



To HEAR & be HEARD

4-DAY CURRICULUM

TRAINING FOR YOUTH WORKERS & VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN DISTRESS

4-day curriculum *To hear & be heard* is one of the intellectual outcomes of strategic partnership project "Can you hear me? I hear you.", funded by the Erasmus+ program. 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).

Purpose: to empower youth workers, help them set boundaries and understand their role when it comes to working with youth in distress.

Aim: that youth workers feel confident working with youth in distress and are provided with tools and methods that support them at their work.

You can find descriptions of activities below and if you find it interesting or want to know more about it, feel free to contact Youth center Zagorje ob Savi via email: info@mczoz.si. [MAIL >](#)

This 4 day training includes the Four fold practice [LINK >](#), for each day one practice. The Four fold practice is the base of Art of Hosting [LINK >](#). It is simply an observation that great conversations happen when people are present, when they participate, when they are hosted well and when they co-create something.

We use Four fold practice to establish a safe and creative environment for the participants, to enhance their learning process. It is also an opportunity for participants, youth workers and volunteers, to experience and recognize the importance of creating a safe space for young people in daily centers. The Four fold practice is offered as an approach to establish an appropriate environment for working with youth.

1ST DAY – HOSTING YOURSELF

Intro & getting to know each other (speed dating game)



We present the first part of the Four fold practice – Host yourself and emphasize the importance of first supporting yourself and the practice of being present if you wish to support young people in distress. Invite a collective slowing down so that all participants can be present together. This might be as simple as taking a moment of silence to rest into the present. You can also invite the group to answer one question like "How do you host yourself?" or "How do you experience life when you are fully present?" to open a debate.

Speed dating game*: We exchange pairs in multiple rounds, each pair has 5min to share and they get one question per round.

Questions:

- What sparks your eyes, what is your passion?
- What are you most grateful for?
- If you could have dinner with anyone in the world, who would it be and why?
- If you could have any superpower, which one would you choose and why?
- What are your dreams for the future?
- If you could eat only one dish for the rest of your life, what would you choose?

*you can also use any other getting-to-know-each-other-game you know

Team building activity* (building safe space from Legos)



We divide participants in small groups and give them legos. The task is that they create the best daily center for youth that is based on safe space. Each of them has a role in this dreamy center and space to create. They have 30min to build and then 30min for all the groups to present their centers. In the last 30min the whole group makes a poster with key elements of safe space.

*you can also use any other team-building activity you know

My role as a youth worker (my presence & my boundaries)



Each participant gets a blank paper (A3) where they draw a superhero, super youth worker.

They are also invited to write down the qualities, super powers, tools that a super youth worker should have. After 20min of individual drawing we invite participants to share in pairs what they draw and talk about how they feel as youth workers.

Afterwards we have a group discussion on the topic of the role of youth workers 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. 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.

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.



Reflection (pictures)

Have a set of pictures (it can be Dixit cards or a set of different photos) and invite participants to choose a card that visually represents how they feel about the day. They can share reflection in trios.

2ND DAY – HOSTING OTHERS

We present the second part of the Four fold practice – Hosting others. The basics of hosting others are to determine the need and the purpose, to create a powerful question, to encourage contributions and to harvest the outcomes.

It is about being courageous, inviting and willing to initiate conversations that matter.



Youth in distress (theory + building characters activity)

Theory part



Introduction: Presentation of the topic: What is distress?

We ask the participants to define distress from their experience. They write it on paper and those who want to share can.

For us it was really difficult to define it, we mostly found topics about mental health, but in this project, it is defined more broadly.

We describe the topic and its importance and define 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).

We ask if the definition we give is different from theirs. In which way?

The significance of the topic:

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

- One in seven adolescence 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% 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 adolescence;
- 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.).

Building characters - activity



Participants are divided into groups (2-3 people). They are given Dixit cards from which they can choose one card. They will choose the card which they associate with distress. The task is to imagine a story about the person from the card: Who is this person (age, what they do in life, interests, family context...)? How do they feel? Why are they feeling this way (different factors)? We give an example using one card. If somebody finishes early they can pick another card. They have 15-20 minutes. Each group or pair can present the story in any way they choose (drawing, acting...) and they have 3 minutes to do so.



Discussion

Based on the presented stories we lead a discussion with the following questions?

Did you base your story on something you experienced while working with youth in distress?

Do you recognize some similarities between stories? Which?

Can you tell us about some other problem that young people face which wasn't mentioned in the stories?

Once again we return to the picture to compare with the stories.

Also present and discuss this:

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



Daily center structure (what is it, how it works)

We make 3 islands and 3 groups. Islands are big posters with 3 topics: What is Daily center? What youth needs in Daily centers? What is a youth worker's role in Daily centers?

Each group goes around the papers and adds their answers. We check together all of the 3 papers afterwards and have a discussion about it.

The aim of this activity is to write down and agree on the main key elements of what Daily center is, what we offer there to young people and what is our role as youth workers in Daily center.

Some of our theory for your support:

The purpose of Daily center is to enable young people to spend quality free time in the local environment in the company of their peers. The space is based on socializing, young people themselves choose what, when and how they will do. In the daily center young people try out different roles, learn social skills, discover their desires, interests, get to know their strong areas, deepen their knowledge of themselves and mutual relationships, expand their social network, set goals for the future and gain positive experiences in life. .

The objectives of Daily center are:

- reducing and preventing social exclusion and its negative consequences,
- building a positive self-image, gaining a sense of acceptance and security,
- satisfying social needs,
- improving communication skills,
- learning to accept differences,
- expanding the individual's social network in accordance with their needs,
- acquiring work habits and accepting responsibility.



My role as a youth worker (part 2 - empathic listening)

Empathic listening is a structured listening and questioning technique that allows you to develop and enhance relationships with a stronger understanding of what is being conveyed, both intellectually and emotionally. As such, it takes active listening techniques to a new level. Empathetic listening can help prevent or keep misunderstandings from happening. The better you listen and the harder you work to understand what others are thinking and feeling, the less likely you are to misunderstand them.

When we listen with empathy, we avoid sharing our personal stories, we avoid giving advice and thinking what we could say to respond. We try to really listen actively. We can summarize with our own words what we heard to check if we heard correctly. That gives a talker a feeling of being really listened to. We can share how it makes us feel hearing what they shared. We can ask if there is anything we can do to support them.

It is important to know it is a practice so we need to practice it.

We invite participants to make trios and exchange roles 3 times. In each round one is sharing a story, one is actively listening and the third one is observing. The one who shares a story speaks for 5 minutes without interruption, then the one who listened shares what they heard. And then the observer shares what he saw or noticed.

Afterwards we can ask the whole group for some feedback on how this exercise was and how useful they find it.



Reflection (powerful questions)

Have cards with powerful questions (or print them out on separate papers) that participants can use in trios to reflect on the day.

3RD DAY – PARTICIPATE IN CONVERSATIONS

We present the second part of the Four fold practice – Be Hosted. This part means that you are willing to listen fully, respectfully, without judgment and thinking you already know all the answers.

It is about practicing conversation mindfully.



Protocol card & DC agreements

Present the protocol card "FIRST AID, 5 steps protocol for youth workers working with youth in distress" and they could say to respond. We try to really listen actively.

Create a list of agreements for daily centers and talk about setting boundaries.



Reporting system (how, why)

We learnt that the reporting system can really help us keep track of young people coming, what is happening and how we deal with different situations and to have this information for future needs. Questionnaires that each youth worker fills in after each daily center can provide instant reflection for the youth worker + feedback and information for other co-workers. This way we can also trace phenomena that is happening and evolving between youngsters and we can respond to it faster and more efficiently.



Activities:

- first we invite each participant to individually think about why reporting system is good to have and what you can use the reports for
- then you put participants in small groups to discuss among themselves what kind of questions are needed for a clear and efficient report - each group makes few suggestions based on their debate
- then you can give them different questionnaires (aka reporting systems) that are attached to this document and each group goes through them

Finish with a group discussion on the importance of the reporting system and how they see it being implemented in their work.



Open space (for sharing, fears, worries, questions...)

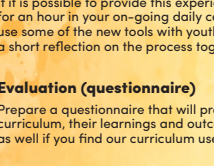
A space that is open to be adjusted to the needs of the group - maybe you want to dive deeper into some topics or you have extra time for discussions.

Also some participants might offer to host a workshop for others.



Reflection (cards)

Use some other sets of cards for reflection or print out a Reflection tree from the internet that supports participants to share their reflection on the day in trios.



Evaluation Tree

Ask students where they feel they are on the tree in relation to the lesson or topic.

Can be used repeatedly to articulate progress/problems.

Could print out on A3/A2 and get students to put post-it notes on with their name.

Could give to individuals and ask them to write on where each aspect of the topic would lie.

Good to use before planning, whole class revision, can use to create groups with different foci etc.

4TH DAY – CO-CREATE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

We present the second part of the Four fold practice – Be a part of a hosting community. Be willing to co-create and co-host with others, blending your knowing, experience and practices with theirs, working in partnership with youth.



Forum theater / role play session

Forum theater comes from Theater of the oppressed but you can also use a basic role-play game as well. Make sure you start with basic theater activities to warm up our bodies and get into more playful mode. You find many basic exercises on the web as well.

Role play session is aimed at us, youth workers, playing out different situations that might happen in daily centers and the goal is that we try out different methods and techniques to tackle specific situations. It offers a playground where we can face our fears and try out. It is important to have a safe space in the group and to raise the awareness of theater as a tool for practicing life-situations.

To keep it simple, we can divide the group into small groups of 4 participants. Every group decides on which topic they will work on and create a situation that could happen (or maybe already did to some youth workers) and play it out as a short performance (max 3min). Each group presents their performance and we have discussions on how youth workers in these situations could react. There are no perfect or right answers, we are just trying to find different ways of communicating and tackling uncomfortable situations.

Daily center experience

If it is possible to provide this experience for participants to have, invite them to join for an hour in your on-going daily centers. It is nice to see the actual practice and use some of the new tools with youth. Later we invite you to have a short reflection on the process together.

Evaluation (questionnaire)

Prepare a questionnaire that will provide you feedback from participants on this curriculum, their learnings and outcomes. We would like to hear feedback from you as well if you find our curriculum useful and how it was for you to use it.