

Mental health **POWER**

YOUTH WORKERS' GUIDE TO
PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH

Anna Erkkö
Marjo Hannukkala



Opetus- ja
kulttuuriministeriö

The handbook has been developed as part of the Mental Health Skills for Youth Work projects (2011-2013) with funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture. The handbook has also received funds donated to the Finnish Association for Mental Health for the aid of youth and adolescent mental health.

Publisher: The Finnish Association for Mental Health

1st edition in English

Authors: Anna Erkko (M.A. Ed., psychology teacher) and Marjo Hannukkala (Lic. Ed., subject teacher, supervisor)

Exercises: Pilvi Mikkonen (physical education teacher, university of applied sciences) Susanna Paavonen (M.A. Ed, drama teacher), and Soile Törrönen (M.A. Ed)

Foreword and expert reading of text: Tiina Röning, psychologist, psychotherapist (advanced level of competence)

Youth work experts: Lassi Puonti, Tiina Tokee, Mimmi Mäkinen, Katja Gunther

Proofreading: Ellen Tuomaala (M.Soc.Sc.)

Tool image design: Growth of Mental Health Skills projects

Graphic implementation of tool images: Taina Ståhl/Visuviestintä Oy

Images: Shutterstock, stock.xchng, Marika Keitaanniemi, Tanja Haverinen

Original layout design and implementation: Pekka Marjamäki

English edition layout: Mervi Kujala

Translation: Käännöstoimisto Pikakääntäjä

Editor: Aino Kattelus

Copyright: The Finnish Association for Mental Health, Anna Erkko and Marjo Hannukkala, 2013

Print: Painotalo Plus Digital Ltd., 2017

ISBN: 978-952-7022-53-5

Foreword

Prologue

Young people's happiness, as well as, unhappiness concerns all adults who are part of their daily lives or who work with them. Everyone who works with young people hopes that their actions will in some way promote the positive development of the young person close to them and help them stay away from self-harm and exclusion.

Day-to-day events and situations come and go quickly. Encounters are often fleeting, and it may not be easy to know how to support young people's development and strengthen their mental health within one's role. Intervention and teaching mental health skills is often not free of obstacles, and good advice seems to be scarce. There is not enough time, and young people are not interested in listening to adults' lectures. It may feel tempting to leave the educational responsibilities to parents or professional helpers and to focus on more practical activities.

However, all activities with young people are associated with strengthening their wellbeing skills. Each encounter offers an opportunity to find new skills and perspectives. Adults show their professionalism by identifying these areas of growth and seizing them. Young people learn to look after themselves through daily interaction and, in crises, by way of example, identifying with a role model and practising new management techniques. Every adult in their life is an object of identification and comparison for young people, and learning new skills is a life long process.

Experimentation and the search for new experiences in interactive situations are a natural part of development. Young people's brains are still flexible, ready to respond to stimuli, so they learn new things in a very different way from adults. The mind looks for personal ways to be and cope. Young people are open to new things, and thus, this stage in life is a goldmine for teaching, experimenting with and searching for lifestyles and skills that support mental health.

For young people to pursue things, they must have things to pursue. At a certain age, it is easier to see other, more-distant adults rather than your parents as role models. Nobody wants to grow into an image of their parents. Sometimes it may be easier to talk to an outsider. Distance provides room for consideration, portrayal and acceptance. And the ones who receive least help at home need it most from sources outside the home. Often youth work and youth leisure time professionals - youth workers, coaches, music teachers and café owners - are the ones most likely to be in the right place at the right time. It is, therefore, important that everyone who works with young people is aware of and masters the core topics of mental health and wellbeing education. When you have thought about mental health

themes and understood their importance to growth and development, it is easier to recognise ideal circumstances for strengthening the protective factors for young people's mental health and identifying risk factors.

This handbook is intended as a source of information and inspiration for adults, who work with young people. It provides information on a variety of themes, as well as, exercises, which can be applied to different situations. Above all, the handbook is aimed to help professionals reflect on everything that mental health involves. When the adult has a clear and broad perspective on the matter, their contribution to young people is empowering. This approach also supports job satisfaction and growth as a person. We can only provide young people what comes from within us.

My hope is that this book will help professionals and other safe adults to turn encounters with young people into moments of conscious learning of mental health skills and events for improving their skills reserves. At the same time, I hope that the handbook will encourage its readers to seize the challenge that our profession offers us and help us feel inspired to support the development of young people.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and flourishes, likely representing the name Tiina Rönning.

Tiina Rönning

Psychologist, Psychotherapist (Advanced Level of Competence)

Acknowledgements

The handbook has been created in cooperation with youth work and mental health work professionals.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the youth work professionals who participated in the training pilot for testing the material and providing feedback for the further development of the material. Your feedback provided us a valuable perspective on the everyday life of youth work and helped us develop the material into a practical tool.

We would also like to pass our warmest thank you to the youth work expert team. During our meetings and discussions, you introduced us to your ways of working, work culture and the field. Mimmi Mäkinen, Lassi Puonti, Tiina Tokee and Tea Törmäkangas, thank you for committing yourselves to the development work and providing valuable feedback and comments on the handbook's text over the three years. With your help, we gained personal insight and experience from youth workers, which we could include into the handbook. We would also like to thank Tiina Saarela and Katja Günther for your invaluable comments; it was great that you participated in our development work.

We are also grateful to Elina Marjamäki for your participation, inspiration and encouragement over the three-year period.

A special thank you also goes to Psychologist Tiina Rönning for her expert comments. You provided the book with a strong professional voice, which is uniquely important in our communication with young people. Thank you also to Psychotherapist Ritva Karila-Hietala for your expert comments on crises and mental health problems and to Specialised Sexual Therapist Maaret Kallio on sexual health related themes.

We would also like to pass our warm thank you to Drama Teacher Susanna Paavonen for your expertise and work with the practical activities in the book. Our thank you also goes to Pilvi Mikkonen for adapting the exercises to meet the needs of youth work and to Soile Törrönen for implementing the exercises within mental health themes. We are also grateful to Elina Hämäläinen for your work on the 'Young people and values' chapter.

A huge thank you to Ellen Tuomaala for your proofreading and editing work.

A warm thank you also goes to Pekka Marjamäki for the excellent layout work and graphic design.

The handbook has been developed as part of the Mental Health Skills for Youth Work projects (2011-2013) with funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture. The handbook has also received funds donated to the Finnish Association for Mental Health for the aid of youth and adolescent mental health.

Helsinki 5 September 2013
Anna and Marjo

Background to the handbook

Work began in 2010 at the Finnish Association for Mental Health with a project funded by Sitra to develop support tools for online-based youth workers dealing with the mental health of young people. The project identified a need for additional expertise, training and tools to support adolescent mental health. As the project was launched, we had the support of Juho Kirvesniemi, Mimmi Mäkinen, Lassi Puonti, Tiina Tokee, Tea Törmäkangas, Tiina Markkula and Tiina Ruottu to establish cooperation on the field.

In 2011, the Ministry of Education and Culture began to fund the project as part of the Development Programme for Children and Young People (Lanuke 2007-2011). A training model and material were developed for the wide-ranging field of youth work based on the online project. The Wellness of Mind study module for health education developed by the Finnish Association for Mental Health was used as the background material for the training model (Hannukkala & Törrönen 2009).

A pilot group was used to develop a model that consisted of four training days. 30 youth work professionals from youth centres, workshops, outreach youth work, online youth work, family youth work and sports associations participated in the work. Church youth and social work were also part of the pilot. The mental health content was used to prepare text drafts, which the participating youth workers tested in-between training sessions in their day-to-day work and provided feedback on the training days. The aim was to gain a comprehensive picture of the training and equipment needed in the field of youth work.

Pilot participants: Lilla Haapakoski, Erika Järvinen, Katja Lehtinen, Tero Myllyvirta, Mira Sipola and Ilkka Valpasvuo from Tampere youth services. Karin Blomqvist, Johanna Ijäs, Jussi Jeskanen, Maria Järvinen, Marjo Tani and Bodil Weckström from the municipality of Sipoo. Omar Abdi, Sari Granö, Kirsti Kallansalo, Minna Revontuli, Ansumana Sabally, Sirpa Savoranta and Mirja Silajärvi from Helsinki youth service.

Heidi Hannikainen, Anna Härkönen, Susanna Palo and Karoliina Sipilä from Helsinki Education Department's workshops. From Hyvinkää's intensive method project: Jukka Hyppönen and Virpi Järvinen. From the Verkkoterkkarit (Online nurses) project: Tanja Hiltunen. From sports associations: Johanna Heikkinen, Juha Pekkanen and Sirkka-Liisa Sandberg. Pirkko Komulainen and Hanna Yogaswaran from church youth work. Juha Jutila from the Church Central Administration.

An expert team consisting of youth work professionals helped prepare the material; the team included Lassi Puonti from the Municipality of Sipoo, Mimmi Mäkinen from the National Development Centre of Online Youth Work, Tiina Tokee and Tea Törmäkangas from Tampere's Youth Services and Tiina Saarela from the Church Government. Elina Marjamäki from the Finnish Association for Mental Health also participated in the work.

Kanneljärvi Institute and the Humak University of Applied Sciences also co-operated in the development work.

The training model was finalised and the handbook completed in the follow-up project (2012-2013) as part of the Ministry of Education and Culture's Lanuke 2012-2015 programme. The national youth work training was launched in the spring of 2013.

The aim of the Mental Health Power training and handbook is to strengthen youth work professionals' expertise in mental health; to offer tools for working with young people, and to support a resource-oriented approach and occupational well-being of youth workers.

Contents

1 MENTAL HEALTH POWER	12
Mental health as a life skill	12
GROUPING EXERCISES	22
2 YOUNG PEOPLE AND MENTAL HEALTH	29
Mental health is an experience of wellbeing	29
Mental health protects from risks	31
Hand of mental health as part of life	33
EXERCISES	36
<i>Hand of mental health as part of life</i>	36
<i>Wellbeing of the mind starts from choices</i>	40
<i>Protective and risk factors of mental health</i>	43
3 ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT	47
Changing body and mind	47
Youth as development phase	47
Girl's and boys' individual growth and development	51
Sexuality - life's positive force	54
Unique young person	59
EXERCISES	65
<i>Strengthening self-esteem</i>	65
<i>Trust and faith in the future</i>	68
<i>Changing body and sexuality</i>	69
4 EMOTIONS AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS	75
Importance of emotional skills for mental health	75
Emotional skills - identification and expression	77
Emotions during adolescent changes	79
EXERCISES	85
<i>Understand your emotions</i>	85
<i>Understand other people's emotions</i>	89
<i>Body and emotions</i>	90
<i>Difficult emotions</i>	92
5 ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIPS	95
Interactive skills support mental health	95
Young person in different environments - changing relationships	96
Putting social skills into use	100
EXERCISES	112
<i>Listening and being present</i>	112
<i>Connecting</i>	115
<i>Self-confidence</i>	116
<i>Dating</i>	120
<i>Positive thinking</i>	123

6 YOUNG PEOPLE'S SAFETY NET	125
Safety net secures and strengthens mental health	125
Young people's most common concerns	126
Connecting with a young person - discussing concerns	133
EXERCISES	136
<i>Safety net</i>	136
<i>Young person's concerns</i>	138
<i>Loneliness and bullying</i>	140
7 YOUNG SURVIVOR	145
Crises are part of life	145
Losses and grief	149
Coping in a crisis	150
Supporting a young person experiencing crisis and grief	152
Action plan for traumatic crisis	156
EXERCISES	158
<i>Life will prevail</i>	158
<i>Grief and crisis</i>	160
<i>Trust and safety</i>	165
8 VULNERABLE MIND	169
Young people facing worries	169
Melancholy and depression in youth	171
Pressing anxiety	173
Eating disorders	175
Self-destructive behaviour	179
Pleasure and addiction	184
EXERCISES	190
<i>Mind put to test</i>	190
<i>Resources for coping</i>	194
<i>Let's relax</i>	196
9 YOUNG PEOPLE AND VALUES	201
Values and choices in youth work	201
Values are established in adolescence	201
Values education	204
Culture, religion and multiculturalism	207
Attitudes, prejudices and differences	208
Media influence on values and attitudes	209
Professional ethics guidelines for youth work	210
EXERCISES	213
<i>Values during adolescence</i>	213
<i>Values and other people</i>	216
<i>Attitudes</i>	217
<i>Values and the environment</i>	220
10 COOPERATION AS A STRENGTH	225
Mental health is a life skill	225
Closing statements	227
EXERCISE ANNEXES	234

1 MENTAL HEALTH POWER

Mental health as a life skill

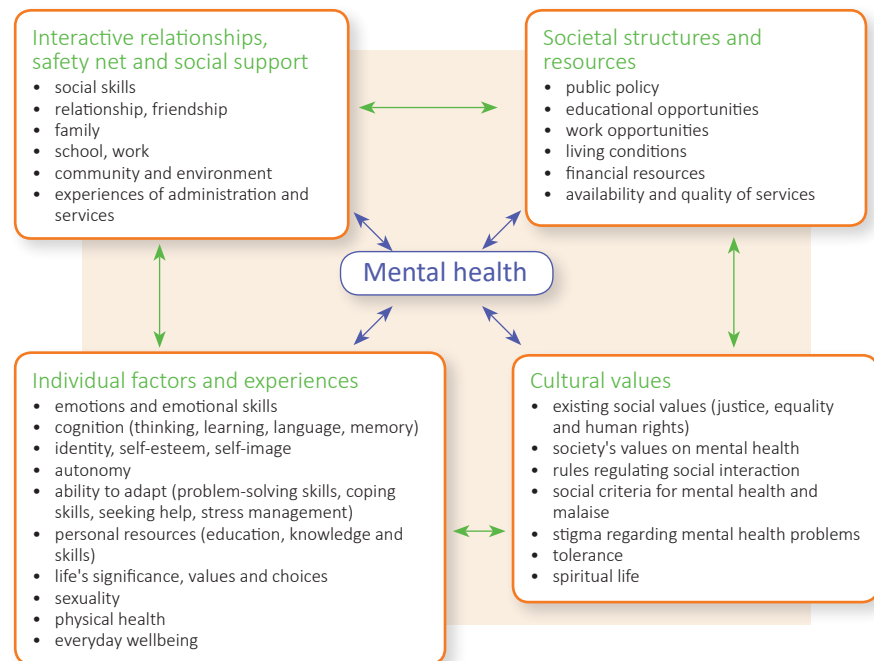
The World Health Organisation divides health into physical, mental, social and spiritual components.

Supporting young people's mental health is part of education. Youth workers are education professionals and an important safety net for young people. Youth work provides good opportunities to strengthen the growth, development and mental wellbeing of children and young people.

Training emotional skills; developing coping strategies; strengthening self-knowledge; increasing the tolerance to endure disappointment and hardship, as well as, learning to resolve conflicts help reinforce the mental wellbeing of young people. These protective factors promote mental wellbeing and reduce the likelihood of mental health problems.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is an essential part of the overall wellbeing and health of an individual. Mental health is a state of wellbeing, which allows individuals to reach their full potential; cope with the normal stresses of life; work productively, and contribute to their community. Thus, mental health is the essence of wellbeing and the basis for fruitful interaction in the community. (WHO 2010)

Mental health is a significant part of overall wellbeing and health.



Adaptation from source: Larikainen, Lahtinen and Lehtinen. 2004. Mielenterveystyö Euroopassa.

Read more about the definition of mental health in chapter 2 *Young people and mental health*.

At the root of mental health lies not only our individual characteristics and circumstances, but also the surrounding social structures and available resources, our culture and community, as well as, the society's values on equality and human rights, and its views human beings. All these may support and strengthen mental health; however, the lack of resources, for example, may weaken our experience of health and wellbeing.

Promoting mental health

The promotion of mental health aims to improve wellbeing at individual as well as community level. The intention is to produce a positive notion of health, an idea of mental health as a resource, which we can build up and use throughout life.

Mental health promotion aims to strengthen wellbeing and can be directed at the community in general or specific target groups. We can promote individuals' wellbeing by investing in factors that produce health and wellbeing at large.

In youth work, each individual encounter with young people matters hugely, but it is also important to be aware of the social structures that play a role in our well-being. The changes needed to ensure that our environment, activities and routines support wellbeing are often not major; it is a question of recognition and joint intervention more than anything. Decision-making, the environment, general attitude and the open promotion of mental health are significant to how we perceive our opportunities to improve our wellbeing.

Resource-based work produces results: capital invested in the promotion of child and adolescent mental health bears fruit within 1-5 years with returns often five times the invested capital. (European Commission, 2011)

Studies show that investing in young people's mental health is hugely beneficial.



Even the smallest acts can support mental health and increase life expectancy by up to seven years.

Mental health promotion is also significant to life expectancy. According to studies, implementing mental health support systems may increase life expectancy by as much as 7.5 years. Interaction with others, physical activity, curiosity, learning new things, sharing and giving have been shown to improve wellbeing and mental health.

1

TREASURE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS Keep in touch with your parents and siblings, your friends, colleagues and neighbours, at home, work, school and activities. People within your inner circle form an important cornerstone in your life. Maintain all your relationships, because they provide support and enrich your life.

2

STAY ACTIVE Go for a walk in the park or go for a long run. Spend time outdoors. Play various games. Do gardening or join a dance club. Notice that exercise feels genuinely good. Try and find a physical activity you enjoy; one that best suits your capabilities.

3

OBSERVE YOUR ENVIRONMENT Be curious. Enjoy all the small things you witness. Take notice of unusual details. Make note of seasonal changes. Try to be satisfied with each moment, even if you are only walking to work, eating lunch or chatting with your friends. Be aware of what is happening in the world and what kinds of emotions events arouse in you. Analyse your own experiences, and you will realise it is easier for you to appreciate everything that has true meaning to you.

4

KEEP LEARNING NEW THINGS Be open about trying unusual things. Regain long-lost skills. Enrol on a course you have dreamed about for a long time. Announce at work that you would like to participate in an up-coming project. Repair your old, broken bicycle. Learn to play a musical instrument or prepare your favourite meal. Set goals for yourself which will please you when you achieve them. Learning new things improves self-esteem and, above all, is fun.

5

GIVE BACK Do a favour for your friend - or maybe even a stranger. Thank someone. Smile at your friend. Participate in charity work. Join an organisation of your choice and become active. Try to create new connections and maintain old ones. Everything you do influences other people in some way. Realising this can be extremely rewarding and lead to many new friendships.

Source: Government Office for Science (2008).

The groundwork for mental health is laid in childhood and adolescence. When we promote the mental health of young people, we help build a generation of individuals who will be ready to contribute to the society in the future. This is a prerequisite for sustainable development. (Werner. 2004.)

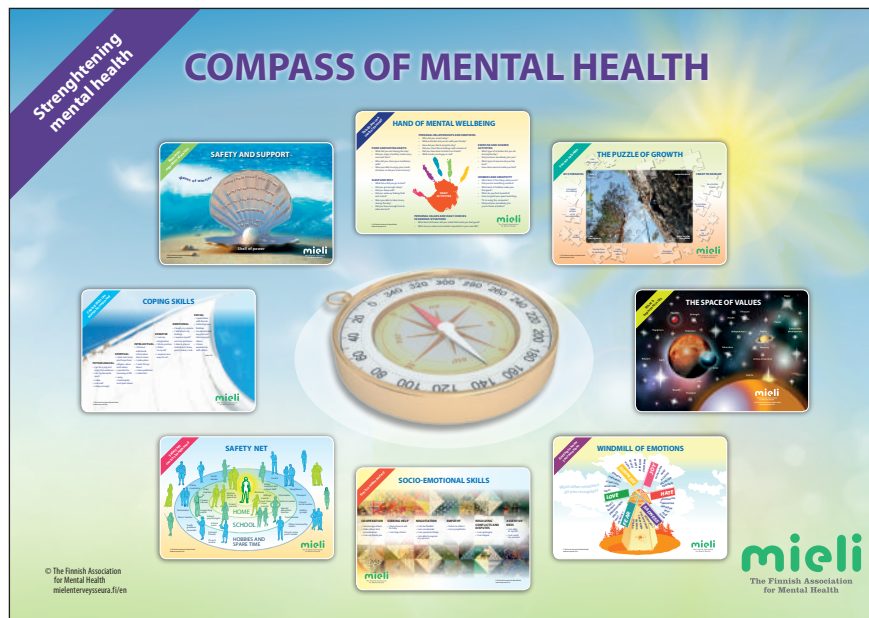
Mental health skills

The Mental Health Power handbook is a practical tool for promoting young people's mental health in youth work. Mental health skills strengthen mental wellbeing by helping us build up and, when necessary, use our resources. These skills have been compiled into the Mental Health Compass image, and they are discussed in more detail in later chapters.

More about everyday mental health in chapter 2.

The choices and small decisions we make on a daily basis impact our coping abilities and wellbeing. The amount of sleep and rest we get; our diet and shared meal-times; encounters and shared thoughts and feelings; physical activity in changing environments, as well as, creativity and self-fulfilment substantially affect our day-to-day wellbeing. Events and circumstances of the day, such as the demands placed by work or school, influence our everyday choices. How we wish to spend our time and what matters to us, in other words, our values also play a role in the choices that we make.

Skills that strengthen mental health have been compiled into the Mental Health Compass.



More about growth and supporting growth in chapter 3.

More about values and values education in chapter 9.

More about emotions and emotional skills in chapter 4.

More about relationships and social skills in chapter 5.

More about safety net and discussing worries in chapter 6.

More about crises and coping in chapter 7.

Safe upbringing helps lay the foundations for mental health. Things that bring joy and strength increase wellbeing and confidence in our own abilities. Experiences of success strengthen our self-esteem.

Values, the things we consider important, precious and worth striving for, are formed during childhood and adolescence and change throughout life. Sometimes it is worth stopping to consider whether you live by your values; follow your principles in your daily life, and what guides the choices you make. Value reflection supports mental health.

Emotional skills, the ability to identify, communicate and constructively express emotions, are an important mental health skill. We can learn to deal with and untangle our emotions, even the more challenging ones, in a constructive manner. Listening to and facing emotions improve self-knowledge and help build a connection with other people.

Good and supportive relationships are an important protective factor for mental health. Social skills visibly affect our actions and state of mind. They help us work in a group, share our thoughts and feelings, listen to others, discuss matters and resolve conflicts. We practise these skills throughout our life in our interaction with others.

We all need to be surrounded by safe and familiar people with whom to share the joys and sorrows of life, the successes and failures. These people are our safety net that changes throughout life. A safety net helps us understand who the important and closest people in our lives are.

Everyone faces challenging situations in life, disappointments, arguments, hardship and sometimes grief and crises. People have different ways of coping with difficult situations. The more ways you have, the stronger your coping mechanism

More about the vulnerability of the mind in chapter 8.

is. It is a good idea to identify your personal strategies and use them actively in everyday situations, even when facing only minor hardship. Sharing your concerns with others, taking nature walks, listening to music and spending time with friends and loved ones are the most common methods of coping.

Despite having their worries and concerns, everyone also has resources. When we discuss anxieties and worries with young people, we should not forget to mention resources. That helps build their self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities to cope with the challenges life brings.

We practise our mental health skills throughout life; no one ever completes that task. Youth workers practise their own mental health skills while helping young people with theirs, and they take the journey together. Recognising the importance of resource-oriented mental health, in both their approach to work and in supporting adolescent development, empowers youth work professionals and gives them strength to carry out their work.

Using the handbook

Because a wide range of titles is used in youth work, the term youth worker is used in the book for consistency. The term instructor is used for the exercises.

The Mental Health Power handbook is intended for professionals working in the field of youth work. The handbook is suited to in-house and outreach youth work, workshops, online work, family youth work, special youth work, sports associations, adventure education and camps, church youth work and confirmation camps and training young confirmed volunteers (YCV), as well as, youth work carried out at schools, for example, as a tool for education instructors. The handbook may also offer new ideas to teaching assistants for their work.

Above all, the handbook is a practical tool: the information, exercises and picture cards found in the book can be used in group and individual work, in one-to-one dialogue and when meeting parents. The picture cards offer excellent support for grouping and emotion work - with the help of the pictures, young people find it easier to talk about themselves and share their thoughts. The handbook also provides youth workers with tools for personal reflection.

The handbook contains ten chapters on resource-oriented mental health. Each chapter begins with an image that summarises the topic and works as a discussion tool for young people and as a summary of the chapter's key points. The body text explores the significance of the topic to the mental health of young people. Each chapter ends with a series of exercises to help discuss the topic with young people. The instructor chooses the most suitable exercises for the individual or group in question. They can be applied to both group and individual work.

The exercises are structured as follows: goal, duration, activity, rounding off, adaptations and further information. The goal section presents the benefits of the exercise and the skills practised with the participant(s). The stated duration of the

exercises is indicative and may vary depending on the group size and the time taken for the rounding off. The instructions for carrying out the exercise are provided in the activity section. Supportive questions, which can be modified depending on the situation, are included in the rounding off section. The rounding off should always be done after each exercise. The adaptation suggestions provide tips for modifying the exercises. The further information section states the source of the exercise, where you will also find additional material to support guidance. Below you will find more detailed instructions for some of the exercise types.

SCALE	COLLAGE	DIGITAL STORY
The scale exercises are well-suited to discussing opinions and attitudes and analysing the exercise afterwards. An imaginary yes-no scale runs through the room, and the young people choose their end based on their opinions on the discussed topic. The scale can be implemented as a continuum, for example, as a scale from 1-5 or as extremities such as “easy-difficult” or “happy-sad”. The instructor can ask why the young people chose their particular place on the scale.	The collage exercises are suited to individual, pair, small group or group work. The collage is a method for compiling several different materials in the same work. The collage method works with almost any material that can be glued, such as, paper, cardboard, photos, fabrics, sand, stones, shells, wooden beads, pine cones, leaves, newspaper, small objects, tissue paper or feathers. The collage can also include words, sentences, comic strips, lyrics, poems, sayings or book extracts.	Digital storytelling allows young people to share stories and thoughts in a digital format - these days writing is not the only way to present a story. Digital stories can be produced interactively and may include a variety of content types, such as images, text, recordings, video clips and music. The story is assembled using a digital layout platform, such as Storybird, Storify, Knovio or Windows Live Movie Maker. <i>More information: dstfinland.ning.com.</i>

The exercises can be used as stimuli for activities, an introduction for group evenings or discussion openers. The exercises can be implemented spontaneously without making arrangements in advance. Practice helps strengthen mental health skills. Come with an open mind, have fun and enjoy one another's company!

Grouping

Grouping and creating a safe group is a prerequisite for practising mental health skills with other young people. Promoting the feeling of safety in the group encourages young people to share their emotions and discuss even the more difficult issues. Young people learn to support one another and express concern and empathy.

Before starting the exercises, it is a good idea to reinforce the feeling of safety within the group to build trust - trusting the others and earning their trust. The sense of acceptance within a group creates safety, as do transparency, providing support and the willingness to work together. People support and encourage one another in a safe group. The experience of belonging to a safe group strengthens self-knowledge and social skills.

Interaction between the instructor and the group also increases the sense of safety within the group. Group work triggers a variety of feelings and emotions in young people, which in turn produce subconscious interaction within the group.

Young people influence one another and respond to behaviour based on how they interpret the actions of others. This may lead to misunderstandings, even conflicts, which call for the ability to alleviate other people's distress; the means to express your own wounded feelings; the readiness to acknowledge your own mistakes, and the confidence to give and receive feedback.

The group develops in stages. Identifying the development stages helps the instructor acknowledge the different phenomena taking place in the group.

GROUP'S STAGES	
Forming	Each member is more preoccupied by their place in the group than the group itself. Members of the group gradually get to know one another. The instructor plays a key role in reducing initial anxiety. A group warm-up and a review of the group's practices, rules and agreements are important.
Storming	This phase takes place after the group has been together for a while. The sense of belonging and courage grow; opinions are expressed more freely. Different personality traits and aspirations begin to emerge. Conflicts may occur when group members look for power and status in the group.
Norming	Clear norms for the group's activities begin to form. Cooperation and transparency increase. The members have resolved their conflicts and have found a sense of belonging; group spirit begins to form.
Performing	The group works as a true team toward its goals. Creativity, productivity and responsibility become more evident. There is an atmosphere of trust in the group, and making mistakes is allowed.
Adjourning	The group activities end with farewells, and the members of the group head towards new challenges. Farewells may evoke wistfulness, anxiety or even boredom. It is a good idea to leave enough time for the rounding off and dealing with the emotions that may arise.

Applied from the following sources: Öystilä (2002). Ongelmakohdat ryhmän ohjaamisessa. Törrönen, Hannukkala, Ruuskanen and Korhonen (2011). Hyvinvoiva oppilaitos.

Grouping refers to improving the safety in a group through practical exercises. Group exercises are needed at all stages of group activities to strengthen and maintain safety in the group and to ensure that the young people are able to participate in the activities on equal terms.

Read more about grouping and safe groups in Finnish in Mikko Aalto's publication *Ryppäästä ryhmäksi*. The book contains many tips on how to operate in a group in unexpected or challenging situations.

Once the group has agreed on rules and operational models, it has tools for dealing with difficult issues too. Certain subject matters may evoke emotions and memories of personal experiences. Thus, group members may appear restless or confrontational, or they may attempt to snub the topic. Practical activities in themselves may cause restlessness among the young people, which in turn affects the atmosphere. The instructor may encourage discussion and participation, but the activities should be carried out on a voluntary basis.

Practical activities

Roles that occur in groups

- initiator
- slacker
- introvert
- comic
- helper
- spurrer
- power-seeker
- contrarian
- emotion expresser
- fusser
- mediator
- know-it-all
- executor
- disturber
- leader
- latecomer
- follower
- questioner
- doubter
- assistant
- innovator

Discussions and practical work promote self-expression and the verbal expression of emotions and increase the sense of empathy and consideration for others. For example, role play, picture-card-assisted storytelling and the young people's own depictions of situations are good ways to practise emotional and social skills. Practical exercises provide an opportunity to experiment and attempt, without the pressure of having to give the correct answer. Performance is not measured on success or failure; the aim is to explore and do things together.

Role play offers an opportunity to safely experience and experiment different emotional states. Practical exercises help participants relate to the attitudes, status, emotions and motives of their character. Being in character gives a chance to express emotions which could otherwise be difficult to convey. At the end of the performance, it is important to deconstruct the character.

Practical exercises present a positive outlet for energy. They also give a chance for the young people to become familiar with their bodies and make contact with others, which promotes grouping, trust and social skills. Using the whole body offers a way to better understand the feelings of others and, thus, diversity in ourselves and others.

Participation is a way to practise life. It means doing and exploring together with others. Participation is at the heart of daily activities in youth work and refers to reciprocity and genuine encounters.

Sources and more information

- Aalto, M. (2001). Ryppäästä ryhmäksi. Turvallisen ryhmän rakentaminen. Ryttylä: My Generation Oy.
- Dewey, J. (1915/1966). *Democracy and Education*. New York: Free Press Paperback Edition.
- Dewey, J. (1934/1980). *Art as Experience*. New York: The Berkley Publishing Group.
- Hannukkala, M. & Törrönen, S. (2009). *Mielen hyvinvointi*. Training module for health education. The Finnish Association for Mental Health.
- Heikkinen, H. (2004). *Vakava leikillisyyys*. Drama education for teachers. Vantaa: Dark Oy.
- Heiskanen, T., Salonen, K. & Sassi, P. (2006). *Mielenterveyden ensiapukirja*. SMS-tuotanto Oy.
- Herron, S. & Mortimer, R. 'Mental Health': A Contested Concept. In publication M.C. Murray & C.A. Reed (eds.) (2000). *Promotion of Mental Health*, Vol 7. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Kaukkila, V. & Lehtonen, E. (2007). *Ryhmästä enemmän*. Manual concerning group instructor skills. SMS-Tuotanto.
- Kauppila, E. (2005). *Vuorovaikutus ja sosiaaliset taidot*. Vuorovaikutusopas opettajille ja opiskelijoille. Opetus 2000. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.
- Lahtinen, E., Lehtinen, V., Riikonen, E. & Ahonen, J. (eds.) (1999). *Framework for Promoting Mental Health in Europe*. Hamina: Oy Kotkan Kirjapaino Ab.
- Lavikainen, J., Lahtinen, E., Lehtinen, V. (2004). *Mielenterveystyö Euroopassa*. Statements by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2004: 17.
- Mental Capital and Wellbeing: Making the Most of Ourselves in the 21st Century*. The Government Office for Science. London (2008).
- Niemistö, R. (2004). *Ryhmän luovuus ja kehitysehdot*. University of Helsinki: Palmenia-kustannus.
- Paavonen, S. (2006). *Kohtaamisia – kahden taidekasvatusfilosofin ajatuksia ihmisestä taiteen ja draamakasvatuksen maastossa*. A thesis for advanced studies of drama education. Department of Teacher Education. University of Jyväskylä.
- Saloviita, T. (2006). *Yhteistoiminnallinen oppiminen ja osallistava kasvatus*. Opetus 2000. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.
- Sohlman, B. (2004). *Funktionaalisen mielenterveyden malli positiivisen mielenterveyden kuvaajana*. Stakes: Tutkimuksia 137. Helsinki: Stakes.
- Törrönen, S., Hannukkala, M., Ruuskanen, U. & Korhonen, E. (2011). *Hyvinvoiva oppilaitos*. Training and education material of mental well-being for higher education establishments. Mental Well-being Project (ESF. Finnish Association for Mental Health and Keskuspuisto Vocational College).
- Vehkalahti, R. (2006). *Leikkivä teatteri*. Jyväskylä: Gummerus
- Way, Brian (1967). *Luova toiminta ja persoonallisuuden kehittäminen*. (Creative Drama Handbook and Role Play Guide) Translated in to Finnish by Tintti Karppinen. Helsinki: Tammi.
- Werner, EE. *Journeys from Childhood to Midlife: Risk, Resilience, and Recovery*. Pediatrics (2004); 114:492.
- World Health Organization. (2010). *Mental health: strengthening our response*. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs220/en/>
- Öystilä, S. (2002). *Ongelmakohdat ryhmän ohjaamisessa*. In publication E. Poikela (eds.). *Ongelmaperustainen pedagogiikka – teoriaa ja käytäntöä*. University of Tampere Press: Tampere: TAJU.



GROUPING EXERCISES

The handbook contains a selection of grouping exercises. The aim of the exercises is to help a new group form, to allow group members to get to know one another and to increase trust within an already familiar group. The exercises can be rounded off by discussing the emotions the exercises triggered.

1. Pirate treasures

SUPPLIES

At least 20 items which can be found on the premises (e.g. water bottles, tape, pens, books, beanbags, sticks, watches, hair clips, hair bands, belts).

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

Similar to the traditional children's game "Statues".

One person sits on a chair at one end of the room with eyes closed and forefinger up, ready to point. All the items, the "pirate treasures", have been placed under the chair.

The others stand in a line at the other end of the room, ready to collect all the "treasures" to their side.

During the game, each time the pirate hears a sound (a creak, the sound of a movement, a sneeze), s/he points toward the sound and says boom. If the boom hits the target, the player must immediately return to the start line and start again. Honesty is extremely important!

When all the "treasures" have been collected, the players' shout hooray, and the "pirate" knows to open his/her eyes.

In the second round, begin to make disruptive noises (e.g. coughing, clapping hands, banging on the floor/wall), if none of the young people have yet realised that disturbing the "pirate" is allowed. However, do not mention that disruptions are allowed at the beginning of the game. It is important that the young people understand the point of good cooperation by themselves.

2. Prevent a person from sitting down

SUPPLIES: the same number of chairs as there are participants

DURATION: 10-20 min

ACTIVITY

Chairs are placed randomly around the room, and the players sit down on them. The instructor's aim is to sit down on his/her empty chair on the other side of the room by calmly walking, at a constant speed, towards the goal. The players, who are sitting down, aim to prevent the instructor from sitting down on his/her chair by sitting on it. No touching, getting in the way or any other mischief! The players can obstruct the instructor only by sitting on the empty chair.

When a player sits on the instructor's empty chair, their chair remains empty, and the instructor can sit there unless someone else gets there first. Therefore, the instructor's goal is to sit on the empty chair.

If the player lifts their bottom (even just a little) from the chair, they must get up and try to sit on a different empty chair. Fair play!

After making it to a few empty chairs (which is easy at the beginning of the game!), tell the young people that they can plan a common strategy out loud.

3. Keepy uppy

A group can keep the ball in the air for more than 2,000 touches. Make a new record!

SUPPLIES: One soft and bouncy ball (preferably the size of a volleyball)

DURATION: 10-30 min

ACTIVITY

The group aims to keep the ball up in the air for as long as possible by flicking from one person to the next. Only one touch at a time per person. The group counts the number of touches on the ball out loud during the game. If the ball touches the ground or the same person touches the ball twice in a row, the count starts from the beginning.

4. Chairs

SUPPLIES: music, same number of chairs as there are participants

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

Chairs are placed at one end of the room (not necessarily in a row), and the players are at the other end. As the music starts, the players calmly dance towards the chairs while enjoying the dancing and the movement. Upon reaching a chair, the player sits down.

On the next round, one or more chairs are removed, and the previous steps are repeated. Since fewer chairs remain, some players need to sit on the same chair, for example, on each other's laps. Ideally, the players do not talk and make plans on whose lap to sit. This makes looks and smiles all the more significant.

The exercise continues in this manner until there is only one chair left. In other words, everyone has to try to sit down on the same chair. If there are more than 6 people in the group, it may be a good idea to leave two chairs for the last round.

ROUNDING OFF

- What did it feel like to sit on the same chair with someone else?
- Was it easy or difficult? Why?
- How did you agree nonverbally on how to organise yourselves on the ever fewer chairs?
- Did you need to plan it?

ADAPTATION

Instead of chairs, the number of newspapers spread on the floor are reduced. In the beginning, there is one paper for each pair. At the end, the entire group has to fit on one. Cooperation is an advantage! More people can fit on the newspaper by piggy-backing or holding someone in your arms.

5. Run to me

DURATION: 10-20 min

ACTIVITY

The players stand in a large circle (wide gaps between players) and look to the centre.

One person starts by shouting out the name of another person in the circle and running through the centre of the circle towards them. The person whose name has been shouted out immediately shouts out a new name and runs (through the centre!) towards the said person. Running through the centre warms the body and prevents people from always shouting the adjacent person's name. Encourage the young people to call out the names in a clear, loud voice.

ADAPTATIONS

- A) Say a different person's name from the one you are walking towards. You must concentrate, because only the person whose name has been shouted out says the next name (different from the one they run to).
- B) You have to leave the ring, if you make a mistake. The beauty of making mistakes should be emphasised before starting the game. Mistakes bring more excitement to the game and break the routine, so they are a good thing!

6. Concentration circle

DURATION: 15-30 min

SUPPLIES: pen

ACTIVITY

The players sit in a large circle (wide gaps between people) and look to the centre.

Also suitable for practising interactive and emotional skills.

One person starts by saying the name of the person sitting opposite them. The person who says the name takes the pen to them and stays in the person's place. The person who receives the pen immediately says the name of the person opposite them and takes the pen over. The exercise continues until everyone has had a turn. Remember who you passed the message (pen) to.

Continue the exercise by carrying the pen in different ways. The pen can be carried, for example, in a shy, confused, flirty or angry way or by meandering or dancing across the floor. Or one part of the body can lead the carrying, for example, the head, stomach, bottom, knees, fingers, toes. Encourage the young people to use brave interpretations. Excessive participation is not necessary. The main thing is that everyone takes part.

ADAPTATIONS

- A) The young people stand in a circle. One player looks another player in the eyes, and names a colour. The player who has been given a colour looks another player in the eyes, and names another colour. The exercise continues until everyone has had a turn. Please note! Each player gets a different colour and only once. As a reminder of having received a colour, players can raise their hand, so it is clear who has already received a message.

When the colour round has been completed, the game gets more challenging. The players start a new round (themes include car makes, food, drinks, animals). The players pass the message to different people from the colour round.

- B) Two messages are circulated at the same time. If the next player fails to catch the message (for example, does not hear it), the person giving the message must ensure that the message is forwarded by repeating their own word. The game can be made even more challenging by circulating a third word. Remember that each word must be passed to a new person.

7. Pie

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

1. The players sit in a large circle (wide gaps between each player) and look to the centre. Each player stands on an imaginary pie slice, which has the player's name on it (for example, Mike), and together the group forms a complete pie. The names stay on the slices throughout the game.
2. The instructor begins with a rhythm: clapping hands on the thighs, clapping hands. The rhythm is kept constant throughout the game. The game can be made even more challenging by accelerating the beat. Particularly, if the game is "too easy," i.e. no one has yet made a mistake.
3. The instructor begins by saying their own name (clap thighs) and another player's name (clap hands) in rhythm with the clapping. The person whose name is mentioned immediately reacts by saying their name (claps thighs) and another player's name (claps hands). Please note! No clapping in between. The beat remains the same, i.e. the players must react immediately once they hear their own name.
4. If a player makes a mistake (says the wrong name, does not keep up with the beat, hesitates, etc.), they move to the slice of pie on the left side of the instructor, whereupon the other players move on to a new slice, i.e. the circle keeps its shape and the slices remain in the right place. Please note! Some players' names will change, because they move on to a new slice with the original player's name.
5. The game continues. The player who makes a mistake always moves to the slice on the left side of the instructor, so players must check whose slice they move on to (named at the beginning of the game).

ADAPTATIONS

A more demanding version, because it also involves movement.

1. The players sit in a large circle (wide gaps between each player) and look to the centre. Each player stands on an imaginary slice of pie, which has a number written on it.
2. The instructor starts with number one and the numbers progress clockwise. When everyone knows the number of their own slice, the game starts.
3. Create a rhythm: clap your own hands, clap the adjacent players' hands (at the same time), the same constant rhythm is maintained throughout the game. The game can be made even more challenging by accelerating the beat.
4. Accompanied by this rhythm, the instructor says one (claps hands) and, for example, number five (claps the hands of the players next to him/her). The person whose number is mentioned reacts immediately by saying his/her number (claps hands) and another player's number (claps the hands of the player next to him/her). Please note! No clapping in between. The beat remains the same, i.e. the players must react immediately once they hear their number.

MORE INFORMATION:
Salinsky, T. and Frances-White, D. 2011. *The Improv Handbook*. (Applied from the exercise Big Booty).

5. If a player makes a mistake, s/he moves to the slice of pie on the left side of the instructor. Please note! When a player moves, his/her number changes. Concentration is important!

8. Fastest in the Wild West

DURATION: 10-20 min

ACTIVITY

The players stand in a large circle (wide gaps between players) and look to the centre.

One player stands in the middle of the circle and points at a player standing in the circle and says his/her name. The player must immediately crouch down. People on both sides of the crouching player point their fingers at each other and say the code word, such as "tag". The slower player drops out of the game. The exercise continues until there are only two players left.

When there are only two players remaining, they must duel. The players stand with their backs against each other with their fingers ready. The instructor (or one of the young people) reads out random numbers, at which point the players take a step forward. When the instructor says a number, which includes the number six (6), the players react, turn and point at their opponent. The fastest player wins the game.

The person in the middle of the ring should accelerate the pace to make sure that mistakes happen regularly. Remember that a mistake is not a bad thing, even if the game is taken seriously. Mistakes break the routine, are fun and strengthen self-esteem. You do not always need to be the best.

9. Stations of safe group rules

GOAL: To compile safe group rules.

SUPPLIES: paper, pens

DURATION: 30-45 min

ACTIVITY

1. As a group, think about what a safe group means. What does it mean to young people? Why is it important? Together, consider the attributes of a safe group (including trust, acceptance, openness, providing support, commitment). The group writes all the attributes that have been mentioned on A4 sheets of paper, which are then placed on the floor as stations. The young people are then asked to go to the station that is important to them.
 - Why did you choose that station?
 - What sort of things do you associate with this station?
 - What does the attribute of this station mean?
2. Elaborate on the attributes together as a group and consider what, for example, openness means and why it is important for the group's future activities. The group then considers the significance of the different attributes for a safe group. Let's take openness as an example:

- How can you be open?
 - Can you be too open?
 - What are the consequences of openness?
 - What kinds of limits does openness have or does it have any?
 - What is our group like in terms of openness?
3. Encourage the young people to choose a station, which they consider to be the most important one for a safe group. What would the young person wish to have more of in the group?
- Why did you choose that station?
 - How is the station manifested in the group?
 - How could you train that skill?

ROUNDING OFF

Review the elements of a safe group and emphasise the most important ones (for example, trust, acceptance, providing support). Look back at the group's previously created rules, and complement them with new ones or rewrite them, if necessary. Did you add any new rules? As a group, agree that the rules apply to everyone. Based on this, compile a set of rules for your group. The attributes can be compiled into a picture next to the previously created rules.

ADAPTATIONS

The instructor can write the elements of a safe group in advance on A4 sheets of paper, whereupon the station work can be started right after the initial discussion.

10. Terminating a group

The previous exercises can also be used to terminate a group. It is a good idea to leave enough time for the rounding off whilst observing the group and sharing thoughts about the group terminating. Other suitable exercising for terminating a group can be found at the end of chapter 9 (starting on p. 106).

Group members can make a digital story, song, poem or collage about the group's progress.

A quick group termination exercise: each participant thanks the other participants with a body or hand pose.

Questions for rounding off:

- Who did you notice first? Why?
- Who did you get to know first?
- Who did you already know from before?
- Who did you get to know the best?
- Who did you laugh with the most?
- Who will remain your friend?
- What was the best thing about the group?
- What will you miss?
- Who did you have deep conversations with?
- Who did you connect with?
- Who would you have liked to get to know better?
- Who would you have liked to spend more time with? Could you catch up after the group no longer meets?
- How do you feel as the group is terminating?
- What kinds of emotions do you experience?
- What would you like to say to the group?
- What do you wish for?

Things you can
control yourself

HAND OF MENTAL WELLBEING

FOOD AND EATING HABITS

- What did you eat during the day?
- Did you enjoy a healthy snack every now and then?
- Who did you share your mealtimes with?
- Were you able to enjoy your meals at leisure or did you have to hurry?

SLEEP AND REST

- What time did you go to bed?
- Did you get enough sleep?
- Did you sleep well?
- Did you wake up feeling fresh and rested?
- Were you able to take it easy during the day?
- Did you have enough time to relax and rest?

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND EMOTIONS

- Who did you meet today?
- What activities did you do with your family?
- How did you feel during the day?
- Did you share those feelings with someone?
- Did you have time to listen to a friend?
- What made you happy or sad?

EXERCISE AND SHARED ACTIVITIES

- What type of activities did you do during the day?
- Did you have somebody join you?
- What type of exercise do you like best?
- How does exercise make you feel?

HOBBIES AND CREATIVITY

- What kind of fun things did you do?
- Did you do something creative?
- What kind of hobbies make you feel great?
- What do you find beautiful?
- How long did you spend watching TV or using the computer?
- Did you have somebody join you in these activities?

PERSONAL VALUES AND DAILY CHOICES IN VARIOUS SITUATIONS

- What kind of choices did you make that made you feel good?
- What do you value and consider important in your own life?

DAILY
ACTIVITIES

mieli

The Finnish Association
for Mental Health

© Mielenterveysliikkeen kassan - liikkeet, The Finnish Association for Mental Health
mielenterveysseura.fi



Summary

- Mental health and personal wellbeing can be strengthened by regularly taking care of the key support pillars of everyday life: sleep and rest, nutrition, relationships and emotions, fitness and exercising together, hobbies and creative activities.
- We make choices every day, which influence our wellbeing and mental health.
- Youth work helps strengthen the protective factors for mental health and prevent the effects of risks.

2 YOUNG PEOPLE AND MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is an experience of wellbeing

Mental health refers to a person's experience of wellbeing and mental balance. Eating a healthy diet; exercising and getting enough sleep; doing work you enjoy; meeting friends and sharing emotions; having hobbies and spending time with your family and friends help maintain mental health and mental balance. Mental health is an essential part of our overall wellbeing and health.

Mental health is often associated with concepts such as mental wellbeing, good life and balanced mind. Mental health does not, however, mean that life could not include temporary anxiety, a sense of insufficiency, melancholy or a diagnosed mental health disorder. Relationship problems, financial troubles, work stress, crises and losses are all part of life.

Mental health changes throughout life, but it is the protective factors and things that improve coping that count. We use the resources that support our mental wellbeing and balance every day, which is why they should also be strengthened on a daily basis.

Opportunities for youth work

Youth work can help strengthen the resources that support mental health. Youth work professionals have an excellent opportunity to listen to young people and make them feel noticed. Youth work takes place mainly during free time, and it enables significant encounters and gives room for time spent with adults. For many young people, a youth worker is an important, safe and accessible adult.

Encouragement supports self-esteem and self-knowledge. Situations that provide us with opportunities to succeed and find new skills and traits in ourselves contribute to our personality and personal experiences. Young people may be keen to discuss the events of the day, their worries and joys, emotions and state of mind. In addition to discussions, practical and creative activities help strengthen emotional skills.

With young people, it is important to discuss the direction their life is taking, their values and attitudes, as well as, to think about their dreams and hopes for the future. These discussions can take place as part of everyday youth work, alongside other shared activities.

Resources improve coping

The resources available to a person vary during life. We can accrue resources by taking care of our coping and keeping a daily rhythm, ensuring we have sufficient time to ourselves and doing things that give us pleasure and stability. Just normal day-to-day life consumes mental resources, but especially disappointments or losses, grief or failures take their toll. Facing and enduring hardship provides us with new resources and faith in life.

Strength from mental health

Cultural background and religion, values and traditions make up a young person's life story. Being aware of and respecting their background is important when supporting young people.

It is key to understand that mental health and mental ill-health are two different things. Mental health work and medical care are needed to treat mental health disorders. People with a mental disorder also always have resources in their life, and it is important to further strengthen and support these resources.

The ability to put emotions and worries into words and the skill to constructively express even the more challenging emotions, such as grief, anger and frustration, are signs of mental health. These abilities allow us to adapt to changes and finally accept them. They help us face and process any losses that we may encounter. We are more likely to be able to seek support and help from people close to us. It provides courage to seek professional help when needed.

Mental health involves the ability to take care of yourself and the willingness to participate in the decision-making concerning your life. We can defend ourselves, without undermining others, when we are mentally balanced. We are more likely to be flexible and have the ability to solve conflicts. Mental health also shows in the ability to have relationships and to love and be loved. It allows us to feel joy for others and care about them. It gives us the desire to work, go to school, attend activities and learn new things.

A healthy mind contemplates what is important in life. Unwinding and considering what is significant to us provides resources and faith in life. Things that are valuable to us strengthen the mind and help us face disappointments, crises and grief.

Unwinding and considering what is significant to us provides resources and faith in life.



Mental health protects from risks

Protective and threatening factors

Factors that protect and threaten mental health strengthen or weaken our well-being. Protective factors maintain health, strengthen performance and help us cope with hardship and crises. Everyone has factors that protect mental health. The more protective factors we have, the smaller the risk of mental health problems, even under great stress. All of us can strengthen the protective factors, thus, increasing our resources.

Risk factors threaten the continuity of life, weaken our performance and increase insecurity. They weaken our wellbeing and can increase the probability of falling ill. The more simultaneous risk factors we face, the stronger their impact.

Internal and external factors

Which protective and risk factors in your own life can you influence?

Some protective and risk factors relate to our personal characteristics and thoughts, some to society, culture and external circumstances. We have no influence over some of the protective and risk factors, such as genetics.

Internal mental health protective factors include, for example, good health, optimism, sufficiently good self-esteem and good problem-solving skills. External protective factors include, for example, a safe living environment, being socially supported, opportunities to study and sufficient income.

Internal factors that weaken mental health include, for example, hereditary factors, such as developmental disorders and diseases, isolation, feelings of helplessness and the lack of social skills. External risk factors include, for example, maltreatment, intoxicants, poverty and lack of care.

Which protective and risk factors in young people's life can you influence?

Youth work supports many of the protective factors in young people's life. It provides young people with the opportunity to be heard and accepted, boosts their sense of community and creates opportunities for peer support. Youth workers can be an important part of young people's safety net, and for some, the only safe adult they have the courage to tell their worries to. All these factors protect young people from the impact of risks.

Young people's protective and risk factors for mental health

INTERNAL PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- looking after physical health
- ability to verbally express emotions
- talking about worries
- ability to establish and maintain friendships
- self-fulfilment through e.g. hobbies
- self-appreciation and acceptance
- ability to solve problems and conflicts

OTHER FACTORS

- sense of acceptance
- genetics
- early relationships

EXTERNAL PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- family and friends
- attending school and studying
- support of safety net and good relationships with people in the safety net
- ability and courage to seek timely help from professional services
- safe growing environment

OTHER FACTORS

- parents' work and income
- being heard

INTERNAL RISK FACTORS

- vulnerable self-esteem
- poor relationships with friends and family
- isolation and alienation from familial relationships
- sense of helplessness
- sense of inferiority

OTHER FACTORS

- biological factors, developmental disorders
- illnesses

EXTERNAL RISK FACTORS

- separation and losses
- violence
- bullying
- alcohol and other substance abuse
- social exclusion
- harmful living environment

OTHER FACTORS

- unemployment or risk of it
- mental health problems in the family
- abuse
- substance abuse

© The Finnish Association for Mental Health

Adaptation from source: Karila-Hietala, Wahlbeck, Heiskanen, Stengård & Hannukkala (2013). Mielenterveys elämäntaitona. Mielenterveyden ensiapu 1.

Hand of mental health as part of life

Adults should bring safety and continuity to the life of young people by introducing routines and a daily rhythm. Young people often lead busy lives: school takes up a lot of their time and evenings are spent with friends. During this phase, it is important to provide moderation and a daily rhythm, and youth workers can help young people find a balance in their life.

Structured life improves wellbeing: daily rhythms and routines provide safety and balance. It is a good idea to stop and think about things in our lives that improve wellbeing and those that create stress, anxiety or malaise. Are there things in life that we could have more of and pay more attention to, thus, boosting our wellbeing?

Read more about values and value choices in chapter 9
Young people and values.

We constantly make choices that affect our mental health. We can make these choices more transparent and think about what we make time for and why; what we value and what we could not give up. We can ask ourselves what kind of a life we wish to lead? It is also important to discuss with young people what is significant and important to them. People who are aware of their own values are capable of making choices that improve wellbeing.

Nutrition and eating are an important part of looking after ourselves. Regular mealtimes and healthy nutrition are important, as is how, where and with whom we enjoy our mealtimes. Preparing and leisurely enjoying meals with family or friends provide important shared moments. Adults can also lead by example and remind young people to enjoy sufficient and balanced meals in the company of others.

Getting enough sleep and rest has a significant impact on our wellbeing. Regular sleep rhythm and the good quality and sufficiency of sleep provide energy for the entire day. We should remind young people of the importance of sleep and offer them tips on ways to rest and relax. Before going to bed, it is a good idea to relax and calm down to help prepare the mind and body for sleep. Ahead of a busy day, it may be helpful to write down the following day's tasks.

Read more about stress and young people in chapter 6
Young people's safety net.

Often young people's days are filled with hobbies and activities, not forgetting that homework also takes up some of their free-time. Young people may also suffer from fatigue. Reminding them of the importance of just relaxing without needing to achieve anything can be helpful. Making to-do lists and prioritising in advance may alleviate stress and reduce workloads. Young people may also demand too much of themselves and fear failure. It is not important to always achieve the highest goal or perform perfectly.

Read more about emotions in chapter 4 and relationships in chapter 5.

Tip!

More information is available in Finnish on Nyyti Association's life skills course and guide (Elämäntaitokurssi ja -opas). The guide can be downloaded from the Nyyti Association's website.

There should always also be time for relaxing, being lazy and just doing nothing.

Emotions and relationships are an important part of wellbeing and mental health. Everyone needs relationships and intimacy in their lives. It is good to encourage young people to talk about their thoughts and express their feelings, even if sharing them feels difficult. Sometimes young people want support from adults for their friendships, to help them make friends or settle a dispute or to talk about and resolve dating problems or issues with their family. Often just talking to a reliable adult helps, and sometimes even a short chat can improve things. A shared burden is a burden halved.

Healthy life includes exercise and spending time outdoors. Exercise releases chemicals that trigger a positive feeling in the body, so it is good for both the body and mind. For young people, exercise is a good tool for channelling their energy. Exercise and spending time outdoors improve sleep and appetite and make you feel satisfied and good about yourself. It may be a good idea to discuss with young people the variety of sports and other interesting forms of exercising available for them. The different forms of exercise may mean a specific sport or incidental activity enjoyed throughout the day or exercising with friends. Not everyone has to enjoy organised sports, but there is a variety of ways to keep fit.

Creativity and hobbies bring pleasure, content and inspiration to life. Every single day should include fun and invigorating activities to throw ourselves into. We should indulge and reward ourselves after an achievement and success. However, it is also important to remind young people that they should also have time to just relax, be lazy and do nothing.



Sources and more information

- Hannukkala, M. (2002). Elämään ja tulevaisuuteen. A case study from the Life Skills course for 9th grade comprehensive school pupils. Home economics licentiate thesis. University of Helsinki.
- Hannukkala, M. & Törrönen, S. (2009). Mielen hyvinvointi. Training module for health education. The Finnish Association for Mental Health.
- Karila-Hietala, R., Wahlbeck, K., Heiskanen, T., Stengård, E. & Hannukkala, M. (2013). Mielenterveys elämäntaitona. Mielenterveyden ensiapu 1. The Finnish Association for Mental Health.
- Nyyti ry: Elämäntaito-opas. <https://www.nyyti.fi/elamantaitokurssi/osallistujan-opas/>
- Sohlman, B. (2004). Funktionaalisen mielenterveyden malli positiivisen mielenterveyden kuvaajana. Stakes: Tutkimuksia 137. Helsinki: Stakes.
- The Finnish Association for Mental Health, Vahvistamo. <http://www.vahvistamo.fi>
- World Health Organization. (2010). Mental health: strengthening our response. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs220/en/>

EXERCISES

The exercises in the Young people and mental health section have been divided into the following categories: The Hand of Mental Health, Good mental health starts from choices and Mental health protective and risk factors. We recommend that you start with the grouping exercises before moving on to the actual exercises and also in connection to all themes of the handbook.

Hand of mental health as part of life

1. Mental health start-up

GOAL: To explain the concept of mental health to young people.

SUPPLIES

The Hand of Mental Health model, collage supplies (e.g. paper, cardboard, photos, fabric, sand, leaves).

DURATION: 30-45 min

ACTIVITY

Start by asking the young people what mental health is and what it means. The instructor tells the young people about mental health using, for example, the Hand of Mental Health, so that they realise that mental health is a resource and belongs to everyone. Then the group moves on to consider what mental health involves. The participants produce a collage either alone or together to describe mental-health-related things (see p. 17).

If the word mental health seems challenging for the young people to understand, the instructor may use the concept of mental wellbeing instead.

ROUNDING OFF

- Why is mental health important?
- What factors influence it? What are its benefits?
- How can you influence your own mental health?

ADAPTATIONS

The group can use picture cards to help them find things involved with mental health.

2. Hand of mental health

GOAL

To illustrate to young people what mental health involves and how to improve our mental health.

SUPPLIES: The Hand of Mental Health model, paper, pens, finger paints

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

The young people draw their hand on a piece of paper and fill in the areas of mental health in the fingers. The participants add examples from their own life in each area. They can also paint the hand with finger paints or press an imprint of their hand on a shared paper and write down things that they consider important for good daily life.

ROUNDING OFF

- What things are included in everyday life?
- What nice things are involved in everyday life?
- What choices do you make on a daily basis?
- What takes too much time in your day? What could you do more of?
- What things would you not want to give up?
- What things do you do with others?
- Why does mental health need to be taken care of every day?

ADAPTATIONS

- A) The instructor draws his/her hand of mental health by either projecting it using a video projector or drawing it on a piece of paper. The instructor shows finger by finger how the hand of mental health has been manifested in his/her everyday life.

The instructor explains and provides reasons for why one finger may have been left short or be swollen. For example:

- Sleep and rest finger is short: internet and TV have taken time away from sleep.
- Relationships and emotions finger is swollen: for example, at the start of a new romance, there is no time for other relationships.
- Hobbies and creativity finger is swollen: too many hobbies, life is too scheduled.

- B) The young people draw their own hand of mental health on a piece of paper. Once it has been done, the group discusses what the hand looks like. How could the short fingers be extended? How could the swelling of the fingers be reduced? What could be done to balance out the fingers?

3. Feel-good bingo

GOAL

To acknowledge what things produce mental health. To gain contact with other young people.

SUPPLIES: Feel-good bingo (see appendix p. 234), picture cards

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

The group reviews the bingo instructions before the bingo sheet is distributed to the group. Before starting the game, the young people number the boxes in a random order with the numbers from 1 to 16. Thus, everyone has a unique bingo grid.

The bingo is played in a circle. Two nested circles are formed by placing the chairs directly opposite each other. Both players pose a question of their choice to the person sitting opposite them, then the players move in the opposite direction of the circle. Then the new pair ask one another questions. If the answer is "yes", the player gets to tick the number on the bingo grid that corresponds with the question. When a player gets four in a row (horizontally, vertically or diagonally), s/he shouts BINGO!

ROUNDING OFF

After the exercise, the group discusses the themes that have come up. The instructor asks about the thoughts the exercise raised. What kinds of insights did the exercise raise? Can I identify areas in which I could improve my mental wellbeing? Picture cards can also be used to round off the exercise.

Supporting questions for different themes:

- What is the best way to spend time with your friends?
- How do you spend your free-time with friends?
- What type of exercise makes you feel good?
- What hobbies do you have? Are all the hobbies pleasant?
- Do you eat regularly and do you snack? Are you more likely to select an unhealthy option than a healthy one?
- What different ways to relax do you have?
- Do you daydream on a daily basis? About what?
- What makes you feel good? How do you treasure your mental health?
- What is valuable in your life?
- What should you do if a friend is being bullied?
- What kinds of things make you praise your friends? Do you say positive things to your friends daily?
- Do you do fun things daily? What are they?
- Do you sleep enough? How many hours on average? What time do you go to bed?
- How much time do you spend in front of a screen each day? TV, computer, game consoles, tablets and smartphones are considered screen time.
- What would it feel like to try a two-week break from screen time? What different things would you then have time for?
- What would you definitely not give up?

ADAPTATIONS

Bingo can also be played individually. Each person answers the questions independently and writes down the answers on a piece of paper or discusses them with the instructor.

4. Panel and TV personalities

GOAL

To learn to understand the same topic from different perspectives. To consider the responsibilities young people have for looking after their mental health.

SUPPLIES: The Hand of Mental Health model

DURATION: 30-45 min

ACTIVITY

Divide the group into five smaller groups and give each group one of the fingers of the hand of mental health to consider.

First, each group thinks of their own finger's theme and comes up with suitable arguments, slogans and reasons why their theme is important and topical for daily life.

The five small groups sit on chairs in a circle. The aim is to hold an “official” debate and allow each group to defend their theme as the most important area for everyday life. The aim for each group is to stand firmly behind their theme. Humour and exaggeration are welcome! Each group can give itself a name as you do in party politics, and shout out the “party’s” slogans during the debate.

ROUNDING OFF

- How did you feel about the exercise?
- What kinds of actions show that you are looking out for someone? Why? What about feeling concerned?
- What does responsibility mean?
- At what age can one be expected to have responsibilities? Why? What kinds of responsibilities?
- Can there be too many responsibilities?
- Why do you need to take responsibility?
- What is the importance of daily routines?
- How did it feel to do an exercise such as this?

ADAPTATIONS

- A) TV personalities: The exercise can also be carried out as a documentary or TV show on each group's theme. For example, sleep is a news broadcast, nutrition is a cooking show, relationships are a talk show, exercise is a fitness show and hobbies are an art education programme. Which TV personalities could produce the programme? Exaggeration and humour are welcome!
- B) Each small group can also hold a debate within their own group, so that each group member represents one of the themes of the Hand of Mental Health. Each member can also come up with a professional role for themselves, which they can use to back up their theme. For example, a football coach could stand up for hobbies, a cook for nutrition, a doctor for sleep, parents for shared activities and friends for relationships.
- C) Young people can create their own digital story as a project about a theme they choose. The digital stories discuss the significance and importance of each theme. The group members present their digital stories to the rest of the group or they could present them on theme nights arranged for the entire youth centre. (See p. 17.)
- D) Alternatively, the young people can create digital stories about mental health in the youth centre. How is mental health visible in our centre? Is there a space for looking after mental health, such relaxation or hobby spaces? How do the group members take care of their own mental health and that of the others in the youth centre?

Young people’s rights and responsibilities are listed on the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare’s youth site.

Wellbeing of the mind starts from choices

5. Spreading the feel good virus

Koulukino's website has a list of feel good movies. See koulukino.fi for educational material and movies.

See how Youth Mental Health Association – Yeesi has spread the feel good virus: yeesi.fi/lumika.

GOAL: To get young people to participate in arranging activities that support mental health.

ACTIVITY

The instructor suggests organising a feel good café, for example, so that the youth centre committee runs the café once a month. The young people can plan activities for the café. The café could also be organised on “feel good” theme nights. Topics for the theme nights could include how to make feel good choices in everyday life; drawing power from emotions or making friends feel good.

ADAPTATIONS

- A) The young people can put together a feel good group for doing things that make you feel happy. The instructor encourages and supports the group's activities. The group can try new sports, prepare good food, watch a feel good movie or do things that bring happiness to others. Imagination is the only limit! The feel good virus is spread among the group members and new people are invited to join in.
- B) The instructor and the youngsters can organise a feel good photo shoot. Each participant writes things that make them feel good on a blackboard. Then they are photographed individually in front of it. If the people in the photos agree, the photos can be posted on the youth centre's Facebook page or be turned into a slide show for the theme nights. The photos can also be printed and hung on the common room wall as a reminder of things that bring happiness.
- C) The feel good wheel of fortune puts you and others in a good mood. See an example of a feel good wheel of fortune at yeesi.fi/lumika. A wheel of fortune can be built from wood or cardboard, or the young people can design and build it themselves and think of activities for it. The wheel of fortune can be put on display at the youth centre, and the youngsters can spin it whenever they feel like it.

6. Good mood - bad mood

GOAL

To make young people aware of what good and bad moods can mean. What is the cause; how to identify them; which emotions may be involved, and how to express them?

SUPPLIES

Flip board and markers and the Hand of Mental Health model.

DURATION: 30-45 min

ACTIVITY

Two or more groups are formed (depending on the number of young people). Each group draws the outline of one of the group members on a large piece of paper and around it, write facts about the person (e.g. name, age, family, hobbies, studies/job) and things that make the person feel good.

ROUNDING OFF

At the end of the exercise, the papers are hang on the wall and then discussed assisted by the rounding off questions.

- What triggers good and bad moods?
- Which emotions are related to good or bad moods?
- What brings about a good mood? And bad mood?
- What things make you happy? And sad, angry or glad?
- What can you do if you are in a bad mood?
- How can you show that you are in a good mood?
- How can you influence your mood?
- What can be done if you are angry?
- How can you influence another person's good or bad mood?

ADAPTATIONS

- A) The Hand of Mental Health model can be used as an aid for understanding the exercise.
- B) The Windmill of Emotions model can help put a name to good or bad moods. What are the different emotions you feel when you are in a good or bad mood?
- C) How do you use your body and face to express that you are happy or sad?
- D) Find music videos on YouTube that depict good or bad moods. Show the videos to the rest of the group. Which things do you associate with good or bad moods?

7. Good mood reminders

Each young person sets good mood reminders in their mobile phones for each day. The Hand of Mental Health model can be used as an aid. The mobile phone reminders are put into practice daily. In a week's time, the young people discuss what the exercise felt like; whether there was time to put the reminders into practise, and how the reminders influenced their mindset during the week.

8. Gossip circulates in a waterfall

GOAL

To raise awareness among young people on what the effects of "talking behind someone's back" can have on your relationships and on how you feel, and to highlight the impacts of gossiping.

SUPPLIES: a story made up by the instructor or a movie clip

DURATION: 30 min

ACTIVITY

The instructor comes up with a story and tells it to the first participant (the young people have been put in numerical order). At the same time, the other young people wait in another room. One by one, the young people come and hear the story and tell it to the next person. Once the story has been told to the last participant, s/he tells it to the rest of the group. Finally, the instructor tells the original story.

ROUNDING OFF

- Did the story change?
- In real life, does gossip often change along the way? Why?
- What harm can gossip lead to?
- Why do groups of friends discuss other people's issues?
- Why can online gossiping (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) be extremely harmful?
- Who should be told about online gossip that targets yourself or others?
- What could young people themselves do?

ADAPTATIONS

A more practical alternative: Instead of a story, the instructor shows a movie clip, in which a person or a cartoon character acts or speaks in a certain manner. Young people take turns in acting the scene to each other. The last young person acts out the movie clip to everyone. After this, the instructor shows the original movie clip. Has the movie clip changed?

9. Good mood from exercising

GOAL

To realise that exercise is a lot more than just sports. It can also mean pleasant activities with others. The important thing is that everyone finds their own way to exercise. Could it be frisbee golf, walking the dog in the forest, dancing, floorball, parkour or circus training?

SUPPLIES: Windmill of Emotions model

ACTIVITY

The group can try a variety of games, ball games and sports together. The young people may get excited by traditional games, such as, statues, variations of tag or Dodge Ball. The group may choose to use a large or a soft ball in the ball games, or make changes to the rules, so that everyone can easily take part in the activity regardless of their level of skill. For example, they may wish to play football with a large exercise ball, which makes it elephant football.

It is important that the instructor has an open mind and is ready to try different forms of exercise with the youngsters and encourage them to be active. The young people can be asked directly what type of exercise they would like to try.

ROUNDING OFF

After the group has tried different types of exercise, they discuss how they feel post exercising.

- What kinds of feelings does exercising trigger?
- How does exercise make you feel?
- How does your body feel, and what about your mind?

ADAPTATIONS

Watch the Small Choices Matter video with the young people: nuorisuomi.fi/pienet-valinnat-ratkaisevat. What thoughts does the video raise in the young people? What is the message of the video? The exercise card made in the Small Choices Matter video, available on Nuori Suomi's website, can be used to round off the exercise.

Active games and ideas can be found online, for example on Nuori Suomi's website.

10. Feel good loafing

GOAL

To acknowledge that sometimes it is necessary to relax, loaf about and just be, either alone or with others. It is not always necessary to achieve or do things; time must also be put aside for just doing nothing.

ACTIVITY

Ball massage: Supplies: a soft platform to lie on; a massage ball, which can be bumpy, hard or semi-soft. The exercise is done in pairs: one person lies flat on their front and relaxes. The other person uses the ball and begins to massage their partner's body (back, arms, legs) in a circular movement. After 5-10 minutes, they switch roles.

ROUNDING OFF

- How did the ball massage feel?
- What was it like to relax?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to relax?
- Do you sometimes feel bad about just loafing? Why?
- Can you relax in the company of others?
- What is the best way to relax?

ADAPTATIONS

Loafing corner: The instructor finds relaxing and empowering photos and projects them on to a screen while relaxing music plays in the background. The group members can loaf about on the floor, on mattresses or sofas with their heads on pillows and blankets pulled up to their ears. What does it feel like to relax whilst looking at the photos?

Protective and risk factors of mental health

11. Hey, we're making a comic strip!

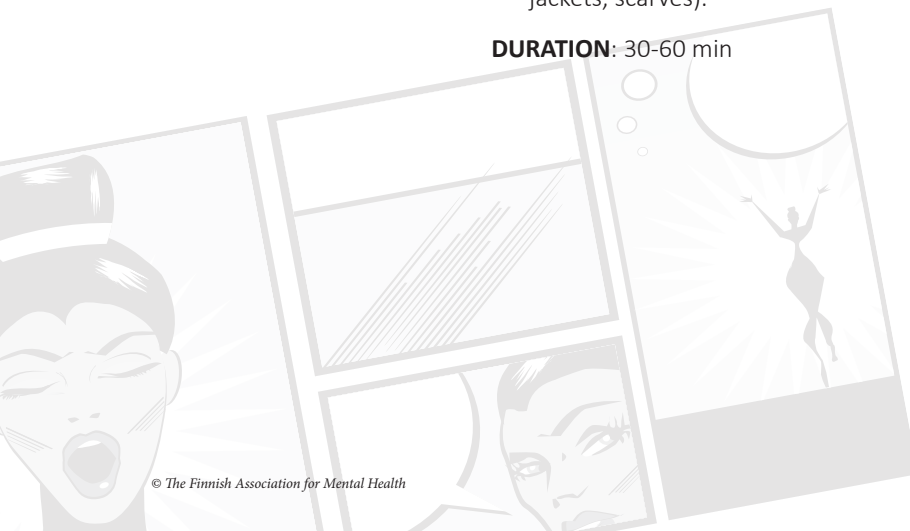
GOAL

To work using your body; a role-playing exercise (experience being in someone else's shoes); to support a friend through life's risk factors and hardship.

SUPPLIES

Windmill of Emotions model, some role-playing clothes if desired (e.g. hats, jackets, scarves).

DURATION: 30-60 min



ACTIVITY

Start off by forming one or more groups. The group thinks of some risk factors over which young people have influence. These could include low self-confidence, poor relationships with friends, violence, bullying, substance abuse. Each group makes a 4-5-panel comic strip, which deals with the chosen risk factor and how to resolve the situation. For example:

- Risk factor: A young person experiences bullying or is isolated from friends.
- Solution: Friends support the young person by listening; being there for the individual and doing fun things together; encouraging the friend to speak to an adult; speaking to an adult together with the person, and asking the friend to take part in an activity.

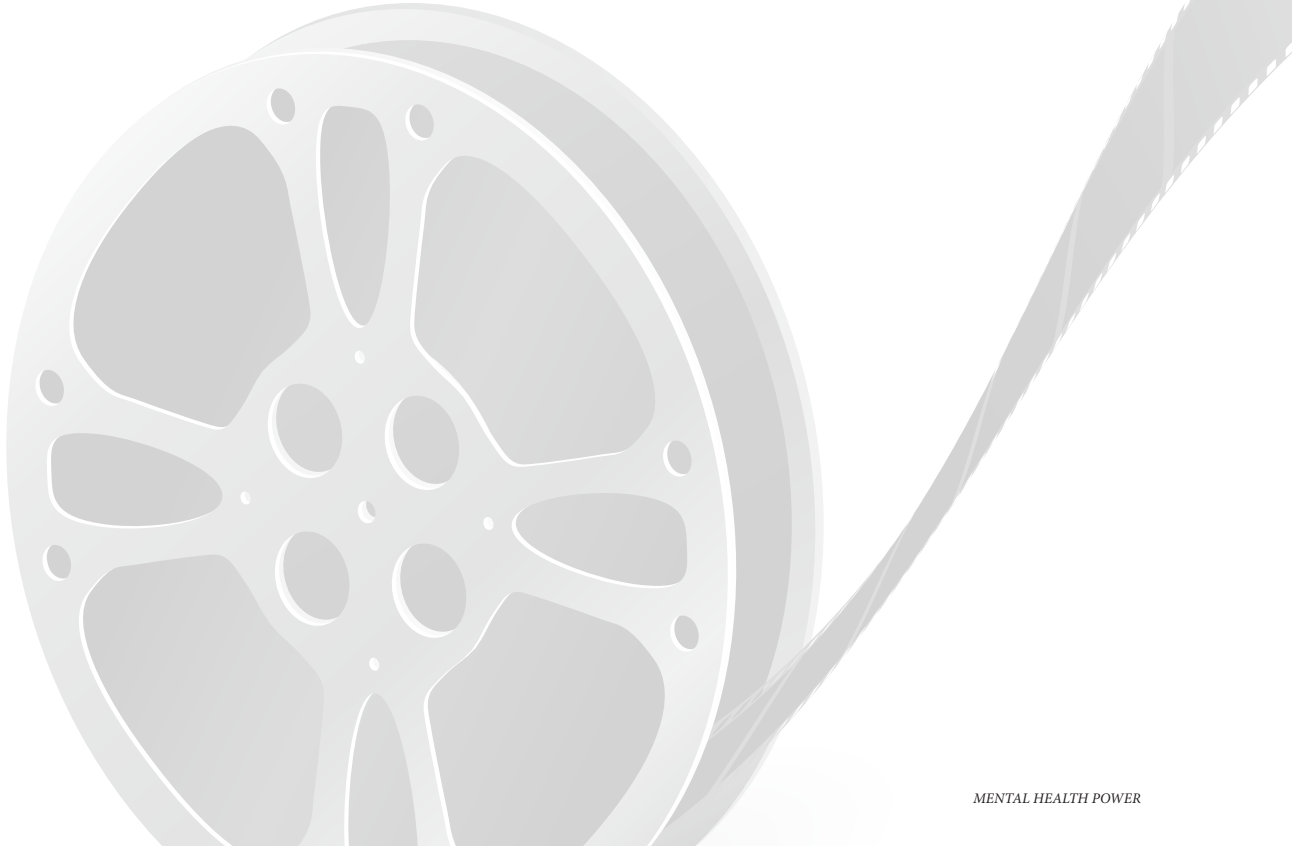
Once the comic strips are complete, the groups present them to the others. It may be easier, if the audience members close their eyes, when the pictures are changed. One of the actors (or the instructor) gives orders to the audience: "close your eyes- open your eyes".

ROUNDING OFF

Think about the feelings the pictures stirred.

- What does it feel like to approach a friend who is in a difficult situation?
- What other solutions could there be for different situations?
- What protective factors are needed?
- What might happen to a friend, if others do not support them?
- At what stage could it be beneficial to talk to an adult about the case?
- What could the friend do to help him/herself?

In role-playing exercises, it is important to shake off the roles and to ensure that the actors return to themselves, for example, by saying: "I am not John from the play now, I am myself, Jack". This is especially important, if the group is new to role-playing. The aim is to make sure that the others do not see the actors as the characters they played.



12. Movie clip

Tips on movies that are suitable for young people are available, for example, on Koulukino's website. The website also includes discussion exercises and questions related to the movie and its theme.

GOAL: To consider mental health's protective and risk factors through a movie.

SUPPLIES: movie

ACTIVITY

Watch a movie that deals with mental health topics. The topic may be friendship, love, adventure and trying new things, health, family, school, hobbies, loneliness, bullying, problems with parents, friendships, surviving a crisis and adolescent changes.

ROUNDING OFF

Discuss the film together:

- What was the main character's situation in life?
- How good or bad was their situation?
- What factors supported the main character in their life?
- What difficulties did the main character encounter in life?
- What went wrong for the character?
- Which coping strategies did s/he use?
- Did the main character have a safety net? Who was included in the safety net?
- How could the safety net have been strengthened?
- What role did friends play in the main character's life?
- How did the friends support the main character?
- What could the main character have done differently?
- Which emotions did the movie trigger in you?
- Which characters were easy to feel compassion for? Why?
- Which character triggered disgust, anger, irritation in you? Why?
- Which character was loveable, nice, beautiful or sweet? Why?



Summary

- Young people grow and develop at their own pace.
- To support their growth, young people need understanding, patience, presence and answers to a number of questions from youth workers. This interaction supports young people's mental health during adolescent turbulence.
- Supporting young people's sexual development also helps support their mental health- they need sensitivity, listening, acceptance and correct information.

3 ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

Changing body and mind

Adolescence is a demanding period of life. It is a transitional phase from a child to an adult. Our bodies and appearances change, as do our thoughts, attitudes, values and opinions. The significance of friends changes, and friendships become stronger, and eventually dating comes into the picture. Parents have a new role in the life of their child.

The mind's functions and abilities develop at different pace from the body; physical development usually precedes emotional maturity. Certain immaturity is part of adolescence - learning through experimenting and mistakes makes adolescence a creative and exciting stage in life. A developing mind is not bound by the restrictions of adult beliefs. The development into maturity cannot be rushed or slowed down without doing harm to the individual, so it is best to let it take its course.

Adolescence creates new opportunities to build hope and trust in life. Peer support; doing things and spending time together, and shared activities provide an experience of being part of a group and build a sense of community. In the turbulence of growth and development, the stability of activities and places, such as a youth centre, workshops, home, school and hobbies, are important to mental health.

Youth as a development phase

According to adolescent psychiatrist, Veikko Aalberg, youth as a development phase can be divided into puberty, which describes the biological and physiological development, and adolescence, which describes the mental development.

Puberty refers to a period of physical change, when a child's body develops into an adult's body. Puberty lasts approximately 2-5 years. For most young people, the physical development takes place more or less at the same time, but there can be variation among individuals. The physical changes may occur earlier, later, quicker or slower than in other young people.

Adolescence, on the other hand, refers to the mental development that takes place between the ages of 11 and 22. Physical growth and changes in hormones affect a young person's mental balance. Adapting to internal and external changes is part of adolescence. During adolescence, a young person breaks away from childhood.

Adolescent developmental tasks

Adolescence is about visions of the unknown future and sadness for leaving childhood behind. Unresolved or painful childhood events, hopes, successes or failures might come up again. Now with more maturity, it is easier to face, resolve and fix those issues. Adolescence could be called a second chance.

The aim of adolescence is to gain independence, and to achieve this, the growing individuals must solve a number of different development tasks.

Read more about youth development stages: Veikko Aalberg and Martti Siimes (2007): *Lapsesta aikuiseksi. Nuoren kasvu naiseksi tai mieheksi.*

- During adolescence, young people take control of their bodies. This means that young people can manage internal stimuli, explore their sexuality and experience control and pleasure in relation to their body. During adolescence, young people detach themselves from the home and become independent from their parents and the hopes directed at the parents. The significance of parents changes, and we see our parents in a new, more adult light.
- Our peers gain new importance, and we seek support from them, when we are in search of our independence. We develop the readiness to date and have romantic relationships.

The capacity for abstract thinking develops during adolescence. Young people gain the ability for independent intellectual thinking, construction of entities, recognition of cause-and-effect and solving disputes. For this, the developing young people need information and experience. Adults can support this stage by discussing matters with young people and offering hypernyms for things to help make sense of them.

In adolescence, a person takes steps toward independence.



Adolescence progresses in phases

A young person grows and develops in many areas:

Physical growth and development

To support their physical growth, young people need adequate sleep and rest, a diverse diet, physical exercise and a regular daily schedule.

Social growth and development

Young people's relationships and social skills develop when interacting with family and friends.

Mental growth and development

In adolescence, mental adjustment and management skills, problem-solving skills and self-knowledge develop.

Intellectual development

Thinking, learning and understanding expand.

Sexual development

The acceptance and embracing of one's sexuality are part of adolescent development.

Emotional growth and development

Young people search for the meaning of life, their values and objects of appreciation, and they contemplate philosophical, global and religious issues.

Adolescence is the period between the ages of 11 and 22. Adolescence can be divided into roughly three phases: early adolescence, middle adolescence and late adolescence. Development in girls and boys is different during these phases.

Early adolescence takes place at the age of 11 to 13. Early adolescence involves physical changes: the body image changes and the experience of self fluctuates. These changes confuse a young person and cause both anxiety and uncertainty. An early adolescent is caught in a dilemma between neediness and independence: the growing youngsters yearn for independence whilst also longing for the safety provided by the parents, when responsibility and the newly found freedom overwhelm. This contradiction is sometimes difficult to handle, and the relationship with parents fluctuates. Quarrelling with and judging parents is common; things may be left untold and boundaries questioned. Regardless, young people need the support of their parents to handle their inner conflicts and the certainty that the parents are there to offer that support. Young people also need the support of other young people and adults outside the family.

During middle adolescence, between the ages of 14 to 16, young people begin to adapt to their changed body and seek their identity. Sexual growth and its impact on relationships is central. Developing femininity or masculinity is marked with uncertainty. Young people are interested in their sexuality, and the confusion of early adolescence changes into curiosity for their own skills and abilities.

During late adolescence, between the ages of 17 and 22, past experiences take shape, and young people achieve a sense of stability. It is time for young people to find their place and role. Young people make choices for the future, plan their education and career and look for their place in society. Their relationship with the parents changes and exists on more equal terms. Young people share a sense of intimacy in their friendships and romantic relationships; they take others into consideration and are more flexible and value their and others' privacy. Gradually, young people start making decisions about having their own family.

Regression and progress

Young people's development does not progress in a straight line; at times it regresses. Development often takes two steps forward and one step back. Physical and mental development do not progress hand in hand either. Particularly at the beginning, young people develop faster physically, and their emotional development lags behind. Various stimuli fill their mind, which is why young people often fear losing control. Young people safeguard themselves using a number of protective measures.

More information on adolescence for young people and a question and answer service is available on Västöliitto's (Finnish Family Federation) and Mannerheim League for Child Welfare's websites (in Finnish).

Regression is part of natural development. When young people lack the mental means to control the pressure of various stimuli in early puberty, they have to resort to childhood methods to control their excitement and restlessness. Regression occurs earlier in girls, which is why the developmental conflict for them is not as significant. For boys, regression usually takes place a couple of years later, which highlights their childish behaviour. Boys also often regress to an earlier level of childhood in terms of development than girls.

Regression means that many skills and characteristics that have already been obtained weaken. Childishness in boys often manifests itself in clinginess, fear and insecurity, which they may attempt to hide by using threats, foul language and being loud. Every third word can be a swear word, and stubbornness, burping and messiness may enter the picture. Sometimes young people want physical intimacy from their parents, at others they vehemently oppose it. School performance may suffer with lower concentration levels and lack of interest in school. Young people do not consider themselves as difficult or different, but parents and other adults may find it difficult to adapt to the new situation.

Regression provides an opportunity to change the childish world of experiences and detach from it on the journey toward independence. Childhood traumas are often reactivated during regression, which is when a young person may spontaneously attempt to repair them. Regression must be a temporary and passing phase. It is a necessary but also a threatening phase, because development may slow down, be distorted or remain in a permanent state of regression.

Young people's protective measures

Young people protect themselves from the internal stimuli of the mind in different ways. Acknowledging the protective measures helps a youth worker understand, reach out to and listen to young people.

See also exercises in Chapter 4 *Emotions and emotional skills*

Splitting means absoluteness and black-and-white thinking. Young people may see people as either good or bad - they are unable to see the dichotomy. The perception of self often goes from perfection to uselessness; young people are either strongly for or against various issues, nothing in-between. Splitting helps young people distance themselves from their parents, one or the other is favoured in turn whilst the other is the object of irritation. The same phenomenon may also be shown in relation to other adults.

Being dramatic and provoking disputes are also typical protective methods. When young people struggle to handle all the conflicts of their mind internally, they need an external "stage" to act them out on. The more a young person challenges an adult, the more they need support, security and attention from an adult.

Young people may also protect themselves by turning to **asceticism**, by refusing pleasures and avoiding them. Being able to control yourself and your desires may feel good. Sometimes young people also treat their bodies and appearance ascetically, thus protecting themselves from the interests of others.

When young people struggle to handle all the conflicts of their mind internally, they need an external “stage” to act them out on.



Girl's and boys' individual growth and development

Their changing bodies trigger a variety of new feelings in young people. To some extent, the developing body inspires pride, but the changes may also be confusing, distressing or scary. It has been said that a developing young person's body changes as much as a woman's body during pregnancy. So it is no wonder that these changes take getting used to.

See Veikko Aalberg's facts on adolescent development, protective methods and regression (in Finnish): mielenterveystaidot.fi/vanhemmat

Young people compare themselves and their own development to other young people, and the changes may cause concern, especially if development occurs sooner or later than for other people. Many young people wonder if the changes in their bodies are normal. Youth workers have an important role in supporting and listening to young people and inspiring them, as well as, answering their many questions and, if necessary, encouraging them to go and see an other professional, such as a nurse.

Talking about changes with an adult

Often at this age, young people may not have the courage, ability or nerve to ask their own parents about the changes or worries they are experiencing. Talking with other adults, such as a youth worker, may also seem very hard, but still easier than parents. Young people usually want to hear an adult opinion and need realistic information about growth and development.

A sexual health adviser, nurse, health visitor, student or expert in the field can be asked to participate in the discussion or theme night.

It may be more natural to discuss sensitive topics in boys' or girls' groups or during theme nights, when physical changes are discussed. Young people should have a safe space to discuss and ask questions, but also the opportunity to just listen in the background in case they do not want to or have the courage to participate.

See exercise *Question and Answer Box* on page 69.

Many young people find it reassuring that everyone is going through the same changes and that all boys or girls have the same worries and thoughts. Sometimes it may feel safer to ask questions anonymously, and these questions could be collected in a feedback box before the discussion. Questions could also be discussed using practical exercises and stories, which is one of the strengths of youth work.

PHYSICAL CHANGES IN BOYS	PHYSICAL CHANGES IN GIRLS
<p>Physical development in boys takes place at a fast pace. Changes cause uncertainty for many boys and adapting to these changes and taking control of their new masculine body is a huge challenge for many.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the most obvious changes in boys is their changing voice: it deepens very quickly, sometimes even overnight. This new voice can seem strange to a young person, and it may require getting used to. Many boys feel embarrassed when their voice occasionally breaks, or high-pitched “squeaks” occur while they talk. • Being short and small causes concern for many boys and may affect their self-esteem, particularly if their voice also breaks later than their friends' voices. • Some boys may suffer from gynecomastia, i.e. the swelling of mammary glands, and many feel ashamed of it and hide it under loose shirts. • One of the changes that causes the most confusion and getting used to is related to their own penis, its size, shape or colour. • Erections become a new thing in boys' lives, and may feel embarrassing, especially if they occur at inappropriate times. Erections often occur unintentionally, which in turn triggers the feeling of lack of control of one's body. 	<p>Girls' puberty begins on average two years earlier than boys', but there can be significant differences between individuals on when the changes take place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the start of adolescence, girls may be concerned about their height, especially if they grow quicker than other girls or particularly boys. • One of the most visible changes in a girl's body is their growing breasts. The size and shape of their breasts may cause concern: they may seem too large or small, be of a different shape or at a different height and therefore seem inappropriate. Large breasts bring their own worries, especially if other young people pay a lot of attention to them. • For girls, puberty involves the onset of menstruation. Periods raise a lot of questions, both before and after they begin. The questions may concern menstrual cycles, irregularity, use of sanitary pads and tampons, birth control or cramps. • In the same way as periods, increased leukorrhea may concern girls. Young people can be reassured that with time, they will learn to identify what is normal.

Young people should be made aware of the services and support that their municipality offers. Sit down with a young person and go through your local municipality's website to see what services the municipality offers.

Developing into a woman or a man is energy consuming, and everyone develops at their own pace. Youth workers can encourage young people to talk to their parents, a nurse, a school doctor or even a PE or a health education teacher about their changing bodies and any concerns they may have.

It is important to be aware of gender sensitivity in youth work. Poikien Talo (the Boys' House) has produced material on gender sensitive education.

Femininity is not just for women and masculinity for men; everyone is entitled to their own gender identity and expressing it. Read more about gender sensitivity in Setälä's material and on their website (in Finnish).

Gender sensitive education

- Aims to deconstruct, open and expand gender roles and gendered behaviour models.
- Understands that masculinity and femininity are complex and even contradictory and that there is no right way of being.
- Recognises the different effects of gender in the growth of a young person into a woman or man.
- Identifies and understands boys' and girls' different growth and development issues.
- Recognises that the growing pains of boys and girls are largely gender-related.
- Recognises the differences between a young person's gender and the opposite gender without assigning value to them.
- Brings out individuals' gender as a positive resource.
- Supports young people in their quest to find an identity and way of being best suited to them.
- Encourages young people to find their strengths and resources, to listen to themselves, and to feel liberated to be themselves.
- Strengthens young people's abilities and skills to spend time with others and offers them the opportunity to be part of a community.
- Recognises the special characteristics of different cultures; multicultural boys or girls are not a homogeneous group, and culture is much more than ethnicity.
- Ensures that employees are aware of the general perceptions on gender roles and the representatives of other cultures and critically observes the stereotypes that guide their own actions.

Some people need more time and space to think about their gender.



Sexuality - life's positive force

"Your life's most important relationship is the relationship you have with yourself."
– Maaret Kallio, 2012

Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships.

Sexuality is an important part of being human. It is a lifelong characteristic that we hold from cradle to grave. Sexuality means feeling good and experiencing pleasure; it brings security and responsibility, openness, expectations but also disappointments.

According to the WHO's definition, sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships. It involves the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences: the feeling of control of one's sexuality and being free of coercion, discrimination or violence. A sexually healthy individual is satisfied in themselves, has safe relationships, feels sufficiently loved and accepted and is able to fulfil their sexuality.

The positive life force of sexuality and the experience of pleasure are an important part of human health and wellbeing. Sexuality is an opportunity and a sensitive part of basic humanity. Sexuality involves feelings and is a way of being and thinking. Contrary to what is often thought, sexuality does not emerge during adolescence, but rather the understanding and perceptions of it are strengthened and become topical. Sexual growth is a physical, mental, social and spiritual process.



Young people's sexuality and mental health

Read more about sexual growth and sexual education:

- Katriina Bildjuschkin and Susanna Ruuhilahti (2012): *Hot. Huolehdi, Ohjaa, Tue.*
- Maaret Kallio (2012). *Sopivasti ihana.*

Changes in the body challenge young people's minds. They consider issues related to identity and self-image, such as: Who am I? How do I feel? What will I become? Am I accepted as I am? Why am I like this? What do others think of me? What am I capable of? Where do I belong? Sexuality and the experience of gender are topical thoughts. The changing body challenges the mind to change too.

Supporting young people's safe growth is important for their mental health. Young people grow and develop at their own pace. Identifying one's own boundaries gives time and space for desires, dreams and inner growth. Young people gradually take control of their own sexuality, and their mind becomes stronger: the developing sexual and mental health support and strengthen one another.

The strengthening self-esteem; the development of friendship skills, and the ability to identify and express emotions are important to establishing wellbeing. Putting value on yourself and having the opportunity to make life choices based on your interests strengthen the mind, and help establish sexual health and identity.

Infatuations, ideals and experimentation

Youth workers should update their knowledge on different cultures and religions and their attitudes to sexuality.

Read more:

- Elina Korhonen and Riikka Närhi (2011): *Uskonnot ja seksuaalisuus.*
- Pirkko Brusila (2008): *Seksuaalisuus eri kulttuureissa.*

The development of sexuality in adolescence involves infatuations. They include secret dreams about and desire and longing for the object of the infatuation. The infatuations may not be shared with others, but experiencing them is valuable and a part of early adolescence. This is how young people practise the emotions of falling in love from a safe distance. Sometimes the object of infatuation is an adult, such as a youth worker, coach or a teacher. In that case, the object of infatuation must remain demonstrably adult and professional and respect the youth, whilst gently yet firmly keeping the boundaries but not losing the connection to the young person.

Young people practise safe intimacy and touching with their friends. Boys often spend a lot of time in large groups practising physical sports, while many girls, on the other hand, hug and stroke one another. Young people learn about the kind of touching they want to give and receive and what physical closeness with others feels like.

Dreaming and even wild imagination are part of young people's sexual growth, and it is important to give time and space for them. Young people explore a variety of media content. It would be a good idea to discuss with them what kinds of images media produces on sexuality and sex. What is healthy or real? And what is misrepresented and distressing?

More information on young people and dating is available in chapter 5 *Adolescent relationships*.

Sexual maturation, acceptance of sexuality and the ability to enjoy reciprocal, mutually satisfactory sexual relations are development tasks for middle and late adolescence. Before they start dating, many young people practise their feelings towards others in a variety of environments and friendships. The first romantic relationships are often short and experimental. They are also selfish. Feelings are initially based on one's own ideals and needs, more than on the real characteristics and personality of the other person. The first romantic relationships are, however, important, because young people use them to discover themselves and their emotional sphere. They explore themselves by mirroring through the other person.

Premature experiences may be harmful

"Confusion is a silent exclamation mark."
– Maaret Kallio, 2013

According to studies, young people are a particular risk group for experiences of sexual abuse and violence. According to a school health survey (2010), 21% of girls and 8% of 14 and 15-year-olds have experienced sexual violence in Finland. It is particularly important for young people that their own difficult experiences are heard and taken seriously. Talking about your own sexual boundaries, rights and emotions help bring up difficult experiences.

Source: Kallio (2012): *Sopivasti ihana*.

Young people often falsely believe that other young people are sexually more experienced than they are. Being able to grow and develop at your own pace is important. Our bodies are our own, and we always have the right to refuse. No one should be pressurised into having sex or into doing things they are not ready for.

Experiencing confusion and uncertainty about your developing body is normal, but sexual stimuli and hormonal effects may cause an unreasonable amount of fear and anxiety. During adolescence; boys have more obsessive-compulsive symptoms, while girls are more likely to have eating disorders. Even if an actual mental health problem is not diagnosed, feelings of anxiety and avoidance and controlling behaviour may restrict an individual's experiences of happiness well into adulthood and cause unnecessary unhappiness.

Early or involuntary sexual experiences can be harmful. If a young person is not ready for sexual experiences, they may hamper development and cause depression. Symptoms of depression have been proven to be more common for sexually active young people than for sexually inactive young people. The more intimate the sexual experiences have been during adolescence, the more common depression is in both girls and boys.

It is possible that young people react to sexual experiences that they were not emotionally ready for with depression. It may also be that a depressed young person seeks intimacy and acceptance from sexual experiences to ease their low spirits. Sometimes a peer group may put pressure on being sexually active. Young people may also feel pressure, if they come across as physically developed, whilst their mental development lags behind.

Sexuality can wound young people exactly because it touches the depth of our humanity on so many levels. It is connected to our sense of self, our ability to adapt socially, as well as, our stress management and emotional development. Sexuality is loaded with joy and attachment and many hugely personal experiences. Thus, it is also fragile to pain, shame and trauma.

Sexuality has not been called a "life force" for nothing. It is exactly that but simultaneously also sensitive and personal. Developing sexuality must be protected and its sensitivity recognised, because healthy and safe sexuality brings joy and pleasure

Read more about sexual abuse in Pirkko Brusila, Salla Hyvärinen, Maaret Kallio, Kirsi Porras and Tarja Sandberg (2009): *Eikö se kuulu kenellekään?*

and protects from mental health issues in adulthood. Putting too much emphasise on sex should be avoided, because it may not facilitate development, but in a rather facile way delivers a message of “easy” and “stereotypical” satisfaction. Instead, we should support young people’s unique, personal, intimate and gradually maturing development, which, in terms of sexuality, in some ways lasts a lifetime.

Sexual education and discussing the topic

Sexual education takes place at different levels. It involves sexual education and advice, as well as, guidance. Everyone has the right to receive sexual education that is appropriate to their age and development level. Young people want to discuss relationships, dating, equality, sexuality and sex with other young people, but also with a competent and reliable adult.

The guidance given by adults can support and strengthen young people’s sexual health. Reflection and safe discussions with an adult, as well as, receiving right information about sexuality, promote wellbeing. However, it is also important that we respect the values of each individual and do not impose our way of thinking on them.

Adept sexual education provides skills that help self-discovery and good self-esteem and strengthens emotional skills and self-appreciation. Discussing individuals’ rights is an important part of sexual education. Everyone has the right to their own sexuality, their own body and integrity, but also the right to express their sexuality in ways that is respectful of others.

Media images of sexuality rarely reflect reality. That is why it is important to discuss how sexuality is presented in social media, TV series, advertisements or music videos. Awareness, constructive discussions and critical media literacy support the sexual growth of young people surrounded by media.

Discussing sexuality helps create a safe environment for approaching an adult and gives a permission to bring up also the more complicated topics. To ensure that sexuality as a topic is a natural part of education, appropriate information must be introduced gradually. Adults must have the sensitivity to recognise and accept all kinds of young people and offer the right support to them.

Every adult that works with young people provides education - whether they want it or not. It is always important to be aware of educational work and the responsibilities it carries. Everyone who works with children or young people should stop and think about their own attitudes and values, thoughts and feelings. Having self-knowledge is vital for youth workers; it adds warmth, care, acceptance and respect for diversity and love and humour to their work. Humour is an important tool to have for discussions with young people and in accepting personal flaws.

See the exercise *Discussion on sexuality* (p. 73)

The Water Lily Model is an example of a tool for bringing up the subject of sex and sexuality, but the model can also help youth workers to analyse and understand their own and others’ attitudes and sexuality. The following questions can be used in discussions:

Questions for youth workers' own considerations

- How was sexuality discussed with you during your childhood?
- What kind of information on sexuality did you received at school and during your studies? What about as an adult?
- What kinds of values do you attribute to sexuality?
- What good and bad experiences do you have about sexuality?
- How is sexuality evident in the body?
- What kinds of emotions do you think are related to love?
- What are different cultures' or religions' attitudes to sexuality?
- What is love?
- What kinds of emotions does sexuality stir in you?
- Do you delight in your own sexuality?
- What kinds of values and morals guide your sexuality?
- What was sexuality like before?
- How do life changes affect sexuality?
- What kind of information and expertise on sexual health do you require to support your work as a youth worker?

The full Water Lily model in publication: Bildjuschkin and Ruuhilahti (2012): Hot. Huolehdi, Ohjaa, Tue

Unique young person

Self-esteem and mental health

Self-esteem refers to individuals' own perceptions of how good they are. It includes self-knowledge and self-appreciation. Self-esteem is not selfishness. It does not come across as confident behaviour or external success; it is part of our personality. People with good self-esteem associate good characteristics and positive attributes with themselves and do not focus on the negatives and wrap up in self-pity. However, they are also realists in terms of the characteristics that still need to be developed. Good self-esteem is not crushed by the acceptance of weaknesses; even laughing at them is possible. Good self-esteem allows us to set sufficient standards for ourselves and helps us cope with disappointments and failures.

Self-esteem gives us courage to be ourselves. It gives us determination to make plans and set objectives. People with good self-esteem trust and like themselves without placing themselves above others. Good self-esteem helps us understand the uniqueness and value of our life whilst allowing us to respect and appreciate others. Self-esteem gives us the ability to take others into consideration, but it also grants us the independence and freedom from the opinions of others.

Self-esteem may come across differently on the outside from the way the individual thinks on the inside; it can be divided into private and public spheres. The public side reflects what the individual wants to show and tell of themselves based on expectations. The private side, on the other hand, is often kept hidden. For example, someone may downplay their abilities to others, even if inside they think they are capable and good. For a balanced person, the public and private self-esteem should be fairly even. In other words, a person should be able to present themselves to the outside world the same way as they experience themselves. Self-esteem may also vary in different areas of life: some trust their capabilities at work, while others have faith in their social abilities.



TEMPERAMENT	PERSONALITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperament refers to people's natural abilities and tendencies, which determine how they behave and react to things. • Temperament explains why some are enthusiastic and others timid in new situations; why some look for adventure, whilst others appreciate familiarity and safety. • Temperament consists of a variety of different human characteristics in different proportions. These include being sociable, active and easily adaptable. • Thanks to different temperaments, people are individuals from the start and remain individuals throughout their lives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality develops as a result of an individual's temperament and the surrounding environment, especially the interaction between the child and the parents. • Personality refers to a person's entire essence: all physical, social, mental and spiritual sides of the being. • Personality includes the self, self-image, self-esteem, values, motives, ethical goals, social skills and operating models. • Although personality consists of various factors and different requirements are related to different situations in terms of self, permanence is a sign of a healthy persona. • Personality keeps developing even in adulthood.

Resources increase self-esteem

The development of healthy self-esteem in childhood and adolescence is an important factor for mental health. Getting young people to appreciate their strengths and resources is beneficial for their self-esteem, because they are then more responsive and impressionable. They are likely to analyse themselves and experience feelings such as success strongly. Identity and the concept of self are formed during adolescent development.

See assertiveness exercises
in chapter
5 Adolescent relationships.

It is important to experience success and being good at things. Every single young person has skills, characteristics and abilities that they can feel proud of. Some young people are good at performing; others are good at handicrafts and arts, while some excel in dancing or as band members. Some may have a natural ability to take others into consideration even when things are tough, ask them how they are coping, and give them positive feedback. Everyone has strengths, which give them joy and the feeling of success in life, and there are always new traits to be found within ourselves. It is important to be interested in and pleased with ourselves without the need to compare too much to others.

Each young person learns new skills and continues to find new characteristics in themselves. Young people practise relationship skills: apologising, forgiving, including in, being flexible and assertive. They practise emotional skills: identifying, wording, expressing and deconstructing emotions. Learning new things also brings with it failures and disappointments. It is important to learn self-forgiveness and be prepared to accept failures and allow for new attempts.

Adults providing strength

Children and young people need feedback that makes them feel accepted. They need daily praise, encouragement, hugs, comfort, discussions and listening.

A youth worker can confidently also contact the young people's home. Good cooperation between youth work, home, school, church and social services can help parents with the upbringing of their children.

Each young person has strengths and resources. Adults can help strengthen young people's self-esteem by providing positive feedback and encouragement.

A youth worker, coach or a teacher can provide support and be the safe adult during the turbulence of adolescence and the development of self-esteem. The adults also act as a mirror for the young people: they model and confirm the right ways of behaving; verbally express emotions and, if necessary, teach the young person and intervene with any failings. Young people's sense of security and trust increase when adults manage the boundaries, give them an opportunity to test them and remain consistent and fair.

Adults should be able to see and understand the needs of children and young people. Leisurely time with young people; openness and honesty, as well as, genuine acceptance create opportunities for discussing and sharing even the more difficult subjects, such as changing bodies or sexuality. Such moments and connection with an adult strengthen self-esteem almost imperceptibly; they allow the young person to feel valuable and unique and empowered by the fact that the adult has time just for him/her. These moments are manifestations of care and love.

Trust and faith in the future are important for mental health. Identifying and finding people's strengths and giving them positive feedback, reinforce their trust in establishing their life and finding their place. Feelings of success and opportune encouragement may help young people find a place to study or even choose a career.



Sources and more information

- Aalberg, V. & Siimes, M. A. (2007). Lapsesta aikuiseksi. Nuoren kypsyminen naiseksi tai mieheksi. Jyväskylä: Publishing company Nemo.
- Antikainen, A. (1998). Kasvatus, elämäntilanne ja yhteiskunta. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Ruuhilahti, S., Bildjuschkin, K. & Marttinen, I. Melkein kymmenen näkökulmaa seksuaalisuuteen. City of Turku, health and social care. Selkenevää! project.
- Bildjuschkin, K. & Ruuhilahti, S. (2008). Seksiä vaatteet päällä. Helsinki: Tammi.
- Bildjuschkin, K. & Ruuhilahti, S. (2010). Puhutaan seksuaalisuudesta. Professional encounters in social and health work. Helsinki: Kirjapaja.
- Bildjuschkin, K. & Ruuhilahti, S. (eds.) (2010). Selkee! Turku: City of Turku, health and social care publications.
- Bildjuschkin, K. & Ruuhilahti, S. (2012). Hot. Huolehdi, Ohjaa, Tue. City of Turku, health and social care publications.
- Brusila, P., Hyvärinen, S., Kallio, M., Porras, K. & Sandberg, T. (2009). Eikö se kuulu kenellekään? – Rohkene kohdata seksuaalisesti kaltoinkohdeltu nuori. Helsinki: Väestöliitto - Family Federation of Finland.
- Cacciatore, R. (2007). Huomenna pannaan pussauskoppiin. Eväitä tyttöinä ja poikana kasvamisen haasteisiin syntymästä murrosikään. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Dunderfelt, T. (2004). Elämäntapa- ja kasvatuspsykologia. Lapsen kasvusta yksilön henkiseen kehitykseen. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Dunderfelt, T. (2006). Voimavarana itsetuntemus. Helsinki: Kirjapaja.
- Life skills guide. Nyyti ry. <https://www.nyyti.fi/elamantaitokurssi/osallistujan-opas/>
- Kallio, M. (2012). Sopivasti ihana. Q & A about girls' sexuality and sex. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Kaltiala-Heino, R. (2004). Sexuality and health during adolescence. In publication E. Kosunen & M. Ritamo. Näkökulmia nuorten seksuaaliterveyteen. Helsinki: Stakes.
- Kauppila, E. (2005). Vuorovaikutus ja sosiaaliset taidot. An interaction guide for teachers and students. Opetus 2000. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.
- Keltikangas-Järvinen, L. (2010). Hyvä itsetunto. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Keltikangas-Järvinen, L. (2010). Sosiaalisuus ja sosiaaliset taidot. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Keltikangas-Järvinen, L. (2010). Temperamentti ja koulumenestys. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Keltikangas-Järvinen, L. (2012). Temperamentti, stressi ja elämäntilanne. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Korhonen, E. & Närhi, R. (2011). Uskonnot ja seksuaalisuus. Väestöliitto - Family Federation of Finland.
- Lyytinen, P., Korkiakangas, M. & Lyytinen, H. (eds.) (1995). Näkökulmia kehityspsykologiaan: Kehitys kontekstissaan. Porvoo: WSOY.
- Röning, T. Nuoren seksuaalinen kasvu. Lecture for youth workers in Helsinki 16 Jan 2012. Mielenterveystaidot nuorisotyöhön -pilotti, Finnish Association for Mental Health.
- Seksuaalisuuden portaati. Väestöliitto - Family Federation of Finland. www.vaestoliitto.fi/nuoret/kasvu_ja_kehitys/seksuaalisuuden_portaat
- Sinkkonen, J. (eds.). (2003). Pesästä lentoon. Kirja lapsen kehityksestä kasvattajalle. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Sinkkonen, J. (2010). Nuoruusikä. Juva: WSOY.
- Sukupuolen moninaisuus. Seta ry & Transtukipiste ry. http://seta.fi/doc/materiaali/seta_sukupuolen_moninaisuus_kevyt.pdf
- Tunnista ja vaikuta. Information on domestic violence. (2011). Nektaria ry.
- Törrönen, S., Hannukkala, M., Ruuskanen, U. & Korhonen, E. 2011. Hyvinvoiva oppilaitos. Training and education material of mental wellbeing for higher education establishments. Mental Well-being Project (ESR). Finnish Association for Mental Health and Keskuspuisto Vocational College.
- Vilkko-Riihelä, A. (2001). Psyke. Psychology manual. Porvoo: WSOY.
- World Health Organization. (2006). Sexual rights. http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/topics/sexual_health/sh_definitions/en/index.html

EXERCISES

The exercises in the Adolescent development section have been divided into the following categories: Strengthening self-esteem, Trust and faith in the future and The changing body and sexuality. The themes may be challenging for young people, so warming up and increasing the feeling of safety in the group are important considerations. (See Grouping exercises in chapter 1 p. 22)

Strengthening self-esteem

1. What am I like

GOAL

To get ready for self-exploration. To understand what is important to you, and what things you like. Also works as a grouping exercise.

SUPPLIES: picture cards or other suitable material, Pieces of Growth Model

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

Participants choose a picture card that describes them in some way or describes something that they like and is important to them. People sit in a circle and take turns in showing the picture card they have chosen.

ROUNDING OFF

- Was it difficult to find a picture card?
- What did it feel like to tell others about yourself?
- What did it feel like to listen to others?
- Did you learn anything about yourself and others?
- What strengths do you have?
- What areas would you like to develop?

2. The good me

GOAL: To identify your strengths and find your positive traits. To develop self-knowledge. To receive and give positive feedback.

SUPPLIES: paper, pens, string, Pieces of Growth model

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

- A) Everyone writes their name vertically and then writes a positive adjective describing them or their strengths next to each letter of their name. Ideas can be found in the Pieces of Growth model.
- B) Ball of wool circulates: the group sits in a circle, and the instructor holds on to one end of the yarn. The ball of wool is rolled in a random order from one person to another, and each person says a positive adjective about themselves on their own turn. On the second round participants can tell each other their strengths. The result is a “friendship network” between the young people. The yarn is rolled back into a ball by sending the ball

Choose the most suitable method from the available options.

back to the previous person, and each person tries to remember what the person who sent the ball had said about themselves. Alternatively, the young people can say positive things to one another. The ball of wool can also be used to round off the exercise.

ROUNDING OFF

- Was it easy or difficult to find positive things about yourself? What about the strengths?
- What did it feel like to tell others about yourself? What did it feel like to say positive things about others?
- What did it feel like to hear others talk about you? What did it feel like to hear good things about yourself?
- Did you learn anything about yourself or other people?

ADAPTATIONS

A miming exercise can be used to describe the positive adjectives: The participants use their bodies, facial expressions and gestures to tell others positive things about themselves. The other young people try to guess what they are trying to mime. Similarly, the young people can use the miming exercises to express positive things about others.

3. Reminiscing successes

GOAL

To find positive personality traits in yourself by reminiscing experiences of success.

SUPPLIES: picture cards or other picture material

DURATION: 15–30 min

ACTIVITY

Participants tell a partner of a successful experience they have had, such as a well-played song, good performance in a play, great baking, cheering up a friend or scoring a goal.

ROUNDING OFF

The instructor can ask the young people to tell what kinds of experiences of success they have had. The instructor may choose to start the discussion with an example of their own.

- What does it feel like to succeed?
- What does it feel like to receive good feedback for success?
- What does this experience of success say about you?

ADAPTATIONS

- A young person holds a mirror and tells their reflection what they are good at. As a warm-up, each participant can take turns in saying "I am great" to their reflection.
- The group acts out each group member's success moments (e.g. scoring a winning goal in a football match or doing well in an exam). Everyone cheers to celebrate together! How can you express the sense of success with your body and facial expressions?
- Think about situations in which you have most recently won or lost. What did winning or losing feel like? Are you a good or a bad winner or loser? Do you know how to enjoy winning? Do you know how to lose?

Positive experiences are our personal resources that support mental health and help coping. They can be small everyday events of which we may not always even take notice.

4. I know myself

GOAL

To develop self-knowledge and self-esteem. To strengthen emotional skills. To make the young people see that everyone is valuable.

SUPPLIES: Pieces of Growth model, self-knowledge labels (see annex p. 237)

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

The young people make a list of things they appreciate in themselves. The things can be related to any characteristic. They also write another list of things they would like to change about themselves. The young people compare their lists with a partner. See the Pieces of Growth model for an example. Alternatively, the young people can make a “My pieces” picture. The self-knowledge labels offer ideas for different characteristics.

ROUNDING OFF

- How have you used the characteristics you value in yourself?
- How could you make use of them in the future?
- What characteristics would you still like to develop?
- Why would you like to change a certain thing or characteristic?
- How could you change it?
- Instead of looking for change, could you accept the existing characteristics?

ADAPTATIONS

- A) The self-knowledge labels can be used to observe your own strengths and development targets. The cut-out self-knowledge labels are shared among the group, so that each person has 4-5 sentences. The young people review their sentences and keep at least one strength and one development target. Which sentence did you keep as one of your strengths? And which as a development target? Why did you decide to keep those? What could you do to help strengthen your development target?

The group can continue the exercise so that the members give each other notes about their strengths or development targets. The instructor emphasises the importance of providing positive feedback. How do you tell another person about their strengths and development targets? How do you receive feedback? Which sentences did you receive from someone else? Which sentences did you give to another person? What did it feel like to tell someone else about their strengths and development targets?

- B) The group members each produce a collage with the topic “myself”. The collage should comprise positive characteristics, and empowering photos, such as childhood pictures. The collage can also include important things that put you on a good mood such as fabric pieces, sand, leaves, words, sentences, magazine clippings or comic strips, a favourite poem, sentences from a favourite book, etc. Then the group members discuss the following questions: What do the images you have chosen tell about you? Why did you choose those images? What do the things included in your collage say about you? What kind of a person are you? Which subject areas do you think you have improved in during the past year? How does it feel?

- C) Alternatively, the group compiles a digital story as a project (see p. 17). The completed digital stories can be either shown to everyone or just the instructor. The story will become a nice memory for the young people involved.

5. Magic cape

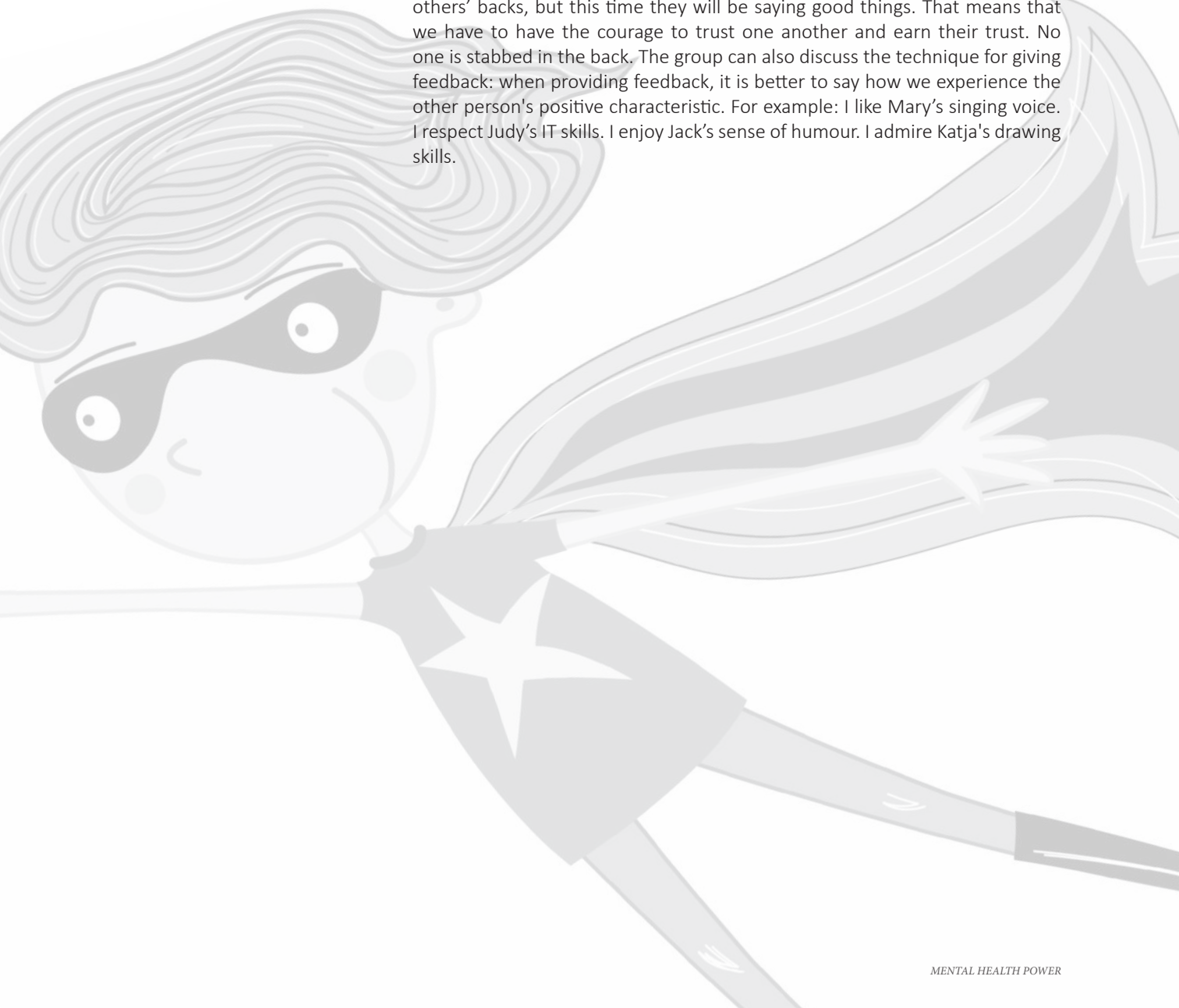
GOAL: To receive and give positive feedback.

SUPPLIES: a large cloth

DURATION: 45-60 min

ACTIVITY

Chairs are arranged in a circle or in the shape of a horseshoe. The instructor initiates a discussion on the importance of positive feedback in the development of good self-esteem. People have the tendency to say bad things behind others' backs, but this time they will be saying good things. That means that we have to have the courage to trust one another and earn their trust. No one is stabbed in the back. The group can also discuss the technique for giving feedback: when providing feedback, it is better to say how we experience the other person's positive characteristic. For example: I like Mary's singing voice. I respect Judy's IT skills. I enjoy Jack's sense of humour. I admire Katja's drawing skills.



The group may also want to give feedback to the instructor, which is a good way to demonstrate that the instructor also trusts the the group. The exercise works best in a group of young people who are already familiar with one another.

One young person at a time turns their back to the group.

The instructor prompts:

- What good things have you noticed in the person?
- What is s/he good at?
- What do you enjoy?
- What do you value?
- What do you like about her/him?

The instructor may also give feedback, thus, being an example to the young people.

The young person with his/her back to the group can be given a scarf or a cloth to cover him/herself with. The cloth is a “magic cape” which allows you to see only the good things in a person. Everyone has their weak sides too, but they are not the focus now. It is also safe to accept praise from under the the cloth.

ROUNDING OFF

At the end, it is time to deconstruct the experience. What did it feel like to give and receive positive feedback? It is often difficult to receive positive feedback. It is worth discussing why this is the case. Do we have the tendency to belittle ourselves? The aim is to emphasise the importance and significance of giving positive feedback and to demonstrate how good it feels. Should we try and see others more through the positive rather than the negative?

- Did you recognise yourself in the positive feedback?
- Did any new, surprising things come up?
- Was it easy to say positive things about others?
- How did it feel to have positive things said about you?
- What did it feel like to receive positive feedback?

It is important that the young people thank the entire group for the feedback they have received. Finally, everyone thinks about positive things about their parents or another important person and then gives them the feedback.

6. Good mood exercise

GOAL

To pay attention to those important to you. To develop self-knowledge and emotional skills. To put yourself and others in a good mood.

ACTIVITY

The young people utilise their own strengths and plan and implement two things that put their family, friends or relatives in a good mood. They could take a friend out to the cinema; pay a visit to their grandfather; make breakfast for their family on the weekend; arrange a game or a movie night; do house cleaning, or take the neighbour’s dog for a walk.

ROUNDING OFF

At the next meeting, the group discusses the thoughts the exercise triggered. What did you do and to whom? How did it feel?

Trust and faith in the future

7. Lyrics on life

GOAL

To discuss the young people's life and their future. To get the young people to think about what is important to them and what their life is like at the moment. To realise that similar, significant events have taken place in other young people's lives.

SUPPLIES: paper, pens

DURATION: 30-45 min

ACTIVITY

The young people write a song, poem or rap about their life and future dreams. They can include different significant events such as starting primary or senior school, the birth of a sibling or memories from a fun summer camp. They may choose to write about their hopes, desires and dreams, such as where they would like to study or live. The song or poem might include significant people and shared memories. It can also express the emotions the events triggered.

ROUNDING OFF

The songs or poems are hung on the wall, and those who wish to can present them to the others. The group discusses: What thoughts came up when writing the song? Did you find similarities between your and the other people's stages of life? What are your wishes and dreams for the future? The instructor may also choose to tell the young people about his/her life: when did I move away from home; where did I study; what was my first job, or fun events I can remember from my own youth.

ADAPTATIONS

- A) The group members can make a digital story about their lives and dreams (see p. 17), or write a wish or encouraging thought for themselves.
- B) The group members write a letter to themselves and seal it in an envelope. The letter can be written e.g. at the start of senior school and opened as the class breaks up at the end of senior school, or at the beginning and end of a workshop year, or at the beginning and end of a sports season.

The letter can be written as follows: describe yourself now, your hobbies, family and friends, emotions, sorrows, tell about your dreams, etc. The subject of the letter can also be, for example, "Me as a footballer," describing what it was like to begin the season and how everything got going, what has changed compared to the previous year? What are your teammates like? Have you made new friends?

The purpose of the letter is to focus particularly on personal experiences and emotions. The letter is written about the here and now. The group members should have plenty of time to write their letters.

The young people each make an envelope of an A4 sheet, and the instructor stores the letters. The letters must be kept in a safe and reliable place. When the letters are opened, the group should discuss what has happened since and consider how their thoughts and life may have changed. Reading the letter will allow the young people to see the changes that have taken place in themselves. Which emotions did reading the letter trigger?

8. Hunt for the future

GOAL

To learn to dream and set goals for oneself.

SUPPLIES

Carton or card (approx. 50-100 cm), scissors, glue, pens, magazines and newspapers and a photo of oneself

DURATION: 30-45 min

ACTIVITY

The young people stick a photo of themselves in the centre of a piece of card and imagine themselves in the future. What hobbies will you have? Where will you live? Where would you like to travel? Where are you studying? Where are you working? What will you want to learn? What will you want to be? What will you want to do? What will make you happy? What things will put you in a good mood? What things will you want to enjoy in the future? Who will be important to you then? The young people glue pictures on the card from magazine etc. that reflect their future. They can also draw if they cannot find a suitable picture. They can include aphorisms on their cards. Below are some examples:

- "Don't dream your life, live your dream."
- "You won't find happiness by looking for it but by living."
- "It is only with the heart one can see rightly"
- "Realising our dream is our role on earth."
- "You should not fear the unknown, because everyone is capable of achieving what they want and need."
- "A person following her path in life knows everything she need to know. There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve, the fear of failure".

ROUNDING OFF

- What could you do to achieve your dream?
- What do you need to support you?
- At what point do you achieve your dream- in the near future or when you are retired?
- Are your dreams realistic?
- Which of them are important?

Changing body and sexuality

9. Question and answer box

ACTIVITY

Young people can anonymously ask questions and post thoughts that they wish to be discussed, for example, on a theme night. The instructor may also invite an expert to participate and answer the questions. The box provides the instructor with information about subjects and questions that are topical for the young people.

ADAPTATIONS

Questions in the box can also be discussed on a weekly or daily basis: the instructor chooses an anonymous daily or weekly question from the box and writes an answer to it on the board for everyone to see, or the questions can

be discussed together during short 15-minute Ask and Answer sessions. The instructor can also collect thoughts and questions into the box in connection to different theme weeks. It is a good idea for the instructor to write the questions on the board, so that no one recognises other people's handwriting.

10. My growth

GOAL

The aim of the exercise is to review the changes that take place in a human body during puberty. The fact that everyone develops at their own pace is also brought up. This exercise works particularly well with 13 to 14-year-olds.

SUPPLIES: paper, pens

DURATION: 45-60 min

ACTIVITY

The young people are divided into groups of 4-6. The groups can be girl or boy groups, or mixed groups. Each group is given two sheets of paper and different coloured pens.

The group members draw a girl's body on one sheet and a boy's body on the other sheet so that the drawings show the changes brought by puberty. Let the young people draw freely and encourage them to clearly bring out the changes.

The completed drawings are hang on the wall and discussed as a group.

ROUNDING OFF

The group discusses puberty-related questions.

- What does puberty mean?
- What kinds of changes take place in the body?
- What thoughts do the changes stir?
- Which emotions does the changing body trigger?

Topics to bring up, if they do not come up in discussion:

In girls: breast growth, widening of hips, body hair, height growth, growth of sex organs, spots, increased sweating, periods.

In boys: widening of shoulders, growth of muscles, height growth, body hair, growth of sex organs, spots, ejaculations, voice change, increased sweating.

The instructor highlights everyone's individual and unique development at the end. The young people's drawings are likely to show the significant differences between different bodies, which is also worth highlighting. It is important to emphasise that a person's body develops into its own unique entity at its own pace. A 13-year old's body is far from "complete," and will continue to change and develop over the next few years. There is no rush.

Discuss the thoughts and feelings this may raise in the group- it is natural for young people to have mixed feelings. Encourage the young people to accept and value their own bodies.

If there is enough time, ask the young people to consider what the characteristics of a good body include. If the group only come up with appearance-related characteristics, the instructor should also highlight the health of the body and

all the different things we can do with our bodies, such as express ourselves, hug, touch, move, etc. Discuss within the group the different ways in which we use our bodies or the feelings we can express with our bodies.

ADAPTATIONS

- A) With the help of the Windmill of Emotions model, review the feelings that a changing body stirs in young people. The young people can draw their own bodies on a piece of paper, and write around it the feelings the changing body triggers. Why?
- B) It would be a good idea to discuss with the group what kinds of images media produces on sexuality and sex. In small groups, the young people can collect images from the Internet and magazines, which indicate their opinions of a healthy and genuine body. And on the other hand, what kinds of images are distorted, scary or distressing?

11. Body scan

GOAL

To increase self-knowledge. To familiarise young people with their own body and attitudes. Discussing diversity.

DURATION: 30-45 min

ACTIVITY

The group goes through the entire body one body part at a time from head to toe and discuss how every change in the body part's direction, pose (forward, backward, to the side, inward, outward) or pace (fast, slow) impacts attitudes and mood. As an example: if your shoulders are pulled forward/backward/one is up, the other one down/towards the ears, how does the change impact the rest of your body? Do you hunch down or is your back straight? And your gaze? Do you feel like looking at others or avoiding eye contact? How does the change impact your attitude? Do you feel more positive or negative with your shoulders pulled forward? What kind of a character does the change bring to mind? What would they say right now?

The group goes through other body parts, the head, hands, back, chest, stomach, hips, bottom, knees and feet, in the same way.

Face: try different ways in which you can use your lips (pouting, crooked, thin); eyes (small, large, slanted), cheeks (plump, flat), head (forward, backward, to the side, tilted). What kinds of characters do the different movements and positions bring to mind? How does the change influence the mood and attitudes?

Voice: low, high, fast, slow, creaking, loud, quiet.

Finally, different body parts can be combined, for example, shoulders forward, bottom backward and feet inward. What is this character like? What could they be thinking? What kind of a voice would they have?

It is a good idea to do some of the exercises in chapter 4 *Emotions and emotional skills before doing this exercise.*

ROUNDING OFF

- Why is it good to pay attention to your own attitudes?
- Can you influence how other people react to you by thinking about what you express with your body and face?
- Which of these people would be easier to approach for a chat: a person with permanently furrowed brow or a person with eyes wide open and slightly raised eyebrows?
- How could you develop your own attitudes?
- How do prejudices and attitudes impact the way we react to other people?
- What is your strength in expressing yourself?

12. Body vibes map

GOAL

To give the group members a chance to explore their bodies and the feelings and functions manifested by it. To offer them the ability to share their thoughts and experiences in pairs. To develop self-knowledge and emotional skills.

SUPPLIES: paper, pens; chalk (for outdoor drawing)

DURATION: 30-45 min

ACTIVITY

The group is divided into pairs, and the shape of a body is outlined on the floor. It can be made using masking tape or chalk on pavement if the exercise is done outside. The young people could also draw the outline of a person in groups or pairs on a large piece of paper. Emphasise that the following exercise has no right or wrong answers.

Ask the young people to walk on top of the giant body as follows. Go to the part that:

- sweats the most when exercising
- is your strongest part
- shows nervousness
- smells the worst
- smells the best
- is the most sensitive point
- has the conscience
- feels grief
- feels love
- feels the betrayal of a friend
- feels the pain when someone is mocking or being mean
- feels good moods
- feels encouragement
- feels a poorly slept night
- feels success
- feels failure

After each task, ask what part of the body the young people are in.

ROUNDING OFF

Discuss each part, and ask the young people why they made their choices.

For example, if a friend's betrayal can be felt in a fist, the discussion can be led to the preference for non-violent behaviour and what are our other options are, instead of resorting to violent behaviour. The exercise can also be rounded off in small groups, if it does not work in a large group.

ADAPTATION

The instructor asks and the young people point to the part of their body in which love, for example, can be felt. And how do you use your body or face to express that you are in love?

13. Discussion on sexuality

GOAL: To kickstart a discussion on sexuality with the group.

DURATION: 30-45 min

SUPPLIES

Picture cards and the Windmill of Emotions model can be used as an aid in the discussion

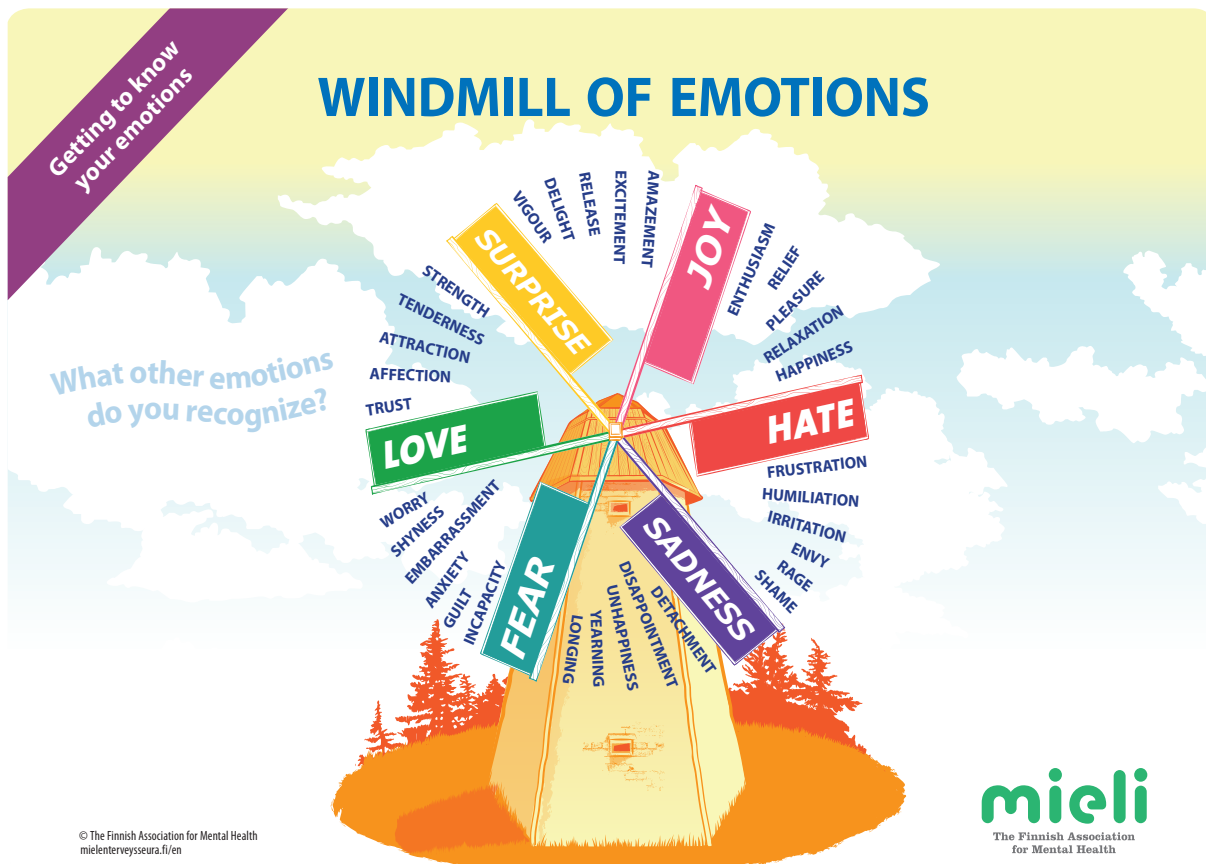
ACTIVITY

The young people choose a picture card or a colour, which in their view describes sexuality. Picture cards and questions are used to aid the discussion. Prior to the discussion, it is important to ensure the grouping works and the group feels safe. Working with a small group is also a good idea. An adult should be part of the discussion throughout the exercise. Using different materials such as pieces of fabric may be useful. The fabric pieces can be used to explain what sexuality feels like or what colour it is.

Questions for the discussion

- What does sexuality mean?
- What does it involve?
- In what ways has sex and sexuality been discussed with you at school?
- What does sexuality feel like?
- What good and bad experiences can be related to sexuality?
- How is sexuality apparent on the body?
- What is love?
- What kinds of emotions do you think are related to love?
- What does infatuation feel like?
- What kinds of emotions does sexuality trigger?
- What are different cultures' or religions' attitudes to sexuality? What about families and generations?
- What was sexuality like before?
- What type of information do you want to receive about sex and sexuality?
- What kinds of values do you attribute to sexuality?
- What is integrity?
- What does sexual responsibility mean?
- What does a good touch feel like?
- What does pleasure mean?
- What is allowed and what is prohibited?

More information: The questions are based on the Water Lily model presented in this chapter. The model can be found in Bildjuschkin and Ruuhilahti (2012): *Hot. Huolehdi, Ohjaa, Tue.*



Summary

- Emotional skills are connected to mental health.
- Emotional skills are strengthened with practice.
- All emotions are allowed, but all actions are not.
- You can learn to express emotions in a constructive manner.
- Identifying and expressing emotions enriches life, makes you feel better and helps you to understand others.

4 EMOTIONS AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Importance of emotional skills for mental health

Emotional skills are learned and practised from birth, and they can and must be strengthened throughout life. Children and young people begin to practise emotional skills with the help of their parents and other people in their lives. Some children and young people do not, however, get the best possible tools at home for learning emotional skills. With age, the number of interests outside the home begin to increase. During puberty, school and friendships are a training field for emotional skills. Although the role of friends is emphasised during puberty, adults outside the home, such as youth work professionals, also play an important role in supporting emotion management methods.

Emotional skills are some of the most important skills that promote mental health and wellbeing. To practise their skills, young people need adults' example on how to identify, name and process emotions. They learn by imitating and identify with the adults' ability to process their emotions in emotionally charged interaction. Young people also need the security offered by an adult to help them put into words their own emotions and practise constructive expression.

Emotional skills strengthen young people's self-knowledge, because emotions describe important things about what is happening within themselves and others during puberty. When they have the tools to tell about themselves and their feelings, they have more opportunities for establishing and maintaining relationships.

Function of emotions

Emotions are a constant part of life. They are often triggered as a response to something. The triggered emotion makes us take action. Emotions are individual. We can experience very different feelings in similar situations, depending on our previous life events. We can experience a countless number of different feelings, and it is not always easy to identify them. Emotions play an important role in directing our actions, motivation, interaction and setting limits.

In the past, they played a significant role in our survival, and they continue to help us survive. Some emotions are triggered so fast that we do not consciously have time to deal with them. An example of this is the emotion of fear in dangerous situations. Emotions help anticipate circumstances and learn from experience. We have a better chance of learning, if we know how to deal with emotions and experiences internally.

One of the function of emotions is to tell us what is important in terms of our wellbeing. Emotions also make us seek things that bring us pleasure and prosperity, such as the company of kind and safe people. However, they also help us avoid

things, which may be harmful or can cause distress. We need emotions to form new relationships and to maintain old and important ones.

All emotions are significant and convey a message and, thus, need to be listened to. Love conveys the message of affection and caring, shows what is valuable to us and what empowers us. Joy gives us power in life. Hatred indicates that someone or something has crossed the limit. Grief helps address loss: its function is to cleanse the burden of experiences and emotional storms. Fear reminds and warns us of a potential threat. Shame may be a sign of insecurity. Anxiety suggests a contradiction, which must be acknowledged and solved before moving on. Only by understanding the messages of our emotions, can we guide our actions to help us find balance and wellbeing. If we attempt to discard our emotions too quickly, we may lose the message and the opportunity to move forward with interaction and life's challenges.

Emotions in the body and mind

Emotions are experienced in the body, and they are given a meaning in the mind. Emotions involve a physiological sensation, such as sweating, faster breathing, trembling or squeezed hands, the feeling of heaviness or pressure in the chest or may be a tingling sensation. These sensations may be evident in our expressions, gestures, voice and body posture. The mind interprets the sensations: situations and feelings they trigger are given a meaning.

The frequency, duration and intensity of the feelings vary. The actual feeling may be short, but the mood, such as irritability, may last longer. Feelings can be different in intensity: some small thing may cheer us up and make us smile, or we may experience great enthusiasm and jump for joy.

The basic emotions, joy, anger, sorrow, fear, surprise and hatred, are common to all cultures, and they are expressed around the world with similar facial expressions. They have played an important role in the conservation of our species. In addition to the basic emotions, there is a huge range of emotions and nuances, which influence the emotional experience.

Social emotions help us communicate to others about needs and issues behind the emotions. Emotions are interactive messages, which we express, consciously or subconsciously, and others respond to them. Social emotions, such as caring, love, longing, shame, guilt, jealousy and envy, promote the sense of community and social interaction. Our family and culture substantially shape the way we experience and express social emotions. Social emotions help us learn the surrounding values and rules and influence the way we operate with people.

Emotional skills - identification and expression

The brain, body and mind interact with one another. Observing and listening to yourself reassures and strengthens the cooperation between the different levels of the brain. This improves emotional management and flexibility.

At their best, emotions give us power. Being well connected with our emotions means that we have the ability to identify, name and express emotions constructively. Such emotional ability releases and increases energy, reduces stress and helps us look after our health. Repressing or dismissing emotions increases the likelihood of depression and makes us more exposed to uncontrollable rush of emotions. Prolonged negative emotions can weaken physical health, increase the risk of death and slow down the recovery from illnesses. In complex, emotionally charged phases of life, we need the ability and skills to channel our emotions constructively, for example, by looking after our own needs, detecting negative thoughts or using relaxation techniques or stress management.

Detecting and acknowledging emotions is a starting point for gaining emotional skills. Sometimes emotions may not be acknowledged or they may be difficult to identify. We may, for example, feel vaguely anxious. Sometimes, we may try to ease poorly acknowledged emotions by eating, exercising or rationalising our mood to avoid having to face the actual painful emotion behind the impulsion. However, then emotions may turn into direct actions putting us at the mercy of our emotions. By repressing our emotions, we may end up with the exact unpleasant result we were trying to avoid in the first place.

The ability to express and word our emotions helps us regulate our behaviour. Expressing positive emotions creates a safe atmosphere - for example, showing that we care, strengthens relationships. It is good to learn to channel the more difficult emotions, so they don't become damaging. We can express emotions through physical reactions or gestures, by talking or taking action such as exercise.

The regulation of emotions refers to the ability to manage emotions and control behaviour, as well as, to the production and strengthening of useful emotions. However, managing emotions does not mean that we would repress or deny them; it refers to the ability to experience emotions safely, and the skill to express, channel and work with them constructively. Emotion management refers to the ability to relieve strenuous emotions, helping us regain balance. Emotions can be regulated by, for example, going to pleasant places, abandoning a situation that encourages aggression, recalling pleasant things or seeing something positive in an otherwise disappointing situation. By just living through everyday situations and sometimes emotionally charged moments, we feel alive and do not need artificial stimuli to produce emotions. And we learn something new about ourselves and life in general.

The importance of emotional skills lies in the fact that we can use these skills to confidently face life events and the emotions they stir, without the constant fear of losing balance. Thus, different events should stir appropriate and suitably strong emotions and reactions, meaning that we are able to regulate which emotions are triggered, how long they last for and how strong the reaction is. Balance means

Emotional management refers to the ability to safely experience emotions and to constructively express, channel and process them.

that we are willing and have the courage to try and express both simple and more difficult feelings.

All emotions, even the more challenging ones, such as grief, anxiety and anger, are permitted, and there is nothing wrong in experiencing different emotions. The fact that you can accept the existence of emotions and identify your own emotions and those of others is a valuable emotional skill in itself, which supports mental health. Emotional skills help establish a strong self-image and self-esteem; relieve stress and anxiety, and allow us to cope with life's burdens.



Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to identify and express personal emotions and also to take other people's emotions into consideration. It also means being able to use emotions to support thinking, for example, in problem-solving situations and in tasks that require creativity. Furthermore, emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive emotional information, for example, by understanding an event and the emotion that followed it.

Emotions and common sense usually cooperate and help cope with difficulties in life. The side, the emotional or the sensible one, that takes hold of our mind varies: the more powerful the emotion is, the stronger the emotional and weaker the sensible mind is. Common sense and emotions usually interact: emotions are necessary for sensible thinking and common sense is needed for emotions.

To summarise, people operate in an emotionally intelligent manner, when they accept and acknowledge their emotions and are able to regulate them without thinking that they represent the reality.

Emotions during adolescent changes

When we are young, our minds are filled with different emotions and our moods vary. We may be impetuous, unbalanced, confused and have mood swings; sometimes we may feel low and sad and at others happy and satisfied. The mind is filled with thoughts and feelings, and we are learning to categorise them. Uncategorised thoughts and feelings may come across as emotional outbreaks and some may be quick-tempered, whilst others internalise the turmoil.

During adolescence, we grow quickly and our bodies start resembling an adult figure. The changes often make us feel proud, but they can also be confusing or scary. We become more aware and observant of ourselves: am I different from others; do my friends accept me; am I good enough as I am.

These observations may bring along feelings of anxiety, nervousness and shame, which may be difficult to express. When we are young, we may not have the words for the emotions or the ability to identify them in our body and mind. Sometimes leaving emotions unexpressed shows as physical symptoms, such as stomach aches, headaches or the general feeling of indisposition.

Challenging emotions in young people's life

It is important to our wellbeing to be able to identify emotional messages and particularly the challenging emotions. It can be painful to process some social emotions, such as shame and pride, which is why we sometimes attempt not to experience them. However, living through our emotions releases energy for problem-solving, which, in turn, reduces stress.

It is important to remind young people that there is no need to fear our emotions and that even the most powerful emotions are only temporary. No emotion is permanent. We must release and channel strong emotions, such as anger and grief, to ensure that they are not left smouldering leaving us feeling unhappy. We practise emotional skills throughout life and can always improve them.

Love

Love is a strong emotion for young people. It can give us power, but it can also be challenging. Love attaches us to life and other people. Caring for and taking care of people are demonstrations of love.

Love is often seen as romantic love between two people. However, love is much more than that; it is one of the basic human needs. Loving and taking care of yourself is just as important as the ability to love others. We must be able to love ourselves to have the capacity to love another person.

Love protects life. The essence of love is the communication and acceptance of love - to be endearing to the other person and being able to accept unconditional love. We can also love things, activities, items and meanings in such a way that it enriches our life and the life of others.

Disappointments and failure

In adolescence, we practise and learn new skills that may take several attempts and mistakes. Many young people are very sensitive to disappointment and failure. Disappointments can trigger melancholy, sadness and sometimes even anger, and failure can give rise to shame. It is a good idea to remind young people that failures are bound to happen in everyone's life, both during adolescence and in adulthood.

Failure is a sign of having been brave and attempted something, so it is not to be ashamed of. You can react to failure with an open mind and humour, have the courage to laugh at yourself and say "oops, this is what happened this time". This is also a way to tell others that failure is allowed. Failure is not pointless either, because you can learn from it.

We should remind youngsters that goals need to be set at a realistic level and that expectations of ourselves should be reasonable. It is good to remember that you do not always have to achieve perfect success, because to err is human.

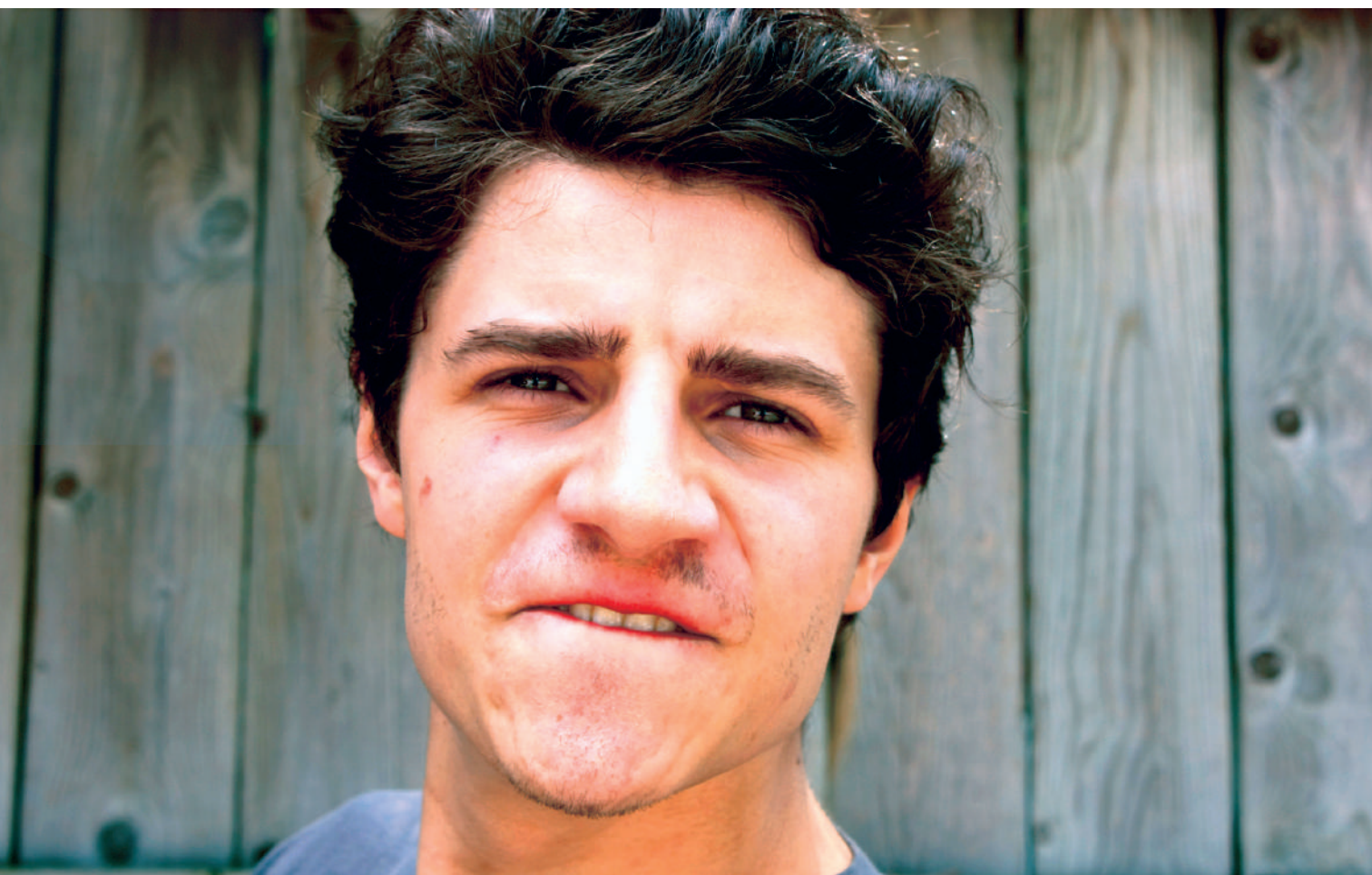
Anger

Puberty involves strong emotions. With physical growth comes new strength. It can at times be difficult to control the rapidly changing body and particularly during sudden outbreaks of strong emotion. Everyone is faced with situations that stir anger, irritation or hatred. We cannot deny our emotions or make them disappear, but we can learn to recognise and express them safely.

Young people can be shown how to process anger.

1. Recognising anger is the first step, i.e. realising that you are now angry. An adult can help young people by describing what it feels like to be angry: your heart begins to beat faster; your head begins to pound; your hands may pull into fists, and your body tenses.
2. When you are in a fit of rage, you can decide, whether you want to feed the emotion or aim to calm yourself down. You can take time out and count to ten or a hundred, before saying or doing anything. If possible, you can try and think about something else, a calm and pleasant situation maybe, thus, consciously learning to control your own feelings and mind. It is important to emphasise to young people that in a fit of emotional turmoil, you should never grab at another person.
3. If you know that certain situations test your self-restraint, you should prepare for them in advance as well as you can. Challenging situations are perfect for learning and practising self-control and social skills. If all other means fail, the best way could be to try and withdraw from the situation as soon as possible. Such method is called "managed escape".

Everyone is faced with situations that stir anger, irritation or hatred.



Emotion word list at the end of the handbook on pages 236 - 237.

4. Hitting a pillow or shouting at it, going for a run or to the gym, crying or jumping may ease a powerful fit of emotion. Telling a friend about emotions is a way of processing them. Creative activities, such as handicrafts, dance, music and art are excellent ways of relieving negative emotions.
5. Sometimes behind your anger is some other emotion, such as fear, insecurity, despair or shame, and that is also important to acknowledge. The Windmill of Emotions or the emotion word lists may be helpful in interpreting underlying emotions.

Everyone must learn to live with strong emotions and find their own way to process them. Regulating your behaviour in emotional situations is an extremely important skill. Being able to control your mind is rewarding and empowering, and it improves self-knowledge and self-esteem.

Grief

Everyone encounters sadness and grief in their life. Loss is a natural part of life. In adolescence, we experience many things for the first time, and it may seem hard to find our place in life and to deal with the changes we face. Everyone feels low and sad at times in relation to everyday things.

A number of different things may trigger grief. A friend moving away, the death of a pet, end of compulsory education, end of a relationship, missing out on a study place, parents' divorce or a relative's illness can all be the cause of grief. Grief and sadness can also trigger or be triggered by other painful feelings, such as disappointment, longing, guilt, anger or bitterness.

Young people should be made aware of sadness and grief and how it may feel like to experience it, and they should be supported through it.

1. It is important to emphasise to young people that processing grief takes time and space. We can get through a painful experience and move forward with our lives. Everyone grieves in their own way and everyone's grief is unique. Young people also have the right to grieve.
2. It is important to talk to a good friend or a family member about sad events and feelings of sorrow. Young people should not be left alone with grief. Youth workers must be ready to approach young people and offer to listen, when they need it. Talking about your emotions with friends and family helps to understand them. Some young people may think that crying is shameful or embarrassing, but it is good to stress that when you feel like crying, you should allow yourself to cry. It is important to give time and space for crying, because it cleanses and makes you feel better. Crying and other reactions to grief should not make you feel ashamed.

Read more about grief and crisis survival in chapter 7 *Young survivor*.

3. In the midst of grief, it is good to take care of everyday things. Eating enough provides energy, sleeping, rest and relaxing help with coping and exercising and spending time and talking with friends provide vitality and joy. Young people struggling with grief may need to be reminded that they should not expect too much of themselves and need to also have time to recover and avoid unnecessary stress. Gradually, they will be able to find moments of joy and things that bring happiness again.



Creative activities are a good way to deal with grief and other emotions.

Sources and more information

- Aalberg, V. & Siimes, M. A. (2007). Lapsesta aikuiseksi. Nuoren kypsyminen naiseksi tai mieheksi. Jyväskylä: Publishing company Nemo.
- Cacciatore, R. (2007). Aggression portaat. Teaching material for schools. Finnish National Agency for Education.
- Damasio, A. (2003). Spinozaa etsimässä. Ilo, suru ja tuntevat aivot. Helsinki: Hakapaino.
- Goldstein, A. P., Glick, B. & Gibbs, J. C. (2009). ART. Aggression Replacement Training. Group exercise method for aggressively behaving young people. Helsinki: Nordprint.
- Goleman, D. (1997). Tunneäly. Lahjakkuuden koko kuva. Helsinki: Otava.
- Hannukkala, M. & Törrönen, S. (2009). Mielen hyvinvointi. Training module for health education. The Finnish Association for Mental Health.
- Isokorpi, T. (2004). Tunneoppia parempaan vuorovaikutukseen. Juva: PS-Kustannus.
- Kokkonen, M. (2010). Ihastuttavat, vihastuttavat tunteet. Opi tunteiden säätelyn taito. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.
- Passi – Portti Elämään. Lions Quest training program. (2002). Vantaa: Dark.
- Purjo, T. (eds.) (2008). Väkivaltaisesta nuoruudesta vastuulliseen aikuisuuteen. Nuorten erityiskasvatuksen mahdollisuudet ja keinot. Non Fighting Generation.
- Rosenberg, M. B. (2001). Myötäelämisen taito. Johdatus väkivallattomaan vuorovaikutukseen. Helsinki: Dialogia.
- Röning, T. Tunteet ja tunnetaidot. Lecture for youth workers in Helsinki 19 Sep 2012. Mielenterveystaidot nuorisotyöhön (Mental health skills for youth work) pilot, Finnish Association for Mental Health.
- Röning, T. Aggression kohtaaminen. Lecture for youth workers in Helsinki 7 Nov 2011. Mielenterveystaidot nuorisotyöhön (Mental health skills for youth work) pilot, Finnish Association for Mental Health.
- Saarikallio, S. (2007). Music as mood regulation in adolescence. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.
- Sinkkonen, J. (2010). Nuoruusikä. Juva: WSOY.
- Tuovila, S. (2005). Kun on tunteet. Semantics of Finnish emotional words. Oulu: University of Oulu. <http://herkules oulu.fi/isbn9514278070/isbn9514278070.pdf>
- Vilkko-Riihelä, A. (2001). Psykyke. Psychology manual. Porvoo: WSOY.
- The Finnish Association for Mental Health. Vahvistamo. Tunteet. <http://www.vahvistamo.fi/vahvistamo/tunteet/>

EXERCISES

The exercises in the Emotions and emotional skills section have been divided as follows: Understand your emotions, Understand other people's emotions, Body and emotions and Difficult emotions.

Understand your emotions

1. Emotion questionnaire

GOAL

To learn to talk about our own emotions using pictures. Picture cards are particularly helpful, when young people find it hard to put their emotions in to words.

SUPPLIES: picture cards, Windmill of Emotions model

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

The young people select a picture card or colour (reverse side of the cards), which describes their current emotional state, and using the card tell about the emotion to others.

ROUNDING OFF

- Which emotions are most common? Which emotions are least common?
- Which emotions do we experience together with friends? What about in terms of hobbies, school, youth club or parents?
- What is the cause for the current emotion?
- Which emotions could be in the background of the emotion?

2. Emotion wall

GOAL: To practise identifying your emotions and to encourage discussing them.

SUPPLIES

A3 paper, pens, Windmill of Emotions Model, Emotion Words (see annex p. 236-237), Emotional State Curve (see annex p. 238)

DURATION: 15–30 min (during 3 days)

ACTIVITY

The young people draw the emotions from the past three days on the youth centre's emotion wall. For example, the young people can draw their emotion of the day/evening on a shared large piece of paper when they visit the centre. They could also choose to write on the wall. It helps to use the Windmill of Emotions and Emotion words when describing emotions.

ROUNDING OFF

- Which emotions come up?
- What do the emotions tell about your state of mind? Which emotions might be behind the emotions?
- Which emotions do I experience most or least often?
- What is the general feeling in the youth centre?
- Are people's emotional states different when they arrive and when they leave?

ADAPTATIONS

- A) Emotions online: the young people create a group in Facebook helped by the instructor. They then post the different emotions they have experienced during the day on the Facebook wall on a daily basis. Alternatively, they may choose to download images expressing emotions on the wall. The group can discuss different emotions with one another keeping in mind the importance of writing appropriate things.
- B) The young people write their emotions on the Emotional State Curve for a week. The task is to consider, which emotions they have experienced during the day. The group then discusses the exercise a week later.
- Which emotion stands out?
 - Which emotion might be behind the emotion?
 - What is the message of this emotion?

3. Word explanation game about emotions

GOAL

To Encourage the group to talk about emotions and practise identifying and describing them. To identify, which emotions are involved in different situations.

SUPPLIES: Emotion Words (see annex p. 236-237)

DURATION: 30-45 min

ACTIVITY

Copy the Emotion Words and cut them into individual pieces. The Young People work in pairs and each pair gets their own Emotion Words. The aim is to play a word explanation game with the Emotion Words. The instructor gives a signal, when the one-minute-long period starts and ends. One partner explains and the other one guesses. The one explaining takes one Emotion Word from the pile one emotion and describes it as accurately as possible, without saying the emotion. The other person guesses which emotion is in question. The pair score one point for each correctly guessed emotion. When the time runs out, parts are swapped and the exercise is repeated.

ROUNDING OFF

- Which emotions were difficult to describe?
- Which emotions were easy to guess?
- What made it difficult to guess the emotions? And easy?
- Which emotion was fun to explain?
- Were all the emotions expressed in the same way as they would be in real life?

ADAPTATIONS

- A) Pictionary game about emotions: just as the word explanation game, but instead of explaining the words, one partner draws the emotion and the other person tries to guess. As in the original game, the drawings must not include any symbols (e.g. heart), numbers or characters (e.g. lightning, dollar sign, etc.)
- B) Charades about emotions: As above, but emotions are now expressed with your body and face, without words.

4. Emotion song

GOAL

To explain the rise and expression of and experiencing emotions through music and the impact of music on mood.

SUPPLIES

The group's choice of tracks and a CD player/computer or other audio device, Windmill of Emotions model

DURATION: 30-90 min

ACTIVITY

The young people choose the music tracks to be played during the evening. The song choices do not need to be justified or explained. The group discusses what kinds of thoughts and emotions the songs give rise to. The group then name the emotions the songs triggered.

ROUNDING OFF

- Can music help express or process emotions? Why?
- What kind of music do you listen to when you are happy, sad, angry, disappointed, in love, joyful?
- How does your song selection affect your emotions? Why?
- Can the mood of a song be contagious?
- Do you intend to influence your emotions by, for example, selecting a happy song when you are angry? Does it work?

ADAPTATIONS

Instead of music try sports. Each participant chooses some sport to describe to the rest of group or asks the group to play, such as a game of floorball.

- Why did you choose that sport?
- Which emotions do sports trigger in the young people?
- Can exercise help process emotions?
- Which emotions can different forms of exercise help convey?
- Which sport do you choose when you are happy, sad, angry, anxious?
- When do you choose to go for a run and when do you do calm stretching instead?

5. Emotions in advertisements

GOAL: To observe and identify emotions.

SUPPLIES: television/internet/magazines, Windmill of Emotions model

DURATION: 15-45 min

ACTIVITY

The group chooses one (or for comparison, several) advertisement(s) and observes the moods on TV/in magazines using the Windmill of Emotions model.

ROUNDING OFF

- Which emotions can the group find in the advertisements? Why?
- How are the emotions used to influence consumers?
- How does the advertisement identify the target group? Who is the advertisement aimed for?
- If the target group were different, how would it affect the emotions used in the advertisement? Why?
- Can the mood of an advertisement be contagious? Can the mood of a friend be contagious?

6. On-the-spot emotions

GOAL

To practise the expression of and quick reaction to a variety of emotions through storytelling.

SUPPLIES: Emotion Words (see annex p. 236-237)

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

- Emotion feed: One person tells a story, e.g. about an everyday activity (morning routines, previous day's hobby, visiting a relative, etc.). One pre-selected group member, shouts out an emotion from the Emotion Words during the story-telling, to which the storyteller must respond immediately by changing the narrative to match the emotion. During the story, the storyteller should receive approximately 4-5 different emotions.
- Growing emotion: One emotion is chosen from the Emotion Words. 3-5 young people standing in line (or a pair taking turns) tell a story for three rounds about a given topic. During the storytelling, the chosen emotion gradually grows and grows until, on the last round, the emotion is very strong.

ROUNDING OFF

- How did the chosen emotion influence the story?
- Did the words or tone of the story change due to the emotion?
- How did the emotion influence the storyteller (loudness of voice, tone, movements, gestures, expressions)?

Additional information:
Johnstone, K. 1999. *Impro for Storytellers*.

Understand other people's emotions

7. Facial expressions behind emotions

GOAL

To identify other people's emotions. How and where do you identify another person's emotions?

SUPPLIES

Windmill of Emotions model, the picture cards showing a face

DURATION: 30-45 min

ACTIVITY

Using the Windmill of Emotions, discuss which emotions can be detected on the picture-card faces.

ROUNDING OFF

- Which emotion was difficult to find?
- How do facial expressions and gestures communicate emotions?
- Are emotional expressions the same in every country?
- If not, how do they differ?
- Why does a facial expression not always tell about the person's emotions? Do people attempt to hide difficult emotions and why?

If the atmosphere within the group is safe and the discussion is flowing well, the instructor may ask one group member to volunteer and tell about a situation, in which s/he has experienced an emotion in a conversation. The instructor can also choose to participate and give his/her own example.

ADAPTATIONS

- Emotions behind gossip and news: The instructor brings in newspapers and magazines. In groups, the young people think about the emotions the people in the news' and magazine articles have experienced. The Windmill of Emotions can be used as an aid. Where and how are emotions visible in the text or images? Can an emotion be seen in a certain detail (small area) of the face or body?
- Emotion workout for the face: Practising to identify emotions shown on other people's faces. Each pair gets the Emotion Word labels (see Annex p. 236-237), and the pair takes turns to communicate these words to the partner using just their face. How do you communicate your emotions with facial expressions? Can you recognise different emotions from the face?

8. With your eyes only

GOAL

The aim is to observe, how much we communicate with our eyes. The aim is also to enrich the young people's expressive skills by paying attention to both small and large muscle work when they are expressing an emotion.

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

Taking turns, the pairs attempt to communicate an emotion using only their eyes. The activity is easier if your face below your eyes is covered with a scarf or a piece of paper. The pairs can come up with emotions or use the Emotion Words (see Annex p. 236-237).

ROUNDING OFF

- Can you communicate an emotion with your eyes, without using your eyebrows or cheek muscles as well? How?
- Why do we have the saying "the eyes are the mirror of the soul"?
- Why is it possible to see from someone's eyes, if their smile is not genuine?
- What is the significance of looking others in the eye?
- Have you encountered people, who never look you straight in the eye during a conversation?
- How does it feel?
- Why do they not look you in the eye?

Body and emotions

9. Body feels

GOAL

To learn to identify, how emotions can affect the entire body and where they can be physically felt. The aim of the exercise is to consider whether we can influence our emotions using the body.

DURATION: 30-45 min

ACTIVITY

In pairs, try and find out, where different emotions are felt and how they affect the entire body. Can we feel an emotion through physical activity?

- **Grief:** Give your friend a piggyback, and walk around the room slowly. When your friend gets off your back, continue walking and aim to keep the same sense of weight on your back. How does the imagined heavy weight affect your emotions and mood?
- **Anger/disappointment:** Hold your breathe. How does it affect your whole body? Can breathing or holding your breathe affect your mood?
- **Joy/surprise/curiosity:** Open eyes wide (stretching the forehead, brow too) and view various objects in the room. How do eyes affect your mood?
- **Uncertainty/hatred:** Frown and look around at the objects and people in the room. How does frowning affect the rest of your body? Do your hands automatically go into fists? Do your shoulders hunch forward? Does relaxing your brow have an impact on emotion management?
- **Relief/infatuation:** Take deep breaths and exhalations. Does breathing affect your posture and mind? Did you open your chest? What kinds of thoughts might taking deep breaths trigger?

ROUNDING OFF

Discuss other connections between the body and moods. Where do you feel love, envy, pride, acceptance or longing?

Additional information:
Pätsi, Mia. 2010. *Näyttelijän tekniikoita*.

ADAPTATIONS

- A) Try expressing different emotions without letting them show on your face. How do you cry with your hands, legs or back? How does your body reflect laughter or surprise; how do you laugh with your toes or stomach? Come up with more examples as a group!
- B) How does the emotion feel: The group looks for stories, proverbs, aphorisms, children's programmes, etc., which describe the experience of emotions in the body. How are they demonstrated in the examples? The instructor can read the following to the group as an example:

"First it feels like your heart drops to the pit of your stomach and splatters abdominal acids over your internal organs. And then all that humidity makes you sweat a lot. The humidity causes a short circuit in your brain and then you become a bit strange. When your brain has smouldered, your mouth detaches and you begin blabbering like crazy until the person has gone."

Stuffed tiger, Hobbes, describes love: Watterson, B. Calvin and Hobbes

10. Emotions in pictures

GOAL

To develop creative thinking through planning and artistic storytelling. To find out about emotional expression through photography. To consider different ways of expressing and creating the air of an emotion, so that it is conveyed to those looking at the photograph.

SUPPLIES: camera, printer

DURATION: 1-3 hours

ACTIVITY

The participants come up with various emotional events. It might be a good idea to pre-plan the composition to ensure that any necessary accessories, such as clothes, objects or make-up kits, are handy. Encourage the young people to think creatively! Photography is storytelling: one photo tells a thousand words! No censoring is necessary at the brainstorming; instead, the participants should consider how different suggestions could be brought together, developed and implemented.

As an example, photographing grief: A girl leans against a tree in a dark forest gazing down with her make-up smudged. Strands of her hair stick to her face. The photo is a close up and black and white.

The photos can be either black and white or colour. The participants can make their own frames for their photos using cardboard, coloured paper, fabric, sticks, twigs. The printed or developed photos are used to make a photo exhibition. In the exhibition, the labels for the photos state the name of the photographer, the year and the name of the artwork, as is the custom in an art exhibitions. The group may choose to invite people to the official opening of the exhibition.

Before the photo shoots, it is a good idea to learn about different angles of view, because a wide-angle and a close-up, for example, tell a different story.



Continues on the next page...

ROUNDING OFF

- How did it feel to model in the photos?
- Was it easy or difficult to express emotions as a model? What did you aim to focus on? Body position or expressions?
- What was it like to plan the photo composition and take the photos? Was it easy or difficult? Why? What was it like to present the group's work at the photo exhibition?
- Did the photos present a visible storyline (what had happened, how did the person feel and why)? Can you recognise emotions in the body and in the facial expressions?
- If several photos include the same emotion, what do they have in common and how do they differ?

ADAPTATIONS

If there is no time for photography, the group can bring their own photos for the exhibition, and discuss them using the rounding off questions. Alternatively, the young people can create digital stories, which could be presented at a joint exhibition (see p. 17).

Difficult emotions

11. Hello emotion

GOAL

To identify emotions triggered by everyday life situations and to consider ways of coping with the situations.

SUPPLIES

pen, paper, Windmill of Emotions model, Emotion Words (see Annex p. 236-237)

DURATION: 30-60 min

ACTIVITY

The participants each select two difficult emotions from the Windmill of Emotions and think about situations in which they have experienced these emotions and how they were manifested. The participants write a letter to the emotions describing the situation in which they occurred and who was present and what the experience felt like.

ROUNDING OFF

The piece of writing is discussed as a group or individually with the instructor.

- What challenging situations have the young people experienced? Which emotions have these situations triggered?
- Why is it so important to express emotions?
- When has it been difficult to express emotions? Why?
- How could the emotion have been expressed in that situation?

ADAPTATION

The participants choose three emotions each from the Emotion Words and using the words, write an imaginary story, rap, lyrics or a poem of daily events. The story should describe different events and emotions that they trigger.

12. Emotional coping map

You can find tips on processing difficult emotions on pages 80-83.

Sometimes leaving emotions unexpressed shows as physical symptoms, such as stomach aches, headaches or general feeling of indisposition.

GOAL

To understand the impact of emotions on young people's physical wellbeing. To consider solution models for challenging emotions.

SUPPLIES: Windmill of Emotions Model

DURATION: 30-60 min

ACTIVITY

Each participant makes a coping map for emotions for themselves: They write challenging emotions on a piece of paper and consider what can be done to ease each of the emotions. For example, do you tell a friend or a relative when you are feeling sad? How do you cope with the feelings of anger?

ROUNDING OFF

- Which difficult and challenging emotions have you experienced?
- Which solution models did you plan?
- Have you ever had to push emotions aside? If you have, what kinds of situations were they and why? How did it feel? How did your body respond?
- What kinds of emotions does adolescence and approaching adulthood trigger?
- What kinds of emotions do the changes in your body raise? Which changes scare you and why?

It is good to discuss different emotions with young people, and their potential impact on physical wellbeing.

- What may be the cause of a stomach ache? Which is the underlying emotion? What does the emotion communicate?
- How does the body respond, when you are feeling sad? Do you lose your appetite?

13. Oops, this is how it went this time

GOAL

To manage failure, embarrassment and disappointment and to learn to leave these emotions behind. To learn to laugh at yourself.

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

The group members think of an everyday situation, in which they have failed or experienced embarrassment. They can then briefly describe the experience, and the others respond by loudly saying: "Oops, this is what happened this time!" The instructor can start by telling his/her own example of a failure. It is important for young people to learn to put up with the feelings of disappointment; they are part of life. You have to learn to laugh at yourself; not everything has to be taken so seriously.

You can find tips on facing disappointments on p. 80.

ROUNDING OFF

- Why is it difficult to forget your own mistakes?
- Do they often come back to haunt you?
- How can you get over your own mistakes?
- Is it easy or difficult to laugh at yourself?
- How can you forget about your mistakes?
- Where in your body do you feel your mistakes and what does it feel like?

Practice makes perfect!

SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

COOPERATION

- I encourage others
- I take others into consideration
- I can say thank you

SEEKING HELP

- I know how to ask for help
- I can help others

NEGOTIATION

- I can be flexible
- I am considerate
- I can question things
- I am able to express my opinion

EMPATHY

- I listen to others
- I am sympathetic

RESOLVING CONFLICTS AND DISPUTES

- I can apologise
- I can forgive

ASSERTIVE-NESS

- I am able to say NO
- I can voice my opinion

Summary

- Interactive skills develop in everyday encounters with others.
- Reinforcing interactive skills helps support mental health.
- Youth work environments offer good opportunities for reinforcing interactive skills and finding occasions for practising them.

5 ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIPS

Interactive skills support mental health

Seize the moment! Youth work can help strengthen young people's interactive skills. See tips in the exercises section.

Social relationships are important for mental health. Everyone needs people around them from cradle to grave. Friendships and the sense of feeling approved and belonging to a community often bring happiness.

The ability to establish and maintain relationships are key to forming a safety net and a community. Being part of and the sense of community bring safety, trust, togetherness and caring for others. Young people practise their interactive skills in a variety of social environments such as the home, school, youth centre, at hobbies and among friends.

Young people need relationships and successes in their interaction to learn different interactive skills. These experiences are an asset for young people and give them courage to establish new relationships and wider networks. However, we all must also be allowed to make mistakes, fail and try again.

The variety of different environments in which youth centres operate establish excellent opportunities for strengthening interactive skills. Group activities, doing things together, discussions and responsibilities provide opportunities for participating, sharing opinions and creating a sense of community with other young people. These activities are ideal for learning negotiation skills and assertiveness, as well as, practising different perspectives, taking others into consideration and empathy.

Good mental health includes the ability to handle disputes and the skill to find constructive solutions in problem situations. Young people can practise these skills in intimate and safe relationships with family members, familiar adults and friends. We also practise other social skills, such as sharing our feelings and worries and expressing our needs, with those nearest and dearest to us. Young people need to have safe adults around them to help them with these skills.

Which interactive skills are your strengths as a youth worker? Which skills do you find are the most important? Which ones are essential in terms of youth work?



Young person in different environments - changing relationships

Parents

Breaking away from home can happen in different ways: for some it is stormy, others experience no major disputes or conflicts.

In adolescence, our relationship with our parents changes. We take distance from them and spend less time with them. The detachment from parents fluctuates: sometimes we experience a longing to return to our childhood and the safety of our parents and at others we want to highlight our independence. There is an abundance of questions needing an adult perspective and answers. Thus, time spent together with parents is invaluable, and space in our schedules should be made for that.

Young people treasure their privacy and as time goes by, they leave parents in the dark on an increasing number of things. It is easier to share thoughts, emotions and secrets with mates or close friends. Young people start questioning boundaries, rules and orders set by their parents and may look for ways to find disputes with parents. Young people often misunderstand their parents' reactions, and the parents may seem selfish, bossy and restricting. They are often black and white in their thinking and may at times favour one parent over the other. To safely detach from home, young people must be able to rely on the fact that, regardless of disputes and provocation, there will always be space and a place at home for them. They need to feel that they are cared for. Parents should give young people enough freedom to practise independence, but also boundaries to maintain a sense of security.

Friends, mates and peer groups

Young people have many peer groups in different environments: at school in their class, groups of friends at the youth centre and in their hobbies. Young people may also have other close one-to-one friendships. Young people's friendships may be very intimate, and best friends are often closely attached to each other. Young people's networks fluctuate: the duration and stability of friendships vary and they may move from one group to another or belong to several groups at the same time.

Young people can also be members of various online and social media groups. The internet offers young people a good opportunity to practise interactive skills. For example, online team games are a good way to practise the skills of joining and operating in a group. However, learning interactive skills also requires face-to-face interaction.

A friendship is a relationship based on emotions between two people. Friendships are more intimate than peer relationships; they involve more commitment and confiding. Friendships are usually considered to be voluntary, equal and mutual. They involve reciprocity and caring for the other person. Friendships teach skills that will help establish and maintain close relationships later in life. They include the ability to experience intimacy and the skill to maintain trust. With their friends, young people dare to have opposing opinions and learn to justify their views. These important relationships train skills needed in work life, various groups and more widely in society.

Almost every young person wants to belong to some peer group. Young people need peers to become independent and to move away from their parents. They compare themselves, their characteristics and thoughts to others and use the feedback to establish an image of themselves. Being part of a group is rewarding,



Being part of a group is rewarding, because groups help young people gain a sense of belonging. Groups also offer a way to spend your free-time, entertainment and friendships.

Young people's friendships can be between two people (*dyadic*), a small group (*a clique*) or large, less well-defined groups (*a crowd*).

because groups help young people gain a sense of belonging and experience intimacy and partnership. Groups also offer a way to spend your free-time, entertainment and friendships. Different groups give young people the chance to practise different interactive skills. These include taking your place in a group, assertiveness, teamwork, solving disputes and making compromises.

Young people who spend time together are often similar. As the saying goes, you are the company you keep. On the other hand, young people also have the tendency to choose certain kind of company. Even when friends change, young people tend to continue to seek similar company. When young people appropriately compare themselves to similar people, they gain more information about themselves and are more likely to receive positive feedback about their characteristics and actions.

How influential a peer group is, depends on a number of factors. Young people tend to experience more peer pressure the greater their desire is to adapt to the group or the more interest they place on what others think about them. Young people are not necessarily pressurised by a group to act or think in a certain way. Instead, young people value their friends and the friends' opinions so highly that they want to act in the same way the group does and adapt their behaviour to match the group's values. It is important to remember that a peer group can have both positive and negative impacts. Peer pressure may be positive, if, for example, the group values school achievements or sobriety.

More information on young people's relationship worries, such as loneliness and bullying, can be found in chapter 6 *Young people's safety net*.

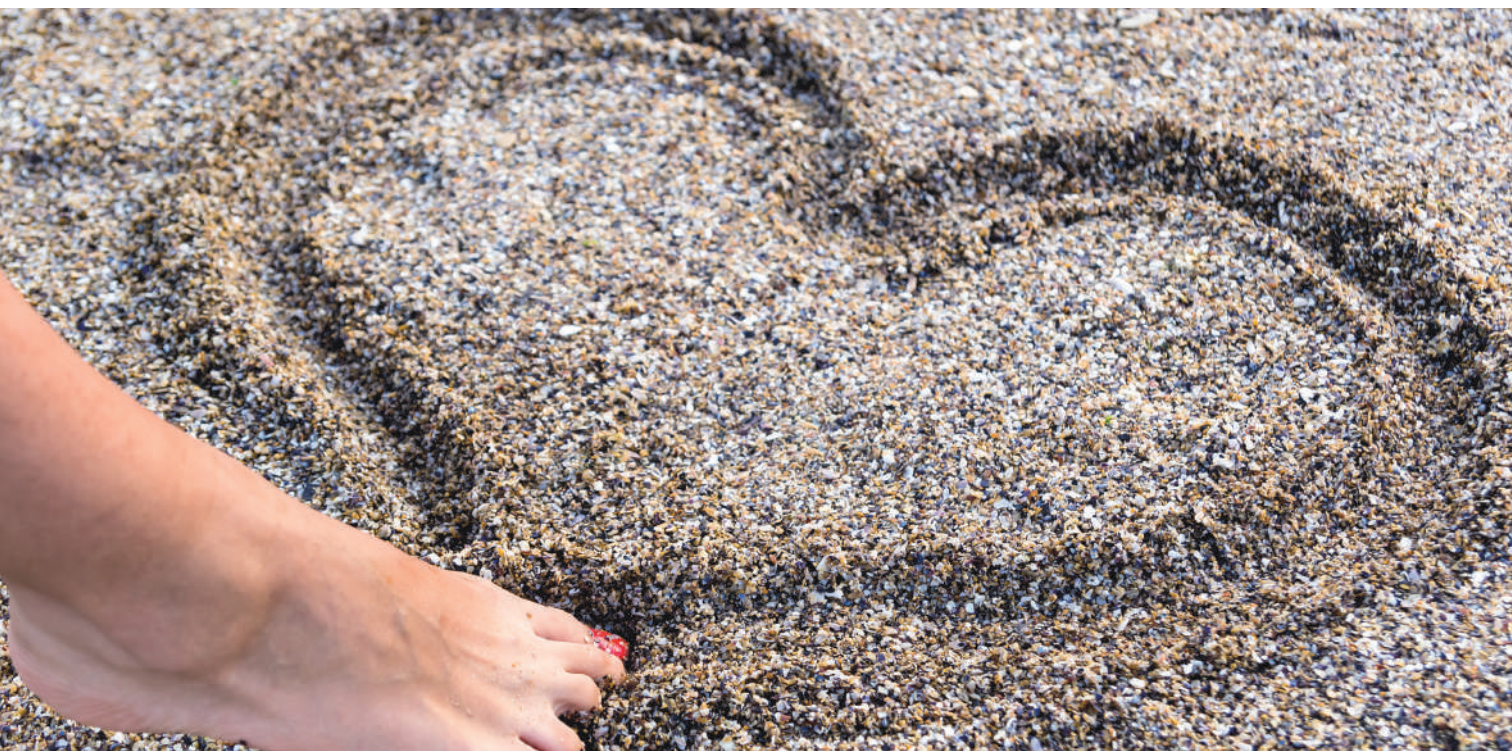
Young people hold different social positions in different groups. They may be popular or unpopular, favoured by some and not by others or completely ignored. Depending on the group and its values, behaviour, appearance, sportiness, clothing, physical anomalies and many other things, which the individuals may not be able to personally influence, can have an impact on their social position in the group. Peers' admiration and acceptance strengthen self-esteem, but even the slightest comment may lower mood and trigger major emotions.

Young people and romantic relationships

Young people practise emotions and intimacy with their family, siblings and friends. These skills are required and used later in romantic relationships. Young people practise intimacy, safe touch, trust, sharing and caring.

Infatuation is an important feeling. Young people may have several objects of infatuation, some familiar and others distant. These objects of adoration may be singers, movie stars, classmates, a friend's big sister or brother and sometimes a teacher or a youth worker. Young people learn about the feeling of infatuation and love from a safe distance. The feeling involves daydreams and fantasies, hopes and dreams of encounters and possibilities.

Romantic attachments are age-appropriate. The first romantic relationships are often short and experimental and, to begin with, selfish. Emotions are more about personal projections and needs, than the other person's real characteristics and personality. Therefore, adolescent romantic attachments cannot be compared to adult relationships. However, the first romantic relationships are important for finding yourself and your emotional landscape and gradually becoming more mature and better prepared for future relationships.



Irrespective of age, everyone needs to feel loved and worthy of love, being important to another person.

When young people fall in love, their image of reality changes. Emotions quickly take over; the world stops, and their head is filled only by thoughts of the object of the infatuation. Young people's minds are occupied by the conflict of how to hold on to the barely achieved independence, whilst allowing for a new love-dependence to form. Sometimes the first romantic attachments lead to a life-long relationship or friendship, but often they are short-lived. When the relationship ends, the youngster is often filled with grief, which gradually turns into melancholy.

After a break-up, young people need adult support, understanding and closeness. Even if the break-up did not come as a surprise to the adult, the disappointment, sadness and pain are genuine, and these emotions should not be undermined or treated indifferently. Young people need time and opportunities to talk about their feelings, and the adults must have the strength to accept and cope with their anxiety. Sometimes young people have the need to tell about their grief over and over again, but they are not looking to get a solution to the situation or healing words, just to have someone listen to them and be present.

The fact that life and its structures stay the same, routines continue and important people remain by their side offer hope to someone going through a break-up. Adults can offer their support by ensuring that daily life continues and basic needs are fulfilled: sleep and nutrition, joint activities and exercise may be vitally important to coping. Young people may find comfort in hearing that even major gushes of emotion, grief and disappointment will eventually pass and that no emotion is permanent. They just need to have the courage to talk to a friend or an adult about the emotions and find a way of venting their unhappiness, whether by exercising, listening to music, crying, writing or spending time with friends.

Putting social skills into use

We learn different ways to interact with others from early childhood: education, childhood relationships and the individual's temperament have an impact on the interactive styles we adopt. Mood, self-esteem and attitudes also influence interaction. The actual situation at hand can also play a role in our interactive method: is the person previously known to us or not, pleasant or unpleasant. People's interactive styles can be categorised in different ways such as aggressive, passive-aggressive, manipulative, assertive.

Different styles of interaction

Aggressive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demanding, hostile and rude. • Does not acknowledge other people's rights. • Pressurises others to do things according to his/her wishes. • Disrespectful towards other people. 	Manipulative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims to impose his/her will by guilt tripping. • Prefers to be the victim or martyr to make others shoulder his/her responsibility and take care of his/her needs. • Blackmails, coerces, challenges and pressurises.
Passive-aggressive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoids disputes by saying things people want to hear. • In reality angry and hostile. • Does not further his/her expectations or needs, if they frustrate, anger, confuse or upset someone else. • Often late, muttery, leaves things undone, disturbs others. 	Assertive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States his/her opinions, needs and wishes honestly and appropriately. • Takes responsibility of him/herself and respects the thoughts and emotions of others. • Effective listening and problem-solving skills.

Source: Tiina Rönning (2011) luentomateriaali nuorisotyökoulutuksesta.

Interaction with others requires emotional and social skills. Social skills support mental health and coping with and maintaining relationships. All interaction with others requires social skills. They enable us to acknowledge, get to know make conversation and be at ease with people who may be very different from us. When we face social problems or disputes, we need a wide range of options on how to solve the problem, how to act appropriately and how to avoid further conflict and aggression.

We also need to use our social skills, when we join and operate in a new group or when we want to cooperate or negotiate with others. To cope with these situation we need discussion and negotiation skills; the ability to ask for permission and help others; decision-making skills; the capacity to tolerate peer pressure, and to know how to be assertive in the face of persuasion.

Emotional skills +
Social skills =
Interactive skills

Interactive skills +
Mindfulness =
Connecting

Read more about social skills in the publication Liisa Keltikangas-Järvinen (2010): *Sosiaalisuus ja sosiaaliset taidot*.

Social skills involve the ability to understand others, their emotions and opinions. Discretion and sensitivity, as well as, empathy and sympathy, are important skills. Empathy refers to the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes. Sympathy, on the other hand, refers to the ability to share another person's experience, entering their emotional state and triggering your emotions based on someone else's experience.

Sometimes social skills and sociability are confused, but they are two separate things. Sociability is a hereditary characteristic and refers to the willingness and interest in being in the company of others. Social skills, however, refer to our ability to be with other people and handle different social situations. We learn these skills through experience and upbringing. Sociability and having social skills are not necessarily dependent of one another; being sociable may not necessarily be a prerequisite for having social skills, because enjoying other people's company does not always mean that your get along with them.

There are various ways of classifying social skills; the table below lists the key skills. Being aware of social skills makes it easier for youth workers to encourage young people to practise them. Strengthening self-esteem - acknowledging and pointing out successes - is essential to learning social skills.

We also need to use our social skills, when we join and operate in a new group.



Social skills

Skills related to conversing and listening

- listening
- conversations and starting a discussion
- introducing yourself and others
- saying compliments
- thanking and saying sorry
- asking and enquiring
- asking for, seeking and providing help

Alternative skills to aggression

- asking for permission
- sharing and taking turns
- acting on behalf of someone else
- putting yourself in someone else's shoes, showing empathy
- coping with another person's anger
- staying out of conflicts
- self-control
- negotiating
- assertively defending your rights

Skills related to emotions

- identifying your own emotions
- naming emotions
- expressing emotions
- understanding other people's emotions
- empathetic listening, talking about yourself
- establishing friendships
- expressing affection and care
- coping with fears
- coping with shame
- processing disappointments
- awarding yourself
- positive thinking

Cooperation and group skills

- joining a group, participating
- operating in a group and maintaining team spirit
- giving and following instructions
- giving and receiving feedback
- responding to blame
- assertiveness and convincing others
- detecting the causes for problems
- making decisions
- coping with conflicts
- accepting facts

Combined from following sources: Kalliopuska (1998): Sosiaaliset taidot. Kauppila (2005): Vuorovaikutus- ja sosiaaliset taidot. Goldstein, Glick & Gibbs (1998): ART Aggression Replacement Training.

Above all, good interaction requires listening skills, empathy, assertiveness and positive thinking.

Cooperation and group skills mean that we follow shared rules and keep up the team spirit.



Empathy, listening and connection

Empathy refers to

- the ability to name and make sense of another person's emotions
- the ability to understand another person's role and perspective
- the ability to have reciprocal exchanges of emotional expression
- the ability to sympathise and listen to another person's message.

Successful interaction with others demands empathy. It means that we are able to identify with the feelings of others and capable of responding to their expressions of emotion. In other words, we can be compassionate and able to experience and share emotions with others. Empathy always involves a conscious side to allow us to be sensitive to someone else's emotional landscape and way of thinking. We must be able to understand why a person thinks, feels, experiences and acts in a certain way. Being able to feel empathy supports mental health, because it helps us in our interaction with others and makes it easier to maintain friendships. It also increases our confidence in our interactive skills.

Empathy requires the ability to identify and understand our own feelings. To be able to understand someone else's emotional state, we must be able to describe the emotion in some way to the other person. Interaction is facilitated by the ability to openly and consistently communicate using gestures and expressions, in addition to verbal communication.

Empathy gives us the ability to mindfully listen to others and to show them that we understand them and share their experience. Empathy skills and in particular empathic listening can be practised. Listening is an essential skill in relationships, friendships and teamwork. Disputes and misunderstandings often stem from us not listening or understanding properly what others are saying. We often do not have the patience to wait for our turn to speak or fail to genuinely listen to the other person, particularly when in a rush. Listening helps us to connect with other people and show them respect and acceptance.

Nonverbal communication

- body language: gestures, expressions, postures and movements
- gaze: eye movement and eye contact
- use of space: distance between people and haptics
- physical: appearance, body structure, smells and scents, clothing, objects, lifestyle.

See exercises on *assertiveness and body language*, starting on page 116.

Listening can mean active participation in itself. We must open our senses, give our attention to the speaker and attentively watch and listen to them. We also receive the speaker's nonverbal communication by listening carefully; thus, it is important to observe the other person's body language, breathing, hand movements and facial expressions. Nonverbal communication also includes the tone of voice, the emphasis and pitch.

EMPATHETIC LISTENING SKILLS	OBSTACLES FOR EMPATHETIC LISTENING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at the person, who is talking. • Face the other person and look in them in the eye. • Concentrate on their message. • Use gestures, such as nods, and expressions and short sentences, to show that you are listening. • Wait for your turn; do not interrupt. • Do not squirm or cut in. • Have the patience not to share you own experiences right away. • Say what you want to say. • Ask questions; tell about your thoughts and emotions. • You can encourage the other person to speak by asking more. • You can also repeat in short what you heard, thus, ensuring that you have understood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advising: "Let me tell you, what you should have done!" • One-uping: "Well that was nothing! Wait till you hear what happened to me!" • Educating: "What did you learn from your mistake?" • Story-telling: "That reminds me of..." • Sympathising: "Oh dear, poor you! I don't envy you..." • Interrogating: "Why did you do that? Who else was involved? Who started it?"



At its best, listening is a way to relate to someone and requires the right setting. For an adult to be able to connect with and hear a young person, the environment must be safe and encouraging, so that the young person has the courage to approach the adult. In a hectic environment, adults are likely to simultaneously concentrate on other things: write or read, use a mobile phone or let their gaze drift, which means that a connection cannot be formed. Sometimes the adult does not have the patience to allow the young person to finish telling their story, particularly if it produces a strong emotional reaction. If that is the case, the adult should show that s/he is committed to the conversation and does not wish to rush, interrupt or criticise, even if feeling agitated. Thus, the adult communicates his/her willingness to listen and help the young person.

There are support questions below to allow youth workers to consider their listening skills and communication with young people. These questions can also be discussed with young people, see exercise 1 *Good listener*.

How do I listen to young people?

1. Do I speak more than the young person?
2. When a young person speaks to me, do I observe the tone of voice?
3. When a young person speaks to me, do I drop other things?
4. Do I do something else at the same time?
5. Do I give the young person time to speak?
6. If the young person hesitates, do I encourage him/her to continue?
7. Do I encourage the young person with nonverbal cues, such as nodding or smiling?
8. Do I let the young person finish speaking without interruptions?
9. Do I ask for clarifications, if I haven't fully understood the young person?
10. Do I have a way of encouraging the young person to keep speaking?
11. Do I always aim to get eye contact with the young person?
12. Do I think about and consider, what the young person is saying?
13. Do I listen even when the subject matter is not pleasant for me?
14. Do I find it easy to accept young people's emotions?
15. Am I likely to express my opinions on matters, when they differ from the young person's beliefs?
16. Do I present additional questions effortlessly?
17. Do I listen to every young person?
18. Am I able to not judge the young person's thoughts before s/he has finished?

Adaptation from source: Kauppila (2005): Vuorovaikutus- ja sosiaaliset taidot.

Assertive interaction

Assertiveness is one of the key social skills. Disappointments, losses, injustice, accusations and other difficult situations should be resolved without hurting or injuring others whilst standing up for and respecting yourself. The behaviour that manages to handle both sides is called assertiveness. It is interaction based on equality and allows you to assertively defend yourself and what is important to you without violating other people's rights or backing off too much.

Assertiveness is not the same as stubbornness, because assertive people take other

You need to have courage to say no in life and to assertively defend your own opinions.



people's opinions and emotions into consideration. Assertive behaviour also involves other social skills, such as the skill of asking and initiating, continuing and ending a discussion. Assertiveness also means keeping your promises.

Life requires the courage and skill to say "no". Young people may find it difficult to refuse their friends' suggestions. It is important to be able to refuse and defend yourself, particularly, in situations in which you feel pressurised or uncomfortable. You can learn and practise assertiveness. Young people should be reminded that they have the right to express themselves and their opinions, wishes and emotions. They must also be encouraged to defend their and other people's rights. It is important to discuss with a young person, how to decline a proposition that feels uncomfortable or may leave others feeling disappointed. Young people also need to know how to be assertive online, for example, when they witness online bullying or encounter unpleasant messages, proposals, images or videos.

It is not always easy to express your opinions and be assertive. This may be the case, for example, in the company of close friends or in a strange environment. In group situations, it may sometimes be difficult to defend your opinions, particularly if it involves the fear of being left alone. Standing behind their opinions may seem

difficult for young people also when they face a more experienced opponent. It may also be difficult to stand up for yourself, if the discussion partner is very controlling or has very strong opinions.

Sometimes discussions may be such that it is safer to withdraw from the debate and commit to your own opinions quietly in your thoughts. This is a particularly good idea, when the discussion partner is obstinate, nullifying or aggressive with his/her opinions. Stating your opinion more strongly in these situations will often not change the outcome of the debate, just cause an argument.

People might sometimes behave submissively or with hostility in discussions that would require assertiveness. Submissive people do not stand up for their rights but succumb to the other person's wishes, even if they did not want to give in. They do not stand up for their own needs and aspirations. Their behaviour is passive, and they do not push to achieve what they want deep down.

Those acting with hostility hold on to their opinions, do not listen to others and overpower other people's opinions. Hostile behaviour also often involves name-calling and pressurising. It may sometimes be related to difficult emotions, which lead to temporary overreactions. Thus, the individual may regret their behaviour later.

ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOUR	HOSTILE BEHAVIOUR	SUBMISSIVE BEHAVIOUR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is aware of and able to express his/her opinions • Has plans and works towards objectives • Takes the needs, emotions and rights of others into consideration. • Stands up for his/her rights and emotions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wants to make all the decisions. • Does not care about the emotions or needs of others. • Does not take responsibility for his/her actions. • Does not act systematically. • Often objects to other people's actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brownnoses. • Behaves calmly and pleasantly. • Lets others make decisions for him/her. • Lacks courage to fulfill hopes. • Often puts other people's needs before his/her own. • Does not express his/her needs, but assumes that other's will take them into consideration. • Sends conflicting messages; expressions and gestures are in conflict with words.

See exercises on assertiveness and body language, starting on page 116.

Assertiveness is related to good self-esteem. Assertive people feel they can be honest with their emotions and promote their rights and opinions without undue anxiety. Assertiveness requires empathy, taking into account other people's needs, emotions and thoughts. Sometimes, it is necessary to make concessions. Assertiveness can be practised. The box below includes tips on how to act assertively if you are being accused of something and how to settle disputes.

Solving disputes and responding to accusations

- Listen to what the other person has to say.
- Consider, what you are being accused of and why. Is the accusation justified or not?
- Have you offended him/her?
- Make sure you have understood the message.
- Think of ways to respond to the accusation.
- If necessary, ask a third person to be a listener.
- Do not accuse the other person; instead, talk about your own feelings and thoughts.
- Explain, why you behaved in the way you did.
- Correct the other person's interpretations and stand up for yourself.
- Ask for forgiveness and forgive the other person.
- Offer to make up for what has happened.
- Aim to meet half way, when solving disputes.

Adaptation from source: Goldstein, Glick & Gibbs (1998): ART Aggression Replacement Training.

Positive thinking

"Being sympathetic towards our weaknesses and flaws makes it easier to deal with them, because it is easier to see ourselves in a loving and kind rather than harsh light".

– Ellen Tuomaala, 2013

Optimism and positive thinking are signs of a sunny outlook in life, a cheerful attitude. They are indications of a healthy self-esteem, faith and trust in yourself. Positive thinking gives you the certainty to make plans for the future. Hope provides faith in the future, even though, it alone does not guarantee the fulfilment of dreams and wishes. Hope stirs the desire to strive towards your goals.

The foundations for positive thinking are in the basic trust established through safe childhood. Children, who are loved and cared for, trust in themselves and others. Children receive the first model at home on how to deal with different situations, emotions and events. If the atmosphere at home is contemptuous, hostile and negative, the model is transferred to children's inner thinking. However, it is possible to learn new, positive thinking models. For example, young people can establish new, positive inner speech regarding themselves and their environment with the help of a youth worker and friends or through group activities.

Plans and actions generate positivity. A systematic approach is manifested through planning your future, establishing objectives and interim objectives. Interim objectives provide opportunities for frequent achievements, which lead to improvement of self-esteem. Our daily actions demonstrate our choices; doing things that make us feel good promotes positivity. Creativity, self-fulfilment and self-appreciation support optimism. Positivity is also a choice. Every now and then, it is important to ask yourself whether you are ready to change your life to be driven by the values that you hold dear.

Optimism and positive thinking are signs of a sunny outlook in life, a cheerful attitude.

Positive thinking is also evident in our attitude towards our environment. We can see positive sides in things, people and our living environment. When you start becoming irritated, it is often time to change perspectives and take it easy. Recognising pleasant things and cheery events and sharing them with others increase positivity in other people's lives too, as does offering encouragement and support. However, being positive does not mean that you deny or hide unpleasant things, but that you see humour, joy and hope around you and in your life. Nobody can be happy all the time. We can, however, consciously practise being positive and strengthen our positive thinking. At its simplest, positive thinking is achieved through a change of perspective and by deciding to give positivity a chance.

The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare has collected a list of tips for finding joy in life.



Find joy in life!

- Enjoy small things. A nice colour of t-shirt, a smile from a stranger, ice hockey training that went well... What has made you happy today?
- Recognise good moments. Happiness does not always involve achieving something, you can be happy with how things are. Recognise these moments and enjoy them.
- Daydream. Sometimes it is good to stop and think, what you really want from life. Feel free to dream! First you can dream something bigger; then you can consider the first steps to achieve it.
- Give yourself time. Do not fill your calendar with hobbies and other activities, give yourself free-time too. Listen to music, read a book, watch TV, go for a walk - relax!
- Sleep enough. Tiredness puts you on a bad mood, makes you surly, anxious and upset.
- Slow down your pace. Living a busy life can be fun, but the best decisions and realisations often occur in peace and quiet. When you slow down for a moment, you give yourself an opportunity to recognise important things.
- Do not ruminate on failures. For example, top athletes do not worry about their failures for weeks on end; instead, they think about what went wrong, and what they could do differently next time.
- Identify and break down your emotions. Do not repress your emotions, but let them come out. Learn to express your emotions, because trapping them in or repressing them with, for example alcohol, leaves you feeling more upset. All emotions are allowed, but all actions are not. Remember to release your emotions, but do not take it out on other people.
- Be active. Play different sports, go for walks, dance, go to the gym. Getting started is not always easy, but it is worth it. Exercise helps you cope and sleep better.
- Be creative. Draw, write, play, sing, paint. Use your negative emotional energy for positive activities.
- Meet up with friends. They give you strength in life. Fun moments feel even more fun, when they are shared with someone else. Relationships need maintaining. You are happier when you are in good terms with others. Occasionally swap social media chats to meeting a friend face-to-face.
- Do not compare yourself to others. There will always be someone, who is better, richer, prettier and more successful, but does it matter? Every person has several sides to them. You are the best you.
- Don't blame yourself unnecessarily. When you fail, think about the reasons for it. Sometimes, you have no influence over events; setbacks may be caused by circumstances or simply bad luck.
- Analyse your success. When you succeed in something, congratulate yourself. Think about the things that lead to success. What skills did you use? How could you utilise these skills in some other situation? Decide to succeed again, because success improves self-esteem.
- Laugh - at yourself as well. Being able to laugh at yourself makes disappointments easier to deal with and promotes self-esteem.

Adaptation from source: The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare. Nuortennetti – elämäniloa.

Sources and more information

- Aho, S. & Laine, K. (1997). *Minä ja muut*. Keuruu: Otava.
- Aalberg, V. & Siimes, M. A. (2007). *Lapsesta aikuiseksi. Nuoren kypsyminen naiseksi ja mieheksi*. Helsinki: Nemo.
- Bildjuschkin, K. & Ruuhilahti, S. (2012). *Hot. Huolehdi, Ohjaa, Tue*. City of Turku, health and social care publications.
- Cacciatore, R. (2007). *Huomenna pannaan pussauskoppiin. Eväitä tyttöä ja poikana kasvamisen haasteisiin syntymästä murrosikään*. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Cacciatore, R. (2007). *Aggression portaat*. Teaching material for schools. Finnish National Agency for Education.
- Goldstein, A. P., Glick, B. & Gibbs, J. C. (2009). *ART. Aggression Replacement Training*. Group exercise method for aggressively behaving young people. Helsinki: Nordprint.
- Isokorpi, T. (2004). *Tunneoppia parempaan vuorovaikutukseen*. Juva: PS-Kustannus.
- Kalliopuska, M. (1998). *Sosiaaliset taidot*. Helsinki: Edita.
- Kauppila, E. (2005). *Vuorovaikutus ja sosiaaliset taidot. An interaction guide for teachers and students*. Opetus 2000. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.
- Keltikangas-Järvinen, L. (2010). *Sosiaalisuus ja sosiaaliset taidot*. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Lyytinen, P., Korkiakangas, M. & Lyytinen, H. (eds.) (1995). *Näkökulmia kehityopsykologiaan: Kehitys kontekstissaan*. Porvoo: WSOY.
- The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare. Nuortennetti, Elämäniloa. www.mll.fi/nuortennetti/mielenterveys/terve-mieli/elamaniloa/
- Passi – Portti Elämään. Lions Quest training program. (2002). Vantaa: Dark.
- Röning, T. *Vuorovaikutustaidot. Nuoren ihmissuhteet*. Lecture for youth workers in Helsinki 7 Nov 2012. *Mielenterveystaidot nuorisotyöhön (Mental health skills for youth work) pilot*, Finnish Association for Mental Health.
- Salmivalli, C. (2005). *Kavereiden kanssa. Vertaissuhteet ja sosiaalinen kehitys*. Keuruu: PS-kustannus.
- Salmivalli, C. (2010). *Koulukiusaamiseen puuttuminen. Kohti tehokkaita toimintamalleja*. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.
- Sinkkonen, J. (2010). *Nuoruusikä*. Juva: WSOY.
- Vilkko-Riihelä, A. (2001). *Psyyke. Psychology manual*. Porvoo: WSOY.

EXERCISES

The exercises in the Adolescent relationships section have been divided into the following categories: Listening and being present, Connecting, Assertiveness and Dating, Positive thinking.

Listening and being present

1. Good listener

GOAL

To understand the importance of listening skills, to identify the differences between a good and bad listener.

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

The group members prepare one another guidelines on what they are looking for from one another in interactive situations. In which everyday situations could I listen better? The guidelines can be hung up on display in the youth centre.

ROUNDING OFF

- Why is the skill of listening important? What do you communicate to another person by not listening to him/her?
- What does it feel like, if someone does not listen to you or is not present in the situation?
- What does it feel like, when someone truly concentrates, understands and listens?
- Is there someone you know, who you think could develop his/her listening skills?

ADAPTATIONS

The young people can also make guidelines for the instructors. Does the group think that the instructors have time to chat with them? In which ways could the instructors improve? Do the group members feel like they can tell their worries to the instructor?

2. Test your listening skills

GOAL: To identify your listening skills and to develop them.

SUPPLIES: Test your listening skills (see annex p. 239)

DURATION: 30 min

ACTIVITY

The instructor presents the questions on the form to the whole group. The participants keep their eyes closed and vote with a thumbs up (yes, agree) or a thumbs down (no, disagree). The exercise can also be completed as a scale exercise (see p. 17).

ROUNDING OFF

- How could you develop in the different areas?
- How can another person be encouraged to tell more?
- What kinds of more specific questions can you ask the other person?
- How can you express your interest in what the other person has to say?
- How can you express to the other person that you are genuinely present in the situation?

ADAPTATIONS

The young people fill in the form individually. They can only answer “yes” or “no”. Finally they calculate their points. Each group member can assess their listening skills independently, or they can be discussed as a group.

3. Retelling

GOAL

To practise being present. The narrator practises describing his/her emotions and the listener tries to empathise as well as possible.

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

The exercise is done in pairs. The partner can be a close friend. The instructor explains that the exercise is confidential; the story told to your partner will remain between the two partners. One partner is the narrator and the other one the listener. The narrator tells about an event, which had triggered strong emotions in him/her, for example, about a dispute with a parent, teacher or friend, or about a performance experience, a holiday or a sports experience. The narrator describes, how the events unfolded; how s/he acted in the situation and what emotions the situation triggered. The listener's role is to listen to the story in an empathetic manner. The listener can only ask the essential specifying questions. At the end of the story, the listener repeats the story to the narrator from start to finish in first person, as if it had all happened to him/her. Finally, the parts are reversed and the exercise is repeated.

ROUNDING OFF

The exercise is first discussed in pairs and then as a group.

- What was easy and difficult about the exercise?
- How well did you manage to describe an emotion?
- Did it feel like the listener understood the narrator's emotions?
- What was it like to listen to your own story?
- Was it easy or difficult to stay present in the situation?
- How can we practise mindfulness in other aspects of life?

4. Mirror

GOAL

To practise observing body language, to monitor and detect body language cues. To practise relaxation and mindfulness.

DURATION: 5-15 min

ACTIVITY

The young people choose a partner (e.g. the person next to them). The partners stand opposite one another, place their hands against each other, but their hands must not touch. One partner moves his/her hands, and the other person must follow the movement as accurately as possible. The movements can be small or large. There is no talking during the exercise. Finally, the parts are reversed, and the exercise is repeated.

Encourage the young people to vary their pace (fast, slow) and to use their entire body and not just their hands. The Mirror exercise becomes more challenging, if the partners use different levels (floor level, crouching, standing on tiptoes). It is often easier to concentrate on the exercise when lights are dimmed.

ROUNDING OFF

- Can the exercise be compared to listening? Can listening be practised?
- How easy is it to follow another person's hand and body movements?
- What was it like to fully concentrate on another person?
- What was it like being close to your partner without touching?

ADAPTATIONS

- Two people stand opposite one another and mirror one another's movements. Neither leads the movement, but both observe and follow the other.
- The exercise can also be carried out to the beat of music.
- Partners can also utter sounds and words for the other one to repeat.
- The exercise can also be carried out in a small group of three or four people, in which case one leads at a time or the leader changes wordlessly without pre-agreement several times during the exercise.

Additional information:
Cohen, R. (1986) *Näyt-
telemisen mahti*.

5. Self-assessment of social skills

GOAL

To know more about your social skills. To consider your strengths and development areas for interactive skills.

SUPPLIES: Self-assessment form (see annex p. 240)

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

The group members answer the questions on the self-assessment form. They have to be honest when replying to the questions, so that they can think about how they could develop their social skills.

ROUNDING OFF

- What kinds of thoughts did the exercise raise in the young people?
- What are you good at?
- What skills could you develop? How?

Connecting

6. Meeting others

GOAL

To practise encountering others and to have more courage to do so. Particularly well-suited for grouping events. The adaptation section offers an opportunity to practise emotional expression when encountering another person.

SUPPLIES: background music chosen by the instructor

DURATION: 5-10 min

ACTIVITY

Choose a space where there is room to walk around. The young people walk around while peaceful music is playing in the background. When the music stops, the young people shake hands with the person closest to them (without speaking) and look one another in the eye. They aim is not to shake the other person's hand forcefully but just to squeeze it lightly. The music continues in approx. 10 seconds. The exercise goes on for approx. 2-3 minutes.

ROUNDING OFF

- Was it natural or awkward to meet someone without talking to them. Why?
- How did it feel to squeeze hands? What about looking the other person in the eye?
- Why is it important to look in the eye. Why is it sometimes difficult? How long can you look someone in the eye for?
- Are gestures important? Why are they/why are they not? Are gestures the same in every country?
- How can you use gestures to express emotions without using words? Is it difficult?

ADAPTATIONS

Walk in the room and present yourself to a person you encounter by shaking hands in different ways. Here are some examples, which can be further adapted:

- Over-enthusiastically
- As if you were at a funeral
- As if you had seen someone else nearby, who is a lot more interesting.
- As if you were infatuated
- As if you were a hyper-active child

Additional information:
Salinsky, T. and Frances-
White, D. (2011) *The Improv
Handbook*.

7. Gaze

GOAL

To group. To get the young people to understand the importance of looking someone in the eye and to encourage it.

DURATION: 10-20 min

ACTIVITY

The group sits or stands in a circle with their gaze towards the floor. Everyone quietly decides, whether they will look into the eyes of the person on their left,

right or opposite them, when the instructor gives a signal. When eyes meet, one of the following actions takes place. Choose one:

- hug
- extremely theatrical death
- scream
- shout and run away from the circle
- hysterical laugh
- casual greeting

The instructor keeps the pace up to ensure that the actions take place simultaneously. The actions should be fast-paced so that the reactions are spontaneous. Remember to encourage the young people to exaggerate their actions: lots of noise and big movements! The exercise also teaches courage through humour.

ROUNDING OFF

- What kinds of encounters did you experience? What did they feel like?
- What was it like to look one another in the eye?
- What is the difference between a short and a long gaze? What kinds of effects do they have?
- If you look at an animal (e.g. a bear or an owl at the zoo) in the eye, drop the eye contact and then quickly look back, what happens? (Answer: the bear sees you as food and the owl brightens up, because you have shown to be submissive).
- Why does eye contact have such an important role for both humans and animals?

ADAPTATIONS

- After each eye contact, a pair drops out, until there is no-one left.
- The action changes after each round.
- The instruction is “a Finnish bus stop” and when eyes meet, the reaction is nervous. How does this change the significance of eye contact? Is this stereotype of Finns as people who avoid eye contact true? How do people behave at the bus stop in other countries? Does the behaviour differ between countries?
- Walking around a room. The group is divided in two. One of the groups is instructed to maintain eye contact with the person approaching them. The other group is instructed to try and gain eye contact, withdraw from it and immediately glance back for a moment.

Additional information:
Johnstone, K. (1979) *Impro. Improvisoinnista iloa elämään ja esiintymiseen.*

Self-confidence

8. Assertiveness test

GOAL

To observe everyday situations in which assertiveness is needed; to learn how to act assertively and what emotions does it trigger in young people.

SUPPLIES: Windmill of Emotions model, Patchwork of Relationships model

DURATION: 30– 60 min

ACTIVITY

The aim is to think, in groups or pairs, about how to act assertively or non-assertively in the example situations.

ASSERTIVENESS TEST

1. A friend asks you to the cinema, and you are very tired. You do not want to go but have not got the courage to say no to your friend. What do you do?
2. A magazine salesperson calls and tries to sell you the newest youth magazine. You would like to subscribe to it, but you do not have the money to pay for it. What do you do?
3. At the shop, the salesperson is pushy and tries to get you to buy a product you do not want. What do you do?
4. Your best friend has tried drugs. S/he wants you to try as well, because s/he has done it. Do you have to try?
5. Your best friend's mobile phone is broken and his/her family cannot afford to buy him/her a new mobile phone. You steal money for the mobile phone from your mother's purse. Are you doing the right thing?
6. Your friends decide to skip school the next day. You do not want to skip school; what do you do?
7. Your family has planned to spend the evening having a meal together. Your friends are hanging out, but you would really like to spend time with your family. Are you a wimp, if you stay at home?
8. You have your first summer job. Your boss asks you to do work which is not your responsibility. What do you do?
9. Your friend hurts your feelings and makes you upset. How do you mention it to your friend?
10. You see your friend bullying another good friend of yours? What do you do?
11. You do not want to consume alcohol. What do you do, when your friends try and persuade you to try?
12. How do you tell your coach during a football match that you cannot play, because your ankle hurts?
13. You are with your friends and watching a horror film which has lots of gruesome scenes that you do not like. Do you dare to leave?
14. One of your best friends is bad-mouthing your other good friend. Do you take part in it as well? Is it easy not to take part?
15. Your friend asks you to do things on his/her behalf which s/he could do him/herself. This has continued for a long time, and you do not want to do these things for your friend. How do you say no to your friend next time s/he asks you to e.g. do his/her homework?
16. You need help with your maths exercises. Do you dare to ask your teacher for help?

ROUNDING OFF

- What thoughts and emotions did the exercise trigger?
- Which emotions do you feel when you act assertively? Which emotions does it trigger in others?
- Which emotions do you feel when you do not act assertively? Which emotions does that trigger in others?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to receive feedback? Why is it important?
- Is it appropriate in every situation to express it, if you do not like something (for example, food, gift, clothes)? Why is it/why is it not?

9. Melting postures

See the table on assertive, hostile and submissive behaviour on page 107.

GOAL

To observe how hostile, assertive and submissive behaviour is evident in our body language. To look for assertive behaviour by first examining the extremes - hostile and submissive behaviour - and comparing them to assertiveness. The exercises help young people to realise, how much body language affects expression.

DURATION: 30-45 min

ACTIVITY

The instructor asks the young people to take a posture, which describes hostile behaviour. The group briefly discusses, what body language is characteristic to hostile behaviour. After this, the young people melt into a posture that suggests submissive behaviour. The group discusses again. Finally, the young people melt into an assertive posture, and together the group discusses, what kind of body language is characteristic to assertive behaviour. The instructor encourages the young people to exaggerate: large movements and humour are welcome!

ROUNDING OFF

- What thoughts and emotions did the exercise trigger?
- How does submissive, hostile and assertive behaviour come across in nonverbal communication?
- How does assertive behaviour differ from submissive and hostile behaviour in nonverbal communication?
- Which emotions did adopting an assertive posture trigger? What about the hostile or submissive postures?
- Which situations have triggered the different behavioural models in the young people? Alternatively, the instructor can take an example situation of each behavioural model from an everyday situation.

10. Two strong wills

GOAL

To practise assertiveness skills through practical activities. To think about interactive skills and what it is like to give in. Also works as a warm-up exercise, because the actions get your body warmed up.

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

All the group members stand opposite a partner on an agreed starting line. The partners place their hands on each others shoulders. The young people agree, who begins to first push towards the goal saying "here I come!". The other partner resists the push and says: "No you won't!" The instructor encourages the young people to over-react and exaggerate. The room should be filled with the sound of these comments throughout the exercise. Words give you power to maintain your own role! Parts are reversed.

ROUNDING OFF

- What did it feel like to push the other person?
- What did it feel like to look the other person in the eye and assertively say your own line?

- What happens, when two people with a strong will want to get their way and neither is prepared to give in? What should you do in such a situation?
- How can you politely get a disruptive person to understand that s/he needs to stop?

ADAPTATIONS

- A) The pairs stand at opposite walls. One person tries to get across the room to the other wall, whilst the partner aims to prevent it.
- B) Two people try and sit on the same chair no matter what it takes. (Please note that you cannot hurt the other person.)
- C) One person tries to count to a hundred out loud with a clear voice. The other person tries to interfere, confuse and prevent the other one from reaching the goal.
- D) The instructor tells the young people a story: for example, someone's best friend moves to another city, but the other person does not want him/her to go (the instructor can continue the story). The aim is to act out the story, so that one person wants to leave and the other person tries to prevent it from happening by all possible means (hitting and tripping are not permitted methods!) (Please note that the leaver really is leaving, i.e. is moving away from the other person, but the other one prevents it by holding on. The young people use the lines "Don't go!" and "Yes, I will!"

Additional information:
Pätsi, M. 2010. *Näyttelijän
tekniikoita.*

11. Behaviour vote

GOAL

To direct the group members to think about their behaviour. To give them more courage to analyse themselves and express their opinions. To practise being assertive.

SUPPLIES: colourful side of the picture cards, statements (see below)

DURATION: 15 min

ACTIVITY

The participants choose two colours, one of which is used to express agreement and the other disagreement. The young people express their opinions to the statements by lifting the right-coloured card.

Choose the statements that fit the occasion: Statements A are generally to do with personal behaviour. Statements B are more to do with assertiveness in relation to topics such as smoking and drugs. The statements are intentionally exaggerated to make it easier to start a discussion.

A) Statements

- I try and take the other person's opinion into consideration in conflicts.
- It is easy to hold on to your rights in conflicts.
- I know how to refuse if I am asked to do something I don't want to do.
- I have the courage to express my emotions in strange situations.
- I have the courage to bravely express my opinions.
- I use expressions and gestures to express my opinions and emotions.

Continues on the next page...

B) Statements

- Smoking weakens my physical fitness.
- Drugs and alcohol are bad for the brain.
- Just trying drugs won't make you addicted.
- I have the courage to decline an offer of a cigarette or drugs.
- Refusal can be difficult.
- I have forced my friend to try smoking.
- Everyone is responsible for their own life.
- I consider the people I see on television and in movies as role models.
- I have the courage to tell an adult about addiction.

ROUNDING OFF

- What did it feel like to analyse yourself? Do you have the courage to express your opinion or say how things really are?
- Which statement in particular stayed with you? Why?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to express your opinion? How could you practise that skill?
- How much does nonverbal communication tell about opinions? Why?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to refuse or have a differing opinion?

ADAPTATIONS

Can also be carried out as a scale exercise (see p. 17); eyes closed in a circle with step voting (yes = step forward, no = step backward); eyes closed with thumb voting (yes = thumb up, no = thumb down).

Dating

12. Dating discussions

GOAL

To think about the different stages of dating and to develop social skills.

DURATION: 30-45 min**ACTIVITY**

The instructor divides the young people into groups. Each group has its own theme, which the group discusses freely. The themes are: starting a new relationship and getting to know the other person, during the relationship, after the relationship. After the discussions, each theme is discussed together with the whole group.

ROUNDING OFF

Starting a new relationship and getting to know the other person:

- How do I approach the person I am interested in?
- How do I show my interest?
- What is it like to be physically close to another person, when you are still getting to know one another?
- How do I gain the courage to look the other person in the eye?
- How do I start a conversation?
- Why is it so difficult to express your infatuation to the person you fancy?
- How do you know you are dating?

- What do I do, if the person rejects me?
- How do I express kindly to another person that I am not interested without hurting his/her feelings?
- Is it difficult to get to know another person?

During a relationship:

- How do I show another person that I care about him/her?
- What does dating involve?
- How can you take another person's emotions into account?
- When can you say no?
- How long can a relationship last?
- Do friends often get forgotten about when you are in a new romantic relationship? Why?
- What would it feel like, if your best friend started dating and forgot all about you?
- How do you express your own disappointment, dismay, anger or dissatisfaction?

After a relationship:

- How can you tell another person that you want to break up?
- Is it possible to stay friends afterwards? Why?
- How should you respond to the other person's emotions after a break-up?
- How do you process your own emotions after a break-up?
- How soon can you start dating a new person?
- What should you do, if the other person wants to get back together? Is it easy to say no?
- How to say it to the other person without hurting him/her?
- How to cope with being left? How do I look after myself?
- Do I know how to be a comforting friend?

13. Secret problem

GOAL

To think about dating through humour and action. To practise acting and being natural.

SUPPLIES

A table and chairs, role-playing clothes (hats, scarves, etc.) to set the scene.

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

The group compiles a list of problems, which could come up in interaction with others, such as a runny nose, sweating, need to go to the toilet, smelly breathe, rumbling stomach, fear of touch, shaky hands, blushing, trembling voice, eye twitch etc.

Two young people act a scene of a first date. Both have a secret problem, which they constantly try to conceal, whilst desperately trying to show the other one how exciting it is to be on a first date and how attracted they are in the other person. For example, if the problem is smelly breathe, the aim is to achieve a "win", which could be a hug/kiss/hand holding, etc.

Please note that you must not mention the problem, the conversation has to be about something completely different. The scene can also be nonverbally acted, in which case music could be playing in the background.

Additional information:
Johnstone, K. 1999. *Impro for Storytellers*.

ROUNDING OFF

- What does it feel like to try and conceal a problem? Have you ever experienced it?
- Did it feel natural to try and conceal the problem? Why?
- If your hands shake uncontrollably when you are performing or in a group of friends, what can you do to make yourself feel better? Have you ever experienced it?
- How do you react, if you notice that the other person is sweating or trembling in your company?
- Why could a problem you experience on a first date feel significant in your head, whilst not being even noticeable to the other person?
- Why does going on a date/meeting another person often make you nervous? How could the anxiety be reduced?

14. Safe touch

GOAL

To understand what kind of touching is allowed and what is not. To think about the emotions different touches or touches by different people trigger.

DURATION: 15– 30 min

ACTIVITY

The group is divided into smaller groups. The aim is to think about what kind of touching is acceptable from a friend, your mother, a friend's parent, a boy/girlfriend, a neighbour and an instructor. Each group gets a theme to think about. After the groups have discussed their topic among themselves, the exercise is rounded off together. Alternatively, the young people can think of situations, which they then present to the rest of the group.

ROUNDING OFF

- What kind of touching do I accept and from whom?
- What is an acceptable way of touching?
- What is not acceptable?
- How can I obey and observe my own emotions?
- What kinds of emotions do different ways of touching trigger?
- What meanings do different ways of touching carry?
- Does age make a difference?
- Who sets the limits to touching? Who determines the limits for touching, for example, in a new relationship?
- How close to you is it appropriate for a stranger to come?
- Which kind of touching may not physically hurt but is still wrong and mentally hurtful?

Positive thinking

15. Positive thinking rocks!

GOAL

To motivate and encourage young people to think in a positive way. To acknowledge the differences, meaning and effects of positive and negative thinking in life.

DURATION: 15-30 min

ACTIVITY

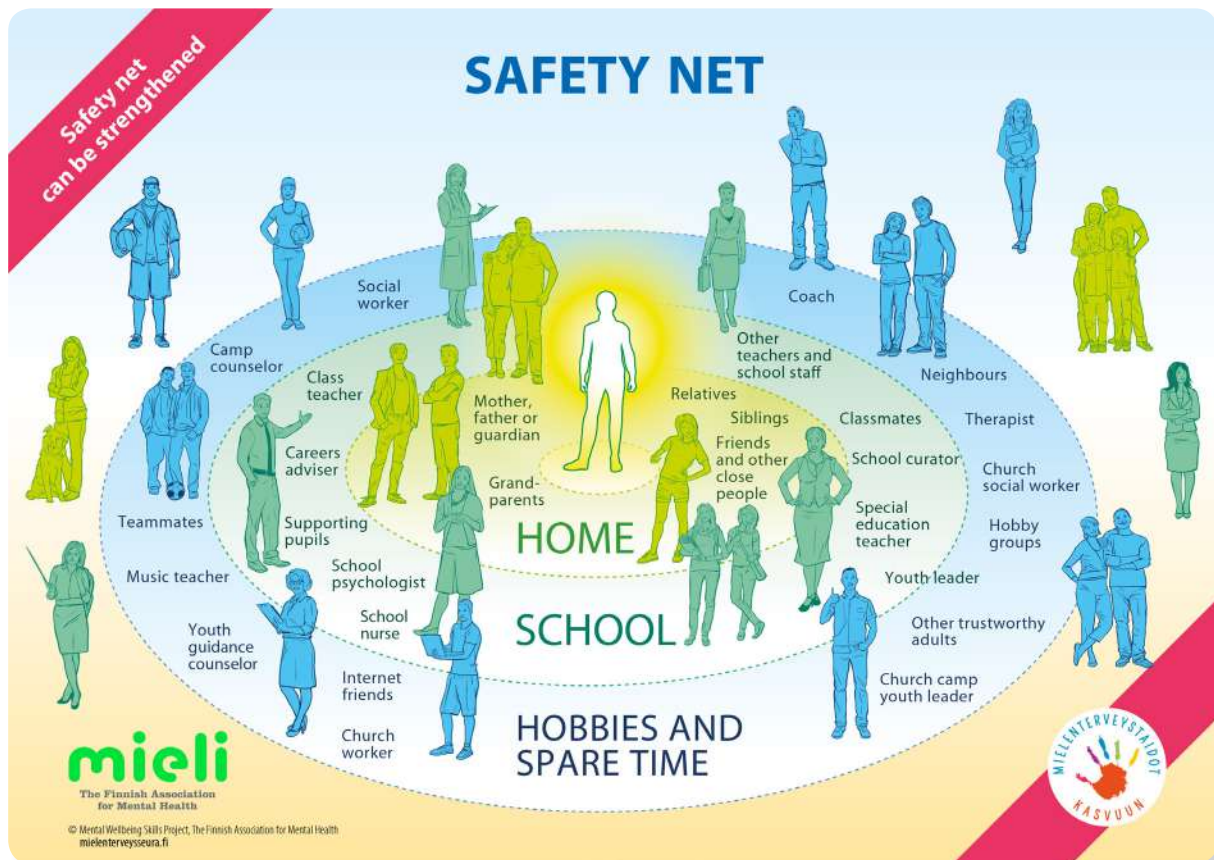
The instructor starts by telling about the differences between positive and negative thinking. The group then thinks about the following questions: Which negative things might we think about or say to one another? What kinds of things do we complain about and why? Is it necessary? Make a “complaint wallboard”, where everyone can complain as much as they like.

ROUNDING OFF

- What does complaining and negative thinking trigger in you and others?
- Can you unwittingly create a cycle of negativity, which makes you feel upset and through which you may spread negativity to others?
- Can you change your own behaviour? How?
- How would you like to change the way you behave in company?
- Which emotions does positive thinking trigger in others?
- Can positive thinking provide strength in everyday life?
- Can positive thinking be spread to others?

ADAPTATIONS

- A) Complaint game: In pairs, one person complains and the other person responds in a positive manner; roles are then reversed. What would be your response if you answered in the customary way and continued the negative thinking? What if you tried to respond differently?
- B) The circle of encouragement and positive thinking: Each person thinks of a positive statement for daily use, for example, “things will sort themselves out” or “that was a delicious meal”! Each member tells their statement to the others, who then begin to repeat it to one another, while the person whose statement it is starts running around the circle.
- C) The group thinks about positive requests, which can help spread good mood to others. Examples or requests: ask for an opinion; praise; laugh at what the other person says; give presents; offer food/drink; tell a secret; let him/her win; praise his/her voice/clothes/eyes.



Summary

- The social safety net consisting of young people's family and friends is an important protective factor for mental health. It is good to discuss young people's safety and examine it with them.
- Youth workers are also an important safety net for young people. Sometimes even one safe adult is enough to support a young person's safe growth and development.
- Youth work provides many opportunities for connecting with young people and bringing up worries for discussion. Offering early support and help is the best way to promote strong growth. Young people must not be left alone.
- Despite having worries, every young person also has resources, which can always be strengthened. Recognising and supporting young people's strengths and encouraging them reinforce their self-esteem. That also gives them tools for building their life.