somatic wilderness narrative

TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEYS



TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEYS

The Guidebook: transforming practical experiences into accessible resources

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Table of Contents

01 Introduction

02 Information about the organisations

03 Standards section

04 Rationale for Modalities

05 Tools

06 Lessons Learned

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Martial arts as a somatic therapeutic practice

1. Emotional Regulation
2. Mindful Awareness of Bodily Feelings
3. Working with Unpleasant Feelings through Somatic Practice
4. Presence and Non-Identifiction
5. Failing and Being Resilient
6. Assertiveness
7. Motivation
8. Mindfulness Practices
9. Connection with Self, Other People and Nature through the body and movement
10. Can I name what I actually feel?
11. Mindful Awareness of Bodily Feelings
12. Lotus Breath Mindful Breathing
13. Spiritual Resource
14. Mindfulness Practices: Connecting to nature
15. Mindfulness: Centering
16. Mindfulness: Positive Affirmations
17. Working with unpleasant feelings
18. Standing Ground
19. Body Awareness
20. Working with Anger
21. Free Exploration Based on Previous Activities
22. Play and Play-Fight
23. Breath awareness and setting boundaries
24. Falling down



Wilderness therapy in practice

25. Introduction to Wilderness Therapy – Grounding, Safety & Group Awareness
26. Trust, Play & Connection.
27. Support, Boundaries & Inner Resources
28. Into the wild - the start of the expedition
29. River of love
30. Closer
31. In my circle
32. Closing ceremony
33. Who were you before the loss?
34. Emotions 1
35. Emotions 2
36. Reactions to Grief 1
37. Reactions to Grief 2
38. Who was the person you lost?
39. Group Dynamics & Safety
40. Reactions to Illness
41. Getting to Know Each Other
42. First Aid
43. Stories with Meaning – Storytelling Exercise
44. Trees
45. Mandala
46. Tent Building
47. The Line of Fears
48. The Portal

Narrative approaches



49. "The Magical Day"
50. Something of value
51. The Personal achievements Shield
52. Tree of Life and Storms of Life
53. "The Intentional identity" – map of narrative practice
54. Re-membering conversations map
55. Statement of Position Map 1
56. Statement of Position Map 2
57. My Special Place
58. My Invisible String
59. Becoming the Author of my Story
60. Forum Theatre - Exploring Our Stories Together
61. Meeting my inner voice
62. Talking to Grief through Poetry & Writing
63. Storytelling approach to grief
64. Our Collective Story
65. Stories, Movement & Nature – Building the Foundation
66. Trust, Play & Connection–Goal Balance in Nature
67. Support, Boundaries & Inner Resources
68. Conversations and Relationships That Continue to Shape Us
69. "Special Day" Exercise and Exploring Personal Values
70. Stories, Movement & Nature – Maps, Roles and Trust
71. Definitional Ceremonies – Witnessing Preferred Stories
72. Celebrating Preferred Stories – Closure and Transition

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Introduction: What is the project about?

‘Transformative Journeys: Nurturing Young People Facing Challenges through Creative Approaches’...

is a two-year European cooperation project funded through the Erasmus+ Programme, under KA220-YOU – Cooperation Partnerships in Youth. Running from November 2024 until October 2026, the project brings together four organisations from Malta, Poland, and Romania that share a commitment to improving the well-being, inclusion, and opportunities of young people facing life challenges.

The project was created in response to an increasing need for innovative and holistic ways of supporting young people who may be experiencing trauma, grief, mental health difficulties, disability, illness, social exclusion, or other personal and social obstacles. Many young people today face pressures that can affect their confidence, relationships, motivation, and sense of belonging. Traditional support systems are valuable, but they are not always enough on their own. ‘Transformative Journeys’



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therefore explores new ways of engaging young people through practical, experiential, and relationship-based methods that speak to the whole person; mind, body, emotions, and environment.

At the heart of the project is the belief that every young person has strengths, potential, and the capacity to grow when given the right support. The project focuses on empowering youth workers, educators, therapists, and other professionals with new tools and approaches so they can better accompany young people through difficult experiences and help them build resilience.

A partnership of complementary expertise
The consortium combines different areas of specialisation:

- Karl Vella Foundation (Malta) – coordinator of the project, with strong experience supporting families and young people dealing with illness, grief, and emotional challenges.
- Prisms (Malta) – specialists in youth work, non-formal education, inclusion, and personal development.
- Fundacja Imago (Poland) – experts in wilderness therapy, outdoor learning, and support for people with fewer opportunities.
- Asociatia Psiterra (Romania) – professionals in narrative therapy, training, and community psychology.

By combining these strengths, the partnership is able to offer a rich and diverse learning experience while creating practical tools that can be used across Europe.

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Main themes of the project

'Transformative Journeys' is centred around three creative approaches:

01

Martial arts as a somatic therapeutic practice:

Movement-based approaches can help young people reconnect with their bodies, manage emotions, develop self-discipline, improve focus, and increase confidence. Through adapted martial arts activities, participants can learn emotional regulation and healthy self-expression.

02

Wilderness therapy in practice:

Nature can be a powerful setting for healing, reflection, teamwork, and growth. Outdoor experiences encourage resilience, problem-solving, trust-building, and a sense of achievement while also supporting mental well-being.

03

Narrative approaches:

Stories shape how people see themselves and their future. Narrative methods help young people explore their identities, recognise strengths, challenge limiting beliefs, and re-author their life stories in more hopeful and empowering ways.

What activities took place?

Throughout the project, professionals from the partner organisations took part in specialised train-the-trainer activities in each of the three themes. These learning experiences strengthened their skills and confidence in using the methods with young people.

Following the training phase, the professionals designed and delivered 108 workshops for young participants across the partner countries. These sessions focused on personal development, emotional well-being, communication, resilience, belonging, and life skills.

From these experiences, 72 tested and reviewed workshops were selected and compiled into this guidebook so that other organisations, youth workers, schools, and practitioners could benefit from the learning generated by the project. A final conference and dissemination activities also helped share the outcomes more widely.

What is Erasmus+?

Erasmus+ is the European Union's programme supporting education, training, youth, and sport across Europe. It provides opportunities for organisations and individuals to learn, cooperate, exchange good practices, innovate, and build stronger communities.

Within the youth field, Erasmus+ promotes:

- inclusion and diversity
- active participation of young people
- quality youth work
- innovation in learning methods
- international cooperation
- social cohesion and European values

Transformative Journeys reflects these priorities by supporting young people with fewer opportunities, strengthening youth work practice, and creating innovative tools that can be used beyond the lifetime of the project.

Why this guidebook matters?

This guidebook is one of the key results of the project. It transforms practical experience into accessible resources that others can replicate and adapt. Rather than remaining only within the partner organisations, the knowledge developed through 'Transformative Journeys' is being shared so that more young people across Europe can benefit.
Ultimately, the project is about hope, growth, and connection. It recognises that challenges are part of many young people's journeys, but with creativity, support, and meaningful relationships, transformation is possible.



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Information about the organisations

About KVF (Karl Vella Foundation)

KVF is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing free psychological, educational and emotional support to families facing serious illness or bereavement. It offers a safe and compassionate environment where children, patients, caregivers, and family members can find comfort, share their experiences, and connect with others who understand their challenges. Each family undergoes a thorough initial assessment to ensure that support services are tailored to their specific needs.

One of KVF's core programs is **The Wellness Pod**, a long-running group therapy service for children aged 5 to 17 who are coping with the illness or loss of a close family member. Through guided group sessions, children are supported in expressing emotions, building resilience, and developing healthy coping strategies.

Another key initiative, **Embrace**, supports young patients with life-limiting conditions, serious chronic illnesses, or those receiving palliative care, whether locally or abroad. The programme focuses on fostering resilience, a sense of belonging, and practical skills to help children navigate difficult circumstances. Ongoing assessments and regular reviews involve both the child and their guardians to monitor progress and adjust support as needed.

KVF also provides free academic assistance to registered children through one-on-one or small group sessions.

This service helps children who may have fallen behind in school due to medical treatment or family hardship regain confidence and stay on track with their education.

The **Because You Matter** initiative extends psycho-emotional support to patients, donors, and caregivers traveling abroad for medical treatment, as well as to family members who remain at home. Support includes scheduled phone check-ins, individual therapy, and crisis intervention delivered by mental health professionals.

In collaboration with the Franciscan Conventual Friars, **Life Beyond Loss** offers grief therapy groups for individuals mourning the loss of a partner, child, or loved one. Additionally, the **Lifeloom Training Hub**, in collaboration with the European Institute for Professional Development, provides training for professionals in psychosocial and educational fields, as well as for parents, companies, and the wider community.

Through its diverse services, KVF promotes healing, resilience, and hope for families navigating some of life's most difficult moments.

Prisms

Prisms was an important partner in the Transformative Journeys project because of its



strong experience in youth work, inclusion, and innovative non-formal education. Established in 2008, Prisms was created to respond to the needs of young people and those who work with them. Since then, the organisation has focused on empowering people with the skills, tools, values, and opportunities needed for personal growth and active participation in society.

A key strength Prisms brought to the partnership was its direct work with young people facing barriers and challenges. The organisation supports young people aged 13 to 35, with a particular focus on autistic young people, young people with intellectual disabilities, and those experiencing social or emotional difficulties. Through initiatives such as Connect, Bliss, Spectrum Squad and CAP Teens Youth Centre, Prisms has created safe spaces where young people can build confidence, develop friendships, learn life skills, and feel a sense of belonging. This practical experience ensured that the project remained connected to the real needs of young people.

Prisms was also highly valuable because of its person-centred approach. The organisation believes in meeting young people where they are, understanding their life context, and building trusting relationships that support growth. This matched the aims of Transformative Journeys, which focused on resilience, emotional well-being, empowerment, and inclusion.

Another important contribution was Prisms' expertise in Erasmus+ projects and European cooperation. Over the years, the organisation has coordinated and participated in many projects linked to inclusion, autism, well-being, and youth participation. This experience helped the partnership deliver quality activities, workshops, and results, while ensuring effective teamwork and strong dissemination of outcomes.

Prisms also brought a unique multidisciplinary perspective. Several staff members combine backgrounds in youth work and psychotherapy. This was especially relevant for a project exploring holistic approaches such as wilderness therapy, somatic methods, and narrative practices. Their knowledge helped ensure that activities were meaningful, supportive, and adapted to young people's needs.

Imago Foundation

The Imago Foundation is a non-governmental organisation whose aim is to bring about real social change. We support young unemployed people, micro-entrepreneurs, migrants, but above all we focus on supporting people with special needs. We are also involved in the development of social tourism and the creation of innovative support systems for teenagers and young adults with disabilities. We specialise in providing personal assistance and organising active holiday stays through the use of nature-based therapies – adventure therapy and nature therapy.

Since 2020, we have been implementing projects focused on increasing the accessibility of outdoor activities for people with disabilities, such as expeditions to the scenic regions of Lower Silesia. Through international cooperation, our team has developed deep expertise in designing therapeutic programs centered on nature. We have successfully developed and implemented Adventure and Wilderness Therapy programs specifically tailored for people with disabilities.

In October 2021, we launched "BASE-CAMP" (BAZA) in Wrocław—the first Outdoor Activity and Adventure Therapy Center for people with disabilities. At "BASE-CAMP", we organize inclusive 1- and multi-day nature expeditions that integrate: hiking, therapeutic climbing (both indoor and rock climbing), kayaking, rafting, bushcraft, cycling and winter survival.

Beyond direct support, we provide professional Adventure and Wilderness Therapy training for institutions, mountain guides, and NGOs working with people with special needs. To date, we have trained approximately 100 professionals in these methods, and this number continues to grow.

We believe that direct contact with nature and the experience of real-world challenges allow individuals to overcome personal limitations, acquire new competencies, and gain profound self-awareness through social interaction.

Psiterra

Psiterra Association relies on a solid 19 years of professional training in narrative therapy (starting with the first workshop attended in Iasi, in 2005, offered by Michael White, from Australia and continuing with the 11 years long specialization in narrative therapy training and supervision offered by INT UK – Institute of Narrative Therapy, UK – by Hugh Fox, as trainer and supervisor (over 280 hours of initial and advanced training). In parralel Psiterra therapists offered clinical support to people in crisis, trauma, mourning or bereavement, initiated a number of projects (Grundtwig, Erasmus+, locally funded Iasi City grants, etc) in which we offered both direct services to people in need of psychological services and we trained professionals in narrative approaches to complement their existing training.

Previous relevant training using narrative approaches supported school counselors of Iasi County, nurses and medical doctors (including family practitioners, surgeons, oncolog and dialysis experts, etc), penitentiary officers and re-integration staff at Iasi Penitentiary, social workers from social services and state child protection services in Iasi County, narrative approaches were employed with children suffering from cancer and their family members and staff at the Children's hospital of Iasi, etc.

Psiterra interventions doubled with evidence-based evaluation research which was presented in academic, professional conferences and was disseminated in highly reputed scientific academic articles and book chapters in Romania and abroad.

Standards section

Physical and emotional safety and preparation

When using the activities in this guidebook, physical and emotional safety should always be a central priority. Many of the methods included in this resource involve reflection, movement, group interaction, outdoor experiences, or personal storytelling. These approaches can be highly valuable and empowering, but they also require thoughtful preparation and responsible facilitation. The aim should always be to create environments where participants feel safe, respected, included, and supported.

Know your participants

Before delivering any activity, take time to understand the group you are working with. Consider participants' ages, abilities, communication styles, cultural backgrounds, previous experiences, and any support needs. Some young people may have experienced trauma, anxiety, loss, exclusion, or other challenges that influence how they engage.

Where appropriate, communicate with parents, caregivers, teachers, or support staff to better understand any needs that should be considered. Adapt activities to ensure everyone can participate meaningfully and safely.

Prepare participants in advance

Provide clear information before the session. Explain the purpose of the activity, what participants can expect, how long it will last, what they may need to bring, and whether movement, discussion, or outdoor elements are involved. Predictability can reduce anxiety and help participants feel more comfortable.

Participation should be based on informed choice. Young people should know they can ask questions, request adjustments, or step back from an activity if needed.

Create a safe group environment

At the beginning of sessions, establish group agreements together. These may include respect, confidentiality, listening without judgement, voluntary sharing, kindness, and supporting one another. A positive group culture helps participants feel secure and more willing to engage.

Physical safety

Check that the environment is suitable for the planned activity. Ensure spaces are accessible, hazard-free, and appropriate for movement or discussion. If working outdoors, consider weather, terrain, hydration, transport, first aid, and emergency procedures.

Adjust physical activities according to participants' fitness levels, mobility, and comfort. Avoid pushing participants beyond safe limits.

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Emotional safety

Some exercises may bring up emotions or personal memories. Never force disclosure or participation in reflective tasks. Sharing should always be optional, and participants should be free to pass, pause, or observe.

Pay attention to signs of distress such as withdrawal, agitation, or overwhelm. Offer breaks, grounding techniques, quieter spaces, or one-to-one support when needed. Know your referral pathways if additional support is required.

Competent facilitation

Whenever possible, activities should be led by trained youth workers, educators, therapists, or facilitators with relevant experience. Know your limits as a practitioner and seek specialist support when working with higher-risk needs.

Reflect and review

After each session, reflect on what worked well, what challenges emerged, and whether any participant may need follow-up support. Gathering feedback helps improve future delivery.

General considerations

- As with any other complementary therapy, these practices work best when merged with verbal psychotherapy especially when working with trauma.
- Avoid these practices with people who have mental health illness such as clinical depression; psychosis, schizophrenia or other serious conditions/disorders.
- If you would like to share these practices with your clients, practice them and get comfortable yourself first.
- When in doubt how to use these practices, always seek professional guidance.

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Rationale for Modalities

Martial arts as a somatic therapeutic practice

Martial arts as a somatic therapeutic practice



1 Emotional Regulation
2 Mindful Awareness of Bodily Feelings
3 Working with Unpleasant Feelings through Somatic Practice
4 Presence and Non-Identifiction
5 Failing and Being Resilient
6 Assertiveness
7 Motivation
8 Mindfulness Practices
9 Connection with Self, Other People and Nature through the body and movement
10 Can I name what I actually feel?
11 Mindful Awareness of Bodily Feelings
12 Lotus Breath Mindful Breathing
13 Spiritual Resource
14 Mindfulness Practices: Connecting to nature
15 Mindfulness: Centering
16 Mindfulness: Positive Affirmations
17 Working with unpleasant feelings
18 Standing Ground
19 Body Awareness
20 Working with Anger
21 Free Exploration Based on Previous Activities
22 Play and Play-Fight
23 Breath awareness and setting boundaries
24 Falling Down

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Introduction

Somatic practices involve a variety of techniques and exercises that focus on internal physical perception and lived bodily experience. These approaches are based on the understanding that the mind and body are not separate entities but form a unified system in which each influences the other in profound ways. Within this framework, the body is perceived as a resource for personal growth and transformation. Somatic practices encourage individuals to explore their internal sensations by tuning into bodily signals, noticing areas of tension or discomfort, and using techniques such as breathwork, mindfulness, and martial arts to release blockages and restore balance.

Trauma-Focused Interventions

Somatic practices are widely used in therapy, coaching, and psychoeducational settings to support individuals in processing thoughts and expressing emotions. Because the connection between body and mind is bidirectional, emotions, fearful thoughts, and traumatic experiences can manifest as stored memories within the body. Somatic work therefore aims to "use the body to heal the body," often through complete and expressive movement in a safe and supportive space. Individuals frequently report increased emotional safety, confidence, and spontaneity following engagement in these practices.

Martial Arts and the Cognitive Triangle

When integrated with martial arts, somatic work aligns closely with the cognitive triangle underlying cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). CBT emphasizes the dynamic relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors: thoughts influence emotions, emotions shape actions, and actions in turn reinforce thoughts. Without intervention, this cycle repeats. Through martial arts as a somatic approach, participants learn to connect with their bodies, surface emotions related to challenging experiences, and gain control over impulses and movement. Practices may include exploring various stances, breathwork, focusing on inner energy, coordinating hand and leg movements, and channeling energy from the inside outward while using the ground as a stabilizing resource.

From this perspective, dynamic bodily movement serves as an antidote to the stillness often stored in a traumatized body. Emphasis is placed on cultivating self-awareness, self-regulation,

freedom of expression, and resilience. Resilience involves learnable behaviors, thoughts, and actions, including building connections, fostering wellness, finding purpose, and embracing adaptive thinking patterns.

These practices also draw on the yin–yang principle described in the *Tao Te Ching*, helping to frame martial arts as an experience of what Jung termed a "psychoid reality," facilitating communication between the Ego and the Self and supporting the energetic flow between mind and body. In martial arts, the yin–yang dynamic illustrates how resistance and struggle can reinforce fixation, whereas surrender and fluid engagement create expansiveness and allow space to become a source of support.

Spiritual Dimensions

Somatic martial arts practices grounded in Kung Fu principles can open pathways for spiritual exploration. Japanese scholar and martial artist Tokitsu suggests that combat practice enhances self-awareness through introspection and fundamental questioning, leading to the reorganization of personality in pursuit of self-development. Similarly, Rev. Dr. William Wong argues that martial arts cultivate and circulate qi energy, enabling the mind to access expanded states of awareness. Developing bodily awareness in martial arts also nurtures human values inherent in one's authentic nature.

Conclusion

Like psychotherapy, internal martial arts can help loosen attachment to rigid thought patterns and perceived identity, allowing for greater psychological freedom. Encountering personal resistance reveals vulnerability and authenticity, inviting openness to new perspectives. Practices often integrated with Kung Fu include Qi Gong, progressive relaxation, internal focusing meditation, body scanning, and loving-kindness meditation.

This somatic approach highlights the power of self-compassion as a pathway to self-discovery and inner growth, particularly in a world often marked by pain. It supports practitioners in developing deeper understanding and meaning in their lived experience.



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Tools

Emotional Regulation



To regulate emotions in our body



Click on the ***Video to follow for instructions***



60 minutes



8 - 10 people

Description of the workshop/session:

1

Introduction:
Before going to this part, it's important to keep the three components of mindfulness in our mind.
Intention – what do I want from this exercise?
Awareness – bring your full attention to what is happening now in the body
Attitude – practice with openness, compassion and optimism

Step 1: Invite the participants to breath from standing position, inhaling from the nose and exhaling from the mouth slowly.

Step 2: Shift the position to a horse stance. Breathing in while pulling the hands inwards and breathing out while pushing the hands outwards slowly.

Step 3: Shift the position to a fighting stance looking at the right hand side – breath in while pulling your hands inward and breath out while pushing your hands outward. Repeat the same movement on the left hand side.

Step 4: Sharing & Processing – create a discussion on what helps us to regulate our emotions. Help the participants express and process the practice that they have just experienced.



Mindful Awareness of Bodily Feelings



To identify and regulate emotions in our body



Click on the ***Video to follow for instructions***



60 minutes



8 - 10 people

Description of the workshop/session:

Introduction:
Before going to this part, it's important to keep the three components of mindfulness in our mind.
Intention – what do I want from this exercise?
Awareness – bring your full attention to what is happening now in the body
Attitude – practice with openness, compassion and optimism

Step 1: Invite the participants to do a body scan, putting their attention on each part of their body.

Step 2: Invite the participants to locate any emotions in their body and acknowledge them.

Step 3: Follow the 'form' in the video to help participants regulate any emotions in their body. The video should be followed with particular attention to the text and part of the video inviting the participants to 'follow the movement'.

Step 4: Sharing & Processing – create a discussion on how emotions are felt and identified in the body. Explore with the participants how our thoughts effect our feelings and our behaviour. Help the participants express and process the practice that they have just experienced.

Notes for facilitator:
The facilitators are urged to familiarize themselves with the video so that they can provide practical tips and examples to the participants.

Working with Unpleasant Feelings through Somatic Practice



To explore how to work with unpleasant feelings using body-based mindfulness techniques and dynamic movement exercises that help express, regulate, and integrate emotional experiences.



90 to 120 minutes



8 - 10 people



Click on the ***Video to follow for instructions***

Description of the workshop/session:

3

Introduction:
Before starting, review the three components of mindfulness:

Intention – What do I want from this experience?
Awareness – Pay attention to the present moment, especially bodily sensations.
Attitude – Practice with openness, compassion, and curiosity.

Part 1: Somatic Grounding & Breath Awareness

1. Breathing Exercise: Guide participants through gentle, mindful breathing to ground themselves and prepare for deeper emotional work.
2. Centering Technique:(As shown in the video) Use visualization or simple movement to bring awareness to the body's center.

Part 2: Movement Exploration & Emotional Release

1. Horse Stance Activation
- Teach participants how to stay grounded in a strong stance.
- Introduce hand strikes as a way to release tension and emotion.
- Progress to fighting stance and introduce kick strikes.

2. Target-Based Practice
- Use target pads and/or punching bags to allow for deeper, more embodied release.
- Emphasize retaining agency while engaging in strong movements.

3. Free Body Movement
- Allow for self-directed movement flow.



- Encourage participants to listen to what the body wants to express or release.

Part 3: Regulation & Reflection

1. Standing Meditation or Breathing
   - Bring participants back to stillness with a guided standing or seated meditation.
   - Reconnect to breath and bodily sensations.

2. Sharing & Processing Circle
   - Facilitate an open discussion around what came up during the practice.
   - Explore how unpleasant feelings were experienced, expressed, and shifted.
   - Discuss resources for self-regulation: e.g., breathwork, support systems, somatic tools, emotional literacy.

Notes for facilitator:

1. The facilitators are urged to familiarize themselves with the instructional video so that they can provide practical tips and examples to the participants.

2. Tailor intensity based on group readiness. Begin with grounding and build toward emotional expression.

3. Provide opt-out options during high-intensity practices.

4. Include time buffers between sections to allow emotional integration.



Presence and Non-Identifiction



To help participants enhance self-awareness, regulate emotions, and develop openness in adjusting to new life experiences by anchoring themselves in the present moment through mindful movement and body-based techniques.



90 minutes



8 - 10 people



Click on the ***Video to follow for instructions***

Description of the workshop/session:

4

1. Introduction: Grounding in Mindfulness
Introduce the intention of the session:

- To tune into the body, be fully present, and release limiting beliefs or labels.
- Emphasize the mind-body connection as a tool for emotional clarity and adjustment.

2. Part 1: Emotional Regulation Warm-up
Emotional Regulation Exercise
- Lead the practice as demonstrated in the video resource.
- Invite students to observe their internal state before and after.

3. Part 2: Structured Somatic Practice
Fighting Stance & Basic Movements

- Teach foundational blocks, strikes, pushes, and pulls.
- Emphasize intention behind each movement.
- Partner Practice
- Participants pair up to practice blocks and response techniques.
- Build mutual awareness and presence through responsive interaction.

4. Part 3: Flow and Embodied Presence
Free-flow Movement

- Guide participants in integrating blocks, strikes, and stances into intuitive, flowing movement.
- Encourage body listening, spontaneity, and expression.



5. Part 4: Breathing & Reflection

Breathing Meditation

- Transition into stillness to integrate the somatic experience.
- Ground awareness back into the breath and body.
- Sharing & Processing Circle
- Discuss themes such as: How do I stay in the present moment?, What beliefs or labels do I need to let go of? and Where can I invite more openness or adaptability in my life?
- Support expression of experiences through reflective dialogue.

Notes for facilitators:

1. The facilitators are urged to familiarize themselves with the instructional video so that they can provide practical tips and examples to the participants.
2. Suitable for newcomers or returning participants.
3. Emphasize emotional safety and give space for personal boundaries during partner work.





Failing and Being Resilient



To provide participants with practical tools to deal with failure, adversity, and setbacks, using body-based exercises that promote emotional regulation, physical resilience, and mental adaptability.



90 minutes



8 - 10 people



Click on the ***Video to follow for instructions***

Description of the workshop/session:

5

Part 1: Grounding & Emotional Regulation
Emotional Regulation Exercise

- Begin with a somatic regulation technique as shown in the video.
- Encourage participants to notice their emotional baseline and set an intention for the session.

Part 2: Falling, Rolling & Reclaiming Control
Basic Ground Rolls

- Demonstrate and practice safe falling and rolling techniques.
- Emphasize how to fall without injury and rise with control.
- Partner Exercise – Push & Recover; One partner gently pushes the other to the ground.
The participant practices rolling and getting up without allowing the partner to maintain control.
- Partner Ground Defense: Escape Techniques; Participants take turns being on the ground while the partner stands or is on top.
- Teach side kicks, front kicks, and basic ground recovery to escape and regain autonomy.

Part 3: Integration & Reflection
Breathing Meditation

- Guide participants in a calming breath-based meditation to integrate physical and emotional learning.
- Sharing & Processing Circle
- Create a dialogue around: What does failure feel like?, How did the body respond to falling and getting up?, How can we build resistance by learning to get back up—literally and figuratively?



- Highlight the idea that while we can't always control life, we can choose how we respond and recover.

Notes for facilitators:

1. The facilitators are urged to familiarize themselves with the instructional video so that they can provide practical tips and examples to the participants.
2. Ensure emotional and physical safety, especially during partner work.
3. Use mats or padded flooring when possible.
4. Emphasize mutual respect and control in physical interactions.







Assertiveness



1. To learn how to react to an emotion without being aggressive
2. To enhance healthy communication
3. To learn the benefits of being assertiveness and the danger of not being assertive.



50 minutes



8 - 10 people



Click on the ***Video to follow for instructions***

Description of the workshop/session:

6

STEP 1 – Assertiveness

Invite the participants to think of a situation where either themselves or someone they know finds it difficult to say 'no' to someone, such as a bully. How did they feel? How do they feel now? How did they react? How could they have done it differently?

Create scenarios of the few examples that the participants brought up in class avoiding intense experiences. Show the participants how they could be assertive by:

- Creating a distance from the other person
- Using body language; proper posture; standing up straight; looking in the eyes; if need be use hands to affirm your 'space';
- Using non-aggressive verbal communication. Be firm without being rude; such as:
- I don't want this; I need this; This is my space; I do not agree with you; This is my opinion;
- Don't argue or attack if you sense resistance. Instead, offer potential solutions to the problems that come up. If you reach a stalemate where there's no possible compromise, be prepared to walk away.

STEP 2 - Sharing & Processing

- How did you feel in these exercises?
- What did you find the most easy or difficult?

Notes for facilitators:

The facilitators are urged to familiarize themselves with the instructional video so that they can provide practical tips and examples to the participants.



Motivation



To learn how to set and attain one's objectives through intrinsic and/or extrinsic motivation.



50 minutes



8 - 10 people



1. Protective Clothing
2. Punching bag
3. Click on the ***Video to follow for instructions***

Description of the workshop/session:

7

STEP 1 – Motivation

Following a warm up exercise, invite the participants to shout 'Kia' from the gut when releasing strikes. Having the whole group shouting Kia allows for a collective positive energy to take place.

The facilitator can make the session as creative as possible to enable the students to reach a goal or attain their objectives.

STEP 2- Sharing & Processing

- What are your present reactions?
- Did you feel motivated when doing the exercises?
- How do you feel now?
- What will you take with you today?

Notes for facilitators:

The facilitators are urged to familiarize themselves with the instructional video so that they can provide practical tips and examples for the participants.

Mindfulness Practices



To connect and tune to oneself



1. Pre-prepared questions
2. Meditation music and script



60 to 90 minutes



8 - 10 people

Description of the workshop/session:

8

STEP 1 – Check-in
Participants have some time to walk around each other, and sense each other, such as looking at each other, smiling to each other or if they are comfortable they can fist bump.

STEP 2 – Centering
Becoming centered is a way to find peace within the chaos that might be surrounding us. It's about being "in check" with what's going on. Individuals who are centered are typically calm and peaceful.

Participants are invited to connect to the following questions followed by the below practices:

- Have you ever felt that you are not yourself?
- Have you ever felt that you are out of touch with yourself?
- Have you ever felt overwhelmed or experiencing mixed emotions?

Suggested Practices

- Breathing techniques - so that we "feel" more of what's going on around us. 'In check' with our thoughts and emotions
- Breathe in for a count of five, and then out for a count of ten. Try to do so slowly and deliberately.
- Make a list of all the things and people you love.
- Pause to acknowledge all your senses. What do you see? Feel? Smell? Taste? Hear? Being aware in this way fosters a sense of mindfulness.
- Try a guided meditation, such as metta, where you practice loving-kindness. Right palm on heart and left palm below navel.

STEP 3 - Processing
- Participants are invited to express how they feel after the practices.

STEP 4 - Closure
During the Closure/ Check- out the participants take it in turns to say how they felt in today's sessions and what they want to take home with them.



Connection with Self, Other People and Nature through the body and movement



Practicing awareness. Making contact. Standing by yourself while being with others



2 hours



from 4 up to 20 people



Space: **Outdoors**



Nature - a good and safe terrain, away from the noise (best with grass and no broken glass), blankets to rest and sit, snacks and drinks for break.

Description of the workshop/session:

9

Energizer - Playful game:
Each participant places one hand on their lower back (back of the hand facing their back) and extends their other hand with the index finger. The goal is to touch as many people as possible with the extended finger in the hand on the back, and without being touched yourself.

Set a timer for 3 minutes and go.

Variations: Make a sound when you're hit or "die" (fall to the ground for 10 seconds with a funny sound).

Development:
1. Feeling our weight and balance.
We stand with feet flat on the ground, hip-width apart. We scan the body and gradually release tension—starting with the jaw (the mouth may gently part), then the shoulders (let them drop freely), and the knees (we don't bend them, just unlock them slightly).We begin to play with our center of gravity. First, we slowly and mindfully shift the weight from the toes to the heels, in a way that doesn't require sudden reactions or cause us to lose balance.Next, we shift the weight from the right foot to the left, imagining that we are pouring something from one vessel into another. When one leg is being emptied, the other is being filled, and vice versa. We give ourselves a moment for exploration.

2. Arch Zen:
A type of embodied dialogue/conversation with elements of strikes (punches) and evasions (dodges).

- Two people stand facing each other at arm's length. Their feet remain "glued" to the ground. One person closes their eyes and begins to send strikes or"punches" using their hands. These are

- delivered very slowly and without changing the chosen trajectory once a movement has started. The person with closed eyes sends strikes from various directions. The task of the other person is to avoid them—moving just enough to dodge—while staying as close as possible. Halfway through the exercise we change roles in pairs. e also can change pairs to explore different qualities
- Participants stand in pairs facing each other, as before, and try to synchronize their breaths—when one person inhales, the other exhales, and vice versa. We practice this for a little while (1 min.)
- Next, once the breaths are synchronized, one person sends a strike or "arrow" on the exhale, while at the same time the other person dodges on the inhale. Then the roles smoothly reverse, following the rhythm of the breath. We give a few minutes for this exercise.
- In the final stage, participants are given the freedom to move more openly. The feet are no longer "glued" to the ground, and legs can also be used to send strikes or "arrows." Participants can change their position and body level. The most important things to remember are the synchronization of breath and the precision and clear direction of each strike.

TIPS: Let the strikes or "arrows" enter the physical space of the other person—they should be perceived as a real (though safe) threat. Do not go easy on your partner—out of respect for them and their learning process. If an arrow is going to land, let it land. Don't try to rescue your partner. The strikes and arrows are, in reality, harmless, but they carry powerful symbolic meaning.

Sharing and processing: How did you feel during this exercise? What was challenging? What thoughts or emotions came up for you? What was this about for you personally?

We now share our reflections.

15 min brake.





3. Guided Sensory Meditation in Nature
Find a comfortable standing or seated position in nature. Feel the ground beneath you and take a moment to arrive in the present.

Sight
Begin by softening your gaze. Gently observe your surroundings—colors, shapes, movement, light and shadow. Let your eyes rest without needing to name or judge what you see.

Touch
Shift your attention to the sense of touch. Feel the air on your skin, the contact with the ground, textures around you. You may explore with your hands—touching a leaf, tree bark, or a stone—staying present with the sensations.

Hearing
Now tune in to sound. Notice what's close—your breath, nearby leaves—then expand to distant sounds: birds, wind, distant activity. Listen to the rhythm and pauses, without needing to interpret.

Stay for a few quiet moments with all your senses open—simply being with nature. Let this be a time of connection and awareness.

When ready, take a deep breath, feel your body again, and gently return.

4. What do I end up with – what state I am in, what emotions I experience now.
Please use 3 words only.

Can I name what I actually feel?



- To regulate emotions in our body.
- To try to name the emotions I feel



2 hours



from 4 up to 20 people



Meditation music, Video

Description of the workshop/session:

10

Introduction:

1. Round with cards. How do I feel today weather -wise (using metaphor of natural phenomena to describe the feelings I experience)
2. Remembering the names of participants: 2 teams hiding behind the blanket in the middle, one person from each team approaching the blanket wall and on “go” command the blanket falls down and the task is to scream the name of the person in front as first one. We play until 5 points.
3. Ensemble movement: the group is following the instructions of the facilitator (to sit, stand, walk, run, slow down, walk, sit) - after that they have to do it together without the commands - just by feeling the energy of the group. There is no leader dedicated to it.
4. Leading the movement: The volunteer is leaving the room, within the group the leader is chosen who will be proposing different types of movement. The task of the volunteer is to guess who is leading the moves (has 3 guesses).
5. How does it feel? The group is choosing the silly word (f.ex spaghetti, red cat). The facilitator reads different emotions, starting from basic ones, through more specific, and the group members enter the circle and need to express a given emotion saying the chosen word.

Development of the Tai Chi elements

6. Participants breath slowly with their eyes closed from standing position, inhaling from the nose and exhaling from the mouth slowly while moving their hands in the up and down direction – in circular motion.
7. Shifting the position to a horse stance. Breathing in while pulling the hands inwards and breathing out while pushing the hands outwards slowly.
1. Breathing in while pulling the hands upwards and breathing out while pushing the hands downwards slowly & alternately.
9. Breathing in while pulling the hands sidewards and breathing out while pushing the hands inwards slowly & alternately.
10. Breathing out while pulling the hands backwards (behind you) and breathing in while pushing the hands inwards slowly & alternately.



11. Participants are invited to tune to their body and allow free body movements.
12. Centering technique
13. Introducing fighting stands





Mindful Awareness of Bodily Feelings



Identifying and regulating emotions in our body



60 minutes



15 people



Video, laptop

Description of the workshop/session:

11

1. Ice breaker

2. Expectations
- I'll tell them briefly what it's about. What is somatic therapy and what exactly will we do during the session

3. Introduction
Before moving on to this part, it is important to keep the three components of mindfulness our minds.
Intention – what do I want from this exercise?
Awareness – draw all your attention to what is happening in your body now
Attitude – practice with openness, compassion and optimism

Step 1: Invite participants to do a body scan, focusing their attention on each part of the their body.
Step 2: Invite participants to locate any emotions in their bodies and recognize them.
Step 3: Follow the "session" in the video to help participants adjust any emotion in the video. corp. [11:08 – horse stance/kicks/free kicks – 14:48]
Step 4: Sharing and processing – invite a discussion about how emotions are felt, and identified in the body. Explore with the participants how our thoughts affect our feelings and behavior. Help participants express and process their practice.

Resources: video

Feedback
- Post-Workshop Evaluation
- Testimonials - 3/4 sentences describing the experience
- Photo



Lotus Breath Mindful Breathing



Relaxation, Connection with the body



60 minutes



15 people



Video

Description of the workshop/session:

12

Introduction:
Before moving on to this part, it is important to keep the three components of mindfulness our minds.
Intention – what do I want from this exercise?
Awareness – draw all your attention to what is happening in your body now
Attitude – practice with openness, compassion and optimism

Step 1: This is a mindfulness lotus breathing meditation.
1. It's an easy way to inhale and exhale, just like a lotus flower
2. As the lotus closes at night, we'll expire
3. And just as the lotus opens during the day, we'll take a deep breath
4. We will use our hands - so when we close our hands we exhale
5. And when we open our hands like the blooming lotus, we breathe in
6. And when you do, it's best to focus on the sensations of breathing in your nostrils and abdomen.

Step 2: Invite the participants to raise their hands and do together the closing and opening of the hand, along with the exhalation and inhalation.

Step 3: Follow the "session" in the video to help participants practice Lotus breathing

LET'S GET STARTED: Keep your hand up. Try closing it. And now what we will do is inhale when we open our hand and exhale when we close our hand.

Feeling the sensations of breathing through the nostrils and extension of the abdomen

1. So breathe in, feel the air coming in
2. exhalation closes hand
3. Inhalation opens the hand
4. exhaling closing my hand



5. Inhalation - exhalation
6. Inhalation - exhalation
7. Inhalation - Exhalation
8. Inhalation - exhalation
9. Inhalation - exhalation
10. feeling the sensations
11. Inhalation - exhalation
12. Deep breathing - the belly expands
13. Exhalation
14. Breathing - breathing sensations
15. exhalation - the belly relaxes back down

Now I'd like you to try breathing like this on your own - just by feeling the breath inhalation - exhalation body relaxation - just by feeling the breath

Step 4: Sharing and processing – invite them to a discussion about their experience. Explore with your participants how mindfulness through our Lotus breath influences us. Help participants express and process their practice.

Feedback
- Post-Workshop Evaluation
- Testimonials - 3/4 sentences describing the experience
- Photo



Spiritual Resource



To explore the potential transformative aspects of spiritual practices using the Somatic



60 minutes



15 people

Description of the workshop/session:

13

Ice breaker

Waiting
- I tell them briefly what it is about – about the spiritual resources that are part of our lives, that we inherit, discover, cultivate throughout our lives and what we will do during the meeting
- fill out the Informed Consent Form for the use of the photo
- complete the Pre-workshop Assessment
- fill in the attendance sheet

Step 1: Share with a partner an experience of how spirituality can influence the emergence of a moment of transformation, in creating meaning and finding purpose in life.

Step 2: Group presentation

Step 3: Meditation – invite participants to look at their thoughts and emotions from a distance and without value judgments, as if they were projected somewhere, on a wall, at a distance. Recognize what appears without delving into them, without thinking too much, without analysis, let them appear, pass...

Then visualize human nature from another perspective, such as: birds, music, dance, thunder, rain, etc... I invite you to imagine what life would be like, how life would feel from each of these perspectives.

Step 4: Use martial arts moves to find harmony between mind and body and be now, in the present with an attitude of love for life. The practice is to detach yourself from yourself, from any intrusive thoughts.

Allow your body to move freely while allowing yourself to be connected with the surrounding energies and harmonies.

Step 5: Sharing and processing - in dyads and in plenary

Feedback
- Post-Workshop Evaluation
- Testimonials - 3/4 sentences describing the experience
- Photo







Mindfulness Practices: Connecting to nature



To connect and tune in with oneself



60 minutes



15 people

14

Description of the workshop/session:

1. Ice breaker

Waiting
- I tell them briefly what it is about – about
- fill out the Informed Consent Form for the use of the photo
- complete the Pre-workshop Assessment
- fill in the attendance sheet

STEP 1 – Check-in:
Participants have time to walk around each other and feel each other, such as looking at each other, smiling at each other, or if they feel comfortable, they can punch each other.

STEP 2 – MULTISENSORY EXPERIENCE IN NATURE:
Participants are invited to carefully explore, with all their senses, the space in which they are:
• What do I see, what colors are there, how many shades
• What texture do things have, plants, what temperature do they have?
• What is heard, how is it heard – but when do you walk? But when you touch or hammer objects with your finger?
• What odors are detectable? Up close, far away?
• How is the sensation of the steps, how is the floor or the ground?

Participants are invited to connect to the following questions, followed by the following

• What images, feelings, emotions are connected to the sensations had?
• How does it change or multiply throughout the multisensory experience?
• What was pleasant, or perhaps indifferent, or unpleasant, or mixed?
• What experiences can be related to those present?
• What makes you think?



• How do you see yourself now, through the lens of these feelings and processing of emotions and thoughts? What does your life look like?

STEP 3 - PROCESSING:
- Participants are invited to express how they feel after the multisensory experience.

STEP 4 - CLOSING:
During closing/check-out, participants take turns saying how they felt today and what they take home with them

Feedback
- Post-Workshop Evaluation
- Testimonials - 3/4 sentences describing the experience
- Photo

Mindfulness: Centering



To connect and tune to oneself



60 minutes



15 people

Description of the workshop/session:

15

STEP 1
Participants have some time to walk around each other, and sense each other, such as looking at each other, smiling to each other or if they are comfortable they can fist bump.

Instructions:
"I invite you to stand up and to walk slowly and quietly around the room. Observe each other without speaking. You can smile, make eye contact, and if you feel it's appropriate, you can high five, or touch. We're not forcing anything - just feeling each other's presence."
"Now that you've connected with each other a little bit, I invite you to gently turn to your inner self. Perhaps close your eyes or let your gaze drop. You don't have to answer aloud. Take a moment after each question".

Reflection questions
- How is my body now? (Is it tense? Relaxed? Tired? Energized?)
- What thoughts are going through my mind?
- What am I feeling now - emotionally?

STEP 2 – Centering:
Becoming centered is a way to find peace within the chaos that might be surrounding us. It's about being "in check" with what's going on. Individuals who are centered are typically calm and peaceful.

Participants are invited to connect to the following questions followed by the below practices:
• Have you ever felt that you are not yourself?
• Have you ever felt that you are out of touch with yourself?
• Have you ever felt overwhelmed or experiencing mixed emotions?
Breathing exercise
"I invite you now to turn your attention to the breath - to the way the air moves in and out of the body. Place your right hand on your chest and your left hand on your abdomen. Sit with your back straight but relaxed.





Close your eyes, if you feel comfortable, or let your gaze soften down.
- As you breathe in, let the air flow down into your abdomen. Try to feel the hand on your belly rise and the hand on your chest remain as still as possible. It is a more natural and calming way to breathe.
- Breathe in through your nose, counting to 4...1, 2, 3, 4
Breathe out through your mouth, also counting to 4...1, 2, 3, 4
Slow, even, unhurried.
- On the inhale - we get air, space, calm.
-On the exhale - release tension, thoughts, noise.
- It doesn't have to be perfect - we just notice and allow ourselves to be here.
When you feel it is time, you can gently come back into the room. Move your fingers, stretch a little... and reopen your eyes at your own pace."

Step 3: Exercise - Personal Resource List
Instructions (for delivery): We invite participants to make a list:

- 2-3 people dear to you
- 2-3 things that bring you joy, peace or energy (They can be simple - a good coffee, a soft blanket, a song, a view).

Take your time. It doesn't have to be a perfect list - just an honest one."

Step 4: Sharing and processing - in dyads and in plenary. Participants are invited to express how they feel after the practices.

STEP 5: CLOSURE

Mindfulness: Positive Affirmations



To identify the inner critical voice and strengthen the healthy one through positive affirmations



60 minutes



TV monitor, video projector, laptop



15 people

Description of the workshop/session:

16

Step 1: Awareness of inner self-talk and identification of the critical and healthy voice
Individual self-reflection exercise : participants are invited to answer the following questions:
• What's the message I most often repeat to myself about who I am? (in silence)
• Is that voice rather gentle or critical?
• What effect does it have on me?

Step 2: Defining positive affirmations and their role
Ever notice how sometimes the voice in our head is the harshest critic? We tell ourselves: I can't do it, I'm not doing enough, I'm not good enough .... This is our inner critic, resulting from the accumulation of negative messages we have received over time. One way to counteract his speech is to increase our healthy inner voice through positive, supportive and compassionate affirmations.

Positive affirmations are simple, consciously worded sentences that help us recalibrate our inner dialog. They are not about deceiving or lying to ourselves, but about consciously choosing thoughts that nurture, not sabotage. Our goal is not to deny criticism, but to grow and empower the voice that sustains us.

Step 3: Increasing a healthy voice through positive affirmations
Exercise:
1. Participants are invited to recall a difficult situation they have been through. It does not have to be something dramatic, but can be one where they just wanted a different outcome.
2. We further invite them to identify the inner critic's discourse
3. Respond in imaginary to the inner critic with positive, compassionate statements, choosing from the following list:

- I'm safe, here and now.
- My body deserves gentleness.
- I don't have to be perfect to be valuable.
- I am learning to be on my side.
- I give myself permission to slow down.





- I can take care of myself, little by little.
- This will not last forever.
- This too shall pass.
- My feelings make me uncomfortable at the moment, but I can accept them.
- I am able to be worried and still cope.
- I am strong enough to deal with what is happening to me now.

Step 4: Sharing and processing - in dyads and in plenary: What emotions and bodily sensations triggered the two types of speech. Which one do I want to nurture?



Working with unpleasant feelings



Regulating Emotions through Somatic Therapy



Video and playback equipment, Playing cards (for pair assignment) Writing materials (pens, paper)



75 minutes



Space: Comfortable open space for movement



15 people

Description of the workshop/session:

17

1.Ice - breaker

2. Setting Expectations & Administrative Tasks
Introduction to somatic therapy and overview of the session structure.

3. Introduction to Emotional Regulation
Objective: Develop awareness of how emotions are experienced in the body.

Explanation of emotional regulation and mindfulness.
Introduction to the three core components of mindfulness:

- Intention – What do I want from this exercise?
- Awareness – Attentiveness to the body's signals
- Attitude – Practicing with openness, compassion, and curiosity

Breathing & Movement Sequence in 3 Stages:
Video-led Movement Practice (with verbal guidance):
The Sun, The Hen, The Sand, The Hourglass, The Cat, Planting the Rice, Petting the Silk Cloth, The Cat with the Thread, Throwing the Fishing Net

Repetition with Eyes Open: Movements repeated with set counts
(8x for the first; 4x for the rest)

Repetition with Eyes Closed: Performed at individual pace with facilitator guidance

4. Emotional Release Practice
Discussion of unpleasant emotions and how they manifest in the body.
Video Practice (min 11:02 – 14:50):
Practice strikes/movements together
Play video twice, then allow time for free exploration of the movements







5. Guided Meditation: Emotional Release through Imagination
Participants close their eyes and are guided through an imaginary fight to help release repressed or unpleasant emotions in a safe, symbolic way.

6. Reflection & Sharing Activity
Objective: Foster connection and processing through dialogue.

Participants paired using playing cards

Dyad sharing on the experience of externalizing unpleasant feelings

Group discussion: Circle sharing on personal insights and experiences

7. Feedback & Closure

Standing Ground



- To experience the physical difference between passive, aggressive, and assertive stances
- To develop a personal “body anchor“ they can return to under pressure
- To practise assertive responses through movement and voice before language



90 minutes



6 - 12 people



- Open space
- Comfortable clothing
- Music (optional)
- Grounding object

Description of the workshop/session:

STEP 1: Individual movement exploration

Participants spread out in the space, given room to move without being observed too closely. They are guided through three physical postures in sequence — collapsed/small (passive), rigid/pushing forward (aggressive), and open/grounded (assertive) — holding each for 30 seconds and noticing sensation, breath, and impulse in each. No discussion yet; this is felt, not talked about.

STEP 2: Pair work: the physical "no"

In pairs, one person slowly approaches the other. The receiving partner practises stopping them using only body and voice — no scripted words, just sound and gesture — at the point where it feels right to say "that's enough." Partners switch. Debrief in pairs only: What did you notice about when you stopped them? What almost stopped you from stopping them?

STEP 3: Large group: building the anchor

Participants are invited to identify one physical sensation or micro-movement from Step 2's "assertive" posture that felt most authentically theirs (e.g. feet rooting down, spine lengthening, a settled exhale). This becomes their personal anchor. The group discusses:

- How to access that anchor in seconds, under real pressure, without anyone noticing
- The difference between performing assertiveness and being physically regulated enough to mean it
- What gets in the way of using the anchor (fear of conflict, social conditioning, fatigue)
- Closing practice: each participant tries their anchor once more, this time while another person mildly pushes back verbally, to test it under light real-world pressure



Body Awareness



Getting to know oneself. Sharpening sensitivity to signals from the outside. Developing a sense of body weight and center of gravity.



2 Hours



Soft floor/mats
Exercise room



6 - 12 people

Description of the workshop/session:

Landing in the Body (Guided Meditation in Motion):
We begin lying down in a comfortable position. Imagine seeing your body from above—first from the ceiling, then gradually closer, with more and more detail. We appreciate this body for all the wonderful things it allows us to do: explore, feel pleasure, nourish ourselves, etc. Then we imagine inhabiting this body (as we actually do all the time).

We focus attention sequentially on:

- the breath
- the pulse (heartbeat—where and how we can feel it)
- sensations from the skin

Then, like a child who knows nothing and has just arrived in their body, we begin to rediscover it from scratch.

Next, we gently begin to explore movement—with the same curious quality ("I don't know, I'm just checking").

We start with micromovements and can finish wherever appropriate for the group—e.g., moving close to the ground, standing on two feet, or even dynamic exploration—jumping, rolling, etc.

In this exercise, we guide participants to stay curious in their exploration, giving them time for free discovery. We emphasize that **there is no way to do this wrong.**

Play with Your Weight/Center of Gravity
This can flow naturally from the previous exercise.
We start standing and look for a position that generates minimal tension in the body.
Participants are guided to release tension in sequence:

- jaw
- shoulders
- abdomen



- hips
- feet

In this relaxed posture, we play with “pouring” our body weight:
- first from one foot to the other
- then from toes to heels
- finally, in free, playful movement

Playing with an Energy Ball (as a bridge to further practice)
This also follows naturally from the weight/center of gravity exploration.
We remain in movement.
The facilitator (or a participant) imagines holding a ball of energy in their hands.
We explore its imagined qualities: **weight, warmth, density, movement.**
Then we play with passing the ball in various ways—rolling it, tossing it, handing it to each other.

This leads into further practice (Tai Chi forms), where everyone will later create their own ball of energy and work with it.

Tai Chi Elements (Emotional Regulation & Steady Form — from Somatic Video):
- Review of movements and breathing techniques for emotional regulation
- Further practice of the “form”
- Exploration of free movement inspired by earlier forms

Sharing and Processing
We end in a sharing circle to build closeness and trust.
Each participant is invited to share observations and discoveries.
Questions might include:
- How do I feel in my body now?
- What was insightful in this practice?

We honor **collective wisdom** in the circle.
Important: We speak **only about ourselves and our own experience.**

Closing:
A guided meditation/relaxation combining:
- body relaxation
- mindfulness
- exploration of identity and the nature of consciousness



Working with Anger



Understanding what anger is.
Exploring common myths and beliefs about anger.
Creating a resource map of what anger gives us access to.
Connecting with the energy of anger through the body.



2 Hours



Training room
Mats and strike pads
Large sheet of paper
Markers



6 - 12 people

Description of the workshop/session:

20

Circle: The Old and New Map of Anger:
On a large sheet of paper divided into two sections, we start by writing down what we believe or have heard about anger. The facilitator can suggest some ideas, but it's important that input also comes from the participants.

Examples of myths about anger:
- Dangerous
- Distancing
- Unpleasant
- Should not be expressed in public
- Common sayings like "Anger harms your beauty"

Next, collaboratively create a new map of anger as a resource.
Examples:
- Anger helps us recognize where our boundaries are and when they've been crossed
- It shows us what matters to us
- It motivates action and self-protection

Conclude this section with a group sharing in a talking circle,
using the following guidelines:
- Speak from your own experience (use "I" statements)
- No judging or commenting on what others say
- What is shared in the circle stays in the circle



Practice

Begin by having participants move around the space. The facilitator gradually introduces qualities that allow gentle contact with the energy of anger.

Invite participants to recall a situation when their boundaries were crossed.
Important: Be aware of who who you're working with. If participants have experienced physical boundary violations, such practices may evoke strong emotional responses. If you choose to proceed, make sure you have the resources to safely support such reactions (e.g. a co-facilitator who is a trained therapist or psychologist).

Suggested practices to evoke the energy/emotion of anger:

- Stomping
- Clenching and releasing fists
- Making vocal sounds
- Shaking or throwing off energy with arms, legs, shoulders – as if getting rid of something unwanted

Blocks, Strikes, Kicks – Repetition and Exploration

Demonstrate a few forms of blocking strikes to the group. The focus is not on technique but on the physical representation of setting boundaries. Encourage participants to use vocal expression freely – any sound, word, or short phrase (e.g., "Ha!", "No!", "I don't want this!", "Go away!").

Participants can be spread out throughout the room and perform these forms one by one. A facilitator with focus mitts or strike pads can walk around and offer participants the chance to feel the resistance of a physical object.

End with an opportunity for free improvisation using the learned techniques.
Keep participants stationary to avoid collisions.

Optional Reflection Prompt (before practice):

"Answer this silently to yourself: What do you not allow into your life? What are you saying no to?"
With that intention, repeat previously learned sequences of punches and kicks – both into space and into pads.

Finish with another group circle (as described earlier), inviting participants to share what they felt and what this practice was like for them.



Free Exploration Based on Previous Activities



Finding freedom in practice. Making it more tailored to ourselves.
Discovering fluidity, flow, and combining techniques.



2 Hours



Exercise room



6 - 12 people

Description of the workshop/session:

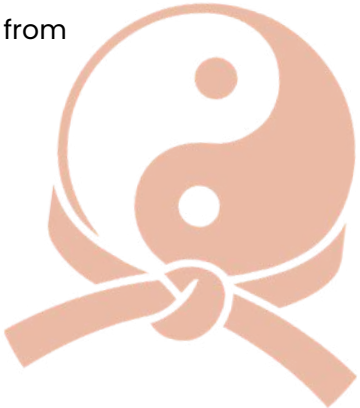
21

Movement into Imagination
Participants find a comfortable place in the room (for safety, decide whether everyone stays standing or closer to the ground). Both participants and facilitator close their eyes (ensuring no one is watching or judging). We observe our imagination—what thoughts and images arise—and try to translate those into the language of movement. It's important to emphasize that nothing can be done "ugly" or "wrong" here. Every movement is valid. It is our interpretation. Set a timer for a specific duration, from 5 to 10 minutes. For a deeper practice and if there's ample time, it can be longer.

Free Movement
Using previous exercises (beginner's mind/child's mind, movement into imagination), we explore new possibilities of moving. In this exploration, it's important to choose an intention. Let's be guided by curiosity and joy (movements that spark our interest, make us smile). We can also propose pleasure in movement as an intention—following movements that serve our body and feel good.

Emotional Regulation (Breathing Exercises), Steady Form (Tai Chi Exercises)
Including kicks, strikes, and blocks.
We move into the final review of our steady forms, which we have been practicing for several sessions. By now, participants should feel more at ease and familiar with the practice.

Free Exploration
Now we open up space for "connecting the dots"—incorporating elements we've trained into our movement vocabulary, including modifying them in ways that suit us best.
We draw from the resources we already have (what we know and do well), from discoveries made during this cycle of sessions, and from regulatory practices, Tai Chi forms, and martial arts elements we've learned.
We create a safe space for participants, set a time, and allow for exploration.



Sharing and Processing

Circle time. Example questions:

- What was this exercise like for you?
- Was it challenging?
- Did you discover something about yourself during today's session?
- Has your "movement vocabulary" changed in any way?
- Did this exercise give you access to something else (emotions, insight, feeling)?



Play and Play-Fight



Exploring the balance between pursuing a goal and maintaining connection with oneself and others.
Accessing dormant joy.
Discovering through the “beginner’s mind” and self-observation.



2 Hours



A space where participants can be barefoot or in socks



6 - 12 people

Description of the workshop/session:

Cycle of Games with Gradual Deepening of Contact
Thumb Game:
Participants pair up and stand facing each other, linking hands as shown in a reference image. The goal in this simple game is to pin the partner’s thumb for 3 seconds while avoiding being pinned oneself. The grip must not be broken during the game.

Switch pairs several times to explore different dynamics—different people bring different qualities.

Development:
After some time, introduce eye contact between partners. Now the primary goal becomes maintaining eye contact while continuing the game described above.

Shoulder Touch Game:
This game introduces more movement and intensity. Again working in pairs, the goal is to gently touch the partner on the shoulder while avoiding being touched. Participants should not block “strikes” but only dodge by moving and adapting their bodies.
Be mindful of others in the room—space is shared.
Switch pairs multiple times to explore other dynamics. Encourage participants to play with tempo, body positioning, etc.

Foot Touch Game:
Similar to the previous game, but now the goal is to touch the partner’s foot with your big toe.
Same rules as above apply.
Note: the touch should be as gentle as possible. Start slowly.
In this game, participants should be barefoot or wearing socks.
Change partners several times as before.



Synthesis:
Combine the two previous games (shoulder and foot touches) while maintaining eye contact.
Switch partners 2–3 times.
This task is challenging due to the need to integrate multiple elements.

Discussion:
Create a discussion around the following topics:

- How was the experience for the participants? What did they feel? Was it difficult?
- What difference did they notice between maintaining eye contact and not?
- How did they feel when they "won" or "lost" more often?
- What words come to mind when thinking about this activity? Why? (e.g., fight or play, partner or opponent, etc.)
- Talk about the search for balance between a goal (e.g., touching the shoulder) and staying in connection (playful engagement) with the other person.
    Can we relate this to our everyday life?
    Is it worth letting go and not going 100% in order to maintain connection and allow the other person to enjoy themselves as well?
    Do I allow giving others a "break," and would I want to receive one myself?

There are many possibilities to explore.



Breath Awareness and setting Boundaries



Practicing awareness. Grounding by breathing and moving. Setting Boundaries.



2 Hours



punching mats, snack for break.



6 - 14 people

Description of the workshop/session:

Energizer - Ninja:
Each participant stretches both hands in front of themselves. During their turn they should "attack" another player by touching their arm. The attacked player can dodge by moving his hand away. After the end of the turn, the participant waits motionless for his/her move. If a player does not avoid the attack, they must put the affected hand behind their back and cannot use it. Touching both hands means elimination from the game. The goal is to eliminate other participants.

Development:

1. Breathing exercises
Working in pairs, one person had to lift up or push another while they were breathing with their lungs and diaphragm.
2. Tai chi elements
Taichi qi gongs with two new moves - dragon stance and cloud hands.
3.Repetition of attacks and pushes and trying them on mat
First we practiced striking while standing scattered in the room, then we lined up in two lines and practiced striking on training mats.

15 min brake.

4. Tai chi sequence - monkey stance
5. Lowen exercises
Grounding exercises and working in Paris on setting our boundaries. One person had to stop another person that was walking or running towards them by telling them "Stop".
6. Relaxation - Jacobson technique
This technique involves relaxing each part of the body separately one by one.
7. Summary circle



Falling Down



Dealing with Failure.
Being ready



6 - 14 people



2 Hours



Soft mats/pads, exercise room

Description of the workshop/session:

14

Warm-up:
Movement game as a warm-up and introduction to later tasks.
Participants pair up. Each person's task is to **Bouch their partner's shoulder with their hand,** while avoiding being touched themselves.
Everyone moves freely around the space, paying attention to other pairs.
No points are scored, and no winners are declared. **Blocks are not allowed**—only evasive maneuvers are permitted.

Tip: Facilitate a discussion afterwards about how this felt. Participants may have experienced satisfaction, competitiveness, frustration, or resignation. Talk about it.
As a variation, offer the same task with **one small change**: participants must maintain **constant eye contact** during the exercise.
Discuss again—**what changed** in the experience?

Main Part
Falling / rolling on mats – technique
Demonstrate several basic rolls used in landing or falling safely. Practice the technique with participants.

In pairs: "Pushing", falling, and simulating threat
In pairs, participants test the techniques. One person gently pushes their partner in the back (decide together beforehand what level of force is comfortable).
The person being pushed uses a controlled fall with a chosen rolling technique.
The pushing person follows them as if to harm or attack them. The person who fell adopts a defensive stance, refusing to allow further harm.
Then, roles are switched.

Ground defense: Guard position
Start in pairs. The first person stands and tries to place their foot over the hip line of their partner (without touching the body).

The second person lies on their back and moves to make this difficult for the standing person.
Another option: the standing person tries to touch a neutral body part (e.g., knee, elbow) of the person on the ground.

In pairs: One person pins the partner's shoulders to the ground.
The person on the ground attempts to reverse the position with the partner/"attacker."
Then roles are switched.
(Advanced/most contact-heavy option – make sure the group is ready.)

Alternative: One person lies on top of the other with full body weight; the person underneath must free themselves.
The person on top remains passive. The larger the person on top, the greater the challenge.

Circle / Sharing:
We sit in a circle in a comfortable position and reintroduce the circle's rules:
1. Speak about yourself and your own experience (no talking about others, no judgment or comments).
2. Only one person speaks at a time, the rest give their full attention.
3. What is shared in the circle stays in the circle (do not share it with outsiders).

Participants may suggest additional rules to ensure safety.
One person can facilitate the circle. Speaking happens in turns or by whoever feels ready, after the previous person finishes.

Example questions:
- How did you feel during the exercise?
- What was difficult?
- What thoughts or emotions came up?
- What did the exercise mean to you personally?

Share reflections.

Closing: Relaxation exercise
Form groups of at least 5 people.
4 people get into an all-fours position (hands and knees) in a row, side by side.
The remaining person lies down on their backs.
The people on the bottom gently move their spines in a wave-like motion (each at their own rhythm), like the cat-cow pose in yoga, so the person on top feels a soft "wave massage."
Continue until everyone in the group has had a turn lying on top.



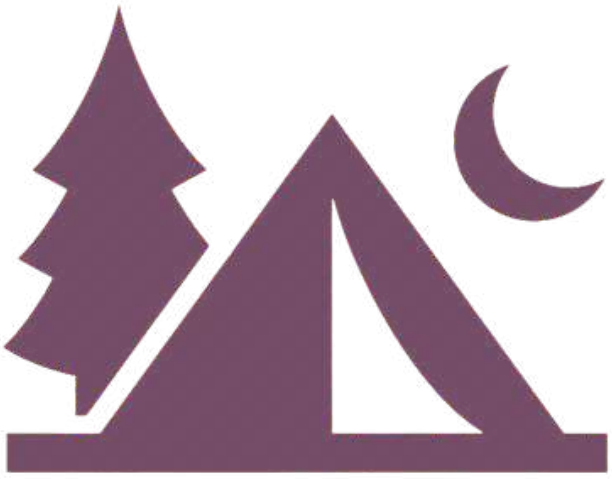


Rationale for Modalities

Wilderness therapy in practice

Wilderness therapy in practice

25 Introduction to Wilderness Therapy – Grounding, Safety & Group Awareness
26 Trust, Play & Connection
27 Support, Boundaries & Inner Resources
28 Into the wild - the start of the expedition
29 River of life
30 Closer
31 In my circle
32 Closing ceremony
33 Who were you before the loss?
34 Emotions 1
35 Emotions 2
36 Reactions to Grief 1
37 Reactions to Grief 2
38 Who was the person you lost?



39 Group Dynamics & Safety
40 Reactions to Illness
41 Getting to Know Each Other
42 First Aid
43 Stories with Meaning – Storytelling Exercise
44 Trees
45 Mandala
46 Tent Building
47 The Line of Fears
48 The Portal

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Introduction

Wilderness Therapy is a highly effective method for individuals navigating various life challenges, particularly those with fewer opportunities, people in mental health crises, or those coping with loss. While it is beneficial across all ages, it is especially impactful for children, adolescents, and young adults.

It is important to understand that this approach is much more than simply taking clients into the wild. It is a structured process that begins with a careful selection of participants and the development of individualized therapeutic plans. All outdoor activities are conducted under the supervision of experienced instructors to facilitate positive behavioral change. Essential components of the program include group therapy led by qualified professionals and continuous evaluation of both progress and clinical effectiveness.

Typically led by trained therapists, these programs utilize a diverse range of interventions tailored to individual needs, such as:

- Individual and group reflection sessions.
- Adventure-based counseling.
- Mindfulness practices and sensory engagement.

The synergy between professional therapeutic interventions and the raw natural environment allows participants to gain profound insights, develop resilient coping strategies, and achieve lasting positive change.

Why Does It Work?

1. **Nature as a Therapeutic Environment** The wilderness offers a serene, grounding atmosphere that naturally reduces stress and anxiety. The inherent beauty and stillness of nature foster emotional regulation and improve overall mental well-being.
2. **Physical Engagement and Empowerment** Through activities like hiking, camping, rock climbing, and field games, participants experience a tangible sense of achievement. This physical engagement boosts self-esteem, increases self-agency, and often introduces young people to life-long passions.
3. **Disconnection from Daily Stressors** By removing individuals from their familiar environments, wilderness therapy provides a "reset." This temporary disconnection from everyday distractions allows for deeper reflection, helping participants gain perspective on their life challenges and fostering self-discovery.
4. **Development of Problem-Solving and Soft Skills** The wilderness presents unique, "real-world" challenges—whether navigating a trail, setting up camp, or gathering wood. These tasks require critical thinking and resilience. Under the guidance of professionals,

- participants operate in their "stretch zone" (the space between comfort and panic), where the most significant growth occurs.
- **Social Support and Group Dynamics** The group setting provides a powerful platform for developing social skills and building authentic relationships. Sharing challenges with peers reduces isolation and fosters a sense of belonging. The process emphasizes self-determination; while the group's influence encourages full participation, every individual is invited—never forced—to engage at their own pace.

Professional Standards

Facilitators of wilderness therapy programs must possess high-level qualifications. Ideally, they should hold degrees in psychology and be certified psychotherapists, sociotherapists, or professional trainers. Furthermore, specialized training in wilderness therapy and outdoor education is mandatory to ensure both physical and psychological safety.



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Tools

Introduction to Wilderness Therapy – Grounding, Safety & Group Awareness



- To create a sense of safety and belonging in the group
- To build initial connection with nature and with each other
- To support emotional regulation through movement, play, and somatic awareness
- To establish shared intentions, values, and group agreements



3 Hours



6 - 12 people



- Natural environment (urban park)
- Small balls
- Laminated group agreement cards
- Comfortable outdoor clothing
- Backpack

Description of the workshop/session:

25

Introduction:

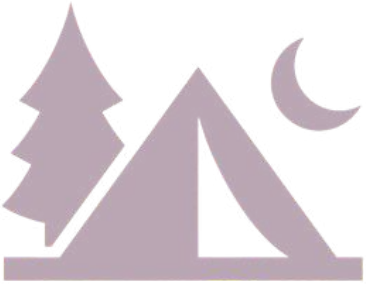
1. Arrival, Orientation & Contact with Nature

The session takes place in a large urban park. Participants gather at a pre-selected meeting point within the park. In our case, this place functioned as an "object of mindfulness" (e.g. a fallen tree trunk, a large tree, or another distinctive natural spot that fits the theme of awareness).

Standing in a circle near the fallen tree trunk, facilitators introduce themselves, the project, and the general idea of the wilderness therapy process. Participants briefly introduce themselves.

2. Name & Attention Game – Ball Game

To learn names and gently break the formal atmosphere of the first meeting, the group plays a name game with small balls.



Participants throw a ball to another person while saying their own name, making eye contact beforehand to ensure readiness.
Gradually, a second and third ball are added, increasing the level of attention, presence, and group coordination, while keeping the atmosphere playful and light.

3. Cooperation Task – Ordering on a Tree Trunk

Participants are invited to step onto a fallen tree trunk and arrange themselves in alphabetical order by first names (A–Z) without stepping off the trunk.
An alternative version can be used: ordering by date of birth (from youngest to oldest), optionally without verbal communication.
The exercise supports teamwork, non-verbal communication, and trust.

Development

1. "Packing the Backpack" – Strengths & Qualities

Still standing in a circle, participants metaphorically "pack a backpack" using natural objects found nearby.
Each object symbolizes a personal quality, strength, or resource that the participant can bring into the group process and also offer to others.
This exercise supports self-reflection, value awareness, and mutual recognition.

2. Motivation, Expectations & Fears – Sharing Circle

Participants take turns sharing:

- what motivates them to take part in the process
- what they expect from the group and the sessions
- what concerns or fears they might have

The sharing is voluntary and held in a respectful, non-judgmental space.

3. Group Contract – Creating Safety Together

Printed and laminated cards with different group principles (e.g. respect, confidentiality, listening, punctuality, consent) are laid out.
Each participant chooses up to **three principles** they personally need in order to feel safe and comfortable in the group.
A "joker" card is also available, allowing participants to add a new rule of their own.

Participants present their chosen principles and explain why they are important to them. This is followed by a short group discussion to clarify shared meaning.
The contract is symbolically signed by everyone placing their hands together in the center of the circle.

4. Warm-Up & Team Game – "Five Passes"

The group is divided into two teams (minimum 4, maximum 7 people per team).
The goal is to complete five successful passes without the ball falling to the ground and without the opposing team intercepting it.
Rules:

- The ball may only be thrown, not handed over
- The opposing team may only intercept the ball in the air or after it touches the ground

This game builds cooperation, physical activation, focus, and group energy.

Closing

1. Practical Formalities

Basic documentation is completed (mainly attendance, as most paperwork was handled online). Due

to winter conditions, this part is kept short.

2. Somatic Meditation in Nature

The session closes with a guided somatic meditation, focusing on:

- awareness of different parts of the body
- exploring weight, balance, and the center of gravity
- breath and heartbeat
- gradual return of attention to the external environment

3. Final Reflection Circle

Participants answer one closing question:

- *"With what sensation or emotion are you ending this meeting?"*

4. Group Ritual & Farewell

The group ends with a quiet collective shout of a chosen word (in our case: "Grounding"), decided by the participants.
Once again, everyone places their hands together in the center of the circle as a gesture of connection and closure.





Trust, Play & Connection



- To deepen participants' sense of safety and trust within the group
- To develop embodied awareness through partner-based movement activities
- To explore the relationship between competition, playfulness, and connection
- To strengthen communication skills, especially around needs, boundaries, and asking for support
- To increase sensory awareness and gratitude toward the body and natural environment



3 Hours



6 - 12 people



- Natural environment (semi-wild urban park)
- "Forest Power" cards
- Slackline and tree protection straps
- Comfortable outdoor clothing
- Open space for movement activities

Description of the workshop/session:

26

Introduction:

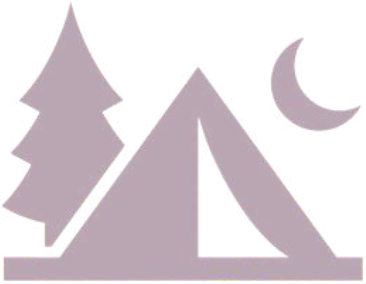
1. Somatic Arrival

Each session begins with a movement-based grounding practice that helps participants transition from everyday life into the workshop space.

The practice combines breathing, body awareness, and playful movement exercises designed to increase presence, regulate the nervous system, and reconnect participants with their bodies.

During this session, participants begin with gentle shaking, grounding through the feet, rhythmic stamping, light jumping, and an exploration of different ways of walking through the space.

The movement sequence also includes an interactive game in which participants place one hand behind their back while extending the other hand forward with one finger pointing outward. The aim is to gently touch another participant's



hand placed behind their back while avoiding being touched themselves. The activity invites playfulness, awareness of others, quick decision-making, and embodied attention.

2. Check-in Circle
Participants gather in a circle to briefly reflect on the previous session before responding to the following questions:

- How am I arriving today?
- What emotions am I noticing?
- What do I need today?

The check-in helps participants become aware of their present experience while strengthening openness and connection within the group.

Development
1. Narrative Exercise – "My Magical Day"
Participants work in pairs.

One participant is invited to describe, in as much detail as possible, what their ideal day would look like. The story may include any activities that feel meaningful, such as spending time with family, travelling, practicing sports, creating art, reading, or simply enjoying moments of peace.

The listener supports the conversation through curiosity and carefully formulated questions, encouraging the speaker to explore:

- What activities would be part of the day?
- Where would they take place?
- Who would be present?
- How much time would be devoted to each activity?
- Why are these activities meaningful?
- What values or qualities do they express?

As the conversation develops, participants are invited to consider who in their lives recognizes these values and to identify examples of how these preferred qualities are already present in other areas of life, such as work, friendships, family relationships, or community involvement.
After approximately five minutes, participants exchange roles.

2. Witnessing Each Other's Stories
When both conversations are complete, participants return to the group.
Each person briefly introduces their partner by sharing the values, strengths, and preferred ways of living that they heard expressed during the conversation, rather than simply summarizing the story itself.

This practice encourages deep listening and allows participants to experience their stories being reflected back by another person.

3. Group Reflection
The group reflects together on the exercise.
Participants are invited to explore questions such as:

- What stayed with me from my partner's story?
- What surprised or moved me?
- Which values seemed especially important?
- What does this story reveal about the person's preferred way of living?

Facilitators also invite participants to notice how easily—or how difficultly—it can be to speak about what truly matters to them.

Closing

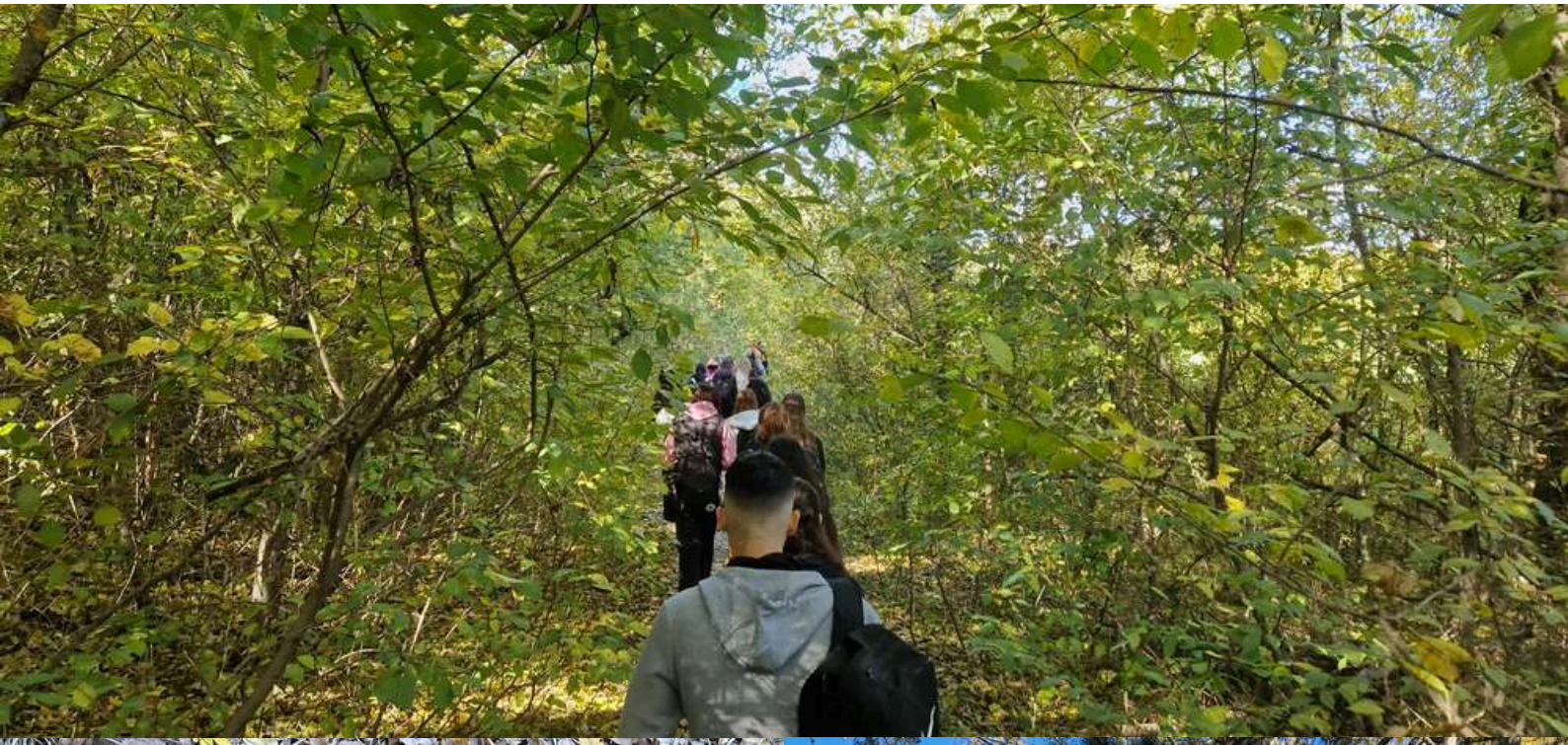
1. Guided Meditation

The session concludes with a short guided meditation adapted to the needs of the group. Depending on participants' energy levels, the meditation may take place either in gentle movement or lying comfortably on the floor.

The practice focuses on integrating the experiences of the session while bringing attention back to the breath, bodily sensations, and the present moment.

2. Final Reflection Circle

Participants conclude the session by briefly sharing:
"What am I taking with me from today's meeting?"







Support, Boundaries & Inner Resources



- To further strengthen trust and openness within the group
- To support self-reflection and identification of personal resources
- To explore reactions to pressure and uncertainty in a playful way
- To practice asking for help and setting boundaries
- To prepare participants psychologically and relationally for the upcoming mountain expedition



3 Hours



6 - 12 people



- Natural environment (urban park)
- Trees or natural markers
- Open space for movement
- Personal backpacks or natural objects
- Comfortable outdoor clothing

Description of the workshop/session:

27

Introduction:

1. Arrival & Emotional Check-In

The group gathers at the familiar meeting point in the park.
Participants are invited to describe their current state using a metaphor (e.g. weather or landscape).

2. Somatic Warm-Up

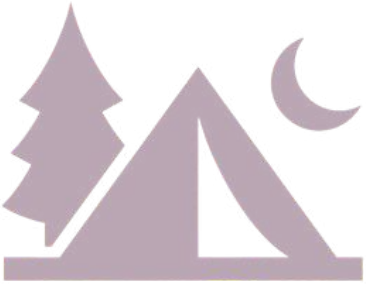
A short movement sequence supports grounding and bodily readiness, including gentle stretching, shaking, and slow walking with attention to breath.

Development

1. Playful Activation – "Tree Monster" Game

A group game is introduced to increase energy, spontaneity, and emotional regulation under mild pressure.
One tree fewer than participants is selected.
All but one participant stand by a tree and "defend" it. The remaining person becomes the "Tree Monster."
On the facilitator's signal ("Change!"), everyone must leave their tree and move toward a different one, while the Tree Monster attempts to occupy any available tree. Only one person may claim each tree.

The person left without a tree becomes the new Tree Monster.



Clear rules are given regarding safety, no pushing, and staying within a defined area.
Short reflection follows about emotional reactions, stress, competitiveness, and playfulness.

2. Partner Reflection – Strength Mirror
Participants work in pairs.
One person shares current fears or challenges related to the upcoming trip, while the partner listens and reflects back perceived strengths and resources.
Roles are then switched.

3. Solo Nature Walk – "What I Carry into the Mountains"
Participants take a short silent walk and collect natural objects symbolizing:

- a personal resource
- a concern
- an intention for growth

The group reconvenes for brief sharing.

4. Group Challenge – "Narrow Passage in the Mountains"
A narrow corridor is created in the natural environment.
The group is invited to cross it together while remaining inside the passage, moving at the pace of the slowest person, and maintaining collective awareness.
Additional rounds may include silence or one participant moving with closed eyes while being guided by the group.

5. Closing Meditation – Visualizing Support
A short guided visualization invites participants to imagine walking on a mountain trail, noticing inner resources and the presence of group support.

Closing
1. Final Reflection Circle
Participants respond to the closing question:
"What are you taking with you from today's session?"



Into the wild - the start of the expedition



- To build strengthen trust and openness within the group
- To support self-reflection and identification of personal resources
- To build initial connection with nature and with each other
- To reduce sensory overload and learning to listen to oneself in silence



3 Hours



6 - 12 people



- Natural environment (mountains)
- Backpack and small balls
- Photos of natural landscapes
- Objects found in nature

Description of the workshop/session:

28

Introduction

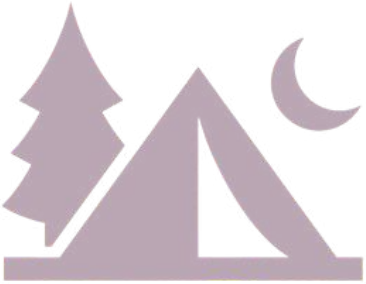
1. Arrival, Orientation & Contact with Nature

The trip takes place in the low mountains near Wrocław. Accommodation and the starting point for the trip is a guesthouse near Śnieznik mountain.

The participants gather in the garden. They are asked to form a circle around the table. There are photos of various natural scenes on the table. Participants are asked to choose one card that best describes how they are feeling at the moment and to share with the group why they chose that particular card.

2. Name & Attention Game – Ball Game

To learn names and gently break the formal atmosphere of the first meeting, the group plays a name game with small balls.
Participants throw a ball to another person while saying their own name, making eye contact beforehand to ensure readiness.
Gradually, a second and third ball are added, increasing the level of attention, presence, and group coordination, while keeping the atmosphere playful and light.
Once we've finished this activity, we'll set off together on a day-long trip to the mountains.



Development

1. "Packing the Backpack" – Strengths & Qualities

The activity takes place at a different location, about a kilometre away.
Standing in a circle, participants metaphorically "pack a backpack" using natural objects found nearby.

Each object symbolizes a personal quality, strength, or resource that the participant can bring into the group process and also offer to others.

This exercise supports self-reflection, value awareness, and mutual recognition.

2. The gate

Participants are asked to build a gate using items found in nature. The gate they build is intended to symbolise the transition from the artificial and disruptive to the natural and development-supporting.

3.What I leave behind is what I take with me.

Participants are asked to find two natural objects—one symbolizing what they want to leave behind, and the other symbolizing what they want to take with them on the journey.

One by one, participants are asked to walk through the gate, first placing an object in front of it that symbolizes what they wish to leave behind.

If anyone is ready, before passing through the gate, they can share with the group what they are leaving behind and what they are taking with them.

3. Solo Silent Walk

After passing through the gate, each participant walks alone in silence. The walk lasts about an hour.

4. Closing reflection circle – what I found in the silence

Participants respond to the closing questions:

- How did I feel in the silence? Was it comfortable or difficult for me?
- Was it a pleasant or unpleasant experience?
- What emotions did I feel?
- What thoughts came to mind?
- What does silence give, and what does it take away?





River of love



- To help group members get to know one another better and to foster an atmosphere of mutual trust
- To deepen participants' connection with nature and with themselves
- To build a sense of agency through challenge and cooperation
- To practice asking for and receiving support in a natural environment
- To reflect more deeply on one's life so far



3 Hours



6 - 12 people



Natural environment (mountains)
A stick for drawing circles on the ground, or pieces of string that we can use to make them
natural elements: sticks, leaves, stones, flowers

Description of the workshop/session:

29

Introduction
1. Pair Conversations – Getting to Know Each Other

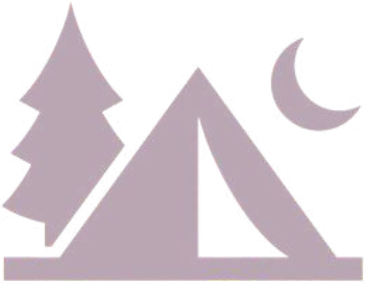
Participants form pairs and engage in guided conversations around several topics:

- Nature in my life
- My greatest adventure
- An important encounter with a person with special needs
- A meaningful life experience connected with helping others

After each conversation round, participants switch partners. This activity supports connection, active listening, and the sharing of personal stories.

Development
1. Comfort Zones Exercise

Facilitators draw three concentric circles on the ground representing different comfort zones. Participants stand around the outer circle. The facilitators then read out a series of questions and statements related to personal experiences, attitudes, and challenges. Participants respond by positioning themselves in one of



the circles, depending on how strongly they identify with the statement. The exercise encourages self-awareness, openness, and recognition of similarities and differences within the group.

2. Nature Challenge – River Trail Crossing
The group embarks on a physically demanding section of the route along a river, requiring careful movement, cooperation, and mutual support. Participants are encouraged to notice moments when they need assistance and to practice both asking for help and offering it to others.

Facilitators support reflection on:
- personal courage and perseverance
- trust in others
- accepting support
- cooperation in challenging situations

The activity strengthens participants' sense of agency and competence while providing an authentic experience of overcoming obstacles in nature.

3. The river of life
The participants are standing on the riverbank. The facilitator introduces the activity by asking each participant to think of their life as a river, which has a source, places where it flows rapidly, places where it encounters obstacles and either overcomes them or changes course, and places where it slows down and meanders in wide bends. From time to time, we may find boulders in the river – these are the milestones of our lives – important events that have changed its course.

The facilitator then invites the participants to each create their own 'river of life' individually using elements of nature (e.g. leaves, stones, flowers, etc.). In the next step, the participants wander from river to river whilst their creators explain what their work represents and what elements it contains

4. Closing reflection circle – river of my life

Participants respond to the closing questions:
- How did I feel whilst creating my river of life?
- Did anything surprise me?
- How did I feel whilst sharing my story?



Closer



- To deepen participants' connection with nature and with themselves
- Work on building trust in the group and in oneself
- To practise sharing in a safe environment



2.5 hours



natural environment (forest)
eye mask



6 - 12 people

Description of the workshop/session:

30

Introduction
1. The facilitators invite participants to reflect in pairs on the following topics:

- What does trust mean to me?
- What do I need in order to trust someone?
- What makes it difficult for me to build trust?

Development
2. A blind man's walk
The facilitator invites participants to pair up with someone they feel safe with.

Each pair is given a blindfold. One person puts on the blindfold; the other's task is to guide them around the area for 30 minutes in such a way that the person being guided feels safe – both physically and emotionally.
After this time, the roles are swapped. The person guiding puts on the blindfold.

The facilitator informs the participants that they may remove the blindfold and stop the activity at any time.

After about an hour and once the pairs have swapped, the facilitator invites each pair to find a safe spot away from the other participants and discuss the activity amongst themselves.

Following this stage, all participants are invited to share their experiences in a group circle.

3. I'm giving you a tree
Participants are invited to pair up again, but with different partners to those in the previous exercise.

Each pair is given a blindfold



One person in each pair puts on the blindfold. The other person guides them through the forest to a single, chosen tree which they would like to 'give' to their partner as a present. The person offering this particular tree should know why they would like to give this specific tree (e.g. because a certain feature of the tree reminds them of the person to whom they are giving it).

The task of the person wearing the blindfold is to focus on finding their way to the tree using senses other than sight and to try to memorise the route.

When the pair stand in front of the tree, the person wearing the blindfold identifies it using all available senses apart from sight and tries to memorise their tree. When they are ready, the guide leads them back to the starting point. They can then remove the blindfold.

The next step is to try to find their tree – this time whilst seeing. If necessary, the guide may offer guidance. When the pair stands in front of the tree they have chosen, the guide's task is to explain why that particular tree was chosen as a gift.

Afterwards, the roles are swapped.

4. Circle of silence

To avoid disrupting the atmosphere of intimacy and tranquillity, participants are invited to sit in a circle together and spend some time in silence.

In my circle



- To deepen participants' connection with nature and with themselves
- To encourage reflection on what is important to participants
- To practise sharing in a safe environment
- To introduce an element of shared fun, light-heartedness and joy



3 hours



natural environment (mountains)
a cluster of trees natural elements: sticks, leaves, stones, flowers



6 - 12 people

Description of the workshop/session:

31

1. Tree monster - strategy game
The facilitator invites the participants to take part in a team game, the aim of which is to devise a strategy to protect the Dryad Forest from a monster.

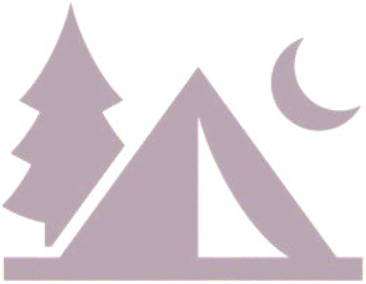
Each participant becomes a Dryad – they stand next to a tree that they will protect. There should be one more tree than there are participants. This one tree will be targeted by the 'wooden monster', played by one of the facilitators. As a rule, the monster can only 'occupy' (by touching) a tree that is not being guarded (touched) by a Dryad.

The players' task is to move between the trees in such a way that the monster is unable to touch an unguarded tree.

Once the game is over, participants are invited to answer the questions:

- What made the strategy work/fail?
- How did the strategy-making process go? Was there a leader?
- Did every participant feel that they had been listened to?
- How do the participants feel after the game?

Development
2. Landing
The group stands in a circle. The facilitator invites the participants to close their eyes, focus their attention on their bodies and scan them from the bottom up: to their feet – how they are standing, whether they are stable or unsteady; to the knees – whether they are relaxed or tense; to the hips and chest – asking them to pay attention to their heartbeat and their breathing – whether the chest is rising and the ribs expanding; to the shoulders and neck –





whether they are tense or relaxed; to the elbows and fingers. Finally, to the face. The facilitator then invites participants to turn their attention outwards and take in as much of the surrounding natural world as possible; finally, they ask participants to open their eyes, look around, make eye contact with their neighbours and smile at them.

3. The Mandala of My World

The facilitators invite participants to reflect on the life scenarios they created during the previous session. Next, they invite participants to shift their focus from the past to the present and to think of their immediate surroundings as a model consisting of concentric circles, with the centre at the heart and repeating elements.

Next, they invite participants to individually create a mandala from elements of nature they find, which will represent their world. They should place themselves at the centre of the mandala. People and important matters should be placed close by, whilst less important ones further away.

When the participants have finished creating their mandalas, they take turns inviting the other participants to view their mandalas and explain the meaning of the individual elements.

4. Closing reflection circle

Participants respond to the closing questions:

- Once this stage is complete, the facilitator invites all participants to form a circle together and support reflection on:
- Was the creative process easy or difficult, enjoyable or unpleasant? What emotions did it evoke?
- Did something take them by surprise? Or perhaps something turned out to be very clear?
- Was the process of sharing with others easy or difficult?

Closing ceremony



- To support participants in processing personal and shared memories of the expedition
- To affirm group cohesion, mutual recognition, and gratitude
- To provide a symbolic closing ritual that marks the transition from expedition to everyday life



3 hours



natural environment
a safe place for a bonfire
flints



6 - 12 people

Description of the workshop/session:

32

Introduction
1.The No Matches Challenge

- the facilitators invite the group to gather the wood needed to light the bonfire together
- joint setting of the focal stack
- the facilitators hand out flints to the participants and lead a workshop on striking a fire without using matches
- the facilitators invite participants to take up the challenge: to light a fire without using matches

Development
2.Ceremony of gratitude

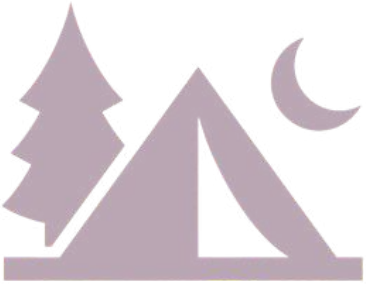
Participants are invited to find three items from nature. The first symbolises what each person wishes to take away from the trip (feelings, thoughts, what they have learnt, etc.); the second, something they wish to leave behind; and the third, something for which they wish to thank someone in the group.

When the participants are ready, they sit in a circle around the campfire.

The person who volunteers goes first. First, they say what they are taking with them, then what they are leaving behind, and finally they approach the person they wish to thank, explain why, and present them with the third item.

The recipient is the next person to speak.

4.Closing circle
The leader invites the participants to share their thoughts on how the expedition has ended.



Who were you before the loss?



- To explore the young person's identity, routines, hobbies, and life before their loss;
- To emphasise the importance of self-identity.



1.5 hours



No materials needed except those found in nature



8 - 10

Description of the workshop/session:

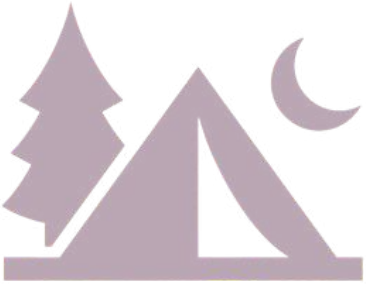
33

Introduction:

1. Begin by explaining the concept of identity; how things can shape our identity (family, friends, hobbies, interests, likes and dislikes, life experiences etc.).
2. Ask them to connect with and reflect on who they were before they experienced the loss of a family member. This can be done during a quiet, reflective walk through the gardens.
3. After the walk, settle down in a quiet area for the following activity:

Nature Collage

1. Ask the young persons to collect leaves, flowers, stones, shells, or twigs; anything that they find on the ground. Stress the importance of leaving no trace, ie. do not take anything off of trees or pull anything out of the ground.
2. Arrange them into a picture or design that represents their personality before the loss.
3. Encourage sharing to debrief on the activity.







Emotions 1



- To learn to recognise and identify emotions related to grief;
- To explore healthy outlets for emotions;
- To release & process emotions.



20 minutes



No materials needed.



8 - 10

Description of the workshop/session:

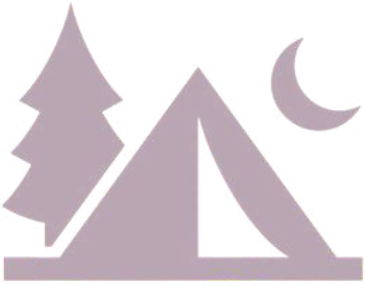
34

This workshops will take place on a sandy beach.

Introduction:
Begin by discussing different emotions before moving on to the activity:

Identifying, Releasing, & Processing Emotions

1. Ask the young persons to draw different emotions in the sand, close to the shoreline.
2. Watch as the waves wash away the emotions - this can symbolise the release of emotions.
3. Discuss and reflect on healthy ways of releasing and processing emotions, including through connection with nature.



Emotions 2



- To recognise and identify emotions related to grief;
- To explore healthy outlets for emotions;
- To release & process emotions.



30 minutes



No materials needed.



8 - 10

Description of the workshop/session:

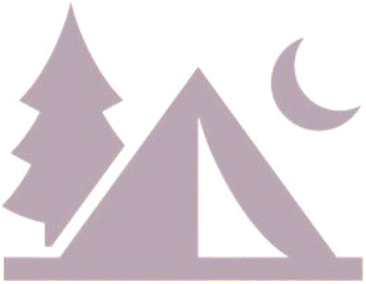
35

This session can take place in any open space withing nature.

Introduction:
Begin by discussing different emotions before moving on to the activity:

Emotion Movement Walk

1. The group of young persons are to go on a short, silent, mindful walk where they reflect on their emotions and ways in which the sounds of nature can be helpful;
2. Encourage the children to use this time to focus on the sensations in their body, the sounds around them, and connect to nature;
3. Once the walk is finished, gently break the silence by asking the group to sit down, take a few deep breaths, and share with each other their experience.





Reactions to Grief - 1



- To explore the physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural reactions to grief;
- To provide the young persons with coping strategies for these reactions.



45 minutes



1 A3 cardboard paper for each participant, Colours, Markers & Glue



8 - 10

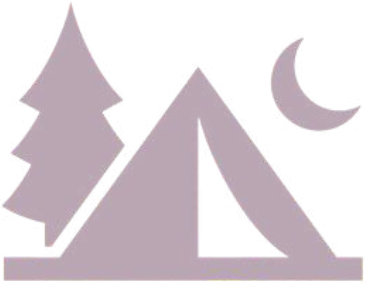
Description of the workshop/session:

36

Introduction:
Begin by discussing the different categories of reactions that grief can bring about (cognitive, physical, emotional, and behavioural)

Body Mapping

1. On a large piece of paper, ask the participants to draw a silhouette of a body;
2. Using things found in nature, they are to identify 4 different objects (leaves, sticks, dirt) that represent the 4 different reactions to grief;
3. They must then map where each of the reactions lives within their body by sticking the objects within the silhouette of the body.
4. Facilitate a discussion on what can be done to alleviate or support the different reactions that are felt.









Reactions to Grief - 2



To identify and explore coping strategies when addressing grief.



45 minutes



Pebbles, Paint, Paintbrushes, Rinse cups, Water, Markers



8 - 10

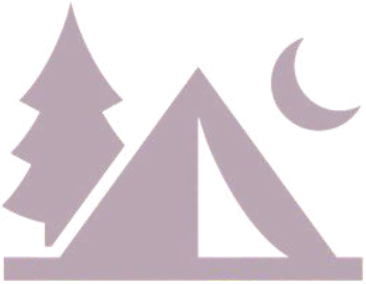
Description of the workshop/session:

37

Introduction:
Begin by discussing healthy coping strategies for the different reactions we can have to grief.

Stone Painting

1. Ask the participants to find a stone that resonates with them;
2. The participants must then paint the stones with their preferred coping strategies on them;
3. Participants are encouraged to use the stones as a reminder of their coping strategies and strength.



Who was the person you lost?



- To honour and remember the person who passed away;
- To allow space for both grief and healing.



60 minutes



1 A3 cardboard paper for each participant, Glue, Markers, & Photo of the person they have lost.



8 - 10

Description of the workshop/session:

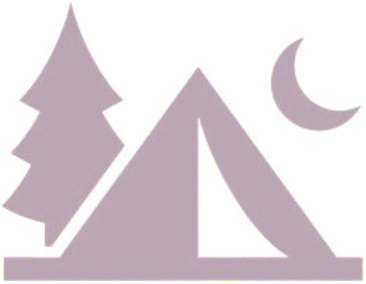
38

Introduction:

1. Each participant is encouraged to bring a photo of the person they lost, and talks briefly about the person who they've lost;
2. Each participant can name one thing about the person which they used to love/appreciate the most about them before moving to the activity;

Main activity:

1. On an A3, the participants are going to use the photo of the person as a guide, and create a nature collage to form the face of the person they've lost.
2. They will be using resources found in nature, such as; leaves, rocks, sticks, the mud, flowers etc.
3. The participants are encouraged to find meaning behind the objects used in the collage – for example; flowers to remind them of the smell of the person, the sticks can represent the strength of the person, the rocks = support etc.



Group Dynamics & Safety



To establish trust & safety withing the group.



1.5 hours



Blindfolds



8 - 10

Description of the workshop/session:

39

Introduction:
Activity 1:
Circle check-in with nature objects

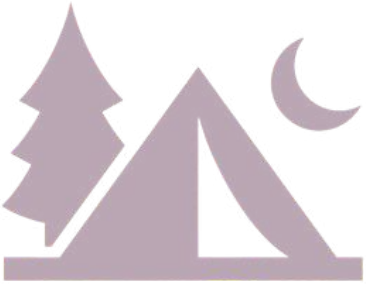
1. Each participant is to pick an item from their surroundings (stone, leaf, stick);
2. Use the item to share one word about how they feel. This sets a tone of listening and respect.

Activity 2:
3. The group is split up into pairs;
4. One person is blindfolded, the other is not;
5. The non-blindfolded person is to lead the blindfolded through the trees, and the person blindfolded needs to take notice of what he/she feels (how many trees were there, what sounds did they hear, what did they smell)

This is an ice breaker and at the same time shows us how to safely guide each other.

Activity 3:
Nature scavenger hunt in 2 teams

6. The participants are split up into 2 teams;
7. They have to look for a number of objects that represent something (for eg: 5 objects that represent Happiness, and the other team looks for 5 objects that represent Strength)
8. Encourage a discussion on finding meaning in different objects as well as the value of teamwork.



Reactions to Illness



To explore how children react emotionally, physically, and behaviourally to having a loved one with a serious illness;
To distinguish between healthy vs unhealthy coping.



30 minutes



No materials needed.



8 - 10

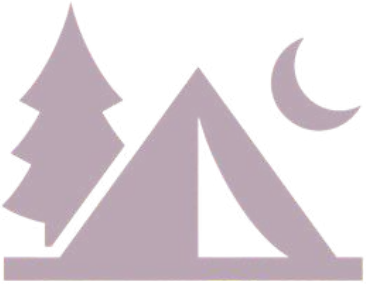
Description of the workshop/session:

40

Introduction:
Begin by discussing different emotions and ask the participants to come up with different objects or imagery that represent the different emotions before moving on to the activity:

Feelings Scavenger Hunt

1. Ask the participants to gather objects that represent different emotions, for example, a sharp rock can represent anger, broken stick can represent sadness, a flower can represent hope or happiness.
2. After they have collected their items, ask them to share with the group the items and the emotions they represent for them.
3. Lead a discussion on how our emotions and reactions to things, including the illness of a family member, can be complex and change every day.



Getting to Know Each Other



To introduce themselves



45 minutes



Ball



15-18 people

Description of the workshop/session:

41

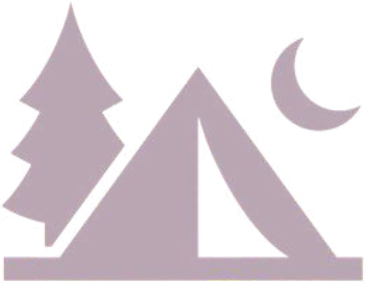
Participants stand in a circle. Each introduces themselves by saying:

“I am [name] and I am represented by [an element from nature].”

Then they throw the ball to another participant. The receiver repeats the name and element of the thrower, then adds their own name and element. The game continues until everyone has introduced themselves.

In the second round, the ball is thrown to someone else, saying their name or element, and then the two switch places.

This activity helps relax the group, stimulates attention, and creates the first connections.





First Aid



To learn to provide first aid



45 minutes



15-18 people



Survival foil, elastic bandages of different sizes, tick tweezers

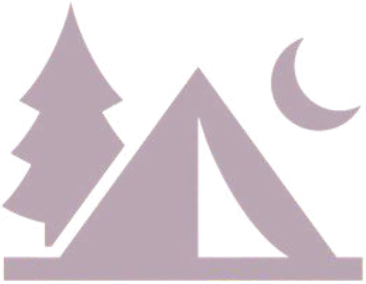
Description of the workshop/session:

42

A free discussion in which participants learn:

- How to use survival foil in cases of hypothermia or burns
- How to build a shelter using survival foil
- How to properly remove a tick with tweezers
- How to provide first aid for sprains using an elastic bandage
- What a basic first aid kit for hiking should contain

Participants then practice these techniques in pairs or small groups.



Stories with Meaning – Storytelling Exercise



This exercise aims to stimulate creativity and introspection by connecting participants with nature and their personal experiences, using natural objects as personal metaphors.



60 minutes



Objects from nature



15-18 people

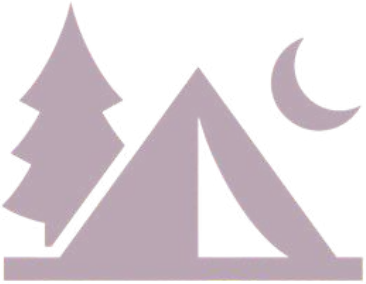
Description of the workshop/session:

43

Through observation, reflective writing, and group sharing, participants develop storytelling skills, empathy, and self-awareness.

Steps:

1. Participants explore nature and choose an object that represents or fascinates them, placing it in a shared group space
2. They then select one object from the group collection and describe it in writing .
3. Next, they reflect on how their life might relate to that object and write a short poem, haiku, or story about it
4. Finally, they share their writing and explain why they chose that object.



Trees



The “Trees” activity helps build a sense of safety and improves participants’ ability to stay focused and present in the moment. It is usually very well received by young participants.



45 minutes



scarfs, nature



15-18 people

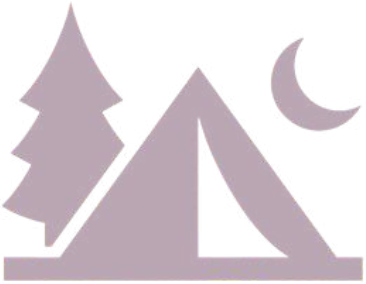
Description of the workshop/session:

44

- Divide participants into pairs.
- Ask one person in each pair to cover their eyes with a scarf.
- The other person becomes their guide and must carefully lead them through the forest (without straying too far from camp).
- The guide chooses a tree and asks their partner (still blindfolded) to study the tree as thoroughly as possible with all senses except sight—touch, smell, etc.
- The guide then leads their partner back to the starting point, taking a less direct route to make it less obvious. Once there, they remove the blindfold, and the participant must find their tree.
- After the tree is found, they switch roles.

Group reflection:

Afterward, gather the group to discuss their experience. Ask questions like:
- How did you feel in each role?
- Which role felt more comfortable?
- How was it to find your tree?
- How did it feel to use different senses?
- How did it feel to be responsible for someone else or to trust another person and let go of control?







Mandala



In this activity, participants create a mandala image using natural objects they find around them



80 minutes



objects from nature



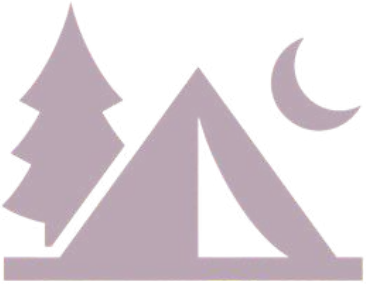
15-18 people

Description of the workshop/session:

45

Some may not have seen a mandala before, so it helps to have printed examples. The mandala's theme can be chosen by the leader — for example, "Who am I?" or "What am I made of?" Once the mandalas are complete, the group gathers for a viewing tour to observe each creation. During this tour, creators can share their thoughts and explain their work (only if they wish — no pressure).

This exercise calms participants, helps them relax, and encourages self-reflection and deeper connection with themselves.



Tent Building



The goal is to collaborate, manage uncertainty, and observe spontaneous group dynamics.



60 minutes



5 tents, chestnuts with symbols, small pouch

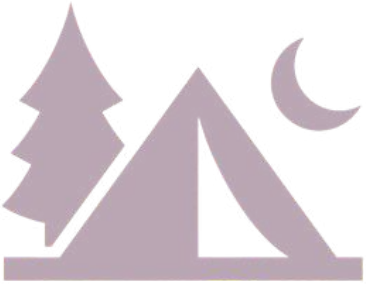


15-18 people

Description of the workshop/session:

46

Participants are divided into five teams, based on the symbol they draw. Each team receives a tent and general assembly instructions. Each participant ties the knots themselves, following the facilitator's demonstration. After completing the tents, participants inspect them, share if they'd like to have such experiences in the future, and under what conditions they'd enjoy camping. After a short snack, they disassemble the tents and return them as they were found.







The Line of Fears



The exercise's purpose is to help participants become aware of and express personal fears, while normalizing them through group sharing.



60 minutes



small slips of paper, markers, bowl of water, branches



15-18 people

Description of the workshop/session:

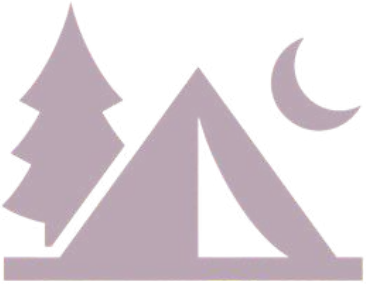
47

Each participant writes a personal fear on a piece of paper.
A line made of branches is drawn on the ground, symbolizing the boundary between fear and freedom.

The facilitator reads each fear aloud. For every fear mentioned, participants position themselves:
- On one side of the line — those who acknowledge feeling that fear.
- On the other side — those who do not currently identify with it.

A collective reflection follows about the role of fear and the emotions that may hide behind it.
Those who don't share the fear explain what helps them stay balanced, while those who do are encouraged to consider what would change in their lives if that fear no longer controlled them.

After each reading, the slip of paper is placed in the bowl of water, and the writing slowly fades — a symbolic reminder that once recognized and accepted, fear loses its shape and power.



The Portal



This ritual marks the beginning of the expedition and symbolizes leaving civilization behind and starting a journey toward one's inner self.



25 minutes



objects from nature: dry branches, leaves, flowers, grass, etc.



15-18 people

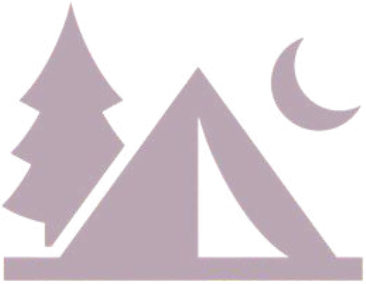
Description of the workshop/session:

48

Participants are asked to find or build a natural "gate" (for example, at the forest's edge or where a path crosses a stream). Once the gate is ready, participants decorate it with symbols (found in nature) representing what they wish to work on during the expedition.

Rules:
- Use only what is found in nature, without harming or breaking it.
- The exercise is done in silence.
- Once someone adds something to the gate, no one should remove it.

After the gate is finished, participants pass through it one by one, at 1-minute intervals, walking silently for 10 minutes afterward, focusing on what they wish to experience or change in their lives.





Rationale for Modalities

Narrative approaches

Narrative approaches



49 "The Magical Day"
50 Something of value
51 The Personal achievements Shield
52 Tree of Life and Storms of Life
53 "The Intentional identity" – map of narrative practice
54 Re-membering conversations map
55 Statement of Position Map 1
56 Statement of Position Map 2
57 My Special Place
58 My Invisible String
59 Becoming the Author of my Story
60 Forum Theatre - Exploring Our Stories Together
61 Meeting my inner voice
62 Talking to Grief through Poetry & Writing
63 Storytelling approach to grief
64 Our Collective Story
65 Stories, Movement & Nature – Building the Foundation
66 Trust, Play & Connection–Goal Balance in Nature
67 Support, Boundaries & Inner Resources
68 Conversations and Relationships That Continue to Shape Us
69 "Special Day" Exercise and Exploring Personal Values
70 Stories, Movement & Nature – Maps, Roles and Trust
71 Definitional Ceremonies – Witnessing Preferred Stories
72 Celebrating Preferred Stories – Closure and Transition

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Why Narrative Therapy

Using narrative therapy with youth is especially important because it offers developmentally appropriate, empowering ways for young people to make meaning of hardship while strengthening their sense of identity, agency, and connection. The narrative approaches respond to the unique emotional, relational, and identity-based challenges that youth face when dealing with suffering, trauma, loss, and change.

Narrative practices help young people address experiences of trauma, mourning, illness, and loss by reconnecting them with preferred identity descriptions—stories of who they are beyond what has happened to them. This is particularly vital during adolescence, a period when identity is still forming and can be easily overshadowed by experiences of distress or failure.

Through externalising practices, narrative therapy separates the young person from the problem, reinforcing the principle that "the person is not the problem; the problem is the problem." This approach reduces shame and self-blame, supports emotional safety, and allows youth to take a more empowered stance toward challenges such as anxiety, grief, or trauma.

Narrative work also revitalises meaningful relationships by inviting young people to reflect on those who have influenced, supported, or inspired them. Re-membering practices strengthen youths' sense of belonging and continuity, which is especially important for young people who may feel isolated or disconnected during times of hardship.

By exploring core values, hopes, and guiding principles—often through accessible metaphors and creative practices such as the Tree of Life—narrative therapy helps youth articulate what matters most to them, even in the midst of adversity. This supports resilience by anchoring young people in values that can guide decision-making and coping across present and future challenges.

Narrative therapy further encourages youth to adopt an active stance of "responding to" hardship rather than being defined by it. This orientation fosters agency and helps young people recognise their existing skills, commitments, and acts of resistance in the face of suffering.

Through re-authoring conversations, youth are supported to craft alternative, more empowering life narratives grounded in their own lived experiences. These narratives are strengthened by the involvement of supportive audiences through outsider-witness and definitional ceremony practices, which affirm youths' strengths and preferred identities.

Finally, the narrative practice of attending to what is "absent but implicit" helps young people recognise the values, cares, and hopes that are often hidden beneath expressions of distress. This approach authenticates emotional pain while simultaneously highlighting meaning, purpose, and personal integrity.

Together, these narrative approaches make narrative therapy a powerful and respectful method for working with youth—one that honours their experiences, supports identity development, and promotes resilience, agency, and connection during some of the most challenging periods of their lives.

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psiterra Think globally - act locally!

Tools

"The Magical Day" - exercise



To describe and enrich the intentional identity



N/A



50 minutes



14 - 16 people

Description of the workshop/session:

49

1) In pairs:

One person to spend 5 minutes talking about how they would spend a 'magical day'. This could be something like sailing, surfing, watching films, snake charming, playing golf, spending time with family etc. Cover the following areas:

- What the activity is, when you do it, who with, where, how long you have enjoyed this activityetc
- Why this activity is important to you
- Try and put words to what you are valuing in this activity
  - I like watching films because it fires my imagination.
  - I love sailing as I like being part of a team
- Identify someone else who would know that these things (e.g., imagination/being part of a team) are important to you
- Give examples of how this thing that is important to you is expressed in other aspects of your life, e.g. at work, as a parent with your friends

The second person to listen and to ask questions to support the above areas of description as appropriate.

2) Swap roles

3) Each person introduces their partner to the group reflecting:

- What it was that most stood out for them about what they have heard - Why they felt drawn to this
- What it tells them about what is important to the talker (Fox, Hugh, 2011)



Something of value exercise



Putting into circulation
the intentional identity



Pen and paper



30 minutes



14 - 16 people

Description of the workshop/session:

50

1. Form a dyad with the neighbour next to you.
2. Tell each other in 3 minutes each, something about yourself.
3. Write individually in a minute or two on a sheet of paper something meritorious about the person in the dyad to which you belong. "Meritorious" can be something "important" for you, something "remarkable", which deserves to be promoted, found out by others. It doesn't have to be EVERYTHING the person says about them.
4. In 2 minutes, read to the person in the dyad what you have meritoriously written about him or her and explain why, how you chose that aspect, how it caught your attention.
5. Present and discuss in plenary some of what you have discovered from this experience.

(Gavrilovici O., Dronic A., 2020)





The Personal achievements Shield - exercise



The aims are to increase self-awareness, to build confidence, to explore personal identity and to improve communication and self-presentation.



30 minutes



Pen and paper



14 - 16 people

Description of the workshop/session:

51

Part 1:
(Individually) Make a shield divided into four quadrants. Note in each quadrant 3 successes or achievements relevant to each of them, as follows:

Quadrant 1: in the last 10 years,
Q 2: yesterday,
Q3: in the last 2 years;
Q4: Last Week

Part 2:
(In couples or small groups)

Each participant describes the details on his/her Shield the colleague(s) support the telling.

Part 3:
(Collectively)
Discuss some of the experiences, ideas and conclusions after this exercise



Tree of Life and Storms of Life



The aim is to help people understand their lives in a more empowering and meaningful way—especially after difficulties or trauma.



1.5 to 2 hours



Paper, Colouring pencils



14 - 16 people

Description of the workshop/session:

52

Part 1:
(Individually)
Draw a tree and write in the different areas:

1. Roots - represent where you come from: places, people, memories that shaped you.
2. Ground - Where do you currently live? The daily or usual activities you do
3. Trunk - represents your strengths and abilities—what you are good at.
4. Branches - represent your hopes and goals
5. Leaves - names of significant people in life
6. Fruits - gifts that you have been given
7. Seeds - represent your positive contributions—what you bring to this group or community.

Part 2:
(In couples or small groups)
Each participant describes the details on his/her Tree of Life; the colleague(s) support the telling

Part 3:
(Collectively)
Create an exhibition with all the individual Trees of Life: The Forest of Life The participants are walking in the exhibition, they may add, comment or write questions on the posters

Part 4:
(Plenary, for groups with problematic shared experience) The Storms of Life The participants are invited to contribute in a collective conversation:
How we resisted (the problem and the problematic effects)?
What knowledges we used?
What skills or abilities were applied?





Part 5:
(Plenary)
What did you notice during the activity?
What similarities did you discover between you and others?
What surprised you?
What strengths does our group have?
How can our different backgrounds enrich our time together?
What do you take with you from this activity? (It can be a word, a feeling, or a small insight) What you bring back to your community or at home? (It can be school or academic community, work group, family, or friends)

Part 6:
(Plenary)
Celebration, certificates & song

(Ncube, 2006)

“The Intentional identity” – map of narrative practice - exercise



Possibilities to inquire about intentional identity descriptors



30 minutes



Pen, paper, a printed copy of the practice



14 - 16 people

Description of the workshop/session:

- What are your intentions or purposes (about the aspect in the Landscape of Action) (e.g. in coming on this course?)
- Why was this important you? What does this intention or purpose say about what you give value to in life?
- Thinking about these intentions and these things that are important to you, what are your hopes and dreams for your life in relation to this?
- If you were to come up with some guidelines for living to help you achieve these hopes and dreams, what would they be? (2-3 guidelines or principles would be good)
- What does all this say about what it is you stand for in the world?

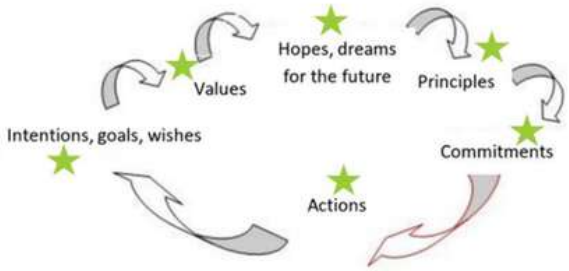
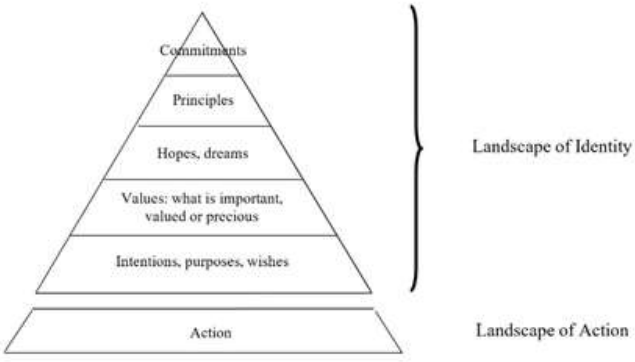


Fig. 1 Possibilites to inquire about intentional identity descriptors (Gavrilovici, 2014)



These categories are not the only ones possible. For instance we could consider aspirations, ambitions or passions, and there could be many others.

Equally, although this order fits together fairly logically, it is not the only possible way to order these categories, and in conversation they may emerge in a different order.

Fig. 2 Possibilites to inquire about intentional identity descriptors (Fox, 2011)

Re-membering conversations map – exercise



Reconnect with meaningful relationships that support their identity and sense of self.



30 minutes



Pen, paper, a printed copy of the practice



14 - 16 people

Description of the workshop/session:

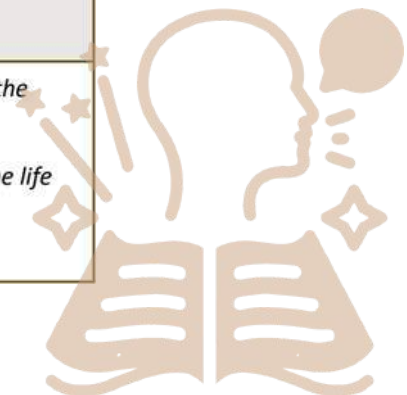
54

Sustain a conversation with of a person who describes a preferred relationship. Explore with the person the re-membering conversations map using the following scaffolding (1-2-3-4) knitting a narrative between the landscape of action and identity and the protagonists.

1. How has the witness contributed to your life? (actions in relation to the witness)
2. How did (these contributions) come to change the meanings of who you are and what your life is like? (effects at the level of identity regarding oneself and one's life (meaning)
3. What is the explanation for the witness's interest in you? How did you contribute to the life of the witness? (action)
4. What were or may be the meanings given by the witness about himself and his life, as a result of your contributions? (meaning)

	THE PERSON IN THE CENTRE	THE PERSON IN RELATION WITH
Landscape of identity	*How did (these contributions) come to change the meanings of who you are and what your life is like?* (effects at the level of identity regarding oneself and one's life) 2	*What were or may be the meanings given by the person about himself/herself and his or her life, as a result of your contributions?* 3
Landscape of action	*How has the witness contributed to your life?* (actions in relation to the witness) 1	*What is the explanation for the witness's interest in you?* *How did you contribute to the life of the witness?* (action) 4

Table 1. The Re-membering narrative practice map. Knitting narratively the two persons actions and identities in resonance:



Statement of Position Map 1



To separate the person from their problem and to double listen for the unique outcomes (exceptions that are not predicted by the problem).



60 minutes



Pen and paper,



14 - 16 people

Description of the workshop/session:

55

Statement of Position Map 1
– from Michael White's Workshop Handouts

Statement of Position Map 1
Four categories of inquiry, that constitute externalizing conversations:
(Start the exercise from inviting the person in the centre to tell the problematic story in a few minutes, then follow the pathways)

1. Negotiation of an experience-near, particular, and non-structuralist definition of the problem/concern (as an alternative to an experience-distant, global, and structuralist definition of the problem/concern).

2. Mapping of the effects/influence of the problem through the various domains of living in which complications are identified (home, workplace, school, peer contexts; familial relationships, one's relationship with oneself, friendships; purposes, hopes, dreams, aspirations and values; life's horizons, one's future possibilities, etc.).

3. [Statement of position]: Evaluation of the effects/influence of the problem in these domains of living (Is this okay with you?; How do you feel about this?; How is this by you?; Where do you stand on this?; What it your position on this?; Is this a positive or negative development? Or would you say both, or neither of these? Or would you say an in-between development?; and so on).

4. Justification of these evaluations (Why is/isn't this okay for you?; Why do you feel this way about this development?; How come you're taking this stand/position on this development?; Would you tell me a story about your life that would help me to understand why you would take this position on this development?; and so on).



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Statement of Position Map 2



To develop a rich description of people's unique outcomes, exceptions, and problem-solving skills, and to strengthen and consolidate their preferred alternative life story.



60 minutes



Pen and paper,



14 - 16 people

Description of the workshop/session:

56

1. Negotiation of an experience-near and particular definition of the unique outcome/exception/ problem-solving skill.

2. Mapping of the effects/potential effects of the unique outcome/ exception/ problem-solving skill in those various domains of living in which these effects might be identified

(home, workplace, school, peer contexts; familial relationships, one's relationship with oneself, friendships; purposes, hopes, dreams, aspirations and values; life's horizons, one's future possibilities, etc.). Bringing things into relationship.

3. [Statement of position]: Evaluation of the effects/potential effects of the unique outcome/ exception/ problem-solving skill in these domains of living (Is this okay with you?; How do you feel about this?; How is this by you?; Where do you stand on this?; What it your position on this?; Is this a positive or negative development? Or would you say both, or neither of these? Or would you say an in-between development?; and so on).

4. Justification of these evaluations (Why is/isn't this okay for you?; Why do you feel this way about this development?; How come you're taking this stand/position on this development?; Would you tell me a story about your life that would help me to understand why you would take this position on this development?; and so on).



My Special Place



- Support emotional regulation through guided relaxation
- Help children develop a personal “safe place” narrative
- Encourage sensory awareness and imaginative expression
- Strengthen a sense of control and inner safety



30 minutes



N/A



5 - 10 people

Description of the workshop/session:

57

1. Introduce the session, inviting them to sit down or lie down comfortably

2. Ask them to close their eyes and focus on their breathing

3. Guide them through the following meditation:

“Now imagine you are in your special place...

Look around you...
What can you see?
Are there colours, shapes, or people?
Is it indoors or outdoors?

Listen carefully...
What sounds can you hear?
Is it quiet... or are there gentle sounds like waves, wind, or birds?

Are there any smells in your special place?
Fresh air... flowers... food... something familiar?

What does it feel like where you are?
Is the ground soft... warm... cool?
Can you feel the breeze or the sun?

Is there a taste connected to this place?
Maybe something sweet, fresh, or comforting?





How do you feel in this place?
Safe… calm… happy… peaceful?

Remember… this is your place.
You can come back here anytime you need to feel calm or safe.

Take one more deep breath…
And when you're ready, gently open your eyes."

4. Invite them children to describe their experience in their special place.



My Invisible String



- Explore the continuing bond with the person who has passed away
- Support expression of complex and mixed emotions (e.g., love, regret, longing)
- Help teens externalise and visualise their relationship
- Encourage meaning-making and identity development
- Reinforce that connection can continue in evolving ways



60 minutes



5 - 10 people



A3 Chart,
papers,
coloured markers,
pens & pencils

Description of the workshop/session:

58

1. Teens are to create a visual map. They are to place themselves on one side of the page and the person they miss on another

2. Guide them to use coloured lines to represent different types of connection (e.g., love, regret, unfinished business)

3. Invite them to:

- Write a letter, text message, or unsent note
- A memory/ Feeling/ Something unsaid
- Create a word cloud of memories, traits, or phrases

4. Prompt them: Show what your connection feels like now, not how it 'should' look.

5. Reflection on Journal:

- What connects you to this person now?
- When do you feel closest to them?
- Are there habits, values, or traits you've carried from them?
- Are there moments you "reach" for them (even internally)?
- What keeps the connection strong? What makes it feel distant?
- Can grief and connection exist at the same time?

6. End on the following sentiment 'Connection doesn't have to disappear for life to continue. It can evolve, and you get to define what that looks like.'



Becoming the Author of my Story



- Help young people externalise and organise personal experiences
- Build narrative skills (beginning, middle, end)
- Encourage perspective-taking and meaning-making
- Strengthen sense of identity and agency



45 - 60 minutes



Pen and paper



5 - 10 people

Description of the workshop/session:

59

1. Begin by explaining the plan for the session:
"Today, we're going to become authors. Authors tell stories about characters, places, and events, and today, the story will be about you. Sometimes, when we tell our story like an author, it can help us understand it in a new way and feel more in control of it."

2. Introduce simple storytelling elements:
Setting: Where and when does the story happen?
Character: Who is in the story?
Beginning: What was life like before this moment?
Middle: What happened? What changed?
End (or "So far..."): Where are things now?

3. Writing activity.
Children write their story using prompts - Story Template:
Title of my story:
Once upon a time / In the beginning... (What was life like?)
One day... (What happened?)
Because of that... (What changed?)
Now... (Where am I today?)
Encourage descriptive elements:
What did the place look like?
What time was it?
What were the characters like?
What was the main character feeling or thinking?



4. Invite sharing:
Follow-up questions:
“What would you call the main character in your story?”
“What strengths did they show?”
“What helped them get through this?”
Externalise: “The character went through something difficult…”
Re-author: Highlight resilience
“What does this story say about you as a person?”
“What kind of person is the main character?”

5. Reflect:
“What was it like to tell your story as an author?”
Reinforce: “You are the author of your story, and your story is still being written.”
Ask them to add a final line:
“The next chapter might be…”







Forum Theatre - Exploring Our Stories Together



- Encourage expression of personal experiences through storytelling and roleplay
- Build empathy and understanding through shared perspectives
- Explore different ways of responding to challenging situations
- Strengthen problem-solving and sense of agency
- Promote group cohesion through collaborative participation



90 minutes



5 - 10 people



Chairs,
clothing,
wigs,
fabric

Description of the workshop/session:

60

1. Begin by explaining the plan for the session:
"Today we're going to try something called Forum Theatre. This means we'll watch a short scene acted out by some volunteers, and then we'll get to pause it, change it, and explore different ways the story could go. There's no right or wrong. This is a space to try things out and learn from each other."

2. Ask for 2 volunteers to act out a short scenario

3. Provide a simple, relatable prompt, for example:
A child feeling left out at school after a loss
Not knowing how to respond when someone mentions the person who died
Feeling misunderstood by friends or family

4. Give them 2–3 minutes to prepare.

5. Actors perform the scene once without interruption

6. Audience watches and reflects

7. Interactive Forum Theatre (20–25 mins).
Explain the rules: Anyone can say "Stop" at any point
They can:

- Suggest what a character could do differently
- Replace a character and act it out
- Add a new line or reaction



8. Facilitator Role:
Guide gently, keep the space safe

Ask reflective questions:

- “What could they say here?”
- “What might help in this moment?”
- “How might that change what happens next?”

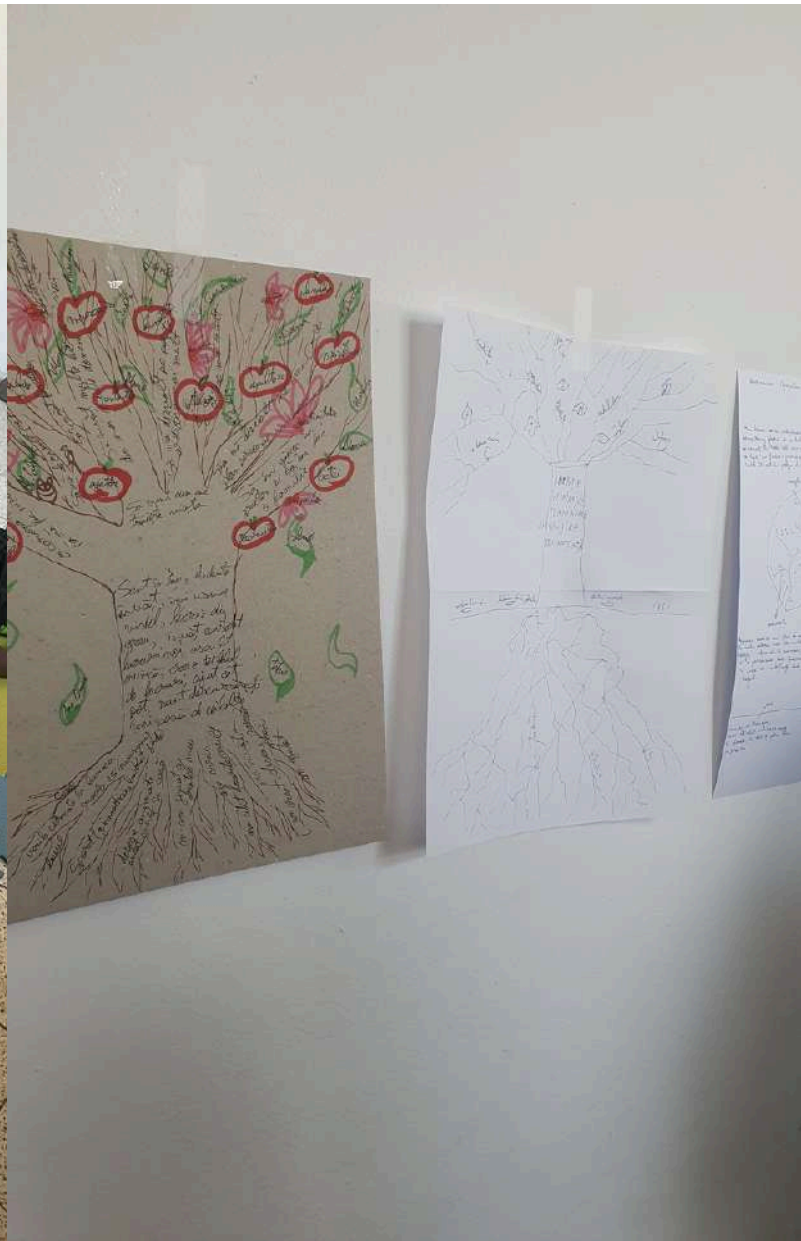
9. Bring the group together:
Discussion prompts:

- “What did you notice during the different versions?”
- “Which responses felt most helpful or realistic?”
- “Did anything surprise you?”
- “How might this relate to real-life situations?”

10. Link to real life:
“What could you take from this into your own life?”

11. Reflection & Discussion





Meeting my inner voice



- Help participants recognise and externalise their inner voice/self-talk
- Explore how thoughts influence emotions and behaviour
- Encourage self-compassion and balanced thinking
- Develop healthier ways of responding to difficult thoughts
- Strengthen sense of agency over internal dialogue



50 minutes



Paper, colours, pens



5 - 10 people

Description of the workshop/session:

61

1. Introduce the concept of an inner voice

2. Exploring the inner voice.
Ask questions about what their inner voice tells them. Is it kind? Critical? Protective?

3. Introduce externalising concept: "Instead of thinking 'this is me', we can think 'this is a voice inside me', something we can understand and respond to."

4. Metaphor creation activity: "If your inner voice was something - an animal, a character, an object, or even the weather - what would it be?"

5. Encourage them to **draw or write** about their inner voice in their selected metaphor.

6. Reflective dialogue: what does your inner voice usually say? How do you usually respond? How would you like to respond instead? Encourage the introduction of a kinder voice.

7. Sharing & Reflection: Facilitator prompts:
- "What did you notice about your inner voice?"
- "Is it trying to protect you in some way?"
- "How can you respond to it differently?"

Narrative Therapy Link:
- Externalization: "The voice is not you, it's something you can talk to."
- Re-authoring: shifting from critical → compassionate response
- Agency: choosing how to engage with the voice



Talking to Grief through Poetry & Writing



- Help participants express thoughts and feelings about grief in a safe, creative way
- Externalise grief by "speaking to it" as something separate
- Encourage emotional processing without pressure to share directly
- Develop self-expression and reflective skills
- Foster a sense of connection through shared creative experiences



60 minutes



Pen and paper



5 - 10 people

Description of the workshop/session:

62

1. Exploring Grief as Something Separate. Introduce externalising idea:
"If grief was something outside of you... what might it be?"

Quick prompts:
- An animal?
- The weather?
- A shadow?
- A wave?

2. Guided Poetry Writing
Offer a simple poem structure (free verse):
Dear Grief,
You show up when...
You make me feel...
Sometimes I wish you would...
But sometimes you also...
I want you to know...

3. Sharing & Reflection

Facilitator prompts:
- "What was it like to write to grief?"
- "Did anything surprise you?"
- "What does your poem say about your relationship with grief?"



A Storytelling Approach to Grief



- To explore grief as a shared, external experience rather than a private failing
- To understand how sorrow and joy can coexist rather than cancel each other out
- To practise giving language and shape to loss through story rather than direct disclosure



75-90 minutes



A physical copy of the book, calm private space, paper & pens



8-16 people

Description of the workshop/session:

63

STEP 1 – Storytelling
Read Cry, Heart, But Never Break a book by by Glenn Ringtved, illustrated by Charlotte Pardi (translated from the original Danish by Robert Moulthrop)
aloud to the group, allowing space for silence and reaction as the story unfolds. Rather than framing it as "a book about death," introduce it as a story that offers a different way of thinking about grief and what it asks of us. Afterwards, invite participants to sit with it for a moment before any discussion begins — no immediate debrief.

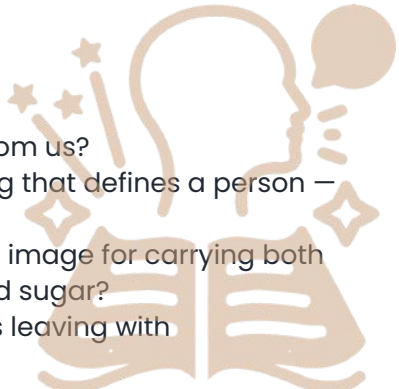
STEP 2 – Small group reflection
In small groups, participants explore the story's central image (that sorrow and joy are inseparable, each giving the other its depth) in relation to their own life, without needing to disclose a specific loss unless they choose to.

Prompts:

- What did this story stir in you?
- Where have you noticed sorrow and joy sitting close together in your own life?
- If your grief (or someone else's) were a character in a story, how would you describe it — not as an illness, but as a visitor, a companion, a weight, a weather system?

STEP 3 – Large group discussion
Bring the group back together to externalise and re-author collectively:

- What did the story suggest grief asks of us, rather than what it takes from us?
- Discuss the idea of grief as something that visits rather than something that defines a person — how does that shift feel?
- Invite participants to name what helps them "hold the cup" (the story's image for carrying both sorrow and sweetness) — what are their own equivalents of cream and sugar?
- Close by inviting (not requiring) one word or image each participant is leaving with





Our Collective Story



- To offer young people (including those with disability, or those who have experienced illness or bereavement in the family) a low-pressure, playful entry point into narrative expression
- To externalise experience through collective fiction rather than direct personal disclosure, reducing the emotional exposure of “telling my story“ alone
- To practise co-authorship of a narrative; reflecting the systemic idea that stories are shaped by many voices, not fixed by one person or one version of events
- To build group cohesion and trust through shared, unpredictable creative output
- To introduce facilitators/peer-supporters to narrative externalisation as a technique they can carry into other settings



60 - 75 minutes



4-10 people per circle



Paper (one sheet per circle) and pens/pencils
A quiet space where participants can sit in a circle without being overheard
Optional: prompt cards with gentle opening lines, for anyone who freezes when it’s their turn
Optional: a soft object to indicate whose turn it is to write (helps with turn-taking for younger or anxious participants)

Description of the workshop/session:

(15 min setup/framing, 25–30 min writing rounds, 15–20 min reading and debrief)

64

Framing

This workshop is adapted from the Exquisite Corpse technique, developed by André Breton.

Explain that the group will co-write a story together, and that no one person controls where it goes. Name this explicitly: *"None of us is responsible for the whole story, we are each responsible for one small piece, and together something unexpected takes shape."* This framing matters for the population as it lowers the stakes and signals that the exercise is not about anyone "getting it right" or revealing something personal.

Optional theme-setting

Unlike the original open-content version, you may offer a loose thematic anchor if appropriate to the group — e.g. "a journey," "a door that opens," "someone who carries something heavy." Keep it metaphorical and open rather than literal (avoid naming illness, death, or disability directly in the prompt itself — let the metaphor do the work, and let participants bring in what's real for them if and when they choose to).



Writing rounds

Sitting in a circle, Author #1 writes an opening line or two, folds the paper to hide it, and passes it on. Each subsequent author sees only the last line (or nothing, depending on your variant — see note below) and continues, folding and passing each time.

Continue until the paper is full or you have done an agreed number of rounds.

The reveal

One person (or the facilitator, if the group prefers not to have a member "own" the reading) reads the whole story aloud, in one continuous voice.

Reflection/debriefing questions

- What surprised you when you heard it read as a whole?
- Did the story end up saying something none of us intended alone?
- Is there a moment in the story that feels like it "belongs" to you, even though you didn't write all of it?
- Sometimes our own stories feel like they only have one version, or one ending. What was it like to watch a story change hands and change shape?
- Was there a part of the story that felt heavier, or lighter, than you expected?
- (Only if the group is ready) Is there anything in this made-up story that echoes something from your own life?

Facilitator notes

1. For groups where anxiety about "not knowing what came before" could be distressing, consider the variant where each writer *can* see the previous line only (fold so only the last line shows) rather than full blackout — this gives just enough continuity to feel safe without full narrative control.
2. You may adapt writing to drawing, symbols, or dictation to a scribe for participants for whom writing is a barrier (motor, literacy, visual impairment).
3. Be prepared for a story that turns dark or sad. Do not redirect it away from that; sit with it, and let the debrief hold it rather than rushing to resolve it.
4. Close with something grounding such as a simple check-out round, or a shared "what do we do with this story now?" (keep it, destroy it, give it a title).



Stories, Movement & Nature – Building the Foundation



- To create a safe and supportive group atmosphere
- To introduce participants to the Story-Movement-Nature approach and the principles of narrative practice
- To establish shared group agreements and expectations
- To encourage initial self-expression through storytelling and movement
- To begin exploring personal narratives in a respectful and non-judgmental environment



3 hours



6 - 12 people



Spacious indoor room or outdoor natural setting
Dixit cards
Prepared value and agreement cards
Flipchart or large sheet of paper and markers
Comfortable space for movement and meditation

Description of the workshop/session:

65

1.Introduction: Welcome Circle
The facilitators welcome participants and briefly introduce the aims of the programme, explaining how storytelling, movement, and contact with nature will be integrated throughout the following sessions.

Participants are invited to introduce themselves by answering two simple questions:

- Why am I here?
- What would I like others to know about me?

This opening round allows everyone to become familiar with one another while giving facilitators an opportunity to understand participants; motivations, expectations, and current needs.

2. Grounding Through Movement
The session continues with a movement-based grounding practice designed to increase bodily awareness and presence.

Participants begin with a short guided meditation focusing on breathing, bodily sensations, and the contact of their feet with the ground. The practice gradually develops into gentle shaking, stamping, and simple grounding movements.

Participants then move freely through the space, weaving between one another, making brief eye contact as they pass before returning attention to themselves. The sequence alternates between connection with others and inward awareness, supporting regulation, presence, and embodied safety.

3. Creating the Group Agreement

Facilitators present a collection of prepared cards describing values and principles that may contribute to a safe group environment, such as confidentiality, respect, active listening, consent, openness, and punctuality.

Participants select the principles they consider most important and explain why they have chosen them. Together, the group creates a shared agreement by discussing and combining these principles into one collective contract. The agreement is written on a large sheet of paper and symbolically signed by all participants.

Development

1. Storytelling with Dixit Cards

Following a short break, participants are invited into the central narrative activity of the session. A wide selection of Dixit cards is spread across the floor. Each participant chooses up to three cards that resonate with them in any way.

Using the selected images as inspiration, participants tell a personal story. The story may describe an important life experience, a recent event, or any moment they feel comfortable sharing. There is no expectation to tell one's life story; participants are encouraged to choose whatever feels meaningful in the present moment.

The exercise introduces storytelling as a way of making meaning from experience while allowing each participant to decide how much they wish to reveal.

2. Reflection on Storytelling

After everyone has shared, the group reflects together on the storytelling process. Facilitators invite participants to consider questions such as:

- Why did I choose this particular story?
- Why did I focus on this moment rather than another?
- What influenced the way I told my story?
- How did it feel to listen to other people's stories?

The discussion encourages awareness that every person constructs and tells their experiences differently, and that many different stories can emerge =from the same life.

Closing

1. Sensory Meditation

The session concludes with a guided mindfulness practice focusing on sensory awareness.

Participants are invited to gradually notice:

- visual impressions,
- sounds in the environment,
- sensations of touch and contact with the ground.

The meditation supports integration of the day's experiences while bringing attention back to the present moment.



2. Final Reflection Circle

Standing together in a circle, participants briefly respond to the closing prompt:

"With what are you leaving today's session?"



Trust, Play & Connection–Goal Balance in Nature



- To deepen participants' sense of safety and connection within the group
- To strengthen body awareness through movement and somatic grounding
- To explore personal values and preferred ways of living through narrative conversations
- To develop active listening and curiosity towards other people's stories
- To support participants in recognizing how their values are expressed in everyday life



3 hours



6 - 12 people



Spacious outdoor or indoor space suitable for movement
Comfortable mats or blankets for meditation
Open space for pair conversations
Flipchart or notebook for facilitator notes

Description of the workshop/session:

66

1.Introduction: Somatic Arrival
Each session begins with a movement-based grounding practice that helps participants transition from everyday life into the workshop space.

The practice combines breathing, body awareness, and playful movement exercises designed to increase presence, regulate the nervous system, and reconnect participants with their bodies.

During this session, participants begin with gentle shaking, grounding through the feet, rhythmic stamping, light jumping, and an exploration of different ways of walking through the Space.

The movement sequence also includes an interactive game in which participants place one hand behind their back while extending the other hand forward with one finger pointing outward. The aim is to gently touch another participant's hand placed behind their back while avoiding being touched themselves. The activity invites playfulness, awareness of others, quick decision-making, and embodied attention.

2. Check-in Circle
Participants gather in a circle to briefly reflect on the previous session before responding to the following questions:

- How am I arriving today?
- What emotions am I noticing?
- What do I need today?



The check-in helps participants become aware of their present experience while strengthening openness and connection within the group.

Development

1. Narrative Exercise – "My Magical Day" - Participants work in pairs.
One participant is invited to describe, in as much detail as possible, what their ideal day would look like. The story may include any activities that feel meaningful, such as spending time with family, travelling, practicing sports, creating art, reading, or simply enjoying moments of peace.

The listener supports the conversation through curiosity and carefully formulated questions, encouraging the speaker to explore:

- What activities would be part of the day?
- Where would they take place?
- Who would be present?
- How much time would be devoted to each activity?
- Why are these activities meaningful?
- What values or qualities do they express?

As the conversation develops, participants are invited to consider who in their lives recognizes these values and to identify examples of how these preferred qualities are already present in other areas of life, such as work, friendships, family relationships, or community involvement.
After approximately five minutes, participants exchange roles.

2. Witnessing Each Other's Stories
When both conversations are complete, participants return to the group.

Each person briefly introduces their partner by sharing the values, strengths, and preferred ways of living that they heard expressed during the conversation, rather than simply summarizing the story itself. This practice encourages deep listening and allows participants to experience their stories being reflected back by another person.

3. Group Reflection
The group reflects together on the exercise.
Participants are invited to explore questions such as:

- What stayed with me from my partner's story?
- What surprised or moved me?
- Which values seemed especially important?
- What does this story reveal about the person's preferred way of living?

Facilitators also invite participants to notice how easily—or how difficultly—it can be to speak about what truly matters to them.

Closing

1. Guided Meditation
The session concludes with a short guided meditation adapted to the needs of the group. Depending on participants' energy levels, the meditation may take place either in gentle movement or lying comfortably on the floor. The practice focuses on integrating the experiences of the session while bringing attention back to the breath, bodily sensations, and the present moment.

2. Final Reflection Circle
Participants conclude the session by briefly sharing:
"What am I taking with me from today's meeting?"



Support, Boundaries & Inner Resources



- To deepen participants' understanding of their personal stories and identity
- To explore strengths, values, relationships, and hopes through the Tree of Life narrative practice
- To strengthen connection with nature by using natural materials as expressive tools
- To develop non-verbal communication, cooperation, and embodied awareness
- To encourage witnessing and respectful curiosity towards one another's life stories



3 hours



6 - 12 people



Natural outdoor environment
Natural materials (branches, stones, leaves, moss, flowers, bark, etc.)
Optional notebooks for personal reflections
Comfortable outdoor clothing
Open space for movement and group sharing

Description of the workshop/session:

67

Introduction
1. Somatic Arrival - Check-in Circle
The session begins with the group's regular grounding ritual.

Participants gather in a circle to reflect on the previous meeting and briefly share:

- How am I arriving today?
- What emotions or needs am I bringing with me?
- Has anything stayed with me since our last session?
- Is there something that has emerged or become clearer during the past week?

The facilitators invite participants to enter the session with curiosity and openness toward both themselves and others.

2. Movement Practice – Communication Without Words
The movement practice focuses on connection, listening, and non-verbal communication.

Participants first work in pairs, maintaining gentle contact by placing one palm underneath their partner's hand while slowly moving together through the space. One person initially leads while the other follows. After some time, participants exchange roles.

In the second variation, participants maintain continuous contact through their forearms.

They first explore leading and following before gradually moving into shared leadership, allowing movement to emerge through mutual listening rather than predetermined roles. The exercises encourage trust, embodied communication, responsiveness, and awareness of subtle relational cues.

Development

1. Narrative Practice – Tree of Life

Facilitators introduce the Tree of Life exercise as a narrative practice that supports reflection on personal identity through the metaphor of a tree.

Participants are invited to create their own Tree of Life using the natural environment. Rather than drawing on paper, they build their trees from natural materials such as branches, stones, leaves, moss, flowers, or by incorporating existing trees and elements of the landscape into their installations.

The metaphorical parts of the tree represent different aspects of participants' lives:

- Roots – personal history, family, origins, traditions, and important influences
- Ground – everyday life and the places where participants feel rooted
- Trunk – personal strengths, abilities, values, and qualities
- Branches – hopes, dreams, and future aspirations
- Leaves – significant people who have supported or influenced them
- Fruits – gifts, lessons, and contributions received from others
- Storms – challenges, difficulties, and ways of responding to adversity

Participants complete their installations at their own pace, using words, symbols, and natural objects to express the meaning of each part of the tree.

2. Walking Through the Forest of Stories

After completing their installations, participants are invited to guide the group through their Tree of Life.

Those who feel comfortable share the meaning of different elements of their tree while the rest of the group listens with respect and curiosity. Participants may ask questions that help deepen understanding of the story, the values it expresses, and the resources that have supported the person's journey.

The activity creates an opportunity for participants to witness one another's experiences while recognizing the richness and uniqueness of each person's life story.

Closing

1. Body Scan Meditation

The session concludes with a guided body scan meditation.
Participants gradually bring attention to different parts of the body, noticing sensations, areas of tension and relaxation, and the contact between the body and the ground. The meditation supports integration of both the emotional and embodied experiences of the session.

2. Final Reflection Circle

Participants briefly share:
"What part of my Tree of Life stays with me as I leave today's session?"



Conversations and Relationships That Continue to Shape Us



- To deepen participants' awareness of the relationships that have shaped their identities
- To explore personal values, strengths, and preferred identities through remembering conversations
- To strengthen embodied communication and non-verbal cooperation
- To recognize how meaningful relationships continue to influence the present
- To foster gratitude and connection within the group



3 hours



6 - 12 people



Spacious indoor room or outdoor setting
Soft balls for the closing game
Comfortable space for movement exercises
Chairs or cushions for pair conversations
Comfortable clothing suitable for movement

Description of the workshop/session:

68

Introduction

1. Somatic Arrival - Check-in Circle

The session begins with the group's regular grounding ritual.

Participants gather in a circle to reflect on the previous session and the experiences that have stayed with them since creating their Tree of Life.

Each participant is invited to briefly share:

- What has stayed with me since our last meeting?
- Have I noticed any new thoughts or discoveries?
- How am I arriving today?
- What emotions or needs are present for me?

The check-in creates space for continuity between sessions while allowing participants to arrive fully in the present moment.



2. Movement Practice – Connection Through Movement

The movement practice begins with a short body scan and grounding sequence, helping participants reconnect with their bodies and settle into the space.

Participants then explore movement initiated by different parts of the



body, allowing the hands, head, chest, hips, and feet to become the starting point for improvised movement. The exercise encourages curiosity, creativity, and greater awareness of bodily expression.

The practice gradually develops into partner work.

Working in pairs, participants explore different movement tasks that require non-verbal communication and cooperation. In the first variation, partners create different body shapes while keeping their hips at the same height. In the next variation, they maintain different hip levels while moving together through the space.

Finally, all predetermined roles are removed. Partners continue moving together while continuously negotiating leadership and following without speaking. Leadership shifts naturally through movement, requiring careful listening, responsiveness, and mutual awareness.

Development

1. Narrative Practice – Remembering Conversations

Facilitators introduce the practice of Remembering Conversations, inviting participants to reflect on relationships that have significantly influenced their lives.

Each participant chooses a person who has been important to them. The chosen person may be living or deceased, someone they know personally, or even a fictional character whose influence has been meaningful.

Participants reflect on questions such as:

- What did this person bring into my life?

- What did I learn from them?
- How did they see me?
- What strengths or qualities did they recognize in me?
- What did I contribute to this relationship?
- Which parts of this relationship continue to live within me today?
- How can these qualities continue to support me in my life?

Rather than focusing only on memories, the conversation encourages participants to recognize that the values, knowledge, and ways of relating developed through important relationships continue to shape their identities and remain available as personal resources.

Participants share their reflections in pairs before returning to the whole group for a facilitated discussion.

2. Group Reflection

Participants reflect together on the experience of remembering significant relationships. The discussion explores how identity is influenced by relationships and how important people continue to accompany us through the values, skills, and ways of being that they helped cultivate.

Facilitators encourage participants to notice the resources that became visible through these conversations and how they may continue to support them in everyday life.

Closing

1. Team Game – Five Passes

The session concludes with an energetic cooperative game.
Participants divide into two teams. The objective is to complete five consecutive passes without the ball touching the ground or being intercepted by the opposing team. Although the activity includes an element of competition, the primary focus is on teamwork, communication, collective strategy, and supporting one another in achieving a shared goal.

2. Final Reflection Circle

Standing together in a circle, participants respond to two closing prompts:

- What am I taking with me from today's session?
- What am I grateful for after today's experience?

Participants are invited to express their gratitude using a single word or a short sentence.



"Special Day" Exercise and Exploring Personal Values



- To continue exploring personal narratives in a respectful and non-judgmental environment.
- To develop and practice active listening skills.
- To support participants in identifying their personal values and guiding principles through a narrative approach.



3 hours



6 - 12 people



Spacious indoor room or outdoor natural setting, Dixit cards, Comfortable space for movement, Printed values worksheet and Pens

Description of the workshop/session:

69

Introduction

1. Welcome Circle

The facilitators welcome the participants and briefly introduce the aims of Session 2. Participants are invited to briefly reflect on the previous week by answering two simple questions:

- How was your week?
- What energy are you bringing today?

This opening round allows everyone to acknowledge one another while giving facilitators an opportunity to better understand participants' mood, motivation, and current needs.

2. Warm-up Movement Game

The session continues with a simple movement game inspired by tag. Each participant is asked to place one hand behind their back while extending the index finger of the other hand. The aim is to gently touch another participant's hand placed behind their back while protecting their own from being touched.

This playful activity serves as a physical warm-up, helps participants become more comfortable with one another, and creates an atmosphere of energy, playfulness, and connection within the group.

Development

1. Storytelling with Dixit Cards

Following a short break, participants are invited into the central narrative activity of the session.

A wide selection of Dixit cards is spread across the floor. Each participant chooses up to three cards that resonate with them.



Using the selected images as inspiration, participants tell a personal story. The story may describe an important life experience, a recent event, or any moment they feel comfortable sharing. There is no expectation to tell one's life story; participants are encouraged to choose whatever feels meaningful in the present moment.

The exercise introduces storytelling as a way of reflecting on personal experiences and constructing meaning while allowing each participant to decide how much they wish to share.

2. "Perfect Day" Exercise

Participants form pairs. One person begins by describing their idea of a perfect day, explaining in as much detail as they wish what they would do, where they would be, who they would spend the day with, and what makes this day meaningful to them. Their partner listens attentively without interrupting, asking questions, or offering opinions.

After the first person finishes, the partners switch roles and repeat the process.

Once everyone has shared, the whole group gathers together. Participants are invited to reflect on their partner's story by sharing what captured their attention, what resonated with them, or which values, themes, or strengths they noticed in the story. The aim is not to interpret the story but to reflect on what stood out from the listener's perspective.

The primary purpose of this exercise is to develop active listening by encouraging participants to listen without judgment or interruption. For the storyteller, describing a "perfect day" often highlights activities, relationships, places, and experiences that are personally meaningful. Hearing another person reflect on what they noticed in the story can further support awareness of personal values, preferences, and preferred ways of living.

3. Values Exercise

Following another short break, each participant receives a worksheet containing approximately 70 values and principles (for example: love, responsibility, family, freedom, creativity, health, honesty, or security).

The first step is to eliminate approximately half of the values that feel least important to them. Participants then continue narrowing the list in several rounds until only ten values remain. Finally, they select and circle the five values that are most important to them.

The goal of this exercise is to encourage self-reflection and increase awareness of one's personal values and guiding principles.

Participants are invited to share their final five values, if they wish, and explain why these values are meaningful to them. They may also illustrate their choices by telling stories or sharing life experiences that demonstrate how these values have developed or become important over time.

Closing

Final Reflection Circle

Standing together in a circle, participants briefly respond to the closing question:
"What are you taking away from today's session?"

This closing reflection gives participants an opportunity to acknowledge their experiences, notice what has stayed with them, and bring the session to a thoughtful conclusion.

Stories, Movement & Nature – Maps, Roles and Trust



- To maintain a safe and supportive group atmosphere.
- To create a safe space for exploring, sharing, and listening to personal narratives.
- To explore new perspectives on personal stories.
- To introduce participants to the roles of narrator, narrative facilitator, and outsider witness.
- To practise using narrative maps.



3 hours



6 - 12 people



Spacious indoor room, Outdoor natural setting with trees, Picnic mats (if outdoors), Dixit cards, Printed Re-Membering Conversations Map, Printed Outsider Witness Map

Description of the workshop/session:

70

Introduction

1. Welcome Circle

The session begins with a check-in using Dixit cards. Each participant chooses a card and briefly shares what has happened in their life since the previous workshop.

This opening round helps participants become aware of one another's experiences and anything the group should be mindful of during the session.

2. Grounding and Connection Through Movement

Participants move freely around the space while mirroring the facilitator's movements. With a gentle tap on the shoulder, the facilitator passes the role of leader to another participant. The activity continues until the facilitator regains the role.

The facilitator then introduces a simple movement sequence: sitting, standing, walking, jogging, slowing down, stopping, and sitting again. The group repeats the sequence without a designated leader, relying instead on non-verbal communication and awareness of one another's movements.

Next, participants work in pairs outdoors, preferably in a park or forest. One partner closes their eyes while the other carefully guides them to a nearby tree. The participant explores the tree using only their sense of touch before being guided back to the starting point. They then open their eyes and try to identify the tree they explored. Partners switch roles and repeat the exercise.

After each activity, participants briefly reflect on how they experienced the exercise.

Development

1. Re-Membering Conversation

Participants work in pairs. Depending on the group, the facilitator may work with one participant or participants may work together in pairs.

Before beginning, participants are reminded that they decide what they wish to share and may pause or decline to answer any question at any time.

One participant takes the role of the narrator while the other acts as the narrative facilitator. Using the **Re-Membering Conversations Map,** the facilitator guides the conversation from the landscape of action towards the landscape of identity. After completing the conversation, participants switch roles.

Re-Membering Conversations Map

Preparing the context

- What value, principle, or commitment are you thinking about?
- How do you express it in your life?
- Where does it come from?
- Who influenced or taught you this value?
- Who recognised or appreciated this quality in you?

Re-membering the relationship

Exploring the other person's contribution

- What did this person contribute to your life?
- What was it like to have this relationship?

Exploring your identity

- What did they appreciate about you?
- How did this shape your sense of who you are?
- How did this relationship help you understand what is important to you?

Exploring your contribution

- What do you think you contributed to their life?
- What might they have appreciated about knowing you?
- How might your relationship have influenced them?

	THE PERSON IN THE CENTRE	THE PERSON IN RELATION WITH
Landscape of identity	*How did (these contributions) come to change the meanings of who you are and what your life is like?* (effects at the level of identity regarding oneself and one's life) **2**	*What were or may be the meanings given by the person about himself/herself and his or her life, as a result of your contributions?* **3**
Landscape of action	*How has the witness contributed to your life?* (actions in relation to the witness) **1**	*What is the explanation for the witness's interest in you?* *How did you contribute to the life of the witness?* (action) **4**

Table 1. The Re-membering narrative practice map. Knitting narratively the two persons actions and identities in resonance:

Exploring their identity

- What did you appreciate about them?
- How might your relationship have supported what was important to them?
- How do you think they saw themselves through this relationship?

Connecting the conversation to the present

- What has it been like to remember this relationship?
- How might reconnecting with this person strengthen your commitment to this value today?
- What might become easier in your life?
- How could you keep this person's influence more present?

The map should be treated as a guide rather than a script. Facilitators are encouraged to combine the questions with curiosity, attentive listening, and a genuine interest in following the narrator's story.

After both conversations, participants gather in a circle. Those who wish may briefly reflect on the experience.

2. Outsider Witness Practice

Participants work in groups of three. One person becomes the narrator, one the narrative facilitator, and one the outsider witness.

The narrator shares a personal story they feel comfortable telling. The narrative facilitator supports the conversation with open questions when needed, while the outsider witness listens attentively.

When the story is finished, the facilitator invites the outsider witness to respond using the **Outsider Witness Map**, while the narrator simply listens.

Outsider Witness Map

1. Expression

- What drew your attention?
- What stayed with you?

2. Image

- What images or impressions came to mind?
- What did this suggest about the person's values, hopes, or commitments?

3. Resonance

- Why did this stand out to you?
- What in your own life did it connect with?

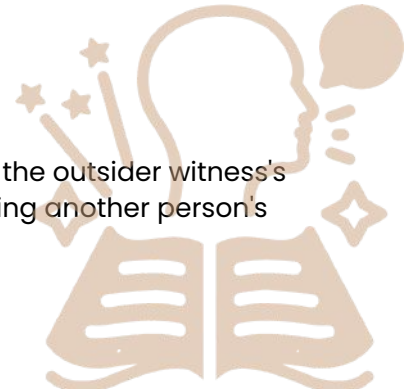
4. Transport

- How has hearing this story affected you?
- What will you take with you from this conversation?
- Has it changed anything about how you see yourself or others?

The map serves as a guide rather than a script.

The facilitator then invites the narrator to reflect on what it was like to hear the outsider witness's responses. They may ask what stood out, what resonated, or whether hearing another person's reflections opened new perspectives.

If time allows, participants may switch roles and repeat the exercise.



The session concludes with a short group reflection on the experience and on what it was like to take on the different narrative roles.

Closing
Final Reflection Circle
Sitting together in a circle, participants respond to the closing question:
"What are you taking away from today's session?"

This final reflection helps participants integrate their experience and brings the session to a thoughtful close.



Definitional Ceremonies – Witnessing Preferred Stories



- To strengthen participants' preferred identities through being witnessed by others
- To deepen active listening and respectful curiosity
- To explore the impact that personal stories have on other people
- To foster connection, validation, and a sense of belonging within the group
- To experience storytelling as a relational and community-building practice



3 hours



6 - 12 people



Spacious room with chairs arranged in a circle
Comfortable space for movement and meditation
Flipchart or notebook for facilitator notes
Calm and uninterrupted environment suitable for reflective conversations

Description of the workshop/session:

71

Introduction
1. Somatic Arrival - Check-in Circle
The session begins with the group's regular grounding practice.

Participants are guided through gentle breathing, body awareness, grounding through the feet, and slow movement designed to help them settle into the present moment. Light playful movement activities encourage relaxation, attentiveness, and connection with the group.

The group then gathers in a circle to reflect on the previous session and respond to the questions:
- What has stayed with me since we last met?
- How am I arriving today?
- What emotions or needs are present for me?

The check-in creates continuity between sessions while supporting openness and psychological safety.

Development
1. Narrative Practice – Definitional Ceremony
Facilitators introduce the concept of Definitional Ceremonies, explaining that stories become richer and more meaningful when they are witnessed by others with respect and curiosity.

One participant volunteers to become the primary storyteller and engages in a facilitated conversation exploring an important life experience, personal value, or a story of overcoming challenges. The facilitator supports the conversation through open questions that invite the participant to describe the meaning of the experience and the qualities it reveals.

The remaining participants listen silently as outsider witnesses, paying attention to the images, values, emotions, and moments that resonate most strongly with them.

2. First Re-telling – Reflections from the Witnesses
After the conversation, the storyteller and facilitator step back while the outsider witnesses begin a dialogue with one another.

Rather than offering advice, interpretations, or evaluation, witnesses share:
- what caught their attention,
- which images or expressions remained with them,
- what values they recognized,
- how the story connected with their own lives or experiences.

The focus remains on describing resonance rather than analysing the storyteller.

3. Second Re-telling – Returning the Story
The storyteller and facilitator return to listen to the reflections offered by the witnesses. The storyteller is then invited to respond by sharing:
- what it was like to hear others speak about their story,
- what surprised them,
- what felt meaningful,
- whether anything became clearer or gained new significance.

This stage often allows participants to experience their preferred identity being recognized and strengthened through the perspectives of others.

4. Group Discussion
The whole group comes together for an open conversation about the process. Participants reflect on:
- the experience of listening deeply,
- the role of being witnessed,
- the difference between giving advice and offering resonance,
- how communities can strengthen one another's preferred stories.

The discussion emphasizes the collective nature of identity and highlights the importance of respectful witnessing within supportive relationships.

Closing
1. Guided Meditation – Integrating the Experience

The session concludes with a guided mindfulness practice.
Participants are invited to settle comfortably and bring attention to their breathing, bodily sensations, and the feelings that remain after the witnessing process. The meditation encourages participants to notice the experience of being seen, heard, and connected while allowing space for quiet integration.

2. Final Reflection Circle
Standing together in a circle, participants briefly respond to the following prompt:
"What will I take with me from witnessing and being witnessed today?"
Participants are also invited to express one word that describes how they are leaving the session.



Celebrating Preferred Stories – Closure and Transition



- To consolidate participants' preferred stories and personal discoveries from the programme
- To strengthen confidence in participants' values, strengths, and identities
- To celebrate the group's shared journey and mutual support
- To acknowledge individual growth through collective witnessing
- To create a meaningful transition from the workshop experience into everyday life



3 hours



6 - 12 people



Spacious indoor or outdoor setting
Natural materials for building the symbolic gate (branches, leaves, stones, flowers, etc.)
Paper, envelopes, and pens for writing letters
Certificate templates and art materials
Comfortable space for movement and group reflection

Description of the workshop/session:

72

Introduction
1. Somatic Arrival & Playful Connection
The final session begins with the group's familiar grounding practice, helping participants reconnect with themselves and with one another.
The movement gradually develops into a series of playful partner exercises inspired by Playfight, encouraging spontaneity, awareness, and relational presence.

Participants explore several movement games, including:

- gently attempting to touch a partner's shoulder while avoiding being touched themselves,
- lightly touching a partner's foot while protecting their own,
- combining several playful challenges into one continuous interaction requiring flexibility, attention, and quick adaptation.

After each activity, participants briefly reflect on their experience.
Facilitators invite curiosity around questions such as:

- Was I more focused on achieving my goal or maintaining connection?
- Did I tend to initiate action or wait for others?
- What happened when I became more playful?
- How did my strategy influence my relationship with my partner?

The exercises encourage participants to notice habitual patterns of interaction while maintaining an atmosphere of playfulness and mutual respect.



Development

1. Narrative Practice – Letter to Myself

Participants take time to reflect on the journey they have completed throughout the programme.

Each person writes a personal letter to themselves, describing the preferred story that has emerged during the previous sessions. They are encouraged to acknowledge:

- important discoveries,
- personal values,
- strengths that became more visible,
- challenges they have overcome,
- intentions they wish to carry into everyday life.

The letters serve as personal reminders of the identities participants have been developing throughout the programme.

2. Certificate of Preferred Identity

Participants create personal certificates celebrating the qualities, values, and achievements they have demonstrated during the programme.

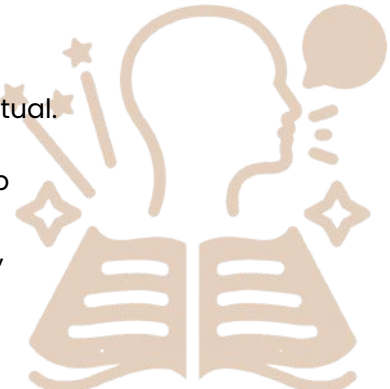
Rather than recognising external success, the certificates acknowledge preferred ways of being that have become more visible through storytelling, movement, relationships, and shared experiences.

Participants are invited to decorate their certificates and, if they wish, briefly present them to the group.

3. Appreciation Shower

To conclude the narrative work, participants take part in an appreciation ritual.

One participant stands in the centre of the circle while the rest of the group shares short reflections expressing what they genuinely appreciate about that person. The focus remains on strengths, values, meaningful moments, and the unique contributions each participant has brought to the group.



The process continues until every participant has had the opportunity to receive appreciation from the group.

The activity reinforces participants' preferred identities by allowing them to hear how others have witnessed their growth throughout the programme.

Closing

1. Transition Ritual – Passing Through the Gate

As a symbolic conclusion to the programme, the group works together to build a gate using branches and other natural materials collected from the surrounding environment.

The gate is decorated collaboratively, becoming a shared symbol of the journey completed together.

One by one, participants walk through the gate, marking the transition from the shared workshop experience back into everyday life while carrying with them the stories, values, and relationships they have strengthened throughout the programme.

2. Final Reflection Circle

The programme concludes with a final circle.

Participants are invited to respond to the question:
What will I take with me from this journey into the next chapter of my life?

The facilitators acknowledge the commitment and courage shown by the group and formally close the Story–Movement–Nature programme.



Lessons Learned

When the Group Does Not Form: Lessons from a Failed Wilderness Therapy Pilot



Partner Information

Name of organization: Imago Foundation
Country: Poland
Target group / disability category: Young adult university students interested in personal development and experiential therapeutic approaches, some of whom had experience with mental health challenges.

Context and Background

This process was part of an Erasmus+ partnership project focused on developing and testing experiential therapeutic approaches. The Polish partner, Imago Foundation, was responsible or testing and presenting a Wilderness Therapy-based modality alongside other project approaches, including somatic work and narrative methods developed by partner organizations from Malta and Romania.

The pilot group consisted of ten university students and young adults interested in personal development and experiential learning. Recruitment was supported by a university staff member familiar with the project profile. Some participants already knew each other before the process began, while others joined individually.

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fundacja imago
Karl Vella foundation Here to Care
PRISMS
psiterra Think globally - act locally!

Identified Challenge or Need; Pre-existing subgroup dynamics, Low commitment to the agreed structure, Mismatch between expectations and process demands, Difficulty receiving confrontation and feedback & Organizational instability

The planned structure included three preparatory three-hour outdoor meetings held in a city park, followed by a three-day outdoor camp with accommodation in a mountain shelter. The process was facilitated by two Wilderness Therapy practitioners from the foundation.



The main aims of the process were:

- increasing self-awareness and emotional insight,
- learning self-regulation through contact with nature,
- building psychological resilience,
- understanding interpersonal and group processes,
- receiving and giving feedback within a group setting,
- exploring personal resources and coping strategies through experiential activities.

Before the process began, participants took part in recruitment conversations and confirmed their availability and willingness to engage in the full program. A group contract was also established collectively during the initial phase.

Identified Challenge or Need

Several significant challenges emerged early in the process and gradually intensified:

Identified Challenge or Need

Pre-existing subgroup dynamics – A large part of the participants already knew each other, creating a relatively closed and internally connected subgroup. This appeared to make integration more difficult for participants joining individually.

Low commitment to the agreed structure – Despite prior agreements regarding attendance and punctuality, participants frequently arrived late, left meetings early, or cancelled participation at short notice. During the very first meeting, nearly half of the group unexpectedly left halfway through the session.

Mismatch between expectations and process demands – Facilitators observed a growing tension between the structure and responsibility required in the experiential process and some participants' expectations of flexibility and adaptation to individual needs.



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Difficulty receiving confrontation and feedback – After facilitators addressed the issue of attendance and commitment, the group appeared to experience this feedback as judgmental or overly intense, despite attempts to communicate it responsibly and transparently.

Organizational instability – The process was further disrupted when one facilitator experienced an injury, forcing the planned camp dates to be postponed. Due to limited staffing capacity, it was not possible to provide a replacement facilitator.

Over time, communication from participants gradually decreased, several people withdrew from the camp phase, and eventually the group process dissolved before the outdoor camp could take place.

Description of the Activity / Situation

The process began with an introductory outdoor meeting focused on building safety, discussing expectations, and establishing a group contract. The contract included agreements around punctuality, communication, confidentiality, speaking from personal experience, respecting boundaries, and the "challenge by choice" principle.

Although participants initially expressed readiness to commit to the process, difficulties emerged immediately during the first session. Several participants informed facilitators during the meeting that they needed to leave early, while others cancelled participation shortly beforehand without prior communication.

Following the meeting, facilitators decided to address the situation openly through a group message. They communicated concern that the inconsistency in attendance and engagement was affecting the group process, trust-building, and practical preparation. The feedback was intended as a clear confrontation regarding commitment and shared responsibility within the process.

One participant responded critically, expressing that the facilitators did not understand the realities and needs of students and should adapt more flexibly to participants' circumstances. After this exchange, facilitators noticed increased withdrawal, emotional distance, and reduced openness within the group.

At the following meetings, attendance continued to fluctuate. Some participants arrived significantly late, while others remained minimally engaged. Facilitators attempted to revisit the earlier tension and explain that the feedback was not intended as personal criticism, but rather as a reflection on group process and mutual responsibility. However, the atmosphere of distrust and separation persisted.

The situation became more complicated when one facilitator experienced an injury, requiring postponement of the planned outdoor camp. The new dates no longer suited several participants. Due to the absence of additional trained staff and concerns regarding psychological safety in the wilderness setting, facilitators decided not to conduct the camp with only one lead practitioner.

Gradually, communication from participants stopped almost entirely, and the process ended without completing the planned camp phase.

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Solution / Approach Applied

Despite the process not reaching its intended conclusion, facilitators applied several important practices throughout:

- Maintaining transparency regarding group process difficulties,
- Addressing issues of commitment and responsibility directly rather than avoiding tension,
- Attempting to reopen dialogue and repair trust after conflict emerged,
- Respecting participant autonomy and avoiding coercion or pressure to continue,
- Prioritizing emotional and physical safety over completing the program at all costs,
- Making a responsible decision not to continue the camp phase without adequate staffing,
- Reflecting critically on facilitation style, communication methods, and group readiness.

After the process ended, the facilitators conducted a detailed reflection and adjusted future recruitment and group formation practices. Later pilot processes were implemented with different participant groups, including volunteers already connected to the foundation and motivated to support people with disabilities in Adventure Therapy programs.

Outcomes and Impact

Although the process was not completed successfully in its original form, it provided significant learning for the facilitators and contributed meaningfully to the development of the methodology.

Key outcomes included:

- deeper understanding of group readiness and motivation,
- increased awareness of the impact of pre-existing social dynamics,
- recognition of the importance of matching communication style to group capacity,
- improved understanding of how confrontation and feedback may be perceived in vulnerable groups,
- development of stronger staffing and backup procedures,
- refinement of recruitment and screening practices,
- increased sensitivity to balancing responsibility with emotional containment.

The experience also highlighted that not every group is ready for the level of commitment, uncertainty, and interpersonal confrontation present in experiential outdoor processes. Facilitators recognized that the difficulties emerged not only from participant behavior, but also from a mismatch between the group's needs and the facilitation approach used at that stage of the process.

Why This Is a Best Practice

This case represents valuable practice because it openly examines a process that did not succeed operationally, yet generated essential professional learning.

It demonstrates:

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the importance of facilitator self-reflection

ethical decision-making regarding safety and staffing

the complexity of forming therapeutic and experiential groups

the risks of assuming verbal commitment equals readiness for process

the importance of adapting confrontation and feedback to group capacity

the need to consider pre-existing social structures during recruitment

Rather than presenting failure as something to hide, the case models reflective practice and responsible adaptation — both central values within Adventure Therapy and Wilderness Therapy work.

Lessons Learned

Key takeaways for facilitators:

- Avoid building groups where strong pre-existing subgroups dominate the social dynamic.
- Recruitment conversations should explore not only motivation, but also realistic readiness for commitment.
- Verbal agreement to participate does not always translate into process readiness.
- Confrontation regarding responsibility and commitment should be carefully matched to group maturity and psychological capacity.
- Emotional safety includes not only honesty, but also timing, pacing, and delivery of feedback.
- Backup staffing is essential in outdoor and wilderness-based programs.
- Programs involving participants with increased psychological vulnerability require stable facilitation structures and clear contingency planning.
- Not all groups are ready for intensive experiential processes, and recognizing this early may prevent escalation and dropout.

Recommendations for Replication

- Conduct careful screening focused on both motivation and capacity for commitment.
- Consider avoiding recruitment of groups with strong pre-existing internal alliances.
- Prepare backup staffing plans before beginning outdoor processes.
- Introduce group responsibility and accountability gradually during early stages of group formation.
- Match confrontation and challenge levels to the developmental stage of the group.
- Treat unsuccessful or incomplete processes as opportunities for professional reflection and methodological improvement.
- Ensure that safety and ethical considerations remain more important than completing the planned program structure.

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Exploring the three components of mindfulness, i.e, intention, awareness and attitude in relation to somatic therapeutic practice.



Partner Information

Name of organization: Karl Vella Foundation
Country: Malta
Target group: Young adults dealing with illness or loss in the family

Context and Background

Intention – what do I want from this practice?
Awareness – bring the full attention to what is happening now in the body
Attitude – practice with openness, compassion and optimism

These three components are fundamental to bringing mindfulness to the body when applying basic techniques of Chinese Martial Arts as a somatic therapeutic practice.

Somatic practices are based on the understanding that the mind and body are not separate entities but rather a unified system in which each part interacts with and influences the other in profound ways.

The practice involves tuning into the body's signals, noticing areas of tension or discomfort, and using mindful movement and breathwork to release blockages and restore balance.

The ultimate goal is the cultivation of somatic awareness, which is a heightened consciousness of the physical body and its relationship with the mind, space, and the environment around it. Furthermore, it's about recognizing the body as a source of wisdom and insight and a tool for personal growth and transformation.

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Identified Challenge or Need; Using my body to heal my body, Quieting the mind through slow body movement, Sensations in the body can also trigger past trauma.

This new learning of using my body to heal my body proved to be challenging for some, in particular participants who are not used to connect to the emotional pain or to sensations in the body.

Quieting the mind through slow body movement was also observed to be challenging for some participants due to the fact that many people are accustomed to operating on autopilot and living with high levels of stress, and at times, daily crises.

Sensations in the body can also trigger past trauma, which, if unresolved, may prove difficult and challenging for participants.



Identified Challenge or Need

The group followed a number of practices related to emotional regulation through the body. Following a thorough body scan to connect with and identify sensations within the body, the trainer demonstrated various slow body movements which the participants then followed.

This practice involved breathwork, balanced postures, and free-flowing movements aimed at promoting balance and restoration within the mind and body. The core components of mindfulness remained central throughout each practice.

The practice itself also cultivates freedom of movement, freedom of belief, freedom of choice, freedom to be intimate, freedom to be affected by others, freedom to set limits, and freedom of expression.

The practices were followed by group sharing and reflective processing.

Solution / Approach Applied

Once participants became familiar with the practices, the next step involved exploring different intentions. For example, an intention might be to become calmer in daily life, let go of a resolved chapter from the past, or adapt to a challenging experience such as grief.

In this bottom-up approach, a dialogue takes place between the body and the mind, helping to release blockages and restore balance.

Verbally processing the somatic practices was of utmost importance. During this stage, participants learned how to connect with their bodies, bring emotions to the surface in relation to their challenging experiences, and take control of the movements that "wanted to happen."

Processing also helped participants understand the relationship between thoughts, emotions, and behaviour, and how they can cultivate self-awareness while exploring alternative neurological pathways.

Outcomes and Impact

The workshop gave participants the opportunity to work together on both cognitive and physical levels. They also had time to practice with one another, particularly when applying basic techniques of Chinese Martial Arts.

For example:

- falling to the ground and getting up again represented failure and resilience;
- striking and pushing helped release unpleasant emotions and explore inner strength;
- blocking and moving forward cultivated boundaries, self-control, and openness to new perspectives;
- freeing oneself from locks helped participants enhance decision-making skills and accept the present situation in order to embrace freedom.

Why This Is a Best Practice

Somatic practice does not necessarily replace other therapeutic approaches, but rather complements verbal therapy.

Like psychotherapy, internal Martial Arts can help individuals release attachment to thoughts and perceived identity, allowing them to move towards liberation and self-awareness.

Meeting one's resistance reveals the authentic and vulnerable self, inviting openness to new perspectives rather than remaining attached to a fixed sense of identity.

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Lessons Learned

Key takeaways for facilitators:

- Group work is a rich resource.
- Somatic practice can trigger traumatic memories.
- Quieting the mind may initially be met with resistance, as the body is not accustomed to it.
- Connecting with oneself while experiencing heightened awareness can feel overwhelming if unsupported by a professional.
- This somatic experience revealed the power of self-compassion as a pathway towards self-discovery and inner growth. It also enabled participants to gain a deeper understanding and meaning of their experience

Recommendations for Replication

- Integrate Buddhist psychology, Taoism, Zen meditation, Qi Gong, movement and progressive relaxation meditation, internal focusing meditation, and loving-kindness meditation into this kind of somatic practice.
- Include more real-life challenging situations within the practice.
- Retain a second facilitator during the workshop, as this proved highly beneficial.
- Maintain guidance and supportive presence throughout the sessions.
- Retain a slow-paced approach.
- Balance experiential practices with psychoeducation.
- Allow sufficient time for listening, sharing, and processing.
- Provide participants with ample resources.



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Exploring significant relationships to foster personal and professional identity development: Re-affiliation narrative practice



Partner Information

Name of organization: Psiterra Association
Country: Romania
Target group: Young adults (18–30 years old)

Context and Background

The Re-affiliation narrative practice is performed in group session by creating initially pairs who work together, taking turns. In the final part, the couples report to the full group their experience and realisations from the dyadic work.

The group consisted of nineteen young adults (aged 18–30). Participants already knew each other from previous sessions, which contributed to an established level of trust and group cohesion.

The main aims of the re-affiliation narrative practice were:

- to exercise double (narrative) listening
- to practice auto-biographical sharing
- to experience cooperation in pairs
- to strengthen narrative communication skills
- to develop trust and reciprocal support, acceptance and understanding
- to build confidence in appreciative narrative sharing in safe relationships.

Some participants had prior narrative communication skills and experience, while others were beginners. The session was facilitated by one Psiterra association trainer and a support volunteer

Identified Challenge or Need; Participation uncertainty, and Limited staffing ratio.

Several challenges emerged during the session:

Participation uncertainty – even with reminders, the registered participants tend to show in a 60-70% proportion, usually.

Limited staffing ratio – even if preferably for more than 12 participants there should be 2 facilitators, only one temporary volunteer could support the facilitator this particular group session.

The pressure to support the mid-size group was well managed in the situation; the presence of a few more experienced participants also provided emergent leadership and support from the participants.



Description of the Activity / Situation

The group gathered (along with all other groups) in the inner courtyard of the building selected for organizing the narrative practices.

After the group plenary presentation of the organizing and facilitating team members, a description of the project and the aims and objectives of the pilot workshops, the role of the participants, the expected outcomes, the participants were randomly allocated to the workshop groups

and they could ask clarification questions. The whole process of the day was described and the groups formed around each team of facilitators/volunteers went into their respective rooms. The inner courtyard was an excellent resource for the workshop since it was a great sunny and warm Spring day and there were no other people in the whole building for the day; the inner courtyard was used for some special sessions, by more than one of the groups during the day.

In the training/experiential room the piloting of four narrative practices started having re-affiliation narrative practice as one of the middle sessions, participants in the group being already accustomed with narrative principles and working in pairs and reporting to the plenary group from previous session. The whole practice started having the participants introduced to the specific schedule of the day, orientating about the breaks, the resources (water, food dispenser on the hallways, toilets, etc), and the freedom to participate and to leave. The project documentation was completed by all the participants – after a clarification regarding GDPR -.

Solution / Approach Applied

Several important principles were described, underlined, applied and discussed:
Double listening – Participants were informed of the role of creating an open and safe space for sharing by the storyteller, while in the listening position focusing both on what is told and on what is the effect of the telling on themselves, of what is said and what may be implicit to what is said.

Respect and curiosity – the listening position including respecting the storying of the person in the centre of the telling and remaining ingenuously curious for the authentic sharing of the other. These two intertwined qualities/skills allow the storyteller the space and time to share as much as they wish, with no pressure or set expectations.

One of the participants presented in the couple one of her's traumatic experiences and was able to share this experience freely with the whole group in the end, expressing gratitude for the climate, confidence, and support she felt in the couple exercise and in the final plenary session.

The facilitator ensured feedback for the storytelling in each couple, keeping the time and responding to eventual questions. In the end, the experiences of the storytellers and then of the listeners were invited in the centre and explored in plenary final session.

Outcomes and Impact

The powerful mentioning of a critical traumatic incident lived by the participant became inspiring for all participating.

Observed outcomes included:

- Greater awareness of possibilities to construct safe listening and understanding environment.
- Increased sense of responsibility among participants. We underscored the "narrative responsibility" of being aware of the effect of our chosen words or expressions in supporting and humanising or re-humanising experiences and description of desirable, supportive identities.
- Increased sense of common affiliation to central values emerging from the various stories shared in pairs and reported in plenary session: love for learning, the power of exploring life and relationships, importance of freedom and equity.

Why This Is a Best Practice

This case represents good practice because: It depicts the empowering narrative process in which narrative agency and narrative responsibility is invited, supported, and celebrated.

It describes the Vygotsky-an "zone of proximal development" principle of growing transparency on behalf of the storyteller and the gradual increase in trust, both in the couple conversation, and in the plenary group.

It allows to accept that empathic and open conversations may support narrative accounts that are otherwise retained, secret, or simply never storied, allowing for opportunities of meaning-making and identity descriptions illuminating gradual increased self- and other-knowledge.

It respects participant autonomy. It integrates guided narrative reflection as a structured exploration of experiences (from the "landscape/description of action" to the "landscape/description of identity").

Lessons Learned

Key takeaways for facilitators:

- Ensure a second facilitator or a volunteer support for activities over 12 participants.
- Clarity in presenting the guidance process in the workshop exercises presenting the conversational pathways of the "narrative practice maps".
- Appreciative attitude is essential in the narrative practice from the dyadic conversations guided by the "narrative practice maps" to the final reporting in the plenary group.
- Time constraints can be mitigated inviting participants to take notes, make short entries on session "journals" so that they can document their experiences and realisations in the final evaluation stage of the workshop.

Recommendations for Replication

Make sure that all participants understand they are free to share as much as they wish in the ad-hoc exercise environment and they may exit at any time from an exercise and/or the workshop, if needed.

Verify with each couple their conversation status – roles, availability and understanding of the guidance map, timing -.

Allow enough time for final reflective group reflection during the reporting phase. Let everybody know that the facilitators are available not only during the workshop, but also at the end, for anybody who needs processing and clarifying, as well as to be contacted in the days after the workshop, if necessary.

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