Družinski inštitut
OBJEM

YoEUth Mental Health *at Heart* ♡



E-Manual of Non-Formal Mental Health Workshops for Youth Workers

A practical toolkit for 90-minute workshops

Co-funded by the European Union

PROJECT CREDITS

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Editorial Statement

This e-manual was developed within the Erasmus+ project YoEUth Mental Health at Heart. The original workshop materials and educational methods were contributed by the project partners. Sanja Obaha Brodnjak, as Project Coordinator and Lead Editor, reviewed, revised, adapted, expanded and integrated these contributions into a coherent educational resource. Her work included content development, professional refinement, methodological harmonisation and editorial coordination. The publication represents a collaborative European project outcome.

About the publication

YoEUth Mental Health at Heart is an Erasmus+ KA210-YOU small-scale partnership in the field of youth. This English e-manual is the unified master version prepared for translation and local adaptation across the project partnership.

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Publication scope and safety

> The workshops are psychoeducational and non-formal. They are not therapy, diagnosis, crisis intervention or a substitute for professional mental health care. Each organisation should add its local safeguarding procedure, referral pathway and emergency contacts before using the manual with young people.

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Editorial status

Editorial draft - unified English version. Final partner credits, national safeguarding contacts and translated language versions are completed or adapted by the relevant project partners before publication.

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1. About this manual

This e-manual brings together workshop activities developed by partner countries in the strategic partnership project YoEUth Mental Health at Heart. The aim is to provide youth workers, educators and facilitators with a coherent set of non-formal learning sessions that can be used with young people and adapted to local contexts.

The original materials were written in different formats and styles. In this editorial draft, they have been harmonised into one structure, using consistent English, facilitation language, timing, safety notes and reflection questions.

In line with the project output description, this manual includes: a selection of the most urgent youth mental health themes identified through partner analysis; two practical curricula for training youth workers and young people; and all workshop methods used in the partner activities, prepared for later translation and adaptation into eight project languages.

Important scope note
The workshops are psychoeducational and non-formal. They are not therapy, diagnosis, crisis intervention or a substitute for professional mental health care. Each organisation should add its local safeguarding procedure, referral pathway and emergency contacts before using the manual with young people.

2. Project snapshot: topic selection and youth mental health topics

The partner teams focused on the most visible or relevant youth mental health concerns identified through the project process. The table below uses the topics and percentages stated in the original coordination document.

Country focus	Topic area	Project indicator / rationale
Slovenia	Anxiety, panic symptoms and sleep disturbances	Up to 62.5% reported general anxiety and 27.4% panic/intense anxiety. Sleep disturbance is connected with anxiety, stress and digital overuse.
North Macedonia	Depression, sadness, hopelessness and loneliness	37.5% reported depression and 33.7% frequent sadness or lack of hope.
Portugal	Concentration and academic stress	52.6% reported concentration difficulties, strongly linked with school pressure and stress.
Estonia	Suicidal ideation and self-harm	26.3% reported thoughts of disappearing and 15.8% thoughts of self-harm. This requires careful safety protocols.
Greece	Eating disorders, body image and emotional regulation	The topic is linked with self-image, social comparison, media influence and emotional regulation.
Croatia	Alcohol, substances and energy-drink abuse	Relevant as a coping and social pressure issue, even if reported less frequently.

How the key themes were selected

The project requirement was to select at least five of the most urgent mental health topics identified through the analysis, especially themes that appeared across partner contexts. Where a topic was particularly relevant for one partner country or youth context, it was included as a specific contribution while still being connected with the common European youth mental health picture.

The final English editorial draft includes seven workshop areas. This goes beyond the minimum requirement of five themes and allows the manual to respond to both shared and context-specific needs.

- Common high-priority topics: anxiety and panic symptoms; depression, sadness, hopelessness and loneliness; concentration difficulties and academic stress; suicidal ideation; self-harm; self-image and eating disorder risks; and substance, alcohol and energy-drink abuse.
- Selection logic: topics were chosen because they appeared in the analysis as frequent, intense, or important for prevention and early support in youth work settings.

- Partner-specific added value: each partner contribution brings a different non-formal method, cultural perspective or practical youth work tool, while remaining usable in other partner countries after adaptation.
- Social inclusion lens: activities are designed to reduce shame, isolation and stigma, and to strengthen help-seeking, peer support, youth worker responsiveness and access to support.

Project requirement	How this manual responds
Minimum five urgent themes	Seven workshop themes are included, each linked to youth mental health needs identified through the project analysis.
Common themes across partners, with specific topics if needed	The manual combines shared concerns and partner-specific strengths, while framing all workshops for wider European youth work use.
Effective and professional training curricula	Two structured curricula are included: one for youth workers and one for young people.
All methods used	Each workshop contains methods, materials, agenda, facilitation guide, reflection questions, safety notes and printable worksheets.
Eight language versions	The English version is prepared as the master version for translation into Slovenian, Macedonian, Estonian, Russian, Croatian, Greek and Portuguese.

Language versions

This English manual is the master version for translation and local adaptation into eight languages: English, Slovenian, Macedonian, Estonian, Russian, Croatian, Greek and Portuguese. Each partner should adapt local support contacts, legal/safeguarding procedures, terminology and examples before publication in their own language.

3. Universal facilitation and safety framework

Mental health workshops can open meaningful reflection, but they can also activate difficult memories or emotions. The facilitator should create a structured, safe and non-judgmental space.

Before every workshop

- Clarify that participation and personal sharing are voluntary. Passing is always allowed.
- Prepare a quiet space and identify an adult/professional who can support a participant if needed.
- Prepare local support contacts: school counsellor, youth centre contact, mental health service, emergency number and crisis line.
- Avoid activities that pressure participants to disclose trauma, suicidal thoughts, eating behaviours, substance use or family conflict in front of the group.
- Use simple language and avoid diagnostic labels unless you explain them carefully and briefly.
- Agree on group rules: confidentiality, respectful listening, no mocking, no advice-giving unless asked, and speaking from personal experience.

During sensitive topics

- Keep the discussion general and educational. Do not invite graphic details or descriptions of methods of self-harm, suicide, eating disorder behaviours or substance use.
- If a participant discloses current risk or immediate danger, do not promise secrecy. Stay calm, listen, and follow the organisation's safeguarding procedure immediately.
- Use hope-focused and support-focused language: "You do not have to carry this alone," "Support is available," and "Let us connect you with someone who can help."
- Close with grounding, regulation or connection so the group does not leave in an activated emotional state.

Facilitator attitude

- Guide, do not lecture.
- Listen before interpreting.
- Normalize emotions without normalizing harmful behaviour.
- Be warm, clear and boundaried.
- Connect every activity to real-life youth work practice.

4. Standard workshop structure

Part	Recommended time	Purpose
Opening / icebreaker	10-15 min	Build safety, connection and a gentle entry into the topic.
Topic introduction	5-10 min	Offer simple psychoeducation and clarify key concepts.
Main experiential activity	35-45 min	Use non-formal methods: movement, mapping, storytelling, art, role-play, case studies or group work.
Skills / application	10-15 min	Practice one concrete tool or link the learning to youth work situations.
Reflection and closing	10-15 min	Harvest insights, name support resources and close with grounding.

Curriculum A. 5 STEPS training curriculum for youth workers

From project analysis to safe, inclusive and practical youth work responses

Why this curriculum is needed

The project analysis shows that youth workers are often close enough to young people to notice distress early, but they need a clearer professional map: what to notice, how to open a safe conversation, how to facilitate non-formal learning without pushing disclosure, and how to connect young people with appropriate support. The training therefore does not turn youth workers into therapists. It strengthens their competence to create safe contact, reduce stigma, use experiential methods and respond responsibly when a young person shows signs of distress.

Finding from the project analysis	What it means for youth workers
Concentration difficulties, sleep problems, sadness, intense anxiety, loneliness, thoughts of disappearing and self-harm were identified among the main youth mental health signals.	Youth workers need practical mental health literacy: not diagnostic labels, but the ability to recognise patterns, ask supportive questions and adapt activities to the emotional state of the group.
Fear of judgement and doubts about whether help will work are major barriers to help-seeking.	Youth workers need to become trusted, non-judgemental adults who can normalise support, respect confidentiality limits and make help-seeking feel less frightening.
Partner documents emphasise experiential, creative and participatory methods instead of lectures.	Youth workers need facilitation skills: how to design safe group processes, debrief activities and connect experience with reflection and action.
Several partner analyses highlight lack of access, stigma, school pressure, peer violence and social exclusion.	Youth workers need a social-inclusion lens: mental health support must also build belonging, reduce shame and strengthen access to local support.

Training philosophy: contact before content

The central idea of this curriculum is simple: young people do not first need perfect explanations; they need a safe contact. Youth workers learn to combine mental health literacy with presence, boundaries and creative non-formal methods. The training follows a Gestalt-pedagogical and experiential logic: awareness first, then contact, then experiment, then reflection, then responsible action.

- Awareness: What do I notice in myself, in the group and in the young person?
- Contact: How do I create a respectful, non-judgemental and boundaried relationship?
- Experiment: Which safe activity helps the group explore the topic without forced disclosure?
- Reflection: What did participants notice, feel, learn and connect with youth work practice?
- Action: What small, concrete next step supports inclusion, coping, help-seeking or referral?

Overall aim and learning outcomes

Element	Specification
Target group	Youth workers, educators, mentors, trainers, volunteers and professionals working with young people in formal or non-formal settings.
Recommended duration	Two full training days, approximately 12-14 hours, or six modular sessions of 90-120 minutes.
Overall aim	To equip youth workers with mental health literacy, safe facilitation skills, social inclusion tools and a clear response pathway for supporting young people without crossing into therapy.
Training approach	Experiential, non-formal, creative, Gestalt-pedagogical, trauma-informed and reflective. Participants first experience methods, then analyse how to facilitate them safely.
Final outputs	One adapted 90-minute youth workshop plan, one local support/referral map, one personal facilitator self-care plan and one dissemination or inclusion action idea.

- Explain the difference between mental health literacy, youth work support, counselling/therapy and crisis intervention.
- Recognise common signs of anxiety, depression, academic stress, loneliness, self-harm risk, suicidal ideation, eating-disorder risk and risky coping behaviours.
- Use non-formal and creative methods while keeping personal sharing voluntary and safe.
- Open a supportive conversation with a young person using validation, curiosity and clear boundaries.
- Respond to disclosures without panic, judgement, minimisation or secrecy.
- Map local support options and know when to involve safeguarding or specialised services.
- Design an inclusive 90-minute workshop adapted to age, culture, language, neurodiversity and participants with fewer opportunities.
- Reflect on the youth worker's own limits, emotional triggers, supervision needs and self-care.

The 5 STEPS model for youth workers

The project can use the following simple model as a common framework across all partner countries. It is easy to translate, practical for training and directly connected with the project title and the "5 STEPS for Youth" approach mentioned in the partner materials.

Step	Youth worker competence	Core question	Useful methods
S - See the signs and the context	Notice emotional, behavioural, body, social and digital signals of distress without labelling the young person.	What am I noticing, and what context might be shaping this young person's behaviour?	Observation map, body signals map, data-to-practice gallery walk.
T - Talk with safety and respect	Open a warm, boundaried conversation; validate feelings; explain confidentiality limits.	How can I make it easier for this young person to speak without feeling judged or exposed?	Supportive sentence practice, safe/unsafe wording cards, role-play in triads.
E - Explore needs through non-formal methods	Use creative, experiential and reflective methods that allow expression without forced disclosure.	Which method helps awareness, connection and insight while protecting personal boundaries?	Mirror Stories, stress backpack, circle of control, thought-emotion-action chain, body map.
P - Plan support and referral	Co-create a realistic next step and connect the young person with appropriate support when needed.	What is the safest next step, and who needs to be involved?	Support map, referral pathway, crisis decision tree, "one next step" card.
S - Sustain inclusion and follow-up	Strengthen belonging, reduce stigma and maintain supportive follow-up without becoming the only helper.	How can the group, school, youth centre or community remain a safer place after this conversation?	Inclusion plan, peer belonging map, follow-up check-in, dissemination action.

Suggested two-day training design

Block	Time	Focus	Process and methods	Trainer notes
Day 1 - Block 1	90 min	Opening, group safety and social inclusion lens	Welcome; check-in; group agreement; "What makes it safe to speak?"; inclusion/exclusion mapping.	Model the tone: warm, clear, voluntary, non-judgemental.
Day 1 - Block 2	120 min	Youth mental health themes from the project analysis	Gallery walk with key findings; small groups connect data with real youth work situations; plenary synthesis.	Keep statistics human: ask what these numbers might look like in behaviour, silence, withdrawal or pressure.
Day 1 - Block 3	120 min	The youth worker's role and boundaries	Mini-input; three circles: youth work support / counselling / crisis response; case sorting; boundary sentences.	Emphasise: youth workers are not therapists, but they can be protective adults and bridge-builders.
Day 1 - Block 4	120 min	Safe conversation practice	Triads: youth person / youth worker / observer; safe wording cards; validation practice; debrief.	Use fictional mild-to-moderate cases first; do not ask participants to use personal crisis stories.

Block	Time	Focus	Process and methods	Trainer notes
Day 1 - Closing	30 min	Integration and grounding	One insight, one question, one body-based grounding tool.	Close calmly and check emotional state before participants leave.
Day 2 - Block 5	150 min	Experiential method lab	Participants rotate through selected manual methods: body map, circle of control, stress backpack, Mirror Stories, Real Energy.	After each method ask: What is useful? What could be risky? How would I adapt it?
Day 2 - Block 6	120 min	Sensitive topics and safeguarding	Case scenarios on self-harm, suicidal ideation, eating disorder risk and substance use; response pathway; referral map.	Focus on safety, support and referral. Avoid details of harmful behaviours or methods.
Day 2 - Block 7	120 min	Designing a 90-minute workshop	Teams choose one topic and use the manual template: objectives, agenda, methods, debrief, safety, inclusion adaptations.	Trainer circulates and asks safety-focused design questions.
Day 2 - Block 8	90 min	Practice, feedback and action plan	Micro-facilitation; peer feedback; self-assessment; local action plan; closing circle.	End with confidence and realism: one thing I can do, one limit I respect, one support I will use.

Detailed module guide

Module 1. Opening, safety and inclusion

Purpose: create a training space that already models the kind of youth work participants should later offer to young people.

Suggested process:

- Check-in question: “What helps me feel safe enough to learn?”
- Group agreement with four non-negotiables: voluntary sharing, respect, confidentiality limits and right to pass.
- Inclusion map: participants identify who can be silently excluded in youth spaces and what youth workers can do differently.

Reflection questions:

- What makes a space emotionally safe?
- How do shame and fear of judgement appear in groups?
- Which small facilitator behaviours increase trust?

Module 2. From analysis to practice

Purpose: translate project findings into concrete youth work observations and activities.

Suggested process:

- Gallery walk with key findings from the partner analyses.
- Small groups choose one finding and answer: “How might this appear in a youth centre, school, exchange or online group?”
- Plenary builds a shared “map of unmet needs”.

Reflection questions:

- Which youth needs are loud and visible?
- Which needs are quiet and easy to miss?
- What do youth workers need in order to respond better?

Module 3. The role and limits of youth workers

Purpose: help participants understand their supportive role without taking over therapy, diagnosis or crisis management.

Suggested process:

- Three circles exercise: What is youth work? What is counselling/therapy? What is emergency/safeguarding?
- Boundary sentence practice: "I am glad you told me. I cannot keep this secret if you are not safe. I will stay with you while we find support."
- Case sorting: What can I hold? What must I refer? What requires immediate action?

Reflection questions:

- Why are boundaries protective, not cold?
- What happens when a youth worker becomes the only helper?
- How can we stay warm and still be clear?

Module 4. Safe conversation practice

Purpose: practise first responses to emotional distress, withdrawal, panic, hopelessness or risky coping.

Suggested process:

- Triad role-play using fictional cases.
- Observer uses a checklist: presence, validation, open questions, no minimising, no rushing to advice, clear next step.
- Rewrite unsafe sentences into safer alternatives.

Reflection questions:

- Which words opened contact?
- Which words could close it?
- How do I stay calm when the topic is serious?

Module 5. Experiential method lab

Purpose: strengthen facilitation skills through direct experience of selected manual methods.

Suggested process:

- Method stations: body map, thought-emotion-action chain, circle of control, stress backpack, Mirror Stories, Real Energy Recipe.
- After each station participants fill in an adaptation card: target age, risk level, materials, debrief questions, safety notes.
- Trainer-led synthesis: methods are tools for awareness, not pressure to disclose.

Reflection questions:

- What did the method make visible?
- Where could the method become too intense?
- How can I make it inclusive for different young people?

Module 6. Sensitive topics and safeguarding

Purpose: provide clear, non-alarmist procedures for self-harm, suicidal ideation, eating disorder risk, substance use, violence and abuse.

Suggested process:

- Red flag cards: participants sort low concern / needs support / urgent safeguarding.
- Referral pathway mapping: internal support, family involvement where appropriate, school/professional services, emergency response.
- Language practice: direct but gentle questions and supportive next-step planning.

Reflection questions:

- When is confidentiality limited?
- Who is responsible for what in our organisation?
- What local contacts must be included in each language version?

Module 7. Designing a youth workshop

Purpose: transform knowledge into a practical 90-minute workshop plan for a real youth group.

Suggested process:

- Teams select one topic from the manual.
- They complete the workshop design template: aims, methods, time, materials, debrief, safety, adaptations and support contacts.
- Peer feedback using "Warm - Clear - Safe - Useful".

Reflection questions:

- Is the activity experiential enough?
- Is the debrief strong enough?
- Is the safety plan clear enough?
- How does the workshop strengthen inclusion?

Module 8. Integration, evaluation and self-care

Purpose: consolidate learning and protect youth workers from over-responsibility and burnout.

Suggested process:

- Competence self-assessment before/after.
- My support triangle: colleague, supervisor/mentor, external professional support.
- Closing circle: one skill I gained, one limit I respect, one next step I commit to.

Reflection questions:

- What will I do differently with young people?
- Where do I need more training?
- How will I care for myself after heavy conversations?

Practical tools for youth workers

Tool 1. First supportive conversation map

Step	Youth worker sentence examples
Open contact	"I noticed you seem quieter lately. I may be wrong, but I wanted to check how you are."
Validate	"Thank you for telling me. It makes sense that this feels heavy."
Clarify gently	"What has been the hardest part recently?" / "When does it feel worse?" / "What helps even a little?"
Check safety when needed	"When you say you want to disappear, do you mean you want a break from everything, or are you afraid you might hurt yourself?"
Set boundaries	"I care about you, and I cannot keep this only between us if your safety is at risk. We will find support together."
Plan next step	"Who is one safe person we can involve today?" / "Would it help if I stayed with you while we contact support?"

Tool 2. What youth workers should avoid

Avoid	Use instead
"It is just a phase."	"This sounds important. I am glad you told me."
"Others have it worse."	"Your experience matters, even if it is hard to explain."
"Promise me you will not tell anyone."	"I will respect your privacy, but I must involve support if you are not safe."
Interrogating or asking for graphic details.	Ask only what is needed for safety and support.
Giving quick advice before listening.	Listen, validate, ask what support would feel possible.
Becoming the only helper.	Create a support circle and use the organisation's referral pathway.

Tool 3. Local support and referral map template

Support level	Who/where?	When to use it?	Contact / procedure
Everyday support	Trusted youth worker, mentor, teacher, peer support group.	Stress, loneliness, mild anxiety, need to talk, belonging issues.	
Professional support	School counsellor, psychologist, counselling centre, youth mental health service.	Persistent symptoms, functional impairment, self-harm thoughts, eating concerns, trauma, substance misuse.	
Safeguarding contact	Designated safeguarding person in the organisation or school.	Abuse, violence, exploitation, serious risk, unsafe home situation.	
Crisis / emergency	Emergency services, crisis line, psychiatric emergency service.	Immediate danger, suicidal intent, serious self-harm risk, severe intoxication or medical risk.	

Tool 4. Facilitator self-care and supervision plan

- After a heavy disclosure, youth workers should not stay alone with the emotional weight. They need a clear internal debrief and supervision pathway.
- Each youth worker writes three names: one colleague for debrief, one responsible person for safeguarding/referral, and one professional or supervisor for consultation.
- The aim is not to become less caring, but to care with support, boundaries and sustainability.

Evaluation of youth worker learning

Competence area	Before training	After training	Evidence of learning
I can recognise common signs of youth mental health distress.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	I can name at least five signs and connect them with support needs.
I can facilitate a sensitive topic without forcing disclosure.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	My workshop plan includes voluntary participation, debrief and safety notes.
I can open a supportive conversation with a young person.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	I can use validation, open questions and clear boundaries.
I know what to do when there is a safeguarding or crisis concern.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	I completed a local support/referral map.
I can adapt methods for inclusion and different youth contexts.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	I can describe adaptations for age, culture, language, neurodiversity or fewer opportunities.

Quality criteria for a strong youth worker training

- It is experiential: participants learn through doing, reflection and practical application, not through long lectures.
- It is safe: no activity requires personal disclosure of trauma, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, eating behaviours or substance use.
- It is boundaried: youth workers understand what belongs to youth work and what requires professional or emergency support.
- It is inclusive: activities reduce shame, stigma and exclusion and are adaptable to different young people and partner contexts.
- It is practical: every participant leaves with a workshop plan, referral map and concrete next step.
- It is sustainable: it includes self-care, peer debrief and supervision so youth workers do not carry heavy stories alone.

Editor note for final manual

Before translation, each partner should insert local safeguarding rules, crisis contacts, referral procedures and age-specific legal requirements. The English master version should remain general, while national language versions should become concrete and locally usable.

Curriculum B. Training curriculum for young people

Mental health literacy, self-awareness, peer support and social inclusion for young people

Element	Specification
Target group	Young people aged approximately 13-30. Adapt language, examples and depth to age, maturity and group context.
Recommended duration	10-12 hours, delivered as a 2-day youth training, 6 short sessions, or selected 90-minute workshops.
Overall aim	To help young people understand common mental health challenges, reduce shame, practise healthy coping tools, strengthen peer support and know where to seek help.
Training approach	Participatory, creative, non-diagnostic and hope-focused. Young people are not asked to disclose personal trauma or crisis stories.
Expected outcomes	Participants recognise body signals, thoughts, emotions and support needs; practise calming and reflection tools; create a personal support map; and identify inclusive ways to support peers.
Final output	A personal mental health support map, one realistic coping plan and one group inclusion message or campaign idea.

Curriculum structure for young people

Module	Time	Content focus	Methods used	Output
1. Safe group, mental health literacy and inclusion	90 min	What mental health means, why stigma hurts and how groups can be safer.	Check-in, group agreements, myth/fact cards, inclusion poster.	Group agreement and one anti-stigma message.
2. Anxiety, panic symptoms and sleep support	90 min	Body signals, anxious thoughts, grounding, breathing and sleep wind-down.	Body map, thought reframing, 5 senses grounding, 3-2-1 sleep plan.	Anxiety and Sleep Support Map.
3. Sadness, loneliness and hope	90 min	Hidden emotions, loneliness, self-compassion and connection.	Emotion spectrum, Behind the Smile, Cause and Effect House, letter to self.	One supportive sentence and one connection step.
4. Concentration and academic stress	90 min	How pressure affects focus and how to unload academic stress.	Concentration challenge, stress-focus cycle, academic stress backpack.	Concentration and Academic Stress Support Map.
5. Self-image, body image and emotions	90 min	Messages about appearance, pressure, identity and supportive peer responses.	Mirror Stories, Voices Around Me, forum moment, reflection cards.	One positive identity statement and one support action.
6. Risky coping, substances and real energy	90 min	Why young people sometimes escape stress and what healthier energy sources exist.	Agree/disagree movement, Why Do We Escape, case stories, Real Energy Recipe.	Personal Real Energy list and peer-support idea.
7. Support map and youth action	90 min	Where to seek help, how to support a friend and how to share learning inclusively.	Circle of control, support map, campaign/message creation, closing circle.	Personal support map and group dissemination message.

Core methods used in Curriculum B

- Creative expression: drawings, symbols, identity cards, mirror scenes, letters to self and visual maps.
- Body-based awareness: body maps, grounding, breathing options, muscle relaxation and sleep wind-down cues.
- Cognitive and emotional reflection: thought-emotion-action chains, realistic reframing, probability checking and compassionate self-talk.

- Peer and group learning: paired reflection, small-group tasks, carousels, movement games, forum-style practice and voluntary sharing.
- Support and inclusion: support maps, help-seeking practice, anti-stigma messages, accessibility adaptations and campaign/dissemination ideas.

Youth training safety and adaptation notes

- Use age-appropriate examples and avoid diagnostic language unless it is explained simply and without labelling participants.
- Do not ask young people to disclose trauma, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, eating behaviours, substance use or family conflict in the group.
- Keep all personal sharing voluntary and allow participants to work with fictional, mild or general examples.
- For groups with minors or vulnerable participants, use co-facilitation and prepare a clear safeguarding pathway before the training begins.
- Each language version should include local support contacts and emergency/crisis resources.

Workshop 1. Anxiety, panic symptoms and sleep disturbances

Understanding anxiety, body signals, thoughts and calming strategies

Item	Detail
Country / partner contribution	Slovenia
Duration	90 minutes
Recommended group size	10-25 participants
Target group	Young people aged 13+ or youth workers; adapt examples to age group
Main methods	Brainstorming, poster walk, body mapping, cognitive reframing, breathing, visualisation, reflection
Source note	Based on the Slovenian workshop document. Edited for clearer timing, flow and facilitator safety.

Purpose

Participants explore what anxiety and panic are, how they appear in the body and mind, and which tools can help them calm themselves and sleep more easily.

Learning objectives

- Distinguish everyday stress, anxiety and panic in simple language.
- Recognise personal triggers, body signals and automatic thoughts.
- Practise realistic reframing and probability checking.
- Learn grounding, breathing and safe-place visualisation for calming and sleep support.
- Create a simple personal sleep wind-down plan connected with anxiety regulation.
- Identify personal support people and coping strategies.

Materials and preparation

- Flipcharts or posters
- Markers and sticky notes
- A4 paper for body outline and thought mapping
- Calm music and speaker
- Printed worksheet: Anxiety and Sleep Support Map
- Optional calm music for the final regulation and sleep-support part
- Optional breathing cards or a timer for guided practice

Safety and facilitation note
Do not ask participants to share panic attacks or traumatic experiences in detail. Frame the exercises as optional self-reflection. If panic symptoms become intense during the workshop, invite the participant to ground, breathe, step outside with a co-facilitator, and connect with appropriate support.

90-minute agenda

Time	Activity	Method / purpose
0-10 min	Opening brainstorm	What do anxiety and panic mean? Group poster.
10-20 min	Mini-input	Simple definitions and difference between stress, anxiety and panic; link with sleep.
20-32 min	Poster walk	Frequency and triggers of anxiety/panic.
32-62 min	Main exercise	Body map, automatic thoughts, reframing

Time	Activity	Method / purpose
		and probability check.
62-77 min	Regulation practice	Concrete breathing options, grounding and safe-place visualisation.
77-85 min	Sleep support mini-practice	Personal wind-down plan for reducing arousal before sleep.
85-90 min	Reflection and closing	What helps me calm down? Who helps me feel safe?

Step-by-step facilitation guide

Opening brainstorm - "What is anxiety? What is panic?" (10 min)

Goal: Clarify common associations and misconceptions.

- Place two posters on the wall: Anxiety and Panic.
- Invite participants to write words, images or situations they associate with each term.
- Read the posters aloud and highlight that these words are often used casually, but they also describe real emotional and body experiences.

Debrief questions:

- Which words appear most often?
- Which words feel like everyday stress, and which feel more intense?
- What is important to understand before supporting a young person?

Mini-input - simple definitions (10 min)

Goal: Give participants a shared vocabulary.

- Explain briefly: stress is usually connected to a concrete pressure; anxiety is worry, tension or fear that can remain even when danger is not immediate; panic is a sudden wave of intense fear with strong body symptoms.
- Explain that anxiety and panic can disturb sleep because the body remains in alert mode.
- Keep the theory short and invite examples without personal pressure.

Poster walk - frequency and triggers (12 min)

Goal: Help participants notice patterns and normalise diversity of experiences.

- Prepare two posters: "How often do young people feel anxious or panicky?" and "What can trigger anxiety or panic?"
- Participants walk around, write ideas or symbols, and read what others wrote.
- Facilitator groups triggers into categories: school, relationships, family, social media, uncertainty, performance and body sensations.

Debrief questions:

- Which triggers are most common?
- Which triggers are visible to adults and which are hidden?
- What helps young people feel less alone?

Main exercise - situation, body, thought, realistic response (30 min)

Goal: Make anxious thinking visible and practise realistic reframing.

- Each participant chooses one mild to moderate situation where they feel stress or anxiety. Remind them to choose something safe to work with.
- They draw a simple body outline and mark where they feel the emotion in the body.
- They write the automatic thought that appears in that situation, for example: "I cannot handle this" or "Everyone will notice my mistake."
- They rewrite the thought into a realistic and supportive sentence, for example: "This is difficult, but I can take one step" or "Some people may not notice, and I can ask for support."
- They estimate how likely the feared outcome really is and write one action they can control.

Debrief questions:

- What changed when the thought became more realistic?
- How does the body respond when we speak to ourselves differently?
- Which sentence would you offer to a friend?

> ***Facilitator note:*** *Avoid forcing positive thinking. The aim is realistic, compassionate thinking, not pretending everything is fine.*

Regulation practice - breathing and safe place (15 min)

Goal: Practise simple tools participants can use in real life.

- Offer a short breathing menu and choose one technique for practice. Emphasise that participants may keep their eyes open and stop if breathing exercises feel uncomfortable.
- 4-6 calming breath: inhale gently for 4 counts, exhale slowly for 6 counts. Repeat 5-8 rounds, with shoulders relaxed and feet on the floor.
- Hand-tracing breath: trace slowly up one finger while inhaling and down the other side while exhaling. Continue around the whole hand.
- Box breathing, optional: inhale for 4, hold gently for 4, exhale for 4, hold gently for 4. Skip breath-holding if it increases discomfort or panic sensations.
- 5 senses grounding: name 5 things you see, 4 things you feel, 3 things you hear, 2 things you smell and 1 thing you taste or imagine tasting.
- Safe-place visualisation: play calm music and invite participants to imagine a safe or comforting place using sensory details: colours, temperature, sounds, support and distance from stress.

> *Facilitator note: Breathing is not a test. For some young people, especially those with panic symptoms or trauma histories, closing the eyes or taking deep breaths may feel unsafe. Offer choices and normal breathing as an equally valid option.*

Sleep support mini-practice - winding down the nervous system (8 min)

Goal: Connect anxiety regulation with practical, realistic sleep support.

- Explain briefly: sleep usually improves when the body receives repeated cues that the day is ending and danger has passed. The aim is not perfect sleep, but a more supportive transition into rest.
- Invite participants to write a 3-2-1 wind-down plan: 3 things I can reduce before bed, such as scrolling, arguing, caffeine or intense studying; 2 things that help my body feel safer, such as shower, stretching, prayer, music or reading; 1 sentence I can say to myself when anxious thoughts appear.
- Examples of sleep-support sentences: “I do not need to solve everything tonight.” “My body can rest even if my mind is still busy.” “Tomorrow I can take one next step.”
- In pairs, participants may share only one safe and non-private idea from their plan. Sharing is voluntary.

Debrief questions:

- Which bedtime habit increases alertness, even if it feels automatic?
- Which small cue could help your body understand that it is safe to rest?
- What support could a young person ask for if sleep problems continue?

Suggested facilitator wording
“You do not need to make anxiety disappear. For now, we are simply helping the body understand that this moment is safe enough.”

Closing reflection - what helps me? (5 min)

Goal: Build a personal calming and sleep support list.

- Participants complete the final part of the worksheet: What helps me calm anxiety? What helps me calm panic? Who helps me feel safe? What helps me fall asleep more easily?
- Invite voluntary sharing in pairs or in the circle.
- End with one word participants want to take with them.

Closing reflection

- What did I learn about my body signals?
- Which thought can I reframe more realistically?

- Which calming tool can I practise this week?
- Who can I contact when I need support?

Additional facilitator notes

- Keep the pace calm and do not overload the workshop with theory.
- Use sleep examples gently: bedtime routines, reducing stimulation, calming the body and asking for support. Avoid shaming participants for phone use or irregular sleep; focus on one small change.
- If a participant describes repeated panic attacks, severe insomnia, self-harm thoughts or inability to function, connect them with appropriate adult or professional support after the workshop.
- Add local support contacts in the final version.

Printable worksheet - Anxiety and Sleep Support Map

This worksheet can be printed as a one-page handout or copied into a participant workbook. It is designed for mild to moderate examples, not for processing trauma or crisis situations in a group.

Prompt	My notes
1. Situation	A mild or moderate situation where anxiety, panic symptoms or sleep difficulty appears.
2. Body signals	Where do I notice it in my body? Breathing, chest, stomach, muscles, head, hands, temperature?
3. Automatic thought	What does my mind say in that moment?
4. Reality check	What facts support this thought? What facts show it may not be the whole truth?
5. Realistic and compassionate thought	What could I say to myself that is both true and supportive?
6. One controllable action	What is one small next step I can take?
7. Regulation tool	Which tool can I try first: 4-6 breath, hand-tracing breath, 5 senses grounding, safe place, movement, talking to someone?
8. Support person or place	Who or what helps me feel less alone?
9. My 3-2-1 sleep wind-down plan	3 things I can reduce before bed; 2 things that help my body feel safer; 1 sentence I can say to myself.
10. When I need extra help	One sign that I should talk to an adult, youth worker, counsellor or health professional.

Workshop 2. Depression, sadness, hopelessness and loneliness

Understanding hidden emotions and building connection

Item	Detail
Country / partner contribution	North Macedonia
Duration	90 minutes
Recommended group size	10-25 participants
Target group	Young people aged 15-30; suitable for youth workers as training participants
Main methods	Safe-space setup, emotion cards, image/video reflection, cause-effect mapping, carousel, letter writing
Source note	Based on the North Macedonian 90-minute workshop plan. Edited to add clearer instructions, scripts and safety framing.

Purpose

Participants learn to distinguish sadness, loneliness and depression, recognise possible signs of hidden emotional struggle, and explore supportive ways to respond.

Learning objectives

- Understand the difference between sadness, loneliness, hopelessness and possible depression.
- Recognise signs that a young person may be emotionally overwhelmed or withdrawing.
- Identify personal and social factors that can contribute to loneliness or hopelessness.
- Practise self-compassion and supportive peer/youth-worker responses.
- Know that professional support may be needed when sadness becomes persistent or risk is present.

Materials and preparation

- Emotion cards or printed emotion words
- Images or short neutral video clips about hidden emotions
- Flipcharts and markers
- Sticky notes
- A4 paper and envelopes for “Letter to Myself”
- Local support resource list

Safety and facilitation note
Do not ask participants to disclose current depression, suicidal thoughts or family trauma in the group. If a participant shares hopelessness, self-harm or danger, respond privately and follow the safeguarding protocol. Keep the workshop focused on recognition, empathy and connection.

90-minute agenda

Time	Activity	Method / purpose
0-10 min	Welcome and safe space	Group agreements and one-word check-in.
10-25 min	Emotion spectrum game	Differentiate sadness, loneliness, emptiness and hope.
25-40 min	Behind the Smile	Discuss hidden emotions using images or short clips.
40-60 min	Cause and Effect House	Map causes and consequences of loneliness/hopelessness.
60-75 min	Coping strategies carousel	Explore self-care, support people, habits and helping a friend.

Time	Activity	Method / purpose
75-85 min	Letter to Myself	Self-compassion writing for difficult moments.
85-90 min	Closing circle and resources	Grounding and support contacts.

Step-by-step facilitation guide

Welcome and safe space (10 min)

Goal: Create trust and emotional safety.

- Greet participants warmly and explain that the workshop is about awareness and support, not therapy.
- Invite one word that describes how participants arrive today. Passing is allowed.
- Create group rules on a flipchart: listen, do not judge, share only what feels safe, confidentiality, ask for support if needed.

Emotion spectrum game (15 min)

Goal: Differentiate sadness, loneliness and hopelessness.

- Place emotion cards on the floor or table: happy, sad, tired, empty, lonely, peaceful, hopeless, hopeful, frustrated, numb.
- Ask participants in small groups to arrange the cards from light to heavy, or from temporary to more persistent.
- Discuss that sadness is a normal emotion, loneliness is a need for connection, and depression may involve longer-lasting loss of energy, interest and hope.

Debrief questions:

- Which emotions are easiest to recognise?
- Which emotions are often hidden?
- Why might a young person smile while feeling very lonely?

Behind the Smile (15 min)

Goal: Build empathy for hidden emotional struggles.

- Show 2-3 neutral images or short clips of people who seem fine on the outside but may feel different inside.
- Ask participants to write two columns: “What others see” and “What may be happening inside.”
- Discuss in pairs, then collect insights in plenary.

> ***Facilitator note:*** *Use carefully selected materials. Avoid graphic, sensational or hopeless content.*

Cause and Effect House (20 min)

Goal: Understand personal and social triggers.

- Groups draw a house. Foundation = basic needs; walls = causes; windows = signs; roof = consequences; door = possible support.
- Ask groups to fill the house with examples: stress, exclusion, family conflict, social media comparison, lack of sleep, bullying, shame, low motivation, isolation.
- Groups present one cause, one sign and one support door.

Debrief questions:

- Which causes are individual and which are social?
- What signs might youth workers notice first?
- What “door” to support can be opened early?

Coping strategies carousel (15 min)

Goal: Share practical tools for resilience and peer support.

- Prepare four flipcharts: Self-care, Who can help, Positive habits, How to support a friend.
- Groups rotate every 3 minutes and add ideas.
- Facilitator highlights realistic, low-cost and relational strategies.

Debrief questions:

- Which strategies are easy to start?
- Which require another person?
- How can we offer support without trying to fix everything?

Letter to Myself (10 min)

Goal: Encourage self-compassion.

- Invite participants to write a short supportive letter to themselves for a difficult day.
- Prompts: "When I feel alone, I want to remember…" "One person or place I can turn to is…" "One small step I can take is…"
- Participants may seal it, keep it, or fold it privately.

Closing circle and resources (5 min)

Goal: Ground the group and connect them with support.

- Invite one word participants are taking with them.
- Name local support options and remind participants they can speak to the facilitator or another trusted adult after the session.
- Close with one slow breath together.

Closing reflection

- What is the difference between feeling sad and feeling alone?
- What signs of hidden struggle should youth workers notice?
- How can I support a young person without judging or minimizing?
- Which resource can I offer in my local context?

Additional facilitator notes

- Add exact links or QR codes to local support services in the final manual.
- The original document mentioned adding video links; choose short, non-triggering materials before publication.

Workshop 3. Concentration, academic stress and study pressure

From overloaded attention to realistic study support

Item	Detail
Country / partner contribution	Portugal
Duration	90 minutes
Recommended group size	10-30 participants
Target group	Young people aged 13+; also suitable for youth worker training and school-based prevention sessions
Main methods	Focus check-in, stress-focus psychoeducation, attention challenge, backpack metaphor, control/influence sorting, peer problem-solving, personal action planning
Source note	Based on the Portuguese workshop notes. Substantially expanded into a full facilitator guide with clearer safety, debriefing, youth-worker framing and a printable worksheet.

Purpose

Participants explore how stress, pressure, tiredness and distraction affect concentration. They experience attention under different conditions, name academic stressors without shame and create realistic strategies for unloading pressure and asking for support.

Learning objectives

- Understand concentration as a capacity influenced by stress, sleep, emotions, digital distraction, environment and task complexity.
- Reflect on academic stress and study pressure without shame or competition.
- Notice body signals, pressure thoughts and common sources of academic stress.
- Practise practical ways to unload academic stress through organisation, support, body regulation and one small next step.
- Distinguish what is within personal control, influence or outside immediate control.
- Create a realistic concentration-support plan that includes planning, breaks, rest, realistic expectations and support.

Materials and preparation

- A4 paper cut into four pieces per participant
- Pens
- Timer
- Music/speaker for controlled distraction
- Empty backpack for each small group; keep the weight symbolic and light
- Books, notebooks or light weighted objects with blank labels taped to them
- Green, orange and red markers or stickers for control/influence/no-control sorting
- Flipcharts: “What helps focus?”, “What steals focus?”, and “Stress-focus cycle”
- Printed worksheet: Concentration and Academic Stress Support Map
- Optional: phone basket or “parking place” for a short digital-distraction experiment
- Optional: stressor cards for groups that need examples

Safety and facilitation note
Do not frame concentration difficulties as laziness or lack of willpower. Attention is affected by stress, sleep, anxiety, grief, neurodiversity, learning difficulties, digital overload and the learning environment. The backpack metaphor should remain symbolic: do not create physical discomfort and do not ask participants to disclose private school, family or mental health problems. Offer examples and allow participants to work with fictional or general stressors.

90-minute agenda

Time	Activity	Method / purpose
0-10 min	Opening and focus check-in	Name one condition that helps or hurts focus; set non-competitive tone.
10-20 min	Mini-input: stress-focus cycle	Explain how stress, sleep, emotions, environment and digital overload influence attention.
20-42 min	Concentration challenge	Four short timed tasks with different levels of distraction and task complexity.
42-52 min	Debrief: what happened to attention?	Connect performance, body signals, self-talk and learning conditions.
52-75 min	Academic stress backpack	Name stressors, sort control/influence/no-control and generate realistic support strategies.
75-84 min	Unloading toolbox	Build a shared menu of practical strategies: environment, time, body, mind and support.
84-90 min	Personal next step and closing	Complete worksheet, choose one small action and close with a supportive sentence.

Step-by-step facilitation guide

Opening - focus check-in and group agreements (10 min)

Goal: Connect participants, normalise focus difficulties and create a non-competitive learning atmosphere.

- Each participant says their name and completes one sentence: "I focus better when..." or "I lose focus when..." Passing is allowed.
- Facilitator collects 5-6 examples on the flipchart and links them to stress, distraction, tiredness, emotions, unclear tasks and motivation.
- Agree on one important rule: the following task is not a test of intelligence or school ability. It is an experiment about conditions for concentration.
- Invite participants to notice their body, thoughts and emotions during the activity, not to compare scores.

Mini-input - stress-focus cycle (10 min)

Goal: Give a simple explanation of why concentration becomes harder under pressure.

- Draw a simple cycle on the flipchart: pressure or overload -> body alertness -> scattered attention -> mistakes or slower work -> self-criticism -> more pressure.
- Explain that focus is not only a character trait. It is affected by sleep, hunger, anxiety, grief, digital notifications, noise, unclear instructions, perfectionism and fear of failure.
- Ask participants for neutral examples of conditions that support focus: clear instructions, short tasks, breaks, quiet, movement, peer support, realistic expectations and enough rest.
- Key message: When a young person cannot focus, the first question is not "What is wrong with you?" but "What is making focus difficult right now, and what support could reduce the load?"

Facilitator note: Keep this input short. The main learning should come through the experience and reflection.

Concentration challenge - attention under different conditions (22 min)

Goal: Experience how distraction, complexity and pressure influence attention.

- Give each participant four small pieces of paper and a pen. Ask them to work quietly and to keep their own results private.
- Round 1: In 90 seconds, write numbers 1-26 and letters A-Z in order. Play music at low volume.
- Round 2: In 90 seconds, write numbers 26-1 and letters Z-A. Increase music volume slightly.
- Round 3: In 90 seconds, alternate number and letter from low to high: 1 A 2 B 3 C ... 26 Z. Keep music and add mild, neutral facilitator distraction, such as walking or making brief comments. Avoid comments about participants' ability.
- Round 4: In 90 seconds, alternate from high to low: 26 Z 25 Y ... 1 A. Remove distractions and create quiet.

- Participants compare how each round felt, not who performed best. They may circle the round that felt easiest, hardest or most stressful.
- Optional: Invite participants to notice accuracy, speed and emotional reaction separately. This helps them see that pressure can change both performance and self-talk.

Debrief questions:

- Which round felt easiest or hardest?
- How did distraction affect your body and thoughts?
- What did you notice when the room became quiet?
- What is similar to school or exam situations?
- Which conditions would make this task fairer, calmer or more accessible?

> *Facilitator note: Do not make this a competition. Focus on experience, accessibility and support. Some participants may have learning difficulties, ADHD, anxiety or language barriers; the aim is not to expose them.*

Debrief - what happened to attention? (10 min)

Goal: Translate the experiment into insight about real-life academic stress.

- Ask participants to name what changed in their body, thoughts and focus across the four rounds.
- Write three columns on the flipchart: Body signals, Thoughts, Learning conditions.
- Connect the answers with the stress-focus cycle from the mini-input.
- Close this part with the sentence: “Difficulty focusing is information, not a personal failure.”

Academic stress backpack - naming and unloading pressure (23 min)

Goal: Identify academic pressure, sort what can be changed or influenced and practise solution-focused support.

- Divide into small mixed groups of 5-6. Each group receives an empty backpack and a set of books, notebooks or light weighted objects.
- Each participant chooses one book/object and writes one academic stressor on the label. They may use a personal, fictional or general example. Examples: too much to study, fear of failure, family expectations, lack of sleep, unclear instructions, social media distraction, comparing grades.
- Participants may briefly hold or wear the backpack to feel the symbolic weight. Observing is allowed, and the backpack must remain physically safe and light.
- Groups remove one book at a time. First, they mark the stressor as control, influence or outside immediate control. Then they write one realistic support or coping strategy on the same label.
- The book can be placed outside the backpack only after a strategy, support person or compassionate sentence has been written. For no-control stressors, the “solution” may be acceptance, support, advocacy or asking an adult for help.
- Invite groups to notice which stressors need individual action and which need school, family or community support.
- If time is short, each group chooses the two heaviest stressors and works only with those.

Debrief questions:

- Which stressors are most common?
- Which ones are in our control, influence or outside our control?
- Which strategy feels realistic this week, not only ideal in theory?
- Which stressors should not be carried alone?
- What can a youth worker, teacher or peer do to reduce the load?

Unloading toolbox - from pressure to plan (9 min)

Goal: Turn the backpack metaphor into a practical menu of supports.

- Each group presents one or two stressors and the strategies, support options or compassionate sentences they created.
- Facilitator groups strategies into five categories: environment, time, body, mind and support.
- Examples: environment - phone away for 20 minutes; time - start with a 5-minute task; body - drink water, move or sleep earlier; mind - “one task at a time”; support - ask a teacher, peer, parent or counsellor.
- Invite participants to choose one strategy that is realistic, one that requires support and one that they want to try during the next week.

- Avoid presenting organisation tips as enough for every situation. Sometimes academic stress needs adult help, learning support or mental health support.

Personal next step and closing (6 min)

Goal: Leave each participant with one realistic next step and one source of support.

- Participants complete the final part of the worksheet: one 5-minute start step, one break or rest cue, one support person and one sentence they can say to themselves under pressure.
- Optional pair share: each participant shares only one non-private strategy they are willing to try.
- Close with the sentence: "I do not have to carry everything at once. I can take one next step and ask for support."

Closing reflection

- What helps my concentration and what makes it harder?
- What is one academic pressure I can name without judging myself?
- What is within my control, what can I influence and what do I not need to carry alone?
- Who can help me carry the load, and what is one concrete way I could ask for help?

Additional facilitator notes

- The original Portuguese activity is creative and memorable. The edited version strengthens the therapeutic and educational flow by adding psychoeducation, safety framing, control/influence sorting, action planning and a worksheet.
- For younger participants, replace academic examples with school, homework, screen distraction and friendship stress examples.
- For youth workers, add discussion on school systems, expectations, inclusion, neurodiversity, learning support and prevention.
- Use culturally relevant examples: exams, grades, entrance requirements, family expectations, work-study balance or migration/language stress.
- If a participant describes persistent inability to function, panic, severe insomnia, school refusal, self-harm thoughts or intense family pressure, connect them with appropriate adult or professional support after the workshop.

Suggested facilitator wording

"Today we are not testing who is good at focusing. We are exploring what happens to attention when the brain is under pressure. If focus becomes difficult, it does not mean you are lazy or weak. It may mean your body, mind or environment is carrying too much. Our task is to notice the load and find one realistic next step."

Printable worksheet - Concentration and Academic Stress Support Map

This worksheet can be printed as a one-page handout or included in the participant workbook. It is designed to help young people move from pressure and self-criticism toward one realistic support plan.

Prompt	My notes
1. When I need to focus...	What situation, task or school moment do I want to understand better?
2. What steals my focus?	Noise, phone, worries, tiredness, hunger, unclear task, pressure, emotions, comparison, other?
3. Body signals of academic stress	Where do I feel pressure in my body? Head, chest, stomach, shoulders, hands, breathing, energy?
4. Pressure thought	What does my mind say when I struggle to focus?
5. Realistic and supportive thought	What could I say that is true, kind and useful?
6. My backpack stressor	One academic stressor I can name without judging myself.
7. Control / influence / outside my control	Which part can I control? Which part can I influence? Which part do I need support or acceptance for?
8. One unloading strategy	Environment, time, body, mind or support: which strategy can I try?
9. My 5-minute start step	What is one very small action that could help me begin?
10. Break or rest cue	What helps my body reset: movement, water, breathing, stretching, music, sleep routine, prayer, fresh air?
11. Support person	Who can help me carry this load? What could I ask them?
12. When I need extra help	One sign that I should talk to a trusted adult, teacher, counsellor, youth worker or health professional.

Workshop 4. Suicidal ideation: Light Through the Fog

Thoughts, emotions, control and support mapping

Item	Detail
Country / partner contribution	Estonia
Duration	90 minutes
Recommended group size	8-20 participants; co-facilitation strongly recommended
Target group	Youth workers or older adolescents in a well-supported setting. Use with minors only with a safeguarding framework.
Main methods	Safe-space rules, weather metaphor, reaction chain, reframing, circle of control, support map, grounding
Source note	Based on the Estonian two-workshop document. Edited to strengthen safety, reduce overload and keep the session educational rather than disclosure-based.

Purpose

Participants explore how thoughts and emotions influence actions, learn to focus on what they can control or influence, and identify personal and professional support resources.

Learning objectives

- Understand the link between situation, thought, emotion and action.
- Practise reframing automatic thoughts in a realistic and supportive way.
- Distinguish control, influence and no-control zones.
- Create a concrete map of support resources.
- Practise grounding and identify where to seek help.

Materials and preparation

- Flipchart and markers
- A4 paper
- Circle of control template
- Support map template
- Local crisis and mental health resource list
- Quiet room and co-facilitator

Safety and facilitation note
This workshop must not invite participants to describe suicidal plans, methods or detailed personal crisis stories in the group. Use safe, general examples. If anyone indicates immediate danger, stay with the person, involve the designated safeguarding contact, and connect them to urgent professional help. Add local emergency and crisis contacts before implementation.

90-minute agenda

Time	Activity	Method / purpose
0-15 min	Opening and safety foundations	Group rules and Weather Inside check-in.
15-40 min	Architecture of thoughts	Situation - thought - emotion - action; reframing automatic thoughts.
40-65 min	Circle of control	Map what I control, influence and do not control.
65-82 min	Support map	Identify people, places and services that can help.
82-90 min	Grounding and closing	5 senses grounding and useful takeaway.

Step-by-step facilitation guide

Opening and safety foundations (15 min)

Goal: Build a clear and safe container.

- Explain the purpose: to understand thoughts, emotions and support, not to share crisis stories.
- Write safe-space rules: listen attentively, speak from personal experience, share only what is comfortable, do not judge, maintain confidentiality within safeguarding limits.
- Weather Inside: each participant describes their mood as weather. Passing is allowed.

Suggested facilitator wording
"Some topics can feel close to personal experience. You never have to share anything private. If anything feels too much, you can step out with support."

Architecture of thoughts (25 min)

Goal: Recognise how thoughts influence emotions and actions.

- Draw the chain: Situation - Thought - Emotion - Action.
- Use a mild example: A friend does not reply to a message. Thought: "They are ignoring me." Emotion: hurt. Action: withdraw or send an angry message.
- Ask how another thought could change the emotion and action: "They may be busy; I can check later."
- Participants choose a mild everyday situation and write the chain privately.
- They rewrite the thought in a more realistic and supportive way and estimate how likely the feared outcome really is.

Debrief questions:

- Can the same situation lead to different thoughts?
- How can a thought change the emotion?
- What action becomes possible after reframing?

Facilitator note: *Use mild examples. Do not ask participants to work with severe crisis material.*

Circle of control (25 min)

Goal: Redirect energy toward what can be changed or influenced.

- Draw three nested circles: I control, I can influence, I do not control.
- Give examples: I control my words, actions and asking for help. I influence relationships, group atmosphere and preparation. I do not control other people's decisions, the past or the weather.
- Participants map current stressors into the circles.
- In pairs, they discuss one item from the outer circle and one concrete action from the control or influence zone.

Debrief questions:

- Where do we spend energy without results?
- What can be moved from worry into action?
- How can this reduce stress?

Support map (17 min)

Goal: Identify sources of support before a crisis becomes too heavy.

- Participants write "Me" in the centre of a page.
- They draw circles around themselves: close people, supportive adults, organisations/services, safe places, online or phone support.
- They add names, places or services where possible.
- Invite voluntary sharing of one support category, not private details.

Debrief questions:

- Is it easy or hard to name support?

- Which resource had you forgotten?
- Who could you contact if a young person needed help today?

Grounding and closing (8 min)

Goal: Leave the group grounded and connected with resources.

- Guide 5 senses grounding: notice three things you see, three sounds, two body sensations and one smell.
- Ask: “What was most useful today?”
- Remind participants of local support contacts and the possibility to speak privately after the session.

Closing reflection

- What do I control when emotions become intense?
- Which thought can I make more realistic?
- Who belongs on my support map?
- What is the first safe step when someone needs help?

Additional facilitator notes

- For youth-worker training, add a short role-play on how to respond when a young person discloses risk.
- For adolescent groups, use co-facilitation and clear safeguarding procedures.
- Do not include method descriptions, graphic stories or sensational examples.

Workshop 5. Self-harm: understanding emotional pain and safer coping tools

Body awareness, regulation and supportive environments

Item	Detail
Country / partner contribution	Estonia
Duration	90 minutes
Recommended group size	8-20 participants; co-facilitation recommended
Target group	Youth workers or older adolescents in a supported setting
Main methods	Object metaphor, body map, stress response, regulation toolkit, supportive environment map, Tree of Self
Source note	Based on the Estonian self-harm workshop. Edited to focus on safer coping, regulation and support, without discussing methods of self-harm.

Purpose

Participants understand emotional pain and stress responses, notice body signals, practise self-regulation tools, and create a visual map of strengths and support.

Learning objectives

- Recognise fight, flight and freeze stress responses.
- Map how emotions and stress appear in the body.
- Practise breathing, grounding and muscle relaxation.
- Create a personal supportive environment map.
- Identify strengths, support and future-oriented resources through the Tree of Self.

Materials and preparation

- Objects in the room or small object cards
- A4 paper and markers
- Body outline template
- Self-regulation instruction cards
- Tree of Self template
- Local support resource list

Safety and facilitation note
Use the term self-harm carefully and avoid asking for personal descriptions. Focus on emotional pain, body signals, safer coping and support. If a participant discloses current harm or danger, follow safeguarding procedures and connect them with professional support.

90-minute agenda

Time	Activity	Method / purpose
0-15 min	Opening and connection	Object That Describes Me or Common Ground.
15-40 min	Body and stress	Fight-flight-freeze and body map.
40-60 min	Self-regulation toolkit	Breathing, grounding and muscle relaxation.
60-72 min	Supportive environment	Space, people, activities and habits.
72-88 min	Tree of Self	Strengths, support, achievements and what to let go.
88-90 min	Closing	One safe step or one word of resilience.

Time	Activity	Method / purpose

Step-by-step facilitation guide

Opening - Object That Describes Me (15 min)

Goal: Encourage gentle self-expression.

- Invite each participant to choose an object around them that represents something about them.
- Each person briefly explains why. There are no right or wrong answers.
- Alternative: in pairs, find five things you have in common in two minutes.

> ***Facilitator note:*** *Keep the opening light and relational.*

Body and stress (25 min)

Goal: Understand the body's survival response.

- Explain fight, flight and freeze in simple terms: defending, escaping or shutting down when the body feels overwhelmed.
- Name common body signals: fast heartbeat, rapid breathing, muscle tension, throat tightness, sweating, anxious thoughts.
- Participants draw a body outline and mark where they feel stress or tension, using colours or symbols.
- Invite voluntary sharing of general body signals, not personal crisis stories.

Debrief questions:

- Which body signals appear first?
- How can noticing early signs help us choose a safer response?
- What might a young person need when they are in fight, flight or freeze?

Self-regulation toolkit (20 min)

Goal: Practise tools that help the nervous system settle.

- Practise 4-6 breathing: inhale 4 seconds, exhale 6 seconds, repeat five times.
- Practise 5-4-3-2-1 grounding: five things you see, four things you feel, three sounds, two smells, one taste.
- Practise gentle muscle release: clench fists for five seconds and release; raise shoulders and relax; tense legs and relax.
- Ask participants to choose one technique they would actually use.

> ***Facilitator note:*** *Offer adaptations: eyes open, seated, no touching, no pressure to close eyes.*

My supportive environment (12 min)

Goal: Identify safer alternatives and resources.

- Participants divide a page into four sections: Space, People, Activities, Habits.
- They write what helps them recover and recharge in each section.
- Examples: favourite room, park, library; friend, mentor, parent; music, drawing, movement; journaling, walking, morning routine.
- Sharing is optional; participants may add ideas from others.

Tree of Self (16 min)

Goal: Create a visual anchor for resilience.

- Participants draw a tree. Roots = support and resources. Trunk = strengths and skills. Leaves = achievements. Fruits = dreams and goals. Birds = joy and inspiration. Fallen leaves = what they want to let go of.
- Play quiet music. Emphasise that artistic skill does not matter.
- Invite participants to look at the tree and notice which part feels strongest or needs more care.
- Voluntary sharing: one small step from the tree that they can take tomorrow.

Suggested facilitator wording
"Your tree is a living tool. You can add new roots, leaves and fruits whenever you discover more support and strength."

Closing (2 min)

Goal: End with a simple stabilising moment.

- Each participant shares one word of resilience or quietly writes it on their page.
- Thank the group for openness and remind them where support is available.

Closing reflection

- Which body signal tells me I need support?
- Which self-regulation tool fits me best?
- What belongs in my supportive environment?
- What strength or support appears in my Tree of Self?

Additional facilitator notes

- The original material includes many useful blocks. This edited version selects the strongest elements for one 90-minute session.
- For a multi-session programme, the longer Estonian document can be used as a resource bank.

Workshop 6. Eating disorders, self-image and emotions: Mirror Stories

Exploring body image, media pressure and self-acceptance through storytelling

Item	Detail
Country / partner contribution	Greece
Duration	90 minutes
Recommended group size	12-25 adolescents; one main facilitator and one co-facilitator recommended
Target group	Adolescents aged approximately 13-18; adapt for older youth or youth workers
Main methods	Circle, wall of voices, small groups, storytelling, forum theatre, individual reflection, sharing circle
Source note	Based mainly on the enriched Greek PDF facilitator guide, which was the strongest and most complete version. The original Greek DOCX was used as the base topic source.

Purpose

Participants explore how self-image is shaped by inner and outer messages, practise empathy through stories and interventions, and create a private self-compassion reflection.

Learning objectives

- Raise awareness of how body image affects emotions and habits.
- Identify positive and pressure-inducing messages from peers, family, media and social media.
- Build empathy for what may happen behind a young person's image or behaviour.
- Practise supportive peer or youth-worker responses through forum theatre.
- Strengthen self-acceptance and group support.

Materials and preparation

- Large mirror or reflective surface, optionally covered at the start
- Post-its in two colours
- Emotion cards
- Printed short scenarios
- Mirror-shaped paper templates
- Pens and markers
- Soft instrumental music
- Quiet support space

Safety and facilitation note
Avoid comments that label bodies or reinforce ideals. Do not ask participants to disclose eating behaviours, weight, dieting or medical history. Do not give nutrition or exercise advice. If eating disorder risk, self-harm, severe shame or distress appears, refer according to local safeguarding and mental health procedures.

90-minute agenda

Time	Activity	Method / purpose
0-10 min	Who I See in the Mirror	Circle warm-up with one mirror word.
10-25 min	The Voices Around Me	Positive and pressure messages on post-its.
25-45 min	Behind the Image	Small groups prepare outside/inside scenes.
45-65 min	Forum moment	Perform scenes and practise supportive

Time	Activity	Method / purpose
		interventions.
65-75 min	Inside the Mirror	Private self-compassion reflection.
75-90 min	Closing circle	Surprises, feelings and "I am enough because..."

Step-by-step facilitation guide

Warm-up - Who I See in the Mirror (10 min)

Goal: Open the space and normalise reflection on self-image.

- Invite participants into a circle. Place the covered mirror in the centre or at the front.
- Explain confidentiality, passing and respect.
- Each participant says their name and one word describing how they usually feel when looking in the mirror. No comments or reactions.

Suggested facilitator wording
"Sometimes we like what we see, sometimes we do not, and sometimes the voices in our heads are not even ours. There is no right answer here, and you can always pass."

The Voices Around Me (15 min)

Goal: Externalise messages about bodies and appearance.

- Divide participants into groups of 4-5. Give each group two colours of post-its.
- Participants write messages they hear about bodies and appearance from friends, family, school, social media, ads or comments.
- One colour is for kind or empowering messages; the other is for critical or pressure-inducing messages.
- Groups place notes on the wall and everyone reads silently.

Debrief questions:

- Which side has more notes?
- Which messages contradict each other?
- How do these messages affect emotions?

Behind the Image - storytelling (20 min)

Goal: Build empathy by showing outside and inside layers.

- Each group receives one short scenario or creates a realistic story.
- They prepare a 2-3 minute scene with two layers: what others see outside, and what happens inside the character.
- They may use a narrator, thought voice, freeze frame or split character.
- Scenarios may include social media comparison, gym pressure, a hurtful comment, or family comments about eating.

Facilitator note: *Keep scenes realistic and non-graphic. Avoid mockery or exaggeration.*

Forum moment - interventions (20 min)

Goal: Practise supportive responses.

- Groups perform their scenes.
- After each scene, ask: Where was the turning point? Who could have responded differently?
- Replay a key moment. An audience member can call "Freeze", step in and try a different supportive response.
- Debrief briefly: how did the support feel for the actor and the character?

Debrief questions:

- What could a real friend do tomorrow?
- What could a youth worker say without judging?
- What response made the character less alone?

Inside the Mirror - individual reflection (10 min)

Goal: Create a private artifact of self-compassion.

- Play soft music. Give each participant a mirror-shaped template.
- Inside the frame, they write or draw feelings they have about their body or how others see them.
- Outside the frame, they write words they wish someone would say to them, or words they would say to a friend.
- Participants keep the mirror private unless they choose to share.

Closing circle (15 min)

Goal: Reconnect and end with grounding and dignity.

- Invite volunteers to answer: What surprised you? What feeling came up? What helps you feel okay about yourself on a hard day?
- Closing ritual: each participant may say, “I am enough because…” Passing is allowed.
- End by reminding participants that the kindest voice in their head can become their own.

Closing reflection

- Which messages about body image do young people absorb most?
- How can we separate a person from the pressure around them?
- What is one supportive sentence I can offer myself or a young person?
- Where can a young person turn if body-image concerns become serious?

Additional facilitator notes

- This workshop is highly suitable as a model for the whole manual because it includes clear preparation, scripts, timing, safety notes and closure.
- Add local eating disorder and mental health referral resources before publication.

Workshop 7. Alcohol, substances and energy-drink abuse

Searching for real energy, belonging and healthier coping

Item	Detail
Country / partner contribution	Croatia
Duration	90 minutes
Recommended group size	10-30 participants
Target group	Young people aged 13+ or youth workers; adapt substance examples to age and legal context
Main methods	Name game, values line, group mapping, case stories, empathy discussion, reflection circle
Source note	Based on the Croatian workshop document. Edited to remove internal comments and create a clean facilitator guide.

Purpose

Participants explore why young people may turn to alcohol, substances or energy drinks and how youth workers can respond with empathy rather than judgement.

Learning objectives

- Understand substance or energy-drink use as often connected with needs, emotions and social pressure.
- Reflect on personal attitudes and peer influence.
- Identify emotional, social and physical reasons behind risky habits.
- Practise empathic responses to youth case stories.
- Name healthy sources of real energy, connection and support.

Materials and preparation

- Prepared agree/disagree statements
- Four opinion corners or space for movement
- Flipcharts with the word ESCAPE
- Printed youth stories: Luka, Ana, Marko and Ema
- Markers
- Reflection circle space

Safety and facilitation note
Avoid normalising or glamorising substance use. Do not ask participants to disclose personal use. Use general case stories. Be aware of legal age, local laws and safeguarding rules. If a young person discloses risk, intoxication, dependency or harm, follow local support and safeguarding pathways.

90-minute agenda

Time	Activity	Method / purpose
0-15 min	My Name and My Recharge	Light personal opener about energy and coping.
15-35 min	Agree / Disagree / Not Sure	Values and pressure movement game.
35-55 min	Why Do We Escape?	Small-group mapping of reasons behind risky habits.
55-80 min	Through Their Eyes	Case stories and empathic youth-worker responses.
80-90 min	Real Energy - Real Connection	Reflection and one word of strength.

Step-by-step facilitation guide

Intro - My Name and My Recharge (15 min)

Goal: Open the topic gently and personally.

- Participants complete: "My name is ___ and I recharge with ___."
- Facilitator keeps the tone warm and light.
- After everyone speaks, connect the activity to the theme: everyone seeks energy, relief or connection; some ways are healthy and some become risky.

Suggested facilitator wording
"Today we will explore what really gives young people energy, and why some habits promise energy but may hide stress, loneliness or pressure."

Agree / Disagree / Not Sure (20 min)

Goal: Reflect on attitudes, habits and peer pressure.

- Place three signs in the room: Agree, Disagree, Not sure. Participants move to the sign that matches their response.
- Read statements one by one, such as: "Coffee or energy drinks help me stay focused." "We are free to make our own choices, even if they are not healthy." "It is easy to say no when everyone else says yes." "Young people today have more stress than adults realise."
- After each statement, invite one or two comments from different positions.

Debrief questions:

- What influences our choices most: stress, people, habits or belonging?
- Was it easy to stand in a different place from others?
- How does peer pressure work silently?

Facilitator note: *Prepare statements in advance and adapt them to age, culture and legal context.*

Why Do We Escape? (20 min)

Goal: Explore emotional, social and physical reasons behind risky habits.

- Divide participants into 3-4 groups. Each group gets a flipchart with ESCAPE in the centre.
- Groups write possible reasons why young people use alcohol, substances or energy drinks: stress, pressure, loneliness, curiosity, fun, tiredness, lack of sleep, need for belonging, sadness, boredom.
- Groups mark which reasons are most common and which may be most dangerous.
- Each group shares 2-3 insights.

Debrief questions:

- What emotion or need may be hidden behind the behaviour?
- What can help meet this need in a healthier way?
- What should youth workers understand before judging?

Through Their Eyes (25 min)

Goal: Build empathy and practise supportive responses.

- Each group receives one short profile: Luka drinks energy drinks every morning because he is exhausted; Ana drinks alcohol at parties because she feels shy; Marko smokes cannabis with friends because he wants to relax; Ema drinks when she feels sad because it makes things easier for a while.
- Groups discuss: What might be happening behind the behaviour? What need or emotion could be expressed? What could a youth worker or peer say or do?
- Groups present through a short scene or a summary.
- Facilitator emphasises listening first and connecting to support.

Debrief questions:

- What changed when we looked through the young person's eyes?

- Which response felt supportive without approving the risky behaviour?
- What professional or adult support may be needed?

Real Energy - Real Connection (10 min)

Goal: Close with healthy alternatives and meaning.

- Invite participants into a circle.
- Ask: What gives real energy, not from a bottle or can, but from inside? How can youth workers help young people find healthier ways to recharge?
- Close with “One Word of Strength”: balance, empathy, courage, calm, awareness, connection.

Suggested facilitator wording
“Real energy does not come only from products. It grows through connection, purpose, rest, nature and people who listen.”

Closing reflection

- What do young people try to regulate through risky habits?
- How can youth workers respond without judging?
- Which healthy source of energy can we strengthen in our communities?
- What is one word I want to remember from this session?

Additional facilitator notes

- The source document had a strong central metaphor and emotional tone. The final version should include prepared statements and printed case cards.
- Consider adding local prevention services and age-appropriate substance-use support contacts.

Appendix A. Universal workshop planning template

Field	To be completed by facilitator
Workshop title	
Topic area	
Target group and age	
Group size	
Duration	90 minutes
Learning objectives	
Materials	
Preparation	
Safety considerations	
Step-by-step agenda	
Reflection questions	
Local support resources	
Adaptations / inclusion notes	

Appendix B. Facilitator safety checklist

[ ] I know who the designated safeguarding person is.

[ ] I have local emergency and crisis contacts available.

[ ] I have explained confidentiality and its limits.

[ ] I have prepared a quiet space and a co-facilitator or support person.

[ ] I will not pressure participants to share personal experiences.

[ ] I will avoid graphic details, methods or sensational examples.

[ ] I know how to respond if a participant discloses immediate danger.

[ ] I will close the session with grounding and support information.

Appendix C. Facilitator reflection after the workshop

- What worked well in the group process?
- Where did participants show strong engagement?
- Were any moments emotionally sensitive or unsafe?
- Did the timing work?
- What should be adapted for the next group?
- Were any follow-up or safeguarding actions needed?

Selected safety references for final editing

For the final publication, the editorial team may consult recognised public health guidance on safe communication about suicide and self-harm, including WHO suicide prevention and mhGAP resources. Add local and national referral information for every implementation country.



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