I needed to connect to people to feel better, but I felt as though I physically could not handle any more empty interactions. I woke up in the night panicked. In the afternoon, loneliness came in waves like a fever. I had no idea how to fix it. About a decade ago, my mom was going through a divorce from my step-father. Lonely and desperate for connection, she called a cousin she hadn’t talked to in several years. On the phone, her cousin was derisive: “Don’t you have any friends?” While dealing with my own loneliness in Portland I often found myself thinking, “If I were a better person I wouldn’t be lonely.” Most of us know what it is like to be lonely in a room full of people, which is the same reason even a celebrity can be deeply lonely. You could be surrounded by hundreds of adoring fans, but if there is no one you can rely on, no one who knows you, you will feel isolated. Both Denmark and Great Britain are devoting more time and energy to finding solutions and staging interventions for lonely people, particularly the elderly. Even though the Internet has possibly contributed to our isolation, it might hold a key to fixing it. Cacioppo is excited by online dating statistics showing that couples who found each other online and stayed together shared more of a connection and were less likely to divorce than couples who met offline. If these statistics hold up, it would stand to reason friendships could also be found in this way, easing those whose instincts tell them to stay on the periphery back into the world with common bonds forged over the Internet. Me? I moved back to New York.

Adapted from:

Olien, J. (2013, August 23). Loneliness can kill you. don’t let it. Slate Magazine, http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/medical_examiner/2013/08/dangers_of_loneliness_social_isolation_is_deadlier_than_obesity.html .



Template 2 for Exercise 1:

STORIES OF SOCIAL ISOLATION: FEELING LONELY

Whether it's all the time or just every once in a while, it's no fun to feel like you're alone. But it's also totally normal, and lots of kids feel lonely. Read the quotes below from other middle and high school students who feel lonely. "I feel really awkward around other kids that I'm not really close to, especially kids who are older than me. I just get so weird! I don't know what to do with my hands, and I don't know what to say, I don't even know what to look at. I'm not really a shy person. In fact, I'm really outgoing with some people." "I'm starting middle school next year and I don't know if there's anyone who shares my interests from other schools. I'm worried that I won't be able to make friends without changing who I am." "I just moved from China. I know English because I was taught it at my Chinese school, but I don't like my new school. No one is Chinese and I feel like an outcast." "See, the thing is, I've got plenty of friends, but occasionally I feel this gnawing despair as though I am totally alone and weird and rotten, and the only reason anyone likes me is because they know nothing about the true me. It's not bad enough to get suicidal, but it is bad enough to make me cry, especially at night." "I like to study, but I don't feel like going to school sometimes because I have no close friends in the school. I feel lonely. I believe this relates to my language problem. I am not a native English speaker, so I have an accent. Sometimes, I have trouble expressing myself. I've struggled to improve my English; however, it doesn't seem to change that much. People still don't talk to me. I'm actually very talkative. I had a lot of friends when I was in my country." "I am not very social and I need to get more friends. But I just don't have the courage to do so." "I feel alone in the world. Like, even though I have a family and I have friends, I still feel like I can't trust anyone. I am just so confused..."

Adapted from: <https://pbskids.org/>



Template 3 for Exercise 1:

RAHELA'S STORY OF A LONELY FIRST YEAR IN AMERICA

Rahela spent her junior and senior years of high school studying in Vermont, and is now starting at an American college. She shared this story about her first year in the U.S., which held more than its fair share of disappointments. The United States is a multi-cultural country that is famous as a melting pot. This country has many international students who came from different countries around the world. Some international students can't get close to American students easily, and have a difficult time making American friends. I was one of those students. I spent my junior and senior years of high school in the U.S. and had a hard time finding an American friend. I think one of the main reasons was my language. This problem is common in the first year of being international student in a foreign country. It was hard to share my feelings and experiences with other students. Sometimes I was afraid I would use improper or unrelated words in my conversation that would embarrass me. I remember one day I went to a doctor for an examination. The doctor said, "Ok! Now you're here." I thought that she said, "Ok! Now your hair," and I immediately took off my head scarf. The doctor looked at me strangely and smiled. She realized that I misunderstood and said "No! No I mean you are in our building, in the hospital now. You are here." I was a little bit embarrassed, but was pleased that she behaved kindly and tried to understand me. Language is like an ocean – the learners need to swim in it in order to learn. I really wanted to improve my language by finding an American friend. My religion was another thing that limited my relationships with students. As a Muslim female, I wear a scarf and have certain beliefs, and this created differences with my classmates. I could not be friendly with males and could not shake their hands. Friendship has a different definition in American culture comparing to Afghan culture. People in the U.S. usually feel more comfortable making relationships with the opposite sex. In my school students were friendly with their teachers; they shake hands and do high fives, which makes a closer relationship. Also, the girls in my class did not speak a lot with me, which I felt was partly because of the way I dress. I had a stressful and hard time in my first year of being in the U.S. I felt lonely because I could not make a friendship, but I was fortunate my teachers played their role as a good friend in my life. It is not impossible to make an American friend, but it is difficult. International students could get



close with other international students easier than with Americans. They felt that they could make a better connection with each other.

Adapted from: Voice of America (VOA), <http://blogs.voanews.com/student-union/2012/08/15/solitary-rahelasstory-of-a-lonely-first-year-in-america/>

Exercise 2:

NAME OF EXERCISE	In my shoes
AIMS	Students to analyze empathy and its impact by participating in or discussing scenarios related to social isolation.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	30 minutes
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Role play, poll, writing task, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Students analyzed empathy and its impact by participating in or discussing scenarios related to social isolation.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Paper for a journal response / “In My Shoes” activity sheet.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Mark Barden & Nicole Hockley, Sandy Hook Promise, Start with Hello (2016), SHP. EDUCATOR GUIDE FOR GRADES 6-12 https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/promise/pages/1983/attachments/original/1539707805/SWH_EducatorGuide_Eng_10-15-18_Final-.pdf?1539707805
INSTRUCTION	Define empathy as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Ask students to compare the definition of empathy to that of sympathy, which is feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else’s misfortune. Ask students to respond to the following journal prompt. Emphasize to students that their journal responses will not be collected or shared, but that they are meant to help students start to empathize

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with others.

Prompt: When you see someone isolated, how does that person feel? Describe a time when you might have felt similarly. If you have never felt this way, imagine a situation that might make you feel this way. Describe that situation and your thoughts and feelings. Group students and distribute the “In My Shoes” scenarios. Ask students to select one scenario and discuss or role play through the questions at the bottom of the page.

Debrief the activity with students by asking at least one of the following questions:

What are some strategies for empathizing with others?

Why should we try to empathize with those who are socially isolated?

Do you think empathy is natural or do you think it has to be practiced? Explain. If you think empathy has to be practiced, how can we do that?

Extension activities:

MATH: Conduct an anonymous poll to collect data about social isolation in your school and community. Consider sharing the collected data, along with analysis, with the school or community.

ENGLISH /SOCIAL STUDIES /HEALTH: Write an argument

for why social isolation issues are community issues and not just the problem of the person who is socially isolated. Arguments could take the form of a formal essay, or they could take the form of an advertisement, letter to the editor, or written speech.

Template for Exercise 2

Resource #6

ACTIVITY WORKSHEET

"IN MY SHOES" Select an "In My Shoes" scenario from the options below.

<p>I have a lot of friends, but I still feel lonely. My friends don't always include me in their activities, and when they do, I still don't really feel like I'm having a good time. I think that maybe my friends are friends with me just because we have known each other for a long time. They don't seem interested in me or the things that I'm interested in. It's almost like they feel sorry for me.</p>	<p>I just moved here. I used to have a lot of friends, but it's been a few months and I haven't made any friends beyond the kids that I get paired with for school assignments. I know that I have similar interests with some of the other kids in school, but I just can't seem to figure out what to say to start a conversation.</p>
<p>English isn't my first language. I'm still learning how to speak it properly. Sometimes, when people talk to me, it takes me a while to figure out what they're saying. I think that this could have something to do with the fact that I don't have many friends at my school. But, I can't learn to speak or listen to English any better if I don't have a chance to form friendships with other kids in my school.</p>	<p>I'm always alone. Always. I take the bus to school by myself. I wait outside of my classes by myself. When the teacher asks us to pair up, I'm always paired with the other kid who can't find a partner. At lunch, I usually go to my favorite teacher's classroom, where I eat and use the computer. I would eat in the cafeteria, but I don't have anyone to eat lunch with.</p>
<p>Every time I look at social media, it seems like everyone around me is having a good time. They'll post pictures of fun activities they did over the weekend, or they'll post inside jokes that I don't understand. In school, the same kids are pretty nice to me, but when I look at social media I just feel so excluded from everything.</p>	<p>I don't mind being alone. Really, I don't. I hate working in groups at school. The fact is, I can probably do a better job on an assignment working by myself than working with someone else. And I don't mind reading a book in the cafeteria while everyone else around me talks to their friends. But, I wouldn't mind having someone to talk to, someone I could confide in, someone my age who I can trust.</p>
<p>ROLE PLAY OPTION</p>	<p>DISCUSSION OPTION</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Choose roles. Someone should play the student in the scenario and at least one other person should play the role of someone who empathizes. Act out a conversation, stressing the importance of empathizing, or understanding and sharing the feelings of someone else. After your scenario, discuss some strategies for empathizing with others during conversation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Read through the scenario. Discuss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is this student feeling? (Some feelings might be directly stated while others must be inferred.) What does it mean to feel like this? What strategies can you use to empathize with this person, or understand and share their feelings?

Figure 10, Source: Mark Barden & Nicole Hockley, Sandy Hook Promise, Start with Hello (2016), SHP. EDUCATOR GUIDE FOR GRADES 6-12

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In this section students will discuss strategies for connecting with others and brainstorm ways to combat anxiety about reaching out.

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Discussion questions and key messages:

What are the best ways to connect with someone?

There are many ways to connect with others. You might simply sit with someone who is sitting alone. Or, you might reach out on social media or write a quick handwritten note. Another option is to invite someone to join you in an activity. Sometimes, even a simple gesture, like a smile or a head nod, helps establish a connection. Your school can also facilitate ways to connect with others. The school could host a No One Eats Alone® day or a “Hey Day” where everyone wears a name tag. Students could do an outreach scavenger hunt activity, or a “Get to Know Me” day.

How can I connect with someone if I am feeling awkward or uncomfortable about connecting?

For many, taking this step can be very hard. Many have said that they just don’t know what to do or when to reach out. They want to reach out but don’t want to be awkward or make anyone feel the same. While this is a valid feeling, the feelings of withdrawal and separation created by social isolation can have more dire consequences. If you are feeling awkward or uncomfortable about connecting, try a less risky activity for reaching out. That might mean reaching out through social media or writing someone a handwritten note. Even something as simple as a smile can help you connect with someone who is feeling socially isolated.

How can I regularly connect with people who are feeling socially isolated?

Sometimes, a nice gesture or a quick note is all it takes to make a connection with someone who feels socially isolated. Many more times, however, it is sustained action that can continue the connection with others who feel socially isolated. Sustained action might be as simple as reminding yourself to empathize with and reach out to others, or might be as complex as starting a club at school or an advertising campaign in your community to address social isolation.

Exercise 3:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Top 5 ways to connect
AIMS	Students to identify effective methods to interact with peers by brainstorming, discussing, and narrowing down their top five ideas to connect to a socially isolated peer.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	45 minutes
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Discussion, poster creation, brainstorming.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Students to have successfully identified effective methods to interact with peers by brainstorming, discussing, and narrowing down their top five ideas to connect to a socially isolated peer.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Paper for a journal response / Chart paper / Markers, crayons, colored pencils for poster creation.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Mark Barden & Nicole Hockley, Sandy Hook Promise, Start with Hello (2016), SHP. EDUCATOR GUIDE FOR GRADES 6-12 https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/promise/pages/1983/attachments/original/1539707805/SWH_EducatorGuide_Eng_10-15-18_Final-.pdf?1539707805
INSTRUCTION	Remind students of previous conversations about social isolation, including how people who are socially isolated feel, what social isolation looks like, and why it is important to empathize with people who are socially isolated. Ask students to individually write a response to the following prompt: Create a list of the

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	<p>top five ways you could connect to a socially isolated peer. Describe each method.</p> <p>In small groups of 3-4, ask students to share their top five strategies. Explain to students that, as a group, they must take their lists and narrow to the group's top five strategies. So, students must discuss each other's strategies and make some tough decisions about which ones are the best. Once each group has decided their top five strategies, provide groups with materials to create a poster of the "Top Five Ways to Connect with Others." Hang the finished products in the classroom or around the school.</p>
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Exercise 4:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Human bingo
AIMS	Students to make connections with peers by participating in a classroom bingo game.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	15 minutes
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Discussion, game, brainstorming.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Students to have made connections with peers by participating in a classroom bingo game.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Human Bingo Activity Worksheet / Paper for a journal response
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Mark Barden & Nicole Hockley, Sandy Hook Promise, Start with Hello (2016), SHP. EDUCATOR GUIDE FOR GRADES 6-12 https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/promise/pages/1983/attachments/original/1539707805/SWH_EducatorGuide_Eng_10-15-18_Final-.pdf?1539707805
INSTRUCTION	Distribute the Human Bingo Activity Worksheet to students. Explain that students should travel around the classroom with their Human Bingo Activity Worksheets and look for other students in the classroom who can add their names to their cards. Allow students time to meet one another and collect names. At the end of the activity, ask students to respond to the following journal prompt: What new connections did



	<p>you make today? How can you continue the connections that you made today, so that no one feels socially isolated? (Note: awarding a “winner” who finishes first may not be conducive to the goal of this activity – to help students make connections with one another.).</p> <p>Extension activities:</p> <p>ENGLISH /SOCIAL STUDIES / HEALTH:</p> <p>Watch ‘Be the One’ Video (2016) by Beyond Differences®.</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTnmgliE408)</p> <p>Beyond Differences® YouTube Channel,</p> <p>Practice empathizing with the students who feel isolated in the video. Then, discuss the strategies that different students in the video took to reach out and connect with others.</p> <p>EXTRACURRICULAR: Create a Human Bingo game that can be conducted school-wide. Encourage students to make connections across grade levels and outside of their traditional group of friends.</p>
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Template for exercise 4:

HUMAN BINGO

DIRECTIONS : Walk around the class and find someone who can fill in each box.

B	I	N	G	O
Prefers using pencil to pen:	Recently had a birthday: Date:	Has traveled outside of the USA: Place:	Plays an instrument:	Has a pet: Pet's Name:
Was born in the same state as you: State:	Has the same favorite food as you: Food:	Belongs to an after school club: Club:	Saw _____ in concert:	Favorite subject is: _____
Has a family member who was not born in the USA:	Favorite color is: _____	FREE!	Has been to a very small town: Town:	Has been in a wedding:
Enjoys reading:	Plays a sport: Sport:	Is good at video games:	Is a collector: Collects:	Can say "Hello" in 3 other languages:
Has a younger brother:	Can speak another language:	Can name four songs by the same artist:	Has an older sister:	Has been to a large city: City:

Figure 11, Source: Mark Barden & Nicole Hockley, Sandy Hook Promise, Start with Hello (2016), SHP. EDUCATOR GUIDE FOR GRADES 6-12

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In this section students will discuss methods to build lasting relationships with others and pledge to help end social isolation and build a connected and inclusive community.

Exercise 5:

NAME OF EXERCISE	A plan to “Start with hello”
AIMS	Students to empower themselves to solve social isolation problems by developing a plan for going through the “Start With Hello” process for reducing social isolation and creating a connected and inclusive community.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	30 minutes
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming, creating a plan
EXPECTED RESULTS	Students to have empowered themselves to solve social isolation problems by developing a plan for going through the “Start With Hello” process for reducing social isolation and creating a connected and inclusive community.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Cut out scenarios from “In My Shoes” activity worksheet / Start with Hello (2016)
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Mark Barden & Nicole Hockley, Sandy Hook Promise, Start with Hello (2016), SHP. EDUCATOR GUIDE FOR GRADES 6-12 https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/promise/pages/1983/attachments/original/1539707805/SWH_EducatorGuide_Eng_10-15-18_Final-.pdf?1539707805
INSTRUCTION	Pair students and provide each team with one of the scenarios from the “In My Shoes” activity worksheet (p. 207). Using the “Start With Hello” Plan activity worksheet, ask students to consider and respond to the three prompts on the worksheet. (Note: one modification

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	<p>is to allow one student in the group to write responses, while the other student in the group can draw illustrations of the responses.) When teams have finished, ask them to share their responses either to the entire class or to another team.</p>
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Template for Exercise 5:

ACTIVITY WORKSHEET

"START WITH HELLO" PLAN

SEE SOMEONE ALONE How does this socially isolated student feel?

REACH OUT AND HELP What can you do or say to reach out and connect?

START WITH HELLO How can you make this student feel less isolated?

Figure 12, Source: Mark Barden & Nicole Hockley, Sandy Hook Promise, Start with Hello (2016), SHP.
EDUCATOR GUIDE FOR GRADES 6-12

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/promise/pages/1983/attachments/original/1539707805/SWH_EducatorGuide_Eng_10-15-18_Final-.pdf?1539707805

Exercise 6:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Why I “Start with hello”
AIMS	Students to empower themselves to improve their community by making a pledge to help end social isolation and build a connected and inclusive community.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	15 minutes
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming, campaign.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Students to have empowered themselves to improve their community by making a pledge to help end social isolation and build a connected and inclusive community.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	“Start With Hello” Selfie Cards.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Mark Barden & Nicole Hockley, Sandy Hook Promise, Start with Hello (2016), SHP. EDUCATOR GUIDE FOR GRADES 6-12 https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/promise/pages/1983/attachments/original/1539707805/SWH_EducatorGuide_Eng_10-15-18_Final-.pdf?1539707805
INSTRUCTION	Distribute a “Start With Hello” Selfie Card to each student. Review how people who are socially isolated feel, why we should empathize with people who are socially isolated, how to reach out and connect, and how to continue conversations. Ask students to generate some ideas that could answer

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the prompt on the Selfie Card: “Why I ‘Start With Hello’: _____.” (Some examples may include: “to help others,” “so that no one feels left out,” or “because I am a leader in my community.”) Once students have generated a few ideas, ask them to share with peers and get feedback so that they can narrow down to one idea.

Allow each student time to write their final idea on their Selfie Card. Then, ask students to share their Selfie Card with a small group or with the class. Take pictures of students with the cards and post around the school or on your school’s social media using the hashtags #startwithhello.

Extension activities:

ENGLISH / SOCIAL STUDIES / HEALTH / ART:

Create a Start With Hello campaign to empower peers to solve social isolation problems. Create an advertising campaign to help others go through the “Start With Hello” process for reducing social isolation and creating a connected and inclusive community. Distribute campaign materials around the school and in the community.

Template for Exercise 6

Resource #9

SELFIE CARD

WHY I "START WITH HELLO"

MY SELFIE CARD:



Figure 13, Source: Mark Barden & Nicole Hockley, Sandy Hook Promise, Start with Hello (2016), SHP.
EDUCATOR GUIDE FOR GRADES 6-12

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/promise/pages/1983/attachments/original/1539707805/SWH_EducatorGuide_Eng_10-15-18_Final-.pdf?1539707805

Tips for trainers:

Source: Mark Barden & Nicole Hockley, Sandy Hook Promise, Start with Hello (2016), SHP.

EDUCATOR GUIDE FOR GRADES 6-12

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Below are several tips for ensuring that your classroom discussions are connected and inclusive:

- **Include all students.**

Sometimes, class discussions further isolate students who feel that they do not belong. However, class discussions are an excellent teaching technique to allow peers to collaborate and dive deep into a topic. To ensure that all students are involved in classroom discussion, try one or more of these options:

- Create smaller groups. Rather than a whole class discussion, where each speaker is “on stage” in front of the class, create smaller groups so that students have more privacy in a conversation. Some options for small group discussion include think-pair-share, elbow partners, and station discussion groups.
- Create and strategically assign roles. Giving students a specific role and responsibility in group discussion helps keep everyone involved and active. Roles may include time keeper, question asker, note taker, illustrator, discussion extender, and more. Think about student strengths and weaknesses and use roles to push individuals out of their comfort zone. For example, a quieter student could practice speaking up as the “discussion extender” while a more vocal student could practice listening as the “note taker.”
- Allow for alternate discussion methods. Some students may still feel uncomfortable speaking in discussions. Create options so that these students can still share their thoughts during or after the discussion. One option is to use an electronic message board and computer or personal device so that students can type and post their thoughts during or after the discussion. Another option is to use a graphic organizer to allow students to write their thoughts during discussion. You can also give students “thinking time” after asking questions before you jump to accepting responses. This

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can give more introverted students a chance to collect their thoughts and keep the same students from dominating conversation.

- **Discuss topics that matter to students.**

One of the primary goals is to create a connected classroom. In order to do that, not only do students need to feel connected to one another, but they also need to feel connected to the content of the classroom. With that in mind, occasionally gauge student interest in discussion topics and modify questions as needed. Additionally, in order to connect the topics to students, teachers may need to take some extra steps prior to discussion in order to access prior knowledge.

- **Create discussion norms.**

Discussion norms are ground rules for conversation. Because so many of the topics discussed deeply impact our students' lives, it is important to make sure that all of our students feel comfortable engaging in conversation. Discussion norms may include a class-created set of rules for healthy conversation, plus some helpful tips and accountable talk sentence frames for engaging in conversation.

- **Pair/group strategically.**

In creating smaller groups for classroom discussion, teachers should consider student relationships and student leadership. It may take time to create meaningful discussion between students who do not already have an existing positive relationship. As you create student groupings, aim to find the slightly uncomfortable middle ground that allows for students to build relationships with one another without cutting off conversation or isolating a student. Additionally, use student leadership to your benefit in pairing shy students with those who are more outspoken.

- **Plan for and recognize growth.**

While some students naturally thrive in a classroom discussion, others have much room for growth. Provide students with feedback on improving their discussion skills, allow students to reflect on their own discussion skills, and help students set goals to improve their discussion skills.

Strategies for trainers to reduce their feelings of loneliness and social isolation:

Source: Loneliness: A guide for teachers and education staff, by Education Support (UK).

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Loneliness-Guide-for-Teachers-and-Education-Staff.pdf>

✓ Take time to think about why you feel lonely

The first step is to consider what type of loneliness you are feeling. Are you feeling lonely because of the situation you are in (the pandemic), or being disconnected from important others, or is it something you have been feeling for a long time? Identifying why you're lonely can help you decide how best to tackle it.

✓ Tell someone

One of the most important, yet difficult steps you can take when feeling lonely, is to talk to someone about how you feel. Try a trusted family member, friend or colleague. If you are new to a role, it can be daunting to ask questions and seek support, but reach out! Speak to more experienced members of your team for advice.

✓ Reconnect with yourself

By taking the time to reconnect with yourself, whether this is by trying a new hobby or activity, writing in a journal, or following a mindfulness video, you can begin to understand and process what you are feeling.

✓ Engage in social activities

When you feel lonely, sometimes you may want to retreat and avoid other people. However, connection can help reduce feelings of loneliness, especially if it is situational. Joining social activities at work might help or you could get involved in further roles and training activities such as CPD, break duties or after-school clubs. But make sure you don't put pressure yourself. Start small, do what works and be kind to yourself. Lunch with a departmental colleague may be a good place to start.

✓ Join a social club outside of school

You might try online platforms where people build communities and join various group events according to your interests. Online communities offer some great support to those wanting to forge connections. Since there is less pressure than real-world meetups, it can be a great first step. Volunteering at community projects is another fantastic way to broaden horizons and feel connected to the world around you.

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Other strategies for teachers:

✓ Connect with other adults during breaks

Even if you are in a classroom filled with students, being the only adult can be a lonely experience. Especially when you have a long, busy period not leaving your classroom all day. The same goes with the extra responsibilities aside from classroom teaching; you can spend hours on your own just marking, lesson planning, reading, researching, behind a laptop and not communicating with anyone. Make sure you do things during gaps in lessons to break up the tasks so the loneliness doesn't creep in and build up. Connect to someone in those breaks. Even if it's a quick text to a friend, or a chat with someone in the staffroom, or going for a walk around the playground and chatting to someone on break duty.

✓ Try mentoring

Connecting with different levels of the school hierarchy can be challenging. Perhaps you are the only teacher trainee, and the rest of the team are lead practitioners? Try to make relationships with others in a similar role, meet regularly, and share your experiences. If there's no other trainees, suggest a mentor with a senior staff member. This can be a great way to make relationships whilst getting advice from someone with different responsibilities. Having a mentor you know you can turn to, at school, for immediate support can make all the difference.

✓ Try new ways of working together to inspire and connect with each other

Team teaching, observations, or marking together is another way to support each other. It doesn't even need to involve lots of talking, but knowing and seeing a teacher next to you doing the same thing, and being in your presence, can be comforting enough. Or doing something that makes you feel connected like observing an activity (assembly, other lessons) can make a big difference.

Implementing these exercises and tips are a sure and effective way to prevent and deal with social isolation of trainees and trainers.

1.3.3. Module 3 - Skills for effective communication between trainers and trainees

This module focuses on activities for fostering effective communication between trainers and trainees as this is one of the aspects that has suffered due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the distance learning period. The module aims to develop the skills of the target groups in this



area, presents valuable exercises for improving communication and supports the overall goal of the programs included in the Methodology, namely supporting the mental health and well-being of trainers and trainees.

The exercises are included because studies suggest that the distance learning period has negatively affected the quality and effectiveness of communication between trainers and trainees. According to Alawamleh et. al. (2020), online learning had an effect on communication between trainers and students in a negative way, and it affected students' productivity levels. The results of the study revealed that students still prefer classroom classes over online classes due to many problems they face when taking online classes, such as lack of motivation, understanding of the material, decrease in communication levels between the students and their educators and their feeling of isolation caused by online classes. This research suggested that trainers must communicate with their students and vice versa in more informal channels in parallel with the formal channels, and should encourage students to participate and study more by providing different kind of incentives.

Thus, more effective ways of supporting communication are needed for both educators and students. That is why, we included the below exercises.

Most of the activities in this module require little time, preparation or equipment. These exercises provide a way for trainers and trainees to improve the communication aspect and develop their skills. They focus on improving essential communication skills like listening, empathy and verbalization. Some of these will also strengthen problem-solving, creative-thinking and leadership skills.

Exercise 1:

NAME OF EXERCISE	The Blindfold Game
AIMS	To build both communication and listening skills and increase trust.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	15-20 minutes
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class + the trainer.
USED METHODS	Physical activity
EXPECTED RESULTS	Built both communication and listening skills and increased trust.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Enough blindfolds for half of the participants; A larger room; Furniture and other items that you can use as obstacles.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by www.mindtools.com (Mind Tools official website)
INSTRUCTION	In this activity, blindfolded participants must rely on their partners to navigate an "obstacle course" within a room. 1. Arrange the room by scattering furniture and other obstacles around it. Navigating your way around it should be fairly challenging, but safe. 2. Divide team members into pairs and ask them to stand at one end of the room. 3. One person from each pair should put on the blindfold. 4. People then guide their blindfolded partners across the room, issuing instructions so that they don't bump into anything. They are not allowed to touch one



	<p>another.</p> <p>5. When a pair reaches the other side of the room, they switch roles and repeat the process back across the obstacle course.</p> <p>Follow-Up:</p> <p>Talk about the experience of this exercise. Consider these questions: How did they have to communicate differently to guide their partners? When they were blindfolded, how did they change and adapt how they listened?</p>
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Exercise 2:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Card Pieces
AIMS	To show other perspectives. To build communication and negotiation skills and help develop empathy.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	15 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class + the trainer.
USED METHODS	Game.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Showed other perspectives. Built communication and negotiation skills and developed empathy.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Playing cards - use between four and six for each person.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by www.mindtools.com (Mind Tools official website)
INSTRUCTION	<p>In this activity, team members trade pieces of playing cards to put together complete cards.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cut each playing card into half diagonally, then in half diagonally again, so you have four triangular pieces for each card. 2. Mix all the pieces together and put equal numbers of cards into as many envelopes as you have teams. 3. Divide people up into teams of three or four. You need at least three teams. If you're short of people, teams of two will work just as well. 4. Give each team an envelope of playing card pieces. 5. Each team has three minutes to sort its pieces, determine which ones it needs to make complete cards, and develop a

bargaining strategy.

6. After three minutes, allow the teams to start bartering for pieces. They can barter on their own or collectively with their team. Give the teams eight minutes to barter.

7. When the time is up, count each team's completed cards. Whichever team has the most wins the round.

Follow-Up:

After the activity, ask participants to think about the strategies they used. Consider these questions: Which negotiation strategies worked? Which didn't? What could they have done better? What other skills, such as active listening or empathy, did they need to use?

Exercise 3:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Make a Team With...
AIMS	To strengthen communication skills.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	15 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class + the trainer.
USED METHODS	Physical activity
EXPECTED RESULTS	Strengthened communication skills.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	No materials are needed.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by www.mindtools.com (Mind Tools official website)
INSTRUCTION	<p>In this activity, players must act quickly to form small teams based on instructions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain to participants that they will have to form a team based on the instructions that you tell. For example, some instructions could include "Get into a team with people who have the same number of siblings as you" or "Get into a team with people who like similar types of music to you." 2. Tell instructions. Players can tell or sit down to signal that their team is "complete." Encourage people to work as quickly as possible. Repeat the exercise as many times as you want. <p>Follow-Up:</p> <p>Talk about how this activity encouraged them to communicate. How could they learn to open up and communicate more effectively in situations in the future?</p>

Exercise 4:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Just Listen
AIMS	To strengthen listening skills. Listening is an incredibly important part of good communication, and it's a skill that people often ignore. This activity also shows players how to listen with an open mind.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	25-30 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class + the trainer.
USED METHODS	Discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Strengthened listening skills.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	An even number of team members, ideally. Eight index cards for each team of two. Each card should list one topic.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by www.mindtools.com (Mind Tools official website)
INSTRUCTION	This is an activity that encourages participants to communicate how they feel about a subject. People get into pairs and one member talks about their opinions. Their partner listens without speaking, and then, without rebuttal, recaps on what has been said. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have your team members sit down in pairs. 2. Give each team eight index cards. 3. One partner will blindly choose a card and then speak for three minutes on how he feels about the topic. As he talks, the other person cannot speak - her goal is to listen. 4. After three minutes, the listener has one minute to recap on what her partner has said. She cannot

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	<p>debate, agree or disagree - only summarize. Next, the roles switch, and the process starts again.</p> <p>Follow-Up: Talk about how they felt about this exercise. Consider these questions: How did speakers feel about their partners' ability to listen with an open mind? Did their partners' body language communicate how they felt about what was being said? How did listeners feel about not being able to speak about their own views on the topic? How well were they able to keep an open mind? How well did they listen? How well did the listening partners summarize the speakers' opinions? Did they get better as the exercise progressed? How can they use the lessons from this exercise at school?</p>
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Exercise 5:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Build a Bridge
AIMS	To strengthen communication skills, to discuss ideas and brainstorm ways to use materials to build half a bridge. To improve problem solving and creative thinking.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	45 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class + the trainer.
USED METHODS	Practical activity, discussion, brainstorm.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Strengthened communication skills, discussed ideas and brainstormed ways to use materials to build half a bridge. Improved problem solving and creative thinking.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Materials for bridge building - this can include toy bricks, pieces of wood, tape, glue, canvas, paper, or straws. Notepads and pencils for drawing. Tape measures. Sheets to section off the room, giving each team a private area to build.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by www.mindtools.com (Mind Tools official website)
INSTRUCTION	In this activity, two teams must work together to build a bridge using materials that you supply. They each build half of the bridge and then "connect" the two pieces to make a complete one, made up of two similar designs. The activity is challenging because the room is divided: no team is able to see how the other constructs its bridge. Teams have to communicate verbally through a sheet that

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divides the room, as they work.

1. Before participants arrive, arrange the sheets throughout the room so that teams won't be able to see one another's work.

2. Divide participants into two (or four or six) teams. Team size doesn't matter; however, teams of four or fewer might be most effective.

3. Give each group a bag of materials. Each bag should contain the same number and type of materials. Each team should also get a notepad and pencils, and a tape measure.

4. Give everyone 10 minutes to draw their ideas. Remind teams to communicate with their "partner group" on the other side of the sheet to make sure that they come up with similar designs. Remember, each half of the bridge must be able to "join" at the end of the building phase.

5. Each team then gets up to 40 minutes to construct its half of the bridge. While the teams build, walk around to ensure that each team communicates with the other through the sheet.

6. When time is up, remove the sheet to see how close each group came to matching their partner team's bridge.

Follow-Up:

When you finish the activity, use the questions below to start a discussion: What was most challenging



	<p>about this activity?</p> <p>Who was responsible for communicating instructions between teams? Were there any miscommunications? If so, what happened?</p>
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Tips for trainers:

Source: 7 techniques to boost communication skills for teachers & administrators (2022), by Team Varthana, <https://varthana.com/school/7-techniques-to-boost-communication-skills-for-teachers-administrators/>

Here are 7 techniques trainers can use to boost communication skills:

- Active Listening:

Teachers are guides for students. They need to listen to students carefully in order to understand and help them better. Active listening is important for effective communication as it helps teachers analyze students' understanding of concepts and resolve their queries. Active listening also helps avoid any misunderstanding and this is a great way to develop trust and build relationships.

- Body language and voice tone:

Body language is an important part of verbal and non-verbal communication. Teachers should ensure that signals given through their body language must be positive, confident, and engaging. For example, eye contact motivates students to pay attention, helps them in learning, makes them feel involved, and shows that teachers are being attentive and supportive. Also, when teachers teach, their gestures emphasize their words which makes them more memorable. To improve your body language, smile more often, move around the classroom, keep your hands open, and give thumbs up to appreciable actions.

- Build emotional quotient:

Sometimes noise or disruption in communication can lead to misunderstandings, which can lead to overwhelming behaviours and emotions such as anger, yelling, and so on. It's crucial to have emotional control in the teaching profession. The ways of dealing with negative emotions are to be mindful about your own emotions, words and actions and focus on remaining calm and positive.

- Sense of humour:

Sense of humour can keep the communication light and fun. Having a sense of humour can help you build rapport with your students and keep them interested in the lesson. Make a joke while teaching, use lighthearted examples, and laugh at appropriate humour from students. Avoid using negative humour that could offend or embarrass students. Only use humour that has received positive feedback from students.



- Safe environment:

The supportive relationship between teachers, students, parents and the school has a positive impact on teacher morale, participation, and achievement. A safe environment makes communication easier where teachers can express their thoughts and challenges without any fear. Creating a safe environment shows teachers that they are free from judgment and humiliation in the classroom. Provide safe space and freedom to teachers to express their thoughts and creativity. A safe environment boosts confidence and communication skills.

- Encouraging teamwork:

Teachers need to work in collaboration with colleagues and the administration. Apart from teaching, teachers participate in other activities in the school where communication is the key to ensuring good performance. Teamwork helps teachers make their task easier and learn from each other like designing lesson plans, sharing ideas, and solving problems in a better way. Teachers can encourage students to perform in teams. Dividing students into small groups helps them to easily share ideas, ask questions and receive feedback which ensures good communication.

- Feedback:

Constructive feedback is essential for professional growth and also is an important component of effective communication. Constructive feedback from teachers helps students grow and vice-versa. The teacher should be mindful of the feedback they are sharing; it must contribute to students' growth and should not demoralize them. Teachers can acknowledge students' performance by giving them feedback and guiding students to work on their areas of development. Constructive feedback helps students as well as teachers in self-reflection and boosting confidence and growth. Effective communication is crucial for teachers' professional growth. An important aspect of improving communication is that it acts as an example for students. It also helps in developing communication skills in students which makes them feel safer and more comfortable. Teachers' communication skills impact student's academic performance. It also helps teachers collaborate with colleagues, deal with parents and build good relationships with administration which ensures success in daily processes.

In conclusion, by implementing the abovementioned exercises and tips, the module ensures that the communication between trainees and trainers is strengthened even after the consequences of the distance learning period.



1.4. Program 4 - Self-affirmation needs

Program 4 “Self-affirmation need” focuses on the fourth level of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Model (1943). Self-affirmation (or esteem) needs include self-worth, self-esteem, accomplishment / achievement, and respect. Maslow classified esteem needs into two categories: (i) esteem for oneself (dignity, achievement, mastery, independence) and (ii) the desire for reputation or respect from others (e.g., status, prestige). Low self-esteem or an inferiority complex may result from imbalances during this level in the hierarchy. Maslow indicated that the need for respect or reputation is most important for children and adolescents and precedes real self-esteem or dignity.

The Program consists of 3 modules focusing on: Self-affirmation and its impact on mental health and well-being (Module 1); Achievement needs of trainers and trainees (Module 2); and Skills and methods for increasing self-esteem and building authority (Module 3).

The modules are very important for trainees and trainers as their self-esteem, self-affirmation and sense of achievement were affected negatively during the COVID-19 pandemic (in particular, due to the demands of distance learning and teaching). The aims are to improve mental health and well-being, improve the sense of achievement and productivity, and increase self-esteem and building authority.

1.4.1. Module 1 - Self-affirmation and its impact on mental health and well-being

This Module focuses on self-affirmation of trainees and trainers and its impact on their mental health and well-being. The module aims to develop the skills of the target groups in this area, presents valuable exercises for practicing self- and positive affirmation and supports the overall goal of the programs included in the Methodology, namely supporting the mental health and well-being of trainers and trainees.

The exercises are included because studies suggest that the distance learning period and the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected the mental health and well-being of trainers and trainees. According to recent research, positive self-affirmations are an effective way to support mental well-being (Page, 2022). Positive affirmations can help change thought patterns and influence different behavioral changes for the better. This can be particularly helpful for those who struggle with anxiety, depression, or self-esteem issues.



Affirmations are brief statements or phrases that can be said aloud or in your head. These are used to build confidence, and self-esteem and to affirm yourself. These can be particularly helpful during difficult or emotional times (such as the pandemic). These phrases are a great way to counteract negative thinking and can stop unhelpful thoughts from spiraling out of control and causing self-doubt.

Here's what the research says about affirmations and mental health:

- ✓ Self-affirmation phrases are shown to reduce stress
- ✓ Self-affirmations are proven to decrease health-deteriorating stress
- ✓ Affirmations can make us less likely to dismiss harmful health messaging
- ✓ Additionally, stating motivational positive affirmations can boost confidence.

Source: Page, S (2022, July 21). Affirmations and mental health: Does positive talk help well-being? <https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/affirmations-and-mental-health>

Because of these benefits, we have included the below exercises. Most of the activities in this module require little time, preparation or equipment. These exercises provide a way for trainers and trainees to improve their mental health and well-being via self-affirmations.

Exercise 1:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Affirming Our Strengths
AIMS	To affirm personal strengths and improve belief in yourself, your worth, and your ability to achieve things.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class + the trainer.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorm, art activity, practical activity.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Affirmed personal strengths and improved belief in yourself, your worth, and your ability to achieve things.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Colored papers, markers, stamps, paper, fabric, and other items in the collage box.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Affirming Our Strengths, Lenore Balliro, World Education https://nelrc.org/managingstress/pdfs/lessons
INSTRUCTION	<p>Part One: Please complete the sentences below.</p> <p>I feel good when _____</p> <p>I feel strong when _____</p> <p>I am very good at _____</p> <p>I am excellent at _____</p> <p>I am talented at _____</p> <p>People are always telling me I am good at _____</p>



	<p>I feel relaxed when</p> <hr/> <p>I can</p> <hr/> <p>_____ when</p> <p>I need a lift in spirits.</p> <p>I can rely on</p> <hr/> <p>_____ to help</p> <p>me through a tough time.</p> <p>I draw strength from</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Part Two: Drawing</p> <p>Draw a picture that shows what you are good at or what makes you happy. You can keep it simple. For example, if you are good at singing, you can draw a microphone or something else that represents that skill.</p> <p>Part Three: Making an Affirmation Box</p> <p>An affirmation box is a place to hold your affirmations. You can open the box and read the affirmations to remind yourself of your strengths, skills, and abilities even if you are feeling down about yourself. It is a reminder that you have positive qualities and can draw from them to meet your goals. In addition to using words, the affirmation box allows you to display colors, items, and images that say something about who you are.</p> <p>To begin:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pick three to five things from the list above that describes what you are good at. (You can add more if you like.) To help you decide, think about what you do in your life that makes you feel competent, strong, and</p>
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positive about yourself. Create a sentence for each of these. For example:

I am very well organized.

I am an excellent singer.

Each of these sentences is an affirmation statement about you. To affirm something means you are saying it is true.

Select some colored papers from the box on the materials table.

Cut a circle, star, or other shape from the patterns on the next page for each of your affirmation statements.

You can also create your own patterns.

Write an affirmation on each one of your shapes.

Decorate it any way you like using markers or stamps.

If you like, share your affirmations out loud with the class or with a partner.

Next steps:

Take a look at the sample affirmation box your teacher has brought in or pictures of other students' work.

Choose a box from the collection to make your own.

Choose some materials from the collage table.

Decorate your box with paper, fabric, and other items in the collage box to reflect something about yourself and your affirmations. You can do the outside and the inside or just the outside.

When your box is dry, you can place your affirmations inside. This is yours to keep and use. Add to it as you discover your gifts and abilities to remind you of your strengths.

Templates for Exercise 1:

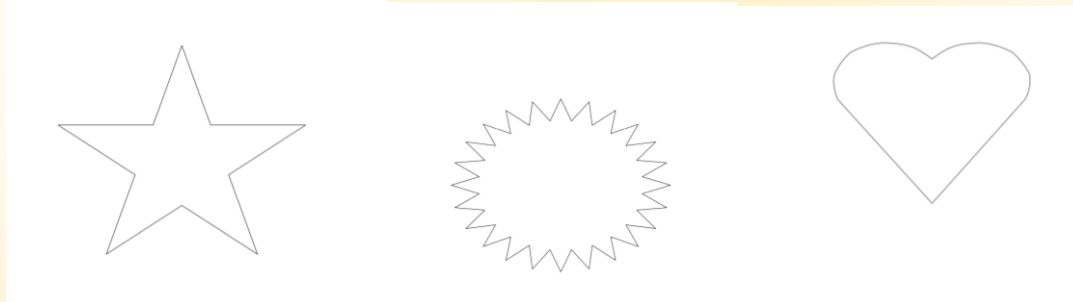


Figure 14, Source: Affirming Our Strengths, Lenore Balliro, World Education,
<https://nelrc.org/managingstress/pdfs/lessons>

Exercise 2:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Gratitude Exercises
AIMS	To enhance optimism and gratitude and achieve self-affirmation. To help develop the self-care practice of positive self-talk.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class + the trainer.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorm, video watching, art activity, journaling.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Enhanced optimism and gratitude and achieved self-affirmation. Developed the self-care practice of positive self-talk.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Journals, pens, pencils, markers for drawing, index cards, jars.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by van Woerkom, M. (2020). Self-Care: Self-Talk for Secondary School Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility. https://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/self-care-self-talk-secondary-school
INSTRUCTION	Try it yourself so you can more authentically guide your students: Think of something you are grateful for. It could be anything, large or small. Consider, for instance, feeling grateful for waking up in a comfortable bed, having hot water for your morning shower, or having a good cup of coffee to start your day. You might be grateful for having a job, for your family, for supportive colleagues or the

students in your class. Whatever it is, direct your mind to go there.

Consider how it makes you feel. Take a few moments to sit with that feeling before moving on to the rest of your day. Taking charge of our thoughts in this way can shift our feelings in a positive direction. Those more positive feelings can lead to a shift in behavior—we might become calmer and more thoughtful, for instance. And that can result in a calmer environment in our classrooms that can lead to improved outcomes. Just imagine being grateful for those outcomes ... and feel your stress levels drop!

1. Consider using some of the following video to introduce Gratitude Practice to your Students:

Gratitude: The Short Film by Louie Schwartzberg (2017),
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpkEvBtyL7M&ab_channel=Mindfulness360-CenterForMindfulness

Modeling gratitude, showing how it's done, can help students direct their brains to go to what they are grateful for.

Gratitude Prompts: If it's hard for students to get started on a gratitude practice consider using gratitude prompts. Some of the ones below can help students get started.

I'm grateful for [a person or persons in your life]

I'm grateful for [a pet, or animals in your life]

I'm grateful for [things in your home or in your building]

I'm grateful for [things in your yard, your street or the park]

I'm grateful for [things in your neighborhood]

I'm grateful for [things you enjoy doing]

You can focus on the senses:

I'm grateful for [something you can hear]

	<p>I'm grateful for [something you can see]</p> <p>I'm grateful for [something you can touch/feel]</p> <p>I'm grateful for [something you can smell]</p> <p>I'm grateful for [something you can taste]</p> <p>Or whatever else you think students might be grateful for in their lives. You can also ask them to explain why.</p> <p>2.Gratitude Journal: Keeping a gratitude journal, is another way for us to direct our brains to go to what's going well and what we appreciate in our lives, so as to counter the negativity bias that our brains are wired for. Writing a journal in longhand can help us slow down and reflect more deeply on the things we're grateful for. Perhaps journaling before going to sleep works for some students, but keeping a journal at the start of class for a few minutes, might be another way for students to get into this. And remember, like any practice, focusing on what you're grateful for comes easier with time. Consider using the following video to introduce keeping a gratitude journal:</p> <p>How to Develop a Gratitude Practice? How to be Grateful? (2017), by Happiness com YouTube Channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s58bLjPw16E&feature=emb_logo&ab_channel=Happinesscom</p> <p>3.Gratitude Drawing: Consider doing an art project around gratitude, a virtual collage perhaps, or individual pieces, put up in a virtual gallery.</p> <p>4.Create a (Virtual) Gratitude Jar: This practice can have a profound impact on your students' and classroom's wellbeing. Get a jar and decorate it in an appealing way. Have students share one thing they're grateful for every day. Collect all the things students are grateful for, write them on index cards, and put them in the jar. The jar will</p>
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fill up with the many things your students are grateful for, while cultivating their gratitude practice. When a student is having a rough day and needs a pick-me-up, they can ask for a card or two from the jar to help focus on what's good in life. You can also have students make their own jars that they fill up themselves and are able to draw on when they need it.

5. Opening or Closing the Day with Gratitude: Inviting young people to reflect on what they're grateful for can be turned into a collective self-care practice. Invite students one after the other to share what they're grateful for. After everyone has shared, ask them to check in with themselves, and recognize how that made them feel. When doing this activity with groups, I often feel the energy in the room shift as smiles appear, and nodding shows how people connect to the things other people in the group are grateful for as well. It's a great way to start or close out the day.

6. Appreciations: You can also invite students to share what they appreciate about others in their class. Encourage them to focus on substantive appreciations that make this activity more meaningful. Instead of, "I appreciate Sam for being my friend," ask them what it is about Sam that makes them a good friend. Or when students share that they appreciate someone for their humor, ask them to talk about a specific time and how it made them feel. This kind of story-telling is an important part of building community, as well as empathy. Of course, it may take some time for students to get comfortable enough with their peers to open up. As always, as the teacher, modeling more meaningful appreciations can help push students to make theirs more meaningful as well.

Exercise 3:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Positive affirmations
AIMS	To improve relaxation, become more aware of thoughts and feelings, learn to transform negative thoughts and feelings about ourselves, our ability and our performance (via positive affirmation).
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class + the trainer.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorm, video watching.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Improved relaxation and awareness of thoughts and feelings, learned to transform negative thoughts and feelings about ourselves, our ability and our performance (via positive affirmation).
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	No materials are needed
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by van Woerkom, M. (2020). Self-Care: Self-Talk for Secondary School Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility. https://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/self-care-self-talk-secondary-school
INSTRUCTION	As we slow down, breathe deeply, relax, and become more aware of our thoughts and feelings, we can learn to transform our negative thoughts and feelings about ourselves, our ability and our performance. Research tells us that our thoughts are as real to the brain as what's happening in our outer lives. This is one reason why

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positive affirmations can be so effective. Positive affirmations work best when you:

use the present tense and the first person (as in, “I am enough,” “I am lovable” or “I am a good friend”) frame them in the positive (instead of “I am not weak,” try “I am strong”)

speak them as if they are fact and truth (no mights, shoulds, or coulds) repeat them confidently to yourself multiple times a day, especially before going to sleep or right before a difficult conversation or test. You can reinforce positive affirmations with physical touch. Tap the back of your hand, gently caress your arm or apply pressure to your temples as you state your affirmation. Consider positive affirmations that have four syllables (e.g., “I am calm now,” “I can do this,” “I am ready,” etc.) so that you can squeeze your thumb and fingers together one syllable at a time, from your index finger, through to your pinky, several times over.

Modeling Positive Affirmations: We know that children learn best by example – the idea of “do as I do, not just as I say.” So as the adult in the (virtual) room, it is important you let them know what affirmations look and sound like. Share some of your favorite affirmations, and talk about their impact. And if affirmations are not part of your daily practice, now is a great time to start.

Try positive affirmations first thing in the morning. It helps having a consistent time of day, to turn this into a regular, empowering self-care practice. Consider some sentence starters, like:

I ... matter, have got this, etc.

I am ... loved, powerful, blessed, etc.

I can ... do this, sit in discomfort, change my ways, make a difference, etc.

I choose ... love over fear, compassion, generosity, etc.

Also affirm your students, modeling language that they, in turn, can use to affirm themselves. Use their names and look them in the eye as you tell them:

Marissa, you matter.

You are loved, Tamir.

Rosa, you are smart.

Class/friends, you can do this, you've got this.

Congrats Louis. Your efforts paid off; you figured it out!

What we know is that our self-talk is shaped by the way caregivers speak to us. As an influential adult in students' lives, you can help transform their negative self-talk into more positive, affirming messages over time. That, or you can further affirm the positive self-talk they've already been practicing. Watch this short clip of three-year-old Ayaan reciting positive affirmations on his way to school. Clearly it is never too early to start.

Brainstorming and Putting Positive Affirmations to

Use: If affirmations aren't part of your practice, you can also choose to build one alongside your students.

Ask if they use positive self-talk in their lives. If so, works for them?

Brainstorm a list of positive affirmations for all to draw on, as you all practice getting better at positively affirming yourself and others in the classroom. Ask students what it feels like to positively affirm themselves. (Accept the feelings that come up, from weird, uncomfortable, and embarrassing to happy, exciting, warm, and fulfilling, and everything in between).

	<p>Call and Response Affirmations (to start or end your exercise): Ask students to repeat after you a set of affirmations, in a call and response way, e.g.</p> <p>You: “I am enough” Class: “I am enough”</p> <p>You: “I am powerful” Class: “I am powerful”</p> <p>You: “I am lovable” Class: “I am lovable”</p> <p>Repeat a second or third time, as you see fit. As this becomes part of your classroom rituals, invite student volunteers to lead the call and response, coming up with their own positive affirmations over time. Consider playing part of the following video for call and response affirmations, set to music:</p> <p>33 Positive Affirmations for Kids Self Esteem, Sandz Academy YouTube Channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ud_eeFkzH4w</p> <p>Positive Affirmation Songs: Songs are yet another way to introduce positive affirmations into the classroom.</p>
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Activities and tips for trainers:

Source: Sharma, S. (2023, March 31). The 10 best self-affirmation activities you should try!.

Calm Sage - Your Guide to Mental and Emotional Well-being.

<https://www.calmsage.com/self-affirmation-activities/>

These self-affirmation activities are for adults / trainers and students who wish to partake in to create healthy and positive thinking.

The human brain is made to adapt and change with thoughts and experiences. This is called neuroplasticity. Self-affirmation is one of the neuroplasticity exercises that one can use to create positive self-talk and bring healthy changes to the thinking process. To affirm means to “...state a fact”. Self-affirmations are essentially statements that you create or use, to maintain a positive self-worth attitude and talk.

Self-affirmations rely on your sense of self. When you feel your sense of self-falling, you can quickly use self-affirmations to maintain your worth. These are also statements that you can use as reminders to yourself, your goals, your worth, and your values. The below exercises are found to be particularly effective:

- **Positive Affirmation List**

The first self-affirmation activity you can try is very simple. All you have to do is create a positive affirmation list! Take a pen and paper, and list all the positive affirmations you’re likely to use. You can also break them down into social, emotional, physical, or intellectual categories. Here are some positive affirmations you can add:

I am strong, fit, and healthy

I work out every day

I eat a healthy diet every day

I love myself

I have a strong sense of self-esteem

- **Affirmation Posters**

Another self-affirmation exercise is affirmation posters. You can self-create some affirmation posters using your favorite affirmations and hang them in your home or at your desk. Here’s an example; you can use an affirmation that says, “I choose activities that make me feel good” or “I am a good team leader” etc.

- **Creating Own Affirmations**

There could be times when positive affirmations that you take from motivational posters might not work for you. When this happens, you can create some positive affirmations just for yourself. Self-affirmations work when you can relate to them. Try to create your own affirmations based on your dreams, goals, and values.

- **Say it Out Loud**

Another self-affirmation activity that works best is saying the affirmations out loud. It's OK to recite the affirmations in your mind, there's nothing wrong with it, but there could be times when the thoughts in your mind are too loud to hush. Here, you can say your affirmations out loud. When you say it out loud, you bring your brain's attention to your new thoughts.

- **"I am..." Self-Affirmation Exercise**

Now, this positive self-affirmation exercise is something you can try alone or in a group. In this simple exercise, complete the sentence, "I am..." with a thought that comes to your mind. This positive validation exercise can help increase your confidence and boost your self-esteem. If this isn't something up your alley, try "Today, I am going to..." These sentence completion exercises can help you better understand your thoughts and motivations.

- **Sticky Note Reminders**

This is a fun self-affirmation activity that all adults and even students can try. It's normal to change your affirmations every week or month. When goals can change, so can affirmations! Using sticky note affirmations can allow you to keep track of your new affirmations. I have one on my bathroom mirror and one on my work desk. You can put these sticky self-affirmations where you can daily look at them and reaffirm yourself.

- **Affirmation Songs**

Did you know that you can use songs as self-affirmations as well? "Happy" by Pharrell Williams and "Roar" by Katy Perry are great songs you can use as affirmations. Not only adults but this activity can benefit young children too! If you're listening to self-affirming songs, then pay attention to the lyrics and be mindful of what is being sung.

In conclusion, the implementation of the abovementioned exercises for trainees and trainers and the tips will support the self-affirmation of the target groups, improve positive thinking and mental well-being.



1.4.2. Module 2 - Achievement needs of trainers and trainees

This Module focuses on the achievement needs of trainers and trainees and how to better promote their accomplishment and productivity. The module aims to develop the skills of the target groups in this area, presents valuable exercises for meeting achievement needs and promoting productivity and supports the overall goal of the programs included in the Methodology, namely supporting the mental health and well-being of trainers and trainees.

The exercises are included because studies suggest that the distance learning period and the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected the sense of achievement and productivity of trainers and trainees. According to recent research (Pietro, 2023), Covid-19 and distance learning have had an impact on student achievement. Meta-analysis findings showed that the pandemic had, on average, a detrimental effect on learning. Students are also found to have lost more ground in math/science than in other subjects. Additionally, one year or more after the first lockdown, students seem to have been unable to catch up on unfinished learning from the pandemic. This result suggests that more efforts should be made to ensure students recovered their (academic) achievements.

In addition to this, productivity and achievements of teachers were negatively impacted during the pandemic and distance teaching. A study by Bartkowiak et al. (2022) determined that some educators had a negative assessment of their own productivity and achievements, their quality of work life and sense of well-being.

Sources:

Di Pietro G. (2023). The impact of Covid-19 on student achievement: Evidence from a recent meta-analysis. *Educational research review*, 39, 100530.

Bartkowiak, G., Krugielka, A., Dama, S., Kostrzewa-Demczuk, P., & Gawel-Luty, E. (2022). Academic Teachers about Their Productivity and a Sense of Well-Being in the Current COVID-19 Epidemic. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 19(9), 4970.

Because of these factors, we have included the below exercises. Most of the activities in this module require little time, preparation or equipment. These exercises provide a way for trainers and trainees to improve their achievements, goal-setting, and productivity. There is a specific focus on goal-setting as it is a vital step to promoting achievements in different areas.

Exercises for trainees:

Exercise 1:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Pressure Cooker
AIMS	To get your students to develop their critical thinking skills, to foster achievement and goal setting.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate for elementary students.
DURATION	15 – 20 minutes
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	8 - 15 players.
USED METHODS	Interactive game
EXPECTED RESULTS	Developed critical thinking skills, fostered achievement and goal setting.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	A long rope (around 7 m.), 1 numbered spot marker per player, a stopwatch.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Ackerman, C. E. (2019). 42 Goal Setting Activities for Students & Kids (+ PDF). PositivePsychology.com. https://positivepsychology.com/goal-setting-students-kids/#education
INSTRUCTION	In advance, lay a long rope on the floor/ground to form a large circle. Collect and number as many spot markers as you have people in your group. Randomly distribute the numbered spot markers inside the circle. Ask each person to stand on top of one of the spot markers. When ready, instruct each individual to move to and touch every other spot in the ascending order of the numbers. For example, the person standing on spot #8 will move to 9, 10, 11 and 12 (presuming there are 12 people in the group,) before moving to 1, 2, 3

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through to 8.

As soon as an individual has touched all of the spot-markers and returns to their own, they will exit the circle. Challenge your group to perform this task as accurately and as fast as possible. Furthermore, challenge your group to solve this problem without stepping outside of the (roped) circle or touching any other person in the process (touching elsewhere within the circle is permitted.) Encourage your group to make as many attempts as possible within a specified time period, aiming to improve their performance with each attempt. Allow ample time for planning and problem-solving.

Template:

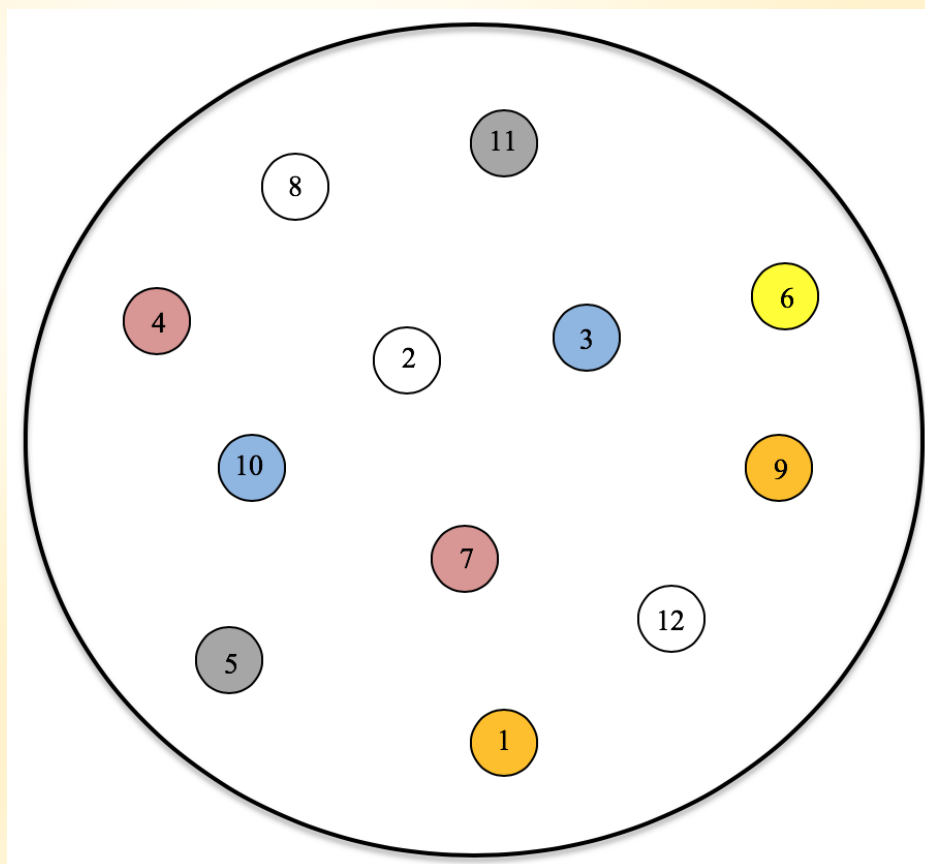


Figure 15, Source: <https://positivepsychology.com/>

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Exercise 2:

NAME OF EXERCISE	My goals
AIMS	To practice identifying and planning for their goals to foster achievement.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate for elementary students.
DURATION	10 minutes
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	Medium to large groups.
USED METHODS	Game, discussion.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Practiced identifying and planning for their goals to foster achievement.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Paper, pens.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Ackerman, C. E. (2019). 42 Goal Setting Activities for Students & Kids (+ PDF). PositivePsychology.com. https://positivepsychology.com/goal-setting-students-kids/#education
INSTRUCTION	This is a great way for your students to practice identifying and planning for their goals to foster achievement. It only requires them to set two goals and gives them ample room to write them down (although they may need your help with this). After they have identified two goals, they answer the following prompts for each of them: This goal is important because... Steps I'll take to reach this goal are... It's simple, easy, and won't take more than 10 minutes or so, making it an excellent addition to either before or after one of the games above. You can find the



	worksheet here: https://0.tqn.com/z/g/specialed/library/goal1.pdf
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Template:

My Goals by _____

Goal # 1 is: _____

This goal is important because: _____

Steps I'll take to reach this goal are: _____

Goal # 2 is: _____

This goal is important because: _____

Steps I'll take to reach this goal are: _____

<http://specialed.about.com>

Figure 16, Source: <http://specialed.about.com>

Exercise 3:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Wheel of Fortune
AIMS	To introduce goal setting in different areas of life and foster achievement in students.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate for middle school students.
DURATION	20 minutes
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class
USED METHODS	Art activity
EXPECTED RESULTS	Introduced goal setting in different areas of life and fostered achievement in students.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Paper, pens / pencils / markers.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Ackerman, C. E. (2019). 42 Goal Setting Activities for Students & Kids (+ PDF). PositivePsychology.com. https://positivepsychology.com/goal-setting-students-kids/#education
INSTRUCTION	The wheel of fortune is a fun way to introduce goal setting in different areas of life. It will show your students that you don't need to keep your goals limited to school or work, you can set goals in all life domains. Follow these steps to create and use a wheel of fortune: Draw a circle and divide it into even segments (like you're cutting a pizza into slices). On each segment, write one of the important life domains; for example, you might write "Family," "Friends," "School/Work," "Hobbies," "Health," and "Fun." For each domain, have students write out the goals they would like to accomplish. Make sure they keep the goals to a specific timeline (e.g., a



	month, 3 months, a year). Make sure to help them keep track of their progress throughout the timeline.
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Exercise 4:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Vision board
AIMS	To get students thinking about what is most important to them, and encourage them to stay motivated in striving towards their goals to promote achievement.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate for middle school students.
DURATION	30 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class
USED METHODS	Art activity.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Encouraged students to stay motivated in striving towards their goals to promote achievement.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Old magazines, newspapers, printed pictures, scissors, cardboard, glue, glitter, stickers, ribbons, markers.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Ackerman, C. E. (2019). 42 Goal Setting Activities for Students & Kids (+ PDF). PositivePsychology.com. https://positivepsychology.com/goal-setting-students-kids/#education
INSTRUCTION	Vision boards are a great way to plan out your goals, especially the big ones that are especially meaningful to you. Helping your students create a vision board will challenge them, get them thinking about what is most important to them, and encourage them to stay motivated in striving towards their goals. Here's how to create an effective vision board: Gather some old magazines (you can also draw pictures, use newspapers, print out some pictures, etc.) and have your students cut out some pictures that represent their hopes and dreams for the future. Help your students



	<p>arrange the pictures on a piece of cardboard and use glue to secure them in place. You can also provide glitter, stickers, ribbons, markers, and anything else they might like to decorate their vision board with. Ask your students to describe what each picture represents and how he or she plans to work toward that goal. If your class is too large or you have some shy students, ask them to write it down instead of sharing it out to the group.</p> <p>Send them home with their vision board or hang it somewhere in the classroom if there's space for all of them.</p>
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Exercise 5:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Learning from the Past
AIMS	To evaluate previous achievements, think about past goals and taking inventory of what went well.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate for high school students.
DURATION	30 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Evaluated previous achievements, thought about past goals and took inventory of what went well.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Worksheet.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Ackerman, C. E. (2019). 42 Goal Setting Activities for Students & Kids (+ PDF). PositivePsychology.com. https://positivepsychology.com/goal-setting-students-kids/#education
INSTRUCTION	It's also important to think about your past goals and taking inventory of what went well, what didn't, and any other lessons learned. This exercise can guide your students through that process. It opens with an explanation of why it's an important practice: "Before setting new goals, it's important to look back to previous goals you have set and learn from them. Analyze why you reached those goals or why you didn't reach those goals." Next, the worksheet presents several questions and prompts to help the user think it through: Previous goal(s) I have set:



	<p>Were goals achieved?</p> <p>List the reasons the goals were achieved or not, be specific:</p> <p>What barriers did you encounter with previous goals?</p> <p>What can you do to confront barriers and obstacles to reaching your goal(s)?</p> <p>In summary, what did you learn from your previous goal(s)?</p> <p>Be ready to help your students with useful prompts or examples in case they need help, and discuss their answers with them after they've completed the activity.</p> <p>Click here to see this worksheet https://worksheetplace.com/mf_pdf/Setting-Goals-Worksheet-1.pdf</p>
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Template:

Name: _____

Goal Setting: Learning from the Past

Before setting new goals, it's important to look back to previous goals you have set and learn from them.
Analyze why you reached those goals or why you didn't reach those goals.

Previous goal(s) I have set: _____

Were goals achieved? _____

List the reasons the goals were achieved or not, be specific _____

What barriers did you encounter with previous goals. What can you do to confront barriers and obstacles to reaching your goal(s)?

In summary, what did you learn from your previous goal(s)? _____

<https://www.worksheetplace.com> ©

Figure 17, Source: <https://www.worksheetplace.com>

Tips and exercises for trainers:

Source: Mead E (2019), 45 Goal Setting Activities, Exercises & Games (+ PDF)
<https://positivepsychology.com/goal-setting-exercises/#workshop-activities>

The below tips and exercises are designed for trainers who wish to improve their achievements at work or in other life areas.

- **The ‘One Year from Now’ Exercise**

You can do this exercise alone, with a family member or a close friend. It can be really rewarding to share your ideas with someone you trust, who will also challenge you to consider things outside of your comfort zone. Some of the key areas to think about when completing this exercise include:

Your Work – What job will you be doing? Where will you be working? How will you be working towards what you want this to look like?

Your Home – Are you hoping to save up to buy a place? Are there some home improvements in your current place you’ve been putting off?

Your Finances – Are you saving for something in particular? Do you want to get on top of your retirement plans?

Your Relationships – Are you happy in love? Wanting to get married? How much value do your close friendships bring? Do you need to work more on connecting with people?

Yourself – How do you want to feel about yourself one year from now? Mentally, physically, socially, personally? What does that look and feel like?

Once you’ve created what one year from now looks like for you, start thinking about the steps required to achieve those things. Be reasonable and don’t try and commit to achieving everything at once. Pick one or two achievable and measurable goals for each area and build a goal-setting plan for each. Include a rough timeline of when you’d like to achieve that by so you can keep yourself accountable. Again, you can write this down on good old-fashioned paper, in a journal, or use a computer – whatever works best for you. Make sure it’s written up somewhere you can refer back to it and add to if needed.

- **The ‘Treasure Mapping’ Exercise**

The Treasure Mapping exercise begins with some basic visualization techniques and takes it one step further. Visualization is a wonderful tool to help you build a picture of what you want certain aspects of your life to look like. When it comes to goal setting, visualization can become tricky as it takes time to concentrate and re-visualize what you're working towards when you need a quick boost of inspiration and motivation. With Treasure Mapping, you create a physical representation of your visualization. You can do this with a drawing, painting, collage, or digital art. It serves as a manifestation of your goals and intensifies the work you put into visualizing them in your mind. A few tips on getting started:

First, clarify the goal you want to work towards. Visualize what this looks and feels like. Is it a personal achievement or more tangible, like running a marathon or paying off your debt?

Now, write it all down in detail, using visualization as you go to build a clear picture. Think about the outcome of achieving your goal: What will you have? What will you be? How do you celebrate? What do your friends and family say?

Once you have written this all down, it's time to get creative! Grab your art supplies, a stack of magazines or whatever else you want to use to create your treasure map. At the top of your map create the visual representation of what achieving your goal looks like – this is the treasure you're working towards.

Now start thinking about all the steps required from where you are at now, to achieving that ultimate goal. Begin the above process again for each step you can identify and work backward from your ultimate goal, creating a visual manifestation on your map as you go.

Align your images – drawings or collage – in a way that you can see how they connect. This will help imprint in your mind how you are going to achieve them. Once finished, place your treasure map in a place where you can see it easily for a regular hit of motivation and inspiration. If you created in using some digital art software, print it or keep it as your background screensaver so you see it daily.

These exercises are just a starting point. Some might work better than others for you, so it's worth trying a few and getting a feel for what you respond to the most.

- **The Winning Lottery Ticket Activity**

This activity is great for giving the mind free reign to think about what you would do if you had no financial constraints. It can be really telling to see what you come up with – most of which can be quite achievable if you start putting in the effort and setting some goals!

The premise is easy: You've just won the lottery! The winning amount is \$30 million. What is your first reaction? What do you do next? What are some of your key priorities to use the money wisely? What about savings? Whom do you help out? You can write this down, visualize it, or discuss it openly if you're doing the exercise with a partner, family or group. Once you've done this, restart the exercise, only this time you've won half the original amount – \$15 million. Think about what changes you'd make to your original plans (if any). Keep restarting the exercise, each time halving the winning amount. You'll notice that you start to drill down to your core values and these can inform the goals you need to focus on.

- **The Retirement Party Activity**

This activity flips the lottery ticket activity on its head a little bit. Instead of visualizing what you would do, you think about what you would regret not doing. Visualize the following scenario: Fast forward a few years or so to your own retirement party. You've worked hard, held down a steady job and now it's time to enjoy some free time. You've invited all of your close friends, colleagues, and family. You give a speech about all the things you've enjoyed in life and then someone asks: What do you regret not doing?

Look back over your life and think about the things you wished you had done but didn't. Perhaps work got busy so some personal travel goals got pushed to the side. Or maybe you never ended up going back to school to study that degree in creative writing you wanted to. Based on how your life is heading right now, you'll probably have a good idea of what these regrets might look like. Now take each regret and rewrite as a positive. You've just created a list of goals to work towards.

All of these activities focus on helping you to get at the core of what your potential goals could be and will foster achievements. It's worth trying a few different activities and seeing what results you get, and especially worth revisiting them over time to see how your ideas change.

In conclusion, by implementing the abovementioned exercises and tips for trainees and trainers, the module ensures that the achievement needs of both target groups are met.



1.4.3. Module 3 - Skills and methods for increasing self-esteem and building authority

This Module focuses on developing the skills and providing methods for increasing self-esteem and building authority of trainers and trainees. It presents valuable exercises for achieving these aims and supports the overall goal of the programs included in the Methodology, namely supporting the mental health and well-being of trainers and trainees.

The exercises are included because studies suggest that the distance learning period and the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected the self-esteem of trainers and trainees and authority of trainers. According to recent research (Azmi et al., 2022), students experienced a decrease in self-esteem due to the shift to a virtual learning environment. Moreover, the online learning played a role in amplifying their stress levels, anxiety, and depression. Cataudella et al. (2021) had similar findings in teachers – a negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teachers, particularly on their self-esteem and self-efficacy, difficulty in the transition to distance learning and establishing discipline in the virtual classroom via authority.

Because of these factors, we have included the below exercises. Most of the activities in this module require little time, preparation or equipment. These exercises provide a way for trainers and trainees to improve their self-esteem, and build authority.

Sources: Azmi, F. M., Khan, H. N., Azmi, A. M., Yaswi, A., & Jakovljevic, M. (2022). Prevalence of COVID-19 Pandemic, Self-Esteem and Its Effect on Depression Among University Students in Saudi Arabia. *Frontiers in public health*, 10, 836688. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.836688>

Cataudella, S., Carta, S. M., Mascia, M. L., Masala, C., Petretto, D. R., Agus, M., & Penna, M. P. (2021). Teaching in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Pilot Study on Teachers' Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy in an Italian Sample. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 18(15), 8211. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18158211>

Exercises for trainees:

Exercise 1:



NAME OF EXERCISE	Valuing yourself
AIMS	To practice self-acceptance, realize that their strengths far outweigh their weaknesses.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate for all ages.
DURATION	15 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Practiced self-acceptance, realized that their strengths far outweigh their weaknesses.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	No materials needed.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by: Polk Mentoring Alliance 2008, CONFIDENCE ACTIVITIES, https://www.acealabama.org/uploads/9/5/5/2/95521332/confidenceactivities.pdf
INSTRUCTION	Self-acceptance is a specific stage in self-discovery that occurs whenever students are willing to look at themselves objectively (with the help of an adult). When they do, they will realize that their strengths far outweigh their weaknesses. Reflect on these questions and try to answer them honestly. This exercise can give you the opportunity to validate your positive self-perception. What three things do I like about myself? What are my strengths? What activities can make me a better and stronger person?

Exercise 2:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Self-Esteem Makeover
AIMS	To recognize signs of low self-esteem and identify ways to improve self-esteem.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 6-8.
DURATION	45 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Recognized signs of low self-esteem and identified ways to improve self-esteem.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Computer with Internet access "Self-Esteem Makeover" handout or plain paper.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by: The Nemours Foundation/KidsHealth, Personal Health Series Self-Esteem (2016), https://classroom.kidshealth.org/classroom/6to8/personal/growing/selfesteem.pdf
INSTRUCTION	„Today, we're going to be self-esteem makeover artists. So, look for a character in a book, TV show, movie, or even a well-known person in real life, who seems to have low self-esteem. Using the "Self-Esteem Makeover" handout, describe the “before” self-esteem of your character. What about this person makes you think he or she has low self-esteem? Then, create a plan to improve your character’s self-esteem. Describe in detail two or three things your character could do to boost his or her self-esteem. Finally, describe the character’s “after” self-esteem. Has the character’s life changed now that he or she has better self-esteem? “

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Template

		Personal Health Series Self-Esteem	Name: Date:
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Self-Esteem Makeover

Instructions: Choose a character in a book, TV show, movie, or even a well-known person in real life, who seems to have low self-esteem. Then describe the “before” self-esteem of your character. Using the KidsHealth.org articles for guidance, create a plan to improve your character’s self-esteem. Describe two or three things your character could do to boost his or her self-esteem. Finally, describe the character’s “after” self-esteem. Has the character’s life changed now that he or she has better self-esteem?

1 Before

Describe your character’s self-esteem before the makeover.

2 MAKEOVER PLAN

Describe your plan for boosting your character’s self-esteem.

3 After

Describe your character’s self-esteem after the makeover.

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Figure 18, Source:

<https://classroom.kidshealth.org/classroom/6to8/personal/growing/selfesteem.pdf>

Exercise 3:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Smile and Say Self-Esteem!
AIMS	Students to recognize signs of healthy self-esteem and understand the importance of healthy self-esteem.
TARGET GROUP	Students from Grades 6-8.
DURATION	90 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Practical activity.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Students will have recognized signs of healthy self-esteem and understood the importance of healthy self-esteem.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Computer with Internet access, Camera, Plain paper, Art supplies (colored pencils, markers), Glue.
LOCATION	Outside class, over a few days
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by: The Nemours Foundation/KidsHealth, Personal Health Series Self-Esteem (2016), https://classroom.kidshealth.org/classroom/6to8/personal/growing/selfesteem.pdf
INSTRUCTION	People talk about the importance of good self-esteem, but what does that actually look like? Get behind a camera to find out! Take pictures of good self-esteem in action – at home, at school, in your neighborhood, wherever! Collect the pictures in a photo essay, in which you write about why you think each picture reflects good self-esteem and how the people in the pictures are influenced by their self-esteem. Extension: Take a selfie, or ask someone to take a picture of you, showing your self-esteem in action.

Exercise 4:

NAME OF EXERCISE	My Wins
AIMS	To foster self-esteem, students to draw, paint, or otherwise represent the things—their achievements and qualities—about themselves that are important to them.
TARGET GROUP	There is no age restriction.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Art activity.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Fostered self-esteem through drawing, painting, or otherwise representing the things—their achievements and qualities—about themselves that are important to them.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Pens, paper, pencils, markers.
LOCATION	Classroom
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by: Ackerman, C. E. (2017), 15 Best Self-Esteem Worksheets and Activities (Incl. PDF), https://positivepsychology.com/self-esteem-worksheets/#kids-self-esteem
INSTRUCTION	This activity is especially great for kids and younger teens who are crafty and creative, although people of all ages and talents can take part. The My Wins is an artistic prompt for students to draw, paint, or otherwise represent the things—their achievements and qualities—about themselves that are important to them. You may wish to use a theme for this activity or for each ‘win’, but it’s okay to engage in this activity with no specific theme in mind as well. This is a simple exercise that has only the

	<p>outline of different certificates. In each, your student can represent the personal qualities, achievements, and traits that they value. For example, if your student is dealing with self-esteem issues, he or she can use the theme “What Makes Me Great” and focus on filling the frames with reasons why he or she is a good friend, a good child, a good student, and a good person in general.</p>
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Template:

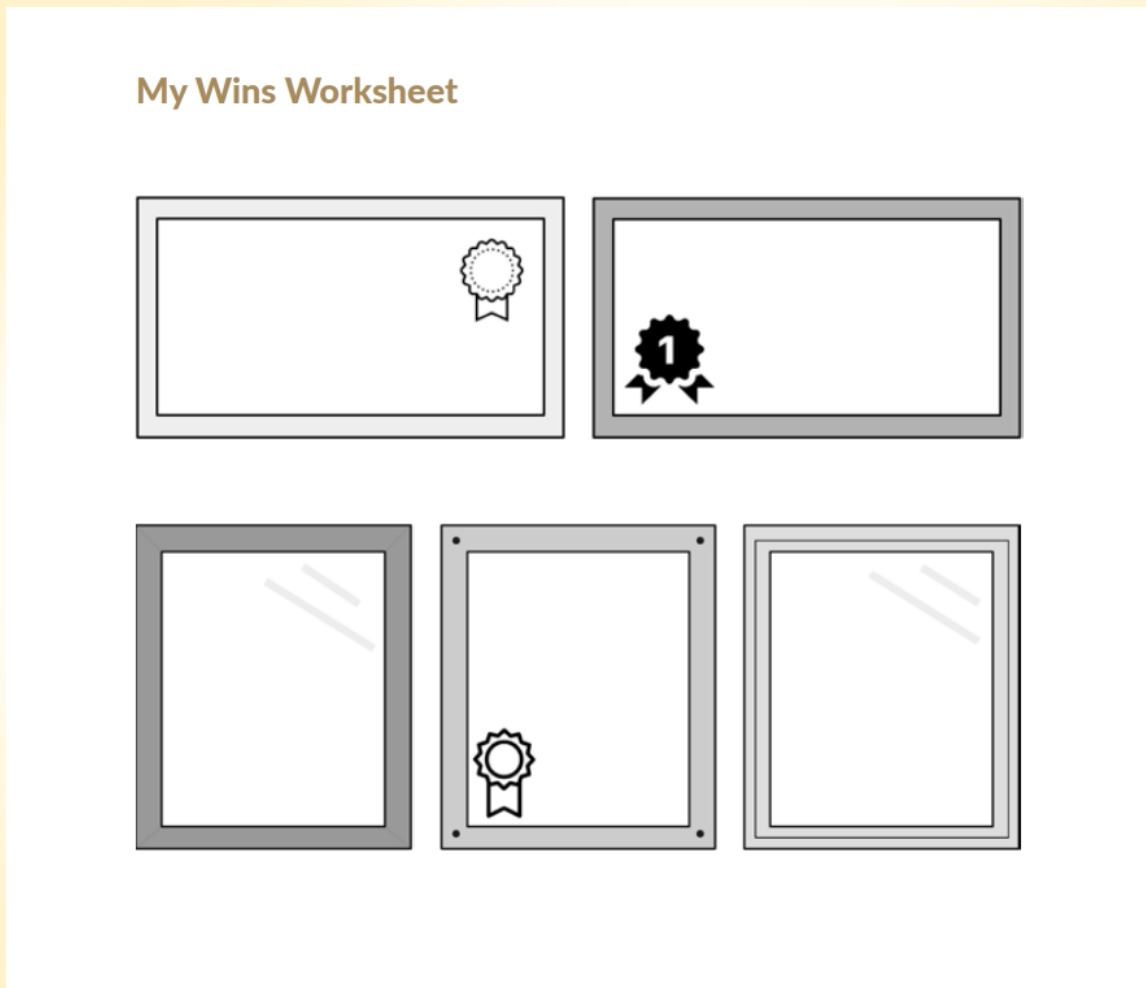


Figure 19, Source: <https://positivepsychology.com/self-esteem-worksheets/#kids-self-esteem>

Exercise 5:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Self-Esteem Journal
AIMS	To build self-esteem and promote optimism among students.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate for all ages.
DURATION	20 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Built self-esteem and promoted optimism among students.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Worksheet.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by: Ackerman, C. E. (2017), 15 Best Self-Esteem Worksheets and Activities (Incl. PDF), https://positivepsychology.com/self-esteem-worksheets/#kids-self-esteem
INSTRUCTION	This activity is great for any age. Keeping a self-esteem journal is a great way for students to begin thinking about the good things that they do and experience, setting them up for a positive outlook on life. The worksheet lists three-sentence completion prompts for each day of the week, starting with Monday. The prompts include “One thing I did great at today...,” “Today it was interesting when...,” and “I made someone smile when...” Completing these prompts every night for a week should help your student feel more optimistic and begin focusing on the good things

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	<p>that happen instead of the bad. Link to worksheet: Self-Esteem Journal for Kids Worksheet by PositivePsychology.com: https://positive.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Self-Esteem-Journal-for-Kids.pdf</p>
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Template:

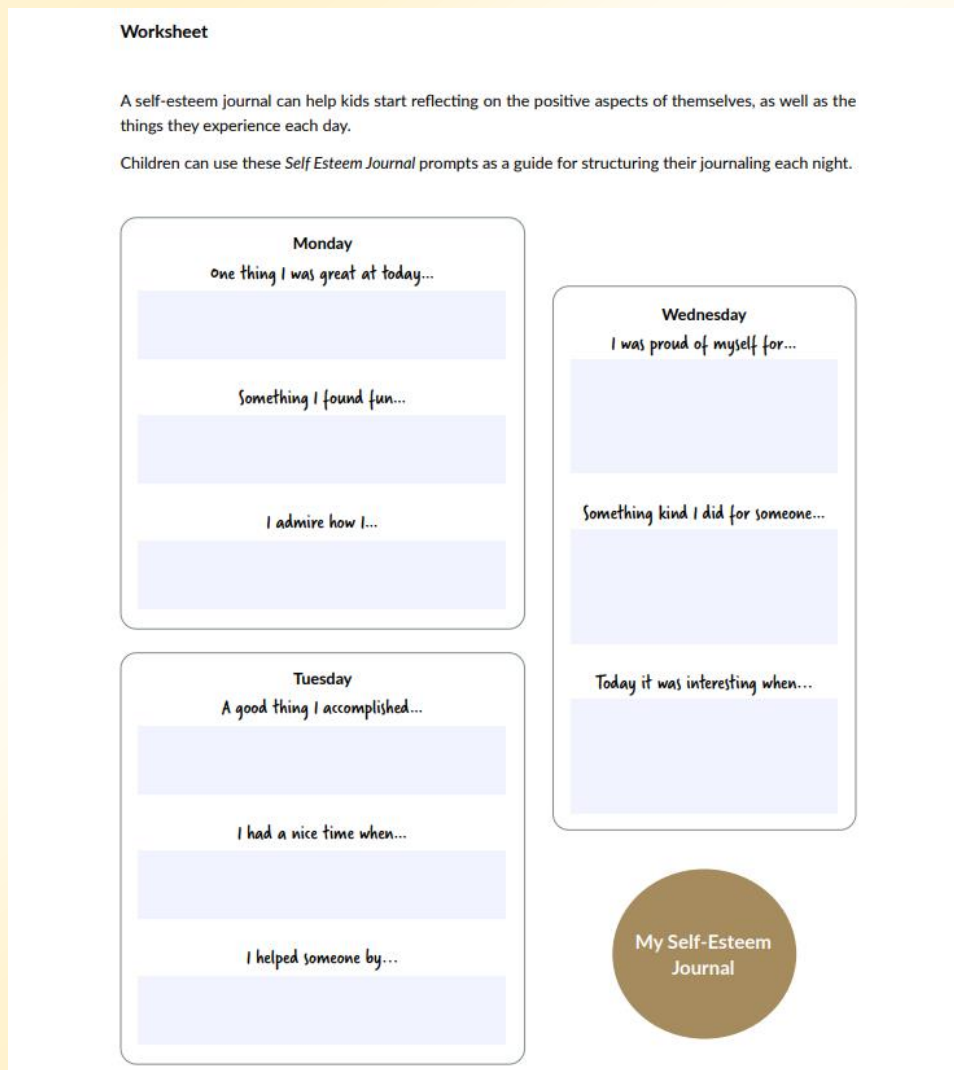


Figure 20, Source: <https://positive.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Self-Esteem-Journal-for-Kids.pdf>

Tips and exercises for trainers:

Source: Ackerman, C. E. (2017), 15 Best Self-Esteem Worksheets and Activities (Incl. PDF), <https://positivepsychology.com/self-esteem-worksheets/#adults-self-esteem>

Building self-esteem is a practice best started young, but it's never too late to begin investing in your own self-worth. Here are some activities and tips that may be beneficial for trainers to try for themselves:

- **Self-Esteem Sentence Stems Exercise**

This is a sentence completion exercise for adults. This exercise is exactly what it sounds like: It includes prompts with space for you to complete the sentence in the way that feels right to you. Completing this exercise can help you explore your thoughts and feelings, and to open up and share them with others. This exercise will help you become more comfortable sharing your thoughts and feelings with others, making it easier to work through self-esteem issues.

Next, it instructs users to set aside 5-10 minutes several times a week to complete the worksheet. After two weeks of completing the worksheet, users can review their responses to get an idea of their general outlooks on life and see how things have changed since they began. The intended result is for the answers to become more positive over time.

After the instructions, the sentence prompts are listed, including:

I have always wanted to...

I'm secretly afraid of...

This week I would enjoy doing...

I often look forward to...

I feel something that the future holds for me is...

I get my strength from...

One person couldn't live without is...

I would never...

It made me feel great when...

I love when...

I find it hard to...

My dream is to one day that...

It makes me angry when...

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I sometimes fear that...

This week is going to be...

Something I deeply desire is...

I flourish when...

This week I hope to...

Something I do secretly...

I find it hard to admit...

Answering these questions can give you helpful insight into yourself, what makes you happy, and what you struggle with. Link to Worksheet: <https://positive.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Self-Esteem-Sentence-Stems.pdf>

- **Identifying and Challenging Core Beliefs Exercise**

We often carry negative or false unconscious or semiconscious beliefs, never stopping to recognize the values and norms that we buy into on a daily basis. This exercise will help you explore and define deeply held beliefs that guide thoughts and behavior. The worksheet begins with an explanation of what core beliefs are: “Core beliefs can be defined as the very essence of how people see themselves, others, the world, and the future.” Next, it explains how core beliefs can influence one’s thinking and emotions through an example interaction. “Interaction: You are attending an interview for a job that you really want.” In this situation, you must choose between three briefcases to bring along to work, each representing a different core belief:

Purple briefcase—“I’m talented”

Internal thought associated: “I am naturally adept with lots of experience in this field. I deserve this role.”

Your reaction: You feel confident as you enter the interview, and subsequently land the job.

Orange briefcase—“I’m unsure whether I’m talented.”

Internal thought associated: “I have lots of experience and I think I’m good, but someone else will probably get the job over me.”

Your reaction: You don’t feel great heading into the interview. You receive relatively positive feedback but don’t land the role.

Green briefcase—“I’m not talented.”

Internal thought associated: “There’s no way I’m getting this job. Other candidates are much more capable than me.”

Your reaction: You don’t get the job.

These examples show that the thoughts we carry with us, everywhere we go, can have a profound impact on our feelings, our behavior, and the associated outcomes. Finally, the worksheet presents an opportunity to apply what you have learned from these examples to your own life. You are prompted to identify three negative core beliefs and three reasons why each belief is not true.

It can be difficult to identify the first core belief, especially if you have several very deeply held negative beliefs that you have never even considered challenging before. However, once you get the ball rolling with the first belief, it should get easier as you go.

Link to the Core beliefs worksheet by PositivePsychology.com: <https://positive.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Core-Beliefs-Suitcases.pdf>

Finally, here are some tips for trainers on how to assert authority in the classroom (source: Linsin M, 9 Ways To Have More Authority Next School Year, Smart Classroom Management website, <https://smartclassroommanagement.com/2017/07/22/9-ways-to-have-more-authority-next-school-year/>):

✓ Dress neatly.

Teachers are dressing more casually now than ever before. You’ll do well to buck the trend—because it has an effect on whether students perceive you as a leader worth following. This doesn’t mean that you must dress formally or wear expensive clothes. General neatness in appearance and quality of clothing is key. Dress like the leader you are and your students will treat you with greater respect. Sharp clothing will also make you feel more confident, which will further improve your authority.

✓ Stand tall.

Confidence in the way you carry yourself sends the message to students that you know what’s best for them and that you’re steering them in the right direction. This frees them to let their guard down, accept your words as true, and place their trust in you. So, stand tall. Throw your shoulders back. Move, behave, and express yourself as if you know exactly what you’re doing. If you’re not feeling confident, that’s okay. The appearance of confidence can have the

same effect. According to research, simply changing your posture can make you feel more powerful and thus behave more confidently.

✓ Follow through.

This one is huge. Do what you say you're going to do and over time your authority will skyrocket. Be wishy-washy, however, break your promises and ignore your classroom management plan, and you'll lose authority quickly. Everything you say will be called into question. Your students will challenge you, argue with you, or pay you little mind. Some may even try to wrest control of the classroom right out of your hands.

✓ Honor the truth.

Be upfront and honest in all your dealings with students. Refuse to engage in over-the-top flattery or manipulation. Steer clear of do-this and get-that rewards, catching students doing good, or token economies—which effectively snuff out intrinsic motivation. Make your words of praise genuine and based on true accomplishment. Tell your students the truth about where they are both behaviorally and academically. A direct approach is highly motivational. It will give you strong authority as well as a dignity and morality that is common to all great leaders.

✓ Be Pleasant.

The use of intimidation in any form is terrible leadership. Lecturing, glaring, scolding, and losing your cool may frighten students into behaving in the short term, but the price is your respect, plummeting authority, and more and more misbehavior. Being consistently pleasant, on the other hand, will give you effortless rapport, powerful leverage, and behavior-changing influence. It will cause students to love you and want to get to know you better, without any additional effort from you. It will make your classroom management plan matter to them and work like it should.

✓ Be calm.

Teachers who rush around, who are frazzled, scatter-brained, and tense, will never have the same level of authority as those who are calm and prepared. Nervous energy has a way of spreading throughout the classroom, infecting every inch. It causes excitability, inattentiveness, and a form of misbehavior that is very difficult to eliminate.

✓ Improve your speaking.

Teachers who struggle to gain authority tend to talk fast and ramble on and on. They repeat themselves and fill silences with ums and ers. They include details and asides that neither help

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nor advance learning. They over communicate. To improve your authority, as well as learning and interest, slow down. Be concise and stay on message. Finish your sentences and pause often to give your class a chance to comprehend what you say. This will cause students to lean in and focus. It will draw them to you rather than push them away.

✓ Be physically prepared.

You can't be an effective teacher, or one your students look up to, if you're stressed out, tired, and irritable. Good teaching requires you to be at your best every day of the week. Which means you must become efficient with lesson planning. You must stay focused during work hours and learn to say no. You must be productive rather than just busy. Go home at a decent hour and get away from even thinking about school for a few hours. Get your rest, exercise for energy, and sit down to eat real, whole food. Spend time with your family and friends or enjoy your favorite hobby. This will not only improve your authority and likeability, but it will also make you a calmer, happier teacher.

✓ Choose to see only the best.

Negative thoughts—about students, your job, the curriculum, etc.—have a way of bubbling to the surface and revealing themselves in your behavior, body language, facial expressions, and even in the things that you say. It's something you can't hide. And it will severely damage your ability to be an effective teacher. Great teaching and inspired leadership are predicated on setting aside negative self-talk, refusing to engage in it and choosing instead to see only the best in the people, situations, and circumstances at hand. It's a choice that has a profound effect on how your students view you—as well as on your very happiness.

In conclusion, the abovementioned exercises and tips are going to support the improvement of self-esteem in trainers and trainees, as well as the building of authority (in trainers).



1.5. Program 5 - Self-improvement needs

Program “Self-improvement needs” focuses on the final level of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Model (1943). Self-improvement needs (also known as self-actualization needs) they refer to the realization of a person’s potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth, and peak experiences. This level of need refers to what a person’s full potential is and the realization of that potential. Maslow (1943) describes this level as the desire to accomplish everything that one can, and “to become everything one is capable of becoming”.

Individuals may perceive or focus on this need very specifically. For example, one individual may have a strong desire to become an ideal teacher or student. In another, the desire may be expressed athletically. For others, it may be expressed in paintings, pictures, or inventions. Although Maslow did not believe that many of us could achieve true self-actualization, he believed that all of us experience transitory moments (known as ‘peak experiences’) of self-actualization. Such moments, associated with personally significant events such as childbirth, sporting achievement and examination success, are difficult to achieve and maintain consistently.

The Program “Self-improvement needs” consists of 3 modules focusing on: Emotional intelligence as a path to self-realization (Module 1); Need for creativity (Module 2); and Skills and methods for personal and professional development (Module 3).

The modules are very important for trainees and trainers as self-improvement areas were affected negatively during the COVID-19 pandemic and the period of distance learning. The aims are to increase the emotional intelligence skills to ensure a better path to self-realization of trainees and trainers; to promote creativity, and to develop skills and methods for personal and professional development for both target groups.

1.5.1. Module 1 - Emotional intelligence as a path to self-realization

This Module focuses on developing the emotional intelligence of trainees and trainers as a path to their self-realization. It presents valuable exercises for achieving these aims and supports the overall goal of the programs included in the Methodology, namely supporting the mental health and well-being of trainers and trainees.

The exercises are included because emotional intelligence is crucial to the self-realization as it helps with building relationships, reducing stress, defusing conflict and improving academic /



job satisfaction (Houston, 2019). The term emotional intelligence, was first coined by psychologists Salovey and Mayer (1990), and refers to one's capacity to perceive, process and regulate emotional information accurately and effectively, both within oneself and in others and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions and to influence those of others. Emotional intelligence can lead us on the path to a fulfilled and happy life by providing a framework through which to apply standards of intelligence to emotional responses and understand that these responses may be logically consistent or inconsistent with particular beliefs about emotion.

In addition to this, emotional intelligence is also important in the context of online learning. Learners and teachers experience emotions as a result of every interaction in the online learning environment. The emotional reactions to the interactions impact attitudes, behaviors, and experiences (Zhoc et al., 2018).

Because of these factors, we have included the below exercises. Most of the activities in this module require little time, preparation or equipment. These exercises provide a way for trainers and trainees to improve their emotional intelligence skills.

REFERENCES:

Houston, E. (2019). The importance of emotional intelligence (incl. quotes). PositivePsychology.com. <https://positivepsychology.com/importance-of-emotional-intelligence/#importance-emotional-intelligence>

Salovey, P. & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional Intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 9(3), 185–211.

Zhoc, K. C. H., Chung, T. S. H., & King, R. B. (2018). Emotional intelligence (EI) and self-directed learning: Examining their relation and contribution to better student learning outcomes in higher education. *British Educational Research Journal*, 44(6), 982–1004.

The below activities are designed to help students develop their emotional intelligence, explore their emotions and feelings, and think about the situations that might trigger those emotions. They are based on Mentally Healthy Schools guidance for teaching staff on delivering mental health activities. these activities can be adapted for children aged 7+.

Reference: Mentally Healthy Schools guidance for teaching staff on delivering mental health activities/ Feelings activities (Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families UK) <https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/media/2065/feelings-activities.pdf>

Exercises for trainees:

Exercise 1:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Things that make me feel...
AIMS	For students to understand a range and scale of emotions, and relate them to their own and others' experiences.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate for children aged 7 +.
DURATION	15 – 20 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	The whole class or small groups.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Students to have understood a range and scale of emotions, and to have related them to their own and others' experiences.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	List of feelings, worksheet.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/media/2065/feeling-s-activities.pdf Mentally Healthy Schools guidance for teaching staff on delivering mental health activities (Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families)
INSTRUCTION	This activity could form part of a series of work around a number of named emotions. This could be done with a whole class as part of circle time, or in small groups as an intervention. The intention is for children to understand a range and scale of emotions, and relate them to their own and others' experiences. Begin by either brainstorming a range of emotions (best for older children) or working from the provided list of appropriate feelings to work through (best for younger

children, or children with special educational needs):

Anger Frustration Pride

Disappointment Worry Confidence

Happiness Calmness Sadness

Gratitude Surprise Boredom

Jealousy Optimism Excitement

Together, explore one of the emotions further. What do we mean by that word? What words or images come to mind when we hear that word? How might someone feel if they are experiencing this emotion? Where might they feel it in their body?

You could also suggest the children answer these questions in their head, unless they want to share. Children should share their own experience in pairs or contribute to the class, if they feel comfortable to do so. For each emotion you will then explore the experiences around it further by completing the below worksheet. There is a worksheet for younger children and a worksheet for older children. Model this for the children first - name the emotion and share an experience when you felt that emotion. For example, gratitude – I remember feeling grateful to the doctor who helped me when I broke my leg.

You could expand on this to discuss some of the above, how it was a scary time, that you needed help and support which the doctor provided, they made you feel comfortable, so you were grateful. Add this to the activity sheet as an example. Children can then think of other potential situations or if appropriate share their own experience in pairs or within a small group. Children should then complete their experiences of the emotion.

	<p>Note:</p> <p>The teacher’s discretion should be used regarding the emotions to focus on. If the focus of the lesson is on an uncomfortable emotion, it is advisable to spend some time talking about self-help strategies and signposting to support children with these feelings before closing the activity.</p>
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Template for Exercise 1:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Things that make me feel...

Emotion:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Things that make me feel...

Emotion:

- When?
- What happened?
- Who?
- Why did you feel this way?
- What can we do to help us deal with this emotion?

Figure 21, Source: <https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/media/2065/feelings-activities.pdf>

Exercise 2:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Matching emotions and actions
AIMS	To improve emotional intelligence skills of students related to matching emotions and actions.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate for younger and older students.
DURATION	Matching pairs 5-10mins, worksheets 10-15mins.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	Small groups.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Improved emotional intelligence skills of students related to matching emotions and actions.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Worksheets (see templates – Emotion cards, Situation cards, Blank Cards).
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/media/2065/feelings-activities.pdf Mentally Healthy Schools guidance for teaching staff on delivering mental health activities (Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families)
INSTRUCTION	This activity is best done in a small group or in pairs. Remind the children of the previous work completed on our feelings/emotions - that we all have emotions, that there is a range of emotions, some are big or small, nice or uncomfortable. Spend some time recapping this and introducing the vocabulary of feelings again. Perhaps go through the list of emotion cards and ask the children what each image might represent before revealing. Share an image of a situation, for example getting a new

	<p>puppy.</p> <p>What emotions/feelings might we be feeling in this situation?</p> <p>Would we only be feeling one thing? Might we have slightly conflicting emotions e.g. happiness and nervousness?</p> <p>Reiterate to the class that we all feel a range of emotions and that we might feel differently to others in the same situation.</p> <p>Repeat this activity with a different situation, then share the activity most appropriate to the group.</p> <p>Younger children:</p> <p>Give out the matching pairs cards to children in small groups or pairs. The children then match the situations to emotions. This could be done like matching pairs, laying them out face down and selecting two at a time. You could also have the emotions and situations in two piles which the children pick from, with the aim of the matching a situation with an appropriate emotion. Ask the children to discuss the reasoning behind this before making a decision. Allow children to select either the prevalent emotion or multiple emotions for each situation. Make sure to reinforce that there is no right or wrong emotion, and that it is okay for the children to have differing responses.</p> <p>Older children:</p> <p>Give the children a set of the situation cards. They select one from the pile and discuss it in their pair. What emotion(s) would someone be feeling in this situation? Complete the worksheet explaining this. More able</p>
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	<p>students could create their own situations and describe the related emotions. Once the worksheet has been completed, you may want to discuss coping strategies with the children. Ask questions like: what could someone do in this situation? Who could they speak to?</p>
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Templates for Exercise 2:

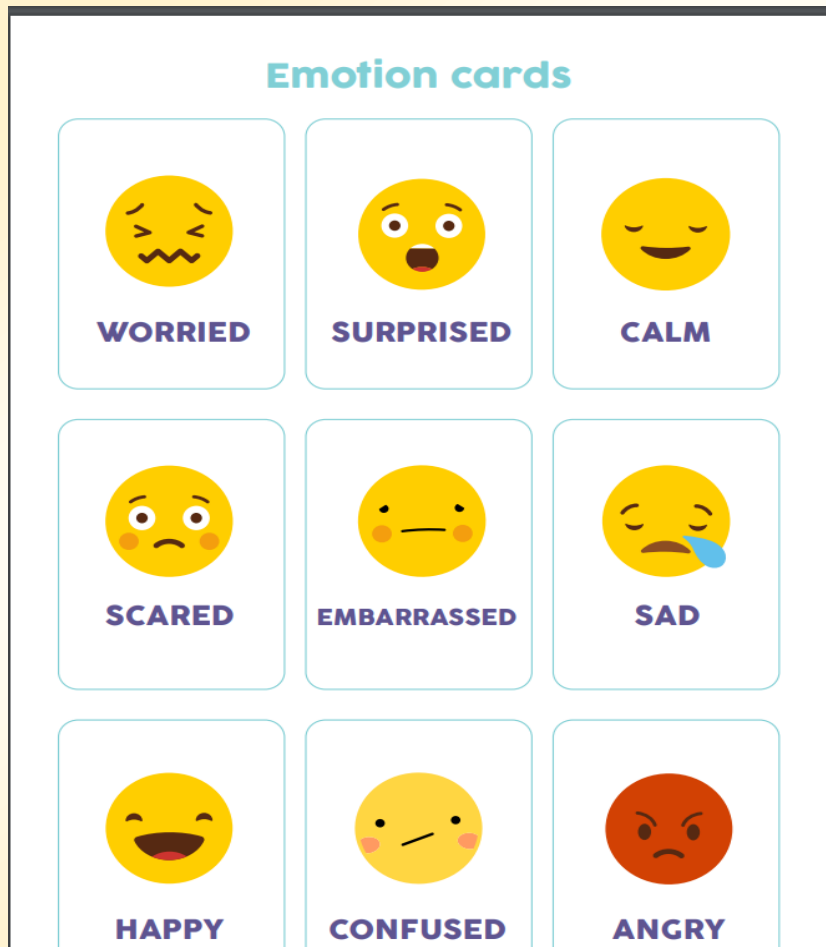


Figure 22, Source: <https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/media/2065/feelings-activities.pdf>

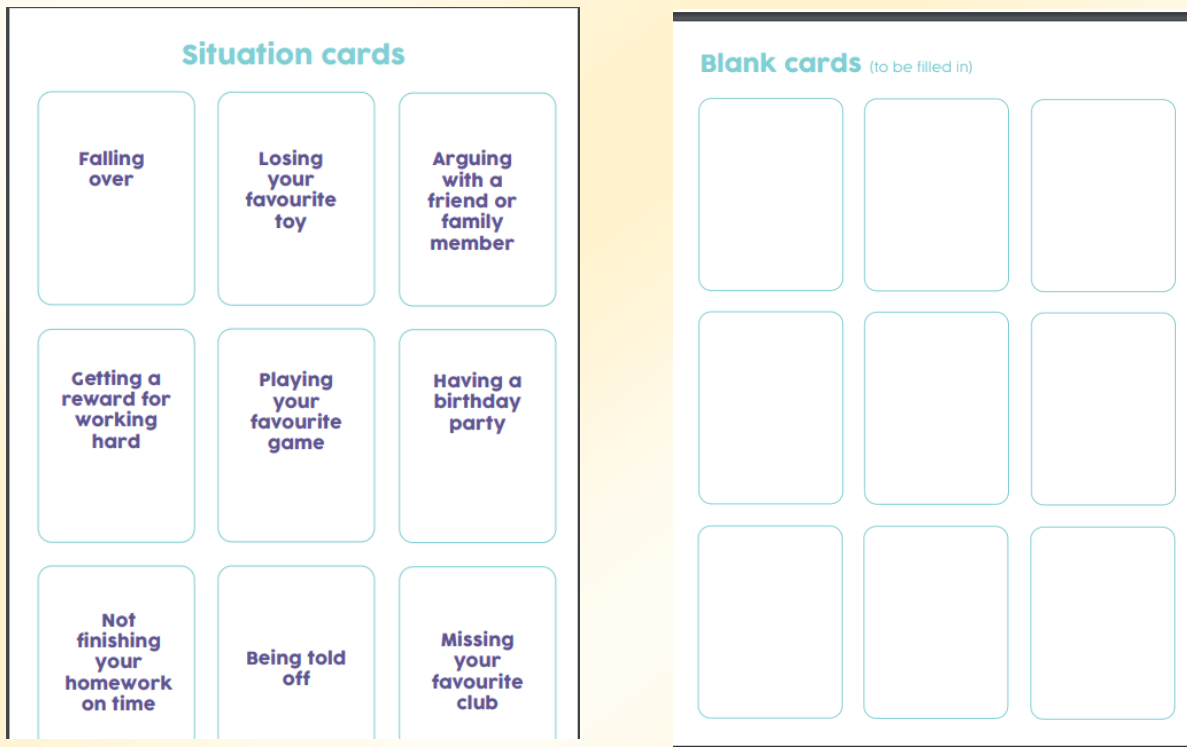


Figure 23, Source: <https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/media/2065/feelings-activities.pdf>

Exercise 3:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Emotion chart
AIMS	To support students' understanding of their own and others' emotions and feelings, as well as helping them to name those feelings. To develop an understanding of what feelings may present in certain situations, and how different people will feel differently in the same situation.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate for younger and older students.
DURATION	Activity 1 (30-45 mins.), Activity 2 (10 mins daily).
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	Whole class.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming, story, art (drawing) activity.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Supported students' understanding of their own and others' emotions and feelings, as well as helped them to name those feelings. Developed an understanding of what feelings may present in certain situations, and how different people will feel differently in the same situation.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Worksheets (see template – Emotion chart).
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/media/2065/feeling-s-activities.pdf Mentally Healthy Schools guidance for teaching staff on delivering mental health activities (Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families)
INSTRUCTION	This activity supports students' understanding of their own and others' emotions and feelings, as well as helping them to name those feelings. They will develop an understanding of what feelings may present in certain

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situations, and how different people will feel differently in the same situation. This activity can be used in a number of ways including:

Introduce the chart as being similar to a pictogram that you

would see in maths, and explain that you are going to use this

chart to track feelings and emotions. Model the chart using a story known to the class, such as Cinderella, and have five or six key events picked out from the story. Explain that you are going to map these on the chart. Frame the first situation and note this on the bottom left axis of the emotion chart.

Ask the class:

- with a whole class to develop emotional intelligence and inference from a story (activity 1)
- individually, to support a child's own reactions to situations (activity 2)
- What feelings might this character have at this point?
- How would you describe this emotion?
- Do you think this would be a strong emotion or quite small?
- Are there any additional emotions they might be feeling?
- What colour/shape would this feeling be?

As a group decide:

- how you will pictorially display this emotion
- how it will be represented
- whether it should be multiple icons
- where on the chart it should sit i.e. the scale of each emotion

- will you include more than one emotion here?

Draw this on the emotion chart. When children are suggesting

ideas ask them to explain their reasoning - e.g. anger should be red because..., happiness should be a smooth shape because... Complete the key to show which emotions are represented by which icons. Repeat for a different event in the story.

Activity 1 (30-45 mins.)

The children complete the emotion chart for the character, or create a new chart for a different character in the story. Older children can create their own axis and key on graph paper.

Activity 2 (10 mins. daily)

For a child who finds expressing emotions difficult, this activity could form part of a daily emotional log of their week completed one-to-one with a trusted adult. You could begin with introducing this via a character, but then ask them to relate the chart to their own feelings at their own pace. This could be used to express emotions after an incident or as a daily record. This will provide a good opportunity to discuss

appropriate emotional responses and coping strategies. Keeping this log could build into a way of identifying particular stresses that need support or strategies that have worked. Never force a child to talk about their feelings, and be sure to reinforce to the class the internal and external support pathways which are available, should they need or want to talk to someone.

Template for Exercise 3:

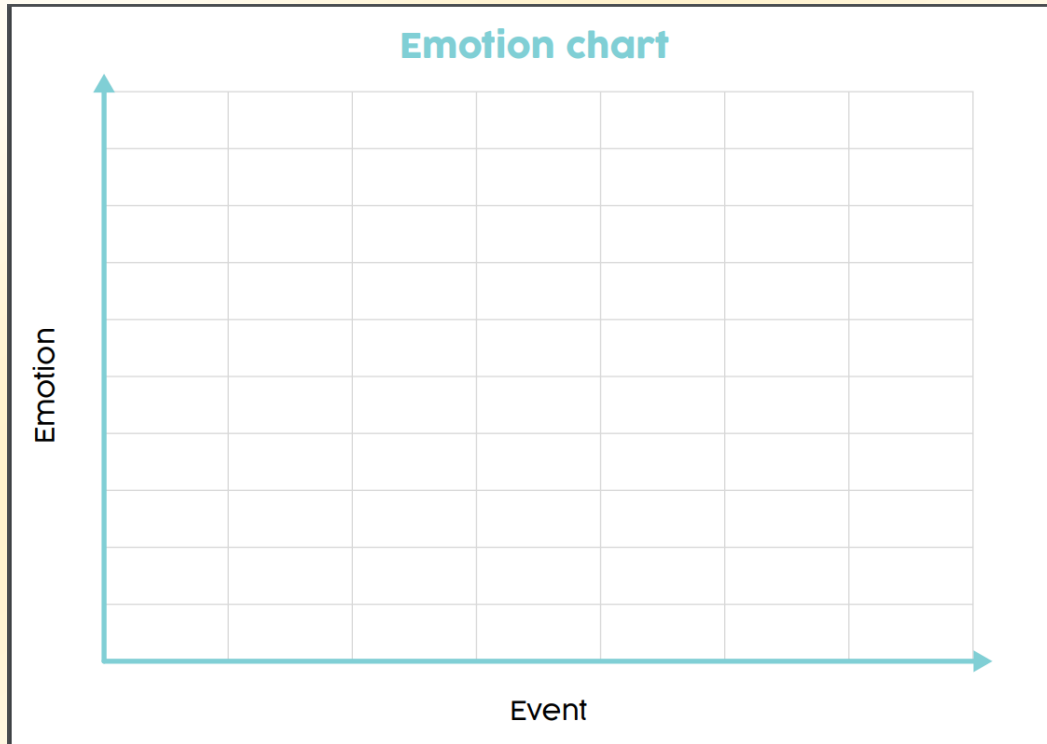


Figure 24, Source: <https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/media/2065/feelings-activities.pdf>

Exercise 4:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Group circle
AIMS	To encourage emotional intelligence, listening skills and empathy.
TARGET GROUP	The activity is appropriate for younger and older students.
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	Whole class.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming, role play.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Encouraged emotional intelligence, listening skills and empathy.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	“Talking piece” (an object that is passed around the group and signals that the holder has exclusive speaking rights).
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Ackerman, C. E. (2017), 40 Empathy Activities & Worksheets for Students & Adults https://positivepsychology.com/kindness-activities-empathy-worksheets/#empathy
INSTRUCTION	Before beginning this activity, choose a “talking piece”—this is an object that is passed around the group and signals that the holder has exclusive speaking rights. You can use a stuffed animal, a small beach ball, or any object that is easy to hold and pass around. If you can, remove the desks or tables from the classroom. If this is not possible, you can either push the desks and chairs to the perimeter of the room, arrange the chairs in a circle, or sit on the floor with the whole class. Tell your students that in the Group Circle, only one person may

talk at a time and everyone else must listen quietly and respectfully. Show the class the talking piece and explain that only the individual holding the talking piece may speak.

First, have the students pass the talking piece around the circle as a way to check in with each student. This is a good opportunity for everyone to practice holding and passing the talking piece, as well as an opportunity for students to say a few quick words about how they are feeling or what is on their mind. As the teacher/facilitator of the activity, introduce a topic or ask a question that you would like the circle to respond to. However, after you have sparked the conversation, make sure to take your seat in the circle, and become a member rather than a leader. This activity can be a good way to start the day, end the day, or simply encourage community and kindness at any time. It is especially useful after something particularly emotional or traumatic happens, whether that event took place in the classroom, in your city, or on another continent. The Group Circle exercise helps students relate to one another, and it can encourage students to accept and share feelings that may be difficult to talk about. This lesson outline also contains tips and suggestions to help you get started. Link to Group Circle Activity by PositivePsychology.com: <https://positive.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Group-Circle.pdf>

Activities for trainers / educators:

Based on: Ackerman, C. E. (2019), 13 Emotional Intelligence Activities, Exercises & PDFs, <https://positivepsychology.com/emotional-intelligence-exercises/>

1. Giving Feedback: Improving Your Self-Awareness

With this activity, you'll boost your self-awareness and, in turn, your emotional intelligence.

Here are all the questions it poses:

Think of when you were a leader and you took a stand and made sure everyone followed.

How did you feel? How do you think others felt?

Think of when you were a leader and took a stand on an issue and then backed down. How did you feel? How do you think others felt?

Think of when you were a leader and didn't take a stand on a particular issue when you should have. How did you feel? How do you think others felt?

Think of when you were a follower and took a stand on an issue and did not back down. How did you feel? How do you think others felt?

Think of when you were a follower and took a stand on an issue, felt forced and backed down. How did you feel? How do you think others felt?

Think of when you were a follower and didn't take a stand on an issue and then later strongly regretted that you should have not backed down. How did you feel? How do you think others felt?

If you want to continue the self-exploration and EQ-boosting, go through these discussion questions: How useful were the questions? Did you discover something about yourself that you were not aware of before? Link to worksheet: Giving Feedback Exercise: Improve Your Self-Awareness (2010), by Skills Converged Ltd,

<https://www.skillsconverged.com/FreeTrainingMaterials/tabid/258/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/812/categoryId/132/Giving-Feedback-Exercise-Improve-Your-Self-Awareness.aspx>

2. Self-Awareness Activity

This is another good activity for enhancing your self-awareness (which is an emotional intelligence skill). It begins with a great point: it's hard to make changes to yourself when you aren't sure where to start! Enhancing your self-awareness will help you figure out what your



strengths are, where your EQ competency levels lie, and where you should focus your self-improvement efforts. The activity includes a list of 30 strengths or character traits that you might feel are strengths or areas for you to improve. This list includes traits like: Creative, Confident, Positive, Funny, Curious, Imaginative, Hard-working. On one side, there is space to identify three strengths you have and on the other, there is space to identify three traits you would like to work on. If you think of any strength or an area, you'd like to improve that is not included on the list, add it in any way. Your list should be personalized to you, so add and edit what you need!

Link to worksheet:

Emotional Intelligence: Skill Building (2018), The Institute for Family Violence Studies (USA), <https://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/upcbnu1886/files/2018-11/Emotional-Intelligence-Handouts.pdf>

3. Social Awareness Activity

If you feel comfortable with your self-awareness but are less comfortable with your social awareness, this activity is the one for you! Social awareness is all about how well we understand others, how we recognize and identify emotions in others, and how we manage emotions in social situations. The activity includes five pictures of faces with various expressions and a list of emotions on the other side, like Stressed, Peaceful, Disappointed, Relaxed, Upset, Frustrated, Tired, Happy. The instructions state that you should feel free to match more than one emotion with each picture and that you're free to add more emotions if you'd like. The point is not to create a one-to-one match or to get them "right." Instead, the point is to be more aware of the emotions of those around you and to be more attentive and responsive in your interactions with others.

Link to worksheet:

Emotional Intelligence: Skill Building (2018), The Institute for Family Violence Studies (USA), <https://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/upcbnu1886/files/2018-11/Emotional-Intelligence-Handouts.pdf>

4. Self-Management Activity



If you're more interested in improving your self-management skills, this activity can help! It opens with this description: "Self-management builds on the basis of self-awareness and is the ability to control your emotions so that they don't control you. Self-management means you're able to control impulsive feelings and behaviors, manage your emotions in healthy ways, take initiative, follow through on commitments, and adapt to changing circumstances." The activity lists some positive and negative emotions for reference. Positive emotions include: Happiness, Excitement, Joy, Peaceful, Relaxed, Calm, Cheerful, Caring, Flexible, Harmonious. The negative emotions include: Anger, Disappointment, Exhaustion, Frustration, Stressed, Concerned, Worried, Anxious Defensive, Confused. This activity can be focused on any emotion, but the worksheet targets anger. Here are the instructions:

Think of a time when you were angry and how you handled it. Describe your reaction and behaviors in the lines provided below. Fill in the blanks: "The last time I was angry I..." Once you have filled in the blanks above, move on to planning for how you will handle future episodes of anger: Think about how you would like to process anger in the future. Describe healthy management skills and behaviors and write them in the lines provided. You might list management and coping skills like: Breathe deeply, Take a break, Go for a walk, Take a shower, Distract yourself, Lie down, Think before speaking, Write about it. Keep these planned future coping skills in mind and make sure to pull them out the next time you get angry.

Link to worksheet:

Emotional Intelligence: Skill Building, The Institute for Family Violence Studies (USA), <https://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/upcbnu1886/files/2018-11/Emotional-Intelligence-Handouts.pdf>

Tips for trainers:

Sources: Snelling, J. (2020, February 18). 7 tips for helping students develop emotional intelligence. ISTE. <https://www.iste.org/explore/ISTE-blog/7-tips-for-helping-students-develop-emotional-intelligence>

Here are tips for teachers seeking to help students develop the basics of social and emotional intelligence:

✓ Encourage eye contact

There's a mind-body connection associated with empathy. It helps us feel valued when the person we are talking to makes eye contact with us. Remind students to make eye contact with each other when communicating.

✓ Make a face.

Younger students are sometimes shown pictures of faces and asked to read what emotion is being expressed. Ask students to mirror the emotion by making faces that express that particular feeling.

✓ Notice posture.

Ask students to notice if their friend is slumped in their chair or looking downward? Or are they sitting upright and looking chipper? These indications can help students see beyond the words the person is saying.

✓ Name that emotion.

It may seem obvious, but even the act of naming the emotion you are seeing can help you more fully understand it. Is that person happy, irritated or confused?

✓ Recognize tone of voice.

Much like the expression on our faces, tone of voice can betray much more about our feelings than we intend. Think of the number of times your exasperated tone of voice has unintentionally betrayed your irritation with your spouse or child. The good news is that tone of voice can be practiced. Demonstrate what it sounds like when you are being disingenuous or patronizing. Now have students practice what it sounds like when they are being genuine and complimentary. There are subtle differences in tone that can help us understand one another.

✓ Listen for understanding.

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Most people listen with the intention of responding, but encourage your students to listen with the intention of understanding. Paying attention to the subtle clues of facial expression, noticing a person's posture and listening to the tone of voice will help your students truly hear what the person is trying to express.

✓ Respond with empathy.

An empathetic response shows that you care about the other person. This is a skill that is difficult for adults, as well. Avoid giving advice, one-upping, analyzing or correcting the person. Sometimes the only response needed is just to let the speaker know they have been heard. While many of these trademarks of empathy have become second nature to us as adults, children are still learning. If there is respect for each other in the classroom and everyone's feelings matter, there will be less bullying. Besides bullying prevention, there are many benefits to helping students become more empathetic, including building a positive classroom culture and preparing students to become leaders.

In conclusion, implementing the abovementioned exercises for trainees and trainers and the tips for educators support the development of emotional intelligence skills in both groups.



1.5.2. Module 2 – Need for creativity

This Module focuses on developing the creativity skills and creative thinking of trainees and trainers. It presents valuable exercises for achieving these aims and supports the overall goal of the programs included in the Methodology, namely supporting the mental health and well-being of trainers and trainees (in this case, through creative activities). The exercises are included because creativity is a facet of self-actualization / self-improvement, as per Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943). He stipulates that there is a correlation between psychological health and ordinary creativity. To Maslow, creative people are happy and secure.

In essence, creativity encompasses the ability to discover new and original ideas, connections, and solutions to problems. It fosters resilience, sparks joy, and provides opportunities for self-actualization. According to a study by Al-khresheh (2022), during COVID-19 and distance learning teachers' creativity has been significantly and negatively affected. The unexpected pandemic has affected educators' preparedness and limited their capacity to develop creative online teaching methods. This in turn has affected their students' motivation for creative expression, as most of them perceive educators as their role models.

Because of these factors, we have included the below exercises. Most of the activities in this module require little time, preparation or equipment. These exercises provide a way for trainers and trainees to improve their creativity skills and creative thinking.

Sources: Al-khresheh M.H. (2022). The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Teachers' Creativity of Online Teaching Classrooms in the Saudi EFL Context. *Front. Educ.* 7:1041446. doi: 10.3389/educ.2022.1041446

Dobbs, M. (2020, May 8). 5 activities to encourage creative thinking in secondary el - bespoke el: Essay writing tips + lesson plans. *Bespoke ELA*. <https://www.bespokeclassroom.com/blog/2018/8/22/5-activities-to-encourage-creative-thinking>

Exercise 1:

NAME OF EXERCISE	“WHAT IF?”
AIMS	To develop creativity skills of students by creating new, unique ideas for stories.
TARGET GROUP	The activity can be adapted for different ages (but is most appropriate for secondary school students).
DURATION	One class hour.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	Whole class.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming, creative writing.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Developed creativity skills of students by creating new, unique ideas for stories.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Each group receives three cups and strips of paper.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Dobbs, M. (2020, May 8). 5 activities to encourage creative thinking in secondary ela - bespoke ela: Essay writing tips + lesson plans. Bespoke ELA. https://www.bespokeclassroom.com/blog/2018/8/22/5-activities-to-encourage-creative-thinking
INSTRUCTION	The “What if?” game is a game that students play in groups in order to generate unique story ideas for creative writing. There are several ways to play this game, but here’s a basic setup: Students get into groups of 4-5 peers. Each group receives three cups and strips of paper. They will be generating ideas and writing them onto the strips of paper, folding them up, and placing them into the appropriate cups. The three cups are labeled “Characters,” “Settings,” and “Actions.” Students take turns first generating various characters. Each of these

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slips should begin with “A _____” (i.e. “A waiter,” “A barber,” “A spy,” etc.). They can get as specific and descriptive as they’d like. Once they have brainstormed at least ten characters, they can move onto actions.

Next, students generate various settings for the characters. Each of these slips should begin with “In _____” or “From _____” (i.e. “In Medieval Europe,” “From the local movie theater,” “In a small town in Texas,” etc.).

Students then generate various actions for the characters. Each of these slips should begin with a present tense verb (i.e. “Runs out of the grocery store,” “Robs a bank,” “Turns down a dark street,” etc.). Students should aim to be as creative as possible with these actions.

After students have generated their ideas and placed them into the appropriate cups, they then begin drawing ideas at random to generate new story premises. When they come across an idea they like, they can write it down and use it to inspire a new piece of writing.

Students should draw a character first, then select a setting, followed by an action. Selecting items in this order should create a complete statement. The whole statement should begin with “What if?” such as: “What if a baker from Medieval Europe robs a bank?”

After students have generated some ideas from their own cups, have them switch cups with other groups to really mix up the ideas. They can then share as a whole class and have fun creating new, unique ideas for stories!

Exercise 2:

NAME OF EXERCISE	THE “DEFINITION” GAME
AIMS	To encourage vocabulary growth and creativity of students.
TARGET GROUP	The activity can be adapted for different ages (but is most appropriate for secondary school students).
DURATION	20 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	Whole class, groups of 5-6 peers.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming, writing.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Encouraged vocabulary growth and creativity of students.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Pieces of paper, pens / pencils, dictionary, notebooks.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Dobbs, M. (2020, May 8). 5 activities to encourage creative thinking in secondary ela - bespoke ela: Essay writing tips + lesson plans. Bespoke ELA. https://www.bespokeclassroom.com/blog/2018/8/22/5-activities-to-encourage-creative-thinking
INSTRUCTION	<p>The “Definition” Game encourages vocabulary growth and creativity. For this game, students get into groups and make up definitions for words they do not know. It’s a fun way to learn new vocabulary terms in an interactive format. Here’s how to play:</p> <p>Students get into groups of 5-6 peers. Each student should tear up a piece of paper into slips. They will be writing their “definitions” onto these slips of paper. Each group should also have either a dictionary or access to dictionary.com.</p> <p>Moving in a clockwise direction, each student takes a turn</p>

with the dictionary. They are to select a word from the dictionary that they think NO ONE KNOWS. So, this word should be challenging and new. The student with the dictionary writes the word and definition down on their own slip of paper. Then, this student tells the word to the group— but only the word and NOT the definition. The definition must be kept secret and will be revealed at the end of the round. Students then make up their own definitions for the word and write their definitions down onto their own slips of paper. They should aim to make their definitions sound as realistic and as accurate as possible! They will want other group members to vote for their made-up definitions because this is how they will earn points in the game. Once they've finished with their definitions, they pass them to the student who has the dictionary. This student mixes them up into a pile and begins to read each definition out loud to the group.

As the person with the dictionary reads each definition out loud, students vote on which definition they think is the real definition of the word. Remember that the real definition is mixed up into the group's made-up definitions. Points are earned when a student votes for "your" definition. This means that if someone votes for my fake definition, I get a point because I tricked them. If a person votes for the actual definition of the word, that person receives TWO points (double) because they were able to decipher which definition was the real one!

Once the round is over, the real definition of the word is revealed, and students can write down any new words from the game to integrate into writing or other vocabulary activities. Usually, students make a list in



	<p>their writer's notebooks to come back to when completing vocabulary pages or when looking for higher-level vocabulary for writing.</p> <p>Play then rotates clockwise to the next player in the group. This person receives the dictionary and selects a new word. The person with the most points at the end of the game, WINS!</p>
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Exercise 3:

NAME OF EXERCISE	101 USES FOR A DRIED-UP PEN
AIMS	To thinking outside the box, to promote creative thinking.
TARGET GROUP	The activity can be adapted for different ages.
DURATION	20 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	Whole class.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming, writing.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Encouraged participants to think outside the box, promoted creative thinking.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Pens, paper.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Dobbs, M. (2020, May 8). 5 activities to encourage creative thinking in secondary ela - bespoke ela: Essay writing tips + lesson plans. Bespoke ELA. https://www.bespokeclassroom.com/blog/2018/8/22/5-activities-to-encourage-creative-thinking
INSTRUCTION	This game encourages participants to rethink the uses of a common object: a pen! For this game, participants get into groups and take out a pen. Their task is to brainstorm as many uses for a dried-up pen as they possibly can. Someone in the group needs to record their answers because the group with the longest list wins the game! Some usages for the pen can range from hair rollers to drink stirrers. Participants need to think “outside the box” to win this game. It’s important to then apply the concepts of this game to writing and challenge students to “see” a work of literature in a different light, to brainstorm various lenses or angles through which to analyze something. It’s a great analogy for encouraging

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	<p>analysis in a creative and collaborative way!</p> <p>After completing this activity, have participants transfer the concept to a piece of literature by having them brainstorm “101 Ways to See _____” (they should fill in the blank with a work of literature, character, theme, element, i.e., “101 Ways to See Macbeth,” etc.). They can then use this list to inspire a new thesis for analytical writing.</p>
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Exercise 4:

NAME OF EXERCISE	TOMORROW'S HEADLINE
AIMS	To generate outrageous headlines for tomorrow's news stories; to promote creativity and creative thinking and writing.
TARGET GROUP	The activity can be adapted for different ages.
DURATION	30 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	Whole class. In groups or individually.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming, creative writing.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Generated outrageous headlines for tomorrow's news stories; promoted creativity and creative thinking and writing.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Pens, paper.
LOCATION	Classroom or another space with plenty of room.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Dobbs, M. (2020, May 8). 5 activities to encourage creative thinking in secondary ela - bespoke ela: Essay writing tips + lesson plans. Bespoke ELA. https://www.bespokeclassroom.com/blog/2018/8/22/5-activities-to-encourage-creative-thinking
INSTRUCTION	For this creative writing activity, participants are to generate outrageous headlines for tomorrow's news stories. Begin this activity by showing outrageous headlines from current tabloids to give them the idea of how the activity works. They can then get into groups or work individually to create a list of their own outrageous headlines for tomorrow's news. It is important to have participants analyze how their headlines capture attention by purposefully employing tactics such as



	<p>literary techniques, vivid vocabulary, and a sensationalizing tone.</p> <p>Participants can share their headlines in groups and then with the entire class who can then discuss what makes each headline captivating.</p>
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Exercise 5:

NAME OF EXERCISE	An Unexpected Perspective
AIMS	To look at the world from an unexpected viewpoint; promote creativity and creative thinking.
TARGET GROUP	The activity can be adapted for different ages (but is recommended for high school students).
DURATION	30 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	In groups or individually.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming, art activity.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Looked at the world from an unexpected viewpoint; promoted creativity and creative thinking.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Watercolor paints, Paint brushes, Palette, Paper. Inspirational image.
LOCATION	Classroom or another place with enough space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Meleen, M. (2023, May 3). Art activities for high school. LoveToKnow. https://www.lovetoknow.com/parenting/teens/art-activities-high-school
INSTRUCTION	This activity requires a look at the world from an unexpected viewpoint. Choose an object, location, or person to use as inspiration. Consider the standard view of this inspiration, then choose another element and how its perspective might be different from the norm. For example, looking at a flower from the human perspective provides one picture while looking at it from the perspective of the dirt provides a different image. Decide upon an unexpected perspective and inspirational image. Using watercolors, create a picture on the paper.

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	The nature of watercolors will create a fantasy-like texture to bring out the interesting point of view.
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Tips for trainers:

Sources:

5 Ways To Develop Creativity In Students (2023), by Team Varthana,
<https://varthana.com/school/5-ways-to-develop-creativity-in-students/>

Constantinides M (2015), Eight steps to becoming a more creative teacher,
<https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/eight-steps-becoming-more-creative-teacher>

How to develop creativity in students:

Learning requires creativity since it provides learners a favorable impact on their education and makes it enjoyable. People can address challenges in their daily lives and increase their productivity through creativity. Creativity aids in the development of practical thinking abilities, which is one of the important results of education. As people learn more quickly while they are younger, schools are the best place to foster creative thinking and imagination, which is the foundation of creativity. Thus, encouraging students to think creatively can be quite important.

Due to students' ability to pick up new information fast as they are younger, learning new things is often easier. Curious minds are the most creative, curiosity frequently promotes more original thought. Students should cultivate an inventive and curious mind since creativity aids in the complete growth of any individual. Hence educational institutes must develop creativity in students.

Ways to develop creativity:

- Designing learning activities to foster creativity

The faculty can set up a variety of learning exercises for the students to foster creative thinking, such as giving them paint and paper and asking them to draw whatever comes to mind or asking them to close their eyes and simply observe their thoughts as they arise, among other options. These kinds of activities can help students become more creative. The student becomes more mindful and environmentally conscious as a result of these exercises. Teachers should also encourage pupils to indulge in creative writing.

- Teaching them a variety of skills that can boost their creativity

Learning new skills helps students develop their curiosity and makes them aware of the various options that are available to them, for example, innovative thinking abilities, problem-solving, 3D painting, photoshop, video editing, etc.

- Encourage them to think out of the box

The world of creativity is large and dynamic. It's important to encourage creativity in a way that gives children the flexibility to explore their ideas without worrying about criticism or judgment. Encourage them to take chances when working on new projects. Asking students questions that may have never been posed before or posing the question like, How can we change things in a given context? What may occur if...? These exercises, which enhance creativity regularly, offer possibilities for new viewpoints and promote the innovative problem-solving abilities necessary for success in many types of occupations.

- Sharing ideas among all

Students need to have the confidence to experiment with new ideas and try new things to be creative. Research, daring, risk-taking, and persistence are necessary for creativity. Instead of being afraid of failure or criticism, students should view these things as a scope for improvement. Sharing concepts with the entire class can be beneficial because it broadens the range of viewpoints on a certain topic. This technique can increase productivity in the classroom. When a teacher describes each student's method, each student waits for his or her turn, which develops interest and fosters competitiveness among the students. As a result, the student's creativity grows and is given more voice.

- Provide constructive feedback and assistance

To develop and enhance their creative processes, students require constructive feedback. The ability to learn from mistakes or criticism and utilize it as a tool to produce greater ideas in the future. Students will be able to focus and give greater emphasis on the portions of their work that are working well by receiving immediate feedback on their ideas. Additionally, one to one conversations are also beneficial; students will get a deeper knowledge of what they have done in the class. The qualities that power the future are imagination and creativity. Both encourage learning and should be incorporated into all aspects of a student's life.

How to become a more creative teacher:

Apart from promoting creativity in students, there are also effective steps that can be applied to become a more creative teacher / trainer. Attributes associated with creative teachers are

flexibility, being open to new ideas, and being imaginative. But how can we develop these qualities? What are the first steps?

- Step one: become a knowledgeable teacher

Today, it's easier than ever before to learn about teaching. There are lots of books, training courses, free online courses, online resources, and university programmes that can help us develop as teachers. Learning about other things is important too. Creative teachers bring more to class than just a knowledge of teaching. They are educated in other areas, and can draw on their experiences and outside interests. You can take up an artistic hobby such as learning to play a musical instrument, or following a drama course. As well as enjoying these things for their own sake, you can use them in your teaching to great effect. Using songs in the classroom, for example, is very motivating for learners and can help them process the language and improve pronunciation. Including drama techniques and integrating them into your syllabus is another great way of allowing a hobby to enrich your teaching.

- Step two: connect with other teachers

Although formal training will help you develop as a teacher, it's important to connect with others in your field. Inspiration can come from the big-name speakers and writers, but just as often, it comes from other teachers. It's never been easier to find inspiring teachers to follow on Facebook, Twitter and in the blogosphere. Follow and read their blogs, join a teacher's association and attend talks and workshops live or online. Inspiration rubs off and will create in you the desire to imitate these teachers in your daily teaching practices.

- Step three: become a collector of teaching ideas

It doesn't matter if you don't use the ideas you collect straight away. The important thing is to collect and organise them in a way that makes it easy to try them out when the right opportunity presents itself. It's these ideas that will nudge you along the road to creativity, especially as you begin to adapt and experiment with them. When discovering new ideas online, be sure to use the various bookmarking and curation tools available today, and follow the curated collections or lists of others. Curation will also help you to be more resourceful: you'll have ideas and activities at your fingertips in case things go wrong!

- Step four: share your learning

In my experience, teachers (like learners) can pick things up from others as they go along, but there comes a point when they find they have to make a commitment or a contribution. If you



have training days in your school, offer to lead a session and then research the topic, so that you feel confident about sharing your knowledge with your peers. This can be a daunting but momentous moment in the life of a teacher, and you'll be amazed by how much you learn in the process.

Start a teaching journal or a blog. The act of blogging and describing your teaching ideas generates conversations with other teachers, and those conversations stimulate more ideas; they are a great bridge to creative teaching.

- Step five: remove the blocks to creative thinking

Many people are confident about their creative potential and are not afraid to dip their toes in the pool, but lots of us at various times have felt we cannot do it. In those moments, we might feel we lack the imagination, that we're not clever enough, young enough or talented enough, and so on.

No-one can claim that every person has the same skills and abilities as everyone else, but all people have the potential to be creative. Look what we do with language! Using a finite vocabulary, each of us creates original utterances, never articulated in quite the same way before, every time we speak. Work on your self-esteem; be around supportive colleagues who share the same interests and goals and make you feel good about yourself.

- Step six: practice your creativity

Just as athletes maintain their ability through continual training, our brains also benefit from regular exercise. What do you do to exercise your mind? Do you enjoy crosswords, Sudoku or jigsaw puzzles? These and similar 'brain-training' activities have been shown to increase our concentration and boost creativity. We often tell our students that practice makes perfect, but it's important that we apply this to ourselves. Skilled people in all fields, from dancers to chefs to teachers, reach the highest levels through practice – they didn't get there overnight. But practice takes discipline and patience.

When practicing anything, it's a good idea to set your mind to the process rather than the goal. In other words, take satisfaction in what you're doing in the present moment rather than worry too much about what you have yet to achieve.

- Step seven: start experimenting and reflecting on your teaching

A sure way to burn out as a teacher is to stick to the same ideas and techniques without trying something new. This approach is bound to demotivate your students at some point too.



Learners respond positively to teachers who don't follow the same old steps in the same old way day in and day out. As much as learners like teachers who are patient, tolerant and able to explain things well, they appreciate teachers whose lessons have surprises and elements of fun. Try out new ideas or adapt old ones, but remember to stop, think and evaluate the experience when done. Learn from your successes and your mistakes, and try to make this a regular part of your teaching.

- Step eight: make creativity a daily goal

Being creative can help you solve problems. This is useful to teachers because problem-solving is what teachers do every moment of their working day, from deciding on teaching materials, procedures and grades, to adapting an activity that learners are not responding to, and helping individuals who are not progressing as they should. To keep developing these skills, you need to make creativity part of your daily routine rather than an occasional activity. Look at everything you do with a critical eye and consider how your lessons could be made more motivating, productive and interesting for your learners.

Above all, give yourself time and don't judge yourself harshly. Developing one's creative thinking abilities, just like developing any other cognitive ability or skill, is not a straight and smooth progression but requires patience, dedication, and a passion for excellence.

In conclusion, implementing the abovementioned exercises and the tips will help support the creativity of both groups – trainees and trainers.



1.5.3. Module 3 - Skills and methods for personal and professional development

This Module focuses on developing the skills and presenting methods for personal and professional development of trainees and trainers. It presents valuable exercises for achieving these aims and supports the overall goal of the programs included in the Methodology, namely supporting the mental health and well-being of trainers and trainees. The exercises are included because personal and professional development are important aspects of self-actualization, as per Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943). Self-actualization is about achieving your dreams (whether personal or professional), which means that it is within your grasp—whether that means becoming a successful student, becoming a teacher, or anything else that sparks your passion.

According to a study by Mufarrihah et al. (2022) online learning has had an impact on student personal development from the aspect of learning enthusiasm, values and even student personality. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative effect on teachers' desire and accessibility to professional development as well (Perry, 2022).

Because of these factors, we have included the below exercises. Most of the activities in this module require little time, preparation or equipment. These exercises provide a way for trainers and trainees to improve their skills for personal and professional development, and provide effective methods in these areas.

RERERENCES:

Mufarrihah, Anik & Sukmawati, Sukmawati & Susanti, Susanti & Lamadang, Karmila. (2022). Impact of Online Learning On The Personal Development of Students. *Aksara: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Nonformal*. 8. 1377.

Perry, E. (2022). Teacher Professional Development in Changing Circumstances: The Impact of COVID-19 on Schools' Approaches to Professional Development. *Education Sciences*, 13(1), 48.

Exercise 1:

NAME OF EXERCISE	ASSESS ASPECTS OF YOUR DEVELOPMENT
AIMS	To discuss the relationship among aspects of personal development, to understand own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, to evaluate own thoughts, feelings and actions, and to show the connection of thoughts, feelings and actions to actual life situations.
TARGET GROUP	The exercise can be adapted to different age groups (recommended for high school students and adults, incl. trainers).
DURATION	30 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	No restriction.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Discussed relationship among aspects of personal development, understood own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, evaluated own thoughts, feelings and actions, and showed the connection of thoughts, feelings and actions to actual life situations.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Paper, pens / pencils.
LOCATION	Classroom or another place with enough space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines - Personal Development Reader, 2016 https://buenavistanhs.weebly.com/uploads/7/2/2/8/7228051/personal_development_reader_v13_final_apr_28_2016.pdf
INSTRUCTION	Draw a large circle on a blank sheet of paper. Divide the circle into 8 segments. In each segment, write some descriptions of the different aspects of yourself as follows:

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1. Physical Self. Describe yourself. Try not to censor any thoughts which come to your mind. Include descriptions of your height, weight, facial appearance, and quality of skin, hair and descriptions of body areas such as your neck, chest, waist, legs.
2. Intellectual Self. Include here an assessment of how well you reason and solve problems, your capacity to learn and create, your general amount of knowledge, your specific areas of knowledge, wisdom you have acquired, and insights you have.
3. Emotional Self. Write as many words or phrase about typical feelings you have, feelings you seldom have, feelings you try to avoid, feelings you especially enjoy, feelings from your past and present, and feelings which are associated with each other.
4. Sensual Self. Write how you feel as a sensual person. What sense do you use most - sight, hearing, speaking, smelling, touch? How do you feel about the different ways you take in information - through the eyes, ears, mouth, nose, pores, and skin. In what ways do you let information in and out of your body?
5. Interactional Self. Include descriptions of your strengths and weaknesses in intimate relationships and relationships to friends, family, co-students and strangers in social settings. Describe the strengths and weaknesses which your friends and family notice. Describe what kind of son or daughter, brother or sister you are.
6. Nutritional Self. How do you nourish yourself? What foods do you like and dislike? What do you like and dislike about these?

7. Contextual Self. Descriptors could be in the areas of maintenance of your living environment: reaction to light, temperature, space, weather, colors, sound and seasons and your impact on the environment.

8. Spiritual Self or Life Force. Write words or phrases which tell about how you feel in this area. This could include your feelings about yourself and organized religion, reactions about your spiritual connections to others, feelings about your spiritual development and history, and thought about your metaphysical self. Think about your inner peace and joy. Think about your spiritual regimen or routine.

Output: Personal Assessment of Aspects of Development with Plan of Action

Write about the eight segments of your development. What are the words or phrases which represent aspects about yourself which you like? What are the items which you consider to be weaknesses or areas for improvement? What words which are neutral or factual, such as “5 feet 4 inches tall, 120 pounds”? Do some categories have more minus than plus areas? The larger proportion of minus to plus areas you have, the more effort will be needed to achieve positive self-esteem. If the vast majority of your minus responses are in one or two areas, your self-esteem is likely to be good but has a few self-estimates which need to be improved. Name some ways in which you can improve the minus areas and further enhance the positive aspects.

Exercise 2:

NAME OF EXERCISE	MY PERSONAL TIMELINE
AIMS	To evaluate personal development and plan the future in a constructive way.
TARGET GROUP	The exercise can be adapted to different age groups (recommended for high school students).
DURATION	30 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	No restriction.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming, art activity.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Evaluated personal development and plan the future in a constructive way.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Paper, pencils, pen, crayons.
LOCATION	Classroom or another place with enough space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines - Personal Development Reader, 2016 https://buenavistanhs.weebly.com/uploads/7/2/2/8/7228051/personal_development_reader_v13_final_apr_28_2016.pdf
INSTRUCTION	A personal timeline portrays the influential events and happenings of a person's life so that he can understand where he has gone wrong and right in the past. It helps to plan the future in a better constructive way. Using a bond paper, write the major events in your life and the significant people in your life. You may add your age, specific dates and places. You may draw the timeline horizontally, vertically, diagonally or even using ups and down depending on your imagination. Be creative in your representations. You may also use symbols, figures and drawings. Think of a title for your personal timeline.

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You may use crayons or art materials depending on the available resources or just a simple paper and pen may be fine. You can also go for the personal timeline template available online by Template.net.

Link: <https://www.template.net/business/timeline-templates/personal-timeline-template/>

Write about your Personal Timeline which you made in class. Answer the following questions:

1. Is there a 'center' or a central theme in your timeline and life? If you will give a title for your timeline, what would it be and why?
2. Identify the turning points in your timeline. What were the thoughts, feelings and actions that you experienced?
3. Who are/were the most significant people in your life? How did they influence you?
4. What would you change or add, if you could? How would each of these changes or additions affect your life, or even change its present course?
5. Where do you want to be in a year, 5 years, and 10 years? What do you expect your future timeline will be?

Exercise 3:

NAME OF EXERCISE	DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS OF BEING IN GRADE
AIMS	To evaluate personal development depending on the grade.
TARGET GROUP	The exercise can be adapted to different age groups (recommended for high school students).
DURATION	30 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	No restriction.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Evaluated personal development depending on the grade.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Paper, pencils, pen.
LOCATION	Classroom or another place with enough space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines - Personal Development Reader, 2016 https://buenavistanhs.weebly.com/uploads/7/2/2/8/7228051/personal_development_reader_v13_final_apr_28_2016.pdf
INSTRUCTION	Using the Developmental Tasks Summary Table (see below), assess your own level of development as a Grade Student. Processing Questions: 1. Being in Grade, what are the developmental tasks expected of you? Rate yourself from 1-10 (10 as the highest) on whether you have accomplished those expected tasks. 2. As you are in Grade ..., you are in transition from being an adolescent to young adult. How do you feel

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	<p>about this transition?</p> <p>3. Do you think you are ready for this transition which may mean more responsibilities and greater accountability? If no, what are the expected tasks you need to work on? If yes, what are the ways to take so you can better plan for the future?</p>
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Templates:

What are the expected tasks you have successfully accomplished?	What are the expected tasks you have partially accomplished?	What are the expected tasks you have not accomplished?

Figure 25, Source:

https://buenavistanhs.weebly.com/uploads/7/2/2/8/7228051/personal_development_reader_v13_final_apr_28_2016.pdf

THE DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS SUMMARY TABLE

Infancy and Early Childhood (0-5)	Middle Childhood (6-12)	Adolescence (13-18)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to walk • Learning to take solid foods • Learning to talk • Learning to control the elimination of body wastes • Learning sex differences and sexual modesty • Acquiring concepts and language to describe social and physical reality • Readiness for reading • Learning to distinguish right from wrong and developing a conscience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning physical skills necessary for ordinary games • Building a wholesome attitude toward oneself • Learning to get along with age-mates • Learning an appropriate sex role • Developing fundamental skills in reading, writing, and calculating • Developing concepts necessary for everyday living • Developing conscience, morality, and a scale of values • Achieving personal independence • Developing acceptable attitudes toward society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving mature relations with both sexes • Achieving a masculine or feminine social role • Accepting one's physique • Achieving emotional independence of adults • Preparing for marriage and family life • Preparing for an economic career • Acquiring values and an ethical system to guide behavior • Desiring and achieving socially responsibility behavior

Figure 26, Source:

https://buenavistanhs.weebly.com/uploads/7/2/2/8/7228051/personal_development_reader_v13_final_apr_28_2016.pdf

The next few exercises focus on the professional development (future career development) of students and how to support it.

Exercise 4:

NAME OF EXERCISE	THE CAREER WHEEL
AIMS	To assess needs and facts about yourself and potential challenges, to help with deciding on future career options.
TARGET GROUP	The exercise can be adapted to different age groups.
DURATION	20 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	No restriction.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Assessed needs and facts about yourself and potential challenges, helped with deciding on future career options.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Paper, pen.
LOCATION	Classroom or another place with enough space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines - Personal Development Reader, 2016 https://buenavistanhs.weebly.com/uploads/7/2/2/8/7228051/personal_development_reader_v13_final_apr_28_2016.pdf
INSTRUCTION	Write about your career wheel. Answer the following questions: 1. How did you go about naming events, situations, needs and facts about yourself? Were there challenges in doing this? If so, what are these challenges? 2. Looking at these many facets in your life, which among them do you think are major considerations when deciding on future career options? Why would you consider these as a source of great impact? 3. Which are the areas that will really work to your advantage in relation to the career options that you are considering? How will these impact your choices? 4. What are your realizations after this exercise?

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Template:

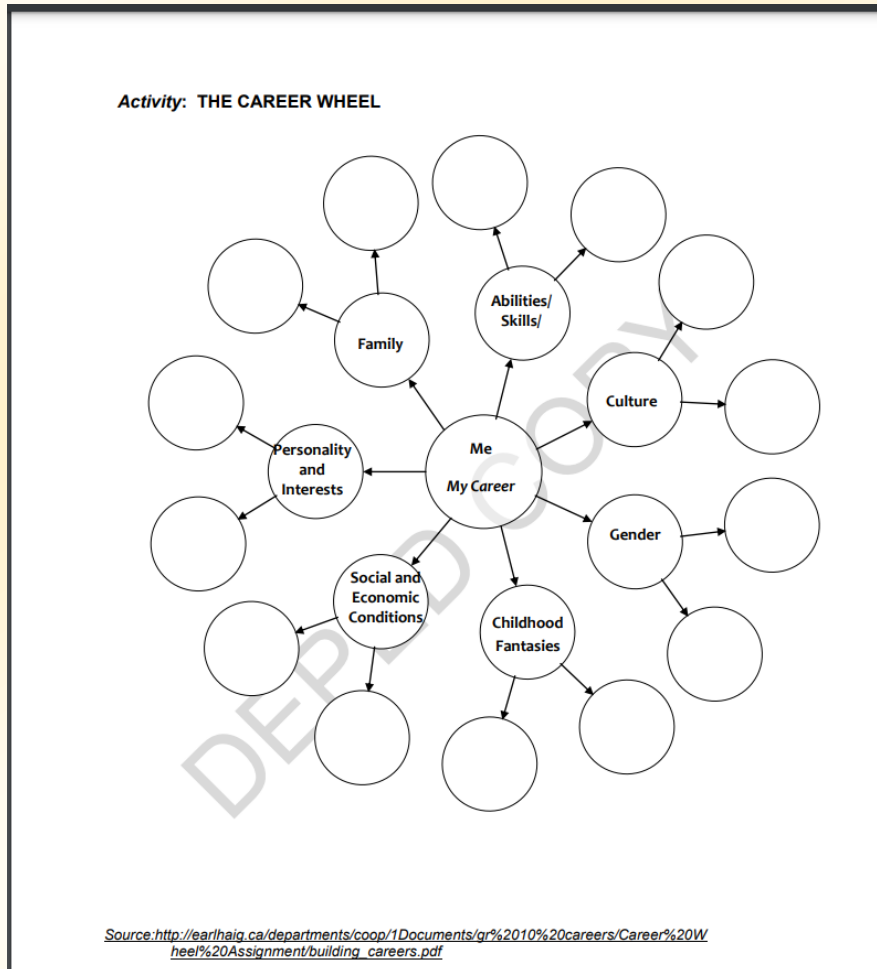


Figure 27, Source:

https://buenavistanhs.weebly.com/uploads/7/2/2/8/7228051/personal_development_reader_v13_final_apr_28_2016.pdf

Exercise 5:

NAME OF EXERCISE	Preparing for the future
AIMS	To become better able at researching future career options.
TARGET GROUP	The exercise can be adapted to different age groups (recommended for high school students).
DURATION	20 minutes.
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	No restriction.
USED METHODS	Discussion, brainstorming, research, interview.
EXPECTED RESULTS	Became better able at researching future career options.
NECESSARY MATERIALS AND PREPARATION	Paper, pen.
LOCATION	Classroom or another place with enough space.
LINK TO DIDACTIC OR VIDEO MATERIAL	Inspired by Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines - Personal Development Reader, 2016 https://buenavistanhs.weebly.com/uploads/7/2/2/8/7228051/personal_development_reader_v13_final_apr_28_2016.pdf
INSTRUCTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Name 3 jobs/occupations that you feel so far you would want to have in the future. 2. Do background research on this job by actually interviewing individuals who hold such jobs. Find out the following information from the interview: Job Title/Position Title; Needed academic preparation; Skills, Knowledge, Abilities, expected competencies to succeed in the job; Demand for the Job; Perks; Difficulties/Challenges; Expected compensation/remuneration package of a person occupying the position. 3. Write up the results of the research. Discuss.

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Activities for professional development and tips for trainers:

Source: Young R (2024), *10 fun professional development activities for teachers*

<https://screenpal.com/blog/professional-development-activities-for-teachers/>

Professional development (PD) is an important part of every educator's career. It can be a lot of fun if you use activities that emphasize the experiences of educators and provide valuable teaching tools. The goal of PD should always be to improve student outcomes and give teachers the information and tools they need to be successful. Here are ten fun professional development activities you can use to boost your school's learning environment.

✓ Create an online teaching portfolio

Online teaching portfolios are a great way to help teachers showcase their achievements and reflect on their best practices. Teachers can use WordPress, Google Sites, or Weebly to create a free online portfolio. What should teachers include in their online portfolios? Most portfolios include a teaching philosophy statement, CV, pictures, and videos of mini-lessons. Some even add a blog! Portfolios are completely customizable so teachers can get really creative with this project. Make it a team exercise by having teachers work together to brainstorm and share their creative ideas.

✓ Inclusion and accessibility assessment

For this PD activity, begin by asking teachers how their classroom is inclusive and accessible to all students. Get more specific by asking teachers to consider their classroom arrangement, decor, media, and instruction. How do these aspects of their teaching allow everyone to participate and thrive? After getting the conversation going, share some ideas and tips for making the classroom inclusive and accessible. For example, if teachers use movies or videos in the classroom, they should consider using captions for students who have hearing impairments. After the discussion, give teachers an inclusion and accessibility rubric so that they can assess their own classroom practices. You can find free rubrics online or create your own. This self-assessment is a great way for teachers to reflect on their classroom environment and identify areas for improvement.

✓ Knowledge sharing

Teachers are experts at their craft and everyone has unique knowledge to share. A knowledge-sharing activity is a fun way for teachers to share their expertise with their colleagues and

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learn new skills to incorporate in their classrooms. Ask teachers to create a presentation on a topic they're an expert on. Maybe they're experienced in running workshops, designing task-based learning projects, utilizing technology in the classroom, or organizing field trips. Whatever it is that they are best at, it is worth sharing! Knowledge sharing or "expert sharing" is the perfect way to empower teachers and build strong connections between colleagues. The best way to do this activity is by asking teachers to create a Google Slides or PowerPoint presentation. Presenters can share live or use screen recording software to pre-record their presentation.

✓ Educational study review

Educators understand the importance of keeping up with the latest teaching methods. The best way to keep up with new pedagogical methods is by reviewing the latest education publications. With so many interesting studies to read, it can be overwhelming for one teacher to find time to read everything. To solve this problem, ask teachers to read 1 or 2 studies and share their findings with their colleagues. Start by gathering a list of relevant studies. Then, create a sign-up sheet so teachers can choose which article to read. Set a date for a conference and ask each teacher to share what they learned from the study. Teachers can create a presentation highlighting the key findings of the studies and discuss how to apply them in the classroom. Similar to the knowledge-sharing activity, teachers can present live or pre-record their presentation using free screen recording software.

✓ Create an educational book club

We all have a book or two on our shelf that we bought with excitement but haven't gotten around to reading yet. Sometimes we just need a little accountability to help us get motivated to read. You might also have a favorite book that your colleagues might not know about yet. Teachers stress the importance of reading to students, so why not model that behavior for them? Teachers can agree on an educational book and develop a reading schedule with weekly or biweekly meetings to discuss chapters. *Teaching to Transgress* by Bell Hooks is a terrific book that will challenge teachers to think deeply about their student's needs. For something a little lighter, *Educated* by Tara Westover is a page-turner! Each meeting should have a different moderator who will lead the conversation and ensure effective reviews of chapters.

✓ Reflective journaling

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Teaching is a reflective practice; teachers constantly reflect on their lessons and analyze what worked and needs adjustment. Professional journaling helps teachers keep track of these reflections and monitor their own professional development. Teachers can create a handwritten journal or use video journaling. If using video journaling, make sure you have a secure place to store your videos! You can store video journals directly on a computer but using an online platform is more effective because you can access them from anywhere.

✓ Watch motivational videos

Teachers are superheroes, but sometimes they need to be reminded of this fact! During the school year, teachers can get so caught up in their work that they might forget how much of an impact they are making. Keep teachers inspired by sharing motivational videos like Ted Talks. There're tons of great online content, and they're not just on YouTube! Edutopia, Pinterest, and TedED have lots of videos to choose from for professional development ideas. Just make sure you store your videos in one easy-to-access place so you can keep your media organized.

✓ Dive into emotional intelligence

Let's face it, teaching is a stressful occupation. This is why it is so important for teachers to understand their emotions and have strategies for alleviating stress. The five components of emotional intelligence are empathy, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, and social skills. Using free online resources, you can create your own presentation on emotional intelligence to share with teachers. This is an activity that works best in small groups where everyone gets an opportunity to communicate and share their ideas. Instead of giving your presentation multiple times with different groups, use a free screen recording application to make a video presentation. This way, you can save your presentation and send it to multiple small groups. Make your presentation interactive by including a poll with questions to gather feedback.

✓ Educational technology crash course

Technology is now a staple in our classrooms. Whether teachers are teaching online, using flipped learning, or teaching in-person, technology can help them manage their classrooms. Plenty of teachers are using apps like Wakelet, Book Creator, ScreenPal, Google Classrooms, and other online tools to share lessons with students. Platforms like Schoolytics and ClassMarker help teachers manage student assessments. With so many online tools available,

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it can be overwhelming for teachers to choose which ones to use. Create your own guide to share with teachers. Your guide should review all aspects of using educational technology, such as online classrooms, online assessment tools, online conferencing tools, and video editing software.

Overall, the abovementioned activities and the tips will help support the personal and professional development of trainees and trainers in educational organizations.

2. Part 2 - Practices and methods aimed at students with fewer opportunities

The practices and methods described in detail below are aimed specifically at students (trainees) with fewer opportunities. According to SALTO YOUTH Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2021-2027, «Young people with fewer opportunities are young people that are at a disadvantage compared to their peers because they face one or more of the situations and obstacles mentioned in the non-exhaustive list below. In certain contexts, these situations or obstacles prevent young people from having effective access to formal and non-formal education, transnational mobility and participation, active citizenship, empowerment and inclusion in society at large. »

Participants with fewer opportunities can fall on multiple typologies:

SOCIAL OBSTACLES:

- Discrimination – young people facing discrimination or under-representation because of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc.
- Risk Behaviours – young people with limited social skills or risky behaviours;
- Situation of Risk or Distress – young or single parents, orphans, young people from broken families; victims of abandonment, domestic violence, bullying or sexual abuse; young people living in very precarious situations or homeless;

ECONOMIC OBSTACLES:

- Economical Issues – young people with a very low standard of living, very low income, strong dependence on social welfare system, poverty, young people who are homeless due to economic issues, youth in debt or with financial problems.
- Employment Issues – young people not studying or working (NEET) or individuals in long-term unemployment (more than a year).

DISABILITIES AND HEALTH PROBLEMS:

- Mental disabilities (intellectual, cognitive, learning);
- Physical and sensory disabilities or other disabilities;
- Light Health Problems: intolerances, health issues, chronic health problems and mental conditions that may affect their daily life;



– Severe Health Problems: young people with chronic health problems, severe illnesses, psychiatric conditions, mental health problems, etc.

EDUCATIONAL DIFFICULTIES:

– Learning issues – youth with learning difficulties or poor school performance;
– Lack of compulsory education – young people that did not finish the compulsory education, early school-leavers or school dropouts (based on the school-leaving age and from compulsory secondary education).

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES:

– Immigrant/Refugee – young immigrants or refugees or descendants from immigrant or refugee families, cultural inclusion problems, etc.
– Minorities – young people belonging to (under-represented) a minority because of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

GEOGRAPHICAL OBSTACLES:

– Geographic isolation: young people from remote or rural areas, living on small islands, abandoned villages or peripheral regions (far away from urban areas);
– Problematic areas: young people from urban problem zones or from less serviced areas (limited public transport, poor facilities).

The practices are chosen according to those criteria, and according to the needs of trainers and trainees from countries in the EU, which were presented in the previous chapters outlining the current context and challenges in Bulgaria, Poland and Cyprus. Through the practices the following outcomes will be achieved:

- Developed improved methods that meet the needs of students with fewer opportunities;
- Identified and achieve an individual approach to dealing with learning disabilities, early school leaving, and low skills in learning in the digital environment (distance);
- Improved the basic skills as a prerequisite for early school leaving, including from vulnerable groups;
- Developed key competencies to improve physical, mental health, and well-being of students with fewer opportunities.



The subchapter includes 3 practices focusing on the social inclusion of students with fewer opportunities, preventing their early school leaving (ESL) and supporting their well-being (in particular of students with learning difficulties).

2.1. Practice 1 Increasing the social inclusion of students with fewer opportunities

Social inclusion in educational settings is the phenomenon when all students feel valued, their differences are recognized and respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in harmony with one another and in dignity (Juvonen et al., 2019). For many years children with fewer opportunities were either sent to their own schools or left out of education altogether. However, improvements in inclusion have been substantial over the years. Today students are educated in the least restrictive environment, which means that, hopefully, they are spending as much of their days as possible in the regular educational classroom (excluding the COVID-19 pandemic).

What are the advantages of social inclusion?

- Role Models: Inclusion is better for students with special needs or fewer opportunities because they can see other ‘typical’ children and emulate them. They get an opportunity to learn acceptable social behaviors and to learn from their peers.
- Social and Emotional Development: School isn’t just about academic needs. Children’s social and emotional needs also must be considered. It is important for kids to have as normal a school experience as possible.
- Increased Tolerance: Inclusion is better for students without special needs and fewer opportunities than keeping them isolated. The more they are included the more their peers start to see the students for who they are.
- Children from inclusive classrooms have more opportunities to develop tolerance for differences and empathy for others.

For inclusion to work well, schools and classrooms need good **practices** to foster inclusive environments. But how can teachers achieve this? Here are some good practices:

- Build Relationships: It is important for teachers to foster a one-on-one relationship with each of their students as much as possible. This can be accomplished by greeting them each at the door, asking them about their interests, and using genuine praise in the classroom.

- Celebrate Diversity: Pay attention to the materials you use in class. Do they depict children from a variety of backgrounds and with varying abilities? How do books, videos, and other materials portray children with special needs or fewer opportunities? Celebrate the diversity in your classroom and teach your students to do the same.
- Educate Yourself: Educate yourself about the specific disabilities or fewer opportunities any of the students you work with have. You can then educate your students. Education leads to understanding which then leads to compassion and connection.
- Encourage Interaction: Give students opportunities to interact with each other so they can build friendships and a sense of community.
- Strengths-Based Approach: Everyone has strengths and weaknesses. Help students develop their strengths and see that children with special needs / fewer opportunities have strengths too. Focus on progress, no matter how small.

These teaching **methods** help students of all backgrounds to be successful in the education classroom.

- Differentiate Instruction: When teachers differentiate all students can participate and work at their current ability.
- Make Objectives Clear: Posting and reviewing objectives in age-appropriate language helps all students achieve the desired objective of each lesson. It is especially helpful for students with special needs and fewer opportunities.
- Adapt: Teachers are masters at adapting. They watch students and constantly assess; slowing down when they don't understand something then speeding up when it's clear they've already got it. Teachers challenge those that are ready for more and provide extra support to those that need it.
- Explicit Teaching and Modeling: Model for students and gradually turn the responsibility over to the student. The "I do, We do, You do" approach is especially beneficial to students with special needs and fewer opportunities; it gives them the support they need to keep up with classroom activities.
- Have a Positive Attitude: As the teacher, your positive attitude about inclusion sets the tone for the rest of the class. If you see having special needs or fewer opportunities



students in your classroom as a growth opportunity and a positive, your students will too.

- Teach to Different Learning Styles: Vary the learning styles you target. Use different approaches and try to cater to many different learning styles so that all students can learn. For example, one lesson you might incorporate movement and music while another you encourage students to write and draw.

In essence, inclusion is good for all students. The strategies teachers use to make education appropriate for students with special needs and fewer opportunities are helpful for all students. Including students of all backgrounds and abilities increases tolerance and empathy among students. Inclusion is worth it.

Source: MyleenP (2024), How To Promote Inclusion In The Classroom, James Stanfield website, <https://stanfield.com/11-strategies-promote-inclusion-in-the-classroom/>

In addition to these practices, there are other methods and practices to make the class more socially inclusive (Eredics, 2018). According to Eredics, the social curriculum conveys the values, belief systems, and expectations of behavior in school. It is just as important as the academic curriculum, but is often "hidden" for children with learning challenges. Here are some effective strategies to intentionally facilitate social inclusion in the classroom and school-wide.

Inclusive schools are places where educational barriers are removed and students of all abilities are educated in general education classrooms. This also involves the removal of barriers to the academic curriculum using learning accommodations, lesson modifications, universal design for learning, and assistive technology to facilitate inclusive education.

There is another area of the curriculum where barriers can exist to full inclusion. It typically receives less attention, yet is just as important. This is the "hidden" or social curriculum that is the by-product of a school's education program. This social curriculum conveys the values, belief systems, and expectations of behavior in the school setting.

This social curriculum is not "hidden" in an inclusive school. It's actually quite the opposite — with as much attention given to the social development of students as well as the academic. Teachers give explicit instruction in social inclusion, model socially inclusive behavior,

provide socially inclusive opportunities for students, and expect that all students will adhere to an inclusive belief system.

So, if you or your school is on a journey towards inclusion or you are thinking about creating a more inclusive classroom, here are some strategies to intentionally facilitate social inclusion:

- ✓ Switch up the seating plan — give students a change of scenery and someone new to work with by changing up your seating plan several times during the school year.
- ✓ Find common ground — class games, such as "Find Someone Who," gives students a chance to get to know one another in a fun and informal manner.

Find Someone Who activity:

This fun activity is a good one to use at the beginning of a course. It's a quick way for students to connect with one another and overcome shyness. This is a good activity to do with students at the beginning of a course. It provides a quick way for students to connect with one another and helps them overcome initial shyness in a new situation.

Introduction:

Tell students that they are going to play a game to find out things they might not know about each other. They will have a few minutes to fill out a survey sheet. When they hear a signal from you, they will "freeze" in their places.

Distribute the Find Someone Who survey sheets (see below). Explain that students are to walk around the room and find people who have the characteristics described on the sheet. When they find someone, they write the name in the blank provided. Ask them to find as many different people as possible, using each person's name only once.

Begin the game. Continue until several students complete the worksheet. This will probably take about five minutes.

Ask students to return to their seats. Ask a student who completed the entire survey to go down the list, saying who s/he found for each item and acknowledging that person. Where appropriate, ask for more details. (For example, if Yvette has a pet, ask what pet she has.)

Discuss: What did you notice about yourself and others during this game? Did you learn anything new about someone? If you were making up questions for this worksheet, what are some things you'd like to ask?"



Worksheet “FIND SOMEONE WHO”:

Find someone who:

Name: _____ ...is wearing the same color as you.

Name: _____ ...has an older brother or sister at home.

Name: _____ ...is wearing jewelry.

Name: _____ ...has visited another country.

Name: _____ ...has a pet.

Name: _____ ...has a birthday the same month as you.

Name: _____ ...is the oldest in his or her family.

Name: _____ ...saw the same movie as you recently.

Name: _____ ...has read a Harry Potter book.

Name: _____ ...plays a musical instrument.

Name: _____ ...has lived abroad for a year or more.

Name: _____ ...speaks a language other than English.

Name: _____ ...cooked a meal recently.

Link to activity: Find Someone Who (2007), Morningside Center website,

<https://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/find-someone-who>

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- ✓ Partner or small group work — set students up in partners and small groups to complete work. Giving students guidelines and expectations of group behavior beforehand can help set students up for a positive experience.
- ✓ Offer structured recess activities — unstructured recess time can be very difficult for some students. It can be lonely, awkward, or even chaotic. Offer some structured and supervised games that are open to all students.
- ✓ Use socially inclusive language — socially inclusive language is essential to creating an atmosphere of respect. Schools should expect that students and staff use words that appropriate and culturally responsive.
- ✓ Role-play situations where students can include one another — role-playing common social situations can give students the skills they need to successfully interact with one another.
- ✓ Set expectations for socially-inclusive behavior — clearly communicate your expectations of socially inclusive behavior. Ensure that all students understand the expectations.
- ✓ Find ways to highlight student interests and strengths — encourage students to share their favorite things, celebrate student success in various areas of the curriculum, and demonstrate their talent and/or expertise.
- ✓ Ensure that all students have an effective and appropriate way to communicate — make sure assistive devices are working properly and are set-up for students to effectively communicate with their peer group.
- ✓ Provide opportunities/places for students to meet and interact in your classroom — create spaces where students can work together, read together, have discussions, complete an activity, or just socialize with one another. Use different types of seating, tables, and materials to create welcoming spaces.

Source: Eredics N, 10 Things You Can Do to Make Your Class Socially Inclusive, Reading rockets WETA Washington, <https://www.readingrockets.org/article/10-things-you-can-do-make-your-class-socially-inclusive>

In conclusion, applying these practices and methods will ensure the increased levels of social inclusion of students with fewer opportunities.



2.2. Practice 2 Preventing early school leaving of students with fewer opportunities

This subchapter identifies the latest researched **practices** for preventing school disengagement and Early School Leaving (ESL) (including of students with fewer opportunities) which are significant as we transition to a post-COVID-19 school environment. Drawing from an extensive review of research literature on the prevention of ESL and student disengagement, this subchapter identifies the practices that are implementable at the classroom level to promote students' engagement and foster school-family relationships.

While some practices which ameliorate ESL are already known, others such as 1) early-on identification of students' disengagement; 2) strong peer and teacher relationships; 3) high teacher expectations; 4) classroom level behavioural practices targeted to student engagement; 5) nurturing, safe school environments; 6) challenging curriculum; and 7) partnerships between schools and parents whereby both are trained to view schools as a joint learning enterprise are critical.

Early School Leaving (ESL) is defined by Eurostat as leaving the formal school system before obtaining an upper secondary education degree, applying to youth between the ages of 18–24 (Donlevy et al., 2019). The terminology associated with ESL includes strong characterisations such as abandonment, dropout, withdrawal, and attrition. Youth who do not acquire the compulsory educational diploma are systematically viewed as having failed their education (Fernández-Macías et al., 2013). ESL should not be considered as just an outcome, but rather a process of gradual disengagement from school caused by a variety of in-school and external factors (González-Rodríguez, Vieira, and Vidal, 2019).

ESL has been a major concern within the European Union and despite the implementation of national interventions to decrease ESL rates below 10% throughout Europe during the past decade, there have only been slight increases in the numbers of students staying in school (Donlevy et al. 2019). Furthermore, the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 has resulted in the closure of schools and learning spaces, the confinement of families, and the maintenance of social distance – all with dire consequences for education. Students have been prevented from attending school and have had to learn to adjust to alternative teaching methodologies requiring technological equipment and training. Such changes for students, teachers, and parents have already put a strain on depleted technological school resources economies (Cabrera, 2020).

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The COVID-19 pandemic has made evident how access to the internet, computers, and ‘media literacy’ are essential to keep students engaged in schools but has also highlighted the enormous digital inequalities that are taking place not only between Northern and Southern Europe, but within different countries and regions of Europe (Cabrera, 2020). Hence, schools are harder pressed than ever to stretch their resources, streamline online teaching, adapt hybrid teaching models, and support parents to guide their children’s learning as bona fide educators.

Factors leading to ESL, include:

- Individual factors: the students’ socio-economic, health, and psychological conditions in specific life situations including negative attitudes students may towards schools.
- Family-related: socio-economic, cultural background, health, and psychological situations of students’ parents and families (González-Rodríguez, Vieira, and Vidal, 2019). Students can be prevented from continuing their education when they do not have adequate economic resources and are poor. Moreover, if their families and parents who do not value education or perceive education as being in opposition to their culture or a threat to their family’s cultural reproduction can also prevent students from being in school.
- Friendships-related: Students with friends who have high levels of absenteeism and drop out may experience the negative influences which are exerted on them (González-Rodríguez, Vieira, and Vidal, 2019), while students with cross-group friendships, where ethnic identity is viewed as significant in improving the academic attitudes of ethnic minority youth who may be at risk of ESL, may deflect negative influences.
- Student-related: students’ academic performance, absenteeism, and native language use.
- Classmate-related: not having friends within the school, being rejected by their peers, and experiencing bullying among other rejecting behaviours.
- Teacher-related: teachers’ levels of qualifications, training, pedagogical approaches, teacher expectations, and resources.
- School-related: the area and location of the school, the school environment, school policies, and the economic, human, cultural and social resources of the school, etc.

Firstly, we will present good practices for engagement at the classroom level:

- **Classroom management**

The goal of classroom management is to create a safe environment for learning by engaging students and mitigating disruptive behaviours and disruptions. Fundamental in making sure all students perform well academically is the effective management of the classroom environment (Black, 2016). Classroom management entails, aside from maintaining the decorum of the classroom, setting up expectations early on during the year; openly discussing behavioural rules and regulations for students; setting up learning sequences; explaining schedules; and pacing teaching and learning based on small or large group encounters. Effective classroom management requires developing the leadership and management skills of teachers while they focus on student learning and maintain disruptive behaviour at bay.

Of the practices that work, Mallett (2015) reports, that in the U.S. ‘one of the stronger empirically-supported interventions used in over 18,000 schools is Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) which focused on teaching skills and behaviour management early in the academic year with the goal of changing problem behaviours for all students. In addition, Laursen and Nielsen (2016) point out that reflexivity, in which teachers construct and analyse their teaching process relative to interactions with their students, is another highly effective practice. They show that student teachers who learn to use non-authoritarian practices such as: a) concentration techniques, which restore calm at the beginning of the class; b) movement exercises which provide energy where the moods may be low; and c) stepping out of their teachers’ role and levelling down to a student role to understand motivation, are successful teaching strategies (Laursen and Nielsen, 2016). Ineffective practices that can lead to compound students’ behavioural and emotional disengagement and become reasons for ESL, are measures such as shouting at or sending students to the principal’s office in order to restore order in the classroom (Laursen and Nielsen, 2016). Expelling a disruptive student from the class affects not only the expelled students’ emotional and behavioural school engagement, but also the levels of engagement of those students who remain in the classroom (Black, 2016).

- **Behavior management**

Teachers can support student learning by using strategies that help them master their social and emotional skills when dealing with difficult circumstances so that these situations do not



detract from their learning. Teaching and coaching a student to regulate their emotions and behaviour, particularly when dealing with psychologically stressful moments such as bullying, name-calling, or emotional outbursts, is critical in fostering engagement and mitigating ESL. Bradshaw, O'Brennan, and McNeely (2008) posit that schools should support students in developing core socio-emotional competencies in order to regulate their emotions and behaviour. These include acquiring a positive sense of self, self-control, decision-making skills and developing a moral system of belief. For teachers to re-enforce these competencies, teachers need to recognise the following strategies for themselves and their students according to Walberg and Paik (2000), 1) modelling – in which teachers exhibit the desired behaviour and outcomes; 2) guiding practice – where students, with the support of their teacher, achieve the desired outcomes and 3) application – where students, act independently from their teachers, and achieve the desired outcomes while being checked for progress.

- **Teacher expectations**

The research literature emphasises highly the value of setting of high expectations as a goal for student achievement. Teachers' low expectations are shown to lead to students' emotional, behavioural, and cognitive disengagement in schools (Tarabini et al. 2019). This is more evident, as Callingham (2016) shows, for students with disadvantaged backgrounds since they are often not recognised as having talents and skills and are then at greater risk of ESL. By having low expectations of students, “teachers can steer them towards relatively low-skilled vocational pathways that further disadvantage them both in education and the workforce” (Callingham, 2016). Low teacher expectations may lead students to behaviourally disengage because they believe that they are not able to learn, are “bad students” and do not have a future in the educational system. Low expectations lead students to believe in disengagement as a goal, shown by absenteeism or not actively participating in classroom and schools' activities (Tarabini et al., 2019). They may also contribute to students' emotional disengagement since students perceive that their teachers discriminate against them and do not understand their specific needs. Unfortunately, teachers with low expectations also tend to ‘dumb the curriculum down’ which means students are provided with content that is not at their required level but is below, setting into motion a downward spiral of learning.

The lack of a challenging curriculum engaging students' high-order level of thinking leads to students' cognitive disengagement. Thus, delivering a challenging and provocative curriculum

is key. Indeed, the European Commission (2018a) relates that there is a ‘strong positive association of academic expectations and resilience status across analyses’.

- **Engaging curriculum**

To keep students engaged in learning, Main and Whatman’s (2016) research argues that teachers need to be able to listen to students and negotiate the curriculum they teach in ways that match students’ interests and identities. Moreover, Callingham (2016) highlights that when students have input into their own learning, a sense of connectedness with the school can be developed, which enhances the school’s belonging, a powerful protective factor against ESL. While teachers are often expected to deliver set curriculum, teachers, in their day practice, do make decisions over what aspects of the curriculum are emphasised and how content is delivered. Hence teachers can create the space to negotiate the curriculum in ways which incorporate the interests, identities and knowledge of students while also advancing their learning. To do so, listening to students becomes crucial. Schultz, Jones-Walker, and Chikkatur (2008) identified two main listening strategies to deploy in the classroom: (1) Planning for ‘small moments’ in classroom schedules where teachers can connect directly with students’ lives, their knowledge and understanding. Incorporating assignments based on students’ interests or uniform or generic material. By making certain curricular choices, assignments and pedagogical decisions, teachers can draw on their students’ knowledge and community contexts. They can choose how to design their assignments based on students’ interests or may decide to introduce more uniform or generic instructional material.

- **Flexible evaluation measures**

Students who consistently do not get good grades tend to disengage from school, do not feel confident, and think school is not for them, increasing the likelihood of early school leaving. By introducing flexible and diverse evaluation measures, students may feel they are understood by the school, be prevented from falling behind, and be motivated to stay in school. Cardoso et al. (2019) have also shown that the use of exams and tests to assess students’ total learning may not be totally accurate or reflective of what students are able to do. Some students may feel anxious and stressed about taking exams which negatively affect their performance. Others might not be able to study and comprehend concepts and content as they might in less stressful situations. Yet others, may need different approaches to understand the subject matter to respond effectively. Lessons which include kinesics, or



movement, mathematical challenges, artistic performances, or visual displays may be useful in these cases. Employing the multiple intelligences of students and adapting teaching and evaluation to meet student responses by providing a greater repertoire of evaluation measures, may reduce tensions, and allow students to show their strengths in learning.

An example: The General Programme with a Human Rights-Profile: an inclusive, democratic and individual-oriented approach in Sweden

The folk high school programme General Programme with a Human Rights-Profile is a measure that offers young people who lack a complete upper secondary qualification the opportunity to attain such a qualification. The programme is arranged within the folk high school at upper secondary school level and has a clear ideological profile focusing on human rights, a perspective and approach that permeate all of the activity in the measure.

A number of measures have been implemented within the framework of the programme, measures that aim to facilitate learning and increase the students' chances of attaining a complete qualification. For one thing, the manner of teaching is clearly adjusted to the needs of individual students, insofar as study groups are small, students hardly have any homework or tests and are given more time to complete their school work than in upper secondary schools. Students also get the opportunity to choose between different kinds of learning methods. All of this implies that the measure is characterized by high degrees of flexibility.

Moreover, staff at the school also try to create a kind of free zone for the students, a place where they feel welcome and where they feel they are actively participating. Consequently, one of the basic principles at the school is community and cooperation. Students are not only seen as students but are also treated as citizens taking part in and contributing to the development of a democratic society. The wider goal, thus, is to make students part of a democratic process and get them involved in society. The program's specific focus on human rights contributes to the strengthening and deepening of these inclusive and democratic basic guiding principles. After completing the measure, the students attain a complete upper secondary qualification. Many students themselves state that participating in the measure also helps to strengthen and empower them as individuals as well as provide them with the tools necessary to achieve their future educational or occupational aspirations.



Source: Martha Montero-Sieburth & Domiziana Turcatti (2022) Preventing disengagement leading to early school leaving: pro-active practices for schools, teachers and families, *Intercultural Education*, 33:2, 139-155.

In conclusion, applying these practices and methods will ensure the decreased levels of ESL of students with fewer opportunities.

2.3. Practice 3 Supporting the well-being of students with learning difficulties

In today's world, it is more important than ever to support students with learning difficulties early, in order to support their well-being, resilience, and mental health. According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission's "Right to Read" Inquiry Report, students with learning difficulties are more likely to experience negative outcomes, such as lower academic achievement, increased risk of dropping out of school, and higher rates of mental health issues.

The Right to Read Report highlights the importance of early identification and intervention for students with learning difficulties. By identifying and supporting students with learning difficulties early, we can provide them with the appropriate accommodations and resources they need to succeed in school. This can include things like specialized instruction, visual aids, and assistive technology.

Reading disabilities, such as dyslexia, can have significant and lifelong consequences on the well-being, resilience, and mental health of students. According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission's "Right to Read" Inquiry Report, students with reading disabilities are more likely to experience negative outcomes, such as lower academic achievement, increased risk of dropping out of school, and higher rates of mental health issues.

The negative effects of struggling to learn to read can begin at a young age. Many students with dyslexia may feel like they have failed in school as early as age seven. When a student is not a proficient reader by the end of Grade 1, it predicts longer-term outcomes such as ongoing reading failure throughout schooling, dropping out of school, and developing psychiatric problems.

The difficulties that develop from having an unsupported reading disability are often interrelated, mutually reinforcing, and cumulative. For example, when a student loses confidence in their learning abilities, it affects their academic performance and self-esteem.



Their impaired academic performance reinforces their poor academic confidence and low self-esteem, and contributes to social, mental health, and behavioral difficulties. The adverse effects can continue over the person's lifetime, leading to increased risk of underemployment or unemployment, relying on social assistance, poverty, homelessness, criminalization, and even suicide.

It is essential that schools identify and appropriately respond to early reading difficulties to prevent these negative outcomes. Teaching students to read is the single most important task assigned to elementary schools, as it enables children to read to learn throughout their lifetime. Students who struggle to gain word reading accuracy and fluency fall further behind their peers in their ability to access all aspects of the curriculum in all subject areas.

It is important to mention that early identification and support for students with learning difficulties is not only beneficial for their academic success but also for their emotional and social well-being. These students may face challenges with self-esteem, self-regulation, and social interactions. By providing them with the appropriate resources and accommodations, we can help them to develop resiliency skills and improve their mental health.

The website "Right to Read Inquiry Report" by the Ontario Human Rights Commission provides several **practices** that can support the well-being and resiliency of students with learning difficulties. Some of these include:

- Differentiated instruction: This approach involves adapting instruction to meet the diverse needs of students with learning difficulties. This can be done by providing students with different materials, teaching strategies, and assessments that are tailored to their individual needs.
- Evidence-based instruction: This approach involves using research-based instructional strategies that have been proven to be effective in teaching students with learning difficulties. This can include strategies such as explicit instruction, graphic organizers, and scaffolding.
- Multi-sensory instruction: This approach involves using multiple senses to teach students with learning disabilities. This can be done by using visual, auditory, and kinesthetic methods to teach information.
- Collaborative learning: This approach involves working in small groups to encourage students with learning difficulties to share their knowledge, skills, and strategies.

- Self-regulated learning: This approach involves teaching students with learning difficulties how to monitor, evaluate and regulate their own learning, to set goals and strategies to achieve them, and to use self-reflection to evaluate their progress.
- Positive reinforcement: This approach involves providing students with rewards for positive behavior and academic achievements. This can help to increase their motivation and engagement in learning.
- Universal design for learning: This approach involves designing curriculum, instruction and assessment methods that are accessible to all students, including those with learning disabilities.
- Positive attitude: This approach involves fostering a positive attitude towards learning by providing a safe and supportive environment for students with learning difficulties.

Overall, these practices can help to support the well-being and resiliency of students with learning difficulties by providing them with the tools and strategies they need to succeed in the classroom.

Further, incorporating creative activities into a student's learning routine can help to increase their resilience. For students with reading disabilities, incorporating creative activities can help to build their confidence and self-esteem, which can in turn lead to an increase in resilience.

One way to do this is to use creative writing as a tool to help students with reading disabilities express themselves and practice their reading skills. Encouraging students to write their own stories or poems can help them to develop their imagination, creativity and vocabulary. Additionally, allowing them to illustrate their writing can also help them to develop their fine motor skills and visual-spatial abilities.

Another way to increase resiliency through creativity is to use drama and role-playing to help students with reading disabilities to practice social skills, self-expression and problem-solving. This can be done by having students act out scenarios that they might encounter in real life and then discussing how they might handle them.

Finally, incorporating art and music into the curriculum can also help students with reading disabilities to develop their creativity and self-expression. This can be done by having students create art projects that reflect their emotions and thoughts, or by allowing them to compose their own music.



Overall, incorporating creative activities into the learning routine of students with learning difficulties can help to increase their well-being and resilience by building their confidence and self-esteem, as well as developing their imagination, creativity and problem-solving skills.

It is crucial that we take these recommendations seriously and take action to support students with learning difficulties early. By doing so, we can help ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed in school, and to lead happy and fulfilling lives.

It is important to mention that early identification and support for students with learning difficulties is not only beneficial for their academic success but also for their emotional and social well-being. These students may face challenges with self-esteem, self-regulation, and social interactions. By providing them with the appropriate resources and accommodations, we can help them to develop resiliency skills and improve their mental health.

Source:

Right to Read: public inquiry into human rights issues affecting students with reading disabilities, Ontario Human Rights Commission website, <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/right-read-public-inquiry-on-reading-disabilities>
<https://bigideasineducation.org/2023/01/22/learning-disabilities-supporting-an-inclusive-classroom-for-student-well-being-resiliency-mental-health/>

Good practice example for supporting the well-being of students with learning difficulties:

Makaton is a visual language tool that helps children who struggle with communication to express themselves and participate in social activities. It is designed to support spoken language and uses signs, symbols, and gestures to help children understand and communicate. Makaton can be used by anyone who struggles with communication, including those with learning disabilities, autism, or speech and language difficulties. It is often used in educational settings to promote inclusive learning environments and ensure that every child can participate in the learning process.

Makaton involves the use of signing, symbols, and speech to aid communication. Signing is a key component of Makaton and involves the use of hand gestures and movements to convey meaning.



The signs used in Makaton are based on British Sign Language (BSL), but simplified and adapted to make them easier to learn and use. By incorporating signing into communication, Makaton helps to bridge the gap between those who struggle with speech and language and those around them, making communication more effective and inclusive.

The world is moving towards inclusive learning environments. Ensuring that every child participates in the learning environment is our responsibility as educators. When a child struggles with communication, they wish to participate and develop a regular social life. But they struggle to express themselves and deal with others.

How does Makaton help learners?

Makaton is a communication system based on the use of signs and symbols. The Makaton program assists children in improving and developing their communication skills. The signs used in British Sign Language and the language of the Deaf community formed the foundation for the Makaton programs' symbols.

Communication is a necessary tool in our daily lives. It is essential for everyone to communicate in order to meet their needs. Education is one situation where communication skills are required.

A child has to learn to communicate to be able to ask for food, ask to use the restroom, make friends, solve problems, and participate in class. Yet, some people find it challenging to communicate; as a result, sign language can assist with several communication issues.

Makaton can be customised according to the person's needs and used at a level that is appropriate for the person's abilities. After a child can express themselves orally, many people gradually stop using signs or symbols.

Makaton Signing (source: Caldecote)

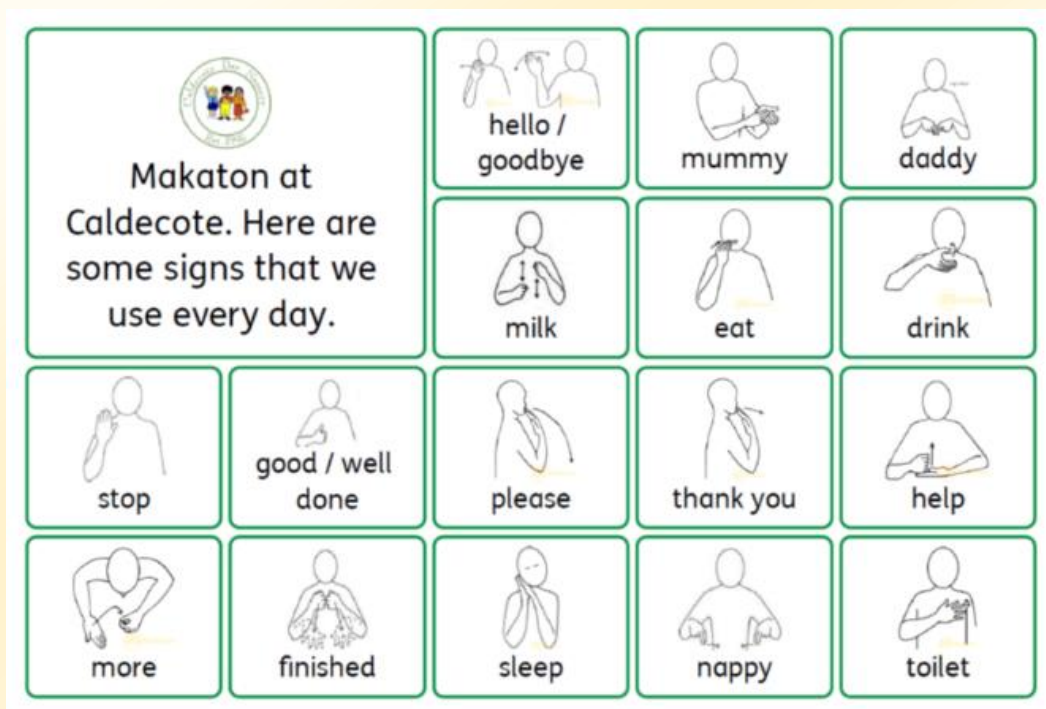


Figure 28, Source: www.caldecotedaynursery.co.uk

How to use the Makaton Programme

We frequently communicate with gestures without even realising it. Our brains recognize everyday movements quickly and use them to develop our thoughts and ideas. Makaton signs are based on a variety of hand gestures, which is the main distinction between Makaton and other communication systems. It makes it simpler for people to use this tool for regular communication.

Unlike British Sign Language, which has its own sentence structure and grammar standards, Makaton gestures are easier to use and follow while speaking in regular English sentences.

Makaton is useful for language learning because the signs you learn directly translate into spoken English. For example, pointing the hand towards the mouth while saying "food," "hungry," or "eat" indicates that someone is eating.

Makaton has a core vocabulary of approximately 450 topics and a resource vocabulary of over 11,000 items. As technology develops, these figures will continue to rise. The Makaton method also includes detailed line drawings to help us understand the terms in our vocabulary. Makaton symbols help students understand how objects, feelings, and actions appear in the real world. Some Makaton users may carry a book or sheet of symbols to help provide

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background for what they are saying to people. For example, if they want to ask for "food," they may point to a picture of a plate, knife, and fork.

Makaton Symbols:

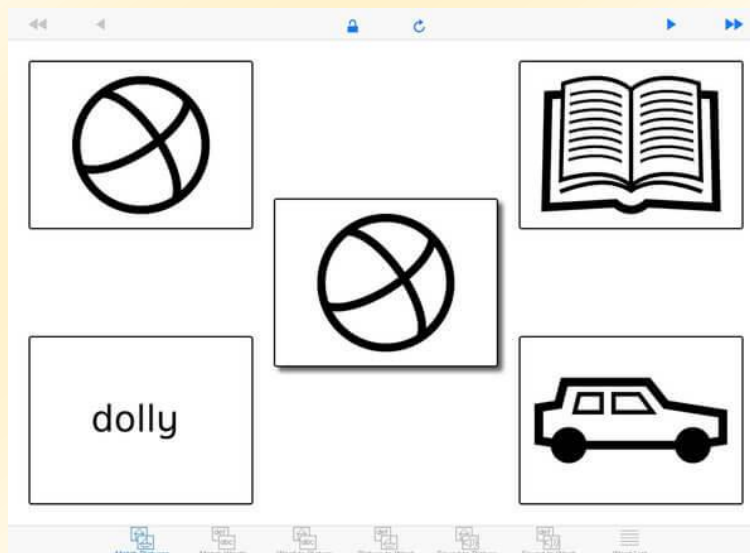


Figure 29, Source: www.caldecotedaynursery.co.uk

Makaton signs can be used at several phases, such as:

- Functional meaning: where a single sign represents a complete thought.
- Two or three represented keywords are used in a sentence.
- In a sentence, every word—including grammar terms and word punctuation.

Each Makaton symbol follows a set of three essential design principles:

- The signs should be visually appealing, as they are required to communicate the concept they represent. Here is an example of the use of greeting signs in Makaton and how they relate to real-world expressions: Makaton Topic - GREETINGS - Singing Hands Video (2020), Signing Hands UK YouTube Channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcEj_MMHabo
- The signs should be simple enough to be drawn by hand and used in a way similar to writing. Here is another example demonstrating how to create the Makaton sign by drawing: Makaton for 'To Draw' Video (2020), Makaton with Lucinda YouTube Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RX2BEnODb70>
- The signs should reflect language concepts in order to encourage the growth of language structure.

Makaton signs focus on providing:

- Stability: The symbols are unchangeable, unlike signs and words that disappear.
- Meaning: The character usually matches the object it stands for, such as a toilet or television.

Makaton Printables

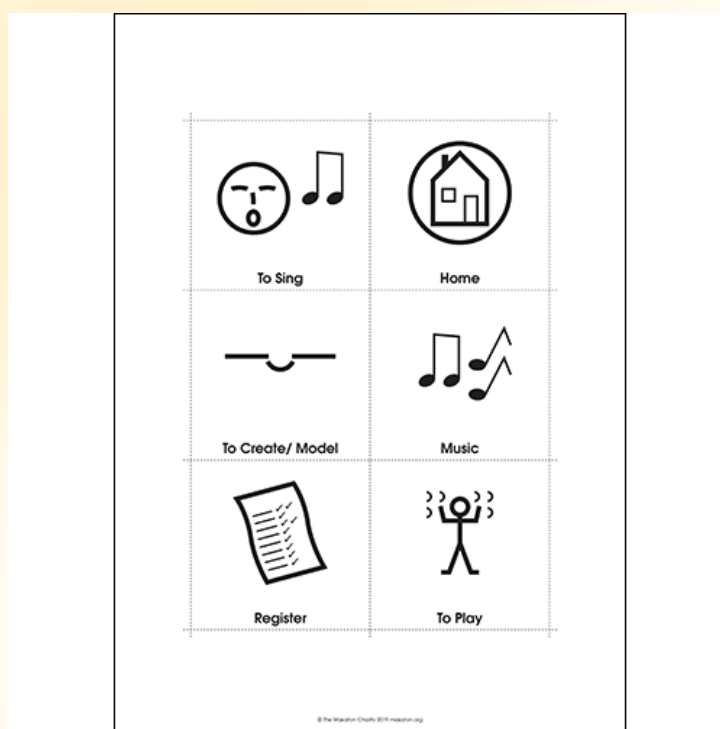


Figure 30, Source: www.caldecotedaynursery.co.uk

Makaton is not intended to replace or slow down someone's learning of spoken English. Instead, Makaton gives everyone the tools to participate in the dialogue and offers some valuable stepping stones in the language learning process.

Who uses Makaton? One of the most popular language programs in the UK for people with learning or communication challenges is Makaton. Parents, siblings, friends, instructors, and medical teams who treat people who have communication issues can use Makaton.

Users of Makaton:

Autism spectrum disorders (ASD): ASD can affect a child's speech, language development, and social communication skills. Children with ASD may take longer to acquire language than other children of their age, and they may also experience selective mutism and have



difficulty understanding or using spoken language. Makaton can help ASD people communicate. Children and adults with ASD can enhance their language skills and expand their comprehension abilities by using Makaton. Makaton can help children with ASD communicate independently by using signs and symbols. Many people with ASD naturally stop using signs and symbols as their speech abilities improve.

Cleft lip & palate: Children with a cleft palate have difficulty creating sounds, getting the right volume or phonation, and having eating and drinking issues. Most children with cleft palates will require a speech therapist. Cleft palates affect the area at the back of the throat, which can lead to nasal-sounding voices and speech issues. The Makaton signs can make it easier for children with cleft lip and palate to communicate with others. Posters are used in conjunction with speech to provide additional visual support for children who cannot speak or whose communication is unclear.

Language development disorder: also known as developmental language disorder (DLD), it is a speech, language, and communication disability that affects how children understand and use language. If a child has communication difficulties, Makaton helps them communicate their ideas.

Every child has the right to learn and the right to take part in society. A child who struggles with learning should not be asked to do tasks that are beyond their ability. The main goal should be to give the child the tools to engage with others and participate in the community. It is a basic human right to give children a supportive environment to help them deal with their challenges.

By implementing the abovementioned practices, the well-being of students with learning difficulties will be supported.

Source: Gawish A. (2023), Makaton, Structural learning website <https://www.structural-learning.com/post/makaton>



V Main principles of supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers – how to apply

This is the beginning of the practical part which includes main principles of supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers (how to apply) which is divided into two sections: Application of the Methodology to students and Application of the Methodology to teachers.

1. Application of the Methodology to students

The Methodology for supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers is applied to a pilot group of students (students aged 7 – 20 from educational organizations), with the objectives to:

- support their mental health and well-being;
- improve basic skills to prevent early school leaving (ESL);
- promote social, civic, and intercultural competencies.

The part from the Methodology which is applied to the pilot groups of students is the Programmes and innovative approaches for working with trainees (Chapter III, subchapter 1). They are developed according to the needs of trainees (identified in previous chapters focusing on the current context and challenges in Bulgaria, Poland and Cyprus), including innovative approaches for working with them, as well as new or improved practices/methods that meet their needs.

In order to properly apply the Methodology to students, they must be included without taking into account discriminatory and protected factors such as gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious beliefs, ethnical background, origin, race, political beliefs, socioeconomic status (SES), presence of a disability, be it physical or mental, and other characteristics. After the pilot implementation, the participants complete a feedback form to evaluate the contents, programs and overall effectiveness of the resource.

The feedback forms for students include information on their age and gender and focus on whether they think the resource was easily understandable and suitable for them, whether they learned new ways on how to improve mental and physical health, whether what they have



learned will help overcome the consequences of distance learning, perform better in school and communicate better with classmates and teachers. In addition to this, the feedback form also assesses whether the pilot course is well organized, if students want to share what they learned with their peers, and if they wish to apply what they learned to their daily life at school. A separate question for comments is also included.

The feedback forms must be collected on paper and the results analyzed and prepared into a report with conclusions and recommendations. They are also available on Google Forms.

As a way to properly apply the Methodology to students, the trainers have to carefully **examine and read** the entire resource beforehand, with a specific attention paid to **Chapter III** Tools for supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers, Part 1 - Programmes and innovative approaches for working with trainers and trainees. Then, they choose the exercises and activities that they wish to implement to the pilot group of students according to the following Programs and Modules:

Program “Physiological needs”:

- Module 1 - Diet and physical activity and their impact on the physical and mental health of trainers and trainees;
- Module 2 - Sleep and its influence on concentration and attentional stability
- Module 3 - Skills and methods for relaxation and mental relief.

Program “Existential needs”:

- Module 1 - Sense of safety and self-preservation instinct during the pandemic;
- Module 2 - Safety in the workplace during the pandemic (this is applicable only to trainers, do not include it in the pilot implementation for students);
- Module 3 - Family environment and dynamics of family relationships;
- Module 4 - Skills and methods for coping with stress and burnout.

Program “Social needs”:

- Module 1 - Sense of belonging and community during the pandemic;
- Module 2 - Social isolation during distance learning;
- Module 3 - Skills for effective communication between trainers and trainees.

Program “Self-affirmation need”:

- Module 1 - Self-affirmation and its impact on mental health and well-being;
- Module 2 - Achievement needs of trainers and trainees;

- Module 3 – Skills and methods for increasing self-esteem and building authority.

Program “Self-improvement needs”:

- Module 1 - Emotional intelligence as a path to self-realization;
- Module 2 – Need for creativity;
- Module 3 - Skills and methods for personal and professional development.

The choice of exercises and activities (and their number) to be included in the pilot implementation for students, **MUST** be influenced and guided by the:

- **Age and grade of students** (some exercises are more appropriate for specific age groups and grades; for example, activities for high school students and for middle school or elementary school students can be very different);
- **The specific needs of students related to education, health and well-being** (identified in Chapter II Current context of mental health and well-being among students and teachers (Bulgaria, Poland, Cyprus));
- **Duration of the activities** (how much time is available for the pilot implementation of the programs) – each exercise has a specific duration ranging from 5-10 minutes to 45 minutes (one class hour);
- **Number of participants** - some exercises are more suitable for smaller groups, whilst other need the whole class present, if it is possible; the pilot implementation focuses on 40 students per educational organization (around 2 classes).
- **Used methods** – some students may prefer discussions and brainstorming, whilst other would rather participate in practical or art activities; this will heavily influence the choice of activities in the pilot implementation, because trainers need to find the best way to engage their students.
- **Necessary materials and preparation** – the activities must also be chosen according to the availability and access to various materials needed for their implementation (stated in the description of the exercises). Usually, the materials described are not inaccessible to trainers and may include art supplies, stationery, etc. which can easily be found.
- **Location** – some exercises have to be conducted in the classroom, whilst other have to be conducted outside or at another place with available free space for students.



An important part is for the trainer to read the instructions to the exercises very carefully, in order for him / her to know how to implement them properly. The instructor must also be familiar with the **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943)** which is a theoretical psychology model on which the programs are based (more information can be found in Chapter III).

During the pilot implementation of the programs to students, pictures must be taken for evidence and attendance lists must be filled in by all participants. A program and presentation for the event must be prepared in advance. The presentation serves as a valuable tool including the description of the included exercises, activities and programs which aid the proper pilot implementation.

It is advised to include exercises from **each** Program because they follow the Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (1943), that includes physiological needs, existential (safety) needs, social (love and belonging) needs, self-affirmation (esteem) needs, and self-improvement / self-actualization needs. This is advised because according to Maslow himself, "a person can only move on to addressing the higher-level needs when their basic needs are adequately fulfilled." Thus, it is necessary to implement the Programs in the order specified in the Methodology (starting from physiological needs, and finishing with self-improvement needs; from the bottom of the hierarchy upwards).



Figure 31, Source: Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50 (4), 370-96.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Another important principle to the application of the Methodology, is NOT to include all exercises, but only those that fit the needs of your students. The pilot implementation needs to be relatively short (in one school day) in order to capture the attention of the target group.

In addition to this, make sure to include exercises with a variety of used methods, in order to provoke the curiosity and interest of students (for example, brainstorming along with more practical and creative activities).

N.B. For proper implementation, apply the shorter icebreaker exercises first.

Whilst following the abovementioned advise on how to apply the Methodology, please get familiar beforehand with the following **main principles to supporting the mental health and well-being of students:** (Source: The Association of Independent Schools of NSW (2022)

<https://www.aisnsw.edu.au/Resources/WAL%204%20%5BOpen%20Access%5D/Principles>

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[%20of%20practice%20to%20support%20student%20wellbeing%20and%20mental%20health.pdf](#))

“Supporting the wellbeing and mental health of all students includes creating a safe and inclusive whole-school climate, prioritising social and emotional learning through the curriculum, utilising effective methods for identifying, supporting and monitoring students at risk, and providing ongoing professional learning opportunities for educators.

Student wellbeing is characterised by a whole-school approach to foster positive relationships and learning experiences. Student wellbeing includes a focus on developing coping strategies, help-seeking skills, self-efficacy and supporting others. In addition, social and emotional learning capabilities are central to maintaining wellbeing and for lifelong success. Wellbeing also encompasses diverse and interacting relationships between the individual, their family and communities, and their associated beliefs, values and experiences.

Mental health focuses on the psychological experiences of wellbeing and its impact on how we feel, think and behave. Mental health can be represented as a continuum, with flourishing and optimal functioning on one end, and severe distress and impact on everyday activities on the other.

Both wellbeing and mental health are dynamic, and constantly fluctuate depending on various and interacting internal and external factors.

Overview:

These eleven principles are provided as considerations when supporting the wellbeing and mental health of all students through education, prevention, early identification, intervention, and ongoing support.

1. Creating a safe, supportive, and inclusive whole-school school climate:

- Create an inclusive school and classroom environment that promotes diversity, respect, and fairness, as well as non-competitive ways of learning.
- Focus on positive and quality connections that foster feelings of safety, support, and trust. A greater ratio of positive to negative interactions with teachers has been shown to increase student engagement in schools (i.e., academic participation, school enjoyment, and educational aspirations).
- Build a culture of help-seeking for all school staff and students.



- Schools may consider creating a physical safe space for students to “take a break” during the day when needed. This may help promote self-regulation.
- Experiences of high stress or trauma elicits feelings of helplessness and unpredictability. Therefore, it is important that the school environment is a safe, stable, and supportive place for students to express themselves, process their experiences and emotions, and cultivate a sense of agency and control.

2. Implementing high quality evidence-based wellbeing strategies or interventions:

- Wellbeing strategies or interventions based on demonstrated success can improve protective factors for wellbeing such as social and emotional learning skills, self-esteem, pro-social behaviour, internalising problems, and academic performance (Mertens et al., 2020).
- The intervention design should consider factors that have demonstrated increased intervention effectiveness and consider barriers to its success.
- If an intervention is implemented, consider who will design the implementation plan and consider whether they have a background in translating research into practice.

2. Prioritising and supporting schoolwide education for students focusing on wellbeing and mental health e.g., social and emotional learning, help-seeking strategies:

- Research observes that explicitly teaching students social and emotional skills is key for enhancing student wellbeing, as well as learning positive help-seeking and coping strategies and gravitating less towards anti-social or self-harming behaviour, and substance use (Durlak et al., 2011).
- Social and emotional learning fosters the development of five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioural competencies, these are: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. These skills are crucial to goal achievement, working effectively with others, and regulating emotions.
- Long-term behavioural change is more likely to be successful when initiatives or strategies are evidence-based and ongoing (Runions, Pearce, & Cross, 2021). Rather than conducting short-term wellbeing and mental health initiatives or one-off presentations from external support providers, developmentally appropriate social and emotional skill building should be explicitly taught and practiced through the school curriculum and co-curricular activities.
- Barriers to help-seeking for students and their families experiencing poor mental health and illness include social stigma and discrimination. Improving wellbeing and mental health



literacy (e.g., education on how to maintain positive wellbeing, signs and symptoms of poor mental health, and help-seeking strategies) may reduce the associated stigma of mental health difficulties (Goodsell et al., 2017).

3. *Creating opportunities for authentic student voice and engagement:*

- Create a school environment and climate where learners feel comfortable authentically voicing their perspectives.
- Allow students the opportunity to work with other peers and school staff to have an influence on positive changes at the school. When teachers work in partnership with their students, it improves their ability to meet students' needs and increase levels of wellbeing (Runions, Pearce & Cross, 2021).
- Provide a variety of methods for students to raise questions, concerns, and feedback (e.g., via spoken dialogue and writing, collectively and/or individually). Providing multiple opportunities for questions and feedback can promote inclusivity, respect, and equity to all student voices (Powell, Graham, Fitzgerald, Thomas, & White, 2018).
- Maintain ongoing communication between students and school staff.
- Ensure a process to address and act upon student concerns and questions is available.

4. *Ensuring that school staff receive regular and ongoing professional learning related to student wellbeing and mental health:*

- Educate school staff about the evidence supporting wellbeing outcomes which is essential to support successful implementation of wellbeing approaches.
- Organise regular and ongoing professional learning opportunities for educators to build staff capability related to wellbeing, mental health and trauma-informed practice.
 - Trauma-informed practice involves understanding the influence of mental health and trauma experiences on learning and behaviour and recognising the signs and symptoms of trauma, neglect, or abuse. Signs that children are struggling can look different depending on the individual, or their developmental stage.
- One main concern from teachers when supporting students who are experiencing mental health difficulties is that they will say the wrong thing and make things worse. Place teachers at ease with the knowledge that a “caring, calm, stable presence is often the main need for the young person experiencing a mental health emergency” (Cooley & Zuzic, 2017). Equipping



teachers with strategies to draw on when having conversations with students about their mental health needs is an important part of this professional learning.

- Provide ongoing professional learning opportunities to allow educators multiple opportunities to ask questions, provide feedback and learn from other educators.

5. *Articulating clearly defined school processes that include identification of emerging signs and indicators, provision of support and regular monitoring:*

- Ensure transparent, consistent, and clear policies, processes, and procedures for responding to students who may need additional mental health support.
- Ensure an effective and standardised orientation regarding the schools' procedures when dealing with mental health emergencies for new staff.
- Ensure all staff are aware of and follow internal referral procedures for students of concern.
- Implement early risk identification methods and regular monitoring of at-risk students. Processes for screening students could be put in place to identify protective (e.g., social connection) and risk factors (e.g., anxiety, irritability, sadness, poor attendance).
- Ensure school staff are competent in identifying and managing risk, knowing how and when to respond to mental health difficulties.
- Clear anti-bullying policies and procedures and ongoing training for staff in creating safe environments and positive behaviour interventions.
- Schools ensure they have comprehensive eSafety policies with clear consequences for breaches.

6. *Undertaking appropriate individual planning processes in collaboration with the school, student, parents/carers and external mental health professionals and practicing transparent, timely and open reciprocal communication:*

- Appropriate planning processes are those which work towards reducing the experience or intensity of mental health difficulties, as well as providing adequate and timely intervention.
- Consent from the family for the school to liaise with external mental health professionals facilitates the planning undertaken for the student.
- Teachers should conduct regular check-ins with at-risk students to identify needs and preferences.



- Provide easy access to mental health resources and practitioners. On average, mental health service use has been linked with improved academic performance amongst students with a mental disorder.

- Create plans to support the transition back to school for students who have had time away from school due to mental health difficulties. This might look like changing school attendance times, allowing increased rest breaks, providing extra time for class activities, extending deadlines, and adjusting the classroom environment and communication methods according to the students' needs.

7. *Having a dedicated team or individual at the school as a point of contact for students and their families:*

- Establish a dedicated leadership team to drive whole-school wellbeing.
- It is critical that the team members and/or individual are approachable, empathetic, demonstrate outstanding interpersonal skills, and shows interest in student wellbeing.
- Identify the key team or individual at the school for students who may be experiencing mental health difficulties. This team may be made up of the wellbeing leaders, school counsellors/psychologists and school executive.
- This team or individual can identify when a student requires referral to further professional mental health intervention and/or treatment. Refer to clear policies and referral procedures.
- Ensure all school staff, students, and parent/carers know to contact this team/ individual in relation to any wellbeing and mental health concerns or queries.

8. *Actively cultivate and encourage proactive parent partnerships:*

- Provide parents/carers opportunities for decision-making in school wellbeing initiatives. Whole-school wellbeing interventions that have involved families in the process were more effective in improving the school climate than those that did not (Mertens et al., 2020).
- Create opportunities for parents/carers to voice their opinions and raise concerns.
- Families can play a critical role in educating and supporting young people, both in and out of school. Where possible, share information with families and be in regular communication with them. This will provide support to families, as well as opportunities to draw from their insight into their child's life.
- Actively cultivate parent/carer partnerships by creating methods for parents to make suggestions.



- Provide parents/carers mental health education opportunities to increase understanding of wellbeing and mental health difficulties, as well as to feel more confident in knowing when and how to respond.

9. *Supporting staff wellbeing and mental health:*

- When staff wellbeing is supported, it has a positive impact on staff retention, quality of performance and classroom instruction, classroom climate and capacity to engage and effectively teach. Therefore, it is essential that measures are put in place to identify teacher needs and prevent burnout and distress.
- The following preventive measures to promote teacher wellbeing are recommended:
 - Provide regular opportunities for staff to connect with each other and share experiences and challenges.
 - Teach skills that increase wellbeing (e.g., cognitive-behavioural strategies, mindfulness and relaxation, social-emotional skills, help-seeking and professional learning).
 - Provide opportunities to receive support from senior staff and management (Roeser et al., 2013).
 - Ensure staff receive appropriate recognition for their work.
- It is important to acknowledge that supporting students who are experiencing mental health difficulties can be distressing to school staff. It is critical that school staff are provided support and debriefing opportunities after an incident or challenging experience.
- Processes to support staff wellbeing should be developed in consultation with school staff and school leadership.

10. *Ensuring ongoing evaluation and opportunities for feedback and improvement for student wellbeing and mental health initiatives and processes in the school:*

- Regularly monitor the progress of student wellbeing and mental health initiatives and processes (e.g., processes involving risk identification and monitoring, student re-integration into school, and wellbeing initiatives) and adapt program components accordingly (e.g., use the plan, do, check, and adjust cycle aimed at continual improvement).”

If all abovementioned steps and principles are taken into account, the pilot implementation of the Methodology to students is going to be effective.

2. Application of the Methodology to teachers

The Methodology for supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers can be applied to a pilot group of teachers working in educational organizations, in order to achieve the following objectives:

- to increase the skills and competencies of trainers / teachers for improving their mental health and well-being;
- to improve their basic skills to prevent early school leaving (ESL), including for students from marginalized groups;
- to strengthen the capacity of the education and educational experts to improve the mental health, physical health and well-being of students;

The part from the Methodology which is applied to the pilot groups of teachers is the Programmes and innovative approaches for working with trainers (Chapter III, subchapter 1). They are developed according to the needs of trainers (identified in previous chapters focusing on the current context and challenges in Bulgaria, Poland and Cyprus), including innovative approaches for working with them, as well as new or improved practices/methods that meet their needs.

In order to properly apply the Methodology to teachers, the participants for the pilot groups must be chosen at random without taking into account discriminatory and protected factors such as gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious beliefs, ethnical background, origin, race, political beliefs, socioeconomic status (SES), presence of a disability, be it physical or mental, and other characteristics.

After the pilot implementation, the participants must complete a feedback form to evaluate the contents, programs and overall effectiveness of the resource. The feedback forms focus on whether teachers think that the Methodology can improve the skills to deal with the consequences of distance learning; whether the Methodology is an effective tool to support students' mental health and wellbeing. In addition to this, the feedback form assesses if the provided methodological materials increase the ability to work with students with fewer opportunities; whether the information received is useful and relevant to the teaching profession; if the pilot course is well-structured and organized; whether the Methodology increases the skills to prevent early school leaving and social isolation among students; whether the

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programs and methods are innovative and valuable. The last questions evaluate if teachers want to share the information with their colleagues and apply what they learned in their work. A separate question is left for comments or suggestions.

The feedback forms must be collected on paper and the results analyzed and prepared into a report with conclusions and recommendations. They can also be available on Google Forms.

The pilot implementation includes activities and exercises from Chapter III Tools Part 1 - Programmes and innovative approaches for working with trainers and trainees (in this case, only the activities and tips for trainers will be included).

The Programs are based on Maslow's (1962) hierarchy of needs theory as our approach in the Methodology because it has made a major contribution to teaching and classroom management in schools. Rather than reducing behavior to a response in the environment, Maslow adopts a holistic approach to education and learning. Furthermore, Maslow suggests that the teachers should create a supportive and positive learning environment.

As a way to properly apply the Methodology to teachers, specific attention must be paid to Chapter III Tools for supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers, Part 1 - Programmes and innovative approaches for working with trainers and trainees. Then, the activities and tips must be chosen and implemented to the pilot group of teachers, according to the following Programs and Modules:

Program "Physiological needs":

- Module 1 - Diet and physical activity and their impact on the physical and mental health of trainers and trainees;
- Module 2 - Sleep and its influence on concentration and attentional stability
- Module 3 - Skills and methods for relaxation and mental relief.

Program "Existential needs":

- Module 1 - Sense of safety and self-preservation instinct during the pandemic;
- Module 2 - Safety in the workplace during the pandemic (this is applicable only to trainers);
- Module 3 - Family environment and dynamics of family relationships;
- Module 4 - Skills and methods for coping with stress and burnout.

Program "Social needs":

- Module 1 - Sense of belonging and community during the pandemic;

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- Module 2 - Social isolation during distance learning;
- Module 3 - Skills for effective communication between trainers and trainees.

Program “Self-affirmation need”:

- Module 1 - Self-affirmation and its impact on mental health and well-being;
- Module 2 - Achievement needs of trainers and trainees;
- Module 3 – Skills and methods for increasing self-esteem and building authority.

Program “Self-improvement needs”:

- Module 1 - Emotional intelligence as a path to self-realization;
- Module 2 – Need for creativity;
- Module 3 - Skills and methods for personal and professional development.

The choice of activities (and their number) and tips to be included in the pilot implementation for teachers, MUST be influenced and guided by the:

- Level of experience of teachers (some exercises are in a more simple and less structured format, whilst others have a more structured instruction);
- The specific needs of teachers related to health and well-being (identified in Chapter II Current context of mental health and well-being among students and teachers (Bulgaria, Poland, Cyprus));
- Number of participants - some exercises can be performed individually or in a group setting; the pilot implementation focuses on 20 teachers per educational organization.
- Used methods – some teachers may prefer practical activities whilst other may prefer discussions; this will heavily influence the choice of activities in the pilot implementation, depending on the preferences of teachers.
- Necessary materials and preparation – the activities must also be chosen according to the availability and access to various materials needed for their implementation (stated in the description of the exercises). Usually, the materials described are not inaccessible to trainers and may include art supplies, stationery, etc. which can easily be found.
- Location – the exercises for trainers can usually be performed also outside the classroom as long as there is enough free space provided.

An important part before the pilot implementation is to read the description of the exercises and tips very carefully, in order to implement them properly. The instructor must also be



familiar with the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) which is a theoretical psychology model on which the programs are based (more information can be found in Chapter III).

During the pilot implementation of the programs to teachers, pictures must be taken for evidence and attendance lists must be filled in by all participants. A program and presentation for the event must be prepared in advance. The presentation serves as a valuable tool including the description of the included exercises, activities and programs which aid the proper pilot implementation.

It is advised to include exercises from each Program because they follow the Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (1943), that includes physiological needs, existential (safety) needs, social (love and belonging) needs, self-affirmation (esteem) needs, and self-improvement / self-actualization needs. This is advised because according to Maslow himself, "a person can only move on to addressing the higher-level needs when their basic needs are adequately fulfilled." Thus, it is necessary to implement the Programs in the order specified in the Methodology (starting from physiological needs, and finishing with self-improvement needs; from the bottom of the hierarchy upwards).

However, not all Modules include practical exercises, some are more focused on tips or on less structured activities. Depending on teachers' needs, the instructor may prefer to implement some Modules in contrast to others. Special attention needs to be paid to the Module "Safety in the workplace during the pandemic", as it is solely directed towards trainers.

Another important principle to the application of the Methodology, is NOT to include all exercises, but only those that fit the needs of teachers. The pilot implementation needs to be relatively short in order to capture the attention of the target group.

In addition to this, make sure to include exercises with a variety of used methods, in order to provoke the curiosity and interest (for example, brainstorming along with more practical and creative activities).

N.B. For proper implementation, apply the shorter exercises first.

Whilst following the abovementioned advice on how to apply the Methodology, please get familiar beforehand with the following **main principles to supporting the mental health and well-being of teachers:**



“Teacher wellbeing is reflected in a positive attitude toward teaching that stems from supportive relationships with colleagues and students, the belief that one has the ability to teach effectively, and the feeling that one’s personal and professional needs and expectations are met.

The social, emotional, and physical health of teachers is a shared responsibility and a critical component of student learning and overall community wellbeing.

Why is teacher wellbeing important? When teachers feel supported, they are better able to:

- Manage the daily stresses of teaching. Teacher wellbeing is associated with:
 - more teachers saying they enjoy teaching.
 - higher rates of teacher commitment, leading to lower rates of burnout and attrition.
- Establish and maintain effective classroom management strategies that are productive for learning. Teacher wellbeing is associated with:
 - higher rates of teacher efficacy.
 - better understanding of classroom dynamics.
 - skillful use of emotional expressions to promote the enjoyment of learning.
- Cultivate supportive and caring relationships with students. Teacher wellbeing is associated with:
 - improved student-teacher relationships and a positive school climate.
 - better modeling and implementation of social and emotional learning (SEL) practices in the classroom.

Ask your teachers (in-person or through a survey) how they are doing and what they need to support their wellbeing. Feedback is a great way to identify opportunities to provide immediate and future supports.

HOW CAN ONE GAIN INSIGHTS INTO TEACHER WELL-BEING?

Before implementing strategies to promote teacher wellbeing strive to understand your teachers’ professional experiences. While implementing strategies to promote teacher wellbeing measure your progress in supporting teachers’ wellbeing. Principals and school administrators may want to consider: Scale-based surveys; One-on-one interviews; Focus groups. Using these measurement tools, schools and districts can build an understanding of teacher professional experiences around workload, stress, organizational support, job



satisfaction, school connectedness, physical health, teacher effectiveness, life satisfaction, student interactions and relationships.

Tips for Selecting and Using Tools to Gain Insight Into Teacher Well-being:

Select a measurement tool that is valid and reliable and that is connected to the outcomes you are striving to measure. For example, some tools specifically measure things like work-related stress levels, and some tools may focus on other aspects of wellbeing, like connectedness and teacher efficacy. Choose a tool that is considerate of your workplace and community culture. For example, in environments where there may be low levels of trust, an anonymous scale-based survey may be more appropriate than one-on-one interviews. When using a tool, such as a survey or interview protocol, communicate a clear goal to participants, share how results may be used, and provide a process for protecting confidentiality. These practices may increase participant trust and willingness to share their experiences.

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT TEACHER WELLBEING? Social and emotional learning (SEL) activities for teachers provide a framework that school administrators can use to promote overall teacher wellbeing.

- Equal Treatment

Ensure the equal treatment of teachers, regardless of gender, type of employment, working hours, and time served. Providing teachers with equal support and treatment lays the groundwork for fostering a positive school environment.

- School Culture

Create school environments that promote feelings of belonging, respect, value, and trust for both teachers and students. Positive school environments support the growth of a school community where members, including teachers, feel connected.

- Relationship Building

Provide opportunities for teachers to develop professional networks that enable them to learn from one another and connect during times of celebration and turbulence. Make a concerted effort to foster connections between principals and teachers to allow teachers to more easily obtain help from principals to develop their instructional and leadership capacity.

- Professional Learning

These opportunities enable teachers to learn, develop, and grow together. Further, opportunities show teachers that school and district leaders are invested in their learning and



wellbeing. Topics could include: managing the emotional labor and stress of teaching; strengthening social and emotional competencies to support student social and emotional growth; using SEL interventions in the classroom; building close relationships with students.

- Teacher Voice

Supply opportunities for teachers to participate in decision making to support their professional growth and connections to the learning environment.”

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If all abovementioned steps and principles are taken into account, the pilot implementation of the Methodology to teachers is going to be effective.



VI Conclusion

In conclusion, the Methodology for supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers is a beneficial resource that provides effective Tools for supporting the well-being and mental health of students/trainees aged 7-20 (including with fewer opportunities) and teachers/trainers. The product is also useful for non-teaching school/university staff, counselors, pedagogical advisers, psychologists and other experts who are working with students and teachers.

The Methodology also contributes to the increase of key competencies, skills and knowledge of the abovementioned target groups, and creates an appropriate model for maintaining mental health and well-being based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954). This resource is freely available online and translated into four languages – Bulgarian, English, Greek and Polish. It can be used and applied to a pilot group of teachers/trainers and students/trainees aged 7 – 20. In summary, the Methodology helps overcome and prevent the consequences for students / trainees and teachers /trainers of distance learning in an electronic environment by promoting and improving well-being and mental health through the developed modules. It also increases the capacity for coping and prevention as well as resilience skills, and promotes the development of key competencies in the abovementioned areas.



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