



# SOCIAL MEDIA

*and mental health of young people*

Training Program and Methodology

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The main aim of the CONFIDENT project is to provide a system supporting young people through youth work to work on changing their self-image. In order to work towards achieving this aim, the CONFIDENT project will follow these objectives:

- *Raise awareness about the negative impact of social media on young people's mental health*
- *To define the correlation between social media and youth mental health*
- *To train youth educators for combating the negative impact of social media*
- *To promote a healthier approach to communicating online*
- *To create a digital space where young people can learn about the negative influence of social media and share experiences and knowledge*



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# INTRODUCTION

Today's youth culture is dominated by social media which has become an unconsciously essential aspect of their lives. The smartphone has become an indispensable tool for anyone living in the 21st century, offering much more than a backpack full of tools: a telephone, notepad, calculator, maps, books, games, music, and films. However, social interactions, which were previously not pocket-sized or held in the palm of one's hand, have now become possible with the advent of social media. While older generations may remember a time without smartphones and social media, younger Millennials and Gen Z grew up with their emergence and have been significantly impacted by them. There is no doubt that social media is here to stay, with no indications of it changing anytime soon. Our focus should be on understanding how they affect the lives of young people and finding ways to harness their benefits while addressing the potential dangers to their well-being.

CONFIDENT Training Methodology is organized into five cohesive modules that are interconnected and work together as a whole. We strive to provide a theoretical background to explain the issues and offer engaging activities that encourage young people to analyze their own relationship with social media and its exact effects on their lives. Furthermore, we provide proven and effective self-help strategies and tools that they can use individually not only during the workshops but also in their daily lives. Finally, through interactive workshops, we aim to equip them with skills that social media may have deprived them of, enabling them to rely confidently on themselves and the skills acquired through training, rather than solely relying on smartphone applications.

The theoretical part has been developed with mentors and youth educators in mind to provide them with a deeper understanding of the interrelation between causes and consequences. It emphasizes the fact that there is usually a deeper reason behind each issue at hand. By understanding this interconnectedness, educators can grasp that different problems may have different underlying causes and, therefore, require different solutions. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. The aim is to encourage mentors and educators to adopt an individualistic approach with each participant, recognizing that this is a highly personal topic that affects individuals differently. The goal is to help participants find their own unique solutions that work specifically for them.

Modules 1, 2, and 3 involve analytical inquiry into the issues and the underlying reasons behind them, while Modules 4 and 5 provide practical solutions. Module 1 begins by defining the problems or negative effects that young people face due to their social media use. The intention is to raise

immediate awareness of these issues, as many young people are not aware that they are facing these difficulties. For them, these challenges have become a normal part of their lives, especially when they see their peers experiencing similar struggles.

In Module 2, we aim to highlight the reasons why these issues arise and what causes young people to become so dependent on social media. We explore how these causes influence the fragile psyche of a young person. In Module 3, we emphasize the importance of understanding the societal motivators that contribute to these issues. This module aims to demystify the problem by shedding light not only on the internal factors but also on the external factors responsible for these challenges. It is crucial to recognize that these issues are not inherently the fault of the young person alone. We exist in a society, not in isolation on an island, and there are multiple factors at play.

While the first three modules focus on defining areas where young people may struggle, the subsequent two modules provide tools for self-help and real-life skills. Module 4 starts by asking the question, «Who are you without your social media?» and delves into self-awareness and building a positive self-image. These tools are designed for participants to take home and continue using them to deepen their understanding of themselves. These tools can be utilized in the future whenever they encounter obstacles in life. Module 5 focuses on addressing the missing skills in areas where young people may be lacking. In fact, Module 4 provides answers to the issues raised in Module 1, while Module 5 offers solutions to the challenges discussed in Modules 2 and 3.

For example, let's consider a common issue of distorted self-image or body image among young adolescents and adults (as described in Module 1). This distortion may be a result of comparing oneself to others or to unrealistic images seen on social media (as described in Module 2). It could be driven by the need for affiliation, which is also commonly experienced (as described in Module 3). In such cases, a tool from Module 4 that teaches individuals to compare themselves only to their past selves, such as writing a letter to their younger self, might be helpful. Additionally, the critical thinking skill provided in Module 5 could be valuable in addressing this particular issue.

It is important for readers to understand that there is not always a singular solution to address the issues discussed. The approach should be tailored to each individual, as problems may not always be as straightforward as the example provided earlier. For instance, a problem with decreased productivity (described in Module 1) could be linked to addiction to social media, which consumes a significant amount of free time (described in Module 2). This addiction may be driven by the ease of access and the comfort it provides in anxious social situations (described in Module 3). To address this issue, mentors can utilize tools from Module 4, such as building a posi-

tive self-image, and teach skills from Module 5, such as active listening, which can improve the person's communication skills. It is important to note that seemingly unrelated skills, like communication skills, can have a positive impact on other areas of life, such as productivity. For example, if a young person's social anxiety leads them to prefer burying themselves in their smartphone and avoiding social situations, improving their communication skills can help alleviate discomfort and enhance productivity.

We encourage you to explore different approaches and enjoy delving into the depths of the young person's psyche through interactions with mentors, peers, and themselves. These workshops are designed to be interactive and not limited to traditional lectures. They provide fun and effective methods to discuss and discover one's own behavioral patterns and explore enjoyable ways to bring about positive changes.



# MODULE 1:

## DISCOVERING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA: CONSEQUENCES

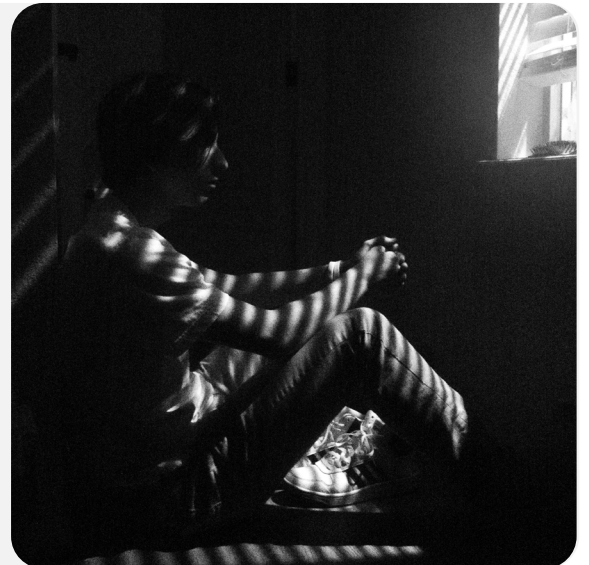




In this module we are zeroing in on the question what are the consequences of the excessive use of social media and how does social media affect young people mental wellbeing. Particularly, we are taking a look at the negative effects. It is highly important to define what the problems actually are before we offer any solutions. Not everyone experiences the same effects, some may experience more than others, but it's important to understand what can be due to the use of social media.

Let's discuss the consequences and explore the common «symptoms» observed in young people as a result of the negative impact of social media. It is crucial to understand these effects and address them appropriately. Some of the most prevalent and significant consequences (Keles et al., 2020) we have observed in young people include:

- Distorted self-image/image of the world
- Depression
- Anxiety
- FOMO
- Short attention span
- Decreased productivity
- Procrastination
- Lack of motivation
- Reduced physical activity
- Weakened communication



Now, let's explore the different ways social media can negatively impact young people and gain valuable knowledge about each of these effects. It's crucial to understand them so that you can effectively communicate with your target audience, especially young people. We'll break it down in a friendly and easy-to-understand manner to help you engage with youth educators more effectively.

## *Distorted self-image/image of the world*

One significant issue that affects young people is the distortion of their self-image and perception of the world due to social media. This distortion often leads to negative views of themselves, their appearance, or their surroundings. Cognitive distortions, also known as «thinking errors,» are exaggerated or irrational thoughts that create an inaccurate understanding of reality.



These cognitive distortions can result in behaviors similar to body dysmorphia, where individuals have a distorted perception of their own appearance (SA Hosseini, 2022). Young people may feel pressured to edit their photos on social media to fit unrealistic beauty standards, leading to risky diets, excessive exercise, and even contemplating invasive procedures. Additionally, social media creates an idealized and romanticized view of the world, where individuals feel compelled to document and share every mundane activity. This creates a «beautified» reality that differs from actual experiences.

Moreover, social media exposes young people to multiple simultaneous depictions of reality, making it challenging to distinguish fact from fiction. This lack of distinction can lead to accepting certain depictions as true, which further contributes to negative self-image and feelings of emptiness or unfulfillment. It also fuels the fear of missing out (FOMO) when young people perceive their lives as inadequate compared to others’.

Understanding these distortions and their impact on young people is essential for youth educators. By recognizing and addressing these issues, educators can support young people in developing a healthy self-image, critical thinking skills, and resilience to the unrealistic standards perpetuated by social media.

## *Depression*

Social media acts as a constant influx of pleasurable social stimuli that trigger the release of dopamine, the brain’s reward chemical. However, the overstimulation of pleasure receptors, caused by excessive social media use, can lead to dopamine dysfunction, feelings of emptiness, exhaustion, and ultimately, depression (J.M Twenge, 2017).

Seeing the seemingly happy lives of others can deepen depressive thoughts, and social media provides a platform for individuals to isolate themselves further.

Rapid task switching, encouraged by social media, may also contribute to depression. The constant exposure to multi-window computer environments, multi-app smartphone screens, and sensory stimulation can overload and distract individuals, impacting their mental well-being.



It's important to note that while social media usage can be associated with an increased risk of depression, it does not necessarily mean that all individuals who use social media will develop depression. The relationship between social media and depression is complex and influenced by various factors such as individual vulnerability, coping mechanisms, and overall mental health.

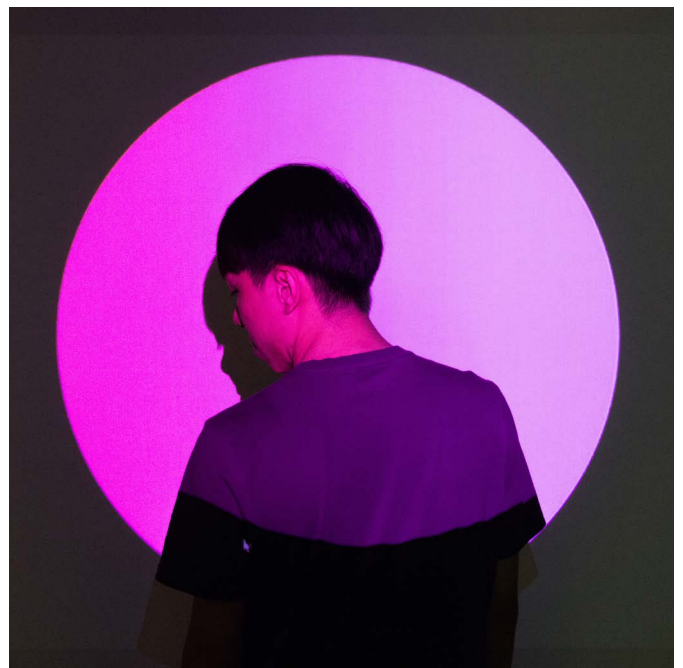
Remember, each young person is unique, and the impact of social media on their mental health can vary. Approach the topic with empathy, understanding, and a non-judgmental attitude. If you have concerns about a young person's well-being, consider involving other professionals, such as school counselors or mental health experts, for additional support and guidance.

In CONFIDENT Training activities, it is useful to know this information when implementing "Discovering the negative impact: where do you stand?" "Mind mapping the negative consequences of SM use" and "The youth café".

## *Anxiety*

Social media usage among young people has been associated with anxiety, exacerbating their already existing anxious states and contributing to increased levels of anxiety. Rather than addressing the root causes of anxiety, turning to social media for comfort often leads to avoidance of uncomfortable situations, making individuals even more unequipped to deal with them in the long run. Social media presents a false pretense of being a helpful tool in resolving these situations, when in reality, it only perpetuates the cycle by sweeping the issues under the rug. As a result, social media appears to fall short of its perceived benefits in alleviating anxiety (Kratzer and Hegerl, 2008).

Numerous studies have established a link between social media and anxiety, highlighting the negative effects of excessive connectivity. Research conducted in the UK (Anxiety UK, 2012) found that a significant percentage of adults reported feeling worried or uncomfortable when they were unable to access their email or social network sites. Younger generations, in particular, exhibit higher levels of anxiety when unable to constantly check their messages and social networks (Rosen et al. 2013).

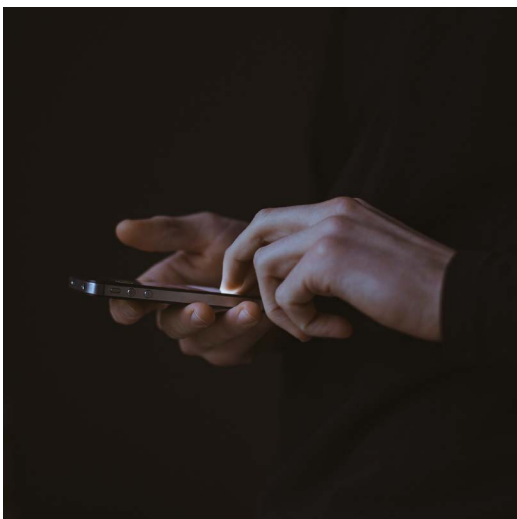


In conclusion, the impact of social media on anxiety levels among young people cannot be ignored. It not only fails to address the underlying causes of anxiety but also contributes to increased anxiety through constant connectivity and the reliance on social media as a coping mechanism. As youth educators, it is crucial to be aware of these effects and to promote healthy digital habits, encourage face-to-face interactions, and provide support to young individuals in managing their anxiety in a balanced and constructive manner.

## *FOMO*

FOMO- Fear of missing out (Wang et.al 2021) is a unique term introduced in 2004 to describe a phenomenon observed on social networking sites. FOMO includes two processes; firstly, perception of missing out, followed up with a compulsive behavior to maintain these social connections. It is associated with a range of negative life experiences and feelings, due to it being considered a problematic attachment to social media.

As a youth educator, you play a crucial role in helping young people navigate the impact of FOMO. Many young individuals feel overwhelmed by the infinite possibilities presented on the internet, which can make them believe they are unable to achieve their own goals within the constraints of a 24-hour day. They look up to influencers or their peers who constantly post on social media, showcasing seemingly fulfilling lives filled with various activities. Your role is to provide guidance and support, helping young people understand that these online representations may not reflect reality. Encourage them to embrace their own unique journeys and remind them that comparison is not productive. By fostering a positive self-image and promoting self-acceptance, you can help young individuals combat feelings of dejection, depression, and low self-esteem associated with FOMO.



By addressing the negative impact of FOMO and empowering young people to navigate social media in a healthier way, you are equipping them with valuable skills for their overall well-being. Your role as a youth educator is crucial in shaping their perspectives and helping them develop resilience in the face of societal pressures. Together, we can create a positive and supportive environment that promotes self-acceptance and genuine connections, ensuring that young individuals thrive both online and offline.

## Short attention span

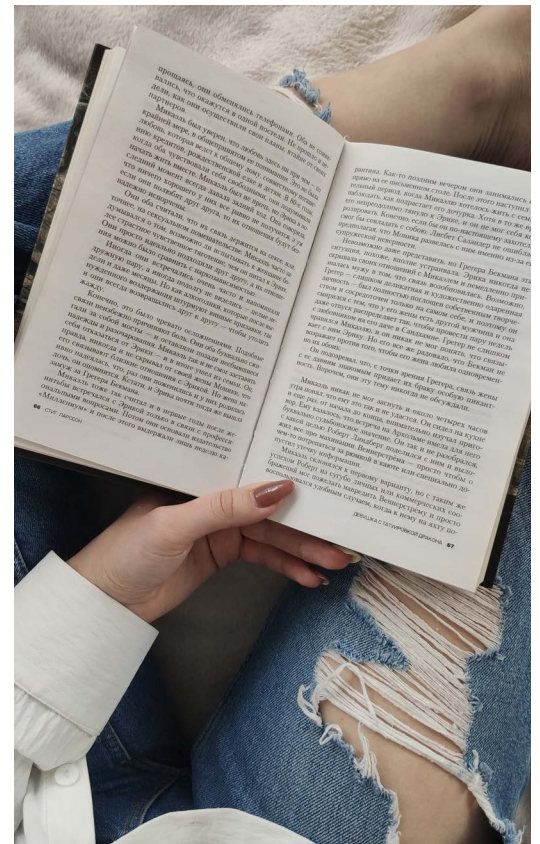
'Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is characterized by a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that has a direct negative impact on academic, occupational, or social functioning' (Yen et al., 2007). The symptoms can range from forgetfulness, difficulty planning, managing and organizing tasks, difficulty maintaining a focused attention to tasks without a high level of stimulation or reward, to being easily distracted from the task at hand by external stimulation and thoughts.

While ADHD usually appears in children under 12 years old and needs professional diagnosis, social media use makes many young people exhibit behavior similar to that of ADHD diagnosed individuals. This is due to the fact that social media networks such as Tik Tok are serving short easy-to-digest, above all, fun content that are created with the sole purpose of capturing your attention for a short period of time, only to then re-focus on another, different short-content and then another one, and another one perpetually forevermore.

The constant bombarding with different content meant to get your attention is an added factor that increases the ADHD effect.

In practice, this is evident in the fact that many young people do not have the sufficient attention span to read a longer text or a book, or to follow a lecture that's not for entertainment purposes only. Moreover, their writing skills are dramatically decreasing courtesy of instant messages that need to be short and typed quickly. Young people avoid using long sentences and cannot fully develop a complete thought. They opt for short, quickly thrown together bits and pieces of information in lieu of a fully formed thought.

The increased frequency of instantaneous pleasure and alluring internet content cause dopamine addiction, that is, due to constant gratification the dopamine receptors are overstimulated which in turn causes a decreased interest in activities that do not offer the required dose of dopamine surge. Thus, young people are stuck in a vicious cycle of a constant search for satisfying the need for dopamine stimulation and when



a certain activity lasts too long to feel the pleasure reward, the interest is lost and said activity comes to a halt in order to be replaced with one that will quickly satisfy that need.

## *Decreased productivity*

One area of concern regarding social media's impact on young people is its effect on their productivity. As a youth educator, it's important to understand how excessive social media usage can hinder productivity among the youth you work with. Research has shown that higher levels of personal social media engagement are associated with lower task performance, increased technostress, and decreased happiness (Brooks, 2015). It's worth noting that while social media can provide temporary comfort and serve as a coping mechanism for anxiety, it often becomes a way to avoid real-life challenges and responsibilities.

## *Procrastination*

Besides escaping facing their problems, many young people today face the problem of procrastination. Large volumes of schoolwork or job responsibilities can cause stress, anxiety and aggravate fears. Instead of facing the problems/responsibilities that seem insurmountable,



social media provides a quick and easy distraction away from said troubles, and the ability to instantly reduce the stress and anxiety caused by them. Postponing the execution of obligations indefinitely, will inevitably lead to their non-fulfilment, constant delay and failing to meet the goals set. Studies have confirmed that social media use has an important role in triggering procrastination (Albiwi, 2021).

## *Lack of motivation*

Even in cases where procrastination is not an issue, the constant availability of social media content intended to distract and provide continuous entertainment makes young people unmotivated for other activities that do not involve using the Internet. Simply put, young people cannot find motivation for other activities, especially for activities that would not give instant satisfaction in the way that Internet entertainment provides. The situation wouldn't be so alarming had the Internet not invaded all available free time and made young people disinterested in any other activities, virtually suppressing most other hobbies.



## *Reduced physical activity*

It is not surprising that young people live a sedentary life. Schools and the educational process itself is still desk-bound. In such conditions, any amount of physical activity is desirable and children are often motivated to take up sports activities during the educational process for the betterment of their physical and mental health. However, social media addiction often replaces these hobbies and even if a young person takes up sports, those activities often stop after finishing high school. Even though carrying out physical activities several times a week alleviates the negative side effects of a sedentary lifestyle, it does not completely cancel them out. In fact, studies suggest that young people leading a sedentary lifestyle are more likely to be frequent social media users (SV Shimoga, 2019).



## *Weakened communication*

The emergence of instant messaging and the widespread use of smartphones have transformed the way young people communicate, but they have also led to a rise in antisocial behavior among the younger generations. As a youth educator, it is crucial to recognize the impact of excessive smartphone use on face-to-face communication skills and social interactions. Young individuals who rely heavily on online communication often struggle with appropriate social behavior, non-verbal communication, active listening, and building meaningful relationships (E.Venter, 2019).

Smartphones and the internet have become coping mechanisms for various psychological conditions arising from social interactions. They provide an escape, allowing young people to

avoid spending time with others, even those they may have feelings for or find uncomfortable. Communication avoidance can be total, with individuals completely absorbed in their smartphones, ignoring those around them. Alternatively, it can be partial, using smartphones as a distraction or interruption to hide emotions or steer clear of unwanted topics. In many cases, smartphones are also used to avoid awkward silences or to give the impression of engagement in a certain group, providing a sense of comfort, entertainment, and validation.

However, it is important to note that this reliance on smartphones and the excessive use of these devices as a coping mechanism come at a cost. They hinder the development of essential communication skills and contribute to a lack of self-confidence in face-to-face interactions. As a youth educator, it is your responsibility to address this issue by promoting healthy communication habits and guiding young people towards balanced and meaningful connections. Encourage activities that foster face-to-face interactions, provide opportunities for practicing active listening and non-verbal communication, and create a supportive environment where young individuals can develop their interpersonal skills. By addressing the impact of excessive smartphone use on communication abilities, you can empower young people to navigate social interactions with confidence and authenticity.

# ACTIVITIES - MODULE 1:



# ACTIVITY 1.1.

## BUILDING TRUST - OPERATION NAVIGATION


The activities in this module start with trust building exercises, building a safe space so that the participants feel at ease 'exposing' themselves to the rest of the group. Not everyone will express their deepest insecurities publicly, which is why among the first activities is the 'insecurity box' where participants can anonymously express the things, they are ashamed to admit in front of the group.


By first building trust among the group, the next goal of this module is to make young people speak out, describe the difficulties they are facing. Guided by the educators, in later activities they are encouraged to do their own research so they can see for themselves the negative effects described in the theoretical part.

Ultimately, the goal of this module is to foster self-reflection and self-awareness among the participants. By acknowledging and accepting the presence of problems related to social media usage, young people can begin to explore potential solutions and strategies for managing their well-being. Through trust-building exercises, open dialogue, and personal exploration, this module sets the foundation for subsequent modules to address the challenges and empower young people to make positive changes in their social media habits and overall well-being.

Since we are working with a sensitive topic, where young people need to be vulnerable in front of the group, it is very important to feel comfortable in front of each other. Therefore, the aim of the first activity of CONFIDENT Training Methodology is to build trust among the group, in a way that one may feel comfortable to open up and share sincerely. Additionally, this activity builds the team spirit in the group.



 **Participants:** This activity can be done with a new group or with a group of people that already know each other. Number: 10 - 30

 **Materials:** Different objects like notebooks, pencil cases, balls, cones, boxes, etc., that can be placed on the floor as obstacles. At least 5 objects per 2 participants. Since this activity it's a completion, the trainers should also provide a prize for the winning team.

 **Time duration:** 20 minutes

### *Description:*


This activity can be done inside or outside. The trainers place different objects (like notebooks, pencil cases, balls, cones, boxes, etc.) around a room or open field as obstacles, and ask the participants to team up in pairs. One team member will be blindfolded while the other stands behind them and directs them around the objects as quickly as possible. If an object is touched, the partners are out. The partners who "navigate" through the objects and get to the other side without touching anything are the winners. The trainers should plan the number of the objects according to the number of the teams.

If you want you can exclude the competition part, and have participants change their roles in the teams.

# ACTIVITY 1.2.

## BUILDING TRUST - CIRCLE OF TRUST

While the first activity was meant to create trust while working in team, the next activity aims to build trust as a group.

 **Participants:** This activity can be done with a new group or with a group of people that already know each other. Number: 8 – 30

 **Materials:** Spacious room

 **Time duration:** 20 minutes

### *Description:*

Ask the group to form a tight inward facing circle. The circles should be around 8 people, divide the group into more circle according to the number of participants. One person is selected and stands in the center of the circle. They allow themselves to relax, and fall backwards, safe in the knowledge that their team will catch them and then 'bounce' them gently round the circle. The tighter the circle, the less risk of accidents. Remain vigilant and monitor the safety of participants at all times. Give everyone that wants to try the challenge an opportunity to do so.

# ACTIVITY 1.3.

## THE INSECURITY BOX

With this next activity we start to dig in, and explore the consequences of social media's negative impact on young people. And the best way to understanding a certain issue is through connecting with it. So, instead of pointing out the negative consequences by the trainer, we want to use the group as the best representative of young people and make this an experiential learning process. The aim of this activity is to explore and understand the issues through sharing the personal elements of each young individual in the group. The purpose is to encourage participants to talk and develop a discussion.

 **Participants:** 10 – 30

 **Materials:** an empty box, small papers, pen/marker

 **Time duration:** 45 minutes

### *Description:*

The trainers present the Insecurity Box, and explain the activity – all participants will write their insecurities on a piece of paper and put them in the box. The papers are anonymous, they only write one insecurity on one piece of paper, without names. They can put up to 3 papers. Once all participants fill the box, they will start to take one by one paper from box and discuss each insecurity in group. The trainer should encourage them to express whether they are facing the insecurity that is being read, and on which level. They can do it by raising hands or any other creative method of counting that the trainer can come up with.


Preparation: The trainer may decorate the box before the activity starts. If the trainer wants to get creative, you can try to think of another way of participation gesture instead of raising hands.

# ACTIVITY 1.4.

## TRUST FALL

Another trust activity, upgraded with sharing their negative habits. The purpose of this activity is to understand that everyone has a certain tendency regarding to social media usage that can be seen as negative. Moreover, to recognize that some of them may be very similar and shared with the rest of the group. The aim is to associate with the group and feel accepted from their peers despite having their negative habits.

 **Participants:** 10 – 30

 **Materials:** Participants will need a chair or step to stand on, and a piece of paper and pen to write down their negative habits

 **Time duration:** 45 minutes

### *Description:*

Each participant gets a piece of paper to write their negative habit and tendencies. Encourage participants to think about ways to address their negative habits, give them 5-10 minutes to think and write it down. Once everyone has done that, the group stands in front of a chair. One by one, participants get up on the chair, read out loud their insecurity and make a free fall toward the group, while the group catches them.

Before starting, it's important to establish ground rules or guidelines to ensure a safe and respectful environment during the activity. This can include guidelines such as refraining from making fun of others or judging them for their negative habits. By setting these expectations at the beginning of the activity, participants will feel more comfortable sharing their insecurities and negative habits, and will be more likely to feel supported and accepted by their peers. Encouraging respectful and supportive behavior can also create a positive group dynamic and foster a sense of community among the participants.





After everyone has had a chance to participate in the Trust Fall activity, it's important to debrief and reflect on the experience. The trainer can begin by asking participants how they felt during the activity and what they learned about themselves and their peers. It's also helpful to discuss how the activity relates to real-life situations and how the lesson can be applied outside of the workshop.

Participants can share their thoughts on how it felt to trust their peers and how it felt to be trusted by others. They can also discuss the similarities and differences in their negative social media habits and how they can work together to overcome them.

The debriefing can end with a focus on the positive, highlighting the importance of trust, acceptance, and community. The trainer can encourage participants to continue to support each other and work towards positive change in their social media habits.

### *Extras:*

Young people identify with their favorite movies. Similar to this activity is a scene of the iconic movie "Mean Girls". In order to get closer to the group, pop culture references are often good ideas, when dealing the youth, in order to connect to the young audience. The trainer can open the session by asking the participant if they have seen the movie and remind them of this scene before explain the rules. If the group is likely to be familiar with the movie «Mean Girls» and pop culture references are appropriate for the setting, then mentioning the extra part could add a fun and relatable element to the activity. However, if the group is not likely to be familiar with the movie or pop culture references are not appropriate for the setting, then it may be best to leave out the extra part. Ultimately, the decision should be based on what will best serve the goals and needs of the participants.

# ACTIVITY 1.5.

## REFRAMING NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

The negative impact of social media can also contribute to increased levels of negative self-talk in young people. Young people may engage in negative self-talk, constantly berating themselves for not measuring up to the idealized versions of others they see online. This negative self-talk can further erode their self-esteem and contribute to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. It is important for youth educators to address and raise awareness about the detrimental effects of negative self-talk caused by social media and provide strategies for promoting positive self-image and self-acceptance. One technique we offer is reframing the negative talk. Negative self-talk affects how we feel and how we act, whether it's regularly telling ourselves, «I'm never going to be good enough,» or «People think I'm crazy.» In actuality, the dialogue we conduct with ourselves frequently becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.


Consider someone who believes, for instance, «I'm socially awkward, and nobody wants to talk to me.» He avoids initiating discussions and restricts his interactions with others to help him deal with his shyness. People thus perceive him as awkward around others, which supports his self-perception.

So, whether it's calling themselves names, or you always talk themselves out of trying something new, this tool teaches young people how to deal with negative thoughts in a healthy way.

What is reframing? Reframing is about shifting your perspective. It's about looking at a situation, thought or feeling from another angle, so you can form a more open, realistic view of the situation.

Reframing your inner dialogue is not ignoring or suppressing your negative self-talk or deceiving yourself. It's about acknowledging the words of your inner critic but consciously choosing to believe a more supportive narrative—one that is led by your inner coach, optimist and cheerleader.

 **Participants:** 5-20, participants should work individually

 **Materials:** flipchart, markers, paper, pen (We recommend participants using a notebook during the activities so that everyone can write down their thoughts and ideas and keep them safe.)

 **Time duration:** 45 minutes

## *Description:*

Bellow we give the instructions for the exercise. Read them carefully, explain the example that is given (or you may come up with your own), using a flipchart or a presentation and guide your group through the 5 steps, where every participant finds one personal negative thought of a self-talk. They should work individually and if they feel comfortable, they may share the results with the group.

### **1. Recognize your negative thoughts.**

Is your first assumption that you're about to be fired when you receive an email from your employer stating, «I need to meet with you as soon as possible,» or do you assume you must be getting a raise?

You think a lot automatically. They appear out of nowhere, without your conscious effort.

Hence, it's crucial to pause and assess your thoughts so that you can spot ones that are impractical, fruitless, or unreasonable.

### **2. Look for proof whether your thought is true.**

Nothing is true just because you think it is. In actuality, the majority of your thoughts are probably more views than actual facts.

Thus, inquire inside yourself, «What is the proof that this is true?» What proof, using the boss's email as an example, do you have that you're about to be fired?

Make a list of the proof that backs up your claims. Maybe recently you missed many days of work due to illness. Or perhaps you failed to meet a deadline for a significant assignment a month ago. Provide as many justifications as you can.





### **3. Look for evidence that your thought isn't true.**

Then make a list of potential arguments against your theory. You can be one of the team members who works the hardest, and you are aware that your supervisor hardly ever fires employees without cause. Perhaps the manager has called you into meetings in the past, but you were never let go.

Ask yourself, «What would I say to a friend who had this problem?» if you are having trouble finding the opposite evidence, which is likely to happen when your emotions are strong. You may probably think of various explanations as to why your coworker's claim that «I'm about to get fired» might not be accurate. Thus, offer yourself the same solace that you would extend to a friend.

### **4. Reframe your thought into something more realistic.**

Create a more realistic statement after examining the information on both sides of the argument. saying to yourself, «My manager wants to speak with me. There could be several factors for that email, «can assist you in maintaining a right perspective.

It won't help to try and persuade yourself of things that are extremely good. Making a statement that is grounded in reality should be the aim instead.

### **5. Ask yourself how bad it would be if your thought were true.**

The best technique to deal with negative self-talk can occasionally be to confront it. How horrible would it really be if I were to lose my job? Then, take some time to consider your response.

You would have options, such as applying for a different job or starting your own business. The world wouldn't end as a result. Some of the fear, anxiety, and stress that comes with the circumstance can be reduced by reminding yourself that all will work out in the end.

### **Practice replacing negative self-talk.**

It's okay if you never fully eradicate your negative self-talk. Recognizing that your brain's inferences and conclusions aren't always correct is the aim. By doing so, you'll be less vulnerable to the thoughts that often lead to unpleasant feelings or inappropriate conduct.







You'll be better able to realize your full potential the more you practice replacing your critical self-talk. After all, if you're continually criticizing or putting yourself down, you'll never become your greatest self.

# ACTIVITY 1.6.

## THE YOUTH CAFÉ

Talking about difficult topics can be challenging, especially if they uncover some uncomfortable truths. In this case, those are the negative consequences in young people that are resulted by the compulsive use of social media. Often young people deny having problems or challenges, especially concerning their mental wellbeing but once they get some encouragement and start talking, they expose the most vulnerable part of themselves, when in a safe environment. The purpose of the next method is to create a safe and fun environment, enabling participant to unravel their truths in structured conversations.

 **Participants:** 15 - 50

 **Materials:** paper table clothes, markers, snacks, coffee, soft drinks

 **Time duration:** 90 minutes

### *Description:*

The working space/room should be decorated as a cafeteria with some decorations on each table. Tables are covered by paper table cloths. On the bar there was café, soft drinks, snacks and fruits.

#### **How youth café works:**

- Participants are divided into groups of maximum 5 people. One person per table volunteers as a host;
- There will be three rounds of discussions - 30 minutes each;
- There will be questions from one topic during each round, and





- Discuss with the people in the same table
- Write notes on the table cloths.
- After each round change table randomly, meet new people, but have in mind to not exceed the number of participants per group/table (5).
- One from each table stays in the same table during the whole Café as a host. The role of the host is to welcome new people by sharing the most important things from the last round. At the end of the rounds, the host presents briefly the summary of the discussions at their table.

We propose the following topics and question for the rounds (feel free to modify or add according to your judgment):

### **Round 1. Discovering the negative impact of social media: consequences**

*Questions:*

- How does social media impact young people?
- What is the negative impact that social media has on your wellbeing?
- What negative patterns can you notice in you and your friends that are caused by the compulsive use of social media?
- How many hours do you spend on your phone daily? Do you think it's too much?
- Have you ever had negative thoughts or feeling while scrolling on social media and if yes, what were they about?

### **Round 2. Discovering the negative impact of social media: causes**

*Questions:*

- Do you think social media are addictive? And why?
- What do you think people show on social media? Which version of themselves?
- Do you ever compare with other people on social media? If yes, how does it make you feel?
- Do you think the reality we see about people's lives on their social profiles is the reality they live?





### **Round 3. Discovering the roots: why young people reach for social media?**


*Questions:*

- What is the first thing you do in the morning? Do you think it's a healthy/positive routine?
- What makes you reach for your phone?
- Why do you scroll when you are alone and why when you are in a company with other people?
- How often do you seek validation on social media?
- What do you expect to get in return when posting on your SM profile?

# ACTIVITY 1.7.

## DISCOVERING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT - WHERE DO WE STAND?

In alignment with the overall purpose of this guide, the next activity serves as a means to deepen our understanding of the impact of social media on youth's mental well-being. Through active participation in a very visual way, young people can gain insights into their own habits and perspectives, fostering a more informed and conscious approach to social media usage.

-  **Aims of the tool are:**
- To stimulate a discussion in the group on the topic of the impact of social media
  - To challenge assumptions about how social media impact youth's mental wellbeing
  - To raise awareness of our own habits

The method is an adapted version of the classic 'statement exercise'. The facilitator reads out a statement and asks participants to position themselves in the space between the 'I agree' and 'I disagree' signs on opposite sides of the room. The closer they are to the signs, the more they agree or disagree. The closer they are to the middle line, the less they agree or disagree. Everybody should take a stand, either on the 'agree' or 'disagree' side.

 **Participants:** 10 - 30

 **Materials:** spacious room or large open space

 **Time duration:** 60 - 90 minutes (depending on the number of participants)

## *Description:*

The activity starts with the trainer explaining the rules and reads the first statement. After everyone has positioned themselves, the facilitator invites people to explain their positions. Encourage active listening and do not allow judgmental speech. After all the arguments have been heard, ask if anyone is willing to change their position. If so, allow for a few additional comments from the people who have moved. Repeat for several statements.

Then, invite the group to sit in a circle for the debriefing.

### **Possible statements:**

1. I compare myself to other people I see on social media (sub questions: what do you compare with: image, looks, appearance, success, events, achievements, jobs, social life and activities, material possessions etc.).
2. I get anxious when I don't have internet or access to my phone.
3. I spend more than 5 hours on social media daily. (Encourage to check their phones after positioning and discuss if they were position right and whether they were surprised. Talk about healthy time of daily phone usage.)
4. I feel down when I compare my life to the life other people show on their social media.
5. I want to look like the influencers.
6. I share all good moments of my life on my social media profiles.
7. I share my bad moments of my life on my social media profiles.
8. I sometimes pretend to be someone better on my social media.
9. I have difficulty maintaining a focused attention to tasks without a high level of stimulation or reward pan, such as reading a longer text or a book, or following a lecture that's not for entertainment purposes only.
10. I avoid using long sentences and cannot fully develop a complete thought.
11. My writing skills are dramatically decreasing courtesy of instant messages that need to be short and typed quickly.
12. I sometimes scroll my phone as a coping mechanism for avoiding things.
13. I often postpone tasks and scroll mindlessly.
14. I find it easier to communication via message than in person or phone.
15. When I need validation, I reach for social media. (Sub questions: posting a selfie/ picture of myself, is it a public post or shared privately with friend only? In which ways do you tend do get the validation?)

# ACTIVITY 1.8.

## MIND MAPPING THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE

We proceed with another visual tool – mind map, used to organize and structure information in a way that is easy to understand and remember. It is a diagram that starts with a central idea or topic and branches out into subtopics or related ideas, forming a tree-like structure. Mind maps can be created using pen and paper or digital tools, and they are often used for brainstorming, note-taking, problem-solving, and learning.

Mind maps are particularly useful when dealing with complex or interconnected ideas, as they allow you to see how different concepts are related to each other. They are also a great way to explore and organize your thoughts and ideas, as they encourage non-linear thinking and creativity. By using colors, images, and symbols, mind maps can help you to visualize information and make it more engaging and memorable.

In the context of this workshop on the negative impact of social media, a mind map can be used to help young people to explore and understand the different consequences and causes of social media use. It can also be used to help them to identify their own personal experiences and feelings related to social media, and to connect these to broader themes and patterns. Ultimately, the mind map can serve as a tool for reflection, analysis, and problem-solving, helping young people to develop a more nuanced and critical perspective on social media use and its effects on mental health.

How it helps: Mind mapping helps young people to organize their thoughts and ideas and make connections between different concepts. By creating a visual representation of the negative consequences of social media use, they can see how different factors are interrelated and gain a deeper understanding of the issue. This understanding can help them make more informed choices about their social media use and take steps to protect their mental health and well-being.

 **Participants:** 5-50, divided into groups of 3-5 people.

 **Materials:** Large paper, colored markers, pens, flipchart.

 **Time duration:** 45 minutes

### *Description:*

1. Introduce the concept of mind mapping and how it can be used to visually represent complex information and ideas. Mind Mapping is a creative way of organizing and visualizing your thoughts, ideas, and information. It is a technique that helps to stimulate the mind, generate ideas, and make connections between different concepts. In this workshop, participants will use mind mapping to identify and visually represent the negative consequences of social media use on their mental health.
2. Ask participants to work in small groups to create a mind map that visually represents the negative consequences of social media use. Encourage them to use colors, images, and symbols to represent different ideas and concepts
3. Participants will start by choosing a topic related to social media and writing it in the center of a large piece of paper. Then, they will use colored markers to draw lines out from the center and write down the negative consequences of social media use that they can think of. These consequences could include, for example, feelings of inadequacy or anxiety, cyberbullying, addiction, and more.
4. As participants continue to brainstorm and add to their mind maps, they will start to see connections between the different consequences and how they are interrelated. They will also gain a deeper understanding of the negative impact social media can have on their mental health, and develop an awareness of the potential risks and dangers associated with its use.
5. At the end of the activity, participants can share their mind maps with the group and reflect on what they have learned. They can discuss how social media affects their lives and brainstorm strategies for using it in a more positive and healthy way. The Mind Mapping activity is a valuable tool for helping young people to explore their thoughts and emotions, and develop critical thinking skills that can benefit them throughout their lives.







6. After 20-30 minutes, ask each group to present their mind map to the rest of the participants. Allow time for questions and discussion.
7. Facilitate a group discussion on the negative consequences of social media use, focusing on the common themes and ideas that emerged from the mind maps.
8. Conclude the workshop by summarizing the key points and encouraging participants to reflect on their own social media use and how it may be impacting their mental health.

# MODULE 2:

## DISCOVERING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA: CAUSES



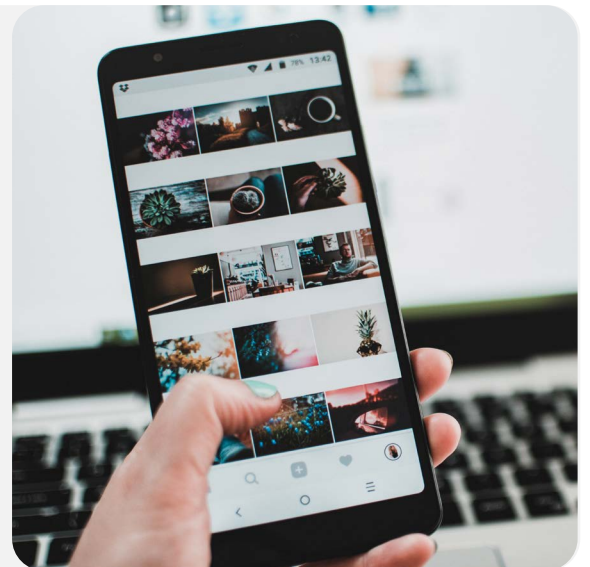
In this module, we will delve into the various factors that contribute to the detrimental effects of social media on young people's mental health. Here we are viewing the problem from another angle, what causes the negative effects young people are experiencing? So far, we have seen the consequences of excessive social media use, it is important to address the reasons so that we can complete the behavioral mechanisms. The issues that arise from social media use are like a vicious cycle, the causes and the effects are closely related, and it's not unusual for them to change roles.

The question we will try to answer here is why does this happen? You will quickly realize the vicious circle between the cause and the effect, for example a lack of activities, both mental and physical, are the main cause for the need to fill the void in one's seemingly empty life. Furthermore, social media are presented with a purpose to connect and help people communicate. Ironically the opposite happens. A tool for quick and efficient communicating, relaxing, letting creative juices flow can quickly end up depleting our energy, willpower, motivation, etc. What is meant to fulfil and enhance our lives ends up being the very thing that steals away from it. What is meant to combat boredom and introduce some entertainment steals from productivity and enables different methods of violence like cyberbullying for example.

Through this module, we aim to increase your understanding of the causes behind the negative impact of social media on young people's mental health. By exploring these causes, we hope to empower you with knowledge and insights that can help you navigate social media more effectively and support others in doing the same.

In this module, we will address various key factors that contribute to the negative effects of social media:

- Social media - an initiator of unrealistic images
- Social media - a comparison agent provocateur
- Social ideals in the Digital Age
- Social media - enabler of bullying
- Social media - creator of types of communication
- Social media - a silent thief of time



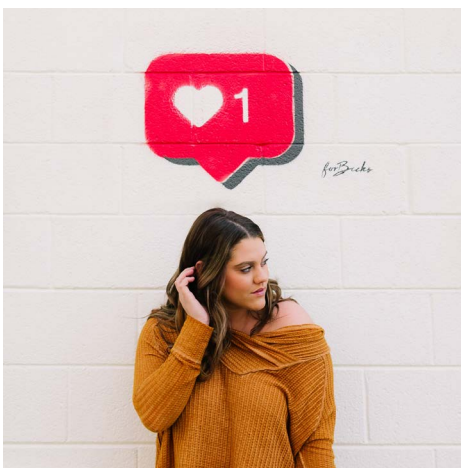
It is crucial to gain a deep understanding of these causes to effectively address and mitigate their effects. By examining each of these causes, you will be able to communicate more effectively with your target audience, particularly young people. We will present the information in a friendly and easy-to-understand manner, empowering you to engage with youth educators more effectively. Let's dive in and uncover the root causes of social media's detrimental effects.

## *Social media - an initiator of unrealistic images*

The reason why young people suffer from a distorted view of reality is the twisted image that social media produces in order to create entertaining content. In order for something to be consumed, there first must be a demand for it. If everyday existence is drab and boring, there is a need to find ways around that drab existence. There is a need for «influencers» who will serve daily portions of entertainment showing an artificial version their lives. This need to create a false reality is directly caused by social media that maintains the belief that all of their users are ordinary people, just like everyone else, but also a space where popularity and fame are highly valued.

## *Social media - a comparison agent provocateur*

Social media serves as a provocative agent of comparison, surpassing traditional venues like schoolyards, hangout spots, bars, and clubs. The number of followers, likes, and comments has gained paramount importance, becoming crucial to one's perception of likability, attractiveness, and self-worth. A lack of popularity on social media can make one feel invisible, as if they are being overlooked or deemed less desirable compared to individuals with a larger following. The objective reality of statistical data, such as views, likes, and comments, often undermines the subjective sense of popularity and desirability that lacks statistical support.



While comparison to others is not unique to social media, its measurable statistics only fuel the fire. By providing quantifiable metrics, social media offers checkpoints that young people utilize to compare and measure their «achievements.» This inevitably leads to an unending cycle of comparison and competition, which can profoundly impact mental health, self-esteem, and overall well-being. A 2014 study revealed that some individuals experienced depression after using Facebook due to the negative effects of comparing themselves to their friends on the platform (Steers et al., 2014).

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that our worth as individuals is not defined by the number of followers, likes, or comments.

Shifting our focus from external validation to internal validation becomes essential, as does accepting and loving ourselves for who we are. Young people who use social media for self-comparison often struggle with low self-esteem, which can further perpetuate their reliance on these platforms readily available to them. In this module, participants will learn strategies to compare themselves to their past selves rather than others, recognizing and appreciating their own progress and accomplishments, irrespective of social media metrics. By doing so, they can foster a healthy sense of self-worth and mitigate the negative impact of social media's comparison culture.

One effective approach to transform toxic comparison into a healthy one is to concentrate on personal progress and achievements. Instead of comparing ourselves to others, we can focus on evaluating our growth in relation to our previous versions. This entails setting personal goals and monitoring our progress over time, rather than constantly measuring ourselves against others. In the activities of this module, we will introduce two exercises: one to help participants recognize their growth through personal achievements and another to assist them in setting goals for future progress.

It is vital to remember that progress is not always linear, and setbacks are a natural part of the journey. Instead of becoming discouraged by failures, we can embrace them as opportunities for learning, growth, and becoming even better versions of ourselves. Social comparison on social media has been shown to have negative effects on the mental well-being of young people. By focusing on their own progress and accomplishments, individuals can evade the perils of comparing themselves to others and cultivate a healthier mindset.



## *Social ideals in the Digital Age*

While the era of idolizing traditional celebrities as symbols of perfection may be fading, the rise of social media presents a new breed of influencers who portray themselves as «ordinary people, just like everyone else.» Through platforms like Instagram, they showcase their seemingly mundane activities such as buying take-away coffee or grocery shopping, turning everyday life into picture-perfect moments.

This new wave of influencers resonates more with young people because they are relatable, often being peers themselves, unlike the untouchable and flawless images of traditional celebrities. However, the image projected by influencers is more attainable, which in turn creates a different kind of pressure. Instead of saying, «I wish I were like X celebrity» as in the past, the narrative has transformed into «I must be like John/Jane Doe.» This shift amplifies the impact of peer pressure in the digital space.

The impact of idealized images on social media can be particularly powerful when individuals perceive them as relatable or representative of people their age. Statements like «Wow, that really could be me» or «People my age are looking like this or doing this kind of stuff» highlight the potential negative effect this can have on young people's self-perception and well-being.

When individuals see their peers or individuals of the same age group presenting an idealized version of themselves online, it can create a sense of pressure and inadequacy. The desire to fit into the mold of what is portrayed as normal or desirable can lead to self-comparisons and feelings of not measuring up. This can have a detrimental impact on self-esteem and contribute to a distorted perception of reality.

Addressing this issue requires fostering critical thinking and promoting a healthy sense of self, with which we deal throughout the 5 modules of CONFIDENT Methodology.

## *Social media - enabler of bullying*

The methods in which bullying is expressed among young people today are worrisome, sadly social media is where they turn to for inspiration, but also for a new way of bullying, aka cyberbullying. This is followed by the appearance of practical jokes and pranks that are recorded and published on social media.

If physical or verbal violence was not enough, social media offers the possibility of online violence and harassment. Young people are twice as likely to be bullied on Facebook than on any



other social network. A bully can spread hate speech, lies, gossip, rumors, use social media as a tool to defame, belittle, stigmatize or simply put harass someone. If a young person is fragile and is suffering from low self-esteem and depression, bullying can be fatal. Cyberbullying is a pervasive issue in the digital age, and one of its most disturbing aspects is that the harmful content can linger online indefinitely (Vessey et al., 2022). Once something is posted or shared, it can quickly spread and become deeply ingrained in cyberspace, making it challenging to erase completely. This means that something shameful or hurtful that was shared online may haunt individuals indefinitely, causing long-lasting emotional distress and potentially impacting their personal and professional lives. The permanence of online content highlights the urgent need for preventive measures, education on digital responsibility, and support for victims of cyberbullying.



## *Social media - creator of types of communication*

Fast online communication as a newly established standard imposes constant availability. Since almost everyone has a smartphone in their pocket, it is expected that a person is available for any information at any time of the day. And even while the person is asleep, they are expected to see and respond as soon as they wake up. Constant availability in turn creates pressure to respond and causes misunderstandings when the person does not reply in a relatively quick time, and the possibilities to check when the person was last time seen on the application and whether the message is read are established in an attempt to reduce the frustration of unanswered messages.

With the new technical possibilities, text messages have become the most used way of communication among young people. They are fast, short and effective, it is possible to communi-

cate with several people at the same time even while doing activities that normally do not give us the opportunity to talk, during a boring lecture for example.

Textual communication lacks many elements of non-verbal communication that serve for a nuanced understanding of the content of the message. Tone of voice, body language are key elements in communication. The lack of these elements is understood by the person using their own imagination, and misunderstandings often arise. Even the use of audio-visual messages provides some comfort and concealment of elements of verbal or non-verbal communication that otherwise could not be concealed. Using imagination to judge one's communication leads to distortions directly caused by the technical possibilities of communication.



Young people today often struggle with essential communication skills that are crucial for effective interpersonal interactions. The rise of social media and digital communication has led to a decline in certain aspects of communication, such as active listening and public speaking.

Active listening, the ability to fully focus on and comprehend what someone is saying, is often overshadowed by the distractions of digital devices and constant online engagement. As a result, young people may find it challenging to truly understand and empathize with others during face-to-face conversations. This lack of active listening can hinder meaningful connections and lead to misunderstandings or miscommunications.

Similarly, public speaking skills have taken a hit in the digital age. With online platforms offering more opportunities for written communication, the need for confident and articulate public speaking may seem less relevant. However, the ability to express oneself clearly and persuasively in front of an audience remains a valuable skill in various aspects of life, such as presenting ideas, participating in group discussions, or pursuing career opportunities.

It is crucial to equip young people with these communication skills to foster stronger connections, promote understanding, and navigate the complexities of the digital world while maintaining meaningful relationships. We will focus on improving these skills in the last Module.



## *Social media - a silent thief of time*

Social media creates entertaining content, very easily captures and distracts the user's attention in such a way that the user loses track of time, and in the blink of an eye few minutes turn into several hours. It acts as swindler who diverts attention from the victim's valuables, while the victim is blissfully unaware of it until it's much too late. Hence, a young person is baffled by the quick passage of time, not having accomplished much by the end of the day, wondering where their time has gone, as if a skillful pickpocket snatched it from their hands, ironically, the pickpocket himself is the very thing they grasp tightly in the palms of their hands.

Young people have replaced their morning and evening routines with social media. The first and last thing young people do in the day is check their smartphone and social media. As they wake up, they immediately check what has happened while they were sleeping, and they start seeking entertaining content for a good start of the day.



The end of the day is not much different from the morning, re-checking and viewing all the content that may have been missed during the day, then the search for relaxing and entertaining content continues. And while their parents fall asleep to late night television or boring TV commercials their children however, lose sleep to social media content. From the moment they wake up until they fall asleep, the addiction to entertainment served by social media is one of the main causes of reduced productivity among young people. We must not overlook the fact that even short, but frequent views, take up a lot of time that could be used more wisely.

While we highlight this issue in Module 2 to raise awareness and understanding, we will delve deeper into solutions and strategies to address this problem in Module 3. It is essential to equip ourselves with effective approaches that can help young individuals develop healthier digital habits and regain control over their routines and overall productivity.

Regarding the need for physical activity to meet the psycho-physical needs of young people and maintain their mental wellbeing, which is necessary to maintain productivity. Newton's first law of inertia states that if a body is at rest it will remain at rest until it is acted upon by a force to change that state. A young person who consumes content is in an inert state and is unlikely to get up and do something else if the main editor (the brain) is trapped consuming entertainment.

Now that we have explored the theoretical aspects of social media's impact on young people, it's time to bridge the gap and delve into the practical activities of Module 2. These activities are designed to help you navigate the challenges posed by social media and understand the "causes" together with young people. From exposing the facade of fake reality to analyzing your own social media behavior, each activity aims to empower you with the tools necessary to engage authentically and responsibly online. By comparing yourself to your own progress, setting personal growth goals, understanding your happy hormones, adopting a new mantra of self-care, and exploring the language of love, you will discover how to create a healthier and more fulfilling relationship with social media. Get ready to embark on this transformative journey as we unlock the keys to thriving in the digital world.

# ACTIVITIES - MODULE 2:



# ACTIVITY 2.1.

## EXPOSE FAKE REALITY

Unrealistic beauty standards, body standards, relationship goals, and materialism are being portrayed to young audiences. Is social media still a platform to enjoy yourself or is it just a place for feeding the unhealthy feeling of not measuring up and of not being good enough? People's lives may seem flawless on camera, but nothing is ever perfect; even those who appear to lead enviable lives have their own personal struggles. Such is the nature of life. The purpose of many influencers and accounts is to trick users into believing that life can be perfect. The purpose of the following activity is to expose the reality behind the image that influencers show on social media, by encouraging participants to research videos and images on social media platforms, such as Instagram and Tik Tok.

 **Participants:** 10 -50

 **Materials:** phones, projector

 **Time duration:** 60 minutes

### *Description:*

The trainers gives introduction about the fake realities portraited on social medial platforms and show examples of videos that discover the truth behind it. Than gives instructions on the research – find videos and/or photos that exposes the truth behind the filter/ photoshop/posing using different hashtags - *#fakereality* ; *#instavsreality*; *#igvsreality*; *#exposing* etc. The participants should be creative and work in teams of two to find at least one video/photo. They will have 10-15 minutes for the research and every team will show their video on the projector. Our suggestion is for the teams to download the videos and put in a folder on google drive, created and shared with the group by the trainer.

## *Closing and Evaluation:*

To close this activity, gather all the teams together and have a discussion about the videos/photos that were shared. Encourage participants to reflect on what they have learned about the fake realities portrayed on social media and how these images can be misleading. Facilitate a conversation about the impact of these fake realities on individuals' self-esteem, body image, and overall well-being.

During the discussion, you can ask the following questions to evaluate the activity:

- What were some of the most eye-opening or surprising videos/photos that were shared?
- How did this activity change your perception of the content you see on social media?
- Did you notice any patterns or common themes in the videos/photos that exposed the truth behind the filters/photoshop/posing?
- How do you think the prevalence of fake realities on social media affects young people's self-esteem and body image?
- What strategies can you use to differentiate between genuine and manipulated content on social media?
- How can you promote a more authentic and positive online presence for yourself and others?

Encourage participants to share their thoughts and experiences during the evaluation, and emphasize the importance of critical thinking, media literacy, and self-care in the digital age. Conclude the activity by highlighting the key takeaways and encouraging participants to apply what they have learned to their own social media usage.

# ACTIVITY 2.2.

## THE TRUTH BEHIND THE HIGHLIGHT

Once we realize the truth behind what other people post on social media, and we humanize all the glamour that influencers show, we proceed by turning to ourselves – being brave enough to open up and show the truth behind our profiles. Sharing a vulnerable truth behind a perfect picture we have narrated online will bring the realization that we all have similar changeless and nothing is as bright and perfect as it seems online.

The aim of the activity «The Truth Behind the Highlight» is to encourage participants to reflect on the truth behind what they and others post on social media. By sharing a vulnerable truth behind a seemingly perfect picture or moment, participants can realize that everyone has similar struggles and imperfections, and nothing is as perfect as it may seem online. The ultimate goal is to promote authenticity, vulnerability, and empathy among the participants.

 **Participants:** 5 - 50

 **Materials:** Phone, internet, projector, lap top.

 **Time duration:** 60 minutes

### *Description:*

If you did the previous activity, then you can reflect on it, and connect with this activity, by focusing now on “ourselves”. You can start with something like this:

“As we have learned from the previous activity, social media can often portray an unrealistic and fake reality. It’s important to remember that nothing is perfect and everyone has their own personal struggles. In this next activity, we want to take a closer look at our own social media profiles and encourage everyone to be brave enough to show the





truth behind the perfect pictures we have shared online. By doing so, we can humanize the glamour that influencers often show and recognize that we all have similar imperfections. So, let's take what we've learned from the previous activity and apply it to our own lives by sharing a vulnerable truth behind a perfect picture we have narrated online."

Or if you haven't done the activity "Expose Fake Reality", you can start with something like this:

"We can notice a common tendency to present a perfect and glamorous version of ourselves online, and the pressure to conform to the same standard set by social media influencers. By acknowledging and accepting the truth behind these curated images and narratives, participants can then turn to their own profiles and be brave enough to show a more vulnerable and authentic version of themselves. Sharing these moments of imperfection and truth can help to break down the facade of perfection and create a sense of connection and understanding among the group. It reinforces the idea that everyone has their own struggles and that social media doesn't accurately represent the reality of our lives."

Afterwards, the trainer gives the instructions to the group:

All participants should find something that they have published on their social media profiles presenting a perfect moment of their lives, where in fact in reality that moment is not completely genuine. They will share with the group what they have posted and the truth behind it. The trainer should decide how much time to give them for preparation, we recommend from 10 – 15 minutes, and each person should get around 3 minutes to share. If the group is smaller, they can have more time to present. Afterward the trainer should encourage the group to give feedback on the exercise, how they felt, what they have come to realize and what they will take as a learning outcome.

Here are some debriefing questions for the end:

- How did it feel to share a vulnerable truth about yourself with the group?
- Did you find any similarities or differences in the truths shared by others?







- How did this activity change your perspective on social media and the images we present online?
- Did this activity inspire you to be more authentic in your online presence? If so, how?
- How can you apply the lessons learned from this activity to your offline interactions and relationships?




# ACTIVITY 2.3.

## LOVE LANGUAGE

The next tool is inspired by Chapman's book «The 5 Love Languages», first published in 1992. He says that there are five love languages which describe five ways that people receive and express love in a relationship. These are words of affirmation, quality time, physical touch, acts of service, and receiving gifts. We all express and receive love differently. Learning and understanding those differences can have a meaningful impact on our relationships. According to Chapman, this is one of the simplest ways to improve our relationships. In this activity, we take that knowledge and adapt it to the relationship one has with themselves.

 **Participants:** 1- 50

 **Materials:** paper, pen, link to the website:  
<https://5lovelanguages.com/quizzes/love-language>

 **Time duration:** 60 minutes

### *Description:*

Start by explaining the importance of love language:

Love language refers to the way in which we express and receive love. Understanding your own love language, as well as that of your partner, can have a significant impact on your relationship. It is important to recognize that everyone has a unique way of giving and receiving love, and what works for one person may not work for another. By understanding and practicing love language, you can improve your relationships with not only others, but also with yourself.





Explain how love language improves the relationship with yourself:

When it comes to self-love, understanding your love language can help you identify the ways in which you prefer to give and receive love from yourself. This can include anything from taking time for yourself, engaging in self-care practices, setting boundaries, and more. By recognizing your love language, you can better understand what makes you feel loved and fulfilled, which can in turn help you build a stronger relationship with yourself.

To get started with exploring your love language, first identify what your preferred love language is. There are five love languages: words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service, physical touch, and receiving gifts. Once you have identified your love language, take the time to reflect on how you can incorporate this into your daily life. This can include things like setting aside quality time for yourself, practicing self-care rituals that align with your love language, or finding ways to express love and gratitude towards yourself.

You can also use this knowledge of love language to improve your relationships with others. By understanding the love language of those around you, you can better express your love and support in ways that are meaningful to them. This can help deepen your connections and foster healthier, more fulfilling relationships.

### *Instructions:*

1. The trainer should provide participants with the website link for discovering their love language: <https://www.5lovelanguages.com/quizzes/>.
2. Participants should visit the website using their phone or computer.
3. On the website, participants should click on the button to start the quiz.
4. Participants will be presented with a series of questions related to their preferences in relationships. They should answer each question honestly based on their own feelings and experiences.





5. Once participants have answered all the questions, the website will generate their love language results.
6. Participants can review their results and read more about their specific love language on the website.
7. The trainer can encourage participants to share their love language results with others in the group, and discuss how understanding each other's love languages can improve communication and relationships.

You can close the session with something like this:

Try to give YOURSELF any kind of love. It can be affirmation words, physical touch, quality time, or act of service.

For example, if your love language is word affirmation, for the next 30 days, every single morning, after you wake up, you are going to look into the mirror and you are going to compliment yourself as many times as you can.

If your love language is quality time, you will dedicate one hour of your week to doing something that you love while you are ALONE. It could be either something that you love doing now, or preferably, if you can something that you used to love to do when you were a kid.

If your love language is acts service: you are going to dedicate once a week to doing something for YOURSELF, may that be either getting a massage, go get your favorite coffee order, taking yourself shopping whatever it is but you are going to do it once a week

If your love language is gift-giving, you are going to prioritize celebrating yourself for even your smallest of wins. May that can be buying yourself flowers, buying yourself a box of chocolates for Valentine's Day. You are going to treat yourself, buying yourself something you've always wanted to get

If your love language is physical touch, you are going to do the following for 3 minutes every single night before bed, while you lay in bed right before going to sleep, you are going just hold yourself. It's okay if you get emotional or feels wired at moments, you can laugh or cry if you feel like it.





After 30 days of practicing, check how you feel. Do you feel closer to yourself?

Do you rely less on other people and external factors in order to feel loved?

# ACTIVITY 2.4.

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS EFFECTS ON MOOD AND BEHAVIOR

With the prevalence of social media in our daily lives, it's important to understand the impact it can have on our mood and behavior. The activity that follows will explore why young people are drawn to social media and how it can affect them, as well as provide an opportunity to practice healthy phone use in social situations.

 **Participants:** 10 - 50

 **Materials:** room or open space, objects for the role play, prepared and printed scenarios

 **Time duration:** 60-90 minutes, depending on the number of participants

### *Description:*

In this workshop the group will engage in a role-play activity. Participants will be given a scenario where they are in a social situation with friends or family, but are constantly checking their phone and not engaging with those present. The group will then discuss how this behavior affects both the person on their phone and those around them, and come up with strategies to avoid this in the future.

We developed some possible scenarios, but of course feel free to be creative. Here they are:

1. At a family dinner, a teenager is constantly checking their phone, scrolling through Instagram and texting friends, ignoring their family members who are trying to have a conversation with them.
2. A group of friends are hanging out at a park, but one person is glued to their phone, scrolling through social media and not participating in the conversation or activities.





3. In class, a student is distracted by their phone, checking their notifications and browsing social media instead of paying attention to the lesson.
4. A couple is on a date at a restaurant, but one person keeps checking their phone, responding to messages and scrolling through social media, making the other person feel ignored and unimportant.
5. During a group project, one team member is distracted by their phone, constantly checking notifications and browsing social media instead of contributing to the work.
6. At a social event, a person is taking constant selfies and posting them on social media, trying to gain likes and attention instead of enjoying the moment and interacting with others.
7. During a conversation with a friend, one person keeps checking their phone, responding to messages and scrolling through social media, making the other person feel unimportant and disrespected.

The goal of this activity is to create awareness around social media usage and its effects on mood and behavior, as well as provide practical strategies for healthy social media habits. By acknowledging the impact that social media can have on our lives, we can learn to use it in a more positive and mindful way.

To wrap up the activity, gather the participants together and initiate a debriefing session. Begin by asking the participants to share their experiences and observations during the role-play activity. Encourage them to reflect on how their behavior on social media affected their own mood and the interactions with others in the scenario.

Facilitate a discussion around the following questions:

- How did it feel to play the role of someone who is constantly on their phone and not engaged with the people around them?
- What impact did this behavior have on your own mood and the mood of those around you in the scenario?





- Did you notice any changes in the dynamics of the social situation when one person was consistently on their phone?
- How did the behavior of being constantly on the phone affect the quality of communication and connection within the scenario?
- What are some potential consequences of excessive social media usage on personal relationships and well-being?
- Did you personally relate to any of the scenarios or behaviors depicted? How does it make you feel when others exhibit this behavior in real life?

Conclude the activity by emphasizing the importance of being present and engaged in real-life interactions, and remind participants of the goal to use social media in a positive and mindful way. Encourage them to apply the insights and strategies discussed during the activity to their daily lives, promoting healthier social media habits and nurturing authentic connections with others.

# ACTIVITY 2.5.

## COMPARE TO YOURSELF ONLY

So frequently, we find ourselves comparing ourselves to others when, in reality, the only comparison we should ever make is to our previous selves in order to measure our progress and accomplishments. We're constantly bombarded with people who live *#blessed* lives on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. What we don't consider is that we often compare our own worst moments with someone else's highlight. We need to stop doing this. Because comparison is the thief of joy. And the truth is, the things we tend to compare ourselves to aren't really real.

Real life isn't edited, filtered, and carefully curated to ensure that we present our very best selves to the world at all times. We know this. But at the same time, we can't help but compare our perfectly imperfect lives to someone else's Instagram feed. Instagram isn't real life. Reality TV isn't even real. And when we compare our chapter one to someone else's chapter twenty, misery is the only outcome. So, how to stop this, if comparison is so inevitable? It is by comparing our current selves to different, past versions of ourselves, that we're able to gauge our progress, decide what we like and don't like, keep ourselves safe etc.

This tool steps in, with a solution, bringing us healthy comparison and teaching yogh people that "the only person you should be comparing yourself to is yourself". Our efforts should focus on growing from within, being kinder, more resilient, working hard, and being more open instead of whether or not our hair is long enough or we're as strong as someone else.

The activity is designed to help young people compare their current selves to different past versions of themselves in order to measure their progress and accomplishments. By reflecting on their personal growth and achievements over time, they can gain a better understanding of their journey and build confidence in themselves.



 **Participants:** 5 - 50

 **Materials:** pen, paper

 **Time duration:** 45 minutes

### *Description:*

This activity should start by a short discussion, the trainer asking question about whether the participants ever compare themselves, with whom and in which situations. Are there certain emotions that cause this comparison or that the comparison causes. Then, the trainer should proceed to explain that comparison is a normal, inevitable process and we cannot run away from it. What we can do, is to convert toxic comparison into a healthy one. How to do that? By learning how to compare ourselves to ourselves only.

Then the trainer should introduce the topic of personal growth and achievements, explaining that this workshop will help participants identify areas where they have grown or improved.

Here we want to quote Peterson's rule "Compare Yourself to who you Were Yesterday, not to who Someone Else is Today", which is trying to get the point across that everyone's lives are extremely complex and nowhere near perfect all across. No one can succeed every single game they play and no one is playing all the same games you are. That is why the only really person you can compare yourself to is the person you were yesterday.

The trainer will give participants 20-30 minutes to write down their accomplishments in the last year, not matter how big or small. They might share with the group of keep for themselves.

The point of this exercise it to understand how far they have come in the last year. Writing down accomplishments of the last year can be important for several reasons.

Firstly, it can help individuals to appreciate their progress and feel proud of what they have achieved. This can boost their self-esteem and confidence, and help them to feel motivated to continue working towards their goals.





Secondly, it can provide a sense of direction and focus for the future. By reflecting on their accomplishments, individuals can identify what they have done well and what they would like to improve on, which can help them to set realistic and achievable goals for the future.

Lastly, it can be a useful tool for tracking personal growth and development over time. By regularly writing down their accomplishments and reviewing them, individuals can see how far they have come and identify patterns or trends in their progress. This can be a valuable source of insight and motivation for future personal and professional endeavors.

At the end of the workshop, the trainer can encourage participants to reflect on what they've learned about themselves and their personal growth.

# ACTIVITY 2.6.

## ACHIEVEMENT MAP

We will now proceed with another tool for healthy comparison, in addition to the last one. This tool considers the achievements throughout our entire life and provides a visual representation of our progress. The Achievement Map activity is designed to encourage participants to reflect on and appreciate their personal accomplishments throughout their lives. The activity involves creating a mind map that visually represents their achievements and milestones.

The Achievement Map activity supports healthy comparison by redirecting participants' attention to their own achievements, fostering self-acceptance and a realistic perspective on personal growth. It helps individuals develop a broader view of achievements and recognize the value of their unique experiences. Through self-reflection and self-awareness, participants can build resilience against social media pressures and strengthen their sense of self. The activity also encourages a gratitude-focused mindset, promoting a positive relationship with social media and fostering a fulfilling journey of personal development. Overall, the Achievement Map empowers young people to navigate the negative impact of social media and cultivate a healthier and more fulfilling mindset.

 **Participants:** unlimited, this activity is done individually

 **Materials:** Paper, pens, markers, presenting screen or flipchart to show example of an Achievement Map

 **Time duration:** 45 minutes

### *Description:*

Introduce the concept of the Achievement Map to the participants. Explain that the goal of this activity is to recognize and celebrate the various achievements they have accomplished over time.





Provide each participant with a large sheet of paper or a whiteboard and markers. Alternatively, they can use digital mind mapping tools if available.

Instruct the participants to start by placing their name or a central theme in the center of the paper or digital canvas. This will serve as the starting point for their Achievement Map.

Encourage participants to think back on their lives and identify significant achievements in various areas such as education, career, personal growth, relationships, hobbies, and community involvement. These achievements can be big or small, tangible or intangible.

Instruct the participants to draw branches or lines radiating outward from the center and write down specific achievements on these branches. They can use different colors or symbols to represent different categories or areas of achievement.

Encourage participants to elaborate on each achievement by adding details, such as the date, a brief description, and the impact or significance of the accomplishment. This will help them reflect on the journey and the positive outcomes of their achievements.

Allow sufficient time for participants to work on their Achievement Maps. Offer support and guidance as needed.

Once the participants have completed their maps, invite them to share and discuss their achievements with the group. This can be done in pairs, small groups, or as a whole group depending on the size and dynamics of the participants.

Conclude the activity by encouraging participants to reflect on the positive aspects of their lives and the progress they have made. Emphasize the importance of acknowledging and celebrating personal achievements as a way to build confidence, motivation, and a sense of fulfillment.

# ACTIVITY 2.7.

## PERSONAL GROWTH TRACKING - GOALS SETTING

The ability to set goals and work towards achieving them is a crucial life skill. It helps us stay focused, motivated, and gives us a sense of direction. By setting clear and realistic goals, we can create a roadmap for our future success.

In this activity, we are not only setting goals for the future but also learning the importance of comparing ourselves to our own past accomplishments and not to others. Setting goals is a healthy way of measuring progress and accomplishments, as long as we focus on our own personal growth and not on comparing ourselves to others. By identifying our own strengths and areas for improvement, we can set achievable goals that are tailored to our own personal growth. When we measure our progress against ourselves, we are not only more likely to achieve our goals, but we also avoid the toxic comparison that often comes with measuring our progress against others. Therefore, this activity serves as a reminder that comparing ourselves to ourselves is the only way to truly gauge our progress and accomplishments.

 **Participants:** 5-50

 **Materials:** Paper, pens, markers, presenting screen or flipchart

 **Time duration:** 60 minutes

### *Description:*

Introduction and Guideline for goal setting (10 minutes)

The trainer should start by explaining the importance of setting goals and how it can help participants achieve their desired outcomes. You can give examples of famous people who have achieved their goals, thanks to setting clear and measurable objec-





tives. Also, you can always share some information based on the text we give you in the context for the activity.

The trainer should introduce a guideline for setting goals. This guideline can be presented on a screen or you can write on a flipchart. It includes the following steps:

- Identifying a specific and measurable goal
- Breaking the goal into smaller, achievable steps
- Setting a deadline for each step
- Creating a plan of action
- Identifying potential obstacles and finding ways to overcome them
- Celebrating each small success along the way.

## Goal setting

Participants should be given a [worksheet](#) that will guide them through the goal-setting process. Here is some info for you, and the worksheet is in the Annexes of this Module.

- **GOALS (What is their ultimate goal?)**
- **STEPS (What are the steps they need to take to achieve this goal?)**
- **TIMEFRAME – WHEN? (When do they plan to achieve this goal?)**
- **OBSTACLES (What are the potential obstacles they might face along the way?)**
- **CLEBRATION OF SUCCESS (How will they celebrate their progress and successes?)**

Participants should have time to think and reflect on their goals, and fill in their worksheets or templates accordingly.

## *Sharing and feedback*

Once the participants have completed their goal-setting templates, they should be given the opportunity to share their goals with the group. The trainer should encourage positive feedback and support from the group. Participants can be asked to share one or two of their goals and discuss what motivated them to set those particular goals.

The trainer should summarize the importance of goal-setting and how it can help participants achieve their dreams. They should encourage participants to keep their goals in mind, and remind them that it's okay to change and adjust goals as they progress and encounter new challenges.

By the end of the activity, participants should have a clear understanding of how to set goals for themselves, and a concrete plan of action for achieving their dreams.



# MODULE 3:

## DISCOVERING THE ROOTS: WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE REACH FOR SOCIAL MEDIA?



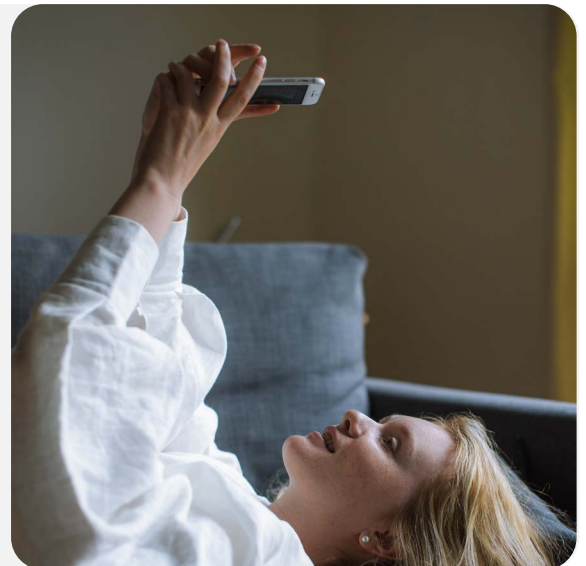
To complete the last part of our problem analysis, this module tries to find the motivators for social media use. What prompts young people to be so tempted by social media, so much so that it appears as if nothing else matters outside of the virtual. If it's not on social media, it doesn't exist or the mantra of the Instagram era is "pics or it didn't happen (Schrag, 2015).

Triggers are very important motivators for our brains. Without being conscious about it, they influence the way we think, feel or act. In order to truly answer the question, why young people reach for social media we need to look at the root causes. Social media are just a tool, they are not inherently good or bad, it's what we use them for that defines their positive or negative use. What is blatantly obvious is that they represent a sort of an escape mechanism. Escape from the hardships young people face every day, it becomes a way to cope with the difficulties of adolescence and the adversities of life as a young adult.

In module 3, we take a closer look at the reasons behind young people being drawn towards social media and strive to understand the underlying motivation behind their usage.

In order to understand this negative use of social media as an escape mechanism, we must first understand the root causes that provoke the seeking of comfort, the need for validation and the need for affiliation. The fear of confrontation, self-exposure and avoiding uncomfortable situations. We can begin to crack the need for obsessive social media use, once we understand better these reasons for being drawn to the little black screens:

- Need for validation
- Social media and relationships
- Loneliness
- Need for Affiliation
- Social anxiety
- Fear of self-exposure
- Fear of confrontation



## *Validation*

One negative aspect of social media is the strong need for validation and approval. Young people often seek validation through likes, comments, and followers, basing their self-worth on the perceived popularity and acceptance they receive. This constant craving for validation can lead to self-esteem issues, anxiety, and a reliance on external validation for their self-worth. Understanding this need for validation allows us to address it and help young people develop a healthier sense of self-worth that is not solely dependent on social media metrics.



The need for validation appears during a person's growth and development. Since the earliest stages of our childhood, we seek validation from our parents, and as we grow older also from our peers as well as the society around us. Validation assures us that we are heard and accepted, ensures that our anxieties, fears and failures, as well as achievements and successes are justifiable and well founded. The seeking of validation helps us to receive the necessary support, but it can also serve as a signifier that what we are doing is justified, reasonable and should be continued. Validation is a kind of feedback mechanism. In the absence of validation from their immediate environment, social media are the most available tool for satisfying this need. This validation (Papageorgiou et al., 2022) was perceived to reinforce to girls that their value is largely placed on their appearance and influenced the types of images they would consider posting of themselves. The quality of the feedback received through social media is incomplete and insufficient as it remains only in the virtual, therefore seeking validation for one's own identity turns into an obsession and a pattern of behavior in order to fulfil this need. Obsessively posting photos, selfies in order to get likes and comments, to build a controlled positive image, in order to overturn negative comments and gain positive ones, leads to the loss of one's own self in an attempt to gain approval from followers.

## *Social media and relationships*

Personal relationships are another way social media is altering how young adults engage with their peers. Social media can harm friendships and romantic relationships because its use can lead to misinterpretation. In the case of romantic relationships, it increases jealousy and partner

surveillance. Compulsive social media users have more conflicts with their partners, feel more excluded show lower commitment and lower feelings of passion and intimacy as well as less disclosure. Also, high levels of social media use may serve as an indirect temptation for physical or emotional cheating (Brandon T McDaniel et al., 2017)

The difficulty is that it can be a challenge to express yourself in the same way as you would in person. Relationship issues arise from misinterpretation of social media posts or direct messages by a friend or a partner. The same issues happen outside of social media, but they tend to get magnified more or made worse because of it. This can be a breeding ground for toxic communication.

## *Loneliness*



Loneliness is another challenge that can arise from excessive social media use. Despite the illusion of connectivity, social media can actually contribute to feelings of isolation and loneliness. Seeing others' seemingly perfect lives and social interactions can intensify the sense of missing out and not belonging. It is important to recognize the potential negative impact of social media on mental well-being and provide strategies to combat loneliness and foster genuine connections offline.

## *Need for Affiliation*

The need for affiliation is “the disposition to seek out or retain emotional relationships with people” (Lansing et al., 1959). It is a tendency to receive social gratification from interpersonal relationships and human interaction, it is a very important social motivator for communication. The need for affiliation and a sense of belonging can create harmful patterns of behavior on social media among young people. Sometimes conforming to certain trends, ideologies or social norms happens despite not aligning with their true values and beliefs. Recognizing the underlying motivations can assist in fostering more valuable connections leading towards healthy online behavior.

Back in the ‘olden days’ people lacking affiliation simply wrote more letters (Lansing et al., 1959), in the Internet age, people are using online communication to satiate their desire for affiliation,



especially those who struggle with shyness and social anxiety.

There is a direct correlation between the need for affiliation and online communication, the higher the need for affiliation the more frequent the use of social media as a tool to obtain it. Hence, it's no wonder that many young people are glued to their screen. Texting instead of seeking to fulfil the need for affiliation face-to-face is more accessible, you can get plenty of it very quickly very easily, why bother meeting with your friend for a cup of coffee when you can drink it at home while chatting to many friends, and get plenty of affiliation gratification.

## *Social anxiety*

When young people feel anxious or sad, they often turn to social media as a means of seeking comfort, distraction, or validation. The instant gratification, sense of connection, and potential for escape that social media offers can temporarily alleviate negative emotions and provide a sense of solace. However, it is important to understand the underlying reasons for this behavior and explore healthier alternatives for managing emotions in order to foster long-term well-being, which we will do in this module.

## *Fear of self-exposure*

Social media has contributed to the appearance of a new form of social anxiety: fear of self-exposure. This is the fear anyone who ever uploaded anything to a social network has ever experienced: putting yourself out there on the online space and the fear of 'what will they say?' Having in mind that people feel more sheltered behind their screens to spew out negative criticism towards one another, the fear seems to be more than justified. This usually affects people who are at the opposite spectrum of those who excessively expose themselves on their social media outlets in search of validation or affiliation. They will either not post anything because of this fear or will experience so much anxiety when they actually do.



## *Fear of confrontation*

Another entry in the portfolio of anxieties is the anxiety caused by the fear of confrontation. This fear can manifest itself with those that chose not to post on social media, this time, because the negative comments might create the need to confront opposing views. Another way this type of anxiety can appear is when young people use social media to avoid confrontation in real life. Because of this fear, they choose texting over and online communication over face-to-face conversation.

In Module 3, we provide young people with healthier alternatives to deal with negative emotions instead of resorting to social media. By fostering self-reflection, participants learn to turn inward and explore effective coping mechanisms, promoting personal growth and self-care. This module empowers young individuals to develop the skills needed to navigate their emotions in a healthy way and rely less on social media as a coping mechanism.

Activities provided in this module continue the self-analysis method, we are connecting our emotions, thinking and behavior with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy activities to work on recognizing our own individual behavior patterns when it comes to social media and how we use them to cope with our emotions. On emotional level, the next area of focus would be facing our fears and finally some rejection therapy. On the behavioral level, we offer ways to break with the habit of excessive usage of Social media by building productive daily routines that replace social media with other fun and interesting activities.

# ACTIVITIES - MODULE 3:




# ACTIVITY 3.1.

## FISHING BOWL DISCUSSION

The objective of the first activity is to explore the reasons behind why young people are drawn to social media and the potential impact it can have on their mental health and well-being by use of Fishbowl discussion technique. This activity also aims to promote self-reflection and encourage participants to be more mindful of their own social media use

 **Participants:** 10 -50 people

 **Materials:** to have enough space, chairs

 **Time duration:** The approx. duration of the discussion may range from 45 to 60 min., depending on the number of participants, number of questions for discussions and the level of their engagement in the conversation.

### *Description:*

1. Preparation. Set up the room: Arrange chairs in two concentric circles (or a similar arrangement) with one circle inside the other.
2. Explain the rules and process of "Fishing Bowl" which is discussion technique used in group discussions where a small group of participants sit in a circle in the middle of a larger group, and have a conversation while the others observe silently from the outside. The participants in the circle are given a specific topic or question to discuss, while the observers listen and take notes. After a set amount of time, the observers can then join the conversation in the middle, and the original participants can move to the outer circle to observe. This technique encourages active listening and respectful communication, and can be a great way to have a focused and productive discussion on a particular topic. After giving instruction, participants are divided into







an inner and outer circle. In the inner circle or fishbowl, they have a discussion; others who are in the outer circle listen to the discussion and take notes. Participants can move from the outer circle to the inner circle to participate in the discussion.

3. Start the discussion by introducing the topic and explaining the purpose of the fishbowl discussion. Encourage participants to listen actively and share their perspectives in a respectful manner. Invite participants in the inner circle to start the discussion by sharing their thoughts on the topic. Encourage them to speak from their own experiences and perspectives, and to respond thoughtfully to each other's comments. Participants in the outer circle should listen actively and take notes on key points.

Here are some questions we suggest. Of course, you can modify them according to your groups:

- Have you ever found yourself mindlessly scrolling through social media for hours without realizing it? What do you think caused you to do this?
- How has social media affected your relationships with friends and family? Has it made them stronger or weaker? Why do you think that is?
- What do you think is the biggest draw of social media for young people? Is it the need for social validation, the ability to connect with others, or something else?
- Have you ever felt pressure to present a certain image of yourself on social media? How has this affected your self-esteem and self-worth?
- Do you think social media is a positive or negative influence on young people's mental health? Why?
- How has social media changed the way you communicate with others? Do you find it easier or harder to connect with people through social media compared to in-person interactions?
- How has social media influenced your interests and hobbies? Have you discovered new things through social media, or has it reinforced things you already liked?
- Have you ever experienced cyberbullying or witnessed it happening to someone else on social media? How did it make you feel, and what did you do about it?



- Do you think social media has changed the way young people view themselves and the world around them? In what ways?
- Have you ever taken a break from social media? Why did you decide to do so, and how did it make you feel?

### *Closing Remarks:*

End the discussion by summarizing the key points that were raised and emphasizing the importance of continuing to explore this topic. Encourage participants to reflect on their own social media use and how they can be more mindful of its impact on their well-being. Thank participants for their contributions to the discussion

# ACTIVITY 3.2.

## DISCOVERING YOUR HAPPY HORMONES

Do you know that your brain has a natural «happy chemical»? It's like a superhero in your brain that helps you feel motivated, excited, and happy when you do things you enjoy, like hanging out with friends or listening to your favorite music.

With proceed with helping participants to understand the role of so-called happy hormones (dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, endorphins) in our lives and how they contribute to your overall sense of wellbeing. Participants will learn about different happy hormones and explore ways to boost these hormones in their daily lives in order to experience more pleasure, happiness, and fulfillment. The purpose is to understand why “their brain” wants to open social media, and find ways to healthy alternatives.

### HAPPY HORMONES

and how to hack them

#### DOPAMINE

(The Reward Chemical)

- Listen to music
- Try something new
- Do something creative
- Tick something off your list

#### OXYTOCIN

(The Love Hormone)

- Hug someone you love
- Spend time with friends
- Show affection
- Do something nice for someone

#### SEROTONIN

(For Good Moods)


- Exercise
- Bask in the sun
- Practice meditation
- Eat a healthy meal

#### ENDORPHINS

(The Pain Reliever)

- Take a hot bath
- Create music or art
- Try yoga
- Laughter

 **Participants:** This activity can be done individually or in a group, and is suitable for people of all ages, 10 to 50 people

 **Materials:** A whiteboard/Flipchart, paper, and pens for participants to take notes if needed, optional: music, aromatherapy diffuser or other items to create a relaxing atmosphere

 **Time duration:** 45-60 minutes

### *Description:*

- 1. Introduction (5 minutes)** - Introduce the topic of happy hormones. Explain that these hormones are chemicals in our bodies that contribute to our sense of pleasure, happiness, and well-being. Briefly outline the goals of the activity.
- 2. Happy Hormone Presentation (15-20 minutes)** - Use the whiteboard or flipchart or PTT presentation to present information on happy hormones. Discuss the role of dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, and endorphins in our lives. Explain how each of these hormones contributes to our overall sense of well-being. Provide examples of activities that boost each hormone.

The «hormones of happiness» refer to a group of hormones that are associated with positive emotions, pleasure, and well-being (Dfarhud et al., 2014)

- **Dopamine:** Dopamine is known as the «reward» hormone because it is released when we experience something pleasurable, such as eating food, receiving a compliment, or achieving a goal. It is also involved in motivation, learning, and memory.
- **Serotonin:** Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that regulates mood, appetite, and sleep. Low levels of serotonin have been linked to depression and anxiety, while higher levels are associated with feelings of happiness, relaxation, and well-being.
- **Oxytocin:** Oxytocin is often called the «love» hormone because it is released when we bond with others, such as through physical touch, eye contact, or social interaction. It is also involved in childbirth, lactation, and orgasm.





- Endorphins: Endorphins are natural painkillers that are released during exercise, laughter, and other pleasurable activities like walking, swimming, dancing, hiking. They can also help reduce stress and improve mood.

**3. Small Group discussion (15-20 minutes)** Divide participants into 4 groups.

Share the example of the figure bellow and ask each group to discuss ways they can boost one of the happy hormones in their daily lives. Give one of the hormones for each group Encourage groups to make a brief research, share their ideas and discuss the potential benefits of these activities.

**Examples of the activities that can increase the level of dopamine:**

- Listening to Music: Listening to music that you enjoy can increase dopamine levels in the brain, which can help to elevate mood and reduce stress.
- Learning something new: Dopamine levels are known to increase when we learn something new or experience a sense of achievement or accomplishment, such as mastering a new skill or completing a challenging task.
- Socializing: Spending time with friends and family, or engaging in social activities, can increase dopamine levels in the brain, which can help to improve mood and reduce feelings of loneliness or isolation.

Then, ask participants to make a list of activities that can boost these hormones and share a favorite activity that brings them pleasure.

**4. Conclusion (10 minutes):** Ask participants to share one thing they learned during the activity. Summarize the key points about happy hormones and the importance of finding pleasure in life. Encourage participants to incorporate the tips and strategies discussed in the activity into their daily lives.

# ACTIVITY 3.3.

## HEALTHY MORNING ROUTINE DEVELOPMENT

In Module 2, we shed light on a concerning trend observed among young people: the replacement of morning and evening routines with social media. It has become a common practice for them to begin and end their days by checking their smartphones and engaging with social media platforms. Upon waking up, their immediate focus is on catching up with the content they missed while sleeping and seeking entertainment to kickstart their day. Similarly, before bed, they dedicate significant time to rechecking and viewing all the content they may have missed during the day, perpetuating their search for relaxing and entertaining material. Starting the morning by checking social media can have several negative impacts on mental health and well-being. Here are a few reasons why:

- **First, Exposure to Blue light emitted by LED screen:** Research (Cajochen et al., 2011) has shown that exposure to blue light has some cognitive benefits, such as improving cognitive performance and fighting fatigue. However, most people who check their phones first thing in the morning start by catching up on messages they missed during the night, leading to a day full of stress. Research has found that monitoring work emails outside of actual work hours negatively affects mental health.
- **Then, Triggers Stress and Anxiety:** It bombards you with new messages, emails, and to-dos, leaving you with no time or space to start your day calmly. Social media can be a source of stress, especially if you come across negative news, triggering images or comments that can set the tone for the rest of the day.
- **Disrupts Focus:** Checking social media first thing in the morning can hijack your attention and time. Your mind is bombarded with external stimulus that can leave you feeling overwhelmed and leave little room to start your day calmly. Furthermore, other people's opinions, requests, and advertising can pollute your thinking, hijacking your focus and making you react to their stuff instead of proactively focusing on your own goals and priorities for the day, making it harder to focus and be productive.





- **Can Lead to Procrastination:** Aside from your attention, your time is also being hijacked. What starts out as checking social media for 5 minutes quickly turns into 15 minutes, which then turns into 30 minutes, sometimes even more. Checking social media can be a time-consuming activity that can cause you to procrastinate and delay getting started on your day.
- **Sets a Distracted Tone to entire day:** By starting your day distracted, you set the tone for a distracted day and interfere with your ability to prioritize tasks. The brain releases dopamine when checking social media or email, which can lead to a repetition of the behavior throughout the day, decreasing your ability to focus. Author Julie Morgenstern advises that almost everything can wait at least 59 minutes before checking your phone.
- **Sets a Negative Tone:** Sometimes, seeing other people's highlight reels on social media can make you feel like you're not doing enough or living up to expectations, leading to feelings of inadequacy and negativity.

The objective of the next activity is to help participants develop a healthy morning routine that sets the tone for a productive and positive day. Additionally, it can help to replace the check the social media immediately upon the waking up.

 **Participants:** 1 – 50 people

 **Materials:** whiteboard or flipchart, paper, pens to take notes if needed

 **Time duration:** 50–60 minutes

### *Description:*

1. **Warm-up (5–10 min).** Ask the participants to brainstorm and write down on their paper their current morning routine, including what they typically do within the first 30–60 minutes after waking up. Ask participants to share their routines with the group, writing down common habits on the whiteboard or flipchart.





- 2. “What happen if you start your day with check of social media (10-15 minutes) -** We recommend to use a method call “Storytelling”. You can come up with your own, here is our suggestion:

“It’s the morning. You’re cozy in bed. Your alarm blares. You reach over to grab your phone so you can turn the alarm off (because of course your phone is also your alarm clock these days). And immediately after you do so, you check your email... then Facebook/Instagram/Tiktok/Twitter... then the weather... and the next thing you know, you’ve spent 10 minutes scrolling through everything you missed while you were asleep. But if you’ve never given a thought to what effect checking your phone first thing in the morning might be having on you – on your brain, on your body, on your mindset for the day – it’s worth considering. Is it likely to change your habits?”

- 3. Discussion (15 minutes) -** Lead a discussion on the above-mentioned negative effects of starting the day with social media or other negative habits. Ask the participants Is it likely to change their habits? and continue to next point.
- 4. Developing healthy morning routine (15 minutes) -** Encourage participants to share their own experiences and any challenges they have faced when trying to develop a healthy morning routine. Lead a discussion on its benefits. Explain why developing a healthy morning routine is important for overall well-being.

“If you struggle with smartphone addiction and find it hard to resist the urge to check notifications in the morning, here are two methods to help you start your day without checking your smart phone in the morning:

- Method #1 is to put your phone on flight mode before you go to sleep so that you don’t immediately see new messages and notifications when you wake up. Consider using a classic alarm clock instead of your smartphone as an alarm.
- Method #2 is to make a list of at least 7 replacement activities that you could do instead of checking your smartphone, such as exercising, meditating, reading, or making a healthy breakfast. Every morning, pick one or more of these activities and follow them instead of checking your smartphone. Starting your day like this will help you feel calm and in control, reduce stress and anxiety, and make your days more focused and productive. Remember, the way you start your day sets







the tone for the rest of the day, so make sure you start it well by taking action on these tips”.

Provide participants with a list of suggested healthy morning activities, such as drinking water, stretching, meditation, listening to the music or some podcast, reading a book, journaling, scheduling your day or setting your tasks. Ask participants to select 2-3 activities they would like to incorporate into their morning routine. Additionally, encourage them to create a plan for their morning routine, including the selected activities and the order in which they will do them.

- 5. Conclusion** (5-10 minutes) - Summarize the key takeaways from the activity and emphasize the importance of consistency and persistence when developing a healthy morning routine.

# ACTIVITY 3.4.

## UNDERSTANDING FEELINGS AND BREAKING NEGATIVE PATTERNS

We proceed with an activity based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) (Beck, 2011), which is a type of psychotherapy that focuses on identifying and changing negative thought patterns and behaviors. It is based on the premise that our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are interconnected, and that by changing the way we think and behave, we can improve our emotional well-being. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) helps people identify and change negative patterns of thinking and behavior. In the context of social media use, this activity will help young people understand their feelings when they reach for social media, and help them break negative patterns of behavior.

Social media has become an integral part of our daily lives, and its use has grown exponentially in recent years. While social media can be a useful tool for communication, entertainment, and information sharing, it can also have a powerful effect on our emotions and behavior.

As we have discussed before, social media use can lead to increased feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness, as well as lower self-esteem and body image issues. Social media also has the potential to reinforce negative thought patterns and behaviors, such as comparing oneself to others, seeking constant validation, and engaging in excessive screen time.

In addition, social media algorithms are designed to keep users engaged for longer periods of time, leading to addictive behavior and an inability to disconnect from the platform. This can result in a negative impact on mental health and well-being, as well as on relationships with others in real life.

Therefore, it is important to recognize the potential negative effects of social media and to learn how to use it in a healthy and balanced way. This involves setting boundaries, managing one's social media use, and being mindful of how it affects our emotions and behavior.







CBT is a structured and goal-oriented therapy that helps individuals learn how to recognize and challenge negative thoughts and beliefs that contribute to negative emotions and behaviors. It also teaches individuals how to develop more positive and realistic thoughts and beliefs, and to engage in positive behaviors that promote emotional well-being.

Through CBT, individuals can learn to identify the triggers for negative thinking and behavior, such as reaching for social media as a coping mechanism, and develop strategies to manage and overcome these triggers. They can also learn to set achievable goals and take small steps towards positive change, building their confidence and resilience along the way.

In the context of our activity, CBT can be explained as a way to understand and manage our thoughts and behaviors related to social media use. By using CBT techniques, we can identify negative patterns of thinking and behavior that may be contributing to our excessive social media use and work to change them. This can include challenging and changing negative thoughts, developing coping strategies to manage difficult emotions, and setting realistic goals for social media use. CBT (Beck, 2011) can empower us to take control of our social media use and improve our overall well-being.

 **Participants:** This activity involves exploring deep emotions, so it is recommended to provide participants with individual space to complete the worksheet. Number of participants: 1-20

 **Materials:** Worksheets ([source: Thought Record Sheet – 7 column; Carol Vivyan 2010, adapted from Padesky 1995](#)), pens, paper

 **Time duration:** 60 minutes

### *Description:*

- 1. Introduction:** Begin the session by explaining that social media can have a powerful effect on our emotions and behavior. Explain the concept of CBT and how it can help us break negative patterns of thinking and behavior.





- 2. Discussion:** Ask the group how they feel when they reach for social media. Encourage them to think about the emotions and thoughts that come up when they open their social media apps. Ask them to share specific examples of times when social media has affected their mood or behavior.
- 3. Worksheet Activity:** Hand out the worksheets and pens. Explain that the worksheet will help them identify their thoughts and emotions related to social media use. Have them fill out the worksheet for a recent example of when they reached for social media. By allowing them to reflect and engage with their own thoughts and feelings privately, participants can delve into their emotions more authentically and express themselves without external influences. This personal space fosters a deeper level of introspection and encourages participants to connect with their inner selves on a more profound level
- 4. Share:** Encourage the group to share what they wrote on their worksheets. Ask them to identify any negative patterns of thinking or behavior that they noticed, such as comparing themselves to others or mindlessly scrolling.
- 5. Identify Triggers:** Ask the group to think about what triggers them to reach for social media. Encourage them to share their triggers with the group, such as boredom or anxiety.
- 6. Role Play:** Divide the group into pairs. Have each pair act out a scenario where one person is mindlessly scrolling on social media while the other person is trying to have a conversation with them. After each role play, ask the group to identify the negative patterns of behavior that were present and brainstorm ways to break those patterns.
- 7. Conclusion:** Wrap up the session by reminding the group that it's important to be mindful of their social media use and to identify and break negative patterns of behavior. Encourage them to use the worksheets and techniques they learned in the activity to help them make positive changes in their social media habits.

# ACTIVITY 3.5.

## “ART THERAPY” FOR GROUNDING

### *Art Therapy*

Art therapy is a technique used to assist a person in interpreting, expressing, and resolving their feelings and thoughts. Practicing the tools art therapy can provide, a person can explore their emotions, comprehend conflicts or feelings that are bothering them, and use art to help them resolve those issues.

The underlying ideas are that expressing yourself through art can help you comprehend and respond to your emotions and thoughts from a fresh viewpoint, and that artistic expression is beneficial for mental wellbeing and has been even used as a complementary treatment for mental disorders by professionals (J.Hu et al., 2021).

During art therapy one works to figure out what is bothering them by using artistic expression. Practicing art while tackling the root cause of their problem appears to assist conditions related to mood, such as anxiety and depression, low self-esteem etc.


Many adolescents find it easier to express their emotions through drawing, painting, or other artistic forms than through words. Art can be used to better understand the one's emotional responses and thoughts (S.Hogan, 2016).

In this module, we explore the concept of art therapy as a means of self-expression and personal reflection. Art therapy, in a non-medical context, refers to the therapeutic use of artistic activities to promote emotional healing, self-discovery, and well-being. It provides individuals with a creative outlet to process their emotions, gain insights into their inner world, and find personal growth. It's important to clarify that while we use the term «art therapy,» our intention is to provide a supportive and expressive environment rather than a clinical therapeutic setting.

The first activity aims to help individuals manage anxiety and stress by using art as a therapeutic tool. No special skills or training are required, making it accessible to anyone.

 **Participants:** Not limited as participants work individually

 **Materials:** paper, coloring pencils

 **Time duration:** This activity can be done in as little as 10–15 minutes, but it is recommended to allow at least 30 minutes for a more immersive experience

## *Description:*

**1. Introduction:** Ever catch yourself doodling during a tense moment, perhaps while on a frustrating phone call or waiting for an appointment you weren't looking forward to? You may not have realized it, but you were using a simple form of art therapy.

Art therapy refers to any use of art for a therapeutic purpose, including relief from anxiety and stress. The theory (S.Hogan, 2016) behind art therapy suggests drawing, coloring, painting, and sculpting can help you tune into and express painful or difficult feelings you have trouble putting into words.

Drawing and coloring can be helpful tools for anyone seeking new ways to manage anxiety symptoms. Not an artist? That's OK – you don't need any special skills to give art therapy a try.

**2. Instructions:** Let's see how it works. You just need some paper and coloring pencils.


- Choose one color and write down what is making you anxious, for example, I feel overwhelmed
- Then with the same color start to paint the entire page using only that color
- Take another color and draw patterns or shapes you like, it can be flowers, butterflies
- Allow yourself to focus on the process of coloring and creating without worrying about the end result.
- As you color, try to tune into and express any difficult or painful feelings you may be experiencing.

You can incorporate art therapy activities into your daily meditation practice or simply turn to them when things become too stressful.


# ACTIVITY 3.6.

## CLEAR YOUR MENTAL SPACE

The objective of the following activity: «Clear Your Mental Space» is to help participants relax and clear their minds by engaging in a creative and meditative exercise. By drawing different designs in each section of the squares and rectangles, participants can release mental clutter and focus on the present moment.

 **Participants:** not limited, but preferable to have from up to 30 participants to make the activity more manageable

 **Materials:** paper, pencils or pen

 **Time duration:** The duration of this activity can vary depending on the number of participants and the amount of time allocated for the activity. Approximately 20–30 minutes for participants to complete their drawings.

### *Description:*

1. Give each participant a piece of paper. Then ask them to draw different-sized squares and rectangles.
2. Instruct participants to draw different designs in each section using pens, pencils, or markers. Encourage participants to focus on the present moment and to let go of any distracting thoughts or worries.
3. After the time has passed, invite participants to share their drawings with the group (optional).

Conclude the activity by leading a brief discussion on how the exercise made participants feel and how they might use similar techniques in their daily lives.





**Note:** You can provide prompts or themes for participants to use in their drawings to make the activity more structured or focused. Alternatively, you can leave the drawings open-ended to allow for more creativity and self-expression.



To conclude the «Art Therapy for Grounding» activity, provide a space for participants to reflect on their experience. Encourage them to share their feelings and insights about the activity, emphasizing the therapeutic benefits they may have experienced. Facilitate a brief discussion on how participants can incorporate art therapy techniques into their daily lives as a means of managing anxiety and stress. Wrap up the session by expressing appreciation for their participation and highlighting the importance of self-care and self-expression.

For the «Clear Your Mental Space» activity, invite participants to share their drawings with the group (optional). Encourage them to describe their experience and any observations or insights they gained during the activity. Facilitate a discussion on how the exercise made participants feel and how they might apply similar techniques in their daily lives to promote relaxation and mental clarity. Conclude the session by expressing gratitude for their participation and encouraging them to continue exploring creative practices for self-care and well-being.

And encourage participants to continue exploring these practices beyond the session. However, emphasize that these activities are tools for self-exploration and calming down when feeling stressed or anxious, but certainly not a professional therapy. Offer any additional resources or recommendations for further possibilities, for example talking with a therapist if they feel anxious very often.



# MODULE 4:

## GETTING TO KNOW YOURSELF - WHO ARE YOU WITHOUT SOCIAL MEDIA?



Imagine a scenario where you accidentally leave all your electronic devices on an airplane, and it takes a couple of weeks for them to be returned to you. Can you envision living without them? What would your life look like during those weeks without Internet access and social media? Would you feel bored or lost?

For many young people, social media plays a significant role in their lives, often overshadowing other activities. Their online identity becomes intertwined with their real-life identity. But if we strip away the online persona, what remains? This raises an important question about knowing who we truly are without the influence of our virtual identities.

Virtual reality is just a part of our existence in the physical world. Self-discovery becomes crucial in breaking free from the distortions created by social media and the fictional world it presents. Developing a firmly rooted identity in the physical world is essential. When the virtual identity is disconnected from reality, it becomes necessary to look inward and reconnect with the physical world to pursue our dreams and create a meaningful life beyond the confines of social media.



## *Lack of coping tools*

The smartphone is the most widespread tool available to young people. Whatever they need is checked on the phone first. How many centimeters are in an inch, the closest ATM machine near me, I don't know what to wear, what's cool right now? Ideas on how to organize my room. I am bored. How to deal with depression? How can I raise my self-confidence?

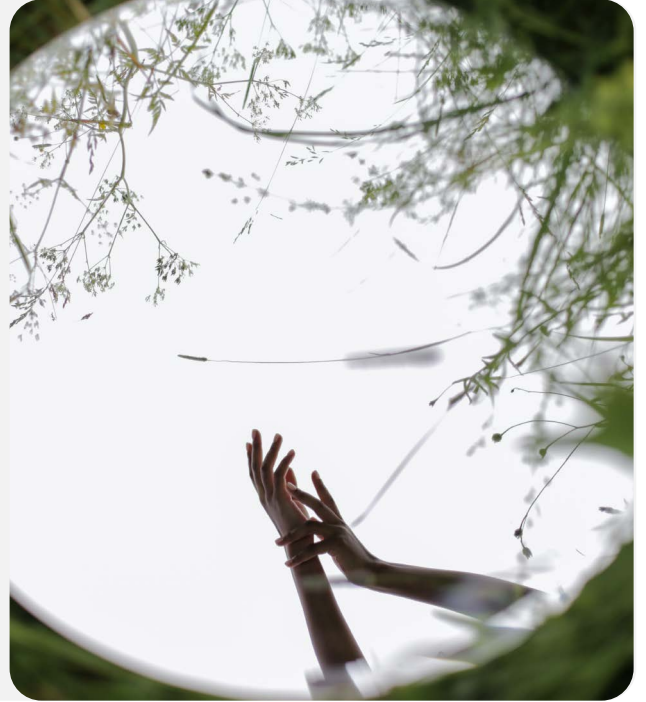


These searches reflect the fact that social media behavior often stems from underlying psychological difficulties that individuals may not even be aware of. For instance, individuals with low self-esteem may unknowingly seek validation by posting photos, deriving temporary mood and self-esteem boosts from the likes and comments received. However, this coping mechanism fails to provide lasting self-confidence and can lead to a constant reliance on social media for validation.

To promote healthier social media use, it is crucial to support young people in discovering new coping mechanisms that genuinely address their psychological distress, including depression, anxiety, lack of confidence, and insecurities. By focusing on self-development and utilizing social media and other tools as aids rather than crutches, young people can overcome obstacles in life and foster a healthier relationship with social media.

The purpose of this module is to provide young people with self-help tools that they can use independently, without the need for a coach. We offer various methods such self-discovery, meditation, journaling, vision boards for goal-setting, discovering values. These tools empower young individuals to take control of their own personal growth and well-being. Each tool serves a specific purpose, and there is something suited for everyone's unique sensibilities. Our aim is to provide the tools, instructions on how to use them effectively, and the underlying purpose behind each technique. Here are some techniques that can be used in each person's life journey:

- Who are you? – self-discovery techniques
- Discovering your core Values
- You in other eyes
- Persona map
- Journaling
- Meditation
- Positive affirmations
- Self-acceptance and Inner Confidence
- Vision Board
- Writing letters (8 to 80 method)



Before we dive into the activities for implementing these techniques, let's talk about some of them in order to gain better understanding.

## *Mediation*

Meditation is a powerful tool for introspection, looking inward and reconnecting with our inner self. Meditation helps raise awareness of our bodies and mind and this can be helpful in many ways.

This can be a powerful tool to help combat feelings of anxiety and depression and an overall mental well-being. Mindfulness practice improves emotion regulation and reduces stress. Frontal-limbic networks involved in these processes show various patterns of engagement by mindfulness meditation. Meditation has potential for facilitating the cultivation of a healthy mind and increased well-being.

This practice has the potential to improve present-moment awareness. This is key in order to start living in the present, in actual reality and not being detached from it with the help of social media.



## Journaling

Journaling is another powerful tool to help empty out the mind and reduce mental clutter.

The journaling can be an effective way of self-therapy to reduce intrusive thoughts and decrease levels of depression in young adults. Journaling could help students and young adults manage their stress and anxiety with the simple act of writing down their thoughts every day (Brennan, 2021).

Journaling practice allows us to put negative thoughts on paper and process them in a non-emotional way, which helps us come up with rational, analytical ways of dealing with those thoughts and emotions.

## Vision Board

One useful tool that uses the principle of visualization is the creation of a vision board. A tool used extensively in creative industries, it is a means of presenting a vision, an idea or a concept. A way of turning ideas into a reality. A tool to empower and manifest your dreams. A simple way for young people to present and discuss their hopes, dreams and aspirations but also as a way to be persistent in overcoming obstacles. It also allows people to encourage each other by finding a solution and keeping each other motivated.

Vision boards can help envision positive future and invoke optimistic views of life. Even the simple act of creating the vision board can be effective for wellbeing. This is so because seeing is believing, envisioning your desired future can help you believe it is within your reach. Creating mental images affect the cognitive processes such as planning, attention, perception, which are related to motivation confidence and improved performance.



# ACTIVITIES - MODULE 4:



# ACTIVITY 4.1.

## WHO ARE YOU?

In today's world, social media has become an important tool for self-expression and self-promotion. Many of us create online profiles that present a certain image of ourselves, showcasing our best moments and hiding our flaws. However, this curated image doesn't always reflect our true selves. It can create pressure to maintain a certain persona and make it difficult to connect with others authentically.

In this activity, we will explore who we really are beyond our social media profiles. We will reflect on our values, personality traits, and interests, and gain a deeper understanding of ourselves. By recognizing the difference between our authentic selves and our curated personas, we can create more authentic connections with others and feel more confident in who we are.

The purpose of the first activity in this module is to guide participants in discovering their true self and to reflect on how social media can impact their self-image. In today's world, social media has a strong influence on the way people present themselves to the world. It's easy to get caught up in projecting a certain image or persona, and it can be difficult to know who we really are beyond our online profiles. Objectives:

- To help participants reflect on who they are as a person, independent of external influences such as social media.
- To encourage participants to identify and acknowledge their true self.
- To foster a sense of self-acceptance and self-love in participants, regardless of how they present themselves online.

 **Participants:** This activity can be presented in a group, however each person should fill the worksheet by themselves. Number of participants: 1-40

 **Materials:** pen, handouts (*print the worksheets*)

 **Time duration:** 45 minutes



## Description:

Distribute the [worksheet](#) to participants and explain that they will be reflecting on who they truly are, beyond their online persona and social roles.



Instruct participants to start with the first question, **«Who are you on your social media profile?»** and write down any traits or characteristics that they tend to portray online. Encourage them to be honest and reflective in their responses. Participants should reflect on the image they portray on social media and write down what aspects of their life they tend to highlight, how they present themselves, and how they want to be perceived by others.

Next, **«Who are you in your social circles?»** - Participants should reflect on their relationships with friends, family, and others in their social circles. They should write down what they believe others think of them, how they act around others, and how they want to be seen by their peers.







«**What are your roles?**» - Participants should reflect on the roles they play in their life, such as student, friend, family member, athlete, artist, etc. They should write down what responsibilities come with each role and how each role contributes to their identity.

In the third section, «**How do you feel?**», ask participants to list all of the emotions they experience on a regular basis. Encourage them to be as specific as possible and to include both positive and negative emotions.

After participants have completed these four boxes, explain them that this is not who they are. Rather, these are just aspects of themselves that they express or experience. Our roles and emotions are constantly changing, and they do not define our true selves. For example, in one moment we may be someone's girlfriend or boyfriend, but after a break-up, our role changes to «single.» Similarly, our emotions fluctuate and change throughout the day, but they do not define us. In some moment we feel happy in other sad, that does not make us a happy or a sad person.

Ask them if they have changed or grown in the last year. They will for sure say yes, then let them know they are «growing», «changing», «evolving».

Lead them to find out who they are from this list of words (examples of thing they can write in the «true self» box):

- Daring
- Determined
- Driven
- Empathetic
- Empowered
- Evolving
- Focused
- Forgiving
- Generous
- Gene
- Grounded
- Growing
- Humorous
- Insightful
- Intuitive
- Joyful
- Kind-hearted
- Loving
- Nurturing
- Open-minded
- Patient
- Persistent
- Playful
- Present
- Reflective
- Resilient
- Respectful
- Self-aware
- Trustworthy
- Visionary

Once they fill the inner circle, explain them that those things are behind who they truly are, behind all the roles, labels, feelings, that are just things we express and experience. Than tell them to write in the circle the title - «**Your true self**».





At the end, allow time for group discussion and sharing. The trainer should emphasize the importance of being true to oneself and acknowledging all aspects of their identity, not just the ones they present on social media.

For the debriefing part of the activity, you can ask participants to reflect on their responses and discuss their experience with the activity. Here are some prompts you could use:

- How did you feel while completing the worksheet?
- Did anything surprise you about your responses?
- How do you think social media influences the way we present ourselves to the world?
- How do you feel about the concept of a «true self»?
- What did you learn about yourself during this activity?
- How do you think this activity could help you in your daily life?

You can also encourage participants to share any insights or realizations they had during the activity and ask follow-up questions to encourage deeper reflection. The debriefing session should end with a summary of key takeaways and a reminder that we are more than our external roles and emotions.


# ACTIVITY 4.2.


## DISCOVERING YOUR CORE VALUES: IDENTIFYING WHAT REALLY MATTERS TO YOU

One of the ways that social media can impact young people is by creating a sense of disconnection from their core values. With so much focus on likes, followers, and other superficial measures of success, it can be easy to lose sight of what really matters to them on a deeper level.

By taking the time to identify their core values, young people can gain clarity and a sense of direction in their lives. This can help them to make decisions that are more aligned with their true selves, rather than being swayed by the opinions and expectations of others on social media.

In essence, discovering your core values is a way to strengthen your inner compass and better navigate the often overwhelming and confusing world of social media. It can help you to stay true to yourself and cultivate a sense of well-being that is not dependent on external validation.

 **Participants:** from 10 to 50 people. This activity is suitable for anyone who wants to gain clarity on their values and align their actions with what they truly believe in. Participants can work individually or in a group.

 **Materials:** A whiteboard/flipchart, paper and pens for taking notes if needed. Handouts with list of core values (B. Brown, 2018)

 **Time duration:** 45-60 minutes

### *Description:*

1. Introduction - introduce the topic of core values. Explain the importance of values in shaping our behavior and decisions as they are part of who we are.





Have you ever asked yourself, «what's most important to me?» The answer to this question is closely tied to your core values – the fundamental beliefs and principles that guide your decisions, actions, and behaviors.

Core values can vary from person to person. It means that even though a group of people may share common experiences and backgrounds, they may still have different core values. Core values are personal and can be influenced by a variety of factors such as upbringing, culture, religion, and life experiences, among others. Therefore, it is natural for individuals to have different core values, even when they belong to the same group or community.

Core values are what you stand for and they play a significant role in shaping your life. Living in accordance with your core values can lead to greater fulfillment, but violating them can cause internal tension, leading to destructive habits and regressive behavior. Identifying and living according to your core values is crucial for living a purposeful and meaningful life.

Discovering your core values is important for your well-being because it helps you live a more meaningful and authentic life. When you have a clear understanding of your values, you can align your actions and decisions with what matters most to you, which can lead to greater happiness and fulfillment.

Living in accordance with your core values also helps you to set priorities, make better choices, and maintain a sense of direction and purpose in your life. This can lead to a greater sense of control and autonomy, which are important components of overall well-being.

Additionally, identifying your core values can help you to communicate better with others, especially in close relationships. When you understand what is important to you, you can better articulate your needs and boundaries, which can lead to healthier and more fulfilling relationships.

Overall, discovering your core values is an important step in developing a strong sense of self and improving your overall well-being.

2. Ask each participant to circle the values on the provided list that they identify with or feel are important to them.





3. Have the group discuss their chosen values and help them connect similar values together. Encourage participants to share personal stories or experiences that connect with their values.
4. Guide the group to narrow down their selected values to only 10. Encourage them to consider which values are most important to them and which ones they can live without.
5. Support the group in listing their values by priority, with the most important value at the top of the list. Encourage participants to explain why each value is important to them and how it can be integrated into their daily lives.

Remember to create a safe and supportive environment for the participants to share their thoughts and feelings during the activity.

## *List of core values:*

Acceptance	Creativity	Independence	Productivity
Accomplishment	Credibility	Individuality	Professionalism
Accountability	Curiosity	Innovation	Prosperity
Accuracy	Decisiveness	Inspiring	Purpose
Achievement	Dedication	Integrity	Quality
Adaptability	Determination	Intelligence	Realistic
Altruism	Development	Joy	Reason
Ambition	Dignity	Justice	Recognition
Amusement	Discipline	Kindness	Recreation
Assertiveness	Discovery	Knowledge	Reflective
Awareness	Effectiveness	Lawful	Respect
Balance	Efficiency	Leadership	Responsibility
Beauty	Empathy	Learning	Satisfaction
Boldness	Empower	Love	Security
Bravery	Enjoyment	Loyalty	Self-reliance
Brilliance	Enthusiasm	Mastery	Selfless
Calm	Equality	Maturity	Sharing
Capable	Ethical	Meaning	Significance
Careful	Excellence	Moderation	Simplicity
Certainty	Fairness	Motivation	Sincerity
Challenge	Family	Openness	Spirituality
Charity	Famous	Optimism	Spontaneous
Cleanliness	Freedom	Order	Stability
Comfort	Friendship	Organization	Status
Commitment	Fun	Originality	Strength
Community	Generosity	Passion	Structure
Compassion	Giving	Patience	Success
Confidence	Goodness	Peace	Support
Connection	Growth	Performance	Sustainability
Consistency	Hard work	Persistence	Teamwork
Contribution	Harmony	Playfulness	Thankful
Control	Health	Poise	Thorough
Courage	Honesty	Potential	Thoughtful
Courtesy	Honor	Power	Tolerance
Creation	Hope	Present	Traditional

# ACTIVITY 4.3.

## YOU IN OTHER EYES


Often, we tend to be overly critical of ourselves, focusing on our flaws and negative characteristics. This next activity aims to challenge that self-perception by highlighting the positive aspects that others notice in us.

«You in Other Eyes» is an activity designed to provide individuals with a fresh perspective on how they are perceived by others in the group.

During the activity, each person in the group writes down characteristics or qualities they admire or appreciate about the other group members. The key aspect is that there are no limitations or instructions explicitly stating that only positive characteristics should be noted. However, it is common for participants to naturally gravitate towards highlighting positive attributes rather than negative ones.

By engaging in this activity, individuals get the opportunity to see themselves through the eyes of others. It can be an eye-opening experience to realize that the negative aspects we often dwell upon may not be as prominent or noticeable to others. It encourages self-reflection and self-acceptance, promoting a more balanced and positive self-image.

Overall, «You in Other Eyes» is a powerful activity that helps individuals recognize their positive qualities and gain a different perspective on how they are perceived by others in a supportive and encouraging environment.

 **Participants:** This activity should be done with a group that already knows each other.  
Number of participants: 1-20

 **Materials:** A4 papers, sticky notes, pens.

 **Time duration:** 45-90 minutes, depending on the number of participants.

## *Description:*

Before the activity begins, prepare an A4 paper for each participant with their name written at the top. Set up a table or designated area where participants can place their completed A4 papers.

Distribute small pieces of paper, such as sticky notes or index cards, and pens or markers to each participant.

Or another option is to give first the instructions and participants can write their own names on A4 paper, or you can do it while they distribute among themselves the sticky notes.

Explain the purpose of the activity to the participants. Let them know that they will be writing down characteristics about each person in the room. Remember not to mention positive or negative. Just say “characteristics”.

Give some time (15–30 minutes) for them to think about it and write down. Adapt the time according to the size of the group.

As participants finish writing, instruct them to attach each small piece of paper to the corresponding person’s A4 paper. They can stick the papers directly on the A4 paper or use tape if necessary.

Once everyone has completed the activity, ask participants to take their A4 papers with the characteristics written on them and read out loud one by one. It will be nice if the group is sitting in a closed circle.

Finally, facilitate a group discussion or reflection on the activity. Encourage participants to share their feelings or thoughts about the characteristics written about them and how it made them feel to see themselves through the eyes of others.



# ACTIVITY 4.4.

## PERSONA MAP

### Have you ever heard about a persona map?


Persona mapping is a marketing strategy that leads to an improved user experience (UX) for your ideal customer. The process involves creating fictional customer personas based on demographic information, personality traits, pain points, and other details about your target customers (Bradley, et al., 2021).

Inspired by this amazing tool that helps entrepreneurs to define and understand their target group and customers, we made a tool that supports young people to discover their “persona map” as the best version of themselves.

The objective of this activity is to help participants visualize and embody their best selves, which can support their mental health by providing them with a tangible and positive image to turn to during difficult times.

By creating a persona map, participants can identify the qualities and characteristics they admire in themselves and set specific goals for how to achieve them. This exercise can also help them recognize their own strengths and values, which can improve their self-confidence and self-esteem. Additionally, having a clear picture of their ideal self can provide motivation and direction for personal growth and development.

 **Participants:** 1-30

 **Materials:** Paper, pens, colored pencils, markers, or other drawing materials, hand-outs (print the [worksheet](#) for each participant)

 **Time duration:** 60 minutes

## *Description:*

Explain that the purpose of this activity is to help participants identify their most confident and successful selves, and to bring that version of themselves into the present moment at any given time. Emphasize that this activity is not about creating a new, idealized version of themselves, but about recognizing the strengths and qualities they already possess and how they can embody them.

Tell participants that they will be drawing and writing about this ideal version of themselves, including how they look, feel, and act. Explain that this exercise will help them to visualize and embody this version of themselves in their everyday lives, allowing them to tap into their inner strength and confidence whenever they need it.

Finally, encourage participants to approach this activity with an open mind and a willingness to explore new aspects of themselves.

We made a template of the worksheet they should fill. We recommend to print in out beforehand. Or you can always save paper and show in on the presentation's screens, while participants draw and write in their notebooks.

Here are some prompts/questions to start with:

- Can you describe a specific moment or experience when you felt like this ideal version of yourself? What was happening and how did you feel in that moment?
- What are some of your strongest qualities and values? Write them down and describe how you embody them.
- How would your ideal self handle challenges or difficult situations? Write down some examples of your ideal self's problem-solving and coping strategies.
- What kind of physical activities and self-care practices does your ideal self engage in? Write down some examples and consider how you can incorporate them into your daily routine.
- What kind of relationships does your ideal self have with others? Write down the qualities of your ideal relationships and consider how you can cultivate those qualities in your current relationships.





- Remember, the purpose of this activity is not to create a completely new or unrealistic version of yourself, but to recognize and embody the strengths and qualities you already possess.
- How do you feel when you embody this ideal version of yourself? Can you describe those feelings?
- What kind of activities do you engage in when you are this version of yourself? What do you do during your free time?
- What kind of people do you surround yourself with? What qualities do they possess that make them a good fit for you?
- What are you wearing?
- How do you style your hair?
- What does your body language look like?
- What surroundings do you imagine yourself in?
- What kind of expression do you have on your face?
- What kind of posture do you have?
- Are there any props or accessories that you have with you?
- Are there any particular colors or patterns that you're wearing?

# ACTIVITY 4.5.

## JOURNALING

Journaling can be a powerful tool to improve mental health and well-being can help young people reduce stress and anxiety, increase self-awareness, boost mood and well-being, improve problem-solving skills, enhance creativity, and provide a sense of control over their thoughts and feelings. In this activity we give you 3 journaling techniques: Morning Pages, Bullet Journaling and 5-part prompt.

 **Participants:** 1-50

 **Materials:** notebooks, pens, flipchart/whiteboard, markers.

 **Time duration:** 45 minutes

### *Description:*

#### 1. Morning Pages

Writing in a journal is an act of self-expression that is done periodically to record feelings and inspire ideas. Morning pages serve a deeper purpose. This type of journaling is a cathartic, ritualistic writing process that clears your mind, builds confidence, and creates a path for greater creativity.

#### ***What Are Morning Pages?***

Morning pages are a stream-of-consciousness journaling habit done first thing every morning on a daily basis. The idea is to wake up, open your morning journal, and write three pages of longhand of any thoughts that come out of your head. Julia Cameron, author of *The Artist's Way*, created this approach to journaling as a way for people to unleash their creativity.





Morning pages enable you to clear your mind. When you wake up, your mind is swimming with thoughts from the previous night. When you write off the top of your head first thing in the morning, the words that spill out onto the blank page will no longer be taking up space in your brain, and you can approach the rest of the day with more clarity.

Morning pages allow you to process emotion. Life can be overwhelming. On top of personal stress, we are bombarded with heavy information in the news—some of it tragic. It's okay to grieve and process these stories. Morning pages give you the space to do this, freeing your mind from information that can weigh you down and affect your productivity and your life.

Morning pages unleash your creativity. Being creative takes discipline. Making the time to sit down and write that novel or short story often gets pushed aside. By writing morning pages, you're establishing a routine that will help you find a way to make time for your creative self. Once you get into the habit of writing morning pages, finding the time for your creative endeavors will come easier.

Morning pages silence your inner critic. Before even putting pen to paper, writers can be their own worst critics. Stream-of-consciousness writing accesses only what's on your brain at that moment, leaving no room for self-criticism.

Morning pages are brain dumps: three pages straight, first thing in the morning. It's stream-of-consciousness writing. The point is to write every thought that comes into your head and hold nothing back—even if that thought is, «I don't know what to write in these morning pages. They seem kind of pointless.» To do morning pages, you start with three standard-sized pieces of paper. We recommend to use a notebook.

## 2. **Bullet journal**

Bullet journaling is a personalized system for organizing and tracking various aspects of your life. It involves creating a journal with a combination of bullet points, symbols, and lists that help you to keep track of your daily tasks, goals, appointments, and ideas.

Starting your day with bullet journaling can improve your productivity and overall well-being. By writing down what you are grateful for, you begin your day with a posi-





tive mindset and focus on the good things in your life. This can help reduce stress and anxiety and increase feelings of happiness and contentment.

Writing down your goals for the day helps you prioritize your tasks and stay on track. It gives you a sense of direction and purpose, and helps you avoid distractions and procrastination.

The «I am» section of the bullet journal is a space for you to write down affirmations or positive statements about yourself. This can help you build self-confidence and improve your self-esteem.

Sending love to someone is a way to express gratitude and kindness towards others. It can also help you feel more connected and empathetic towards those around you.

Finally, setting an intention for the day is a powerful way to focus your energy and attention on what you want to accomplish. It can help you stay motivated and inspired throughout the day, and give you a sense of purpose and direction.

Here are the “bullets” to share with the group:

***I am grateful for...***

- 
- 
- 

***My goals for the day...***

- 
- 
- 

***I am...***

- 
- 
- 

***Sending love to...***

***My intention for the day is....***





### 3. 5-part prompt

You can feel incredibly inspired if you journal every morning. Here is the 5-part prompt that you can use daily:


1. *Gratitude* – Write down 3 things you are grateful for today
2. *Positive experience* – Write down 3-5 sentences about something that brought a smile to your face in the past 24 hours
3. *Excited for* – Write down 3 things you're looking forward to in the day ahead
4. *Priorities* – Write down 3 priorities you have for your life right now
5. *Impact* – Write down 3-5 sentences about how you would like to affect the community around you

# ACTIVITY 4.6.

## MEDITATION

The objective of the following activity is to introduce participants to the benefits of meditation and guide them through a few simple meditation practices. By introducing young people to meditation, they can learn to manage their stress and anxiety in healthy ways that do not involve reaching for their phones or social media. Meditation can help them develop a deeper sense of self-awareness, which can lead to improved mental and emotional health. Additionally, by learning to focus their attention through meditation, young people can improve their productivity and ability to stay present in the moment, reducing the need for constant distraction from social media.

 **Participants:** 5 - 25

 **Materials:** A quiet, peaceful environment. Optional: meditation music or guided meditation recordings, enough space for everyone to be in a comfortable position, preferable laying on the ground, yoga mats if needed.

 **Time duration:** 45 minutes

### *Description:*

In this activity the trainer should guide the participants through a mediation talking with a calm gentle voice. Below we will give you some instructions you can read. However, if you don't feel comfortable with it, we recommend trying a recorded meditation. One very good place to find such is "The Headspace", here is a link with free meditation: <https://www.headspace.com/meditation>.

They also have a platform where you can buy a yearly subscription to daily meditation programs.







- 1. Introduction** - Explain briefly what meditation is and the benefits of incorporating meditation into our life. Invite participants to relax and focus their attention on the present moment.

*Meditation is a mental exercise that involves focusing one's attention to achieve a state of mental clarity and calmness. It is a practice that has been used for thousands of years in different cultures and religions as a way to calm the mind and promote relaxation, spiritual growth, and mental wellbeing.*

*The benefits of meditation include reduced stress and anxiety, improved concentration, better sleep, and increased emotional wellbeing.*

- 2. Guided Meditation #1: Breath Awareness** - Guide participants through a simple breath awareness meditation. Guide participants through a simple breath awareness meditation. Encourage participants to focus on their breath and let go of any distracting thoughts.

*Breath awareness meditation is a type of meditation that focuses on paying attention to the breath:*

*Find a quiet and comfortable place to sit. Begin by closing your eyes or lowering your gaze. Take a deep breath in and exhale slowly. Focus your attention on your breath, feeling the sensation of the air moving in and out of your body.*

*You may notice your mind starting to wander, and that's okay. When you notice your mind has wandered, gently bring your attention back to your breath.*

*Continue to focus on your breath, inhaling and exhaling slowly and deeply.*

*If you find it helpful, you can count your breaths, starting at one and counting up to ten, then starting again at one.*

*You can continue with this practice for a few minutes or as long as you'd like.*

The goal of breath awareness meditation is to bring your attention to the present moment and quiet the mind.





**3. Group Discussion** - After the meditation, invite participants to share any thoughts or experiences they had during the practice. Encourage participants to ask questions and share any challenges they have encountered in their own meditation practice.

#### **4. Guided Meditation #2: Body Scan**

Guide participants through a body scan meditation. Encourage participants to focus on their body sensations and observe any tension or relaxation in their body.

*Body scan meditation is a practice where you systematically focus on different parts of your body to develop awareness and relaxation. Here's an example of a body scan meditation:*

*Find a comfortable position, either sitting or lying down, and close your eyes.*

*Take a few deep breaths to settle into your body and relax. Begin to scan your body from the top of your head down to your toes, focusing your attention on each area one at a time. As you focus on each area, notice any sensations you may be feeling in that part of your body, without judgment or interpretation. Simply observe and feel.*

*If you find any areas of tension or discomfort, gently breathe into those areas and imagine the tension melting away with each exhale. Continue to scan your body, taking your time and focusing your attention on each part. When you reach your toes, take a few deep breaths and feel the sensation of relaxation and calmness throughout your body.*

*When you're ready, slowly open your eyes and take a moment to reorient yourself to your surroundings.*

**5. Discussion** - After the meditation, invite participants to share any thoughts or experiences they had during the practice. Ask participants how they felt after the two meditations and if they noticed any differences between the two practices.

**6. Closing** - Encourage participants to continue practicing meditation regularly and offer resources or tips for incorporating meditation into their daily routine.

# ACTIVITY 4.7.


## POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

The objective of the next activity is to help individuals develop positive affirmations, which are statements that promote positive self-talk and self-belief. The activity is designed to help participants identify areas of their lives where they may be struggling with negative self-talk or limiting beliefs, and to create personalized affirmations that are tailored to their specific needs and goals. By practicing these positive affirmations regularly, participants can “train” their brains to focus on positive thoughts and beliefs, which can ultimately lead to positive changes in their attitudes and behaviors.

The overall goal is to help individuals cultivate a more positive and optimistic mindset, which can improve their overall well-being and resilience in the face of challenges.

 **Participants:** 5 - 50

 **Materials:** paper, pens, cell phones for recording audio

 **Time duration:** The approximate duration of this activity is 45-60 minutes. The time may vary depending on the depth of discussion and the amount of time given for brainstorming and sharing affirmations.

### *Description:*

**1. Introduce the concept of positive affirmations:** Explain the purpose and benefits of using positive affirmations to promote self-belief and positive self-talk.

**Intro:** Positive affirmations are statements that are designed to encourage and uplift individuals by promoting positive self-talk and self-belief (Sherman et al., 2006). They are typically short, simple, and focused on positive aspects of the self, such as one’s strengths, accomplishments, and potential. Some examples of positive affirmations include «I am worthy of love and respect,» «I am capable of achieving my goals,» and «I am confident in my abilities.»





Positive affirmations are important because they can help individuals reframe negative or limiting beliefs about themselves and their abilities. They can also help individuals cultivate a more positive and optimistic mindset, which can improve their overall well-being and resilience in the face of challenges (Cohen et al., 2014).

Using positive affirmations can lead to a number of benefits, including improved self-esteem, reduced stress and anxiety, increased motivation and confidence, and enhanced problem-solving abilities. By consistently repeating positive affirmations to oneself, individuals can train their brains to focus on positive thoughts and beliefs, which can ultimately lead to positive changes in their attitudes and behaviors.

- 2. Identify areas of focus:** Ask participants to reflect on areas of their lives where they may be struggling with negative self-talk or limiting beliefs. This could include self-esteem, relationships, career goals, personal growth, or any other relevant areas.
- 3. Brainstorm positive statements:** Encourage participants to brainstorm positive affirmations that are tailored to their areas of focus. These affirmations should be short, simple, and focused on positive aspects of the self. Provide examples if necessary.

***Here are some examples of positive affirmations:***

***I am worthy of love and respect.***

***I am capable of achieving my goals.***

***I am confident in my abilities.***

***I trust in my decisions and choices.***

***I am surrounded by positivity and abundance.***

***I choose to let go of fear and embrace courage.***

***I am grateful for all the blessings in my life.***

***I am capable of handling any challenges that come my way.***

***I am deserving of success and happiness.***

***I am worthy of self-care and self-love.***

It's important to create affirmations that are personal and relevant to your own experiences and goals.





- 4. Share and discuss:** Invite participants to share their positive affirmations with the group. Encourage them to explain the meaning and significance behind each affirmation.
- 5. Practice and repetition:** Encourage participants to practice their own positive affirmations regularly, ideally daily. They can repeat them to themselves in the morning, throughout the day, or before bed. Additionally, they can record these affirmations on their phones and listen to them when they most need them.
- 6. Reflect and revise:** After a period of time, ask participants to reflect on their experience using positive affirmations. Did they notice any changes in their mindset or behavior? Are there any affirmations that were particularly effective or ineffective? Encourage them to revise and refine their affirmations as needed.

# ACTIVITY 4.8.

## SELF-ACCEPTANCE AND INNER CONFIDENCE

Young people can struggle with self-esteem and self-confidence, due to the negative impact of social media, particularly those who tend to set rigid labels or expectations for themselves. As it revolves around reframing, this activity is similar to the activity “REFRAMING NEGATIVE SELF-TALK”, except it doesn’t focus on self-talk, but emphasizes the reframing the negative labels and beliefs. The activity aims to help young people develop greater self-acceptance and challenge their negative labels and beliefs for themselves. By completing the worksheets, participants can gain a deeper understanding of their internal rating and develop new, more positive ways of thinking about themselves. This activity was adapted from various parts from ‘Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook For Dummies, 2007’ by Rhena Branch and Rob Willson, Chapter 12, pages 172-186.

*This activity has 3 parts:*

- I. Understanding low self-esteem and acquiring self-acceptance**
- II. Comparison, areas and domains of rating**
- III. Losing the labels**

In each part we will have some theory for you, to read and understand better, so you can present and explain to the group, as well as worksheets that you can print and hand out to participants, write down on flipchart or even present it on a big screen, it’s up to you.

 **Participants:** 5 - 30

 **Materials:** handouts, paper, pen, flipchart or presentation screen

 **Time duration:** 90 minutes

## Description:

### I. UNDERSTANDING LOW SELF-ESTEEM AND ACQUIRING SELF-ACCEPTANCE

The use of the term «self-esteem» can be problematic because it suggests that a person's overall worth or rating can be accurately determined, even if that person is the one doing the rating. It may be easy to assess the value of an object like jewelry or a diamond, but human beings are living, dynamic beings who are much more complex. Rather than self-esteem, an alternative concept to consider is self-acceptance.

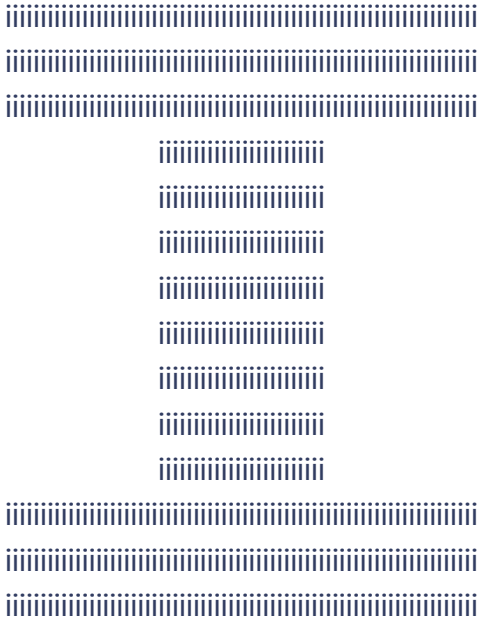
Self-acceptance beliefs and attitudes possess three key characteristics:

- They are logically coherent. For instance, just because one prefers not to make mistakes, it doesn't mean they should never make them.
- They align with reality. For example, everyone is capable of making mistakes. Therefore, giving oneself permission to err acknowledges one's capacity to make mistakes occasionally.
- They are beneficial. For instance, allowing oneself to make mistakes can help to avoid excessive self-criticism or depression when errors occur. By not focusing on condemning oneself, individuals can concentrate on addressing the situation and finding solutions.

Assigning a single aspect of your behavior to represent your entire self is not advantageous. A visual aid in the Figure below demonstrates the intricacy of human nature and exposes the absurdity of assigning oneself a global label. Show the following image to the participants and ask them “Which do see first: the big ‘I’ or all the little ones?”







**Which do see first: the big 'I' or all the little ones?**  
 (Image source: 'Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook For Dummies, 2007' by Rhena Branch and Rob Willson, 2007 p. 178)

Explain them that the large letter «I» in the figure represents the entirety of oneself, including the past, present, and future, as well as positive, negative, and neutral qualities. This encompasses every little detail about oneself. The smaller «i's» depict different behaviors, characteristics, abilities, attributes, talents, experiences, aspirations, limitations, mistakes, and other aspects that contribute to the complexity of one's being.

It's important to recognize that as a human being, you will make mistakes. Accepting your fallibility is crucial because nobody is perfect. Rather than engaging in negative self-talk, feeling ashamed or depressed when you make mistakes, or setting unrealistic expectations for yourself, it's important to acknowledge your fundamental fallibility.

## II. COMPARISON, AREAS AND DOMAINS OF RATING

It's very common for us to rate ourselves as either good or bad, a success or a failure, or worthy or worthless based on our achievements or circumstances. However, just because it's common doesn't mean it's a good practice. In fact, tying our self-worth to external conditions is the root cause of self-esteem problems. If our current situation is not maintained, our opinion of ourselves can quickly drop. Life is unpredictable, and things can change quickly, so if we constantly anchor our value to our job, relationships, financial situation, or other external factors, our mood and view of ourselves can swing wildly.

All individuals possess equal worth. Take a moment to reflect on your level of agreement with this statement. Isn't human life considered sacred, which is why murder is universally illegal? Most of us have been taught that human beings have intrinsic value and





worth, meaning that we are valuable and deserving simply because we exist. However, we frequently behave as if some individuals are more worthy than others. In western society, we often place too much emphasis on certain things like wealth and social status, mistakenly assuming that people who possess these traits are superior to those who do not. Simultaneously, we may undervalue our own generosity, social responsibility, and kindness.

Comparing oneself to others based on external conditions can lead to feelings of superiority or inferiority, both of which are unhealthy because they devalue oneself or others. Accepting oneself (and others) means recognizing that all individuals have equal worth but differ in specific aspects. For example, you may excel in cooking but struggle with driving, while your neighbor may be the opposite. However, you are both worthy individuals with unique strengths and limitations. One of the initial steps in achieving self-acceptance is acknowledging the specific conditions to which you typically attach your self-worth.

### III. LOSING THE LABELS

Self-imposed labels can be negative because they often involve harsh judgments and criticisms of oneself. These labels are rigid because they don't allow for growth, change, or learning. For example, a person who labels themselves as «lazy» may believe that they will always be lazy and never be able to change their behavior.

Self-imposed labels can also be unrealistic because they don't take into account the complexity of human experience. People are multifaceted, and it's not fair to label oneself or others based on a few characteristics or behaviors. For example, a person who labels themselves as «stupid» because they struggle with one subject in school is not acknowledging their strengths and other areas of competency.

Self-imposed labels can hold a person back and prevent them from achieving their goals because they create negative self-talk and beliefs. When a person believes that they are a certain way, they may not even try to change or improve themselves in that area. This can lead to missed opportunities for growth and success.





Here is a checklist of general areas or domains that people frequently judge their overall worth against. Mark the ones that you personally relate to, and feel free to include a few additional ones that are not mentioned in the list.

**External Conditions Checklist** (source 'Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook For Dummies, 2007' by Rhena Branch and Rob Willson, 2007 p.172):

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academic/educational qualifications | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical attractiveness/fitness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career or job success               | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical disabilities           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity/artistic talents         | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical health                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnicity                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Quality of relationships        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fame/celebrity status               | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious observance            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family background                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Social popularity/social ease   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligence                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Socio-economic status           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Wealth/material possessions     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting skills                    |  |


Explain to the group: Identifying the areas where you tend to give yourself a global rating is the first step in overcoming low self-esteem and practice self-acceptance. We proceed with some techniques presented in the following sections, continuing this process.


# ACTIVITY 4.9.

## VISION BOARD

Next, we want to help participants clarify their goals, aspirations, and dreams by creating a visual representation of their ideal future using a vision board. Through this activity, participants will reflect on their values, desires, and priorities, and use images, words, and symbols to express their vision for their personal and/or professional life. By creating a tangible representation of their goals, participants will be motivated and inspired to take action towards achieving them, and will gain a greater sense of purpose and direction in their life.

 **Participants:** 5 - 25

 **Materials:** Provide participants with magazines, newspapers, art supplies, and other materials that they can use to create their vision board. If the activity is being done virtually, provide links to websites with images or templates for digital vision board, or we suggest to use [Canva](#).

 **Time duration:** The duration of a vision board activity can vary depending on the complexity of the boards and the amount of time given for sharing and discussion. Introduction and instructions: 10 minutes. Gathering materials and creating the vision board: 60 minutes. Sharing and discussion: 30 minutes. Wrap-up and reflection: 10 minutes. This gives a total estimated time of around 110 minutes or 1 hour and 50 minutes for the activity.

### *Description:*

**1. Introduce the concept of a vision board:** Explain the purpose of a vision board and how it can help individuals clarify and manifest their goals and aspirations.

**Intro:** A vision board is a tool used to help individuals clarify their goals, dreams, and aspirations by creating a visual representation of them. It typically consists of a collage





of images, words, and phrases that represent the things a person wants to achieve or manifest in their life. A vision board can be created using a physical bulletin board or a digital platform such as a website or mobile app. The idea is to curate a collection of images and text that inspire and motivate the individual toward their desired outcomes. By regularly viewing their vision board, the person is reminded of their goals and can stay focused on the actions needed to achieve them.

- 2. Set goals and intentions:** Ask participants to reflect on their personal and professional goals and intentions. Encourage them to consider what they want to achieve in the short term and long term. For example, it can be some financial goals (saving X amount of money, buying my first property, buying my dream car, etc.), career, relationship, health, etc.
- 3. Create the vision board:** Give participants time to create their vision board, either individually or in pairs/small groups. Encourage them to select images and text that represent their goals and aspirations, and to arrange them in a way that is visually appealing and inspiring.

***Keep in mind, create a vision that makes you wanna jump out of bed in the morning!***

- 4. Share and discuss:** After the vision boards are completed, invite participants to share their boards with the group. Encourage them to explain their choices and what each image or word represents to them. Allow time for feedback and discussion.
- 5. Reflect and revise:** After the sharing and discussion, encourage participants to reflect on their vision board and their goals. Ask them to consider if there are any changes they want to make or if there are any new insights they have gained.
- 6. Follow-up:** Encourage participants to keep their vision board in a visible place and to regularly view it as a reminder of their goals and aspirations. Follow up with participants to see how they are progressing towards their goals and to offer support and encouragement as needed.

# ACTIVITY 4.10.


## WRITING LETTERS (8 TO 80 METHOD)

We are ending the module with one very interesting tool used in the final activity. The objective of this activity is to help participants reflect on their life journey and gain perspective on their past and future selves, with a focus on self-compassion and personal growth. We called the tool “8 to 80 method”, where participant should imagine their present self writing a letter to their younger self – 8 years old. And then imagine they are 80 years old and write a letter to their present self.

Writing a letter to your younger self can be a transformative and therapeutic practice that promotes:

- Reflection and self-awareness
- Healing and closure
- Self-compassion and forgiveness
- Perspective and wisdom
- Emotional release and empowerment
- Gratitude and appreciation

Writing a letter from your future self, envisioning yourself at 80 years old, can also have several benefits for mental health, and it can be a powerful tool for personal growth, self-reflection, and motivation. It allows you to tap into your wisdom, set meaningful goals, cultivate gratitude, and gain a broader perspective on life. By envisioning your future self, you can actively shape your path and work towards creating a fulfilling and purposeful life.

 **Participants:** This tool can be used in a group setting, however it should be done individually, therefore the number of participants for this activity is unlimited.

 **Materials:** papers or notebooks, pens.

 **Time duration:** 90 minutes

### *Description:*

1. Introduce the concept of writing a letter to your younger self, at age 8 and a letter from your future self, at aged 80. Explain that this technique can help us gain perspective on our life journey, reflect on our past experiences, and envision a positive future for ourselves.
2. Ask participants to take a few moments to reflect on their younger selves. Encourage them to think about the challenges they faced, the hopes and dreams they had, and the lessons they learned along the way. Give participants 20–30 minutes to write a letter to their younger selves, offering words of encouragement, advice, and support.

**«What would you like to say to your younger 8-year-old self?»** Encourage them to be as honest and compassionate as possible, and to reflect on what they would have liked to hear from someone older and wiser when they were younger.

3. Next, ask participants to take a few moments to reflect on their future selves.

**«What advice would your 80-year-old self give you?»** Encourage them to imagine what their life might look like at age 80, and to envision the kind of person they want to be and the experiences they want to have.

4. Give participants 20–30 minutes to write a letter from their 80-year-old selves to their present selves. Encourage them to imagine what their future selves would say to them, offering words of encouragement, wisdom, and hope. This could involve reflecting on what they achieved, what they overcame, and what they learned along the way.





5. Once everyone has finished their letters, reflecting on what they learned, how they felt, what surprised them about the process, or what steps they can take to move closer to their ideal future. Perhaps, some of them may choose to seal their letters in envelopes for privacy, give them this option.
6. Wrap up the activity by thanking participants for their participation and encouraging them to continue reflecting on their life journey and envisioning a positive future for themselves.



# MODULE 5:

## FILLING THE GAPS OF MISSING SKILLS



This final module is conceived to build the missing skills needed in order to combat the negative effects of social media use. The activities are put together as a whole in order to recognize the negative aspects and to shift the focus from the virtual to the actual reality.

We focus on a very crucial skill - critical thinking. It is an essential life skill, especially when one is young and impressionable and bombarded with all types of content online. The critical thinking skills developed here are focusing on the content available on social media and are aimed at consuming content with a pinch of salt, always questioning before taking things for granted.

Another area of focus is communicational skills, starting with the art of active listening and continuing with activities that focus on building skills for verbal expression which are lacking thanks to the extended written usage of language online. The aim of these activities is to make young people feel more comfortable in social situations without seeking comfort and turning to social media for help, to help overcome the discomfort of face to face interaction by acquiring and building up on communicational skills.

As we have reiterated before, it's how you use the tool that defines it's positive or negative effects, therefore, as a final activity we are providing ways that users can optimize their social media apps to work for them and not against them.

## *Building Communicational skills*

For healthy relationships communication is essential. You can communicate, learn, respond, and develop enduring relationships with the people in your life when you can speak honestly and openly with them. This is an essential component of all relationships, including those with peers and family, but it can be particularly important in romantic ones.

Effective communication can improve your relationships in many different ways, such as creating a firm bond with someone, reduce and resolve conflicts, and minimize negative feelings from issues by discussing them in a more positive, effective way. (SR Rogers et al.,2015).

Important aspects of effective communication include, active listening, showing acceptance and validating the other person's feelings and emotions which also means being present when talking, in other words to be an active listener. Kindness is also important because it makes people feel understood.



## *Active listening*

Active listening as a communicational skill involves a lot more than simply listening to the words of our interlocutor. It includes understanding the meaning of those words and being an active participant in the conversation. Active listening is important because it keeps you engaged in the conversation and makes the other person feel valued and above all heard.

Social media has made young people disengage in conversation: ignoring the speaker because you are scrolling on your phone, or talking to multiple people at the same time and thus caring only about the things you have to say while not paying attention to the arguments and needs of the other person.

There are **four** types of listening: **Empathetic listening:** when you are focused on the other person instead of yourself and you feel for the other person. **Appreciative listening:** when you find pleasure in listening to another person speak **Comprehensive listener:** when you listen to learn something, for example, a podcast or a lecture. **Critical listener:** when you listen to form an opinion (SR Rogers et al.,2015).

Active listening falls under empathetic listening, although one can argue that all four aspects are important for good communication.

It goes without saying that multi-tasking, is best be avoided when talking to anyone. Other good examples of active listening include asking questions, especially open-ended questions. Taking the time to summarize what the other person is saying to assure the speaker you have fully understood them. Removing all biases aside and do not judge other points of view. Be patient and focus on the other person. Do not change or divert the conversation to other topics, acknowledging the other person's arguments and responding adequately.



## *Developing empathy*

Seeing the world from another person's perspective is the practice of empathy. Empathy is the ability to understand another person's feelings and to understand the reasoning behind their actions (Goleman, 1995).

Empathy makes it easier for us to explain our ideas to others and makes it easier for us to comprehend others when they speak to us. It is, one of the fundamental pillars of effective social interaction.

Some individuals are incredibly empathetic by nature and can tell how another person is feeling just by looking at them. Some people have very little innate empathy, so they won't understand why you're upset until you start shouting. The majority of individuals fall somewhere in the middle and not always comprehend how another person is feeling. The lack of social skills thanks to social media contributes to the loss of empathetic communication, as texting does not give us the possibility to whiteness the non-verbal communication and thus makes us less able to fully understand how a person is feeling.

Fortunately, empathy can be developed by carefully paying attention to all the verbal and non-verbal cues in the communication, putting ourselves in the other person's shoes, learning to identify emotions, your own and those of others, and communicating from a place of no judgment.



## *Critical thinking skills*

Questioning, analyzing, interpreting, evaluating, and developing an opinion about what you read, hear, say, or write are all examples of critical thinking (L.Wright, 2001). Critical thinking among young people today is more important than ever as social media bombard them with all sorts' information, images, to the point that they become passive consumers without ever questioning anything. Young people often take for granted the things they see on their social media and accept it as true. Adding to this is the lack of life experience a young person needs in order to make an informed decision.

This can be especially detrimental when young people get involved in things, they wouldn't normally do had they thought about it more and used some of the critical thinking skills in order to make a proper decision.

Critical thinking skills can be developed by working on self-awareness, practicing active listening, evaluating information, analyzing things and above all, asking questions.

When using social media, one should always evaluate the content they are exposed to, the reasons why they are consuming it, which means being very aware of things. This way, by questioning, analyzing, and evaluating the content, one can combat some of the negative aspects of social media use, such as unrealistic standards, false images and distorted reality.

## *Adjusting social media to work for you*

Social media, as we have mentioned many times so far, offer a plethora of content designed to grab your attention and keep you hooked without noticing the passage of time. This content is mostly for entertainment purposes. However, there are plenty of content creators that produce content that's not purely for entertainment. One can indeed learn a lot from podcasts, videos, educational TikToks etc., Not many people are aware that there are certain adjustments one can make in order to weed out undesirable content, and set-up their social media algorithms to work in their favor instead of against them.



This can be the key to healthy social media usage. Using social media for all of the benefits they can provide and minimize the negative aspects. In this case, being aware and managing the type of content you would like to consume instead of being served enticing content that does not fall in line with your goals and aspirations in life. Social media can also be used as a type of vision board for example, when we choose to be exposed to the type of things that inspire and motivate us.



# ACTIVITIES - MODULE 5:



# ACTIVITY 5.1.

## ACTIVE LISTENING

We are starting by raising competences in communication skills, particularly learning how to be an active listener and reflect on our listening behavior so far. The objective of this activity is to help participants develop their active listening skills, which are essential for effective communication. By practicing active listening, participants will learn to pay attention to verbal and nonverbal cues, and to fully understand the speaker's perspective and feelings, and to show that they are fully present and engaged in the conversation.

 **Participants:** 9 - 30

 **Materials:** printed [handout](#), paper and pens for taking notes if needed

 **Time duration:** 90 minutes

### *Description:*

1. Introduction part: Give a short intro to active listening definition and why it is important for the successful communication process (K. Robertson, 2005).

*Active listening is a communication technique that involves fully concentrating on, understanding, responding to, and remembering what is being said rather than passively hearing what the speaker is trying to convey. It involves being present in the moment, paying attention to the speaker's words, body language, tone of voice, and emotions. (SR Rogers et al., 2015)*

*Active listening is important because it helps to build better relationships, reduce misunderstandings, improve problem-solving and decision-making, and increase empathy and understanding. It can help to avoid conflicts, build trust, and enhance mutual respect. By actively listening, you show the speaker that you value their thoughts and opinions and that you are committed to understanding them. This can*





lead to more effective communication and better outcomes in both personal and professional relationships. (SR Rogers et al.,2015)

2. Group division and giving instruction: Divide participants into groups of three, provide each of them a handout with active listening techniques that they will use during the activity, then assign roles to each member: Listener, Storyteller, and Observer. Instructs them on what they should do, specifically:
  - the Storyteller starts his/her narration on a given topic which takes approximately 5 minutes
  - the Listener carefully listens to a story, using the active listening techniques from the handout to show that he/she is fully engaged and present in the conversation. He/she puts focus on the words used, the speech rate, whether there are any pauses between sentences, pronunciation, and so on.
  - the Observer takes notes on the behavior of the listener, paying attention to the use of active listening techniques and the overall effectiveness of communication. They follow the table in the handout and mark what the listener is doing.

Encourage participants to actively engage in the activity and provide constructive feedback to each other.

3. First round of storytelling and active listening (15 minutes: 5 minutes per storyteller/listener/observer trio)
  1. *Rotation to next role (5 minutes)*
  2. *Second round of storytelling and active listening (15 minutes: 5 minutes per storyteller/listener/observer trio). Be careful, rotate the roles so that each member has a chance to experience all three roles.*
  3. *Group discussion and reflection on the activity (10 minutes) - All participants discuss how they felt, which role was easier for them, why, where or in which role they struggled or felt any inconvenience, and what they learned.*
  4. *Conclusion (5 minutes)*







## ACTIVE LISTENING

What to do	What to Avoid
<b>Pay attention:</b> Focus on the speaker and give them your undivided attention. Maintain eye contact and avoid distractions.	<b>Interrupting:</b> Let the speaker finish their thoughts before you respond. Avoid interrupting or finishing their sentences for them.
<b>Show interest:</b> Show the speaker that you are interested in what they have to say by nodding, smiling, and making appropriate facial expressions.	<b>Judging or criticizing:</b> Avoid judging or criticizing the speaker, their opinions, or their feelings. Be open-minded and respectful of their point of view.
<b>Ask questions:</b> Ask open-ended questions to encourage the speaker to provide more details and clarify any misunderstandings.	<b>Rushing or pushing:</b> Be patient and give the speaker time to express themselves fully. Don't rush or push them to finish quickly.
<b>Paraphrase:</b> Repeat what the speaker has said in your own words to show that you understand and to confirm your understanding.	<b>Being distracted:</b> Avoid being distracted by your own thoughts or external stimuli. Stay focused on the speaker.
<b>Summarize:</b> Provide a summary of what has been said to ensure that you have understood the main points of the conversation.	<b>Changing the topic:</b> Stick to the topic at hand and avoid changing the subject.
<b>Reflect:</b> Reflect on the speaker's emotions and feelings, and acknowledge them by using statements such as «I can understand how you feel» or «That must have been difficult for you.»	<b>Multitasking:</b> Avoid multitasking or doing other things while listening to the speaker.
<b>Be patient:</b> Be patient and give the speaker time to express themselves fully. Don't rush or push them to finish quickly.	<b>Talking over the speaker:</b> Wait for the speaker to finish before you respond.
<b>Show empathy:</b> Show empathy by putting yourself in the speaker's shoes and trying to understand their perspective and feelings.	<b>Making assumptions:</b> Don't make assumptions or jump to conclusions. Ask for clarification if needed.





	<b>Daydreaming:</b> Stay focused and avoid daydreaming or letting your mind wander.
	<b>Showing disinterest:</b> Avoid showing disinterest or being dismissive of the speaker's thoughts or feelings.

Here are some questions that you can ask the group after the exercise:

- How did it feel to actively listen to someone else during the exercise? Did you notice any differences in your listening habits compared to your usual communication style?
- What were some of the challenges you encountered while practicing active listening? How did you overcome those challenges, if at all?
- Did you notice any changes in the dynamics of the conversation when you were actively listening? How did it impact your understanding of the speaker's message?
- What strategies or techniques did you find helpful in enhancing your active listening skills? Did you try paraphrasing, summarizing, or asking open-ended questions? How did these techniques contribute to the quality of the conversation?
- Did you notice any non-verbal cues or body language that helped you better understand the speaker's message? How did you incorporate these cues into your active listening approach?
- How did it feel to be on the receiving end of active listening? Did you feel heard and understood? Did it influence your willingness to share more or be vulnerable in the conversation?
- Reflecting on the exercise, what insights or lessons did you gain about the importance of active listening in effective communication and building relationships?
- How do you think you can apply the skills and strategies learned from this exercise in your everyday interactions? Can you think of specific situations where active listening would be beneficial?





- What are some of the key takeaways you will remember and incorporate into your communication style moving forward?

These questions can help facilitate a meaningful discussion and encourage participants to reflect on their active listening experience, share their insights, and explore ways to apply active listening skills in their daily lives.

# ACTIVITY 5.2.

## PRESENTATION CREATION'S ADVENTURE

These questions can help facilitate a meaningful discussion and encourage participants to reflect on their active listening experience, share their insights, and explore ways to apply active listening skills in their daily lives.

The purpose of this activity is to engage participants in a fun and learning activity that tackles various aspects: overcoming the fear of public speaking, improving communication skills, improvisation, developing presentation skills, gaining skill in using digital tools.

 **Participants:** 5 - 25

 **Materials:** Phone, tablet or computer; projector

 **Time duration:** 90 minutes

### *Description:*

In this activity everyone makes a PowerPoint or Canva presentation for someone else to present on the spot. The key: no one knows what they are presenting until the randomly chosen Presentation is up on their turn. If the group is small, participants can work on creating the presentation individually, and if it's a larger group, they should work in teams. The trainer explains the rules, gives them 30 - 40 minutes on creating the presentation and everyone gets 2-3 minutes to speak. Therefore, the participant should have in mind the duration of the presentation when they prepare it. The topic of the presentation should be by the choose of the one(s) that prepare it, and the speaker should present like they know it all, projecting self-confidence.

The fun aspect of this activity takes of the pressure of the participants, enabling them to stand up confidently in front of the group, knowing that they cannot fail.

# ACTIVITY 5.3.

## THE MAKING OF

This activity focuses on improving communication skills and understanding the importance of conveying information clearly. Participants will write instructions for making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and the trainer will attempt to make the sandwich using only the written instructions. The activity helps participants develop their descriptive writing skills and highlights the importance of details in communication.

 **Participants:** 10 - 25

 **Materials:** Paper, pen, bread, peanut butter, jelly, knife, spoon, napkins, gloves.

 **Time duration:** 40 - 60 minutes (depends on the size of the group)

### *Description:*

Each participant should write on a piece of paper instructions on how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Once everyone is done the trainer starts reading the directions and prepare the sandwich accordingly – while reading out loud the instructions and proceeding to do exactly as written. The interesting part is that the instructions are never complete and detailed, so for participants it's interesting to watch the preparation. If there is no successful sandwich at the end, they get a second chance, until the trainer finds Instructions that are detailed enough to make the sandwich right.

#### **Instructions:**

1. Distribute a piece of paper and pen to each participant.
2. Instruct participants to write step-by-step instructions on how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Encourage them to be as clear and detailed as possible.





3. Once everyone has completed their instructions, the trainer starts reading them out loud one by one.
4. As the trainer reads the instructions of one paper, they should follow them exactly to prepare the sandwich.
5. If the sandwich is not successful, give participants a chance to revise and improve their instructions.
6. Continue the activity until you find instructions that are detailed enough to make the sandwich right.
7. After the successful sandwich is made, debrief with participants to discuss what made the instructions clear and effective, and what could be improved for next time.
8. Collect the papers and discard any leftover food items.

***Note: Provide gloves and napkins for hygiene purposes.***

# ACTIVITY 5.4.

## THE BROKEN TELEPHONE

Communication is very easy to misinterpret. What is clear to you is not always clear to the next person. Don't make assumptions that people understand your words. Test your phrases and communication on others to make sure they understand them the same way you do. The Telephone Game is familiar to many people, as it has been around for years. A good telephone game works for any age and in many situations. In our case we have an intro part and a follow up, as we want to relate it to critical think and recognizing the fake news on social media.

 **Participants:** 10 - 50

 **Materials:** paper, pens

 **Time duration:** 15 minutes

### *Description:*

To get started, players must sit in a circle or stand in a straight line. They need to be close enough that whispering is possible, but not so close that players can hear each other whisper.

To begin, the first person in the line or circle whispers a complex phrase into the ear of the person sitting or standing to their right. Players whisper the phrase to their neighbors until it reaches the last player in line. The last player says phrase out loud so everyone can hear how much it has changed from the first whisper at the beginning of the circle or line. The final version of the sentence will be compared to the original, demonstrating the omissions and differences that are also present when news and stories are passed on in the social media.




# ACTIVITY 5.5.

## DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS: UNDERSTANDING ITS IMPORTANCE AND APPLICATIONS

With the abundance of information online, it can be challenging to discern what is real and what is not. The following activity aims to develop critical thinking skills in young people and help them recognize fake news and false realities online. The objective of this activity is to understand what critical thinking is, why it is important, and how to develop critical thinking skills. Additionally, participants will explore real-life examples of critical thinking in action.

 **Participants:** 15 - 50

 **Materials:** Presentation slides. Paper and pens for taking notes if needed. Prepare some images of optical illusions.

 **Time duration:** 90 minutes (the duration may vary or can be prolonged depending on the number of participants)

### *Description:*

- Warm-up activity (10-15 minutes)** Start the session with showing optical illusion images to the participants and ask them to describe what they see. Here you can find few that you think are the best fit: <https://www.optics4kids.org/optical-illusions>

*The idea is to present an image that tricks the brain into seeing something that is not actually there, or seeing something differently than it actually is. These illusions occur because the brain makes assumptions and predictions about what it is seeing based on past experiences and knowledge, and sometimes those assumptions are incorrect. By presenting an image that goes against those assumptions, the brain is forced to question and reconsider what it is seeing, which can help develop and strengthen critical thinking skills.*





Then, point out how the image is designed to trick the eye and how our brains can sometimes fill in gaps or make assumptions based on incomplete information. This can lead to a discussion about the importance of questioning assumptions and gathering additional information before making judgments or decisions. Use this as an opportunity to practice critical thinking skills by encouraging participants to consider multiple perspectives and possibilities before coming to a conclusion.

Explain how false information, fake news, and misinformation can be spread through social media platforms. Just like how optical illusions can trick our brains into seeing something that is not there, fake news can trick us into believing something that is not true. It is important to question assumptions and gather additional information before making judgments or decisions based on social media posts. Encourage participants to consider multiple perspectives and fact-check information before sharing or reacting to posts on social media. Use this opportunity to highlight the importance of critical thinking skills in today's digital age, where information is easily accessible but not always reliable.

- II. Presentation** (15-20 minutes). Main elements and key characteristics of critical thinking. Why it is important to develop critical thinking? Explain the objective of this activity and the importance of critical thinking in today's world.

Critical thinking is **a kind of thinking in which you question, analyze, interpret, evaluate and make a judgement about what you read, hear, say, or write**. The term critical comes from the Greek word "kritikos" meaning "able to judge or discern".

***The 5 elements of critical thinking are:***

- 1. Knowledge:** The foundation of critical thinking is knowledge of the subject matter. It involves gathering relevant information, facts, and data to form a base for reasoning.
- 2. Comprehension:** Once the knowledge is acquired, it needs to be understood and comprehended. This requires the ability to interpret, summarize, and synthesize information.





3. **Analysis:** Critical thinking involves the ability to analyze information, ideas, and arguments. This requires identifying patterns, relationships, and inconsistencies in the information presented.
4. **Evaluation:** The ability to evaluate information, ideas, and arguments is crucial in critical thinking. This involves assessing the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of the information presented.
5. **Synthesis:** The final element of critical thinking is synthesis, which involves putting together the analyzed, evaluated, and comprehended information to form a new perspective or conclusion. This requires creativity and the ability to think beyond the obvious.

Developing critical thinking skills is important for a variety of reasons, including:

- **Making sound decisions:** Critical thinking allows individuals to evaluate information, assess potential biases or flaws in reasoning, and make informed decisions based on evidence rather than emotion or personal biases.
- **Problem-solving:** By using critical thinking, individuals can identify problems and develop effective solutions. It helps to approach complex issues with a clear and rational mind.
- **Avoiding mistakes:** Critical thinking helps individuals to avoid making hasty decisions that can lead to mistakes. It helps to reduce errors in judgment and improves decision-making.
- **Enhancing communication:** Critical thinking promotes effective communication and enables individuals to express their ideas and opinions in a clear and concise manner.
- **Achieving goals:** Developing critical thinking skills can help individuals to achieve their goals by providing them with the tools to analyze situations, evaluate options, and make strategic decisions.





Main techniques to develop critical thinking are following:

- Asking questions
- Evaluating evidence
- Considering different perspectives

### **III. Developing critical thinking skills** (30-40 minutes).

1. Divide participants into groups of 4-6 people.
2. Assign each group the task of finding and preparing to present 3 different news stories, one of which is fake.
3. Give the groups 30-40 minutes to research and prepare their news stories.
4. After the preparation time is up, each group should present their news stories to the whole group.
5. After each presentation, the rest of the group should guess which news story is fake.
6. Allow time for discussion and debriefing after all groups have presented.

**Note:** Encourage participants to use critical thinking skills during their research and preparation, including questioning sources, checking for bias, and considering multiple perspectives.

### **IV. Conclusion and reflection** (5-15 minutes). Recap the main points of the Critical Thinking activity. Encourage participants to reflect on how they can apply critical thinking skills in their personal and professional lives.

# ACTIVITY 5.6.

## FACT OR OPINION

Another activity that aims to develop critical thinking skills in young people. The first activity focused on recognizing fake news and false realities online, while the second activity focuses on distinguishing between fact and opinion. In today's digital age, it's more important than ever to be able to differentiate between fact and opinion. With the rise of social media and the ease of sharing information online, it can be difficult to discern what is true and what is not. This activity aims to help participants develop critical thinking skills by distinguishing between fact and opinion, and to understand the importance of seeking out reliable sources of information.

 **Participants:** 5 - 30

 **Materials:** Flipchart, markers, printed handouts

 **Time duration:** -

### *Description:*

A fact can be proven either true or false. An opinion is an expression of feeling or point-of-view and cannot be proven true or false

The trainer will create some statements that are either fact or opinion. If it's a fact, participants should check on F and then briefly explain how it can be proven. If it's an opinion, they check on O and briefly explain why they feel it can't be proven. Compare answers with your friends and share your views with each other.





**Instructions:**

1. First create a list of statements that are either fact or opinion.
2. Participants will be given a worksheet with two columns, one for F (fact) and one for O (opinion).
3. Participants will read each statement and determine whether it is a fact or an opinion.
4. If it is a fact, participants will check the F column and briefly explain how it can be proven.
5. If it is an opinion, participants will check the O column and briefly explain why it can't be proven.
6. After completing the worksheet, participants will compare their answers with others in the group and discuss any discrepancies.
7. The trainer can lead a discussion on the importance of verifying information before making judgments or decisions and how this can impact our perceptions of the world.

**Statement:**

-----	F	O
-----	F	O
-----	F	O
-----	F	O
-----	F	O
-----	F	O
-----	F	O
-----	F	O
-----	F	O

**Preparation:** Develop some sentences, or use *our examples*.

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