

## 6 YOUNG PEOPLE'S SAFETY NET

### Safety net secures and strengthens mental health

Imagine your own safety net and draw it. Who has been an important person to you during your childhood, adolescence, adulthood, is at the moment and might be in the future? When you were young, was a youth worker part of your safety net?

No one can cope completely alone, and there should be no need to either. Every young person needs safe adults and good friends around them for chats and sharing life's joys and sorrows. Expressing thoughts and emotions out loud often makes you feel better. Young people should also recognise their safety net, so that they know who to share their thoughts and emotions with. Even just knowing that there are adults around, who are interested in and there for you when needed, provides security. Adults can help reinforce young people's self-esteem and mental health by providing positive feedback and encouragement. Through experiences and feedback, young people establish their identity and form their set of values.

A safety net can consist of adults and other young people at home and in school and free time. It may include several people or just one important person. A safety net can also change at different stages of life. The important thing is that everyone has someone or several valued people in their safety net to rely on when needed.

Everyone safe and reliable who is there for them when needed is part of a young person's safety net. A safety net changes and expands with time. It can and must be built throughout life.

Finding a connection with a young person takes place through daily activities. Youth workers should have the courage to ask young people how they are coping. Shared moments, encounters or asking how they are doing are always important experiences for young people. When adults show interest or provide encouraging feedback, young people are often left feeling valued.



## Young people's most common concerns

Many studies show that the most common concerns young people have are related to relationships. These include worries about friends, loneliness or dating. Young people's concerns may also focus on problems within their family, such as parents' alcohol abuse, violent behaviour, money problems or unemployment. The family's circumstances might not be evident to an outsider.

Other worries that have come up in studies include the loss of an important person, money problems and limited leisure time. School-related pressures and success in studies, as well as, social relationships at school also worry young people. The uncertainty of future, appearance-related pressures and mental health issues are also a cause for concern. Reliable adults are often the best support for young people's disputes.

## Loneliness and rejection

During adolescence, young people's need for company and solitude vary. If solitude is not a personal choice and a young person is left outside a group against his/her will, the feelings of loneliness and being rejected may be overwhelming. Loneliness can be a result of a number of things. Friendships may end due to a move or parents' divorce. Young people cannot always influence how things go, which may leave them feeling helpless. However, if the young person feels s/he has played a part in how things have turned out, s/he may experience unreasonable guilt.

Loneliness is a subjective experience, and young people may often feel lonely even in a group. During adolescence, girls' friendships are often close and intimate. Compared to boys, girls' groups are more exclusive. Promises, which may or may not be kept; secrets, which are honoured or spread, and feedback, which is given

directly or without asking, are a significant part of girls' relationships. Such intimacy is also more likely to hurt and cause upset. Boys, on the other hand, practise social skills more often in groups than in pairs.

Boys' groups tend to be more open to new members, and they do not create or solve emotional conflicts to the same extent as girls in their groups. No young person wants to stand out in a group, at least not in a negative sense. Negative attention or feedback from others can feel bad, sometimes even cruel.

The lack of friends and being left outside a group are hurtful experiences. Sometimes young people are rejected for reasons they cannot do anything about, such as physical or neurological differences. Sometimes being aggressive or withdrawn may be reasons for being left outside a group, thus, creating a negative and repetitive cycle. Withdrawn or aggressive behaviour may cause problems in friendships, such as rejections, which then further increase the withdrawal and aggression.



There are differences in young people's abilities to make friends, but young people's skills to establish relationships can also be strengthened. Adults can encourage young people to make friends and, for example, remind them of successes they have had with friendships. It might be a good idea to discuss with young people, what they are like as friends and what are their positive traits.

Young people who are rejected do not have the same opportunities to get to know themselves, practise their social skills and experience interactive friendships. Young people do not need to be hugely popular, but reasonable popularity, acceptance and inclusion protect from many problems. Being rejected once leaves a young person at a higher risk of being left out in other reference groups, experiencing loneliness and being bullied. Rejection involves a higher risk of dropping out of school and later behavioural problems. Loneliness also causes problems in emotional life, such as anxiety and depression, as well as, difficulties with trusting others also as an adult.

It is important that lonely young people are noticed and included in. Doing practical exercises that support grouping with all the young people involved helps prevent loneliness and isolation. It is good to encourage young people to talk about their thoughts and express their feelings with an adult, even if it feels difficult for them. An adult can encourage young people by saying that even if they do not have a close friend now, that does not mean that there is no one who likes them. Coping with difficult stages in life gives strength and courage.

Solitude can also be positive, if you like spending time alone. Being alone can give you time to think and calm down. It means you have time to concentrate on things that put you in a good mood, such as listening to music or writing. It is good to remind young people, that loneliness is sometimes part of life. Everyone feels lonely at some point in their life.

## Bullying

Bullying refers to any recurring hostile behaviour, which causes intentional injury or distress to another person. It can be physical, verbal or indirect. It includes physical attacks, hitting, kicking, pushing or stealing and breaking items. It can also mean isolation, not speaking to a person and leaving them out. Bullying is also gossiping, talking behind someone's back and name-calling.

In primary schools, the bully is often a child who is physically larger or stronger than the others, who threatens others with violence. In high school, bullying is less physical and more psychological. An act of bullying involves the victim, one or more bullies and the by-standers, who do nothing to end it. The young people, who witness bullying, may understand that it is wrong, but the fear of being left out of the group keeps them quiet.

Bullying always about inequality. The bully may be stronger, older, arrogant or more quick-witted than the victim. The victim unwillingly becomes the centre of degrading and embarrassing attention. Bullying feels scary, oppressive and demeaning. No one needs to put up with bullying, and there is no justification for it.

Bullying must be addressed immediately. Young people may feel helpless in the face of bullying and expect an adult to take action to end it. Bullying feels even more difficult, if the victim feels s/he is left alone to deal with it. Therefore, young people need adults who are present, alert to the situation and ready to intervene.

There should be adults in youth work, at school and at home who keep their eyes open to bullying. If a victim of bullying has the courage to tell an adult about the situation, the worries should be taken seriously, because if they are dismissed, s/he will probably not bring it up again.

See chapter 5 *Adolescent relationships*, assertiveness exercises.

Bullying should be discussed openly, and it is important to involve all the young people, who have participated in it or allowed it to happen. Talking about bullying with young people, does not increase its likelihood - to reduce bullying, it must be decided together that bullying is not tolerated. It is also important to discuss the different involved roles in bullying, and consider, the responsibility we all have when we witness bullying. It is important to come up with shared rules: how to act when we witness bullying; who should be told, and how each person can act to prevent it.

The strength of youth work lies in its ability to group young people. Grouping is an essential factor that prevents bullying and protects young people. It is a process and cannot be achieved overnight. Grouping and supportive practical exercises are good ways to help timid young people to join in. Grouping requires time, and the practical methods to support it should always be part of the work done with young people. Grouping is also important when the group is not exclusive or does not convene on a regular basis, such as for open house activities.

Bullying feels even more difficult, if the victim feels s/he is left alone to deal with it.





See more about grouping in chapter 1 *Mental health power*.

Adolescent bullying can have serious and long-term consequences on wellbeing. Bullying affects self-image, self-esteem and mood. As a result of bullying, young people experience isolation and loneliness and are at a risk of exclusion and depression. Therefore, bullying must be addressed straight away. Youth work, home and school all have to support the victim of bullying.

## Online bullying

The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare has created material on social media related phenomena for the use of youth work. The material gives youth workers tools to deal with social media issues in their work with children and young people. Read more on MLL's website, see sources.

Nowadays it is more and more common for public mocking to continue with text messages or online. Social media bullying is common, and young people often continue the day's events in the evening online. The threshold is low, because the bully and the victim do not meet face-to-face and the bully does not need to witness the victim's reactions. Online bullying is public and permanent. Online bullying is just as harmful to its victim as other types of bullying: although it does not hurt physically, it causes severe shame and distress to its victim.

Online bullying can involve name-calling, jeering, smearing and insulting the victim; spreading gossip and information on them; the misuse of passwords; pretending to be the victim and identity theft in general; as well as, the manipulation and distribution of harmful videos and photos. Everything might start with a light comment which later spirals out of control. For example, mock images of another person can spread quickly and reach a large audience, even if it was not the bully's original intent. Images, videos and text posted online spread to other users' computers and smart phones. You may never be able to delete videos and text, and they will remain online for a long time.

Online bullying can be addressed using the same methods as other bullying. An adult should be told about bullying; the person could be an online-based youth worker or an Internet police. A bully might mistakenly think that you cannot be caught for online bullying. However, online bullies can almost always be identified. More serious cases can be investigated together with the police and site administrators. Young people must be encouraged to address online bullying. Young people should avoid joining bully groups and bullying messages must not be liked or forwarded.

TIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ON HOW TO ACT WHEN WITNESSING ONLINE BULLYING	TIPS FOR ADULTS ON PREVENTING AND SETTLING ONLINE BULLYING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You should not in general respond to bullying messages.</li> <li>• You should behave objectively and not provoke others unnecessarily.</li> <li>• You should think about who to accept as friends in social media. You should not accept everyone.</li> <li>• If an online acquaintance or behaviour online makes you feel uncomfortable, the acquaintance should be ended right from the outset.</li> <li>• If you feel you have been bullied, you should not join in the name-calling and threats, but block any messages from the bully, if that can be done in the platform you are using.</li> <li>• Online bullying usually leaves a trail, so bullies can be traced back.</li> <li>• Bullying messages should be saved; they can be used as evidence when the matter is settled.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach young people to save message for further action. The print screen button (Prt Scr) can be used to take a screenshot.</li> <li>• Teach and encourage young people to use the service's safety functions. Many services allow you to block messages and comments from a bully. Safety services include friend lists, black lists and limiting access to personal details and photos.</li> <li>• Contact the service provider, where the bullying has taken place. Many services can "suspend" the bully.</li> <li>• Contact the bully's parents and teachers.</li> <li>• Online bullying cases often fulfil the criteria for criminal activity. If this is the case, do not hesitate to contact the police.</li> <li>• Discuss with the young person how similar situations could be avoided in the future.</li> </ul>

*Adaptation from source: Tietoturvakoulu and MLL parent portal*

## Young people's stress and fatigue

Intermittent stress is part of life: it helps you operate, get going with work and achieve objectives. Sometimes stress improves performance and gives strength, but in excess or if it is long-term, it weakens performance, consumes energy and causes unhappiness.

Stress triggers changes in the body. It releases stress hormones, such as adrenaline, which is why the body thinks it getting ready to fight or flee and prepares for action: the heart beats faster, blood pressure rises and hands sweat. These changes in the body temporarily improve attention and performance, but in the long run, they are straining and consume energy.

Everyone has their indicators on what kinds of things and work loads cause stress and how to cope with them. What is stressful for one person may be inspiring or energising for another.

One person might find a tight work schedule stressful, whilst someone else might get stressed about the amount of work. Some have more physical symptoms from stress and others experience more psychological symptoms. Some have both. Some people become irritable and struggle to concentrate; they become anxious, depressed or forgetful, unsure or tired. Others experience stress physically: headaches, problems with sleeping, sweating, upset stomach and weight management problems can all be signs of stress. Stress can also affect relationships: a stressed person might isolate him/herself from the company of others, have disputes with friends and family or feel restless.

We experience stress already in childhood and adolescence. The amount of school work, difficulties to learn or the length of school days can cause pressures for many young people, as can performing or answering in class. The transition from primary school to secondary school can also be a stress factor for young people. It is good to discuss with young people the effects of stress and methods for relieving it.

School stress can be alleviated, for example, by preparing a study plan with the young person and prioritising: what to do first, what can be left to the end and what does not need doing at all. Young people, particularly those who are used to getting good grades, may set their personal expectations too high. If that is the case, it may be a good idea to discuss with them how they regard themselves and their performance and whether the requirement level is reasonable: it is not necessary or even possible to always achieve the best. It is usually enough just to complete the assignment adequately.

Personal experience is the most important stress indicator. The key is to identify which symptoms indicate harmful stress and which things in your life cause an overload. Each person has their own way of relieving stress, and it is important to have several ways of relaxing and reducing fatigue.

See relaxation and concentration exercises in chapter 8 *vulnerable mind*.

Ensuring balance in life is one of the most important stress management measures. Balance can be achieved through small decisions and daily rhythm. Life's support pillars that promote coping include nutrition, sleep, rest, relaxation, hobbies, exercise and social activities. Smooth life comes from flexible use of time, staying on top of busy schedules and managing the number of things you do. There must be time for just being, relaxing and lazing about without feeling any guilt. You also have the right to treat yourself and do something that puts you in a good mood on a daily basis.

## Different learners

School is one of the main sources of stress and worry for adolescents. It is good for youth workers to be aware of these worries. Youth workers are in an excellent position to help express, support and strengthen the self-knowledge of all kinds of learners, so that they can find their own methods of learning and adopting new things. Background information can also be useful in multi-professional cooperation with a teacher and other school staff.

Learning difficulties are common, since 20-25 per cent of people have some kind of learning challenges. Some people read slower than average, find it hard to memorise things, or producing or analysing text might be arduous for them. People suffering from hyperactivity or concentration problems also need support. This means that the young person might seem restless, over-active, easily distracted or may have difficulties concentrating.

Learning problems may also be the reason why a young person does not want to go to school. In extreme cases, the the young person has a negative attitude towards school altogether. This might result in skipping school and deteriorating grades.

The motivation to study might hit rock bottom. Learning difficulties influence self-esteem: a young person might feel insufficient compared to classmates' and other people's successes. Young people should be encouraged and have occasions in their free-time that provide experiences of success. The most important thing is to provide positive feedback for even the slightest successes or spontaneous acts.

Learning difficulties may also be evident in youth work, for example, when a group is doing an exercise or a task. You should stay calm, provide time and be patient, even if things have to be repeated several times. The atmosphere should be accepting and encouraging without any fear of failure. With examples and feedback, the youth worker can show the entire group that incorrect answers are not a problem and trying is always good, even if you make a mistake at times.

A youth worker may be the only adult, who realises a young person's learning difficulties.



Erillaisten oppijoiden liitto (association for special learners) website has material in Finnish on different support forms developed to assist schooling.

Sometimes a youth worker is the only adult, who realises a young person has learning difficulties. In this case, the youth worker plays a key role in helping the young person acknowledge the matter and find the necessary municipal services or support at school. Youth workers can encourage young people to discuss their difficulties with a teacher or a special education teacher. They can contact a teacher or a teaching assistant and can encourage the parents to contact the school too. Youth workers can also participate in meetings at school and provide the young person support in the discussions. It is important to express to the young person that everyone can learn and everyone has their strengths. Success in school work is important so that young people can find their study and career path and place in society and to ensure that they do not become excluded from society.



## Connecting with a young person - discussing concerns

When you are discussing young people's worries, it is important to always also mention their resources. Emphasising strengths and protective factors promotes self-esteem and confidence in their coping. See the Security and Support tool, which can be found in chapter 8 *Vulnerable mind*.

Young people need a day-to-day relationship with dependable adults, who are able to share their joys and sorrows both at home and at school. Youth workers have the opportunity to connect with young people through various activities and in different environments. Youth workers who know how to listen and be present, caring and encouraging and who value young people are skilled professionals and an important part of young people's safety net. A youth worker may also be the first person to notice a change in a young person's behaviour. Feeling concerned is always enough for a youth worker to raise the matter with the parents.

When young people tell an adult about their concerns, they must always be taken seriously. It can be difficult for young people to express their feelings, so it is important to find a quiet place and time to reach out to a young person. It is a good idea to start the discussions with the issues that are topical and foremost in the young person's mind. The young person and the adult may be concerned about different issues: the adult may be worried about the young person's behaviour, whilst the young person is concerned about friendships. Often a common factor can be found for the worries.

Young people can see things in a very different way from an adult. It is important to remember to listen to young people's own approach to their issues and what is significant. For example, young people are easily hurt by appearance and relationship related matters and carefully protect themselves. Even minor worries should always be taken seriously.

Young people usually raise their concerns with peers and friends. Sometimes friends tell about the problems to an adult, because they are concerned. These worries should always be clarified and raised with the relevant person. A friend may have information about their friend, which an adult has not yet become aware of.

The courage to seek timely help and assistance indicates that the young person is taking responsibility. For young people, it is enough to have the skills to express their need for help to an adult. The adult's task is to help the young person access appropriate help. Young people do not yet have sufficient skills to independently manage their life. The main principle is that young people should be escorted two steps further than they themselves want to be taken to ensure that the help has been sufficient. You could help the young person book an appointment with the school nurse or walk him/her to the reception. Adults should always be there to support young people in their daily lives. There are support questions below to help youth workers to bring up any concerns they may have with young people.

Raising a concern is especially important, when a young person's friend tells in confidence about a friend's self-destructive thoughts, eating disorder or other worrying aspects in his/her life. The burden is too heavy for a young person to carry alone and should always be shared with an adult. A young person must not be left alone with his/her concerns.

## Steps to raising a concern

1. Think about your concern and what made you concerned.
2. Think about what is good and effective in your work with the young person in question.
3. Consider, how you could express both the good things and the concerns without sounding accusatory or scolding.
4. Predict, what will happen, if you do or say, what you aim to. How will the young person react?
5. Look for ways by yourself or with a colleague, to create opportunities to talk, listen and continue cooperation with the young person.
6. Change the approach, if the practice run leaves you feeling negative and sceptical of whether the young person will want to participate in the discussion or if you are doubtful of whether the approach will work.
7. When you feel that you have found a considerate and constructive way to approach the young person, raise your concerns when the time and place are right.
8. Listen and be flexible; it should be a dialogue. Take the circumstances into account.
9. Analyse how it went. Did things go as you had predicted? What did you learn? How will you ensure that your connection with the young person remains?
10. Above all, remember that you are asking for help to reduce your worried. In terms of the young person's life, it is important that the concern is raised and that the potential help can be found.
11. If necessary, ensure that the young person access to specialist help.

*Adaptation from source: Eriksson & Arnkil (2012). Huoli puheeksi. Opas varhaisista dialogeista.*

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# EXERCISES

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The exercises in the Young person's safety net section have been divided into the following categories: Safety net, Young person's concerns and Loneliness and bullying.

## Safety net

### 1. Significance of a safety net

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#### GOAL

To provide examples and an adult's perspective on the significance of a safety net in life.

**DURATION:** 15-30 min

#### ACTIVITY

The instructor can share a safe example from his/her own life or give a fictional example of a situation, in which it was important that a person had dependable people in the safety net. The discussion can go on for a while giving a few young people a chance to tell about the significance of having a safety net.

### 2. My own safety net

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#### GOAL

To show the young people what their safety net looks like. To demonstrate who they can turn to in a tricky situation. A personal safety net is part of the basic structure of mental health.

**SUPPLIES:** A4-sized paper, pens, Safety Net model.

**DURATION:** 15-30 min

#### ACTIVITY

The young people draw their own safety net on a blank piece of paper. The instructor can start by showing an example of his/her own safety net or a fictional example of a safety net.

A safety net can consist of family members, close relatives, friends, acquaintances and friends from hobbies. Everyone has a unique safety net. Drawing a safety net can be extended to include all the safe people in a young person's immediate environment. Help the young people realise that there are members of the safety net in their school and hobbies too (e.g. teachers, youth workers, nurse).

#### ROUNDING OFF

- What thoughts did the exercise raise?
- Was it easy or difficult to draw the safety net?
- What kind of different environments can you find safety net members in?
- Do you young people share different experiences and feelings with different safety net members?



- Who can you talk to in the safety net? What kinds of worries are easy to raise with say a youth worker?
- Why can it be helpful to share your concerns with someone?
- How does talking help?
- Can talking sometimes do more harm than good? When?
- Who provides good feedback?
- Who gives you encouragement?

### ADAPTATIONS

At the beginning of a group or camp, the young people can form a safety net for the group or camp. A youth centre can also have its own safety net. This also works well as an exercise at the end of a group or camp.

## 3. My life's treasures

### GOAL

To get the young people to realise and notice good things in their own lives.

**SUPPLIES:** paper or cardboard, pens, coloured pencils, magazines, scissors, glue

**DURATION:** 30-45 min

### ACTIVITY

The young people collect their treasures for their safety net template. They can cut positive words and phrases related to their life from magazines and glue them or draw ideas on a big piece of card. They can also include names or pictures of people who are important to them and encourage them. They can choose suitable texts from a favourite book, comic, song, poem and write or glue it on the card.

The text and pictures can act as an encouraging factor. The most important thing is that each person considers positive factors in their life; things that provide them strength and encouragement.

### ROUNDING OFF

- What treasures did the young people find?
- Did the young people realise new important things?
- Who are the important people providing strength in the safety net? Are there people who have been particularly good at making the young people feel good about themselves?

### ADAPTATIONS

Alternatively, the exercise can be completed as a digital story (see p. 17). The exercise can also be carried out with Prezi software. See more [prezi.com](http://prezi.com).

*Continues on the next page...*

## 4. Feel good surprise card

**GOAL:** To learn to pay attention to other people. To show that you care.

**SUPPLIES**

Carton, coloured pencils, other craft equipment and decoration materials

**DURATION:** 15-30 min

**ACTIVITY**

The young people make a feel good surprise card to an important person in their safety net. Everyone writes a message on the card and decorates it. The card can be addressed to a friend ("Lets go to the cinema at the weekend") or a mother ("Lets cook together in the evening") or it may state an important thought "You are dear to me".

**ADAPTATION:** The young people can make feel good jewellery to be given as gifts to important people.

## Young person's concern

## 5. Concerns

**GOAL:** To show to the young people, what kind of concerns people may have and how they can be discussed.

**SUPPLIES:** paper, felt pens, Pieces of Growth model, Safety Net model

**DURATION:** 30-45 min

**ACTIVITY**

In small groups, the participants think about the kinds of concerns young people may have. Each group writes or draws the concerns on a large piece of paper. After this, the group discusses the concerns that came up. Together or in smaller groups, they consider what could be done about the concerns. The Safety Net can be used as an aid.

A child's or young person's concerns could include:

- Loneliness or isolation in a new group
- Parents always at work
- Thoughts about whether anyone cares about me
- Bullying, making friends
- School pressures
- Nervousness in performance situations.

**ROUNDING OFF**

- What kind of concerns might young people have?
- What kind of strengths do young people have? How could these be further developed?
- How to strengthen self-esteem?
- Can worries be talked about? How do you build up courage to talk about them?
- How can you talk to about worries? With whom?
- Why is it important to talk about your thoughts and emotions?

- What brings safety and security to your life?
- What other worries can young people have in their life?
- How similar or different are the concerns that were brought up by the groups?
- Do adults have the same concerns?
- What could be the solutions for the concerns?

## 6. Disappear in a puff of smoke

### GOAL

To make the act of removing a worry more concrete. A key part of the exercise is to encourage young people to think positively and to accept themselves.

**DURATION:** 15 min

### ACTIVITY

The young people write a concern that has been bothering them on a piece of paper. The paper is crunched up or ripped up and thrown away or burned on a camp fire or in a barbecue. They do not need to share their concern with the others.

### ROUNDING OFF

- What did it feel like to remove the concern? Did it help?
- Do you sometimes end up turning worries over and over in your head? How does it make you feel?
- What could you do about churning worries?

### ADAPTATIONS

- A worry can also be blown into a balloon, which is then popped, or the air inside the balloon is let out into the sky!
- The group can also let their worries go by everyone shaking their bodies from head to toes! Faces, cheeks and mouths must also wobble about- and everyone should start making noises too. Mumbling, exaggeration and humour are welcome!

## 7. Survivor

### GOAL

To bring up young people's worries and provide solutions to them through images and discussion.

**SUPPLIES:** picture cards, Sails of a Survivor model, Windmill of Emotions model

**DURATION:** 30 min

### ACTIVITY

Together as a group, choose images from the picture cards that show young people's concerns. Together or in small groups, consider what has happened to the young people in the pictures.

### ROUNDING OFF

- What has happened to the young people in the pictures?
- Which emotions can you detect in the pictures?
- Which emotions do the young people in the pictures trigger in you?
- How can you get over your worries?

It might be easier for young people to tell about their own worries with the help of pictures. Using an imaginary person, the young people do not need to tell others about their personal worries. Saying difficult things outloud can make them a bit easier to deal with.

- What would bring security to the young people in the pictures?
- What would help the young people in the pictures to cope with the situation?
- How could you cope in similar situations?

## Loneliness and bullying

### 8. Alone

**GOAL:** To get the young people to think about loneliness.

**SUPPLIES:** picture cards, Pieces of Growth model, Safety Net model

**DURATION:** 15-30 min

#### ACTIVITY

The young people look for an image among the picture cards, which presents a young person who seems lonely. Together, the group considers why the young person in the picture may be lonely. Give the person a name.

Questions for the discussion:

- How would a safety net help the young person? What kind of support could the young person get from his/her safety net?
- What could the young person do to make friends?
- Who can you talk to about loneliness?
- What could fellow pupils in the same class do?
- How could parents intervene in the situation? What could they do?
- What does loneliness mean?
- What kind of strengths does the young person have?
- How could the young person be tempted to come to a youth centre?
- What could the other young people at the centre do?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to make friends?
- Are there differences between girls' and boys' friendships and methods of making friends?
- Can boys and girls be friends with each other?

#### ROUNDING OFF

Come up with an action plan for the young person in the picture:

- How can the young person move away from loneliness?
- What should be done first?
- How could s/he make friends at school or at the youth centre? How can you make contact with another person?
- Can solitude be a positive thing?
- When is solitude a positive thing?
- In what situations do young people long for solitude and why?



## 9. Can I join in

The exercise is particularly well suited to a group that has been together for some time but for some reason is not working, or if there has been bullying or discrimination within the group.

Digital stories of the Building a safe group project can be downloaded from YouTube with the search terms: *Uusi jäsen ryhmään* (New group member) and *Opiskelijagallup hyvästä opiskeluryhmästä* (Student poll about a good study group).

### GOAL

To use a practical exercise to show, how difficult it can be to join a new group of friends.

**DURATION:** 10-15 min

### ACTIVITY

The young people form a tight circle. The instructor tries to become part of the circle and the young people try to prevent this. When the instructor has tried for sometime (usually unsuccessfully), volunteers try the same.

### ROUNDING OFF

- Can it be as difficult to join an existing group of friends? What makes it difficult?
- What does it feel like for the person, who is trying to join the group?
- How could we involve more young people?
- Can the young people think of an everyday situation, in which it would have been difficult to join a group?
- What about a situation, in which a new person has been noticed and helped to join a group?
- How could the young people, for example at the youth centre, try and involve new young people in the group? What methods could there be?

### ADAPTATION

The instructor can tell about an everyday experience, in which it has been difficult to join in to a group, for example, at a new workplace or hobby. How had it felt for the instructor? The instructor can also tell about a situation, in which s/he has noticed, how new people could be better involved in different groups. After this, the group discusses the topic together.

## 10. Rejection

### GOAL

To discuss rejection, including bullying, among young people.

**SUPPLIES:** picture cards, Windmill of Emotions model

**DURATION:** 30 – 45 min

### ACTIVITY

The instructor tells about a situation in which the paths of two friends part when one of the friends decides to change groups of friends and makes new friends to replace the old friend. S/he begins to discriminate against and spread false gossip about the old friend. The old friend is left alone and does not have a friend to spend time with after school.

Find pictures of the two people in the story from the picture cards - what do they look like? Together the group considers the following:

- What happened to the friends? Why?
- Why did one of the friends suddenly begin to discriminate against the other person?
- What could the young person, who was left alone, have done? Who could s/he seek help from?

- How could s/he make new friends?
- How do you identify bullying?
- Is discrimination and name-calling a form of bullying?

### ROUNDING OFF

- How can the situation be resolved?
- What happened to the friendship?
- Has something similar happened to anyone in the group or someone they know?
- Which emotions did the story trigger?
- What does it feel like, when a friend abandons you?

## 11. Discussion on bullying

**GOAL:** To discuss bullying with the help of thematic questions.

**DURATION:** 30-45 min

### ACTIVITY

Discuss bullying with the group using the following model:

A video about online bullying created by Mannerheim League for Child Welfare's Nuortennetti can be downloaded from YouTube with the search terms *Gallup: Nettikiusaaminen (Poll: Online bullying)*. The Building a safe group project's digital story on bullying can be downloaded from YouTube with the search terms *Kiusaaminen - ryhmän ulkopuolelle jääminen (Bullying - being left out of the group)*.

#### What is bullying?

Everyone reacts to bullying in different ways. Bullying is recurring and intentional behaviour that aims to cause distress.

- Physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, causing pain...
- Mental - name-calling, threatening, forcing, blaming, sneering, hiding belongings, online bullying, rejection, isolation...

What other forms of bullying can there be?

#### Why does a bully bully?

- May have been a victim of bullying
- To release personal discontent
- Bully's aim is to leave the victim feeling insecure.

#### What different roles does bullying include?

- victim
- bully
- spurrer
- helper
- defender
- silent approver

Everyone has the right to be part of a group. Everyone can play their part in ending bullying in a group. However, bullying continues for as long as it is accepted by the group.

#### Methods to end bullying:

- to support and show empathy towards the victim
- to tell an adult at home or at school about the bullying
- bullying should not be watched as a bystander or encouraged by cheering or laughing, because these usually maintain it.
- to develop and strengthen emotional and interactive skills and ways of coping in life.

More rounding off questions on online bullying on page 41: Gossip circulates in a waterfall

### ROUNDING OFF

- Why are some people bullied?
- Why does someone bully?
- How would you describe a bully?
- How do others react to a bully? Does a bully have friends?
- What might s/he have experienced?
- Why is difference difficult to accept?
- How bad can it feel, if you are bullied?
- How can people in these various roles bring bullying to an end?
- How could you intervene with bullying?
- Who can be told about bullying? Is it easy or difficult to tell about it?
- How can you support the victim of bullying?

## 12. Bullying sucks!

### GOAL

To prevent bullying, to make statement, to understand why bullying is not to be done.

### ACTIVITY

The instructor shows the young people YouTube videos – for example, the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare's *Yksin (Alone)* or *Sinä voit auttaa (You can help)*. Afterwards, the groups consider, what could be done to avoid bullying. What should you do if you realise that a friend is being bullied? The young people plan and create anti-bullying posters together. The posters are hung up for an anti-bullying theme week e.g. at the youth centre.

Coping skills can always  
be improved

## COPING SKILLS

### PHYSIOLOGICAL

- I go for a jog and enjoy the outdoors
- I do my favourite sport
- I relax
- I eat well
- I sleep enough

### SPIRITUAL

- I seek sanctuary and hope from religion, ideas and values
- I ponder the meaning of life
- I pray, contemplate and quiet down

### INTELLECTUAL

- I find out additional information about issues
- I make plans
- I write things down
- I solve problems
- I make lists

### CREATIVE

- I use my imagination
- I think positive
- I listen to myself
- I explore new ways to act

### EMOTIONAL

- I laugh, cry, rejoice
- I talk about my feelings
- I express myself and my emotions: I dance, play an instrument, draw, paint, tinker, cook

### SOCIAL

- spend time with friends
- I attend group hobbies
- I accept/receive support and I also support others
- I share experiences with others

Ayalon 1995

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for Mental Health

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## Summary

- Crises are part of life. There are several kinds of crises: developmental crises, life crises and traumatic crises.
- Everyone reacts to a crisis or grief in their own way, and everyone has their own strategies for coping. These strategies can also be practised and strengthened.
- Young people dealing with a crisis must not be left alone. They need the presence and support of an adult. It is the adults' responsibility to be available to the young people, when they feel the need to talk.
- If a crisis or grief affects several young people at once, the events should be discussed together. A third party expert can participate in the discussions, and the local municipality's crisis plan and services can be applied.
- If necessary, a young person must be referred to further support.



# 7 YOUNG SURVIVOR

## Crises are part of life

Read more about protective factors in chapter 2 *Adolescent mental health*.

Everyone faces crises, grief and losses at some point in their life. They are a natural part of life. People experience crises in their own personal way. Crises may leave scars, but it is possible to get over them.

Strengthening mental health's protective factors and using your own coping strategies help you cope with crises and promote mental health in difficult life events. Young people survive crises mainly with the support of their family, friends and other dependable adults. Life's routines and taking care of oneself; the stability of the surrounding structures; the ability to talk about worries; as well as, the skill to name and express emotions support young people in crises.

Crises can be divided into developmental crises, life crises and traumatic crises.

- **Developmental crisis** are, life events, natural life turning points when old life is left behind to move towards new things. Changes do not cause crises for everyone, but others react to them strongly and need more time to get over them.
- **Life crisis** can be triggered by long-term, burdensome circumstances, such as unemployment, a divorce process or a long-term illness.
- **Traumatic crisis** is caused by an event, which is unexpected and powerful, and can cause considerable suffering. It can be triggered by, for example, being part of an accident or witnessing an accident, the sudden loss of an important person, becoming the victim of a crime, witnessing violence or losing a job. These events may leave a person feeling insecure, because the events or personal reactions are uncontrollable.
- **Trauma** is used as a term, when the psychological pain is overwhelming and reactions do not take their course. The event or parts of it become fixated in the body and mind.

## Developmental and life crises during adolescence

Sometimes a young person may experience a crisis in a situation that is not straining from an adult perspective. Young people lack adults' life experience and their mental coping skills are still limited compared to an adult.

People go through various stages of growth and development in adolescence. Breaking away from home and parents and the security they provide; adapting to the changes taking place in the body and to sexual growth, and finding your place in life and employment after studies can trigger a developmental crisis in a young person. Young people can often resolve crises with the help of friends and family, but sometimes a young person's life conditions can make them more difficult to resolve.

Young people need support and encouragement in their development from parents and others responsible for their upbringing. Sometimes young people face setbacks on their journey to independence and make decisions that harm them. If the young people at such a time lack the support of and connection to an adult, they may not have the necessary means to see good in themselves and shame fills their mind. Boundaries that are so strict that young people are unable to test them safely do not promote adolescent development. The complete lack of boundaries is equally harmful, because then parents are not providing the necessary resistance to breaking away from home and, thus, becoming independent is more difficult.

Difficult circumstances within the family, which drain the young person's resources, may cause a life crisis. Sometimes a young person ends up carrying too much responsibility and too heavy an emotional load, due to a parent's illness, financial worries, divorce etc. It is too much responsibility to shoulder at this age. The separation from home becomes delayed, and the young person must suppress rebellion and either become independent too early or get stuck in the previous developmental stage.

Sometimes young people face setbacks on their journey to independence and make decisions that harm them.

Sometimes a life crisis may be caused by changes that are a natural part of life, such as moving away from home, moving in together with a partner, getting married or having a child.



## Stages of traumatic crisis

Everyone, including young people, reacts to crises differently and deals with them in their own way. In a traumatic crisis, such as an accident or a death of a family member or a close friend, young people's life experience, resources and survival skills are not yet sufficient, and they may experience insecurity.

As the traumatic crisis progresses, four different stages can be identified: shock, reaction, processing and reorientation. The stages may not necessarily happen in that order; instead some stages can reappear during the course of the crisis. That is part of experiencing a crisis. It is good to be aware of the different stages of a crisis, so that you can listen to and support the young person in the way the situation demands.

### Shock phase

Denial

The shock phase comes up during the first moments after the event or after becoming aware of it. It is impossible to believe what has happened, and it may feel surreal. People react differently, and you cannot predict your own behaviour. Many people might shout and cry. Others may become completely paralysed, and some seem to act calmly and effectively. The person may not be able to remember almost anything of it afterwards. During the shock phase, the mind protects itself, because it is not yet ready to absorb the news.

### Reaction phase

Understanding, protective mechanisms

During the reaction phase, the person gradually understands that the events are real and processing them and grieving can begin. Emotions start emerging, and they can be painfully intense. The person may have the need to talk about the event over and over again. S/he might blame him/herself or others for what has happened. S/he might be tearful, restless and scared. The entire body can react: shivering, dizziness, fast heartbeat, sleeplessness and headaches.

### Processing phase

Processing, grief and anger alternate

During the processing phase, the person goes through the event and may have the need to talk to others about it. The person might be irritable or isolate him/herself from social situations. Particularly after loss, a person can become introverted. The grief feels intense; it may feel like longing, but also like anger, bitterness and fear. When the recovery process moves on, the physical and psychological symptoms reduce.

### Reorientation

Acceptance, new direction

During the reorientation phase, a person begins to gradually find a new balance in life. Adaptation to the new phase can begin, when it is possible to understand the event. In grief work, loss gradually becomes a memory and something of the past. The reorientation phase can be identified by the fact that the person talks about the future and his/her plans. Trust and confidence in life begins to return and strengthen.

Read more about crises and trauma in the publication by Eija Palosaari (2007): *Lupa särkyä*.

Sometimes people may need powerful methods to protect themselves from the pain caused by crisis. When there is too much psychological pain, it is impossible to start processing the crisis and grieving cannot start, and the painful experience fixates in the body and mind. A person may avoid the event, aim to suppress the emotions and reactions, experience flashbacks of the events and sometimes react in incomprehensible ways. If the crisis is not dealt with and the process is prolonged, it may become a trauma. In that case, getting past it will require additional help. Seeking help always indicates strength and courage.

## Emotions in traumatic crisis

Going through a crisis requires emotional skills, but also develops them. Putting emotions into words, talking about emotions and expressing them are protective factors helping the mind keep its balance. traumatic crisis also involves an emotional shock, which is too big in relation to a person's own resources. The person loses control and life can seem unimportant. Even intense emotions, which a traumatic experience can trigger, are a natural part of a crisis.

Emotions can be expressed in various ways, also through music.



Crisis may cause anxiety in young people, which may stem from fear, grief and even anger. Crisis can also bring with it shame, helplessness and the feelings of insecurity. A young person might find it hard to face things that bring back memories, such as smells, photos or objects. Even though they would bring back positive feelings from the past, they can cause intense reactions of fear in a young person.

Experiencing, acknowledging and naming emotions is liberating. Emotions promote the progress of the crisis and grief work. An adult should communicate to the young person that s/he has the right to feel and experience difficult and even confusing emotions.

Crises bring up various emotions, such as anger, irritability, helplessness, guilt and shame. When emotions are running high, it is good to remember that all emotions are passing. Eventually, emotions fade and become different emotions. Life goes on.

Guilt may also emerge in a traumatic crisis. The death of an important person or parents' divorce can easily bring up self-accusations in the minds of young people. It is important to tell them again and again that there is nothing they could have done to change the outcome.

Grief and loss are sometimes part of life, no matter how you try and make the right decisions and avoid painful matters.

Young people do not yet have the experience of crisis, grief and intense emotions. They cannot know whether the emotional turmoil will pass and when they will feel better again. It may come as a surprise to young people, how strong physical reactions a crisis can trigger. For this reason, they still need adults to name the emotions and events. Young people may be keen to hear about adults' experiences on what will happen next, what other people feel and go through and how the adults have survived crisis.

## Losses and grief

Grief can be defined as a strong and long-term melancholic state of mind caused by a loss, difficult events or a mood. Grief can also be a reaction to the risk of loss. It is a way of letting go and giving up, and the experience of grief is important, because it enables us to gradually move on after loss. Grief also involves beautiful memories. Everyone's grief is unique.

Many things can trigger grief for young people: the death of someone close to them, parents' divorce, a personal or a family member's serious illness, the end of a relationship or moving away from home. Grieving and its duration are unique. There are physical signs of grieving, such as changes to appetite, loss of interest, motivation and initiative, decrease in the ability to concentrate, sleeping problems and susceptibility to crying.

More information on young people's grief can be found in chapter 4 *Emotions and emotional skills*.

Grief is particularly strong and long-term if a young person has to face the death of an important person. The experience might also trigger other emotions in addition to grief, such as anger, guilt and envy. These emotions are a sign that the young person is processing the crisis. Young people over the age of 12 understand the finality of death and their own mortality, and the changes the death of someone important brings to their immediate circle.

Young people often grieve together. Grief involves rituals; for example, an accident site is often filled with candles, flowers and poems. Shared rituals are an important part of grieving for young people. They give opportunities for reminiscing and provide a sense of community in tragic circumstances. Young people may set up grief groups or communities online for sharing their pain and experiences. Friends provide important support for coping, but a young person will also always need a safe adult close by to share and help them deal with their grief.



## Coping in a crisis

Coping in a crisis requires physical strength, mental resources and a strong safety net. Facing the painful issues and showing your emotions help recovery. All different reactions, including ones that may seem confusing and strange, are part of the process. Everyone has their own methods for coping with painful life events, and everyone can survive. There are a number of ways to help you feel better, and you can also practise different coping methods. Smaller disappointments, sorrows and hardship help build coping skills. Every person can find a coping strategy that is suitable for them.

## Different coping strategies

The different coping strategies are explained in youthful terms in the Sails of a Survivor model.

<b>Social support</b>	A person wants to talk to close friends and family about the shocking event and is able to seek and receive help from them.
<b>Affective expression</b>	Expression through crying and laughing or, for example, through art. Sharing of emotions with others.
<b>Cognitive processing</b>	A person collects information about the event; engages in a conversation with her/himself, and uses problem-solving techniques.
<b>Imagination/creativity</b>	A person uses imagination to avoid unpleasant facts or to find solutions to problems. S/he creates mental images and believes in personal instinct.
<b>Belief systems</b>	Religion, beliefs or values offer support and help.
<b>Physical behaviour</b>	A person finds support in eating, exercising, relaxing, sleeping etc.

Source: Ayalon, O. *Selviydyn: Yhteisön tuki ja selviytyminen*. 1995. Helsinki: MLL.

It is a good idea for youth workers to consider what their coping strategies may be. When you know the things that help you in small or bigger hardships, it is easier to encourage young people to find and practise different coping strategies. A person can have many coping strategies; there is no need to categorise yourself as a certain type of survivor. The more strategies you have, the more resources you have resort to a crisis.

## Step by step coping

Being able to concentrate, enjoy other people's company and express emotions, are signs that the young person has managed to put the crisis behind.

### Talking helps.

Telling others about the event and your emotions and thoughts, makes the event more real and easier to comprehend, which helps process it. The events should be discussed in frank terms. Although sometimes in a crisis you might feel like isolating yourself, you need other people around you. If it seems difficult to talk to friends or family, a crisis helpline or professional crisis assistant might be a good option. For some young people, a pet is an important comforter and listener.

### Crying makes things easier.

The body's most natural way to react to grief is crying; crying releases inner anxiety and relaxes the body and mind. Crying helps you understand your own emotions and sadness, making it easier to talk about them. You can also cry in front of others.

### Express through action.

Creativity, crafts and expressing feelings physically help process emotions. You can keep a diary about the event and the emotions and thoughts it triggered; in the diary you can record even the frightening, angry and confusing emotions. You may choose to write a letter to the person who has passed away telling about the things you never got a chance to share with him/her. Some people find it helpful to draw or paint emotions and thoughts, for others physical expression, such as exercising and dancing, is more helpful. Music, playing an instrument and singing are also methods of dealing with emotions.

### Take care of yourself.

Grieving takes up resources, but despite that, it is important to take care of your physical health, because a healthy body radiates strength to the mind as well. Rest enough, eat regularly and spend at least some time outdoors daily.

### Allow yourself to be happy.

There will be some happy moments in amongst the grief and crisis. You should not feel guilty about them; you must allow yourself to have the right to continue with your life. Gradually, moments, even days, will come when grief is no longer the dominant emotion.

*Source: Suru. The Finnish Association for Mental Health. Sos Centre's working group.*

Crisis can also bring something good with it, because through your survival experience, you may find resources you did not know you had. Coping in a crises may also improve self-confidence and trust in your abilities, if you process and deal with the crisis.

## Supporting a young person experiencing crisis and grief

A parent and often an adult outside the home provide a sense of security to a young person amidst a crisis and grief. A youth worker may be needed for support, particularly, when something has happened at home. The young person going through a crisis may wonder, who knows about what has happened. It may be reassuring when an adult tells that they are aware of the event and are prepared to help and discuss it. That means that the person going through the crisis does not need to worry about who knows.

A youth worker may be the first adult to realise a young person's distress. Any sudden changes in behaviour should be a warning sign: a shy young person becomes aggressive and defiant, or a happy young person becomes tearful and absent-minded. Sometimes young people communicate their pain through writing or drawing. Whenever an adult feels concerned or perplexed by the behaviour of a young person, it is time to act.

Young people should be told that the youth worker is there and ready to listen, whenever the need to talk arises. It may be easier for the young person to talk, if there are other things and activities to do at the same time, such as play pool or table football. The chat does not necessarily need to be very long; even a short moment can improve the sense of security.

An adult needs to discuss with and help the young person to analyse the events. Sometimes young people react with denial and aggression, but the reactions must be accepted. The fact that an adult is able to shoulder even strong emotions and provide unfaltering support offers security. In a crisis, young people need to have someone who listens to them, understands and accepts their state of mind and gives them the time and support they need. It is important to make time for these discussions. Sometimes, young people need to tell about the events and their emotions over and over again, even a long time after the event. You can always ask, if there is anything the young person would like to discuss that has not been brought up yet.

Amidst a crisis and grief, adults must establish safety through everyday routines. A crisis should never be dismissed, but it is also a good idea to emphasise that not everything has changed, and life goes on. School, a youth centre or a workshop may be the only places for the young person, where life continues as it used to be. Sometimes it is good to encourage friends to act just the same as they did before the event. They can offer their support by listening and being present, as well as, by spending time and doing normal things together.

It may be helpful to encourage young people going through a crisis to return to their hobbies, because exercising and creativity, such as art, dance, music and drama, help you express emotions. Grief and crisis drain resources, which may result in tiredness and concentration problems. Adults need to support young people going through a crisis in their daily life such as sleep routines, mealtimes, eating and hygiene.

Young people may wish to return to school and their friends quite soon after the event and show that everything is fine. At the same time, they still need care, understanding and flexibility in their daily activities. Young people may need adults' support and encouragement from time to time later on too, particularly when they are going through major changes or have to make decisions, such as when school

finishes or a study place must be chosen. The adults role is to strengthen the young person's protective factors, maintain faith and hope by securing the continuity of everyday life and to show that they will be there.

If necessary, the adult must find out, where professional help could be found for the young person and guide the young person to it. Adults can also encourage young people to participate in peer support groups led by an adult. In the group, young people, who are going through a similar life situation or have encountered similar problems or loss, can share their experiences and feelings. The group may be helpful, because meeting people who have similar experiences provides space and understanding for your own grief. Other people's experiences may give ideas as to what could help and facilitate your own situation. The most common time to participate in a group meeting is, when the crisis is no longer at an acute stage and at least six months have passed since the event.

## How to reach out to a young person experiencing a crisis and grief?

Read more about processing crises with young people on the Finnish National Agency for Education's website: [oph.fi/kriisiaineisto](http://oph.fi/kriisiaineisto)

1. Be interested in the young person and take his/her grief and crisis seriously; keep an eye on his/her reactions. Tell him/her that you know what has happened. Be alert; do not do anything else at the same time.
2. Find a place at the youth centre, where you can talk to the young person in peace and quiet. It may be easier for the young person to talk, if there are other things and activities to do at the same time, such as a pool table, a pack of cards or a table football.
3. Do not feel frightened of reacting to the young person's grief and facing grief. Calling difficult things by their proper names helps with coping. Listening and being alert show that you care and create a sense of security.
4. Grief rituals provide a grieving person with security and an opportunity to process the events and offer a structure, which has a clear start and finish. The ritual can be simple. It can involve one young person or all the youth work personnel.
5. Discuss the events, the facts, emotions and reactions together with other young people. Encourage the young people to listen to the person, who is experiencing a crisis and to be the same friend as before; ask them to be empathetic. You can utilise safe exercises in processing the issue.
6. Sometimes you might need to include a specialist in the discussion to provide support.
7. Contact the young person's parents or guardians.
8. If necessary, refer the young person to a place where they can find specialist help.

## Crisis also affects other young people

It is a good idea for the youth worker to contact the parents or guardians, and tell them that the crisis has been discussed with the young person at the youth centre. The youth work can also encourage the parents to talk about the event at home and process emotions together. The young person and his/her parents can do something together to help the relatives going through the crisis, such as go to the shop or prepare food.

It is important for the youth worker to stay calm and support the young people in their strong reactions. This is possible, when the youth worker has had the opportunity to first deal with the events and personal emotions within his/her work community.

The most important thing is to create a safe atmosphere, where issues and emotions can be freely discussed.

In the event of a traumatic crisis, it is important to also pay attention to the reactions of other young people. You can talk to the young people about the events and the reactions to and impacts of the crisis. It is important to give them the facts and go over any misunderstandings to put a stop to gossip.

If the events are reported by the media, it is good to go over the material by watching the news together or reading articles concerning the event. That also helps you keep up-to-date with the facts. Focusing on the solutions to the event helps manage fear: what was done right and who or what helped cope with the situation.

Questions about the event and explaining the facts	Questions about the reactions to and impacts of the crisis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What has happened?</li> <li>• Where and when did it happen?</li> <li>• Who did it happen to?</li> <li>• Who were involved?</li> <li>• Where did you hear about the event?</li> <li>• How was it described?</li> <li>• How is the event discussed now? What has been said?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was the first thought that came to your mind?</li> <li>• How did you feel?</li> <li>• How did your body react? What kinds of feelings did the crisis trigger?</li> <li>• What meanings could there be for the event?</li> <li>• What kinds of questions have arisen?</li> <li>• How can you help yourself and others move on?</li> </ul>

Youth workers can tell the young people, how people usually react in these situations. They can also tell about their own experiences with grief and coping strategies. That provides an important model for young people and can help them cope with their own crises. When young people tell about their reactions, you can ask others, if anyone else reacted in the same way. It is important to stress that crying and feeling angry are allowed. Encouraging young people to comfort someone who is crying in ways that feel natural to them might stir their inner compassion. A youth worker can also ask the others, what it feels like to see a friend cry.

If the entire local community faces a crisis, then young people, parents, youth work personnel and the school personnel can all get together to go through the events. A crisis work professional, such as a school psychologist, municipal social worker or emergency crisis service worker can participate in the meeting to provide support for the discussions.

At the end, it is important to ask if anyone has questions or if anything was left unclear, or what the young people think about what has just been discussed. The young people should also be told, when and where they can go to have a



one-to-one discussion with an instructor. It is a good idea to discuss the events further with those young people, who have reacted particularly strongly, and if necessary, ensure they have access to professional help.

## Questions about loss and grief for discussions with young persons

In addition to the exercises in this chapter, see also the relaxation exercises in chapter 6 *Young person's safety net* and grouping exercises in chapter 1 *Mental health power*.

- How do you notice a young person is grieving? How do young people usually grieve?
- What does grief feel like? Where do you feel grief? Which emotions might be experienced during grief?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to experience grief? Why is grief sometimes concealed?
- How do people grieve in different cultures? Are some grieving customs different to what you are used to? What other grief rituals can there be? What do you see as the colours of grief?
- How can you support a person, who has lost somebody close? What can you say or do? What is the importance of providing support? What other ways are there to show empathy other than words?
- How can you keep in touch with a grieving person? Should s/he be given time to be alone or should s/he be contacted? If you should, when?
- What do flowers, cards, candles, songs and flying a flag at half mast mean to a grieving person? What significance does a funeral have to the relatives and friends?
- Can you think of events that have shocked everyone in the country? What about the entire world? Why are these events shocking even though they may not directly affect you or your friends and family?
- How is the experience of grief portrayed in the media? Is it genuine?

Young people often grieve together, and shared rituals are important to them.



## Action plan for traumatic crisis

### People to discuss with

- Parents, guardian
- Teachers, instructors
- Nurse, curator
- Psychologist
- Health centre, family clinic
- Social work, child protection
- Mental health services in the municipality
- Youth psychiatry outpatient clinic
- Crisis centre in the region
- Municipal youth worker
- Church youth worker or priest

### Phone numbers (Finland)

- National crisis helpline: 01019 5202
- Children and young people's helpline: 116 111
- Boys' helpline: 0800 94884
- Conscript helpline: 0800 180362

### Websites

- [mielenterveysseura.fi](http://mielenterveysseura.fi)
- [tukinet.net](http://tukinet.net)
- [e-mielenterveys.fi](http://e-mielenterveys.fi)
- [vahvistamo.fi](http://vahvistamo.fi)
- [mll.fi](http://mll.fi)
- [nuortenkriisipiste.com](http://nuortenkriisipiste.com)
- [nyyti.fi](http://nyyti.fi)
- [vaestoliitto.fi/nuoret](http://vaestoliitto.fi/nuoret)
- [poikienpuhelin.fi](http://poikienpuhelin.fi)
- [poikientalo.fi](http://poikientalo.fi)
- [tyttojentalo.fi](http://tyttojentalo.fi)
- [apua.info](http://apua.info)
- [nuoret.mielenterveystalo.fi/nuoriso](http://nuoret.mielenterveystalo.fi/nuoriso)

Following an existing crisis plan provides concrete help in the case of a traumatic crisis. The sense of security is first and foremost an inner experience and only after that refers to the surrounding environment. Therefore, it is essential to strengthen people's inner sense of security. One way to do it is to try and calm yourself and others down. It is also important to emphasise everyone's personal responsibility; for example, gossip and rumours must not be spread.

Training helps reinforce youth work professionals' skills to face grief and loss. It is a good idea to have a municipal action plan for crises in each municipal youth centre and in camp work, and the staff should be made aware of it in training sessions. Municipal youth services and the education sector should have a shared plan for crises and handling communication. Child protection and social services should also be involved in the planning. Contact details for support services, as well as, literature on crises and coping, can be made available in youth centres for general information distribution. The youth services should also have an action plan for camps.

The Finnish National Board of Education has prepared guidelines for writing an action plan for traumatic crisis. The action plan should include the following points:

- crisis prevention and how to prepare for them
- cooperation and distribution of tasks and responsibilities in preparation for and in the event of a crisis
- harmonisation of the emergency plan, school regulations and other safety guidelines
- operating guidelines for different traumatic crises
- principles for management, internal and external communication, as well as, communication between schools and the education provider in a traumatic crises
- organisation of psychosocial support and follow-up care
- crisis plan communication and familiarisation and preparation for operational readiness
- crisis plan updates and assessment.

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# EXERCISES

The exercises in the Young survivor section have been divided into the following categories: Life will prevail, Grief and crisis and Trust and security. It is important to ensure the group's safety, when dealing with these themes: the last section includes exercises on how to support group trust and safety. See Grouping exercises in chapter 1

## Life will prevail

### 1. Sails of a Survivor

#### GOAL

To acknowledge that you can always reinforce your own survival skills. To consider your resources and coping strategies.

#### SUPPLIES

Sails of a Survivor model, Hand of Mental Health model, Safety Net model

**DURATION:** 30-45 min

#### ACTIVITY

The young people build their own sail of a survivor. They consider the following points: What gives you strength in life? How could you strengthen the different coping strategies: social support, affective expression, cognitive processing, imagination/creativity, belief systems, physical behaviour? The more coping strategies a person has, the better prepared they are for coping with difficult events. The sails of a survivor sustain in the tailwinds and headwinds of life.

The sail can also be constructed on to a large piece of fabric instead of paper, on which the coping strategies can be written, drawn, painted or pressed with e.g. fabric markers or paints.

#### ROUNDING OFF

- What is the first thing you do, when you feel upset?
- What would not feel natural for you to do?
- Which coping strategies could you strengthen?
- Where do young people gather resources for life?
- At what stages in life or for which life events might the sails of a survivor come in handy?
- What strategies could help you cope with a particularly difficult life event or crisis?
- What is the most common coping strategy for young people? Is there more than one?

### 2. Survivor's alias

#### GOAL

To explain to young people the different coping strategies and find ones that are suitable for them as individuals. To improve self-knowledge.

**SUPPLIES:** Sails of a Survivor model

**DURATION:** 30-45 min

**ACTIVITY**

Explain or draw and guess: the instructor has written different coping strategies on pieces of paper. The group is split in two and in turns a person from each group explains or draws the content of their own piece of paper. The group gets a point for a correct answer. When the time is up (1-2 min), the other group can also make their guesses and get a point, if they guess correctly.

**ROUNDING OFF**

- What did it feel like to explain, draw or act out coping strategies?
- Was it easy or difficult?
- Could you find any coping strategies suitable for young people?
- Are the young people already using some of the coping strategies?
- Which other useful coping strategies did the group find?
- What kinds of situations are coping strategies used for?
- Are different coping strategies suitable for different situations?
- What coping strategies do young people use when they are feeling sad or grieving?

**ADAPTATIONS**

The group members mime the coping strategies to one another. The instructor can share 4-5 coping strategies per small group and each group mime their strategies. After the group has performed, the others guess which strategy was in question.

### 3. Recollections of coping

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**GOAL:** To leave young people feeling comfortable and relaxed after discussing a difficult subject.

**SUPPLIES**

Have a storytelling object in store for each group of four people (any small object, such as a ball, stick, twig, small decorative item), Windmill of Emotions model

**DURATION:** 15-30 min

**ACTIVITY**

With your eyes closed, think of a situation from the past week, in which you felt you succeeded or coped well. It can be even just a small experience of success, such as doing well in an exam, learning a new song, doing well in an important match, settling a dispute with a friend, baking a cake or teaching a pet a new trick. The instructor splits the young people into small groups of four and gives each group a storytelling object. The person, who is holding the object, tells his/her experience to the others. The object provides safety to the teller and an opportunity to recount his/her experience, whilst others are listening. Talking is only allowed, when you are holding the storytelling object. On the second round, the group members can tell about the feelings the experience of success or coping triggered. The Windmill of Emotions can be used as an aid.

**ROUNDING OFF**

- What did it feel like to tell others about your own success or coping?
- What did it feel like to hear others talk about their own experiences?
- What did you think about the storytelling object; did it make it easier or harder to tell about the experience?
- Which emotions does success trigger?
- Which emotions does coping trigger?

### ADAPTATIONS

- A) The recollections of coping exercise is done together with the entire group: The young people think of a situation in which they have succeeded or coped well and find a suitable picture card to represent it. Each young person briefly presents their chosen picture card.
- B) The recollections of coping can also be done as individual work by asking the group members to write their recollection in a notebook which is then shared with a partner.
- C) Alternatively, the group members' recollections of coping can be collected on a large piece of paper to remind the group of their successes and the importance of coping, and how they provide strength.

## Grief and crisis

### 4. Photo exhibition

**GOAL:** To offer an introduction to handling grief and crises.

**SUPPLIES:** picture cards, Windmill of Emotions model, Sails of a Survivor model

**DURATION:** 30-45 min

#### ACTIVITY

The young people form pairs. The instructor spreads the picture cards on the floor. In pairs, the young people select a picture, which they think depicts a young person going through a crisis.

Together, the young people think about the crisis the person in the picture might be going through. Which emotions could the person in the picture be experiencing?

After that, the group organises a photo exhibition. The photos are left on the floor and tables to form an exhibition. Each pair tells a story about the young person in the picture.

#### ROUNDING OFF

- What kinds of crises did the pictures bring up?
- Did a lot of the same crises come up in the photo exhibition?
- What are particularly difficult (traumatic) crises for people?
- In what kinds of crises is talking to a friend or a guardian enough and which situations require professional help?
- Why does one person experience something as a crisis, while another does not even properly notice it?
- How can you prepare for life's crises or can they be prepared for?
- How do the people in the pictures cope with crises?
- Which coping strategies do the people in the picture use?
- What kind of a safety net might the person in the picture have? Who could support him/her?

#### ADAPTATIONS

- A) Alone or in small groups, the young people can make a rap or a poem (that may or may not rhyme) about crises and coping strategies. They can then present the finished product to the others. If the premises have a stage,

It is important to stress to the young people that they are not alone. During the rounding off discussion, it is good to bring up the importance of a safety net: a young person must not be on his/her own; an adult is there for the young person.



lights and an audio system, the presentations can be made into larger performances. Presenting and performing your own work improves self-esteem and gives courage to perform in front of others.

- B) The group sets up an art exhibition related to crises and coping strategies presenting their own art work on a topic that inspires them. The art works can be executed using mixed media methods, including glue, sand, coloured pencils, nails, fabric and text related to the theme.
- C) Alternatively, the young people can photograph a coping strategy that inspires them. Photography is storytelling: one photo tells a thousand words!

## 5. Messages in songs

**GOAL:** To discuss the crisis theme through music and lyrics.

### SUPPLIES

Songs and picture cards depicting a crisis, Windmill of Emotions model

For example:

- **Ismo Alanko:** *Kriisistä kriisiin*
- **Antti Kleemola:** *Kriisi*
- **Chisu:** *Kriisit*
- **Faith No More:** *Midlife crisis*
- **CMX:** *Suljettu astia*

**DURATION:** 30-45 min

**ACTIVITY:** The group discusses how the songs depict a crisis.

### ROUNDING OFF

The picture cards and the Windmill of Emotions can be used to aid the discussion.

- Which emotions did hearing the song trigger?
- Which crises did the song deal with?
- What does a crisis mean?
- How do young people use the word crisis in everyday life?
- Does everyone experience the same things as a crisis?
- Are some crises often related to a certain age?
- What crises can a child have? And a young person? What about an adult?
- Is your own crisis more important than that of someone else? Why might it feel more important?
- Why might someone else's crisis seem insignificant compared to your own?
- What kinds of crises could affect the entire world? And what about those that affect your own country as a whole?

## 6. Fingerprint of grief

### GOAL

To demonstrate to the young people how grief is personal. The idea behind the exercise is that each person's grief is personal and as unique as a fingerprint.

**SUPPLIES**

ink or other colourants (paint, watercolours) for making fingerprints, Windmill of Emotions model

**DURATION:** 15-30 min

**ACTIVITY**

The young people press their own fingerprint on to paper, and around it, they write their own experiences of and thoughts on grief and the emotions it triggers. The Windmill of Emotions can be used as an aid.

**ROUNDING OFF**

The papers are combined into a joint grief collage. The group then discusses the emotions the subject of grief has brought up. Were there similarities? Everyone's grief is unique. Grief and the emotions it triggers must be given time. It is also important to respect another person's grief

**ADAPTATIONS**

The different stages of a crisis can also be depicted as a finger paint art work. The group is divided into small groups. Each group is given one crisis stage (see p. 147), which they depict on a piece of paper using finger paints. The group works on the exercise together. Finally, the whole group discusses the topic. What was it like to work with finger paints on this topic? Which emotions did it trigger?

## 7. Dr. Phil

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**GOAL**

To discuss crises and coping strategies through action and humour. To develop interactive, emotional and improvisation skills.

**SUPPLIES:** role-playing clothes (hats, scarves, jackets, etc.)

**DURATION:** 30-45 min

**ACTIVITY**

The young people search (youth) magazines' question and answer pages for questions that inspire them on a topic of crisis or worry.

A scene is set, where one person is the all-knowing TV series' Dr. Phil, one person is a member of the public participating in the programme to discuss his/her worries and one or two other people are the family members/acquaintances related to the problem.

During the scene, the characters should wear a piece of clothing, which sets them up for the role (e.g. hat, jacket, scarf, glasses). Thus, the actors have a concrete way of taking off the role, and there can be no misunderstandings of when the young people are playing their role and when they are just themselves.

It is a good idea to emphasise Dr. Phil's self-confidence and all-knowing attitude, i.e. he does not hesitate, laugh at other people's worries or take tentative glances. He can also ask the audience for answers and opinions, if he wishes.

Dr. Phil can be played by a different person for different questions to give as many people as possible the chance to experience being the one giving advice. Creativity and humour should be used in abundance!



**ROUNDING OFF**

- Was it easy to answer the question?
- What did it feel like playing the different roles?
- Do young people of today have the same crises and worries they had say ten or twenty years ago? Why?
- If you could choose just one coping strategy to get over a crisis, which one would that be? Why? Does it work for any crisis?

**ADAPTATIONS**

Watch an episode of Dr. Phil or other similar talk show with the young people. Which emotions did the episode trigger in the young people? Did the main character find it easy or difficult to tell about his/her emotions? Why? How did the others respond to the emotions? How did the other people express empathy?

## 8. Movie trailer

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**GOAL**

To make it easier to talk about crises and difficult issues. To practise storytelling, emotional skills and interaction.

**SUPPLIES:** accessories, photos and other props

**DURATION:** 1–3 h

**ACTIVITY**

In small groups, the young people come up with a story, which will then be turned into a movie trailer. The trailer must include one crisis that has been discussed and a relevant coping strategy. The trailer should have a start, middle, climax and a final solution. Thus the bigger storyline is shown in snippets of the full movie. What music would be suitable for the trailer? Does it have a narrative voice-over? What sound effects can be heard? How would the makers tempt the public to see the whole movie? What is left undisclosed? The groups can implement the trailer as a story, by performing, acting and using accessories, photos, movie clips, etc. Creativity is welcome! The small groups present their movie trailers to the others.

**ROUNDING OFF**

- What was it like to make a movie trailer?
- How did it feel to process a difficult topic in the form of a movie trailer?
- How well did the group cooperate?
- Which emotions did the movie trailers trigger?
- Which emotion prevailed?
- What was the main message of the trailer?
- What did the trailer tell about crises and coping with them?
- What was left undisclosed to keep the audience captivated? What do people tend to conceal, when they are going through difficult times? Why?

**ADAPTATION:** The movie trailer can also be created as a digital story (see p. 17).

## 9. Good bad grief

### GOAL

To help young people consider the dimensions of grief. Even grief comes with some hope. To learn to identify and name emotions.

**SUPPLIES:** picture cards, Windmill of Emotions Model

**DURATION:** 30-45 min

### ACTIVITY

The participants are split into two groups, which are further divided into smaller groups. Half of the young people think about the negative sides of grief and the other half consider the positive sides of grief. They look for suitable picture cards for each perspective.

#### What negative sides are there to grief?

For example:

- Feeling upset, having a lump in your throat, tightening of the chest.
- The constant feeling of wanting to cry, being embarrassed about it.
- Not knowing how to talk to others about it.
- Feeling aggressive and wanting to punch things.
- How and on what can you constructively release grief?

#### What good can grief and grieving bring?

For example:

- Helps orientate towards new things.
- Reminiscing and recollecting good things.
- Grieving is necessary when we encounter loss to ensure the loss is not left unprocessed.
- Grieving together, getting support from others, strengthening the sense of community.
- Everyone (men and women) is allowed to grieve.
- Grief rituals help process the grief together.
- Beautiful memories and love remain; they do not disappear. In Crisis Psychologist Soili Poijula's words: "You can get over grief, but you do not need to forget."

### ROUNDING OFF

The groups make picture collages of the picture cards, and the groups go around and look at one another's work. Afterwards, the group can discuss the exercise and the emotions it triggered:

- What is grief?
- What does grief feel like?
- What are the physical symptoms of grief?
- How long can grief last for?
- Are there different stages of grief?
- What happens, if you do not have the courage to face grief?
- How may unprocessed grief manifest itself?
- What kinds of emotions and behaviour can be involved in grief?

## Trust and safety

### 10. Hug tig

#### GOAL

To experience approval and care through touch, using activities and humour.  
To group.

**DURATION:** 15 min

#### ACTIVITY

One person is it and tries to catch others without making sudden movements. The aim is to enjoy being it and to be able to think "it's great to be it", so playful teasing and bluffing is allowed. There is no need to catch someone right away but to enjoy the game! Others can "seek shelter" by hugging one another tight and inviting others for a carefree hug saying "come here baby". When a person has been caught, s/he announces in a loud voice "I am it" and begins to catch the others whilst enjoying the role.

#### ROUNDING OFF

- What was it like to enjoy being it? Why? What are the benefits of relaxing?
- Can the attitude be applied to your own everyday life?
- How did the easygoing hugging feel?
- Was it easier to hug, when the instruction was to be carefree? Why?

### 11. Hug dance

#### GOAL

To experience approval and care through touch, using activities and humour.  
To group.

**SUPPLIES:** happy music chosen by the instructor

**DURATION:** 15-25 min

#### ACTIVITY

The group casually dances to the beat of the music. When the music ends (the instructor stops it), there are group hugs between everyone, who:

- has the same hair colour
- has the same colour top
- are the same age
- are born in the same month
- are the same height
- has the same shoe size
- are the same gender
- have the same length hair

The instructor shouts out one instruction at a time (e.g. has the same hair colour); after the hug, the music continues until it is stopped again and a new instruction is shouted out.

**ROUNDING OFF**

- Is it easy or difficult to hug someone else? Why?
- What is your opinion of the following claim: "Hugging releases happiness hormone in our brain"?
- What importance does music have on achieving a certain mood?
- Does happy and brisk music make you happy? Why?

## 12. Safe haven

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**GOAL:** To leave young people feeling comfortable and relaxed after discussing a difficult topic.

**SUPPLIES:** paper, pens, colours (paints, crayons, colour pencils)

**DURATION:** 15-30 min

**ACTIVITY**

The inner sense of security can be strengthened with mental images and by using imagination. The instructor asks the young people to get to know their safe haven:

- Close your eyes and relax.
- Think about a place, where you feel protected, safe, loved and where you feel you belong.
- It is a good place to be. The place can be in the past, in present day or in future dreams. If you cannot find a suitable safe place, you can also imagine it.
- What is your dream place like? The place does not need to be "in this world". It can be an abstract, imaginary environment.
- Stay in the safe haven in your mind; what do you see around you?
- What kinds of sounds are there in your safe haven, or is it completely quiet?
- What smells are there?
- Who else is at your safe place?
- What does the safe place feel like in your body?
- Finally, open your eyes.



At the end, you can write or draw what you experienced at your safe haven and what it was like there. You can return to your safe have, when you feel upset or find the need to regain strength. You can also draw yourself in the picture, maybe not even in human form but as an animal, object, building, clothing (for example, a colourful scarf flying in the wind) etc.

### ROUNDING OFF

- Which feelings does your safe haven trigger?
- Which colour dominates your safe haven?
- Where is it visible in particular?
- Which colour are you in the picture? Why?
- What shapes are visible in your picture? Why?
- How could you remind yourself about the safe haven, maybe even on a daily basis? (e.g. a colour, shape, accessory)?
- How do you feel after the exercise?

A tip: You can also use effects: sounds from CDs, a soft carpet, feather touches on faces, making the breeze with a newspaper.

### ADAPTATION

Leading the blind: The instructor tells the young people a story about a safe haven. The safe have might have singing birds, a soft carpet, the sound of the ocean, warm sunshine, a gentle breeze. The young people listen to the description of the safe place and move in pairs around the room: one person leads the other one, who has his/her eyes closed, around the room. Half way through the exercise, roles are swapped.



## Summary

- Young people's resources and protective factors can always be reinforced.
- When a young person causes concern or worry in an adult, the reasons should always be investigated.
- A young person needs an adult for support and security, as well as, to encourage them to get help. It is important to refer a young person for further help and stay by their side as long as they need it.

## 8 VULNERABLE MIND

### Young people facing worries

Changing moods and emotions are part of life for young people. Normally developing young people usually have a positive attitude to life. They are active doing things that matter to them and want to establish and maintain friendships. They know how to relax, rest and regain strength. At times, young people may feel down and disappointed, particularly when they face hardship, but with the support of friends and family, they find new energy and direction.

Protective factors provide strength to cope with hardship. Being able to talk about your worries; getting enough sleep; proper nutrition; adequate rest, and sharing your emotions with others help maintain life's resources. When you manage to settle any difficulties you are facing, they turn into experiences of coping and give you faith in yourself and life.

If a young person is struggling to function and loses his/her desire for and interest in daily life, there is reason for concern. Indications of it include giving up hobbies, skipping school or isolating from friends. Sometimes youth workers can recognise changes in young people's behaviour, because it is often easier to spot the transformation during free-time, for example, by observing how they behave in a group of friends. A young person may not wish to leave the youth centre and go home after closing time, which could be a sign of everything not being well at home. Young

Changing moods and emotions are part of life for young people.



people can behave differently in different situations, for example, they may act as normal at home, but in a way that causes concern at the youth centre. However, the symptoms will show somehow.

There is reason for concern, if a young person	Malaise should be taken particularly seriously, if a young person
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is passive</li> <li>• isolates from company of friends or at home</li> <li>• has lost his/her joy in life</li> <li>• gives up important things, such as hobbies</li> <li>• does not care about his/her health</li> <li>• does not take sufficient care of his/her hygiene or clothing</li> <li>• struggles at school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• repeatedly skips school</li> <li>• shows signs of self-harm</li> <li>• drinks to get drunk on a regular basis</li> <li>• takes prescription drugs not intended for him/her</li> <li>• starts taking drugs</li> <li>• shows signs of sexual self-harm</li> <li>• behaves in a risky manner, e.g. in traffic.</li> </ul>

*Adaptation from source: Laukkanen, Marttunen, Miettinen & Pietikäinen (eds.) (2006). Nuoren psyykkisten ongelmien kohtaaminen.*

If an adult is concerned about a young person in any way, it should be taken seriously. Reaching out to young people, asking how they are and providing support show that the adult cares. When a youth worker is concerned about a young person, s/he can ask directly from the person in question, if his/her parents are aware of the situation and whether they should get in touch with home together. The youth worker can phone the parents whilst the young person is present, thus ensuring that the young person knows, how the situation is described to the parents. This increases the young person's trust in how the situation is handled. If the person in question is still a minor, child protection should also be involved in the conversation.

If necessary, the youth worker and the young person can look for contact details for a local professional together, for example, online, and the young person can be referred to professional help. It is also good to help a young person maintain familiar routines and continue a hobby or find something else pleasant and meaningful to do. The youth worker can establish cooperation with the school to support the young person's education.

Reinforcing resources, promoting self-esteem and providing positive feedback for even small successes, have a strengthening effect. Young people must not be left alone; they have the right to receive help from adults.

## Melancholy and depression in youth

It is a good idea to emphasise to young people that all situations in life can be dealt with. There is always hope in life and the future, no matter how hopeless the situation might feel. Everyone can cope; no one must be left alone.

Melancholy and low spirits are normal in adolescence. Adolescence involves many changes and new things. Temporary feelings of gloom are normal, when a young person faces disappointments and losses. Young people feeling melancholic are often sad, spiritless and tired; they may experience tearfulness and feel generally uninterested in anything. The feelings of melancholy should not, however, have an effect on their performance or last for long periods at a time. Healthy melancholy does not involve other strong symptoms or halt adolescent development.

If the melancholy becomes long-term and intense, is a daily existence and involves other symptoms too, the young person may be suffering from depression. The main symptoms of depression in young people include feeling miserable and exhausted and unable to experience pleasure. The low spirits may come out as tearfulness and a general, long-term feeling of malaise. It might also make the young person irritable, tense, restless, angry and enraged.

Depressed young people often isolate themselves at school. They might have concentration problems, experience the loss of happiness, feel as if nothing mattered anymore. They may feel guilt and become anxious and feel unreasonably critical towards themselves. They struggle to get things done and might stop doing things that have been important to them, such as hobbies. Sometimes falling asleep or sleeping is a struggle, or they may experience a loss of or increase in appetite. Daily rhythm can suffer.

Depressed young people sometimes worry about their body and have physical symptoms such as stomach pain, headaches or undefined pain. It must be noted that the possibility of a physical illness should also always be investigated. Sometimes depression brings self-destructive thoughts, particularly, if it involves substance abuse.

### INDICATIONS OF DEPRESSION

- Getting going is hard.
- The emotional landscape is dominated by sadness, guilt, anxiety, helplessness and hopelessness.
- The general mood is apathetic, bored and tired.
- Lack of feeling and emotions, inability to enjoy anything.
- No longer attending previously enjoyable hobbies.
- Appetite changes.
- Difficulty to concentrate.
- Isolation from others.
- Neglect of obligations and increased number of absences from school.
- Aches and pains.
- Feelings of worthlessness and guilt.
- Self-criticism and self-blame.
- Aggression.
- Suicidal tendencies and self-destructive behaviour.



Depression is a mechanism, which protects the mind from excessive strain. Depression is also described as the numbness of the mind - during depression, the mind becomes numb of facing and processing any more hardship.

It is important to remember that depression is not your fault and not necessarily caused by anyone or any single factor. Depression can occur for several reasons, such as hardship and loss, negligence or violence, being bullied, being left out or the lack of friends. Many stress factors within a family and childhood separation experiences might also play a role in young people's depression. Not enough support, the experience of unreasonable expectations, pressure, worries about finding your place in life, stress and lack of sleep can all contribute to mounting pressure. Hereditary factors, illnesses and alcohol and drug abuse can also have an impact.

There may be several underlying reasons for depression, but also a number of solutions. Any symptoms pointing to depression must be quickly addressed, and the youth workers need to be sensitive to any signals. It is a good idea to take up the issue with the person in question, because discussing it will not make the depression worse; instead, it is often a relief for the person suffering from depression to realise that others can see it too.

Getting help for depression is hugely beneficial, and the recovery rate is approximately 90%. However, depression does have the tendency to recur. The symptoms of depression usually last from some weeks to months, but the illness may be prolonged if left untreated. Early treatment, for example within school health care, often shortens the duration of depressive episodes and prevents new episodes from recurring. Usually the first step is to assess the need for care. The young person needs to attend regular appointments through school or general health care, and often this support and discussions with family and friends alone help. More difficult cases of depression are treated with psychotherapy and prescription medication.

A depressed young person needs safe adults and friends around. It is the adults' job to ensure that the young person keeps to routines and has sufficient rest, sleep and nutrition and to encourage the young person to talk about his/her thoughts to get an overall picture of how things stand. Creativity through art, dance, sports, music or drama, helps young people find, identify, name and express their feelings.

Young people can get important support from their friends in difficult situations.





## STEPS TOWARDS ACKNOWLEDGING DEPRESSION IN YOUNG PEOPLE

- Be particularly sensitive to any signals.
- If you spot any signs of depression, find a quiet place to discuss the issue with the individual.
- Ask if there is anything on his/her mind or whether s/he is worried or upset about something.
- Ask about self-destructive thoughts.
- Ensure that the young person is not left alone.
- Tell the parents about the situation.
- Refer the young person to school or general health care.
- Be mindful and encourage the young person to participate in the youth centre activities in the future as well.
- Guide the young person to participate in creative activities.

## Pressing anxiety

Anxiety is a human reaction and tells about the need to slow down and stop. Something within the person is asking for a change. Sometimes young people experience temporary feelings of anxiety or fear, which may be due to their work load or stress, or a life change, such as the end of a relationship, starting new studies or moving to a new location. In such circumstances, the feelings of anxiety are understandable and part of life.

Anxiety that is brought on by no particular reason, goes on for a long time and feels overwhelming is usually a sign of a more serious problem. Anxiety may be momentary and occur as attacks, or it may be continuous. People suffering from anxiety may feel restless, fearful, irritable or scared and unable to shake their worries off. Anxiety can also cause physical symptoms, such as headaches, sweating, palpitation or chest or abdominal pains, which have no apparent cause.

The maturity of thinking and the level of anxiety determine how well a young person is able to describe his/her thoughts and emotions. A young person may describe his/her anxiety as nausea, a stomach complaint or faintness. Because of the symptoms, the young person might worry about a physical illness or losing control and repetitively seek health care for physical problems.

Panic attacks and the fear of social situations are typical examples of anxiety disorders among young people.

The fear of social situations means that the young person often lacks the courage to interact with others and becomes isolated. The fear tends to occur in situations, where a young person must encounter strangers or becomes the target of criticism. Young people suffering from anxiety may fear that the symptoms, such as blushing, trembling of hands or sweating, are visible to others or that they do

something embarrassing. The isolation and feelings of loneliness increase the risk of depression.

There are a number of ways to tackle social anxiety. Strengthening emotional skills and self-esteem help reduce neurotic introspection. Encouraging creative activities also reduces the tendency to and time for introspection. Creativity and finding courage for creative expression allow young people to forget about themselves.

Panic disorder is characterised by unexpected panic attacks. Recurring attacks interfere with performance and life in general. A panic attack causes palpitations, trembling, weakness, breathing difficulties, abdominal symptoms, sweating, hot and cold flashes and the sensation of choking or asphyxiation. An attack may involve the fear of death, the fear of losing control or the fear of going mad. A panic attack is usually followed by extreme fatigue, confusion and worry.

If panic attacks recur, the person may begin to over-monitor him/herself. The idea of panic and the fear of an attack heighten tension, which increases the likelihood of new attacks. The places, where the attacks have taken place, may become frightening. The person may start avoiding situations in which an attack may take place, or it would be particularly embarrassing if it did. Some ordinary, daily situations may cause overwhelming feelings of anxiety for a young person suffering from a panic disorder, thus s/he may begin to avoid them. These may be something as commonplace as going to the shop, spending time with other young people or going to the cinema. Others often find it difficult to understand how a situation such as that can cause so much anxiety. However, for a person suffering from a panic disorder, that is the oppressing reality.

A person going through a panic attack must be escorted to a quiet place to calm down. It is good if an adult can be present during the calming down. An attack does not mean that the young person needs go home, because then the place might become scary and the threshold to come again will increase. When a young person is given a chance to calm down in the presence of an adult, his/her capability returns. That gives the person an experience of coping with an attack and a feeling that s/he can get through these situations. A panic attack is not dangerous, and there is no need to be embarrassed about one. The other young people can be made aware of the situation and explained what it is all about. The company of a friend or an adult helps relieve the fear of a new attack.

Fear-inducing situations can also be practised, for example, taking a bus or going to the cinema together, may help. Helping a young person to face their fears, gradually weakens the fears and makes them lose their power over the person. The support and encouragement of important and safe people, as well as, the support of professionals, are important to recovery.

### STEPS TOWARDS ACKNOWLEDGING ANXIETY IN YOUNG PEOPLE

- Listen to the young person, take them seriously. Do not underestimate the anxiety and fears.
- Investigate the underlying fears.
- Contact parents.
- In case of a panic attack, provide a quiet place to calm down. Stay with the young person for support; do not send the young person home. Tell that a panic attack is not dangerous and that there is nothing to be embarrassed about. Instruct the young person to breathe calmly, for example, count to three with the young person while inhaling and exhaling.
- Keep the person suffering from anxiety in mind when planning activities for the group and adapt them so that it is easier for the person to take part.
- Organise creative activities and encourage the young person to participate. This leaves less time and energy for introspection.
- Fear-inducing situations can also be practised together, for example, taking a bus or going to the cinema.

## Eating disorders

Young people's bodies change quickly in adolescence. These changes make your body feel unfamiliar and leave you feeling out of control. The changing body may increase self-observation, and young people may have great concerns about their weight. Sometimes these concerns are reflected in their eating habits, and eating might become a way of controlling difficult emotions. Eating disorders are both a mental illness and a physical one. They often involve some other psychological disorder, such as depression or anxiety disorder.

Most people suffering from eating disorders are girls and women. Boys can also suffer from them, but they are often left undiagnosed. Girls' appearance-related pressures focus mainly on the idolisation of slimness, whilst for boys the focus is on muscle mass and masculinity.

The most common thing to trigger an eating disorder is dieting, which spirals into a cycle of non-eating. The initiative for dieting is often the attempt to increase the sense of self-respect and control over life. Dieting triggers positive appearance-related comments to start with, which sustains it. It is particularly harmful when an adult pays attention to a young person's weight loss. Weight is a sensitive subject for young people, and making comments in any way regarding it should be avoided. A young person's positive self-image should be strengthened with other feedback.

Sometimes the need to control unhappy feelings, anger or loneliness is a trigger for an eating disorder. Expressing aggressive emotions can be difficult for young people and sometimes their psycho-sexual development and independence is lagging behind peers. Turning into a woman and developing a feminine body, particularly

the accumulation of fat, may trigger an eating disorder. A girl's dislike of her feminine shape merges with the anxiety brought by emerging sexuality, and she may try to stop her physical development from taking place.

Being bullied, difficulties within the family, school and success pressures may also be behind an eating disorder. Experiences of being excluded, insecurity and traumatic experiences, such as sexual abuse, can also increase the risk of eating disorders. Comments related to appearances and the beauty standards and sexualised body image created by our culture and the media in particular can produce anxiety. An eating disorder can sometimes also spread within a group of friends as a phenomenon.

Developing a feminine body, particularly the accumulation of fat, may trigger an eating disorder.

The best-known eating disorders are anorexia and bulimia. An eating disorder is however a more versatile problem, which has many sub-categories. The table on the following page describes the characteristics of anorexia, bulimia and ortorexia in more detail.



## ANOREXIA

- Anorexia often begins in adolescence, most commonly between the ages of 12 and 18.
- A young person sees him/herself as overweight and more overweight than s/he is in reality.
- The thought of dieting fills the young person's life and s/he aims to lose weight and keep his/her weight down using different tactics.
- The young person has ritualistic eating habits and avoids nutritious foods and eating. S/he may exercise excessively and use laxatives. S/he may be happy to prepare food for others, but avoids eating it.
- Even when the young person loses weight, s/he is scared of gaining it back. S/he might be tired or feel cold. Sometime the young person conceals his/her thinness under loose clothes. Girls might stop having periods. S/he may also experience bloating and brittle nails.

## BULIMIA

- The symptoms of bulimia often begin at a later age than anorexia, usually between the ages of 15-24.
- Bulimia is recurring and periodic gluttony. A young person suffering from bulimia is unable to control his/her eating habits and often eats quickly and in secret.
- Typically, a young person consumes a large amount of high-energy food, but may experience guilt after consuming just a small amount.
- After gorging, the young person typically throws up or uses laxatives to prevent gaining weight. The young person's mind is filled with guilt, regret, self-reproach and depression.
- Most people, who suffer from bulimia, are of a normal weight, but their weight may also fluctuate significantly.
- The constant vomiting often results in enlarged salivary glands, tooth erosion, nausea, seizures and abdominal pain.

## ORTOREXIA OR OBSESSION FOR HEALTHY FOOD

- Ortorexia is not an official diagnosis, but is part of abnormal dieting disorders.
- A young person aims to eat as healthily as possible, following strict "rules".
- Life and thoughts revolve around food, food options, diets and food theories.
- The body can suffer from the lack of certain nutrients.
- There is a very fine line between ortorexia and anorexia.

See exercises in chapter 3 *Adolescent development* and chapter 4 *Emotions and emotional skills*.

Young people suffering from eating disorders may not acknowledge that they need help. Early intervention and care are important because they improve the prognosis. The first step is to refer the young person to school health care, for example, to visit the school nurse, curator or psychologist.

When a young person receives correct information, nutritional guidance, conversational therapy and support in naming and expressing emotions in the early stages, the recovery can begin spontaneously, and the eating disorder period may remain mild and short-term.

If prolonged, the disease usually becomes worse. When the disease becomes chronic, the recovery requires long-term professional help and care, as well as, the support and encouragement of family and friends.

A young person's eating disorder affects the entire family. The eating and nutrition of one family member requires excessive amount of attention, and family time may start revolving around food. A child's illness can make parents feel helpless, guilty and angry, which makes it more difficult to intervene with the eating disorder.

To help a young person recover from an eating disorder, parents and adults need to offer their support for strengthening self-esteem and emotional skills and to show that they care. A young person suffering from an eating disorder needs to be surrounded by friends and family who show her/him that s/he is valuable just as s/he is.

#### STEPS TOWARDS ACKNOWLEDGING AN EATING DISORDER

- Take any concerns seriously. Remember that a young person may not acknowledge his/her need for help.
- Discuss your worries of the change in eating habits.
- Create a safe environment for the conversation.
- Listen to the young person without moralising and nullifying.
- Contact parents and refer the young person to school health care.
- Do not support or accept the behaviour brought on by the illness.
- Guide the young person to participate in creative activities.
- Show the young person that you care and that s/he is valuable.

## Self-destructive behaviour

The majority of young people, who have committed suicide, have talked about their intentions, but often only to their peers. It is important to emphasise to young people that if a friend tells about self-destructive thoughts, an adult must always be informed, even if it seemed like a violation of trust. A young person must not carry the responsibility of a peer facing such a serious problem.

Self-destructiveness refers to behaviour, which involves self-injury or taking life-threatening risks. Self-destructive behaviour can be caused by a combination of difficulties, but even a single life event may be a trigger. There are two types of self-destructive behaviour patterns, direct and indirect. Indirect self-destructiveness can be defined as behaviour characterised by repetitively taking life-threatening risks without the intention of causing self-injury or death. This could mean dangerous behaviour in traffic, alcohol abuse, negligence of physical illnesses or putting excessive strain on personal health. Risk behaviour may bring pleasure, and sometimes young people are not aware of all the dangers. Direct self-destructiveness is intended self-injury. It manifests itself as self-destructive thoughts, talking about suicide, suicide attempts or suicide.

Young people think about life and death-related matters, which is age-appropriate processing. Normal development does not, however, involve self-injury or constant death wishes. Suicidal thoughts often stem from the fact that certain emotional states, such as embarrassment, disappointment or grief, are unbearable to deal with. The aim is not death, but the desire to shake off the intolerable state of mind. The situation may seem to have reached a dead end with no other way out.

Suicidal thoughts should never be played down, because they are risk factors for suicide attempts and suicides. Most young people with suicidal tendencies voice their plans in advance in some way; thus, the expression of suicidal thoughts and previous self-destructive behaviour are the chief factors that predict suicide.

There is often a complex tangle of problems underlying self-destructive behaviour.





The risk of suicide in young people increases after the age of 15; suicides among under 15-year-olds are rare. Girls attempt suicide more often than boys, but boys' attempts are more likely to lead to death, because they are often more violent. During the past year, approximately 20-25% of 13-15-year-old girls and approximately 15% of boys have had self-destructive thoughts. 4-8% of girls and 2-4% of boys have attempted suicide. A quarter of the deaths of 15-19-year-old boys are suicides. 80% of suicides among young people are committed by boys.

*Source: Karila-Hietala (2013): Mielen-terveyden ensiapu nuorten kanssa toimiville.*

### Warning signs for adolescent self-destructive behaviour

- Suicidal thoughts, talking about suicide
- Previous suicide attempts
- Suicides in the family or among friends
- Long-term depression
- Hopelessness, emotional emptiness, numbness
- Difficulties at school, concentration problems, lack of energy
- Difficulty falling a sleep, persistent sleepiness
- Angry emotions towards self
- Loneliness, isolation
- Substance abuse
- Reckless behaviour, unnecessary risk-taking
- Obsession with death
- Warnings, such as "I can't take it any more", "everything is pointless"
- Putting personal business in order

Young people's suicide risk can also be increased by major life changes, such as parents' divorce or the death of someone important. Sometimes a strong reaction may also be a result of sexual exploitation, school bullying, the end of a relationship or other violations. The risk is also increased by financial difficulties or unhappy home environment, such as parents' substance abuse. If a young person is prone to self-destructive behaviour, it may be triggered by a stressful event, which causes humiliation or losing face.

Young people's attempted suicide is always a cry for help. Most attempted suicides by young people are impulsive and carried out under the influence of drugs or alcohol. A vague or mild suicide attempt is always a serious sign that the young person was unable to control his/her urges. The matter should never be denied or taken lightly; instead, the young person should always be asked to stop and think about the gravity of the actions.

Early intervention, talking about it with the young person and direct action to help indicate the willingness to help. There is no harm in bringing the topic up with the young person, and even direct questions do not lead to promote self-destructive behaviour. On the other hand, not getting involved can increase the number or intensity of new attempts and calls for help. Self-destructive behaviour in young people must always be communicated to the parents too.

It is the adults' job to protect young people from their own destructiveness. It is important for an adult to take any mentions of suicide seriously and intervene. The adult must remain calm, listen properly and give their time throughout the discussion. Young people must be given the opportunity to raise and discuss difficult, sensitive and confidential issues. They must also have the right to conceal their innermost feelings. However, talking tends to help when facing a deadlock and often allows the young person to see that there are other alternatives to self-destructive behaviour.

Self-destructive acts are said to be the final call for help: the young person hopes that someone would intervene. The young person must be referred to professional help, even if s/he is against it.

If a young person commits suicide, youth work or municipal crisis plans must be executed. It is important to provide crisis support for friends at school and via youth work, because they are at risk of depression or suffering from a trauma-based stress reaction. A young person's suicide can act as an incitement for other young people. The work community and the employees, who have worked with the young person, must also receive help. Friends and communities have the need and the right to process the event together.

## STEPS TO DISCUSSING SELF-DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR

- If you are worried about a young person and suspect s/he is considering suicide, discuss the matter immediately with the individual. Do not expect for the self-destructive thoughts to just go away.
- If a young person mentions suicide, the situation must be intervened with immediately, even if the person is against it.
- Stay calm, listen with an open mind and give the young person time to talk.
- Even if it feels difficult, provide the young person the opportunity to raise difficult, sensitive and confidential issues.
- Show that you care and give your time.
- Listen patiently. Moralising and panic do not work.
- Ask the young person directly:
  - 1. Have you thought about suicide?**
  - 2. Do you have a plan for how to implement it?**
  - 3. Have you attempted suicide before?**
  - 4. What would help you to continue with life?**
  - 5. How can I help you?**
- Remember that there is no harm in bringing the topic up with the young person and even direct questions do not promote further self-destructive behaviour.
- Tell about the self-destructive thoughts or plans to the parents and school or student health care. Do not promise to the young person that you will not tell others about the issue.
- Tell the young person that help available.
- Help the young person access professional help. Ensure the young person's safety; do not leave him/her alone.
- Tell young people that adults should always be informed, if a friend mentions suicide.
- If a young person commits suicide, operate according to youth work or municipal crisis plan. Friends need to receive crisis support. Remember that a young person's suicide can act as an incitement for other young people.
- Take care of yourself and your own coping.

*Adaptation from sources: Uskalla auttaa -esite, the Finnish Association for Mental Health and Ritva Karila-Hietala, 2013.*

Sometimes young people vent their unhappiness through self-harm. Cutting is the most common way of self-harming; it is four times more common among girls than boys. Hitting yourself, such and wall punching, is more common among boys. Self-inflicted injuries can start by accident by first just testing personal boundaries and soon the addictive behaviour cannot be controlled or stopped.

## CUTTING

- Cutting can be a means for young people to ease and control anxiety and unhappiness.
- Sometimes a person may seem happy, popular and successful on the outside, despite feeling sad inside.
- Cutting is a way to externalise difficult emotions. Cutting may temporarily relieve anxiety.
- The pain might also be a method of self-punishment.
- Cutting can feel shameful and, thus, is done alone and often goes unnoticed.
- Sometimes instead of cutting, young people injure their skin by scratching, burning or picking scabs.
- Cutting is a serious symptom which always involves an increased risk of suicide and death due to blood loss or infection.
- Cutting is addictive. It can be difficult to stop, even when if the individual wanted to.
- By cutting themselves, young people seek attention and hope that someone realises their unhappiness.

## HOW TO DISCUSS CUTTING?

- If you notice a young person is cutting him/herself, discuss the issue with the individual.
- First tie the wounds.
- Stay calm, even if the matter seemed scary to bring up.
- Avoid moralising, so that the young person has the courage to discuss the matter.
- Avoid accusations, because the young person's shame can be intense.
- Consider together what triggers the need to cut and what could the young person do next time, when facing a similar situation or state of mind.
- Contact parents and refer the young person to school health care.
- Give the young person attention and positive feedback. This will strengthen positive behaviour.
- Guide the young person to participate in creative activities.

Source: Ritva Karila-Hietala, 2013 .

### People to discuss with

- Parents, guardian
- Teachers, instructors
- Nurse, curator
- Psychologist
- Health centre, family clinic
- Social work, child protection
- Mental health services in the municipality
- Youth psychiatry outpatient clinic
- Crisis centre in the region
- Municipal youth worker
- Church youth worker or priest

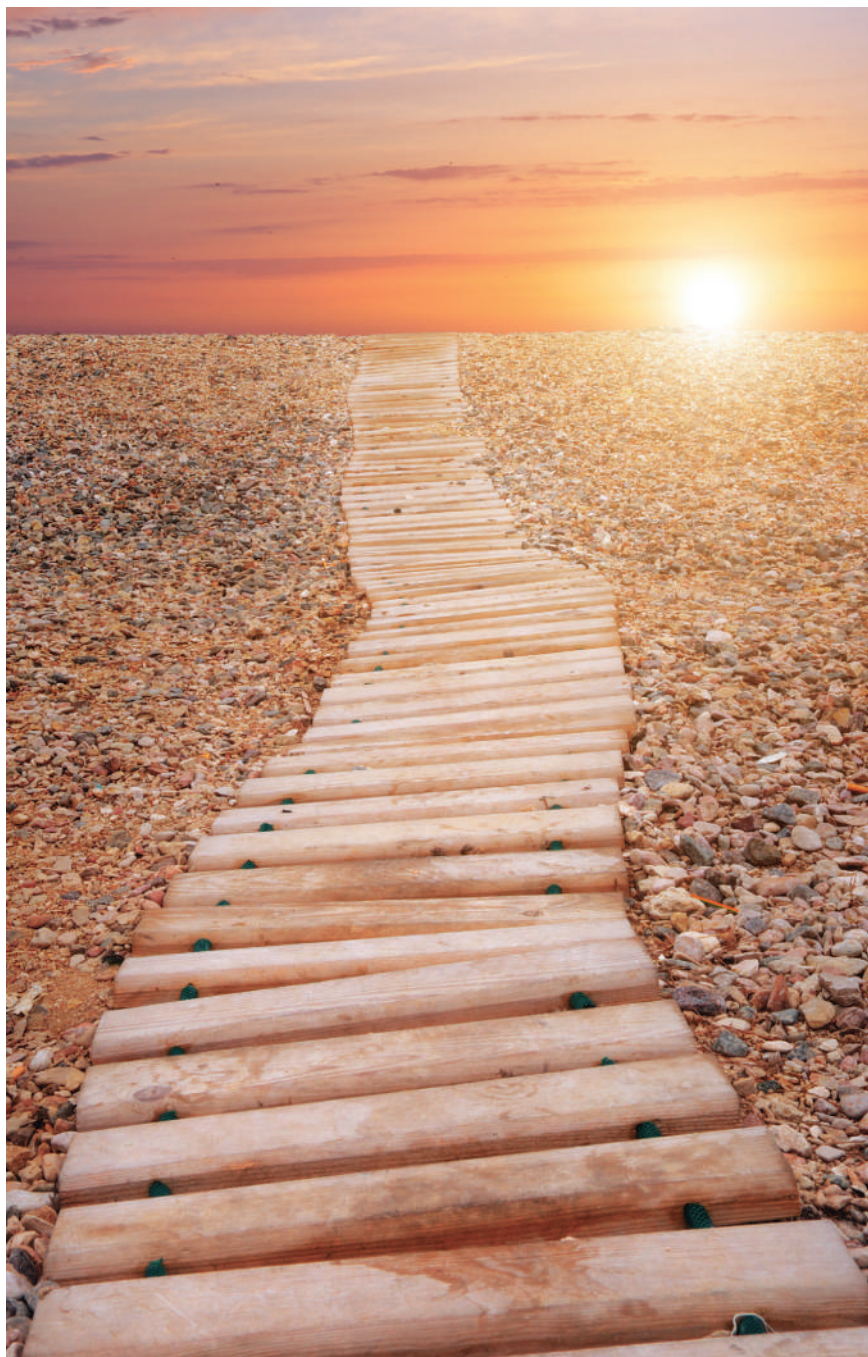
### Phone numbers (Finland)

- National crisis helpline: 01019 5202
- Children and young people's helpline: 116 111
- Boys' helpline: 0800 94884
- Conscript helpline: 0800 180362

### Websites (in Finland)

- [mielenterveysseura.fi](http://mielenterveysseura.fi)
- [tukinet.net](http://tukinet.net)
- [e-mielenterveys.fi](http://e-mielenterveys.fi)
- [vahvistamo.fi](http://vahvistamo.fi)
- [mll.fi](http://mll.fi)
- [nuortenkriisipiste.com](http://nuortenkriisipiste.com)
- [nyyti.fi](http://nyyti.fi)
- [vaestoliitto.fi/nuoret](http://vaestoliitto.fi/nuoret)
- [poikienpuhelin.fi](http://poikienpuhelin.fi)
- [poikientalo.fi](http://poikientalo.fi)
- [tyttojentalo.fi](http://tyttojentalo.fi)
- [apua.info](http://apua.info)
- [nuoret.mielenterveystalo.fi/nuoriso](http://nuoret.mielenterveystalo.fi/nuoriso)
- [pelitaito.fi](http://pelitaito.fi)

The young person should be cared for without accusations or judgement. S/he should be told directly that help is available. An adult must ensure the young person receives help because an individual with a death wish or self-destructive thoughts, must not be left without support. In acute situations, ensuring his/her safety is important: a professional should assess the case to determine how urgent it is and what kind of security or monitoring is needed.



## Pleasure and addiction

Addiction involves the feeling of pleasure. We experience pleasure every day: on a walk, whilst watching TV, enjoying good food, with success at work. Experiencing pleasure enriches and maintains life, and people seek the happiness that comes with pleasure. Usually, people can control their experiences of pleasure. If the thing that produces pleasure takes up an unreasonable proportion of life and becomes compulsive, it has turned into an addiction.

Addiction always involves a physiological, psychological and social dimension.

Almost any substance or activity used to achieve quick satisfaction and pleasure can become addictive. Addictive behaviour helps shift unhappiness, longing and the sense of emptiness. The most common ways to achieve momentary comfort and pleasure are alcohol, smoking and eating, but people can also be addicted to drugs, gambling, mobile phones, shopping, sports, work and sex, among other things. Addictive behaviour typically brings pleasure in the short term, whilst the problems come with a delay.

Addiction can be caused by almost any substance or activity used to seek satisfaction and pleasure.

An addiction occurs, when a substance or action releases neurotransmitters. This results in a strong sense of pleasure and the desire to repeat the thing or action that triggered the pleasure in the first place. When repeated, the substance or action becomes necessary for balanced nerve activity. The person becomes addicted and needs more and more of the addictive substance or activity.





The inability to control oneself means that the addictive behaviour is often followed by shame. This is why people try to conceal their addiction. People may try and deny their addiction, distort facts or defend and explain their behaviour. This is particularly distressing for friends and family, and can trigger feelings of grief, guilt and even anger. In a sense, the whole family becomes ill.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOUR

- When I feel upset, I often turn to this activity to feel better.
- I feel uncomfortable about the way I indulge in this behaviour.
- I sometimes lie about partaking in this kind of behaviour.
- If I have not done this activity for a while, I feel uncomfortable.
- This behaviour causes me problems, such as physical symptoms or difficulties with my relationships.
- This behaviour causes problems for others.
- I have tried to end this behaviour, but I have always returned to it.
- When others tell me off for it, I begin to defend myself.
- Due to this behaviour, I have reduced my participation in other healthy activities.
- If I could control myself better in this area, my life would be easier to manage.

*Source: Tiina Rönning, lecture slides.*

An addict's life revolves around the cause of the addiction and finally other areas of life are lost. As a result of addiction, it is hard to cope with life, and there is a risk of becoming excluded and losing relationships.

The sooner there is an attempt to end the addiction, the easier it is. At the basis of ending an addiction and recovering from it is a decision to acknowledge and admit to the behaviour and a wish to end it. Furthermore, the addict needs a specific plan on how to act, when the desire next arises. Thus, it is important to consider how and for what reasons the addiction began; what situations and states of mind trigger the addictive behaviour, and what other choices could the addict make instead of resorting to the addictive behaviour.

For some, ending an addiction is easier than for others, who may need bigger changes to their thinking and life styles. It is not impossible for anyone. Adults can help by supporting the young person's self-esteem and encouraging him/her to start hobbies and creative activities.

Recovery from addiction is a slow process, which takes time and commitment and the willingness to change and accept help. An addicted young person needs the support of adults both at home and outside the home.

## STEPS TO RECOVERING FROM ADDICTION

- Discuss the addiction with the young person.
- React to the young person calmly and without judgement. If the young person is personally worried about the addiction, s/he is ready to take steps towards recovery.
- Together with the young person, consider what other activities could be included in the young person's life.
- Tell about your addiction suspicions to the young person's parents, and contact the school or student health care.
- Set the young person safe boundaries and maintain routines.
- The more protective factors a young person has, the better his/her protection against addiction is.
- Guide the young person to participate in hobbies.
- Strengthen the assertiveness skills and self-esteem of the young person. That also strengthens the young person's courage to say no.

The higher the number of protective factors that can be reinforced, the better their protection against addiction is. If support only focuses on one protective factor, there is the risk of a new addiction. Safe boundaries, daily routines, friendships, hobbies, as well as the strengthening of social and emotional skills and self-esteem protect the young person from developing an addiction.

Ending an addiction makes room for other opportunities in life.





Tips for managing gaming:  
pelitaito.fi

## YOUNG PEOPLE AND GAMING ADDICTION

- Digital gaming provides entertainment and activities and a way to spend time together. Games can develop cognitive, motor and social skills.
- Gaming can, however, cause nausea and other problems, if a young person's life starts purely revolving around gaming, and there is no more time for other things in life.
- Excessive gaming disrupts the biological rhythm, when it continues late into the evening and night, and there are gaming friends online around the clock. Insomnia, fatigue and lack of sleep make it difficult to attend and cope at school.
- Excessive gaming and Internet use can be manifest as physical symptoms, such as headaches, tired eyes and wrist, elbow, back or neck symptoms.
- Addiction can also affect a young person's sociability, as the young person becomes isolated to play games, and there is no time for family or friends. Disputes in the family may escalate with regards to the young person's use of time.
- Gaming can become a way to vent and escape other problems such as loneliness, bullying or issues at school or home. It may be a way to seek comfort or escape hurtful situations.
- A young person can monitor their own internet and gaming behaviour. Signs of excessive gaming include the loss of sense of time for long periods and the constant need to play.
- Addiction can also develop for gambling. Gambling and occasional profits produce strong pleasure, which can easily make gambling addictive. Young people's gambling can develop into a problem quicker than for adults. They often have distorted ideas of the probabilities and luck in gambling games, which may expose them to a gambling problem.
- If an adult is concerned about a young person's gaming habits, it is important to discuss the matter with the young person.

Source: Luhtala, Silvennoinen & Taskinen (2011). Nuoret pelissä. Tietoa kasvattajille lasten ja nuorten digitaalisesta pelaamisesta ja rahapelaamisesta.

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# EXERCISES

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The exercises in the Vulnerable mind section have been divided into the following categories: Mind put to the test, Resources for coping, Lets relax. After intense and challenging exercises, it may be a good idea to turn to an exercise meant to bolster resources. Relaxation and silly exercises put you in a good mood after straining discussions.

## Mind put to test

### 1. Websites

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The group finds out about different websites that provide information on mental health problems, seeking help, coping and strengthening resources (see page 183).

### 2. Which mental health disorders do you know?

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#### GOAL

To orientate young people to discuss mental health problems. To get young people to understand that people, who have mental health disorders also have mental health resources which can be reinforced.

#### SUPPLIES

Paper (A4-sized and large flip board paper/A3 paper), pens, Security and Support model

**DURATION:** 15-30 min

#### ACTIVITY

The young people write a list in pairs on their thoughts about mental health disorders. Alternatively, the topic can be discussed as a larger group and the participants thoughts listed together.

#### ROUNDING OFF

- What thoughts and emotions did the subject trigger in the young people?
- Can you recover from a mental health disorder?
- What is important for recovery?
- How can you recover? What influences recovery?
- How can you support the person suffering from mental illness?
- How can you support the family of the person suffering from mental illness?
- How could the resource seashell of the person suffering from mental health problems be replenished (see Security and Support)?
- What resources does a person suffering from mental health problems have and how can they be strengthened?

### 3. Picture work on depression

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#### GOAL

To understand and empathise with the thoughts and emotions of a depressed person's close friends and family. To discuss worries and how difficult it may be to bring them up.

Out of the stages 1-5, complete the ones you have time for.

The instructor emphasises that everyone has can cope. You can always get through a mental health disorder or life's other challenges. You do not need to go through it alone; there will always be someone, who will encourage and support you.

You can download YouTube videos of Yle's A2 theme nights: Excluded young people theme nights parts 1-5. The programmes include stories of marginalised young people. The group can also discuss together, what may have led to the marginalisation. What does marginalisation mean? How to support the young people and strengthen their resources?

**SUPPLIES:** picture cards, Windmill of Emotions model, Sails of a Survivor model

**DURATION:** 30-45 min

### ACTIVITY

The young people choose three thematically fitting images from the picture cards. You can use, for example, artistic postcards, such as Hugo Simberg's Wounded Angel painting. The exercise can be carried out as a group or in small groups.

1. Titling of the picture: The young people analyse the picture by suggesting names or titles for it.
2. Naming emotions: The groups interpret the emotional states of the people in the pictures or paintings by naming the emotions. The Windmill of Emotions can be used as an aid.
3. Adding thought bubbles: The groups add thought bubbles for the people in the pictures, thus, wording their thoughts.
4. Adding speech bubbles: First the young people describe the events. They give suggestions on how the people in the pictures could start a conversation about depression. This stage can also be completed in writing. The group discusses if it is difficult to talk about your worries and how it may be difficult for a depressed person to express their emotions in words. Sometimes those closest to the person do not realise the seriousness of the situation.
5. Resources: What kinds of resources might the people in the pictures have? How could they be developed? How could the people in the pictures be supported? How could the families of the people in the pictures be supported? What would the resource seashells of the people in the pictures be like (see Security and Support)?

### ROUNDING OFF

- Which emotions did the exercise trigger?
- Which emotions does depression trigger?
- What fears, concerns and wishes do a depressed person's close friends and family have in terms of the illness?
- Where could you find help for depression? What about more information?
- Why is it difficult talking about worries?
- Is it easy for those closest to the person to realise the seriousness of the situation?
- How could a depressed friend be supported and helped?

## 4. Living book

### GOAL

To hear experiences of living with mental health disorders. To understand the importance of different coping strategies.

### ACTIVITY

The instructor contacts local mental health services. The young people can go and visit various services. Similarly, the instructor can ask a specialist or an expert by experience to visit the youth centre. An expert by experience can be a mental health rehabilitee; a young or an old person who has experienced depression.

Questions for the discussion:

The topic can be discussed with the group using survival stories available on YouTube. Examples of survival stories: Mikko and a bipolar disorder Sini and a panic disorder.

- How have the experts by experience coped?
- Which coping strategies have they used?
- What has the role of a safety net played in their lives?
- What gives them strength in life?

#### ROUNDING OFF

- What was it like to meet a person, who has experienced a mental health disorder?
- What was it like talking to him/her?
- Which emotions did the situation trigger?
- What was the over-riding feeling?
- What do you think it was like for the expert by experience to talk about the experiences?
- Why did s/he want to talk about them?
- Do you think talking helps?
- Did you think about the meeting afterwards?
- Did you later think of something, you would have liked to have said?

## 5. Cooking group

#### GOAL

To discuss eating disorders alongside an activity. To think about how to get through an eating disorder.

#### ACTIVITY

Organise a cooking group. Discuss eating disorders whilst cooking. The instructor can find a video or magazine images, which stir a conversation among the young people. Discuss as a group what may have happened. Picture cards can be used as an aid for discussions if the young people find it difficult to talk about their ideas and thoughts. It may be helpful to use the Windmill of Emotions when describing emotions.

#### ROUNDING OFF

- Why might a young person suffer from an eating disorder? What could be the underlying reasons?
- What could you do, if you are concerned about your friend's eating habits or weight loss?
- How could you cope with an eating disorder?
- How could a friend be supported to get through it?
- What are the good things in a young person's life that could be strengthened?

## 6. Screen-free week

On the *Pelitaito.fi* website, you can also download a game or poker log on your PC or mobile phone for tracking the time and money spend on gaming.

#### GOAL

To discuss gaming, screen time and addiction with the young people. To think about the other things that gaming is time away from.

**DURATION:** 30 min (+1 monitoring week)

#### ACTIVITY

Discuss addictions with the young people. Questions for the discussion:

- What can cause addiction?
- What does addiction mean? How is it manifested?

- What are internet addiction or gaming addiction like? What do they mean and how are they manifested?
- How does, for example, gaming addiction affect the rest of your life? The Hand of Mental Health can be used in the discussions. Does gaming addiction eat away time from the other fingers?

Encourage the young people at the youth centre to hold a game-free week, a week without screen time. The young people agree shared rules for the experiment. During the week, the young people should try and find pleasure from other things. What else could the young people do and what other things could provide pleasure?

### ROUNDING OFF

After a week, the exercise is discussed together:

- What thoughts and emotions did the week trigger in the young people?
- Did the young people find any new sources of pleasure?

The group write things that provided pleasure to them during the week on the wall in the youth centre.

## 7. Every dog has its day

Additional information:  
[www.improvenyclopedia.org](http://www.improvenyclopedia.org)

### GOAL

To think about the role of positive and negative thinking when the mind is challenged or life is rocky. To develop self-knowledge and emotional skills.

**DURATION:** 15-30 min

### ACTIVITY

The young people work in pairs. One partner plays the role of the optimist (O), who only sees the positive in things, events and people. The other person is the pessimist (P), who sees things and people in a negative light. The topic could be a friend's unhappiness. The aim is that the partners do not dwell on describing individual things, so that the story progresses. For example:

- O: My friend was diagnosed with an eating disorder. S/he was fortunate to receive treatment in a hospital for a period and to have been well looked after there.
- P: My friend ended up in hospital with an eating disorder, and she is subjected to constant chats about eating and is forced to eat there. Hospitals are horrible places.
- O: It's lovely to curl up under a blanket in the autumn and light candles, when the evenings turn dark.
- P: The autumn is an awful, dark and depressing time of year.

The groups can start by doing the exercise in pairs, but it is good to have the pairs perform in front of an audience, because after the exercise, the whole group can discuss, how the world-views of positive and negative people differ.

### ROUNDING OFF

- What things did you pay attention to in the optimist's speech? What about the pessimist's speech?
- Do you know people who think in this way? Which type of people do you know more of?
- Why do you think that is the case?

See also exercise *Positive thinking rocks!* on page 123.



- Would you say you are more of an optimist than a pessimist?
- Which person would you rather spend time with? Why?
- Why is positivity worthwhile and what can it lead to?

## Resources for coping

### 8. Positive things in my daily life

#### GOAL

To develop self-knowledge and find positive things in daily life.

**SUPPLIES:** if necessary, paper and pens

**DURATION:** 15-30 min

#### ACTIVITY

Each person thinks for a moment about three positive things about today or this week. They can include past or future events.

#### ROUNDING OFF

The group is divided in to pairs or small groups and each person brings up the positive things. The entire group can also sit in a circle, and each person mentions one positive thing.

- Do many positive things happen in life without us necessarily even realising?
- How could we enjoy the small things in life more? What would it require? What impact would it have?

The instructor can emphasise that positive thoughts and thinking can have a lot of power and can carry us through life's dark moments. Even unpleasant things tend to have something positive to them.

#### ADAPTATIONS

The best moments of the week can be collected on the wall of the youth centre or workshop. The papers with the positive thoughts can be put aside, and at the end of the year, the young people can go back to them and do a nice summary. (Tip provided by Lassi Puonti)

### 9. Keep melancholy at bay!

**GOAL:** To develop self-knowledge and find positive thinking.

**SUPPLIES:** paper, pens

**DURATION:** seven days (monitoring)

#### ACTIVITY

The young people list on a piece of paper at least 10 pleasant things they do in their daily life. During the next seven days, the young people keep track of how many pleasant things they do for themselves.

The pleasant things could include basketball training, sending a nice text message, singing in the shower, taking the dog for a walk, listening to favourite music or cooking with dad.

Pleasant things do not need to be big. It is more important that our daily lives are filled with pleasant things, which can be repeated. Doing pleasant things keeps melancholy away and has a positive impact on the mind.

**ROUNDING OFF**

- Which things in particular bring joy in life? Why?
- Who do you usually do nice things with?
- What nice things do you do alone?
- What would you not give up? Why?
- What pleasant, mood-lifting things would you like to add to your daily life? How could you implement them?
- Who could help you achieve your dreams?

## 10. Resource seashell

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**GOAL**

To become aware of personal resources and survival methods. To strengthen self-esteem.

SUPPLIES Security and Support model

**DURATION:** 15-45 min

**ACTIVITY**

The young people create a giant resource seashell for the youth centre wall. They write things in the seashell that provide resources to themselves and others. The seashell can be supplemented along the way: for example, one of the young people has been abroad and brings shells s/he has collected on the beach. The image can also be supplemented with young people's common concerns.

**ROUNDING OFF**

- What are the most common resources in life? Where can you get more resources?
- When do you use your resources or when are they needed?
- Which resource is helpful for which worry?
- Do you think about your resources?

**ADAPTATION**

Each young person makes their own resource seashell (see Security and Support)? Which resources do young people have despite their worries? The resource seashell can be filled with personal resources and any potential worries can be added in the surge of worries .

## 11. Strength from the forest

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**GOAL**

To find strength and happiness from nature and its tranquility. Acknowledge the joy of spending time outdoors!

**DURATION:** 30-60 min

**ACTIVITY**

Go to a nearby forest or green space with the young people to look for serenity. While walking, you can stop and listen to the silence, birds singing or enjoy the sunshine. Questions for discussion:

- What does it smell like in the forest?
- What does the forest mean to the young people?
- Is it pleasant and natural for the young people to walk in the forest?

Just five minutes spent outdoors in a green space promotes mental health! Many studies have shown that spending time outdoors improves mood and reduces the risk of suffering from mental health problems.

- Is the forest a place where the young people can go to quietly dwell in their own thoughts? Can you get rid of your feelings of hurt by shouting them to the trees?
- Why do people say that forests are places of calming down?
- Do the young people notice the cycle of nature in the forest?

### ADAPTATION

Forests are good places for practical exercises:

- Treasure hunt: Choose and hide a treasure that the rest of the group can go and find. The person who finds it gets to hide the treasure again. The others look for the treasure based on the tips given by the person who hid it: cold-colder, warmer-burning.

*Continues on the next page...*

- Geocaching: Have the young people tried geocaching? See more at [geokätköt.fi](http://geokätköt.fi)
- Do the young people remember, how to play hopscotch? Draw a grid on the ground or build it out of twigs.
- Tree tig: Play tig amongst trees. Hugging a tree makes you safe.
- What does it feel like walking barefooted on the moss, stones and twigs?
- At the end of the forest walk, you can relax by lying down on your back on a soft surface. What do the patterns of the clouds remind you of?

## Let's relax

### 12. Poker face

#### GOAL

To practise being present and mindful. To develop and manage your poker face and emotional skills.

**DURATION:** 15 min

#### ACTIVITY

The young people talk in pairs about a topic such as their plans for the summer, dream jobs, hobbies, etc. During the conversation, the other person (one at a time) asks if s/he can do something completely absurd and inappropriate, to which the other person replies as if the request was completely normal (poker face). For example: "Can I pick your ear?" "Yes, go ahead".

There are many techniques for keeping your poker face: deep inhalations and slow exhalations; pressing your tongue to the roof of your mouth; blowing a laugh/smile slowly away; concentration.

#### ROUNDING OFF

- Is it easy to suppress laughter?
- What kinds of situations might a poker face be good for?
- Why does concentrating on your breathing help manage emotions (fear, anxiety, laughter, etc.)?
- Have you faced a situation, in which a poker face was needed? Why?

## 13. Be prepared

### GOAL

To know your own body through relaxation and concentration. To achieve an open and relaxed mind. To sharpen your senses.

**DURATION:** 10-20 min

### ACTIVITY

Partners stand opposite each other legs hip-width apart, knees flexible and relaxed. One of them tries to knock the partner off balance by quickly pushing either the left or right shoulder or hip (first one, then the other; not all at the same time). The aim is to catch the partner off guard so s/he does not know where the push is coming from. If the partner is focused, relaxed and receptive, the other one will not be able to knock the partner off balance. The power behind the push is not relevant, because the person can absorb the impact and flexibly and effortlessly return to the upright position. You do not resist the push with muscle tension. Remember to breathe!

### ADAPTATION

The partner has his/her back to the “pusher”. The aim is to sense, when the other person is about to push (touch) him/her on the left shoulder by avoiding the push in advance. This requires, but also teaches, true concentration in the moment and paying attention to your senses!

A Japanese method for controlling and relaxing the body and mind: Oida, Y. and Marshall, L. 2004. *The Invincible Actor*

## 14. Painter

### GOAL

The exercise makes the participants feel good and activates the senses. To leave the young people feeling comfortable and relaxed. During the exercise, no-one except for the instructor talks (guides the exercise), which helps the young people concentrate and relax. Relaxing music can be played in the background.

**DURATION:** 10-20 min

### ACTIVITY

The young people sit in pairs on the floor in a circle facing the centre. The partners sitting behind use the backs of those in the front as the canvas for painting on and paint using their fingers, fingertips, palms, backs of their hands by stroking, tapping, drawing lines and patting. The people sitting in the front have their eyes closed!

Every 10-15 seconds, the instructor gives new feel-good, funny ideas for paintings (e.g. rain drops, lemon, sunset, storm, summer, holiday, chocolate cake, ice hockey, football, heavy metal band, woolly sock, joy, love, London, friendship, red, weekend). Afterwards anyone can tell their ideas for the others to paint. The aim of the exercise is to provide the person sitting in the front a relaxing experience. The partners reverse roles.

### ADAPTATIONS

A) The instructor uses gestures to show, which part of the hand is used to paint (e.g. how many fingers or which hand position). It is easier for the person in the front to relax and concentrate, if the exercise is carried out in silence.

See exercise *Feel good loafing* on page 42 and exercise *Mirror* on page 113.

- B) First the painters paint their canvas (the back of the person in front) with a base layer by painting the entire back with a large brush (palms, backs of palms). Then s/he uses different sizes of brushes (one or more fingers, fingertips) to add colours, lines and dots, circles and large lines. The rain may soak the entire painting first with small raindrops (from the head to the lower back using fingertips) gradually turning into heavy rain, which wipes away the entire painting (palms are used to wipe the head and back).
- C) The exercise can also be carried out with different sizes of brushes.

### ROUNDING OFF

- What did the exercise feel like?
- What did someone else's touch feel like? What about touching someone else?

## 15. Concentration

**GOAL:** To sharpen your senses. To learn concentration and being present. To calm down.

**DURATION:** 10-20 min

### ACTIVITY

One person with his/her eyes closed sits on the floor facing the wall. The partner approaches from the other side of the room, which has been cleared of furniture (approx. 4-5m away). When the person sitting on the floor senses that the partner is a metre away, s/he shouts out WHOOP, and the partner stops. The person sitting on the floor can then look back to see how close to the 1 metre the other person was. One person should experience the sensing a few times in a row, to achieve proper concentration. Reverse roles.

#### BOOK TIPS:

Byrne, Rhonda. 2006.  
*Salaisuus*. Tolle, Eckhart.  
1997. *Läsnäolon voima*.

## 16. Five minutes

### GOAL

To learn to listen to your own body and consciously release tension. To learn that concentrating on your breathing helps calm a tense mind. Concentration and relaxation exercises are good stress relievers, which can easily be implemented amidst a busy day. Simultaneously, the group practises mindfulness and being present.

**DURATION:** 5 min

### ACTIVITY

Before starting the exercise, the young people can take their shoes off and find a comfortable sitting position. Relaxing music can be played in the background.

The young people carry out the exercise for the first time lead by the instructor. Afterwards, the exercise can be implemented independently or practised together.

- Find yourself a good position, in which you feel comfortable.
- Let your bottom press against the chair.
- Extend your back and relax your shoulders.
- Let your head rest on your shoulders.
- Rest your hands on your thighs, armrests or let them hang towards the floor.

More relaxation exercises can be found in Jukka Kataja's (Edita 2004) book *Rentoutuminen ja voimavarat*.

Remind the young people to breathe calmly without tension. An important benefit of breathing exercises is that they can help you calm down, when you are feeling scared. (More information: Oida, Y. and Marshall, L. 2004. *The Invincible Actor*.)

- Close your eyes. You can also choose to close them, when you feel good.
- Breathe calmly through your nose.
- Concentrate on your breathing. Feel, how your stomach rises when you breathe in and lowers when you breathe out.
- Concentrate only on your inhalitions and exhalations, and think about, how your body feels.
- If you wish, you can place your hands on your stomach, so you can feel the inhalitions and exhalations.
- Be mindful and notice what you feel.
- Empty your mind of thoughts. To begin with, your mind might be distracted by other things.
- However, always bring your concentration back to breathing. It is part of the exercise. Do this as naturally as possible.
- Your mind is tranquil and calm.
- Breathe calmly, concentrate only on your breathing.
- Gradually come back to this moment. Continue to keep your eyes closed.
- Listen to the sounds around you. Feel the chair under you.
- Stretch slightly, and gradually, open your eyes.

### ROUNDING OFF

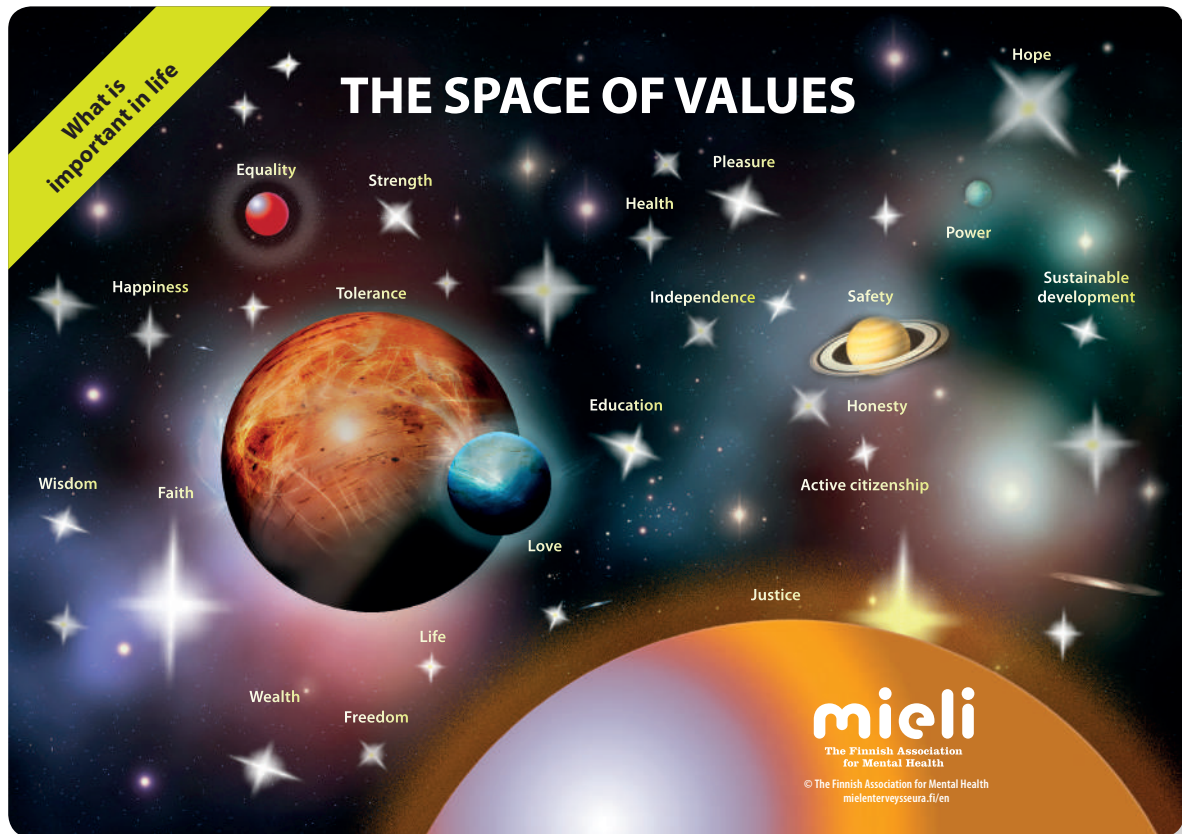
At the end of the exercise, the group discusses the relaxation method. It is worth emphasising to the young people that relaxation can be practised. If the young people know a nice relaxation exercise, they can share it with the group.

- How did you feel about the exercise?
- Did you succeed in concentrating and calming down during the exercise?
- Did you feel relaxed?
- Did you get strength from the exercise?
- Why is it important to listen to your own body?
- Why is it good to do mindfulness and relaxation exercises?

### ADAPTATION: MIND TRAVEL

- Find a comfortable position and close your eyes softly.
- Recognise your own breathing by listening to it.
- Calmly breathe in and out. Feel your stomach rise and lower.
- Think of a peaceful location, where you enjoy spending time. A place you'd like to visit.
- Imagine how you would get there. How do you travel there?
- You have now arrived. What is the atmosphere like there?
- What colours can you see around you?
- What sounds can you hear? Who are the people there?
- Look around. Do you notice how beautiful it is everywhere?
- Feel your body and mind. You realise, how strong you feel.
- You relax and gain energy and strength from the place you are imagining.
- Now you can come back to this moment and stretch your arms and legs, and your entire body. Open your eyes.





## Summary

- In adolescence, people think about their values and the importance of life. Young people establish their values, identity and mental health through this mental process.
- Values are at the core of youth work. Value discussions with young people are part of the education carried out by youth work.
- Value discussions support young people's development and mental health. Value discussions provide young people with determination to analyse their values and justify their choices.
- Youth workers should consider their own values, in other words, those values that they base their work with young people on and the values of youth work in general.
- The function of and participation in youth work reflect the values of youth work.
- Expanding knowledge reduces prejudices and impacts attitudes. Seeing similarities between people and valuing difference help establish a sense of community.
- The professional ethical guidelines of youth work support its educational objectives and strengthen young people's wellbeing.

# 9 YOUNG PEOPLE AND VALUES

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## Values and choices in youth work

Our values reflect what we consider good and important in life. Values can be considered as objectives at the base of our choices and reactions to things we face. They influence our daily choices both on conscious and subconscious level; however, in our daily lives, we also often make choices by mimicing others and out of habit. It is important to stop and think every once in a while about the motives behind our choices. Do I make choices in my life based on what I believe in and value and what I want to achieve? How do I choose to spend my time? Do I live my life in accordance with my values?

Values are at the core of youth work. The methods used in youth work reflect the values of youth work. The sense of community, participation, tolerance and the value placed on each and every human being describe what is seen as valuable in youth work. An attitude that reflects care, attentiveness and respect towards ourselves, young people and work colleagues is the best way to support everyone's mental health. Being involved in youth work can provide young people an experience of the importance of life and help them find their place in life. They make new friends, find ways to influence in the activities of their immediate surroundings and have a chance to express their opinions on social issues.

## Values are established in adolescence

One of the adolescent development tasks is to establish an idea of values and a philosophy on what is important in life. In adolescence, we are often flexible with our values and keen to try things out. Values may be incomplete and incoherent in youth, and they change along the way, before becoming tied down to a certain set of values. Values might be black and white and absolute. Young people's values and beliefs may not be consistent and can be contradictory.

When young people are in search of their values, they often commit to different belief systems unconditionally. However, their beliefs can also fluctuate as flexibly as their idols do, when the group of friends or the situation changes. Young people might simplistically and strongly defend ethics, vegetarian diets, banning furs, human rights or other matter they stand behind.

Young people establish their value concepts by reflecting their thoughts on the values of their parents and friends and other important adults. Young people might criticise their parents' values and question them. At the same time, they are interested in what their parents and others around them consider important; what they find good or valuable; what they aim for in life, and what they think of other people or the world in general. These are the things young people want to find

answers to when they discuss and debate with, throw their criticism at and defend their opinions to adults.

The foundations for our values are laid in childhood based on the childhood home's values and experiences that triggered emotions. Initially, values are based on those of the immediate environment; the values the child or young person has adopted at home or in peer groups. The young people prefer what is considered right or wrong in their circles. Culture, nationality, parents' social class and education also influence young people's values. At a later stage, young people's values might differ significantly from those of the childhood home.

There are different ways of classifying values: there is no one correct way for it. Finnish Philosopher and Linguist Erik Ahlman has presented the following value types:

VALUE TYPES	
<b>Hedonistic values</b>	joy, pleasure, happiness, enjoyment, sensuality
<b>Vital values</b>	life, health, desire, fitness
<b>Aesthetic values</b>	beauty, sublimity, grace, art
<b>Knowledge values</b>	truth, knowledge, education, wisdom, science
<b>Religious values</b>	faith, hope, holiness, mercy
<b>Social values</b>	altruism, friendship, love, faithfulness, freedom, fraternity, honour, patriotism, safety
<b>Might values</b>	force, power, war, wealth, money, victory
<b>Justice values</b>	fairness, human rights, equality, legality
<b>Ethical values</b>	goodness, moral right
<b>Ecological values</b>	natural beauty and health of the environment, animal rights
<b>Egological values</b>	Dignity, selfishness, self-interest

Source: Ahlman (1939). Kulttuurin perustekijöitä.

## Things young people value

Researchers are interested in young people's values. Market research also wants to know what young people value and consider good or important. For young people, as well as most adults, the most important things are home, relationships, health and love. Nowadays, "time at home" and family life are more important to young people than for example partying. When young people think about their future, money and fame are not at the top of the list of objectives; instead, they think that it is more likely that happiness can be found in intimate relationships.

Young people want to remain close with their parents and their family. The longing for social relationships and the desire to commit are at the foremost in young



Fame and publicity are dreams worth trying to attain for many young people .

people's thoughts. Young people want to be reliable friends and beloved family members. They value dutifulness and keeping promises. Young people often have traditional, if not old-fashioned, ideas about work life. As employees, they see themselves as hard-working, reliable and faithful. Media and advertising influence the values of teenagers in particular: ordinary teenagers can become creative professionals, celebrities or stars when they grow up.

The individual, self, plays an important role in young people's values. Self-indulgence is cherished. Young people also value being influential. The desire to influence is channelled, for example, to nature conservation, environmental issues or politics. Discussions with young people about their influencing opportunities strengthen their participation and support their active citizenship.

Young people's greatest fears are becoming ill, their own death or the death of a family member, loss of a job, disruption of world peace and war.

## The search for the purpose of life in adolescence

Values are closely connected to the purpose of life. The experience that your life is important is a crucial part of mental health. In significant life questions, it is not the adults' task to provide complete answers, but to guide the young person into considering and examining the purpose of life and the significance of humanity. The inability to find any purpose for life can easily turn into feelings



of hopelessness, frustration and indifference, as if nothing had any importance. Experiencing life as meaningful, helps young people find their place in life and consider life as interesting, sensible and purposeful.

It is helpful to discuss the importance of life with young people, because it gives a basis for self-knowledge and an experience of emotions and provides them the tools to make lifestyle choices. Education and upbringing should develop young people's ability to be critical and offer experiences on how life that is lived according to personal values can be rewarding.

## Values education

### Morals and conscience

Morals, the concept of right and wrong, progress in stages. Morals change as thinking develops and changes qualitatively during the ages of 10-16. To begin with, morals are based on the individual's own perspective, the moral of obeying. This is followed by the stage of law and order, the rules of society. Gradually moral assessments become internalised rules, the morals of personal principles.

*Source: Vilkkio-Riihelä. (2001.) Psykke.*

Values and values education are closely related to moral development, which is when values become an inner voice, a conscience. This takes place over a number of years, but in the development of morals a particularly sensitive period is in mid-adolescence.

Morals involve what we considered appropriate or inappropriate behaviour, and what kinds of actions we see as correct and wrong, good or bad. The formation of morals also supports mental health.

Youth work also includes conscious and subconscious moral education. Moral education guides young people to make value choices independently and to take responsibility for them. Young people need the guidance and support of an adult for this, sometimes even direct intervention. Young people may not be capable of understanding the consequences of their choices and actions, which is why the advice and active presence of an adult are essential. At times young people may need a concrete example of what produces a good result and what will lead to the situation getting worse. Moral development should continue throughout life. Many adults are also inconsistent in their moral actions, particularly when they are under pressure. Everyone has moral weaknesses and strengths. At best, life experiences make people more mature, and in this process their values and morals also mature.

### Ethical values in education

Environmental education, resolution education and emotional education are closely linked to values education, because values and education affect all parts of humanity.

Education involves values which are in part based on professional guidance and in part on the employee's own values. The values of education, in other words what education aims to achieve; what is considered good and worth seeking for, and which principles guide or are behind operations, influence educational practices also in youth work.

Values education helps young people establish their own set of values. It supports young people in finding their personal ideals, making choices, assessing life phenomena and giving things value-based significance.

Values are not learnt consciously or through verbal education, but in practical life through examples, models and emotional experiences. Youth workers provide an example of an adult's world of values through their actions. They are always closely observed by young people: they interpret the adults' values by comparing their behaviour, speech and gestures with what they say about their values and how they define them. In other words, youth workers carry out values education also subconsciously.

The diversity of youth work creates opportunities for doing and experiencing things with other young people. Values education can be implemented in youth work through practical activities, such as discussions and having everyday responsibilities. Youth work gives young people a chance to discuss values and attitudes alongside other activities, because youth work is close to youth culture and the everyday life of young people.

Initiating value discussions encourages young people to bring forth their own value considerations and stand behind their choices. The aim of value work is to clarify contradictions between values. Young people face many situations in which they have to make choices and consider, what is important to them and what they want. Discussions about the consequences of actions and the relationship between right and wrong, help young people become aware of their actions and increase their ability to take responsibility.

Youth workers operate as role models and value educators for young people.





Values are also part of life as value experiences, for example, through human interaction and experiences of nature and silence. When young people experience personal dignity, it creates a basis for valuing others.

In education, it is good to acknowledge the fact that the lack of values is also a value in its own right. In education, the concept of value freedom is impossible and even incorrect. The motives that could be behind value freedom must be acknowledged. Could non-interference be based on the fact that the hidden moral obligations have not been identified or are we talking about moral laziness? It is good to realise that value-free education does not automatically mean tolerance or a broad-ranging approach; instead, it is more likely to expose lack of boundaries and indifference.

The aim of education is to transfer something good and valuable. Unless the education consciously and openly guides young people's values, they will often subconsciously adopt hidden values within their environment from friends or media etc. Thus, primitive values and immature morals tend to be transferred on. Someone is always educating the young people.

#### VALUES AS PART OF LIFE

- How are your value choices formed?
- Can you make independent choices?
- Do you think about what your choices and actions can lead to?
- What do you think about right and wrong?
- How do you understand your own life and life in general?
- What makes you feel trust?

*You build yourself through your values throughout life and become, who you are.*

Source: Ketonen, Päivi. Lecture 4.2.2013.



For many spiritualism may mean calming down alone.

## Culture, religion and multiculturalism

Our society is multicultural. There are young people and families in our country, who have moved to Finland from different countries, who have their own cultural and religious background. In the same way as other countries and nationalities, the Finnish culture also involves its own religious and ideological cultural history.

Children and young people adopt their first attitudes from their parents, including tolerance and intolerance. To be able to respect people coming from different cultures, you should know your own culture too. You can be faithful to your own culture and respect other people's values as well.

Respecting young people means respecting their culture, background and their differences too. Each young person must be seen as a whole. Their life stories, cultural history and background come with them even if the environment changes.

Some young people's childhood background has given them religious ideals, which they either give up or commit to in adolescence. The choice in terms of family values becomes part of young people's lives and provides a basis for their personal values. Young people for whom religion is particularly important, consider it an important part of their wellbeing.

For many people, spiritualism and spirituality refer to calming down and to a holy experience, regardless of religion. Tranquility and meditation provide strength and

calm the mind, and art or literature, church and rituals or wilderness hiking can help people turn to their innermost.

Some people find they need images of a higher power, to whom they can speak and which provides security and creates hope. Such images are significant to some, especially when they experience existential angst and feel that all other means have failed.

The ability to see similarity between people and being able to respect and value the differences between people, are at the base of a sense of community. They also establish trust between people.

## Attitudes, prejudices and differences

Influencing attitudes is challenging and often very slow. It is often easier to provide more information than to change attitudes. Finding new information and seeking the company of people different from us help us question existing thinking patterns and correct attitudes.

Attitudes refer to our tendency to react in an accepting or rejecting manner to a person, situation or an object. Attitudes differ from values in that they are superficial and can change very quickly. Values, on the other hand, refer to our general tendencies to make choices. Individuals can have as many attitudes as there are situations and objects that require attitudes. In other words, there can be thousands of attitudes, but there can only be dozens of values.

Attitudes are created based on ideas on how we react to people, things and phenomena. Both emotions and reason influence these ideas: they are based on previous experiences, information, attitudes, conclusions and beliefs. The less we know about a subject, the more likely we are to be driven by our ideas.

Through our ideas, we also establish stereotypes, generalisations of a group or an individual as member of a group. Stereotypes often involve strong attitudes and prejudices.

Everyone has prejudices, assumptions before gaining reliable information. They cause problems, if people are not prepared to review or change their perspectives when they receive more information. People with a prejudiced outlook often select the information that fits their original beliefs from any new information. The starting point for breaking down prejudices is to admit to having prejudices.

Discrimination refers to unfair behaviour towards another person. Stigma means labelling: making unfair moral conclusions of another person. When people do not have the opportunity to participate in the society in the way that they want to and lack the opportunities others have, they experience social exclusion. Discrimination, labelling those who are sick and social exclusion often walk hand in hand.

To be able to accept differences, you must first accept yourself. Often difficulties in facing difference is based on personal insecurities. In adolescence, this is natural, because young people are often insecure about themselves during their development. However, this does not justify discrimination against other young people, but indicates, how important it is in youth work to strengthen self-respect and self-esteem and make young people understand the importance of noticing and respecting others.



## Media influence on values and attitudes

Media plays an increasingly significant role in the formation values and attitudes the older young people get and the more time they spend with media. Media also has an impact on the thinking and behaviour of young people. It can have both positive and negative effects on attitudes and values.

Media changes young people's understanding of different nationalities, races and religions, as well as, of different professional and social groups and of young people themselves. The strongest attitudes, models and stereotypes are those that occur repeatedly and are over-emphasised in different media channels. Media's images and values play a role in the developing identities of young people. Media provides idols, which help develop styles in terms of appearances as well as value systems and whose features young people adopt as part of their identities.

Multiculturalism is a resource and enriches the values of our communities.



Media literacy and source criticism, meaning active and critical analysis of media content, reduce media's one-sided impact. People who are critical and media literate are interested, enthusiastic, courageous, speculative and active.

Media literacy enables people to ask: Why was the media content created and who created it? What methods does the content use to raise interest? How do I understand this content? Can different people understand it in a different way? What kinds of values does the content present or leave out?

Critical thinking can be applied to all kinds of media content, such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television programmes, music videos, movies, websites and games. Media literacy allows people to listen to themselves and make choices that support their mental health and wellbeing.

## Professional ethics guidelines for youth work

The professional ethics guidelines for youth work support youth workers' independent value analysis and how values should be present in youth workers' activities and as a basis for values education. The guidelines describe the purpose of youth work and provide a basis for analysing right and wrong procedures. The guidelines emphasise attitudes, responsibilities and different aspects within the work. The values of youth work include avoiding prejudices, respecting differences, fairness, objectivity, prevention of exclusion, participation and influence, respect of the environment and life and promoting wellbeing.



## PROFESSIONAL ETHICS GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH WORK

<b>The objective of youth work is that every young person finds their place as an individual and a member of the society based on their resources and beliefs.</b>	Youth work supports and enables young people's voluntary participation and offers meaningful free-time activities. The activities give young people a chance to genuinely and freely be themselves without the fear of embarrassment or rejection. Youth work sees young people as individuals and members of a group and guides them to resolve disputes with a positive outlook and an emphasis on avoiding partiality and prejudice. Through their actions and attitudes, youth workers provide trust in the future.
<b>Youth work stands for connecting with people, providing encouragement and doing things together.</b>	Youth workers are approachable, trustworthy and safe adults. They have to take into account their roles as the object of identification. Youth workers are there to give young people the time attention they need when they need it. They understand that youth work is based on voluntary participation. Youth workers get involved when they witness wrong-doing and unfairness. They intervene in activities that threaten growth, development or health. Youth workers operate under the principals of equality, fairness and respect for differences. They recognise young people's differing needs. They care for and encourage young people and there for them. Youth workers provide young people time to learn about life and correct mistakes they may have made.
<b>Youth work enforces young people's participation in local communities, different cultures and the society.</b>	Youth workers promote young people's living conditions and wellbeing by being present and active. In cooperation with young people, youth workers establish and develop safe operating environments. Youth work changes to meet the needs of young people and youth culture. Youth workers prevent exclusion and participate in supporting young people in their daily lives. They establish surroundings that allow participation, overcoming fears and achieving dreams.
<b>Youth workers value their work and act in a constructive and open manner in the work community and cooperation networks.</b>	Youth workers strengthen the role of youth work by trusting in their expertise, recognising their professional identity and developing their sector and skills. Youth workers share their expertise and learn from other professionals. They operate in multi-disciplinary cooperation using the strengths of youth work. Youth workers promote dialogue between different operators, respect young people and their networks and deal responsibly with the information they handle. Youth workers support development and education.
<b>Youth workers act as the interpreters of adolescence and young people's living conditions.</b>	Youth workers follow the youth policy discourse and legislative drafting. They participate in discussion and promote young people's perspective. Youth workers have the ability to constructively question and highlight social shortcomings. They encourage young people to influence and together with young people, they develop opportunities for young people to find new means to influence. Youth workers acknowledge the foundations of their work and organisation and view their partners, cooperation and third-party funding from this perspective.
<b>Youth work respects the environment and life.</b>	Youth work recognises the operating environment, intervenes with vandalism and promotes environmentally friendly lifestyles. Youth work follows the principles of sustainable development. Youth workers choose environmentally sustainable and friendly alternatives and working methods.
<b>Youth workers look after their own wellbeing.</b>	Youth workers identify and recognise their personal limitations. They utilise the service network intended for young people to support their work. Youth workers can differentiate between work and free-time and set boundaries in relation to young people. They maintain their expertise and personal coping by looking after their wellbeing and keeping up-to-date on new information on young people and youth work.

Source: Suomen Nuorisoyhteistyö – Allianssi ry, Nuoris- ja Liikunta-alan asiantuntijat ry. [www.alli.fi](http://www.alli.fi)



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# EXERCISES

The exercises in the Young people and values section have been divided into the following categories: Values in adolescence, Values and other people, Attitudes and Values and the environment.

## Values in adolescence

### 1. Finding out about values

**GOAL:** To understand your own and other people's values.

**SUPPLIES:** different objects provided by the instructor

**DURATION:** 15-30 min

#### ACTIVITY

The instructor has found a variety of objects in advance. Each person chooses one object for themselves, which reflects their values. The young people form a circle. In turns, each person throws their object to the centre of the circle and tells the others, what values the object represents. For example, I chose trainers, because I value sports and health.

#### ROUNDING OFF

- How does the object reflect your values?
- Was it difficult to choose an object?
- What kinds of values came up?
- Did the young people have similar values?
- What does a value mean?

### 2. Universe of values

**GOAL:** To understand your own values.

**SUPPLIES:** The Universe of Values model

**DURATION:** 15-30 min

#### ACTIVITY

The young people make their own universe of values. Which planet represent him/herself? Which values are part of your universe? Which values do the other planets, stars, the sun and other entities represent? Where in the universe are they located?

#### ROUNDING OFF

- What things do you consider important in life?
- What things do young people value?
- Which values do you spend your time with on a daily basis?
- How do values come up in everyday life?
- Do values affect daily choices on a conscious or subconscious level?
- How can you act in accordance with your values?
- Do you always have the courage to act in accordance with your values?
- Have you been in a situation in which you have acted against your values? Why?

The text-free version of the Universe of Values model is available at [mielenterveystaidot.fi](http://mielenterveystaidot.fi).

**ADAPTATION**

If you were to give up one of the values in your universe of values, which one would you give up first? Do young people realise which things are most important and valuable for them?

### 3. Proverbs

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**GOAL:** To think of well-known proverbs and phrases related to the theme.

**SUPPLIES:** if necessary, paper, scissors, pens

**DURATION:** 15-30 min

**ACTIVITY**

The group thinks of sayings and proverbs related to the theme and write them down. What kinds of instructions have the young people heard at home? (e.g. "If you call someone's nose ugly, your child will have one just like it.") Instructions and advice related to values heard at home influence the attitudes of many young people.

After the young people have thought about the topic, the instructor can show the following list of different countries' proverbs

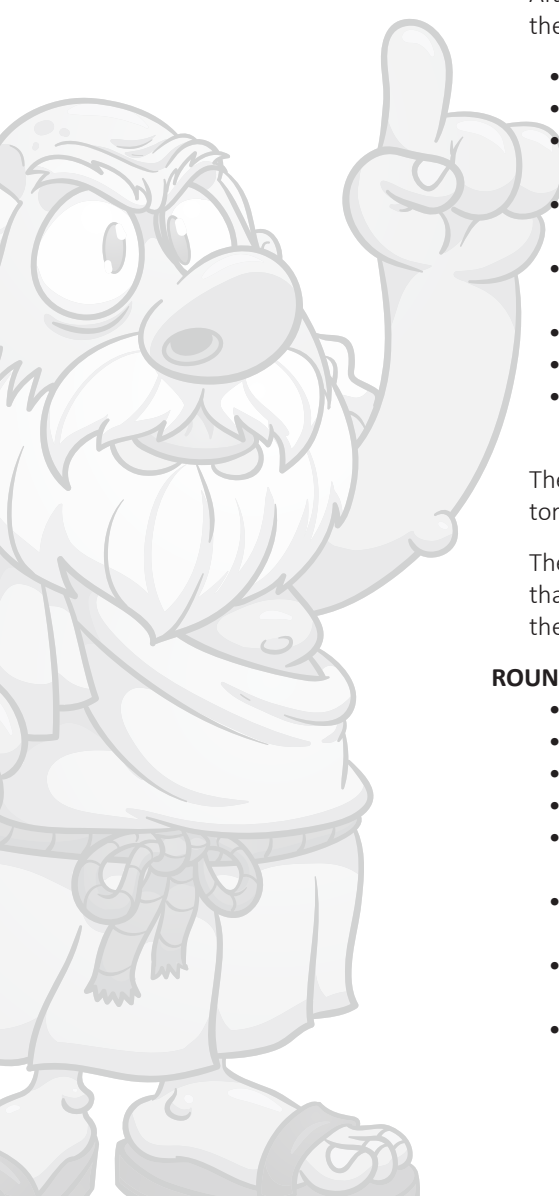
- "Know your own space, offer the same to others." (*Finnish proverb*)
- "A man deserves his merit but not too much praise." (*Finnish proverb*)
- "Prevention is so much better than healing because it saves the labour of being sick." (*Thomas Adams*)
- "Your most valuable asset is a wise and reliable friend." (*Persian King Darius*)
- "Love is the greatest pleasure and greatest sorrow. It is life." (*French proverb*)
- "Desire is half of life; indifference is half of death." (*Kahlil Gibran*)
- "Satisfaction is the highest form of happiness." (*Unknown, circa 200 BC*)
- "Life has value only when it has something valuable as its object." (*Friedrich Hegel*)

There are many websites on the Internet related to the theme, so the instructor can show additional material, if needed.

The young people choose a saying or proverb that is important to them or one that they like, and make it into a picture to be hung on their wall at home or in the youth centre. The proverbs can also be written in another language.

**ROUNDING OFF**

- What other proverbs can the young people think of?
- What do proverbs mean?
- What is the point of proverbs?
- Are modern proverbs similar to old ones? Why? Why not?
- How have values changed with the passage of time? What do modern day people value most in their lives?
- Are there differences between young people's and adults' values? Why is there/why is there not?
- Is there a value, which has not changed over time? Which one? Why is it still important?
- Which proverb do you find annoying? Why? How could you make it more pleasing?



## 4. Value lists

### GOAL

To compare and consider the value types collected from different sources.  
To develop self-knowledge and emotional skills.

**SUPPLIES:** Value types (p. 202) or the Universe of Values Model

**DURATION:** 30-45 min

**ACTIVITY:** The group studies the value types or the Universe of Values Model

### ROUNDING OFF

- Which of these values used to exist but no longer does?
- Do some values contradict one another? Which ones and why?
- Do you agree with all the values?
- Are you able to carry out all of them in your life?
- Why is it important to consider values and attitudes?
- What kinds of values are implemented at the youth centre or in school or at hobbies?

#### MORE INFORMATION:

Sinivuori, Päivi and Timo (2007). *Esiripusta arvoihin. Toiminnallinen draamakavatuskirja.*

## 5. Five most important values

**GOAL:** To consider our own attitudes and values and their importance.

**DURATION:** 15-30 min

### ACTIVITY

The instructor asks each young person to choose five characteristics/values from the following list (if necessary, come up with more):

<i>power</i>	<i>long life</i>	<i>family</i>	<i>freedom</i>
<i>health</i>	<i>wealth</i>	<i>friendship</i>	<i>honesty</i>
<i>beauty</i>	<i>intelligence</i>	<i>sociability</i>	<i>hope</i>
<i>independence</i>	<i>love</i>	<i>material</i>	<i>success</i>
<i>peace</i>	<i>respect</i>	<i>joy</i>	<i>justice</i>

When the young people have chosen their five values/characteristics, they explain why they made those choices. After that, they remove the two least important ones from their list. Again, they remove one, which leaves two. Finally, the young people choose the most important value out of the two still left.

### ROUNDING OFF

- Why did they choose the one they did?
- Was it easy to drop values and choose which one is the most important?
- Was it difficult to select the single most important value?
- Which values were particularly difficult to give up?
- Do the young people live their lives in accordance with their values?
- If a young person's most important value is "infinite wealth", how can the wealth be enjoyed, if you are ill or unhappy?
- Can a poor person also be happy?
- Can values change during life? Why and for what reasons?
- Which values prevail in our society?
- What did I learn from my value choices?

*Continues on the next page...*

- What new things did I learn about myself?
- Which emotions does your most important value trigger in you?

## Values and other people

### 6. Illustrate values with music

#### GOAL

To use music to show the significance of respecting and valuing other people.

**DURATION:** 30-45 min

#### ACTIVITY

The participants find songs that they think tell about respecting other people.

#### ROUNDING OFF

- Which emotions did the music trigger?
- What was the message of the song?
- What did they tell about the dignity of other people?
- Is every person valuable? Why?
- How could we treat each other with even more dignity? How can it be shown to others?
- Can a stranger be treated with dignity and respect? How?
- Is there room for improvement in how we treat each other? Why?

#### ADAPTATION

- A) The exercise can be carried out, for example, in the young people's own Facebook group.
- B) The group considers, how you could spread good will within your own circle. The instructor can look for songs related to the theme on the internet, such as Puhuva Kone: Hyvä kiertää.
- C) The group listens to Rap-Mummo Eila's song, Mummo Rap. What is the song about? Which emotions did it trigger?

### 7. Culture night

#### GOAL

To bring people from different cultures together; to find out about the traditions and values of different cultures.

**DURATION:** 30-45 min

#### ACTIVITY

The group can organise culture nights, on which young people from different cultures tell about their other home country. They can show photos, tell about religion, explain different customs, traditions and values, play music from the country and tell about their relatives and family. The young people can also cook together food from the country in question. If there are no young people from different cultures in the group, the project can also be carried out with other groups or organisations that highlight multicultural values in their activities.

### ROUNDING OFF

- What did it feel like telling others about your other culture?
- Do the others feel they learnt about a new culture?
- What was it like hearing about another culture?
- What differences and similarities are there between the two cultures?
- How does cuisine in the two cultures differ?
- Does the importance of food and dining together differ between cultures?
- How can you highlight your other culture in your everyday life?
- How would you describe your native culture, if you were to tell about it abroad?
- What did music, art and photos tell about the culture?
- How do values differ between different cultures?
- What does understanding another person's culture mean?
- What importance do such conversations hold in terms of values?

## Attitudes

### 8. Poses reflecting attitudes

#### GOAL

To analyse the connection between your pose and attitude in interactive situations. To think about what status means. Status refers to someone's position or regard in relation to another person. The status exercise helps young people understand, what their poses communicate to others (posture, expressions, gestures, voice, tone). Learning this is useful for relationship skills and in different encounters (e.g. job interview, meeting a new person).

**DURATION:** 30-45 min

#### ACTIVITY

The instructor writes the following poses on paper slips:

- hands in pockets
- shoulders pulled back
- shoulders hunched forward
- back straight
- hunched back
- hands arms hanging down by the body
- tips of feet turned inwards
- small, short steps
- arms crossed (in front of body)
- frequent touching of face and hair
- eye contact with a person approaching
- whispers (speaks quietly)
- stares at feet
- hands on hips

The paper slips are placed at a random order in a wide circle on the floor. The young people walk around the circle slowly, and at each paper slip, they carry out the instructions (e.g. shoulders pulled back). The exercise is carried out in silence without making any comments on the content of the paper slips to ensure that everyone can concentrate fully.

*Continues on the next page...*



After a few rounds, the slips are divided into two rows based on the attitude they reflect.

The group walks through the rows, imitating the instructions on the slips whilst analysing the emotional states connected to them and thinking about how a person showing these attitudes would behave towards others.

#### ROUNDING OFF

- Was it easy to follow the instructions on the paper slips? If some of them felt challenging, why do you think that might have been?
- Do you know anyone, whose general attitude reflects some of the paper slips?
- Which pose do you find most you?
- What do you think of the sentence “your pose changes your attitude”? Can, for example, improving your posture change your attitude towards others? Why?
- What emotions did you experience when following the different instructions?
- Did any of the instructions immediately lead you to think of the rest of your body and change your general pose accordingly? (For example, when you pull your shoulders back, you automatically walk slower and look straight ahead.)

## 9. Animal image

#### GOAL

To think about poses and attitudes through humour. To develop self-knowledge, interaction and emotional skills.

**DURATION:** 30-45 min

#### ACTIVITY

The young people each think of one animal. The exercise starts off as individual work, so everyone must be given peace and quiet to concentrate.

The participants start moving around the room so that they imitate the animal's movement and essence 100 %. Slowly, on the instructor's cue, the animal is reduced so that it represents 80%, then 50% and finally only 10% of the person.

When there is only a little bit of the animal left, the participants think what the relevant animal (10% of the human) would feel and think, and how it would react to other people. What status does each animal have?

For example, how a snake person reacts to other people is completely different from a chicken, fox or a peacock.

Small encounters or scenes take place in which different animals in human form meet one another. The encounters could take place in a courtyard, office meeting room, classroom or a restaurant's kitchen.

#### ROUNDING OFF

- Do you know anyone, who seems to resemble an animal? Which animal could that be?
- How does a fox-like human operate differently in a work meeting compared to a sheep? Which one would make a better leader: a snake or a lion? Why?

**MORE INFORMATION:** Johnstone, K. (1999). *Impro for Storytellers*.

- Do humans and animals use emotions or common sense differently? Why?

## 10. Attitude statements

---

### GOAL

To think about issues related to mental health, prejudices and attitudes.

**SUPPLIES:** green and red pieces of carton or the coloured side of picture cards

**DURATION:** 30-45 min

### ACTIVITY

The instructor reads out the attitude claims, and the young people show the correct colour card (green = agree, red = disagree) depending on their opinion on the matter. When there are only two options to choose from, each person has to make up their mind on the issue. The statements are exaggerated to make it easier to choose. The instructor can come up with more statements or change the statements to make them more suitable for the group.

#### Statements

- People, who have mental health problems, make me feel unsettled.
- Difficult emotions, such as anger, are easy to talk about.
- Designer clothes make young people cool.
- Elderly people are respected in my country.
- People lack courage to talk about mental health problems.
- It is difficult to show love.
- People are not fully aware what mental health means.
- People should always give money to beggars.
- Good mental health depends on being happy.
- It is easy to go and talk to a youth worker about your life.
- Good self-confidence supports mental health.
- People can personally influence their mental health.
- It is easy for immigrants to find work in my country.
- Young people have opportunities to exercise influence in the society.
- A person who has committed a crime is always a criminal.
- Free education is pointless.
- A person recovering from mental health problems can work.
- Libraries are pointless.
- Young people are valued in my country.
- Young people, who do not use or have never tried alcohol, are wimps.
- Media only reports facts.
- Elderly people must be given a seat on the bus.
- I am happier alone.
- A picture tells more than a thousand words.
- Unemployed people have the right to unemployment benefit.
- School meals should always be free.
- Elderly people do not need other people around them; they can manage on their own.
- It is pathetic spending time with your parents.
- Every young person must have a smart phone.
- If you have never been abroad, you know nothing about the world.

What other statements can you come up with?

### ROUNDING OFF

After each statement, or at the end of the exercise, a few young people are given a chance to justify their opinions.

- How easy was it to form and express your own opinions?
- What do the statements tell about attitudes and prejudices?
- Do I dare to state my opinion or act according to my values, if other people have different values?
- What prejudices do we have?
- What is the impact of prejudices on interaction?

### ADAPTATIONS

- Young people express their opinions by placing themselves on an imaginary line on the floor, where the extremities represent yes and no options (see p. 17).
- The young people express their opinions by moving in the room, between the corners or walls that have been appointed as the yes, no and maybe options.
- The group members can also answer to the statements with their eyes closed using thumbs up or down gestures or by standing in a circle with their eyes closed stepping forward (yes) or backward (no). Voting with their eyes closed often helps young people to vote without being influenced by other people's actions. It is important that each person is able to form their honest opinion before a joint discussion. This allows even the quieter ones to have their voice heard. The instructor may choose to point out the general voting results and any possible differences between questions.

## Values and the environment

### 11. Shopping channel

#### GOAL

To improve media literacy. To understand the importance of assertiveness and credibility in performance and interactive skills. To think about how media influences emotions and common sense. To develop emotional skills, performance experience and self-knowledge.

#### SUPPLIES

a variety of objects (e.g. an empty tin, a cable, computer components, kitchen utensils, a broom, a paintbrush)

**DURATION:** 15-30 min

#### ACTIVITY

**Warm-up:** The young people form small groups, and each group is given one object. The aim is to come up with 20 different uses for the object in five minutes, which are very different to what the object is actually intended for.

For example an empty tin: a cookie cutter, rolling pin, relay baton, flyswatter, stress toy, baseball bat, rattle, watering can, paint roller, an object for producing sound effects.

The uses can be said out loud one by one or acted out as scenes using the object for its new purpose.

**Shopping channel:** Two young people go in front of the audience. They pull out (or the instructor gives them) an object, which they immediately begin to sell shopping channel style to the other young people. The aim is to practice being assertive and convincing, so it is important that the young people are encouraged to avoid hesitation and the use of filler words such as “well, sort of, like”. The young people should be reminded that the seller believes in the product so wholeheartedly that s/he is prepared to use all possible methods to sell it. “I don’t know” isn’t part of the seller’s vocabulary! Plenty of superlatives and a jolly atmosphere!

### ROUNDING OFF

- How do advertisers aim to influence a purchase decision? What if the advert is targeted at young people? What about adults?
- Why is it more effective to target emotions than common sense?
- Which advert has influenced you the most? Why?
- If you were to design an advert which was targeted at young people (any product), what would you include in it? (music, people, shooting location, shooting angles, editing)
- What needs to be taken into account when advertising a shopping channel product? How does it differ from a normal TV advert?
- Do we need all the things we own?
- Could one item have several uses?
- Are items and objects important?
- What are the five most important things that you would take on a desert island?

## 12. Youth centre values

### GOAL

To think about the surrounding values and their significance to your life.

### SUPPLIES

Universe of Values model, large piece of black fabric or cardboard and materials for making a collage (see p. 17)

**DURATION:** 45-60 min

### ACTIVITY

The young people jointly collect the youth centre's values and make them into a universe of values to be hang on the wall in the youth centre. The collage is made on a big piece of black fabric or cardboard with the objects in space made using a variety of materials, such as paper pulp, fabrics, fabric paints, photos from magazines and newspapers, materials from nature.

### ROUNDING OFF

- What kinds of values can you find around you?
- How are the values of the youth centre put forward?
- How are the values evident in the youth centre's activities?
- What are the impacts of the values on the young people? And adults?
- How do adults show their values in the youth centre?
- Do young people influence the values of the centre?
- Should the values be changed in some way?
- Which values should be emphasised?

*Continues on the next page...*

**TIP:** Christmas lights on black fabric makes a brilliant starlit sky.

**ADAPTATION**

The value discussion can also be raised, when the general rules for the centre/workshop/team/group are discussed. What kinds of values are the rules based on?

## 13. Wellbeing review

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**GOAL**

To acknowledge the importance of the environment on our wellbeing and activities. To pay attention to how the prevailing values of a place are evident (for example, the youth centre, workshops or sports clubs). To show young people how they can influence the values of a place. To guide young people to realise their opportunities to have influence in different premises.

**SUPPLIES:** paper, pens

**DURATION:** 1–2 h

**ACTIVITY**

The group surveys the wellbeing of their surroundings using the questions below. You can come up with more questions. The research group participants set off by asking the other young people questions. The answers are then collected and presented to everyone.

**1. The centre's physical environment**

The aesthetics and functionality, the audio landscape and the noise levels, the general comfort of the building, garden and the surrounding environment.

- How does the physical environment promote wellbeing?
- What changes need to be done?

**2. Psychological, social and mental environment**

Social atmosphere, loneliness and bullying

- How do you think the adults respond to young people? And each other?
- How well are young people with different cultural backgrounds included in the group?
- What kinds of things/activities have you done with a friend, who has a different cultural background?
- How are equality and the respect of others implemented?
- Is there a lot of talking behind other people's backs?
- Do you feel comfortable in and enjoy this place?
- Is there any bullying in the centre?
- What is the atmosphere like in the centre?
- How easy is it to talk to an adult?

**3. Operating environment**

The centre's rules, the youth centre committee, opportunities to influence, informal activities, flow of information

- What do you think of the centre's rules?
- How well are young people's opinions and ideas taken into consideration?
- Give one practical suggestion for improving young people's abilities to have a say.
- What activities are available for young people?

**ROUNDING OFF**

- What is the overall wellbeing of our centre?
- What can be done together to improve the issues that have been raised?

Young people list the pros and cons of different environments. Based on the comments, the young people can pass on wellbeing initiatives to the youth centre committee and adults.

**ADAPTATION**

The exercise can also be carried out using the futures workshop method. Instructions in Finnish:

[hel.fi/hki/Nk/fi/Osallistu+ja+vaikuta/Avara++Nuorten+osallisuuskeskus/Materiaalit](https://hel.fi/hki/Nk/fi/Osallistu+ja+vaikuta/Avara++Nuorten+osallisuuskeskus/Materiaalit)

## 14. My favourite place

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**GOAL**

To examine your immediate environment from a mental health perspective. To find your favourite place in your immediate environment.

**SUPPLIES:** paper, pens

**DURATION:** 30-45 min

**ACTIVITY**

The young people make a field trip into their home or their immediate environment. Where in your home or your immediate environment do you feel happy and calm? Is there such a place at home? How do I calm down in my favourite place? What are the important factors of my favourite place? Is there room for other people in my safe place or is it only for me?

During the next session, the young people tell each other in small groups about their field trip to their favourite place.

**ROUNDING OFF**

- What things can be found in your home which improve or reduce wellbeing?
- Did the young people find favourite places?
- Was it easy to find a favourite place?
- When do I go to my favourite place?
- What are the benefits of a favourite place?
- Why is it important that everyone has a favourite place?

**ADAPTATION**

Each person chooses their favourite place in the youth centre.



Strengthening  
mental health

## COMPASS OF MENTAL HEALTH



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## Summary

- Mental health comes from genuine happiness and shared feelings and activities with young people.
- The Mental Health Compass brings together the tools for mental health skills to be used with young people.
- The adults work together with the young people. Joint activities, the sense of community and young people's participation are reinforced.
- The resource-based work approach, which strengthens the employees' well-being and young people's mental health can be used on a daily basis, when working with young people.
- The chapter ends with comments from youth work professionals. Youth workers enable, support and walk alongside young people. The tools for mental health skills are also available and used online.
- Happiness and fun times with young people- mental health power!



# 10 POWER OF COOPERATION

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## Mental health is a life skill

We can maintain and strengthen mental health from adolescence, just as we can take care of our physical wellbeing. Ensuring everyday balance and making choices that promote happiness and health are essential skills for mental health. Acknowledging and practising emotional skills increase self-knowledge and strengthen relationships. Practising relationship skills, spending time with friends, taking care of important people and being a reliable friend enforce relationship skills.

Mental health means that we have the ability to talk about issues that concern us and seek support from friends and family when it is needed and have the courage to use professional help, when necessary. The wellness of the mind is life's bedrock when you face hardship and dissapointments or feel sad. Everyone can find coping strategies that are suitable for them, such as exercise, listening to music, meditating or writing. Facing hardship and changes, accepting them and coping with them, provide faith in life.

Young people need, and have the right to receive adult support, safety and encouragement throughout their development. They think about their strenghts and the things they like about themselves; they should be encouraged to take genuine



delight in themselves. On the other hand, there are things and situations, in which young people need to go through many repetitions and have to learn new things, sometimes through trial and error.

Youth workers can also reinforce mental health by examining their own values and appreciations - the values that come into play when working with young people. What things do you currently consider important in life? What do you think should probably be given up so that a new or important person or life experience, for example, could fit in to enrich your life? What future dreams do you have?

Every young person is unique and valuable, just like a pearl in a shell. Young people need support and security for their development journey. They cannot be left alone. Seeking help always indicates strength and courage. Reaching out to and

Every young person is unique and valuable as they are.



stopping to ask how they are doing bolster the self-esteem of young people who may be burdened by worries. As a result, they will gain an experience of being appreciated. Thus, their motivation and desire to try again, sense of self-worth and experience of their life as valuable are reinforced. These encounters leave imprints, which give meaning to life.

Youth workers support young people as they bloom into unique individuals. Work with young people help reinforce their mental health skills; that is the lively, happy and sometimes painfully familiar journey youth workers make every working day.

We have received concluding remarks from four youth work professionals. As youth work professionals, Tiina, Lassi, Katja and Mimmi think about the significance of their work to young people's mental health and how important it is to use a resource-based approach in work - on a daily basis.

## Concluding remarks

### Seize the moment- how are you?

Us adults often think we know better and are more capable. Sometimes, however, we must step out of our comfort zone, and see and do things in a new way. Those of us who work with young people are here for them. Therefore, their view must be considered and they must be heard. Working together with young people is more advantageous, when they have had a chance to be part of the process, to have participated in the planning and implementation. I know from experience that getting an opinion for even a simple matter is not always easy, and it takes perseverance, imagination and patience, but it is worth it in the end. Everything does not always have to go as planned or desired, but you learn from the experience.

Taking an active role as a youth worker and having personal insight play an important role in youth work that promotes mental health. The information does not just fall in front of you; it is important to actively promote your own wellbeing. Youth work offers an excellent environment for dealing with mental health, because we are able to seize the moment and take things up on a short notice, if the situation so requires. We could be the one unbiased adult who is easy to approach for discussions or who may help find solutions to problems or the one to enjoy the happy things in life with. Mental health support is not nuclear physics. The small things are relevant, and sometimes all that is needed is a sincere question: "How are you?"

During this project, I have realised how important it is to think about yourself, your own views, attitudes and values. It is also important to be forgiving, both to yourself and to young people. Ready made answers do not just emerge out of thin air, and we do not need to know everything about anything. You can ask for help, no-one is an expert of everything. Us, youth workers enable, support and walk alongside young people. I hope that this manual will provide others with tools and courage to take up topics and exercises that support mental health.

*Tiina Tokee*

Youth Worker

Community Educator (Bachelor of Humanities)





## Bike of mental health

Children grow into young people, young people into adults and finally adults become elderly people. During this journey, mental health grows with the individual. Sometimes the talk of mental health leaves me feeling contradictory. Mental health or mental wellbeing? I often find myself dwelling on these two terms. Mental health involves the thought of comprehensive wellbeing, so let's go with that.

Present day phenomena challenge even education professionals. They are expected to have a lot of information on it, and the ability to utilise it on a practical level. The wheel does not necessarily need to be reinvented; sometimes it is good to rely on old wisdoms.

I rely on my good old bike, which has a saddle equipped with common sense. The wheels work like a dream, the pedals make me move, and the chain gives me an extra push like a tasty lunch. And when the chains have been greased with physical wellbeing, the speed will bring on an exciting future. When you have looked after and maintained the bike, it is easy to give someone else a ride on it too.

The importance of genuine connection and being fully present can never be over-emphasised. Young people are learners, who observe adults and continuously learn from them. Education professionals should remember the importance of connecting with young people at all times.

Young people may seek support and guidance from an adult in surprising situations. Each encounter is important and can influence the young person later on too, not just on that specific moment. The youth worker's presence in that moment may become significant even years later. It is extremely important to consider young people as equals, whilst remembering your professional role, every day, in every encounter.

Those working with young people should also remember and appreciate multi-professional cooperation with other education professionals. It reinforces their own training and ensures that difficult issues can be safely bounced back and forth with colleagues instead of having to juggle alone with them.

I have had the honour to be part of this project for three years. To my joy, I have met new, amazing people and learned new things about mental health and its importance in our everyday life.

The wellbeing of the mind brings physical health and vice versa. The project has taught me to stop and think about the real significance of our work to young people on grassroot level: how we receive them, talk to them and ensure that we are genuinely present in the moment.

What has made me particularly happy during this project has been the down-to-earth approach to mental health issues. Things have not been made too complex, whilst still successfully triggering new ideas. The topic or the objectives have not

been flying off the handle; the wheels have stayed firmly grounded on the basics of life management. The project has been a bike ride on everyday encounters.

Safeguarding mental health is a community matter and the responsibility of all of us. And we must not forget our own mental health, the regular maintenance of our own bike. My bike is red.

*Lassi Puonti*

Municipality of Sipoo

Activity Centre Risteys



## Wellbeing plan - a shared project

The Child Protection Act requires municipalities and municipal cooperatives to make a wellbeing plan for children and young people with an emphasis on preventative child protection. In Vantaa, this plan has, for the first time, been implemented as a website [www.vantaanhyvis.fi](http://www.vantaanhyvis.fi). The plan is part of the city's welfare work. The HYVIS project consists of five sub-categories. They are good health, more cooperation, strong parenthood, joy from hobbies and heartfelt commitment.

The HYVIS measures must be early support, shared work and concrete deeds on municipal-level with the responsible party. The deeds do not need new resources, and the emphasis is on the new ways to provide services to municipal residents. The youth services are involved as a responsible party and a cooperation partner. The good deeds include group activities for children and young people, as well as, seeing, hearing and listening to the child. As an example, a youth cookery club at a youth centre can be implemented jointly by a school nurse, multicultural associations and parents.

The Vantaa's wellbeing plan, HYVIS, is not just gathering dust in some corner somewhere; it has genuinely brought different players around the same table. The following parties, among others, have participated in preparing the plan: Vantaa Youth Station, the Church, organisations, Culture, Youth and Sports Services, the Environmental and Land-use Services, Early Childhood Education. Children and young people have also provided ideas for good deeds.





HYVIS will be launched for the first time in this format to all employees in 2013. In the autumn, it is time for good deeds and taking a look into the new year. Everyone is responsible for promoting the project in their own division. Decision-makers and senior management have also strongly committed to the work.

It is important to realise that youth mental health cannot be promoted from your own desk. Although young people are at the centre of the activities, their families, everyday environments and other players and services must also be taken into account. When working with young people, it is important to listen to them and give them an opportunity to influence the service they receive.

Supporting mental health must be more than just a pile of exercises. It is essential to think about youth workers' theory-in-use (Meiju Hovi, 2010). Meaning the youth workers' own beliefs and values, which influence the way they carry out their work. I would like to see youth workers embrace an approach that considers young people as more than the object of the activities and takes young people's own resources into account. This material provides good practices and ideas for personal theory-in-uses analysis.

***Katja Günther***

Regional Youth Manager, Bachelor of Social Services  
Vantaa youth services



## Mental health skills online

These days, when you cannot remember something or do not know the answer to a question, you immediately google it. The Internet is always there on your phone or some other device, so information is readily available.

Youth work has operated online for several years now, but a lot still needs to be done to ensure that the online dimension is better recognised as a youth work operating environment. The online platform and the opportunities it offers develop at a fast pace, so youth work methods should also be capable of constant change.

When I used to work as a youth worker in different online environments, I realised that the most personal topics were easier to raise anonymously. The most important thing in personal situations was to achieve a genuine connection and discussion. It was challenging to work by writing, but it also made me realise, how good young people were at describing their emotions and events in writing. The reason may be the fact that I used the Internet for the first time, when I was 17 years old, while the young people chatting with me online had been a lot younger when they got started with it and were used to using it more diversely.

During this project, which has taken mental health skills to online youth work too, I have come to see in practice how important it is to sit down every once in a while in all kinds of youth work and take your own working and operating methods apart and write them down and to question them. In our busy, work-filled life, this method is luxury, but we should all have the right to some everyday luxury.

In the future, we are unlikely to talk about online youth work as a separate operating platform; youth workers will have a strong understanding of online cultures and the opportunities the internet provide for their work. Before that, however, we will all have a lot of work to do together.

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## Feel-good bingo

1. Do you play less than two hours a day on the computer?
2. Do you have breakfast?
3. Do you exercise for an hour and a half each day?
4. Do you tend to share your joys and sorrows with your close friends and family?
5. Do you sleep at least 8 hours per night?
6. Do you spend your free-time with friends other than those online?
7. Do you eat one meal a day with your family?
8. Do you ask your friends from time to time, how they are doing?
9. Do you talk to your parents or another adult, when you have something on your mind?
10. Do you feel awake and alert in the mornings?
11. Are you in the habit of doing things that make others feel happy?
12. Are there things in your life that you consider important?
13. You notice that your friend is being bullied. Do you intervene?
14. Do you have spare time in your days to just do nothing?
15. Do you have any dreams?
16. Have you done any fun things today?




I am resolute.	I am friendly.	I take others into consideration.
I am patient.	I take others into account.	I am funny.
I am sociable.	I help others.	I find it easy to get to know others.
I am shy.	I am a good listener.	I am curious.
I am sporty.	I am flexible.	I have a good sense of humour.
I am tolerant.	I am hard-working.	I am quiet.
I am artistic.	I am helpful.	I look after others.
I am polite.	I am generous.	I am sentimental.
I am tidy.	I am playful.	I am stylish.
I am good at languages.	I am fair.	I am good with my hands.
I am determined.	I am strong.	I have a good memory.
I am fast.	I am slow.	I am colourful.
I am positive.	I am creative.	I am musical.
I am good with technology.	I am a good cook.	I am honest.
I am accurate.	I am responsible.	I am short-tempered.

JOY	ELATION	CERTAINTY	GRATITUDE
LOVE	HOPEFULNESS	LUST	COLDNESS
ANGER	INDIFFERENCE	PAIN	EXPECTATION
SORROW	EXCITEMENT	RESTLESSNESS	MISERY
FEAR	UNCERTAINTY	ANNOYANCE	LIVELINESS
HAPPINESS	TRUST	HOPELESSNESS	DISSATISFACTION
ENVY	PRIDE	GREED	SHYNESS
ANXIETY	PITY	IRRITATION	FREEDOM
SATISFACTION	EMPATHY	SHAME	FRUSTRATION
FATIGUE	DESPAIR	TENDERNESS	FAITH
DISAPPOINTMENT	SUBMISSION	ENTHUSIASM	LONELINESS
PEACEFULNESS	SUSPICION	MELANCHOLY	FORGIVENESS
LOATHING	WISTFULNESS	WORRY	APATHY
DEPRESSION	HORROR	SURPRISE	TIMIDITY
LONGING	COURAGE	COMPASSION	DESIRE
PAIN	SUSPICION	CONTEMPT	PASSION
INFATUATION	RELIEF	FUN	SELF-CONFIDENCE
YEARNING	JEALOUSY	NERVOUSNESS	VEXATION
BITTERNESS	RAGE	CONFUSION	GENTLENESS



SERENITY	POSITIVITY	SYMPATHY	SELFISHNESS
WARMNESS	STABILITY	CURIOSITY	GRUDGE
LAUGHTER	SECURITY	POWERFULNESS	RESPECT
RESTLESSNESS	BOREDOM	LIBERATION	HOTNESS
BOISTEROUSNESS	CALMNESS	STRENGTH	SUFFERING
GUILT	NUISANCE	FRIENDLINESS	LAZINESS
EMPTINESS	FEELING GOOD	GENEROSITY	INTIMACY
AGGRESSION	FANATICISM	HELPLESSNESS	HOLLOWNESS
SADNESS	AGITATION	UNAWARENESS	OPTIMISM
EXUBERANCE	ATTACHMENT	MISFORTUNE	NUMBNESS
CHEERFULNESS	TEDIUM	DISBELIEF	PERFECTION
SMILE	WARMTH	GREYNESS	COOLNESS
WEeping	SORROW	DEVOTEDNESS	POWERLESSNESS
NOSTALGIA	SULKING	AMUSEMENT	CARING
REGRET	PLEASURE	DISTRESS	AMAZEMENT
INTEREST	SUCCESS	ASTONISHMENT	DISCONTENT
PATIENCE	HONESTY	DULLNESS	
HUNGER	BELLIGERence	MALICE	

Source: Tuovila, S. 2005. *Kun on tunteet: suomen kielen tunnesanojen semantiikkaa*. Oulu: University of Oulu.

Constructive emotions



Consuming emotions

Sun

Sat

Fri

Thu

Wed

Tue

Mon

Sun

Sat

Fri

Thu

Wed

Tue

Mon

# Test your listening skills

1. Do you talk more than your discussion partner?
2. Are you aware of your friend's tone of voice when s/he is speaking to you?
3. Do you stop doing other things when someone else is talking to you?
4. Do you listen even when you do not find the person speaking pleasant?
5. If the other person hesitates, do you encourage him/her to continue?
6. Do you give non-verbal encouragement such as nodding your head?
7. Do you let the other person finish speaking without interrupting?
8. Do you ask for clarifications, if you haven't fully understood the other person?
9. Do you think about and consider, what the other person is saying?
10. Do you listen even when the subject is not of interest to you?
11. Do you find it easy to accept another person's emotions?
12. Do you present additional questions effortlessly?
13. Do you find it irrelevant whether the speaker is a man or a woman, old or young?
14. Does the other person's status impact your listening?
15. Do you criticise the speaker's thoughts before s/he has finished?
16. Do you look the speaker in the eye?

*Source: Kauppila, R.A. 2005. Vuorovaikutus- ja sosiaaliset taidot. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.*

My points: \_\_\_\_\_/16 p.

Questions 2-13 and 16 (yes answers) = 1 p.

Questions 1, 14, 15 (no answers) = 1 p.

## TEST YOUR LISTENING SKILLS: WHAT KIND OF A LISTENER ARE YOU?

Count your points and compare with the scoring below. Do you recognise yourself?

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 11–16<br>points | Your listening skills are good. You know how to pay attention to your conversation partner and show interest in what s/he has to say. You should refine your listening skills regularly during everyday conversations, at home too.  |
| 6 –10<br>points | You have got off to a good start in becoming an empathetic listener. Think about ways to improve your listening skills in everyday situations? Do you, for example, always look the speaker in the eye? Do you encourage the other person to tell more?  |
| 0-5<br>points   | It's time to act now! Empathetic listening skills can be learned. You can become an empathetic listener by concentrating on what the other person has to say; presenting additional questions, and showing you have understood by, for example, nodding your head. You should also maintain eye contact with the person you are having the conversation. |

MY SOCIAL SKILLS	I never succeed	I some- times succeed	I usually succeed	I consis- tently succeed
1. I am able to look another person in the eye and smile when greeting.				
2. I look at the person I am speaking to.				
3. I am able to share my attention.				
4. I am able to get other people's attention.				
5. I know how to use gestures.				
6. I understand other people's gestures.				
7. I know how to listen to others.				
8. I tell my opinion on things.				
9. I am able to maintain the conversation topic.				
10. I am able to give and receive information.				
11. I am able to express, what I like and don't like.				
12. I know how to thank in an appropriate situation.				
13. I do not bully others.				
14. I ask for help with my tasks, if I need it.				
15. I am fair towards others.				
16. I apologise when I need to.				
17. I am able to give and receive feedback.				

Source: Kauppila, R. A. 2005. Vuorovaikutus- ja sosiaaliset taidot. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

## A

### **addiction** 184–187

See dependency.

### **anxiety** 173–175

A human emotion, which conveys the need to slow down and acknowledge something that is bothering and may need changing. Anxiety may be momentary or long-term and can trigger physical and psychological symptoms.

### **anorexia** 177

Anorexia is a form of eating disorder which makes the individual feel overweight and see him/herself more overweight than s/he is in reality. Thinking revolves around obsessive dieting, and eating habits can change radically and be life-threatening.

### **attitudes** 208

Attitudes refer to the tendency to respond and react to something or someone in a certain way. Attitudes are often emotionally charged and involve a value interpretation of either a positive or negative object. Attitudes are influenced by emotions, life experiences, ideas, beliefs etc.

### **asceticism** 51

A way of protecting the self from difficult incitements by denying or avoiding pleasures. The ability to manage self and personal desires can be rewarding and taking an ascetic approach to appearances can protect from the interest of others.

### **assertiveness** 106–108

Assertiveness refers to confident interaction, which is one of the core social skills. Assertive people know their boundaries and can stand up for themselves without offending and whilst remaining respectful to others.

## B

### **basic emotions** 76

Joy, anger, sorrow, fear, surprise and hatred, are common to all cultures, and they are expressed around the world with similar facial expressions.

### **bulimia** 177

Bulimia is a binge-eating disorder, which involves gorging on food followed by vomiting. Bulimia can be difficult to detect, because there are only some external symptoms. A young person's emotional life is at the basis of the disorder, and the disorder in itself increases the feelings of guilt and self-hate as well as depression.

### **bullying** 127–129

A form of violence that aims to inflict intentional harm and cause distress to another person. Bullying can be physical, verbal or indirect, for example, rejection or exclusion from a group.

## C

### **coping strategies** 150

Various individual methods for coping with difficult events and emotions. The more coping strategies an individual has, the stronger the coping mechanism is.

### **crisis** 145–156

A change or turning point which puts a person in a new situation. The crisis may be a developmental crisis, life crisis and traumatic crisis.

### **crisis plan** 156

An action plan that aims to speed up and streamline operations in a traumatic crisis. It also increases the sense of security between different employees and sectors.

### **cutting** 182

a form of self-destructive behaviour to manage anxiety and undetermined feelings of unhappiness.

## D

### **dependency** 184–187

Almost any substance or activity used to achieve quick satisfaction and pleasure can become addictive. Addiction is strongly connected to neurotransmitters and their neural processes. The most common addictive substances or activities are alcohol, tobacco, eating, exercising, sex or gaming.

### **depression** 171–173

A mechanism, which protects the mind from excessive strain. Occasional melancholy is normal and should not be classified as an illness. Depression is a difficult and, at its worst, life-threatening illness.

### **development crisis** 145, 146

Natural life turning points when old life is left behind to move towards new things. A development crisis can be brought on by moving away from home, getting married or retiring.

### **drama addiction** 50–51

Self-protection against internal incentives. When a young person does not have the means to deal with conflicting thoughts and emotions, they might come out as dramatic and challenging behaviour against the surrounding environment.

## E

### **eating disorder** 175–178

An eating disorder is a physical and mental illness, which can be caused by the need to control one's self through eating. Eating can also be a way of managing challenging emotions, such as grief or loneliness. The best-known eating disorders are anorexia and bulimia.

### **empathy** 95, 103–105

Empathy refers to the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes and understand their emotions and circumstances. An empathetic person is able to identify with another person's experiences.

### **emotional skills** 15, 75–83

Emotional skills refer to the ability to recognise, identify, name and constructively express emotions. Emotional skills help in life, and are practised throughout life. Listening to and facing emotions improve self-knowledge. Emotional skills help people understand one another, and they play an important role in interaction.

### **emotional intelligence** 79

The ability to recognise and express both personal and another person's emotions. It means the use of emotions to aid problem

solving and decision-making. An emotionally intelligent person recognises, accepts and is able to regulate his/her emotions and understands that emotions are not the same thing as the truth about the surrounding world.

#### **emotional self-regulation** 77

Emotional self-regulation refers to the ability to manage emotions and control behaviour, as well as, to the production and strengthening of useful emotions.

## **G**

#### **grief** 82–83, 149–155

A strong and long-term feeling of malaise, which can be triggered by a loss, unpleasant event or a state of mind. Grief can also be a reaction to the risk of loss. It is letting go and giving up. Grieving and its duration are unique.

#### **grouping** 18–19, 129

Different practical exercises can be used to improve group safety and security.

## **I**

#### **identity** 29

The physical, mental and social image of self. Experience of self in relation to other people, the society, culture, environment and community, and the outlook on values and religious and social issues.

## **L**

#### **learning difficulties** 132–133

Factors that make learning new things more difficult. These may include neurological or cognitive factors, which manifest themselves as, for example, concentration or reading difficulties. The causes can also be psychological or social, for example, the lack of motivation or the fear of attending school due to, for example, bullying.

#### **life crisis** 145, 146

A life crisis can be triggered by long-term, burdensome circumstances, such as unemployment, a divorce process or a long-term illness.

## **M**

#### **mental health** 12–15, 29–31, 225

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. Mental health involves the ability to take care of yourself and the willingness to participate in the decision-making concerning your life.

#### **mood** 76

Mood is a state that is longer term and more dominant than individual emotions, and which influences the way emotions are experienced and stimuli interpreted. Cheeriness, melancholy, irritability and satisfaction are examples of different moods.

#### **morals** 204

Morals refer to the perception of right and wrong, good and bad, and what is considered suitable and unsuitable behaviour. Morals develop in stages as thinking develops and changes.

## **O**

#### **online bullying** 129–130

Forms of online bullying include name-calling, jeering, slandering, spreading gossip, identity theft and image-manipulation and distribution. Online bullying is as harmful to the victim as other forms of bullying.

#### **orthorexia** 177

Orthorexia is an atypical eating disorder, which has not been officially diagnosed as a disorder. A person suffering from orthorexia aims to eat as healthily as possible, following strict “rules”. Life and thoughts revolve around food-related topics.

## **R**

#### **regression** 49–50

Part of natural development. When a young person lacks the mental capacity to manage the pressures of early puberty, s/he relies on childhood methods to manage excitement and restlessness.

## **P**

#### **panic disorder** 173–175

One type of anxiety disorder, which consists of occasional panic attacks without an apparent cause. A panic attack involves strong physical symptoms, as well as, the fear of death or loss of control.

#### **personality** 60

Personality refers to a person's entire essence: all physical, social, mental and spiritual sides of the being. Personality develops in interaction between an individual's temperament and the environment, particularly in the interaction between a child and parents. Personality can change and develop throughout life.

#### **prejudice** 208–209

Prejudices can be called assumptions before gaining reliable information. Prejudices often steer people's information processing, which may distort observations of things that actually occur.

#### **puberty** 47, 52

Puberty refers to biological maturation which leads to biological maturity and the ability to produce offspring. Puberty lasts approx. 2–5 years, and there is significant variation between individuals.

## **S**

#### **safety net** 125

A safety net consists of important people at home, school, work and free-time activities, who can be relied on when times are hard and who are there to share successes and joy. A safety net changes throughout life.

#### **self-destructiveness** 179–183

Self-destructiveness refers to behaviour, which involves self-injury or taking life-threatening risks. Self-destructive behaviour includes cutting, risk behaviour in traffic or alcohol and drug abuse. At its worst, self-destructive behaviour can manifest itself as self-destructive thoughts or suicide attempts.

#### **self-confidence** 29, 31, 59, 60

The emotional and cognitive view and assessment of self. It includes an emotional and conscious dimension. Self-confidence and self-knowledge are very



similar concepts, which influence each other. Good self-confidence protects from the hardships of life and helps you strive for things that you value.

#### **social skills** 100–108

Skills needed in interaction with others, which support the establishment and maintenance of relationships. Social skills are needed for social encounters, discussions, settling disputes, joining a new group, decision-making and in cooperation.

#### **social emotions** 77

Social emotions help us communicate to others about needs and issues behind emotions. Emotions are interactive messages, which we express, consciously or subconsciously, and others respond to them. Social emotions include caring, love, longing, shame, guilt, jealousy and envy. Family and cultural background play an important role in, how individuals learn to deal with and express these emotions.

#### **social anxiety** 173–175

A form of anxiety disorder, which manifests itself as a fear of social interaction and means that the individual is likely to avoid social situations. Meeting new people or being watched or criticised by others may trigger the fear.

#### **splitting** 50

A method of self-protection which means absoluteness and black-and-white thinking. Young people struggle to see multiple sides to things and, instead, are likely to interpret people simply as good or bad.

#### **stereotypes** 208

Stereotyping refers to generalisations of a certain group or an individual as a member of the group. Stereotypes often involve strong and unfounded attitudes and prejudices.

#### **stigma** 209

Stigma refers to labelling experienced by a person or a group caused by unfair moral conclusions. Labelling is closely related to the concepts of discrimination and social exclusion.

#### **stress** 130, 131

A state that triggers changes in the body. Stress can have temporary positive effects as well, but in the long term, it is a threat to general health.

## **T**

#### **temperament** 60

Temperament refers to individuals' unique way of reacting to and behaving in certain situations. Temperament has a significant biological and inherited element, which regulates particularly early childhood behavioural models. You can learn to acknowledge and manage your temperament later in life; thus, it may gain different manifestations.

#### **trauma** 145, 148

Trauma is used as a term, when the psychological pain is overwhelming and the recovery and reactions do not take their course. The event or parts of it become fixated in the body and mind and can cause both physical and mental symptoms.

#### **traumatic crisis** 145, 147–149

Triggered by an event, e.g. an accident, which is unexpected, powerful and causes suffering. If events and personal reactions cannot be properly controlled, an individual is left feeling deep insecurity. It is important to seek help and support in an event of a traumatic crisis.

## **V**

#### **values** 201–206

Values reflect what people see as good and important in their life. They influence people's choices and actions, sometimes subconsciously.

## **Y**

#### **youth** 47–49

Youth refers to the joint effect of biological, cognitive and social changes, which may stand out as the storming stage. The environment and cultural boundaries influence the expression and understanding of adolescence.