



To
HEAR &
be HEARD

E-book for youth leaders

INTRO

This e-book is intended for youth workers who meet young people in distress at work.

About the project:

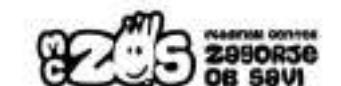
E-book *To hear & be heard* is one of the intellectual outcomes of our strategic partnership "Can you hear me? I hear you.", which is funded by the Erasmus+ program, which is in turn funded by the European Union. The purpose of the project is to develop and explore support mechanisms to work with young people with fewer opportunities experiencing distress and to create a system of education for volunteers and youth workers within the day centers.

Partners in this project are:

- Mladinski center Zagorje (Slovenia),
- Daj mi ruku (Serbia) and
- Aseman Lapset ry (Finland).

The handbook has 3 parts:

- *Theory and definitions* of young people in distress; why it happens, what is the youth worker's role; and general definitions regarding basics of youth work
- *10 tools/methods* that already exist and can be used for working with young people in distress
- *15 good practices* for working with young people in distress that already exist in Slovenia, Finland and Serbia



THEORY >

THEORY OF WORKING
WITH YOUNG PEOPLE
IN DISTRESS

> > THEORY

Who are young people in distress?

Young people in distress represent a heterogeneous group who face numerous biological, psychological, social and cultural challenges, and who are in need of a trusting, reliable and supportive adult.

Why are young people in distress?

Distress in young people is connected to various and interrelated risk factors (eg. low self-esteem, loneliness, the COVID-19 pandemic, exposure to war).

Youth worker's role and boundaries

Role of a youth worker is to give support to young people in distress, whether through the implementation of numerous tools or by referring to experts.

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WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN DISTRESS

Who are young people in distress?

Distress can be described as "emotional, social, spiritual, or physical pain or suffering that may cause a person to feel sad, afraid, depressed, anxious, or lonely" (National cancer institute). Distress may affect how people think, feel, act and make decisions. People in distress can feel unable to manage or cope with changes in their life (National cancer institute; American Cancer Society). Therefore, distress may cause changes in youths' behavior, from showing their dissatisfaction loudly, and disobeying social and institutional norms to becoming very quiet, withdrawn, and socially alienated. In every scenario, those changes can be disturbing and stressful both for youth and others close to them (Harris, 2011). In this handbook, the terms distress and mental health are considered as interdependent and related.

In an attempt to understand the term *young people in distress*, we asked youth workers from Finland, Slovenia and Serbia, who young people in distress are. We provide a picture that points out the main words which youth workers use to describe youth in distress (Picture 1).

As it is shown in Picture 1, youth in distress do not present a homogenous category. If we try to identify things that they have in common, we will find out that most young people have multiple challenges and reasons to be in distress, and that all young people can be in distress at some point in their life. Also, all of them share a need for having some reliable, safe adult they feel they can turn to.



Picture 1: Who are young people in distress from the perspective of youth workers?

Why are young people in distress?

The period of youth is one of the key periods of the development of a person into a healthy, adult individual. This period is very challenging due to the numerous changes that characterize it: completion of studies, finding the first job, separation from the primary family. How a young person will cope with stress depends on a number of factors. These factors can be divided into two main groups: adverse and protective factors. Adverse factors are those which have the increasing likelihood that a certain situation will be interpreted as stressful. For example, if a person has low self-esteem, every appearance in public can be stressful. On the other hand, there are

protective factors which are reducing the negative impact of a situation on the mental health of a person. These factors are associated with biological and psychological attributes of a person, family as well as community circumstances and cultural factors (Risk and Protective Factors for Youth | Youth.gov, n.d.).

The following table represents risk and protective factors which are interrelated and contribute to the mental health of a young person (Table 1). Some youngsters are at greater risk of mental health issues and distress.

LEVEL	INDIVIDUAL ATTRIBUTES	SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES	ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS
ADVERSE FACTORS	LOW SELF-ESTEEM	LOW INCOME AND POVERTY	INJUSTICE AND DISCRIMINATION
PROTECTIVE FACTORS	SELF-ESTEEM, CONFIDENCE	ECONOMIC SECURITY	SOCIAL JUSTICE, TOLERANCE, INTEGRATION

Table 1: Mental Health Determinants (WHO, 2012)

These are key facts about mental health issues in the youth population found in multiple studies provided by WHO:

- One in seven adolescents between 15 and 19 years old have experienced mental difficulties or problems;
- Emotional disorders are most common in adolescence: 4.6% of young people have experienced anxiety and 2.8% have had a depressive episode. Both anxiety and depression share some of the same symptoms, and they affect school attendance and school work. Also, emotional disorders can lead to social isolation or loneliness;
- Behavioral disorders, like ADHD and conduct disorder, are more common in younger adolescents;
- Psychosis usually emerges in early adulthood;
- Eating disorders, suicidal thoughts and self-harm can significantly affect the mental health of youth (WHO, 2017)
- Young people are particularly at risk of the effects of drunkenness, including accidents and violence; alcohol-related deaths account for around 25% of all fatalities in young men aged 15-29 (Health and Well-Being | European Youth Portal, n.d.).

When we are considering the factors of distress, we need to mention the COVID-19 crisis, which has had a negative impact on the mental health of youth. Isolation and lack of contact with peers, anxiety episodes and stressful home environments have had negative consequences on the motivation and overall emotional well-being of youth.

Youth worker's role and boundaries

Every young person is in need of a trusting and supportive adult. When young people face challenges, they seldom seek professional help, but look for support and advice in a non-formal context (Rickwood & Mazzer, 2012). Youth workers are often a part of this context, in which they provide a safe space for young people to share their problems, they listen actively and without judgment, and demonstrate honesty, openness, and empathy (Yanay-Ventura & Amitay, 2019).

Youth workers' role is to:

- Provide a safe space for young people's self-exploration and self-awareness;
- Create an environment where failure is a natural part of learning;
- Engage young people in communication about personal strengths, values and self-acceptance;
- Encourage young people to explore various possibilities to be active, solve problems or experience life;
- Encourage young people to take care of each other and learn about self-care (Tzeses 2020, as cited in Ilić & Pejović, 2021).

Because of the youth worker's role and tasks, they are often the first responders with mental health problem of youth (Rose, 2021). When youth workers meet a young person in distress, they need to be able to distinguish the manifestations of stress and mental health problems (Ilić & Pejović, 2021).

How to react when a young person is feeling stressed or anxious?

1. Notice the problem, recognize when somebody feels stressed or anxious.
2. Pause and reflect. Take care of your own emotions. Ask your colleague to assist or help and intervene.
3. Listen openly without judging, so your group or youngster will be heard.
4. With the information given, reflect again: Do you need to act immediately, or do you have time to plan the intervention?

Need to act immediately (anxiety attack, for example):

1. Take control, now you are in charge. Do you need more help? Find it!
2. Create an emotionally safe space: separate the affected person from the group, but do not leave the group unattended (to work in teams is recommended).
3. Use simple instructions. Being present and caring is a good way to help.
4. Help the youngster to breathe, focus on the airflow in his/her body. Divert attention from thoughts by constant reminders to keep focused on the breathing or anchoring with the here and now (invite the youngster to identify something inside the room and describe it).
5. When he/she feels better, more calm, talk about the situation and evaluate where it might come from, and ask for permission to discuss his/her/their problems within the team. Involve the youngster and/or group.

Time to plan:

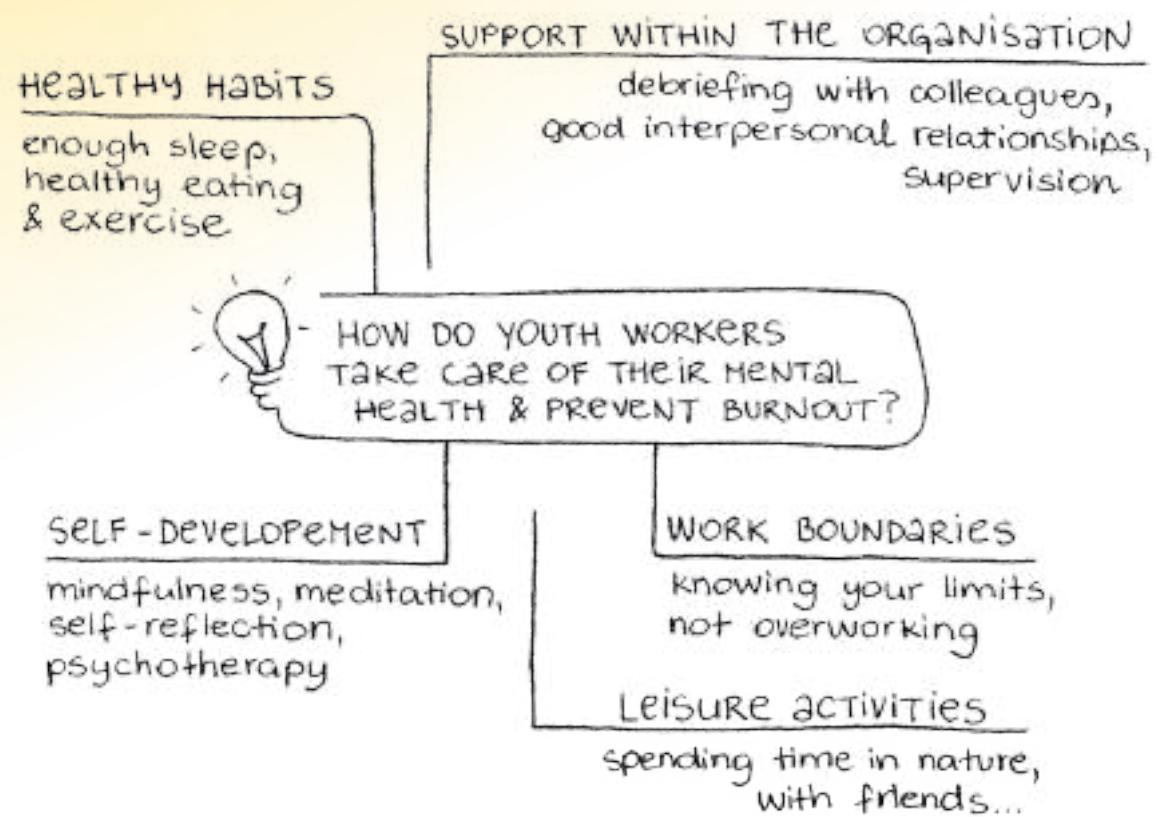
1. Talk about the situation and evaluate where it might come from, and ask for permission to discuss his/her/their problems within the team. Look for clinical psychologists if you notice the issue the youngster is struggling with are beyond your knowledge. Involve the youngster in the decision making.
2. Find a long-term solution together with the youngster and/or group (Rose, 2021).

The primary role of a youth worker is prevention and intervention, but after an initial intervention, sometimes they need to refer the young person to other support services (counselors, psychotherapists, mental health supporting organizations) (Ilić & Pejović, 2021). It is essential for youth workers to recognize that some situations exceed their role. Because youth work is a dynamic concept that vastly depends on the context, it is difficult to establish the boundaries of the youth worker's role. However, the interprofessional collaboration between youth workers and other experts can create a space where the boundaries of youth work are extended. For example, if youth workers collaborate with teachers they can bring together the non-formal, informal and formal context (see The Boundaries of Youth Work webinar, Cooper, S. & Pisani, 2020).

In order to fulfill their tasks and support young people's well-being, youth workers need to take care of their own well-being. Because of their responsible and complex role, youth workers can face occupational stress (Hallam et al., 2021). In many occupations which include providing support for others, burnout is a major concern (Barford & Whelton, 2010).

Burnout can be described as "a state of psychophysical exhaustion, deterioration of relations, and a sense of professional inefficacy and disillusion" (Santinello, 2007, as cited in Golonka et al., 2019, p. 229). Factors within the organization can cause burnout, such as work overload, conflict, quality of relationships with co-workers and supervisors (Cordes and Dougherty 1993; Maslach et al. 2001, as cited in Barford &

Whelton, 2010). Youth workers may sometimes not be able to influence organizational factors, but there are some measures for preventing stress and burnout. We have asked youth workers from Finland, Slovenia and Serbia how they take care of their mental health and prevent burnout. The answers were divided into categories and are presented in Scheme 1.



Scheme 1: How do youth workers take care of their mental health and prevent burnout?

T-01 EMPHATIC LISTENING

Purpose: To release emotions and reduce tensions.

Number of participants: 1 on 1

> > T-01

T-02 SOLUTION-FOCUSED APPROACH

Purpose: Rather than focusing on the problem, SFA concentrates on helping people move towards the future that they want and to learn what can be done differently by using their existing skills, strategies and ideas.

Number of participants: 1 on 1

> > T-02

T-03 POWERFUL QUESTIONS

Purpose: To get to know each other, to build trust, to reflect and to talk about the topics that young people wouldn't think of or talk about by themselves.

Number of participants: 1 on 1 or group activity

> > T-03

T-04 REFLECTION CARDS

Purpose: To start the conversation, to get to know each other, to raise the awareness of the group's well-being.

Number of participants: 1 on 1 or group activity

> > T-04

T-05 SIX THINKING HATS

Purpose: To do a parallel thinking process that helps people be more productive, focused and mindfully involved to solve their problem.

Number of participants: 1 on 1 or group activity

> > T-05

T-06 DIALOGUE EXERCISE

Purpose: This exercise is for practicing listening, waiting and being patient. It's also a good way for the group to bond. This is also used to improve skills to interact with others.

Number of participants: group activity, preferable 5-15

> > T-06

T-07 INTRODUCTION EXERCISES

Purpose: A small warm-up practice to get to know each other. These practices are used in trainings within the full day, and also to refresh the mind from the theoretical part.

Number of participants: 1 on 1 work, group activity, 1-20

> > T-07

T-08 POSITIVE FEEDBACK EXERCISES

Purpose: Build confidence, empowerment, to be able to give constructive positive feedback as well as to take it, works as a good motivation tool.

Number of participants: no limit

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T-09 GROUP TRUST EXERCISES

Purpose: To be able to place trust, promote the psychological aspect of having a sense of belongingness and build team spirit.

Number of participants: no limit, however, everyone has a partner

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T-10 YOUTH WALK – GOING BACK TO THE ROOTS

Purpose: To go inside yourself, to remind ourselves of our young selves and ourselves as adults.

Number of participants: no limit

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EMPATHIC LISTENING

How to:

1. Create a comfortable space for sharing. Giving the speaker a safe place where you will not be disturbed, where he or she can feel comfortable and can fully express him or herself.
2. Offer your full attention. Be present and curious, with the intention to listen patiently to what the other person has to say, even if you do not agree with it. Maintain eye contact. Consider practicing deep breathing so you are more present and attentive.
3. Acknowledge the speaker's feelings. Try to get a sense of the feelings that the speaker is expressing, concentrate fully on what is being said and how the speaker feels. Keep your input to a minimum. It is important to show acceptance, though not necessarily agreement, by simply nodding or adding phrases such as "I understand" or "I see" without interrupting the speaker.
4. Silence is essential to empathetic listening. It adds depth and weight to a conversation. Though it may feel awkward at times, it provides space — for the listener to deliberate and the speaker to reflect on their internal processes and contemplate their dilemma.

5. Wait to speak. If, after sharing, the speaker says, "What do you think?" you may offer your opinion. Otherwise, it is best to simply listen and give small acknowledgments. You can think of yourself as a mirror. Repeat in your own words the speaker's thoughts and feelings back to them and then ask if you have it right. Keep that nonjudgmental and respectful spirit and do not minimize the speaker's issue.

6. Follow Up Check with the person if they have any more things to share, you can also thank them for confiding in you.



SOLUTION FOCUSED APPROACH (SFA)

Materials:

Paper, pencil and a list of questions.

How to:

The principles that guide SFA can be summarized as a three-part theory:

1. What's the trouble?
2. If it works, do more of it.
3. If it doesn't work, do something different.

A fundamental and radical SFA assumption is that in order to find a solution, thorough knowledge of the problem is not needed. The second assumption is that the young person is the one who is the expert on his or her life and has undiscovered sources of power within him- or herself that he or she has already used and can use again.

The stages of a first session

Contracting.

What are your best hopes from this conversation?

Describing the preferred future.

Suppose you fulfilled your best hopes overnight, what would be the first sign you would notice if this happened?

Optional use for deepening the vision of a preferred future.

How would others notice this change?

What effect would their response have on you?

What difference would that make to them?

Identifying instances of success that are already occurring.

Regarding your best hopes for the future, on a scale of 0-10, where are you at the moment?

What have you already done to get to X?

How did you do that? What skills did you use in doing so? Which ones?

Exploration of small signs of further progress.

What would be the signs that you had moved up one point on the scale? What would you be doing differently then?

Or alternatively

How will you know you have moved to X + 1? What will be different?

Ending (optional)

The youth worker offers a short summary of the client's hopes and achievements.

POWERFUL QUESTIONS

Description:

Present the cards to the participants of the daily center and ask if they want to participate.

Each player takes one card and thinks about his/her answer. Whoever is ready and wants to start can go first by reading their question out loud and answering it. When they are finished answering, the next player answers the same question. Each round all participants answer the same question.

It can also be played in a way that participants draw a card and each answers only on the questions in their card. If they don't want to answer they can return the card. At the end there will be left the cards they didn't want to answer. Youth worker takes the cards, reads out loud the questions and answers. A youth worker can then invite participants to share their answers, if they want to.



REFLECTION CARDS

Description:

Take a pack of reflection cards (it can be of different types - the most common ones have some colorful picture on it (often abstract) that encourages young people to think about it). Present the cards to the participants of the daily center, present a topic or question they will have to think about, and invite them to choose up to three cards that they associate with and explain the others their opinion with the help of the images on the cards.

The youth worker asks young people a question regarding the purpose he wants to achieve using the reflection cards (for example: What worries you most about your future? What would you change in your surroundings if you had the superpower to do it? What have you done recently that's worth remembering? If your body could talk now, what would it say?). The cards can be used in different ways: to check the group's well-being, as a conversation starter for a certain topic, as a tool for waking up the imagination of the YP, as a way for a YP to reflect on their thoughts, feelings, some events that might have happened, in order to get a deeper awareness of it, to build acceptance and to think of some possible future actions.

There are many different types of reflection cards (Dixit, OH cards, etc.) that you can use at your work with young people. Cards with abstract pictures and designs, cards with daily purpose, cards with motivational quotes, cards with meaningful questions, etc.

Participants take a look at the image cards and choose up to 3 cards that portray their feelings or thoughts. The facilitator invites each participant to share their thoughts, while the others are actively listening.



SIX THINKING HATS

Description:

We explain to the participants that we will look at the problem with different hats that will help us solve it. We guide them with questions from the hats below. We write each answer on a separate post-it and put it on the wall. It is important that we think only about what each of the hats suggests and that we don't mix them. We follow the Hats in the following order:

1. The White Hat calls for information known or needed. "The facts, just the facts." What could initiate your problem?
2. The Green Hat focuses on creativity; the possibilities, alternatives, and new ideas. It gives an opportunity to express new concepts and new perceptions. How can you overcome the weaknesses?
3. The Red Hat signifies feelings, hunches and intuition. When using this hat, you can express emotions and feelings and share fears, likes, dislikes, loves, and hates. Do the selection and pick the best ideas.
4. The Yellow Hat symbolizes brightness and optimism. Under this hat you explore the positives and probe for value and benefit. What are the benefits of every idea you wrote?
5. The Black Hat: signifies caution and critical thinking – do not overuse! Why something may not work?
6. The Blue Hat is used to manage the thinking process. It represents the control mechanism that ensures the Six Thinking Hats® guidelines are observed. What do we have to do? Till when? Who will do it?



DIALOGUE EXERCISE

Purpose:

This exercise is for practicing listening, waiting and being patient. It's also a good way for the group to bond. This is also used to improve skills to interact with others.

The most important thing is to listen to others and wait for the right moment to say a number.

If more than one participant says the number at the same time, the counting always starts from the beginning again.

Goal:

For young people to practice patience, listening, take others in consideration and be aware of surroundings. In this practice, the only way to reach the goal is with patience and good group spirit!

How to:

Sit in a circle so that everyone can see each other. Each participant thinks of a number from one upwards. If there are less than 10 participants, let's give the numbers 1-15. (It can happen that several participants think of the same number, however, that does not matter, it can be changed as you go.)

Do not say your number out loud yet.

The game starts in silence. No order or gestures. In any order, anyone can start by saying the number 1. Then anyone can say number 2, then 3, etc. until all the numbers have been said in the correct order (for example, until number 15 if that was the agreed highest number).

DIALOGUE EXERCISE

Materials:

Postcards, pen & paper, a ball or other

Purpose:

A small warm-up practice to get to know each other. These practices are used in trainings within the full day, and also to refresh the mind from the theoretical part.

Goal:

To feel comfortable and included in the group, to have a fresh mindset, to reflect, to get to know each other.

How to:

1. "Postcard says" introduction exercise:
Put out a lot of different postcards. Choose one that best describes you. Once everyone has chosen a suitable card for themselves, sit in a circle. One by one, everyone tells why they chose the particular card. You can choose to talk about yourself as much as you like. (If you like, this can be played with a stopwatch, however it is not necessary.)

This exercise can also be applied in other situations, such as meeting a person.

2. Encounter a person/meet a person:

Variation 1: Everyone writes 3-5 questions on a piece of paper. Write questions, you would like to know about another unknown person. Exclude questions such as name, age, place etc. Once the questions are written, form couples. Interview each other based on the written questions.

After the interviews, everyone introduces their own partners from what they have heard.

Variation 2: After the interviews, the questions are shuffled and distributed. No one has their own original questions. After this is done, each in turn answers these additional questions on the note.

3. Special feature salad:

The trainees/youth stand or sit in a circle. One person is chosen to sit/stand in the middle of the circle. The one in the middle of the circle shouts out loud (or says) a skill, characteristic or other trait (e.g., brave!), after which, the ones who can familiarize themselves with this characteristic leave their place and find a new free space (just switch sitting places). Also, the one in the middle tries to find a place for themselves. The one, who does not make it to a sitting place, goes to the middle next and shouts a new feature. If the one in the middle shouts "Super person!" (or any other chosen word by the group), everyone has to change places.

4. Name circle:

Form a circle. One by one, the participants throw a ball at someone whose name they want to know. Once everyone's names are repeated enough times, everyone, or those who want to, can try to remember each name. Once you have gone through this round, you can also continue throwing the ball with other questions, such as where do you live, what do you do, hobbies, your favorite food etc.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK EXERCISES

Materials:

Chairs for participants, paper, tape, pen

Purpose:

Build confidence, empowerment, to be able to give constructive positive feedback as well as to take it, works as a good motivation tool

Goal:

To be able to listen and take positive feedback, the sense of good feeling from that, the strength and acknowledgement you get from it.

Giving positive feedback is one way to create a good atmosphere and elevate another person's mood. However, feedback should always be based on the truth. Here are a few examples that can be practiced.

How to:**1. I'LL INVITE YOU NEXT TO ME**

Participants sit in a circle on chairs. One of the chairs is empty. The intention is that each, in turns, invites a person to sit on the empty chair – a person to whom they wish to give positive feedback. The feedback given may relate to their qualities, skills, abilities, character, personality, and appearance. Anything that comes to mind and you would like to give positive feedback on. You can give feedback on one or more things at a time. The person to the right of the empty chair starts to give feedback.

The recipient of the feedback should only listen. They must not belittle or invalidate the feedback received. Once the feedback is given, the next one on call is again the one with an empty chair to the right.

Lastly, once everyone has had a go, they are allowed to tell what it felt like to give and receive feedback.

2. GOSSIP CIRCLE

Participants are divided into groups of three. One of the group members sits with his back facing two other group members, whilst the two "gossip" positive things about the person sitting in front of them. The person sitting in front (backside towards the two) should be quiet and listen to what the two are talking about her/him.

The parts are changed, so that everyone has a chance to sit in front.

Lastly, once everyone has had a go, they are allowed to share what the exercise felt like.

3. TALKING GOOD POSITIVE THINGS BEHIND YOUR BACK

Two volunteers are invited, they shall take turns. One sits with his back facing the other. The one behind says five good things that come to mind at that moment about the person in front of them. (These can be hair color, humor, personality, style etc.) Then they swap places, and again do the same thing as above.

Lastly, once the exercise is completed, they can share by telling how it felt.

4. BACK PATCH/SLIP

A blank piece of paper is attached to the back of each participant with the words "I am" as the headline. All participants will be given pens to write their own positive feedback about the person with the attached paper.

You cannot see your own note during the exercise. Once everyone has written on everyone's backs, the tags can be removed, and the feedback they have received can be read out loud.

GROUP TRUST EXERCISES

Purpose:

To be able to place trust, promote the psychological aspect of having a sense of belongingness and build team spirit.

Goal:

By respecting another person's boundaries, we also help them to take initiative to build trust with an individual. These activities also enhance communication skills.

How to:

1. COUPLE- AND TRIANGLE FALLING

Form couples. One person from the pair stands up, so that the other one faces their back. The one in the back is an "arm's length away" from the one standing in front.

The person standing behind shall receive the front when they fall, therefore they must take a supportive and stable position (one leg slightly behind and arms outstretched ready to receive the falling person).

The one in front is supposed to calmly fall back straight, so that the person in the back catches them softly and safely, and then gently pushes them back to the upright position.

Initially, the distance between the hands and the back of the person in front is about 5 cm, and gradually, the distance can be slightly extended. It is advised to show this technique to the participants in advance, so that no injuries could happen.

Everyone falls a few times – in turns or so long as they want to.

2. THE TRIANGLE FALLING

The triangle falling is done in groups of three, where one person is falling in the middle of two recipients catching her/him. The person falls with their arms crossed over their chest in such a way as in the first exercise, however now alternately in both directions, so that one catches them from the chest to the shoulders or hands, when falling to the front and when falling to the back, the other catches them from the back.

2. WOBBLE/SWAY CIRCLE

This exercise is similar to the previous one; however, here the whole group stands in a close circle around the one who falls. The one who falls has their arms crossed on their chest. The group of people gently moves the person who fell to each other to receive them. The state of the person who fell is like that of a buoy in the ocean – they sway gently among others, placing their trust in others.

In this exercise, it would be good to emphasize being careful, aware, not to be laughing or speaking (keep in mind the idea behind the exercise). Emphasize the feeling of trust.

Additionally, pay attention to the intensity of the pushes, so that the pace does not accelerate sharply. If this were to happen (especially with youth), it would be a good idea to pause the exercise for a while, to remind the group to pay more attention to safety.

YOUTH WALK – GOING BACK TO THE ROOTS

Purpose:

To go inside yourself, to remind ourselves of our young selves and ourselves as adults.

Goal:

To get to know each other, reflect, familiarize with the youth,

How to:

All participants are asked to close their eyes for a moment or to walk freely in their own thoughts. By the instructor, they are then asked to return to the time when they were young themselves (childhood).

After about 5 min – with eyes still closed or open – whatever you choose, the instructor asks the participants to take a seat. They are then asked questions from their childhood, as they remembered it – for example:

- What kind of clothes did you wear?
- Who were your idols?
- What kind of music did you listen to?
- Who was the first person that you admired?
- Do you remember the first kiss?
- When did you argue at home? How did you behave?
- Who was your best friend? What did you do together?
- When were you angry? What happened?
- When were you sad? What happened?
- When were you happy? What happened?
- Did you socialize? How did it feel if a relationship ended?

- Where were you good?
- What did you do?
- Did you ever lie? To whom? Why?
- What did you think of yourself, your appearance?
- A nice memory of your youth?

These questions can be asked to those who are willing to answer, and no one should be forced to share their own experiences. You can come up with more questions on your own, in addition to the list provided. Usually, during this exercise, many people get huge glowing smiles on their faces. Always leave a question related to positive memory as your last question. Once the desired questions have been asked, participants are asked to close their eyes again and return to this day.

The practice ends with a positive memory. Everyone opens their eyes and reflects on why this exercise was done. In the end, the instructor can give a hint that has to do with familiarizing ourselves with today's youth.

P-01 PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

Name of the organization: Youth center Zagorje, Slovenia
Aim/goal of this practice: Free psychosocial support for international volunteers

> > **P-01**

P-02 "THE SCENE WITHOUT A NAME" PROJECT

Name of the organization: Center za pomoč mladim, Slovenia
Aim/goal of this practice: To have an online open space where young people can hang out and talk about anything with a youth worker

> > **P-02**

P-03 PROJECT "HOW ARE YOU?"

Name of the organization: Association of Psychology Students of Slovenia

> > **P-03**

P-04 PROTOCOL FOR YW WHEN FACING A YOUNG PERSON IN DISTRESS

Name of the organization: Mladi zmaji, Slovenia

> > **P-04**

P-05 AS A YOUTH WORKER

Name of the organization: Mladi zmaji, Slovenia
Aim/goal of this practice: Sharing a view of youth workers' role from a perspective of an experienced youth worker

>

P-06 SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR VOLUNTEERS

Name of the organization: DAJ MI RUKU, Serbia
Aim/goal of this practice: Provision of safe space for volunteers to get all kinds of help they need for challenging situations that show up in working with youth in distress. Improving the knowledge and skills of volunteers.

> > **P-06**

P-07 PSYCHODRAMA SUPPORT GROUP "HELPING THE HELPERS"

Name of the organization: Sociativa, Serbia
Aim/goal of this practice: Raising awareness of the importance of mental health risk prevention in working with youth in distress, education about those risks and finding individual strategies to deal with them through group work.

> > **P-07**

P-08 ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION WORKSHOPS

Name of the organization: DAJ MI RUKU, Serbia
Aim/goal of this practice: Achieve communication with other people in which everyone stands up for themselves and freely, truly expresses their views while respecting the views of others.

> > **P-08**

P-09 PUBLIC APPEARANCE WORKSHOPS

Name of the organization: DAJ MI RUKU, Serbia
Aim/goal of this practice: Improving public speaking skills to increase self-confidence and decrease fear of performing in front of others.

> > **P-09**

P-10 LIFEBOOK / LIFESTORY

Name of the organization: FICE Serbia, Lifebook for Youth
Aim/goal of this practice: Main focus is to make youth aware of all their positive aspects and characteristics, nice events as well as good encounters, in order to work with positive identity, strengthening self-confidence, personal growth and development through the help of a group.

> > **P-10**

P-11 THE TIMEOUT DIALOGUE METHOD

Name of the organization: Timeout Foundation, Finland
Aim/goal of this practice: Timeout is a dialogue method for people from different backgrounds. It works best with a group of six to twenty five. Timeout is always a facilitated discussion. The facilitator will take care of the constructiveness of the discussion. Ground rules for a constructive dialogue, made by Timeout, are a great support for the facilitator and the participants.

> > **P-11**

P-12 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND OTHER SYMPTOMS IN YOUTH WORK AT WALKERS

> > **P-12**

Name of the organization: Aseman Lapset ry, Finland

Aim/goal of this practice: At Walkers, we have a long tradition in meeting with youth in accepting, non-condescending and safe environments. Participating in our activities is always voluntary for young people. At Walkers, we also try to get a hold of marginalised youth and those at risk of marginalisation.

P-13 STREET MEDIATION

> > **P-13**

Name of the organization: Aseman Lapset ry, Finland

P-14 OUTREACH YOUTH WORK AND WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

> > **P-14**

Name of the organization: Into – Association for Outreach Youth Work and Workshop Activities, Finland

P-15 SEKAISIN CHAT / MENTAL CHAT

> > **P-15**

Name of the organization: MIELI Mental Health Finland, Finnish Red Cross, Finnish Federation of Settlement Houses and SOS Children's Villages.

P-16 WALKERS CARS – MOBILE YOUTHWORK AT WALKERS

> > **P-16**

Name of the organization: Aseman Lapset ry and partners around Finland

Aim/goal of this practice: Development of local mobile youth-work practices, to provide young people without an equal chance to take part in other youth-work activities.



PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

Youth center Zagorje enables young people in distress from the local community as well as our international volunteers to meet a psychotherapist free of charge. Those sessions are intended as a form of first aid in situations when one needs a quick first response to the situation they find themselves in. The waiting lines to get into psychological counseling in the health-care system can be pretty long, therefore this is a chance for them to get instant support, and at the same time, see if they find this type of help useful. Each young person comes to the therapist with a unique situation, so the things they get from this experience are also different.

Here is feedback of one of our volunteers in a long term European Solidarity Corps project that regularly attended psychosocial support sessions:

»This experience helped me to become aware of my self-worth, which is something I was missing before. Spending time with my therapist helped me to recognize my problems and encouraged me to start solving them step by step. It helped me change my behavior in a sense that I became self-confident to do the things I have never thought I could or I should. My outlook on many things in life has changed in a way that I started seeing bad as well as good things around me. Without this experience, nothing would be different, nothing would change, and I wouldn't be facing these important changes. During sessions, I got the sense of belonging in a world I've never felt I could belong in.

It was an opportunity that came at the right time in my life, and if it wasn't so, I wouldn't have accepted important decisions regarding my future career. I would keep on being stuck, and this is something I'm still struggling with. If I could give one piece of advice to a person in need, who is still hesitant, it

would be: "Don't do the things that other people think you should have been doing. Focus on something meaningful, not something that is expedient or convenient for you. It might be hard, but it is worth it!"



“THE SCENE WITHOUT A NAME” PROJECT

The project is run by the Center for Youth Aid (Center za pomoč mladim – CPM) and was created during the covid-19 epidemic. It quickly responded to the needs of young people to socialize and get to know their peers. The purpose of the project was to offer young people a place where they can talk openly, socialize, get support and meet new people. This space was offered on the Zoom platform therefore young people from all over Slovenia were able to join them.

Meetings were held once a week for two groups of 10 young people. The first group consisted of young people aged 15 to 19, while the second group consisted of young people aged 20 to 29.

The first meetings were dedicated to cognitive activities and creating a common agreement for each group. Patient and respectful communication was important, and the topics of the meetings were dictated by the participants, as the meetings are based on their own responsibility and willingness to cooperate. Initially, the meetings were led by CPM staff, but later each week two participants came forward to prepare the activities for the next meeting. In doing so, they took into account what topics they wanted to discuss in the group. The most frequently addressed topics were self-esteem, coping with the consequences of the epidemic, mental health, social exclusion, addiction, and goal setting. Through focused conversation, expressing opinions in a group and relaxing board games online, young people found it easier to overcome everyday challenges and hardships.



PROJECT “HOW ARE YOU?”

“How are you?” is a one-week educational project aimed at raising public awareness of the importance of mental health care, organized by the Association of Psychology Students of Slovenia as part of the World Mental Health Day (October 10th). With the name of the project, they want to encourage us to sincerely ask ourselves and our loved ones, how they are, listen and also answer honestly.

The purpose of the project is multifaceted. With it, they want to inform and educate the general public with quality content related to mental health.

For 14 years, they have been organizing free multi-day activities on the topic of mental health in October. Renowned experts from the field of psychology and mental health are invited to participate. Activities take the form of lectures, workshops, round tables, screenings of films with expert commentary, literary evenings, and are intended for the general public. With them, they want to encourage us to be aware of mental health and put it alongside physical health. The project is prepared and led by male and female students. In this way, in addition to studies, they also strengthen the competencies of communication, marketing, organization, promotion and others.

Project “How are you?” has also expanded to social networks, where they share current content related to mental health several times a week.



PROTOCOL FOR YW WHEN FACING A YOUNG PERSON IN DISTRESS

Mladi zmaji (Young dragons) are a public institution based in the capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana, and you can find them in different districts: in Zalog, Šiška, Bežigrad and Črnuče, on the streets and in the city center. They also have a bus, which serves as a youth center on wheels!

They have MOPS which is an acronym that stands for mobile psychosocial counselor.

Protocol for working with youth in distress:

Assessment of the situation is:

- flexible
- subjective

Is it urgent or not?

If it is URGENT:

- 1st step: Safety first (work in pairs)
- 2nd step: Call MOPS
- 3rd step: Notify those responsible
- 4th step: Record the event
- 5th step: Make a plan for help

If it is NOT URGENT:

- 1st step: Record the event
- 2nd step: Email MOPS and coworkers
- 3rd step: Intervention with the team
- 4th step: Plan for help



AS A YOUTH WORKER

Urška made an interview with the youth worker Matic Munc, who has been working in the youth sector for over 20 years and is working a lot with young people on the topic of mental health.

He was talking about *good practices for youth workers* that would help and support YW at their work with youth in distress. His opinion (and I personally agree with him) is that every youth worker should educate themselves (read books, go to trainings and seminars, read about research related to youth and mental health), gain experience (talk to young people, not run away from situations, face challenges and not give up) and build a constant dialog with other youth workers (talk, share, try out methods and tools together, not just present them to each other, spend few days together on regular trainings, etc.).



SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR VOLUNTEERS

Description: "Support system for volunteers" is a program of mentoring, counseling and guidance for volunteers, encouraging them to be engaged in more responsible and complex work with children and youth. The special value of this program is the comprehensive support of professionals the volunteers receive, not only in the implementation of activities but also in creating work programs by themselves.

This program includes:

- Training activities for volunteers: technical preparation for participation in projects, assertive communication, public appearance, forum theater;
- Meetings with volunteers once a month;
- Online social network platform (Facebook) for mutual exchange, adapted to youth communication, which has proven to be highly effective (volunteers use Facebook groups for sharing experiences, quick questions, agreeing on meeting dates and implementation activities, photos, etc.);
- Telephone consultations between volunteers and members of the project team;
- Support from professional associates from schools/institutions (e.g., psychologist, pedagogue, social worker, psychotherapist);
- Psychodrama groups "Helping the helpers".



PSYCHODRAMA SUPPORT GROUP “HELPING THE HELPERS”

Description: Support group “Helping the Helpers” is a model of psycho-social group support for youth workers, who work with youth in distress. This model has been developed due to great responsibility and stress of youth workers and has proven to be highly successful in preventing and relieving stress. The method is a combination of psychodrama and other forms of group work during which the group leader as well as the group itself provide support to youth workers at monthly gatherings for approximately 15 months. The group can include 12 to 15 people.

We are working on:

- Educational level – Theories and perspectives for better understanding the “client and myself” relationship, also background and the state of mental health of the young person (“information on the client's strengths, needs, challenges, goals and resources”).
- Practical level – Using drama techniques for exploring some challenging situations for youth workers working with youth, working on seeking solutions and better understanding.



ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION WORKSHOPS

Description: Daily, we communicate with many people, and in separate situations, we behave differently. The course of communication depends on many factors, but it is important to point out that the communication itself is directed by the persons who participate in that interaction. That's why we recognized assertive communication as a powerful tool that helps people to express their feelings and thoughts directly and honestly, while respecting others. This way of communicating allows a person to set boundaries and experience unpleasant situations in a less stressful way.

We made a series of workshops that are used for learning and practicing assertive behavior. They are intended for both, young people and youth workers. The first level of workshops consists of 8 gatherings, lasting two hours and intended for not more than 15 participants. This level is based particularly on the theoretical part, in order for the participants to get acquainted with the concept of assertive communication. The exercises that are conducted are related to understanding the theoretical part. The next level emphasizes the practical part, reliving real-life situations and looking for different forms of behavior in accordance with the essence of assertiveness.

While practicing assertive and alternative styles of behavior by roleplay, participants were able to better understand their own needs, but also other people's perspective, and they were stimulated to think about feelings of other people in real-life situations.



PUBLIC APPEARANCE WORKSHOPS

Description: We have developed public appearance workshops, during which we help young people to present themselves and convey a message/information clearly, consistently and convincingly. The workshops arose from the need to support young people in presenting and speaking in front of others, in order for them to create a good image of themselves and increase their self-confidence. The basic training for public speaking lasts for two days, taking 5 hours each day, and it is intended for a maximum of 10 young people. It includes a theoretical part about the basics of public speaking and a practical part consisting of presentations on a given topic, with recording the performances. Important elements of the practical part are the perception of the presenter and the comparison of said perception to the feedback by the group and the leader.

Public performance does not only mean performing in front of a large audience. Every day, we have our little public appearances in front of others, with the goal of conveying a message/information. For some people, such performances cause great discomfort and stress, fearing that they will be embarrassed. In addition to psychological suffering and feelings of shame, there can be numerous physical consequences, but it can also lead to withdrawal and fear of any communication with others.

On the other hand, mastering the techniques of public speaking and developing skills leads to increased self-confidence and confidence in one's own abilities. Constant practice and checking by others with comments and suggestions is the right way to prevent the negative consequences of performing in front of others.



LIFEBOOK / LIFESTORY

Description: A personal life story is an intervention originally created for children/youth in the foster care system. The Lifebook can be viewed as a collection of chronological information about a child's/youth's life that includes data, memories, recollections and stories about the child/youth in the foster care system.

According to Baynes (2008), making a personal life story consists of three main elements:

- Collecting valuable items, photographs and memories;
- Creating a written story that explains the reasons for the child's/youth's separation and provides information on members of the biological family;
- Conveying that story to the child/youth in an understandable and meaningful way.

The Lifebook is equally applicable with youth who have faced problems, such as the death of a parent or sibling, the divorce of parents, a serious illness, or a move from one place to another.

It is an effective tool that helps children/youth deal with the past events and plans for the future.



THE TIMEOUT DIALOGUE METHOD

You can use Timeout-dialogue whenever a deeper understanding of the topic or an equal encounter is required – for instance, as a part of preparations, decision-making or bringing different people together.

However, dialogue does not fit in all situations, and it should not be confused with negotiations or decision-making. Instead, use dialogue as part of the above when there is a need to better understand the topic or the field of operation. Timeout offers an opportunity to pause and consider things in peace. The tools help you invite the ones who do not usually take part in conversations.

With the tools, you can practice how to facilitate a dialogue in small steps. As your experience grows, you can become a dialogue expert! You do not have to understand everything at once. Get the hang of a few guiding measures first, and expand your knowledge one dialogue at a time. There is no reason to have cold feet, as anybody can learn. A Timeout discussion has been successful, when an equal encounter and mutual trust have been created, and the participants' understanding of the topic has grown.

Timeout breeds a feeling of inclusion among the participants and societal inclusion in general. Moreover, it provides a deeper understanding of the topic in question and of different perspectives. At best, it generates unpredictable insights and new thinking. The goal is not unanimity.

Before a Timeout dialogue

A clear objective helps to define why the discussion is being held. Here are some questions which can help you in advance with planning your own Timeout!

- What need does the dialogue meet?
- What would be a good topic?
- Where would the Timeout discussion happen? What would be a good place for the participants?
- Who should you invite to discuss?
- Who are usually left out? Invite them too!
- Who facilitates the discussion? Should someone write things down?
- What are the right questions to help the discussion forward?
- What is expected to happen after the discussion?
- How do you ask for feedback?
- When you have considered these questions, it's easier to start.

Timeout can be used by municipalities, organisations, NGO's, enterprises, schools and universities, the media, politicians, parties or local and regional governments as well as religious and denominational communities.

Ground rules for a constructive discussion by Timeout

- Listen to the others, do not interrupt or start additional discussions. "Everyone must have the opportunity to explain their views in peace. It is important that we do not interrupt each other or whisper to the person next to us."

- Relate what you say to what the others have said, and use everyday language. "The objective of the dialogue is to relate what we say to what the others have brought up in the discussion. Let's try to use everyday language and avoid specialist terms."
- Tell about your own experience. "To be able to better understand the issue discussed and each other, it is a good idea to tell about our own experiences. This means that we tell the others what issues, events and situations have affected our views."
- Talk to the others directly and ask about their views.
- Be present and respect the others as well as the confidentiality of the discussion. "In a dialogue, it is important to concentrate entirely on each other and on understanding the issue we are discussing. We will respect the different views people have. Let's keep the conversation confidential, so that everyone can talk as freely as possible."
- Find the hidden and bring together. Boldly deal with emerging conflicts and find issues that have gone unnoticed. "The dialogue is intended to be a safe situation, in which also conflicts can be processed. In addition, it is important to look for things that have gone unnoticed for one reason or another. In the end, we can examine the links between the points of view that have come up in this discussion."

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND OTHER SYMPTOMS IN YOUTH WORK AT WALKERS

According to Walkers' low-threshold policy, we also meet with young people anonymously. This way, we cannot be sure about everyone's identity. We respect this anonymity, and strive to establish a confidential relationship with young people through meeting them in a good and safe environment and doing normal activities. The young person decides what personal details he or she wants to share and at what pace. After the first meeting, we can work with the young person to motivate them to get support and services they need themselves. Building trust, solving problems and advancing the situation of young persons always depend on the case. When young persons establish trust and get motivated, the work gets much more fruitful, both concerning guidance and in looking for solutions to resolve life situations.

We offer further guidance for young people in collaboration with our professional network, and, if necessary, with the minor's guardians, according to the local pathway/service model. In the pathway model, the young person is referred to necessary services, and Walkers' operators walk alongside the young person, supporting their every step. Walkers operates in accordance with the law, employs good practices and collaborates with the authorities. It supplements other local modes of youth guidance in the relevant network of support and services. For a young person with weakened trust in adults and authorities, Walkers can be just the right place at the right time during challenging life circumstances.

For some young people, expressing different symptoms is a way to make oneself seen, heard and noticed. The symptoms that show up in young people may include self-harm by cutting, eating disorders, petty theft, aggressive and violent behaviour, vandalism, sexual promiscuity, depression and other mental health symptoms. Even unintentionally reinforcing these symptoms always hurts the young person. The symptoms are often reinforced, for example, by asking an intoxicated young person "What are you on today?" "Do you drink often or too much?" At Walkers, we want to avoid all kinds of symptom talk. Our goal is to strengthen the young person's experience of being met as an individual. We want to see the human behind the symptom as their own self and as a part of the community. That's why Walkers ask every young person the most important question: "How are you doing?"

When a young person raises concern, for example, by heavy and recurring substance abuse, we take into account that it is just a symptom of some other problem. We aim to get to the root of the problem itself. Our code of conduct can be compared, for instance, to the approach used to deal with eating disorders: do we force-feed the anorectic or starve the obese? And do we reinforce the symptom while we are at it? Regardless of the symptom, the process of getting to the root of the problem usually takes a long time and cannot be achieved only through contacting the authorities. The root of the problems often lies in emotional challenges,

lack of security and not having close people around to interact with. In interacting with youth, Walkers try to give a feeling of safety, confidence and acceptance of all kinds of emotions. It is an excellent preventive measure for marginalisation.

Human beings are what matters; symptoms and problems come second.

Intoxicating substances

All young people are welcome to Walkers and no one is turned back. An intoxicated young person is also accepted, but we do not tolerate intoxicating substances or their use. In Finland, substance abuse is not a threshold issue for meeting with young people or participating in activities.

Possession and use of alcoholic products will be dealt with according to Walkers' rules. Young people are not allowed to possess or use intoxicating substances on Walkers premises. In case of tobacco, a young person may legally carry tobacco products, but their display and use will be addressed in the same way as other substances.

In case of narcotics, action is taken in accordance with the Narcotics Act: if a young person carries narcotics, they must immediately be reported to the police, which, in turn, notify the child welfare services if a minor is involved.

When will a child welfare notification be filed?

- Walkers operators assess each young person's situation separately to determine the need to file a child welfare notification.
- Walkers' operators can also share their concerns and consult with another network of professionals (e.g. police, student services or child welfare services). This helps to build a bigger picture of the situation that the young person is in.
- If the symptoms of the young person are recurring or persistent, he or she is invited to discuss the matter separately with an employee. Together, we discuss how to get help and agree on further actions together. If they do not show up and don't have a valid reason for their absence, despite several attempts, we notify their guardians (if contact details are available), informing the young person about the notification in advance. If, for any reason, the guardians cannot be reached, Walkers' operators should consider filing a child welfare notification.
- When a hard-to-reach young person with recurring symptoms (e.g. shows up intoxicated), despite several attempts at cooperation, does not wish to accept help, the employee must file a child welfare notification.
- If a young person comes to Walkers in an intoxicated state requiring, for example, first aid, we will call an ambulance, the personnel of which will also take responsibility for filing a report and take other further measures. It is also considered good practice for operators to offer the young person assistance that is relevant to the situation, as well as supportive conversation.
- In case of threatening situations with violence involved, the police are called in, who will also take further necessary official action.
- When a professional assessment shows clear signs of a child or young person having an increased risk of marginalisation, and if the situation requires urgent action, the operator must immediately contact the emergency social services or the public emergency number 112.
- As a rule, the young person and their guardians must always be informed of a child welfare notification, its causes and the consequences in advance.
- In accordance with the Social Welfare Act, nowadays, a young person and his or her family can request an assessment of service needs (e.g. through multi-professional work at family centres) with an employee or support person, or on their own. The need for assistance can also be determined voluntarily. When assessing the service needs, a child welfare case or other support measure may be employed.

STREET MEDIATION

Background: Street mediation is a work form, originally developed in Norway, which Aseman Lapset ry has adapted to Finnish conditions.

During 2013 and 2014, small scale mediation operations were performed in Helsinki among other projects financed by Finland's Slot Machine Association (RAY). RAY granted separate project funding for further operations in 2015–2017 to be used for developing and expanding the activities nationwide. 2018– 2019: Development in close cooperation with the Mediation Offices.

Supported by National Institute of Health and Welfare. In Finland, mediation has been part of the court process.

Shortly about Mediation Service in FINLAND
 Started as local projects in 1983. Nationwide service as a result of Mediation Law in 2006.
Financial resources and professional structure: 18 service areas, about 100 mediation advisors and 1200 voluntary mediators. Currently professionally controlled voluntary work

What is street mediation?

Street mediation is a form of youth work where the offending young person gets the opportunity to face the consequences of his or her actions by agreeing to sanctions with the victim of the offence. Street mediation can be applied to minor offences. The most common cases are vandalism, theft, and physical altercations.

The mediation is performed in mutual negotiations between the young offender, his or her parents, mediators and the complainant or victim. The procedure is confidential. Street mediation is always voluntary for the young person.

Street mediation seeks to find a means of compensation appropriate for all parties involved. For example, the sanction may consist of work to compensate for the offence or a behavioural agreement. Street mediation is arranged as soon after the event as possible. It is free of charge. The mediators are professionals in the field of education. They will ensure, among other things, that the consequence agreed upon is age appropriate. After the mediation, there can be "follow-up meetings" if needed. Mediators can meet parties separately before the mediations and continue working with them after.

Professionals from different fields work together. Street mediation is based on the cooperation of professionals from different fields. Efficient use of mediation requires a network of participants, through which a young person can be guided to reach trained street mediators. In addition to youth and social work professionals, security workers, the police, mediation services and social services cooperate in the work. Cooperation enables the sharing of specific concrete practices and knowledge. Existing resources are used in a more efficient way, as the amount of redundant work is reduced.

Street mediation can be,

1. Tool for work

- Philosophy / point of view – restorative justice
- Intention to address educational and low-threshold conflicts in which young people are in a role(s)
- Part of the educational professionals' normal work

2. Service

- Law based
- Involve the parties
- Based on voluntary participation

Restorative justice

- Mediation practices are based on the Restorative Justice philosophy, in which crime is primarily viewed as harm or damage in between personal relationships and not treated as an act of crime
- Definition of mediation by the Finnish law: "A non-chargeable service, in which a crime suspect and the victim of that crime are provided the opportunity to meet confidentially, through an independent conciliator, to discuss the mental and material harm, caused to the victim by the crime and, on their own initiative, to agree on measures to redress the harm."

Restorative values

(Photo, Helsinki mediation service)

Before mediation meeting

- Division of work between your mediator pair
- Agreeing the date and time
- Individual meetings whether necessary
 - Juvenile's or family wishes
 - Complex or lengthy conflict
 - Fear of mediation meeting
 - Need also for other social or medical services

Beginning of the mediation meeting

1. Preparations

- Mediators arrive early and ensure premises are suitable and ready
- Mental preparation
 - Facts of the crime/conflict
 - Did you notice special circumstances during preparation?
- Division of work with your mediator pair

2. Mediator's opening speech

- Introduction round and explaining the algorithm of the meeting and mediation process
- Good to make sure:
 - Mediation is about discussion and exchange of views, not about investigation or finding who is guilty
 - Participants over the age of 15 should understand how the mediation may affect the criminal process. Mediators will not evaluate the result, but the police or the prosecutor may end the pre-trial investigation after successful mediation.
 - Mediation is voluntary and the process can be stopped at any time.

- Be clear and concise. Participants are nervous, and their ability to receive new information is limited.
- The purpose of opening speech is to "sell" the idea of mediation and help parties to focus on the meeting

Ground rules for a mediation meeting

Rules for discussion:

- Only one person speaks at time
- Feelings are OK, aggression is not
- Mediators facilitate and intervene whether needed

Other important issues:

- Role of experts and support persons
- Algorithm of mediation meeting
- Practical arrangements

Saying the ground rules aloud is important, because it:

- Protects the process
- Increases the feeling of being safe
- The mediator reminds everyone about rules

OUTREACH YOUTH WORK AND WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

Background

Everyone has the right to participate in society and enjoy a good everyday life. Into helps those working in outreach youth work and workshops to find inspiration and also inspire others. The young people and adults participating in the services receive support for finding their own path. Outreach youth work and workshops allow everyone to live a life that feels like their own.

Outreach youth work

Outreach youth work is a form of specialised youth work. Its goal is to reach young people under 29 years of age that are outside education or working life and need support to get the services they need. Outreach youth work offers them early support if they decide to accept it, and strengthens their preparedness to move forward in life. For young people, participation is always voluntary. Outreach youth workers are where young people are, offering them opportunities for safe, confidential encounters with adults.

They help young people find answers to their problems and questions, and they assist them in finding the services they want and need.

Workshop activities

Operates in over 90% of Finland's municipalities. Advancing the workshop participants' path into education and employment in a goal-oriented fashion. Support for the participants' engagement and management of everyday life.

Focus on effective and multi-disciplinary co-operation between employment services, education services, youth services, social services and healthcare.

Combination of individual coaching, job tasks that strengthen the participants' skills and peer support.

What are the workshops for?

A workshop is a training community whose purpose is to reinforce inclusion and well-being, identify skills, and provide training that helps participants move on to education and employment.

Workshops are based on multi-sectorial cooperation among youth, employment, education, and social and health care services. They are available in 90% of Finnish municipalities. Workshops offer goal-oriented support, based on the needs of participants, and help them develop skills and competences.

The most common workshop services:

- Rehabilitative work experience
- Work try-outs
- Subsidised employment
- Social rehabilitation.

Workshops

- Improve participants' everyday-life management skills and functional capacity as well as support them in finding their path for the future.
- Improve participants' social skills and their capacity to work as part of a group.
- Improve participants' professional competences and soft skills at work.
- Support participants in finding and maintaining employment in the open labour market.

SEKAISIN CHAT / MENTAL CHAT

Mental Chat

The Mental chat is a national chat service for people aged 12–29.

The chat is free, anonymous and confidential, and no diagnose or referral is needed – it is enough that you feel that you need help. The Mental chat supports mental well-being and helps coping with mental issues.

The Mental chat provides one-on-one chats with a professional counselor or a trained volunteer. The focus is on solutions and resources.

The chat counselor/volunteer is not a doctor or a therapist, but someone who can support the young person to find their own solutions and resources. Listening and empathy often take us far in a conversation, but we can also give information on available services or possible next steps.

Why it works?

The chat provides extensive opening hours, and for young people that live online, getting help online is natural and often easier than face-to-face.

As a participant, you have the freedom to say as little or as much as you want.

Writing about difficult topics is easier for many young people, and anonymity allows disclosing feelings/thoughts you might not disclose in face-to-face communication, so the chat enables feeling less fear of stigma relating to e.g. mental health issues.

You don't have to know where to go with a particular issue – no topic is disallowed at the Mental chat. If you don't know what the issue is, we can try to figure it out together.

We apply the conduct of strengths-based dialogue, where the young person is the active agent with the capacity to make changes or find solutions.

The Mental collective

The Mental Collective is coordinated by four organizations: MIELI Mental Health Finland, Finnish Red Cross, Finnish Federation of Settlement Houses and SOS Children's Villages.

The network consists of over 50 operators from organizations, churches and municipalities, and it is a way to work together for the same cause and divide responsibility. The Mental chat is an enabler of voluntary work – hundreds of volunteers work side by side with professionals.

WALKERS CARS – MOBILE YOUTHWORK AT WALKERS

Mobile youth work implemented in long term by Walkers partner organizations or facilitated via Walkers on Wheels project with short term partners is a combination of mobile youth-work practices and Walkers principles. Basically this means that activities are open for all and focused on conversational interactions between professionals, adult volunteers and young people.

Walkers cars are camper vans decorated to suit the needs of a meeting place. The cars are designed to be easily recognizable from the outside, to avoid confusion and to attract young people to them. The cars are equipped with minimalistic sets of games, coloring books etc., to be used as excuses for interactions. The best attraction by far is the free coffee they offer for visiting youngsters. Finnish climate plays a role in the choice of the cars, as all of them are chosen so that they can offer a warm place anywhere, even in the winter months.

The actual operation of the cars differs from area to area, following local needs and resources. They are used e.g. for youth work at schools, in remote areas with no services for young people and at events that gather groups of young people together. The goal is always to reach young people who otherwise don't have a contact or whose contact with youth work is strongly limited. For example, in northern Finland, the distance to the closest youth center can be hundreds of kilometers and public transport nonexistent.

On the other hand, many young people that mobile methods reach either don't find youth centers interesting or shy away from them for multiple reasons. For these youngsters, mobile youth work offers an easy, low threshold way to get in contact with them that often makes other youth-work activities more accessible for them.

All Walkers activities are exhaustively reported, and Walkers cars are not an exception. After every night, the staff goes through the events and observations of the night and writes them down to digital form. This way, events, progresses and ideas are documented for use in later development. The hot wash-up style debriefings also give a forum to go through any unclear or taxing events of the night. Apart from the daily reports, feedback is also periodically gathered from youngsters for development reasons. This data can also be used to inform local decision makers and other important support groups about the work.

ADDITIONAL INFO



THEORY <**Who are young people in distress?**

Definition of youth

Defining the term "youth" is quite a task. Age is one of the key criteria for defining this term, but it is certainly not the only one that is enough. Young people are in transition from dependent childhood to independent adulthood. Young people represent a very specific category since they no longer enjoy benefits as children, but they still do not have all the rights and obligations of adults. They form a very heterogeneous category with regard to age, socioeconomic status, culture, needs, interests. Even if we are guided only by the criterion of age, there are already significant differences between Finland, Slovenia and Serbia. In Serbia and Slovenia, the group of young people includes people aged 14 to 30, while in Finland childhood and adolescence are not separated, so a young person is every person aged 0 to 30. What this very heterogeneous group has in common are significant life changes that occur at this age, such as completing studies and finding a job, finding a first job, separation from the primary family and planning their own families (*Defining youth in contemporary national and legal policy frameworks across Europe*, n.d.).

If you want to learn more about how young people in different European countries live, you can look at the following [LINK](#).

Why are young people in distress?

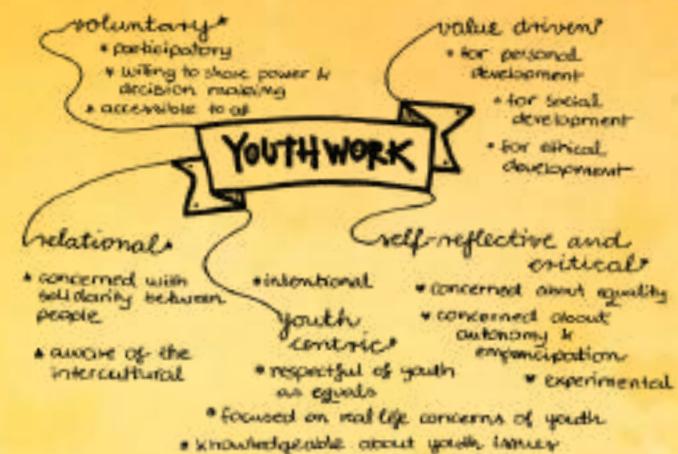
Effects of COVID-19 pandemic on distress in youth

The occurrence of COVID-19 at the beginning of 2020 was a very stressful period. Aside from mortality caused by pandemics, it also had and still has a negative influence on the mental health of all people all across the world. Daily routine in families was changed. Schools were closed so children and youth were at home, parents were working remotely and also were at home. Also, the youngsters were exposed to media in which everyone could find a lot of new, stressful news or information. According to data, during the pandemic, there was an increase in anxiety, depression and sleep problems in the general population, including the youth (Rousseau & Miconi, 2020). Also, in the study which was conducted a few weeks after the beginning of the pandemic, it was found that about 40% of sampled youth were found to be prone to psychological problems and about 14% had some symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). These findings suggest that about 40% of young persons in this study could have some psychological problems triggered or caused by the pandemic (Liang, Ren, Cao, et al, 2020).

Youth worker's role and boundaries

General information about youth work and youth worker's role

Although youth work is quite diverse in different countries, there are certain characteristics which are shared in most contexts. Picture 2 shows the characteristics which are usually associated with youth work.



Picture 2: Youth work characteristics (Council of Europe, 2015, p. 9)

It is not easy to describe the role of a youth worker as it differs between countries. In Europe, youth work is conducted in various institutions and organizations by different people: professional youth workers, youth workers who are part of social welfare provision, youth workers who do not represent a recognized "profession", youth workers as volunteer leaders, etc. (Council of Europe, 2015).

The following definition sums up the main features of youth workers (SALTO T&C RC, 2014, p. 7):

"Youth workers work with young people in a wide variety of non-formal and informal learning contexts, typically focusing on their young charges' personal and social development through one-on-one relationships and group-based activities. While acting as trainers/facilitators may be their main task, it is just as likely for youth workers to take a socio-educational or social work-based approach. In many cases, these roles and functions overlap."

The Council of Europe developed a Youth Work Portfolio which includes 8 youth worker functions (things that youth workers usually do) which are later divided into competencies:

1. Address the needs and aspirations of young people;
2. Provide learning opportunities for young people;
3. Support and empower young people in making sense of the society they live in and in engaging with it;
4. Support young people in actively and constructively addressing intercultural relations;
5. Actively practice evaluation to improve the quality of the youth work conducted;
6. Support collective learning in teams;
7. Contribute to the development of their organisation and to making policies/programmes work better for young people;
8. Develop, conduct, and evaluate projects (Council of Europe, 2015, p. 27).

Make your own Youth Work Portfolio

If you wish to reflect on your practice as a youth worker, you can make your own Youth Work Portfolio. It can also be helpful to ask young people you are working with and your colleagues for feedback. You can find the instructions for your Youth Work Portfolio, ideas for using it and advice on giving and receiving feedback on pages 25 to 37 at this [LINK](#).

How accessible is your organization to young people with mental health issues?

If you believe there are some areas for improvement in your organization regarding working with young people that face mental health issues, you can use the checklist on pages 29-32 on this [LINK](#) to identify those areas.

How can organizations in which youth workers work help prevent burnout?

The research about burnout in child care and youth care workers provided some practical implications that can be applied to institutions in which youth workers work. Based on the data from this research, here are some recommendations on how job pressure can be reduced (Barford & Whelton, 2010):

- By increasing the number of staff, allowing more breaks, debriefing with youth workers after difficult situations;
- By providing training about youth workers' roles and responsibilities;
- By providing experienced mentors for beginners;
- By showing appreciation and valuing the youth worker's profession and effort.

Literature

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T-01 <

When we agree silently or verbally to be a listener, it is a serious agreement. We are being entrusted with someone's vulnerability. Often, however, right in the middle of listening, we get an overwhelming temptation to interrupt. Without noticing we're asking the speaker to focus on us which is not our purpose.

Empathic listening is not about giving advice, consoling, telling a story, commiserating, or educating the speaker. That is why you STOP whenever you notice a wish to start the sentence with - "Oh you poor thing ... ", "I think you should ... ", "I know how you feel. That happened to me too when I ... ", "Cheer up. Don't be so mad.", "I think you should ... ". But when you do speak, you can help yourself with the next steps.

1. Copy what is being said. Simply repeat what you hear in order to get further understanding. Repeat it exactly as you think you heard it.
2. Say what you hear. Repeat the words that were said without adding anything new.
3. Reflect on the feeling. Try to understand the feeling expressed in what was said, going beyond what you think you heard.
4. Restate what was said and think about the feeling. This combines stages 2 and 3 in order to understand the message.

With empathic listening, it's all about the other person and what they are trying to communicate – with their words, with the words left unspoken, and with their emotions. It's all about listening, to understand what the other person is saying and to give them the space to feel heard and validated. This will build respect, trust and mutual understanding.

References

- [LINK](#)

T-02 <

The structure of follow-up sessions then becomes, in effect, the opposite of the first session, in the sense that instead of beginning with future-focused questions, the follow-up begins with the coach focusing on the past, asking 'what's been better?' and then exploring who has done what to move things forward since the last meeting. Later in the meeting, the coach will return to a future focus by asking what would be the signs of further progress.

What's been better since we last met?

What are you pleased to have noticed yourself doing?

What are others pleased to have seen you do?

What have been the effects of that progress on others?

Where are you on the scale now? How come?

What would be signs of moving a point further up the scale?

Important note: Each time after a question has been answered, ask »What else?«. Repeat it two or three times. At some point it might make you or the young person feel uncomfortable, but nevertheless it will create an opportunity to intensify the process and the impact.

References

- Brief Coaching with Children and Young People: A Solution Focused Approach by Harvey Ratner and Denise Yusuf.

T-03 <

It can also be played online. You can find more about Powerful questions at these links:

[LINK](#) [LINK](#)

References

- [LINK](#)

T-04 <

The activity can be also adapted to perform it online at [LINK](#).

References

- [LINK](#)

T-05 <

References

- [LINK](#)
- [LINK](#)

T-06 <

You can make this practice harder in such a way that instead of numbers, participants try the same with letters. Additionally, keep in mind that everyone in the circle must say the number once, meaning everyone takes part. No one is excluded.

At the end of the exercise, reflect on your thoughts as a group: what was the aim, purpose and goal. This can create good discussions.

T-07 <

References

- Aalto, M. (2000). *Ryppäästä ryhmäksi*. My Generation.

P-01 <

In Youth center Zagorje, we work with the psychotherapist Helena Požun from Zavod odprta dlan. [LINK](#)

P-02 <

More about the project (only in Slovene) [LINK](#)

P-03 <

More about the project [LINK](#) [LINK](#)

P-04 <

Link to the organization Mladi zmaji (Young dragons): [LINK](#)

P-06 <

Want to know how this model is applied in practice?

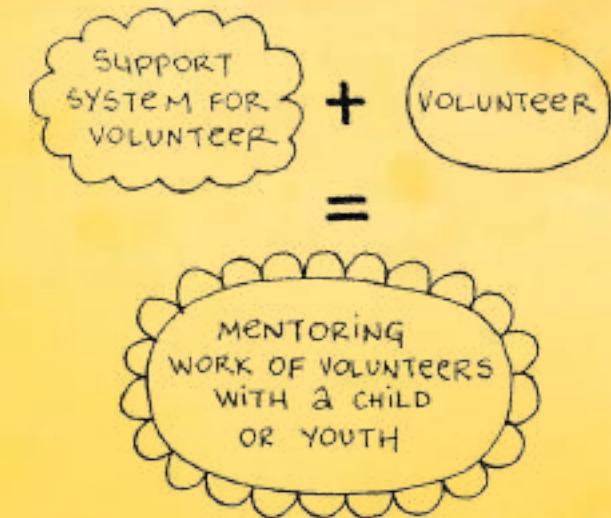
Presentation of the practice:

During 12 years of working with children, youth, youth workers and professionals from social fields, the association DAJ MI RUKU has been putting special emphasis on the support system. One of the support systems we have developed is the support system for volunteers, which we apply to all projects in which volunteers are involved. Volunteers are mostly young people and students who are highly motivated to improve their skills; professional and personal.

One of the main programs of the organization DAJ MI RUKU is the "Older brother, older sister" (OBOS), a program of external psychosocial support to children and young people aged 9 to 14 in their social integration, achieved through student volunteer engagement. This program provides psychosocial assistance to children/youth from vulnerable groups, while promoting the idea of volunteer work and young people as a positive model. The main principle of the work is the establishment of a permanent relationship and interaction between one student and one child (mentoring work) for 20 months, as long as one cycle of the program lasts. Through educational, cultural, entertainment and sports activities designed by volunteers and in accordance with the needs and abilities of the child/youth, the child/youth develops responsibility, trust and care for themselves and others. Acquiring and improving social skills opens the way to more successful socialization and integration into the social environment for these youth/children.

A special goal of the OBOS program is improving the position of young people by creating opportunities for their employment, developing their skills and professional competencies needed for independent and group work with users.

OBOS support line diagram in its support system looks like this:



Before new volunteers start to work with youth in distress, support system provides them with the first phase of support and training in different topics:

1. Assertive communication
2. Public appearance
3. Forum theatre
4. Technical preparation for participation in projects
5. Workshop about first meeting with youth: expectations, emotions, preparation for a meeting

Only when they finish complete training, they start working with children/youth in distress. From the moment they are included in the program, different mechanisms of the support system are available to them, individual and group: monthly meetings, social platform for daily communication, telephone and personal consultation with coordinator and professional associates (psychologist, pedagogue, social worker, psychotherapist).

All described elements of the support system are further implemented in accordance with the plan and program, but also in accordance with the current needs of volunteers.

References

- [LINK](#)
- [LINK](#)
- [LINK](#)
- [LINK](#)

P-07 <**Want to know how this model is applied in practice?**

Presentation of the practice: This model can be applied to youth workers, but also to young people who are involved in volunteer activities of working with children and young people from vulnerable groups. There are two models of implementation of this method in practice:

- Support group for helpers within the project "Older brother, older sister". Model of this method was originally implemented in 2011. Target group are helpers, working with children and youth from vulnerable groups.
- Intensive four months program with helpers from different sectors of society. This program is implemented online and in person, every week at the same time. Duration of one meeting is 2.5 hours. It is led by two workshop leaders. Target group: social workers, pedagogues, psychologists, special educators, youth workers etc. working with children/youth/adults/seniors in need.

In this handbook, we will present a method originally implemented within the program "Older brother, older sister" as psycho-social support to volunteers. This program is implemented by the organization "DAJ MI RUKU", Serbia. The groups are attended by volunteers, student helpers that are working with children and youth in need. Basic method of group work is psychodrama, but we combine it with other methods and tools that are used at workshops as needed. "Psychodrama is an action form of group psychotherapy, in which the life situation or inner world of an individual takes place on the "stage" (in a group) with the help of group members and leaders/therapists."

This model of working with volunteers includes different techniques: verbalization, body language, movement. Relationship between the youth in need and the volunteer is explored at different levels so the volunteer can recognize and get to know himself/herself in that relationship. Next comes reconsideration of interventions that he/she uses in working with youth in need, and support to come up with new ideas. One of the most important group factors is receiving/providing individual support in a group setting.

Psychodrama groups provide continuous monitoring of volunteer work in working with youth, and it provides a space to volunteers to talk about challenging situations. On average, psychodrama meetings take place once every month and last 2.5 hours. Psychodrama emphasizes spontaneity and creativity, living life "here and now". In addition to psychodrama work, the members supporting each other create a safe place in which they will mutually achieve a relationship of trust, goodwill and mutual exchange for the purpose of personal progress.

Topics for support groups are offered according to the program, but they are also chosen on the basis of acute needs of the volunteers. We deal with the following topics:

- Emotions
- Attachment theory – explain a relationship type of youth in need (to understand why they are acting in some way)
- Burnout syndrome
- Vicarious trauma
- Countertransference and transference
- Professional boundaries
- Karpman's drama triangle role (victim, persecutor, rescuer)

- Communication in the service of the best interest of our clients and helpers
- Taking care of yourself and strengthening your strength
- Relaxation techniques for stress release, anxiety etc.

Organization "Sociativa" and "DAJ MI RUKU" conducted research about the satisfaction of group members with the work of the group. This research covered the period from 2011 to 2017. The collected data was based on the responses of volunteers in the Final Report of volunteers at the end of their engagement into this program. The sample included 33 young women, who finished their voluntary work in the program "Older brother, older sister" in the period from December 2011 to June 2017. 30 students from Belgrade University and 3 students from the University of Niš participated in the research. Evaluation shows that the average rating of volunteers' satisfaction with these groups is 9.25 (from 1 to 10). Also, evaluation of this practice shows that the most important parts of this model are "Support from the group" and "Exchange of experiences among volunteers".

References

- [LINK](#)
- [LINK](#)
- [LINK](#) english
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P-08 <

Want to know how this model is applied in practice?

Presentation of the practice: One of the main goals of our organization is to develop communication skills among young people, children and professionals. We made a series of workshops that are used for learning and practicing assertive behavior and thus contribute to improving relationships and to reaching better understanding with others.

It was important that participants understood what assertiveness was and understood the difference between assertive and alternative behavior styles (passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive). In the theoretical section, participants learned that being assertive implies awareness of our own needs and rights, and we treat ourselves by respecting the needs, rights and feelings of others. It was important that participants understood that they should stand up for themselves and say "No!" in a simple, direct way, without attacking or manipulating the interlocutor.

In the practical sequence, we used a lot of various activities for applying theoretical knowledge. At first we gave them examples of assertive and alternative behaviors, in order for them to recognize which behavior was more suitable for a specific situation. Although, we encouraged them to think about situations in their life, in which they were not assertive. Together, we discussed which behavior would be more convenient under given circumstances. Using those examples, we showed them that assertiveness is very useful for real life situations. Also, they were stimulated to think about feelings of other people in these situations.

While practicing assertive and alternative styles of behavior by roleplaying, participants were able to better understand other people's perspectives. Through this model, we motivated participants to improve their soft skills and to act assertively in various situations.

References

- [LINK](#)

P-09 <**Want to know how this model is applied in practice?**

Adolescence is stressful in itself. The pressure that young people feel due to the growing responsibility towards themselves and others sometimes leads to a mental state that a young person cannot easily cope with. The pressure also comes from the need to create a good image of yourself, which young people create based on the feedback they receive from others, so every performance in front of others is important. Public speaking workshops are created in accordance with the needs of young people. The basic training for public speaking lasts two days, 5 hours each, and all young people who participate in the programs of our organization go through these workshops. We combine the theoretical and practical parts that are practiced during the projects in real-life situations: young people lead workshops, participate in meetings with stakeholders, present programs at school or college, etc. During the workshops, we work on the structure of presentation, clarity and conciseness, dealing with fear, body language, etc.

References

- [LINK](#)

P-10 <**Want to know how this model is applied in practice?****Presentation of the practice:**

Some children/youth are directly and actively involved in life story work, while for some, especially very young children and infants, a story is written by others.

Numerous guidelines available regarding the making of a life story emphasize the importance of flexibility of the process of creating the story as well as of the format of the story (for example drawing, writing, collage etc.). Sometimes a personal life story can be made in the form of a box of memories, life lines, a group of photos, songs, drawings and more. Although the documentation and recording are considered very important, the most important thing is the child's/youth's experience of making the story. If some information is not available, the child/youth can express their feelings about the issue or the topic.

This method can be done with youth in small groups of 3 to 6. Before starting the work on the Book of Life, it is necessary for the facilitator to make preparations for the use of different creative work techniques (crayons, colorful papers, glue, scissors, collage magazines, etc., whatever is available) and to encourage young people to bring with them their favorite photos to the workshops. Also, facilitators bring a paper version of a draft of Lifebooks (hard copy) for every participant (note: in the reference you can find different types of prepared Lifebooks).

The program is divided into 5 workshops/days. Every workshop lasts about 2.5 hours. Every day has its topics that are realized through creative group methods – painting, drawing, writing, making collage etc. The topics are:

- Me as a baby
- My best friends
- My creative side
- My family
- My network
- Deep thoughts
- My treasures
- My future
- Animals: favorite animals, me as an animal, animal and fear
- My residences
- My house
- Free space: write, paint, collage – whatever youth want
- Final page: my photo for the end

Every Lifebook has its workshop guide. At the end of this process of making the Lifebook, every youth will take his/her book with him/her.

References

- [LINK](#)
- [LINK](#)
- [LINK](#)

P-11 <

For more information visit [LINK](#) [LINK](#)

P-12 <

Roughly, procedures with a symptomatic young minor can be recorded in the order described above (if the first step does not work, then proceed to the next step). At all stages, other factors that affect the young person's life must be taken into account, and potential problem must be consulted and solved in collaboration with others.

For more information about the Walkers concept:
please get in touch [LINK](#)

P-13 <

More information about street mediation: Please get in touch: [LINK](#)

P-14 <

For more information:
Into – Association for Outreach Youth Work and
Workshop Activities supports capacity building of
outreach youth work and workshops [LINK](#)

P-15 <

For more information: [LINK](#)

P-16 <

Walkers on Wheels project (Finnish, but has
contacts) [LINK](#)

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