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# **PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM**

**PROJECT RESULT: “HOW TO STRENGTHEN  
RESILIENCE AND MENTAL WELL-BEING OF  
ADOLESCENTS IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT”  
2022-1-RS01-KA220-SCH-000088133,**

**CO-FINANCED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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**PROJECT RESULT: “HOW TO STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE AND MENTAL WELL-BEING OF ADOLESCENTS IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT” 2022-1-RS01-KA220-SCH-000088133, CO-FINANCED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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# INTRODUCTION

Adolescent mental health is one of the key aspects of overall youth health and well-being. Contemporary research highlights the increasing prevalence of anxiety, depression, feelings of loneliness, and stress among young people, indicating a growing need for systematic and timely prevention. In this context, peer support stands out as a particularly effective approach, as adolescents are often more willing to open up and confide in their peers than in adults.

Studies show that peer support can have a positive impact on young people's emotional resilience, self-confidence, and social skills. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), peer education and support programs can improve not only knowledge, but also attitudes and behaviors related to mental health. This contributes to reducing stigma, enhancing empathy, and increasing young people's willingness to seek help.

Involving peer educators in working with youth also empowers the educators themselves by developing their communication and leadership skills, while simultaneously building a support network among young people in both school and extracurricular communities. This approach contributes to the creation of an environment where mental health care is accessible and supportive—one of the core goals of the program.

At the same time, peer prevention programs have proven to be sustainable models of support, particularly in environments with limited resources or where young people have reduced access to professional help. Active youth participation in the design and implementation of activities makes them not only beneficiaries but also agents of change, further enhancing the effects of both preventive and intervention measures.

# ABOUT THE PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

The goal of this program is to offer practical workshops and tools that can assist peer educators in supporting their peers, while also encouraging schools, teachers, and parents to recognize the value and potential of peer education in promoting mental health prevention.

The program is designed as a set of nine thematic workshops that can be implemented as part of regular school activities or within special programs focused on improving youth mental well-being. Each workshop is centered around a specific aspect of mental health. The aim is to empower peer educators to independently and meaningfully conduct the workshops within their own environments.

The initial workshops introduce participants to the importance of mental health and psychological resilience, followed by practical techniques for recognizing and managing stress and emotions. Special emphasis is placed on developing emotional intelligence and cultivating a critical perspective on the influence of social media. Workshops such as “Free Your Mental Health Through Your Fingertips” and “Music Mood Journal” offer a creative and interactive approach, while the final workshop focuses on strengthening social connection and solidarity among youth.

Each workshop includes a detailed activity description, required materials, and supporting documents.

At the end of the manual, sample evaluation questionnaires are provided. An evaluation questionnaire for individual workshops should be used at the end of each session, while a comprehensive evaluation questionnaire should be completed after the entire Peer Support Program is finished.

At the school level, it is necessary to select a group of students (ideally 20) to participate in the program. It is recommended that a survey be conducted at the school to identify students who are motivated to later independently implement the workshops at the school level. Ideally, each selected student should attend all workshops and complete the entire Peer Support Program.

The Peer Support Program can be implemented by interested and motivated teachers, counselors, and school psychologists with experience in delivering various types of training and programs for adolescents. These professionals will later provide mentorship and support to the trained peer educators as they independently carry out the workshops from the program.

# 1. MENTAL HEALTH, SOURCES OF STRESS, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE IN ADOLESCENTS

## 1.1 Workshop Title: The Importance of Adolescent Mental Health

### **Learning Objectives:**

Understanding the concept of mental health

Understanding the importance of mental health during adolescence

Recognizing signs of impaired mental health

Identifying factors that influence adolescent mental health

Destigmatizing mental health issues and understanding the importance of timely help-seeking

**Duration:** max 90 minutes

**Participants:** Students aged 14–18

**Number of participants:** 20

**Required materials:** Flip chart paper, A4 sheets for group work or digital devices

### **Description (Content, Instructions, Methods):**

#### **Introduction:**

##### **1. Mental health is...**

The facilitator begins the sentence 'Mental health is...' and instructs participants to complete it. Each participant shares their ending of the sentence. The facilitator writes the responses on a poster or flip chart. Then, they summarize the answers into several categories: responses related to emotions, behaviors, and mental health issues/disorders.

The facilitator then presents the definition of mental health – Attachment 1.

#### **Central part:**

##### **1. Why is mental health important?**

The facilitator asks the above question and encourages participants to share their thoughts, which are then recorded. The facilitator summarizes the responses and outlines key reasons for the importance of adolescent mental health – Attachment 2.

##### **2. What are the signs of impaired mental health?**

The facilitator divides participants into 4 groups, with 5 participants each. Instruction: 'Your task is to discuss and list signs that may indicate a young person is facing mental health problems. You have 10 minutes, after which each group will present.' While groups are present, the facilitator records the signs. After the final group, the facilitator summarizes the most common signs –Attachment 3.

### **3. What affects our mental health?**

Participants remain in the same or new groups. Instruction: 'Discuss and list what factors can influence adolescent mental health. You have 10 minutes, then each group will present their list.' The facilitator records responses and encourages discussion to classify factors into categories: internal/external or psychological, social, economic, and environmental. Prompts: Can these factors be ranked? Are all factors equally important? Is there interaction between factors? – Appendix 4.

#### 4. Who can we turn to if we notice signs of impaired mental health?

The facilitator leads a discussion with questions: Who do young people most often turn to? Who else can they talk to? Who can they turn to at school? Why might young people avoid professionals? When is it urgent to seek help? – Appendix 5.

### **Final part:**

Workshop Evaluation

## **Attachments/ Additional Resources**

### **Attachment 1 – Definition of Mental Health**

Mental health is most often defined as a state of well-being in which individuals realize or use their abilities and potential, can cope with daily stress, work productively, and contribute to society. A mentally healthy person is emotionally well, shows positive emotions, and functions well psychologically and socially. Being mentally healthy means more than just being happy—it means functioning effectively.

### **Attachment 2 – The Importance of Mental Health**

1. Good mental health contributes to positive emotional experiences such as happiness, satisfaction, and a sense of fulfillment. It also enables individuals to better manage and regulate their emotions, which improves their relationships with others.
2. There is a strong link between mental and physical health. Chronic stress and negative emotions can weaken the immune system, increase the risk of chronic illnesses and diseases, and even affect recovery from physical conditions.
3. Good mental health allows us to cope with life's challenges and failures. It provides psychological resilience to handle difficult situations and move forward.
4. Adolescents are a particularly vulnerable group when it comes to developing mental health issues. Adolescence is a time of intense personal growth and a sensitive life stage. It includes behaviors like experimenting, occasional risk-taking, breaking social norms, increased curiosity, and trying out new things—all of which are part of forming identity, but carry certain risks. No other life period involves as much risky behavior as

adolescence.

The worsening state of adolescent mental health globally is a major concern. Statistics show that 20% of young people aged 16–25 have a diagnosable mental disorder, about half of all mental disorders appear before age 14, and as many as three-quarters begin before age 24. This makes promoting and preserving adolescent mental health especially important.

### **Attachment 3 – Signs of Impaired Mental Health**

Adolescents dealing with mental health challenges may not always show obvious signs. Often, their inner struggles remain hidden from others. However, some signs may indicate that a young person is experiencing difficulties:

- Persistent sadness, apathy, or low energy (lasting more than 2 weeks)
- Excessive worry or overwhelming fear (with or without physical symptoms such as sweaty palms, rapid heartbeat, or fast breathing)
- Frequent mood swings
- Self-harm or aggression toward others
- Intense conflicts or arguments with others
- Social withdrawal
- Irritability and impulsiveness
- Difficulty maintaining focus or being easily distracted
- Eating problems (including intentional starvation or vomiting)
- Use of psychoactive substances

### **Attachment 4 – Factors That Affect Mental Health**

Factors that may influence adolescent mental health include:

- Poor physical health
- Substance abuse
- Lack of physical activity
- Lack of sleep
- Unhealthy diet
- Long-term low mood
- Negative self-image
- Academic failure
- Dropping out of school
- Transitioning to a new school level
- Separation from parents
- Strained relationships with family and/or friends

- Prejudice and discrimination
- Violence in the family, school, or community
- Stressful or traumatic experiences (e.g. death of a loved one, relocation, car accidents, terrorist attacks, mass shootings, hostage crises, natural disasters like floods or earthquakes)
- Environmental factors: overcrowding, air/water/soil pollution, global warming

### **Attachment 5 – Who to Turn to for Help**

Research across different countries shows that young people most often turn to friends for help, and seek advice on social media. Due to stigma and prejudice, many youth hide their problems and avoid seeking professional help, believing that their issues are a sign of weakness.

It is crucial to emphasize the importance of seeking timely help and talking about one's problems—not only with peers but also with parents, teachers, psychologists, family doctors, psychiatrists, and other professionals.

#### **In situations such as:**

- Having suicidal thoughts or attempts
- Self-harming or harming others
- Life-threatening situations caused by substance use

...young people, or those around them, should immediately seek professional help from psychologists or psychiatrists.

## **1.2. Workshop Title: WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE AND HOW TO ENHANCE IT?**

### **Learning objectives:**

Understanding the concept of psychological resilience and its importance for mental health

Recognizing factors influencing psychological resilience

Understanding the impact of protective and risk factors on psychological resilience

How can psychological resilience be developed?

Understanding the importance of nurturing a positive relationship with oneself

**Duration of activity:** up to 90 minutes

**Participants:** students aged 14 to 18

**Number of participants:** 20

**Required materials:** flip chart paper, A4 papers for small group work or digital devices

### **Description (Content, Instructions, Methods):**

#### **Introduction part**

The facilitator introduces the participants to the workshop objectives and then asks them what their first association is when they hear the term “psychological resilience”. The facilitator records participants’ responses, summarizes them, and concludes that psychological resilience or resilience is a term accepted in psychological practice, similar to psychological immunity. It is what keeps us going when circumstances are tough.

#### **Central part:**

##### **1. Profile of a psychologically resilient person**

The facilitator divides participants into 4 smaller groups with an equal number of participants and gives them instructions for group work:

- Describe a person whom you consider resilient or psychologically resilient.

- What are their qualities?
- How do they behave?
- How do they react in challenging situations?
- What is their mood like?
- What are their relationships like with others/adults and/or peers?

Each group has 10 minutes for their discussion, after which each group will present their findings. While the groups present, the facilitator records responses, categorizes them, and summarizes, explaining further. (See Appendix 1)

## **2. Protective and risk factors of psychological resilience**

Before giving instructions for small group work, the facilitator explains the relationship between risk and protective factors influencing psychological resilience. (See Appendix 2)

Participants remain in small groups, and the facilitator gives the following work instruction: “Within your small groups, discuss the factors that strengthen a young person’s psychological resilience and protect them, as well as the risk factors that could threaten or diminish adolescents’ psychological resilience. Record the most important points, which you will later present to the others. You have 15 minutes for this task.” Each group presents their findings, and the facilitator summarizes the protective and risk factors, citing the most commonly mentioned ones in psychological literature. (See Appendix 3)

## **3. How can you develop your psychological resilience and who can help you?**

Participants remain in small groups and have 15 minutes to propose ways to develop psychological resilience and identify who can assist them in this process. After the group work time expires, each group presents their findings. The facilitator summarizes the responses (Appendix 4) and encourages discussion by asking them to share their understanding of the methods outlined in the American Psychological Association’s handbook “The Road to Resilience.”

## **4. How can we be nurturing and kind to ourselves?**

The facilitator encourages discussion and asks questions to the participants:

- What does it mean to be nurturing and kind to yourself?
- What actions, methods, activities can young people apply daily?
- How do these actions affect psychological resilience?

The facilitator summarizes using Appendix 5.

## **Final part:**

Evaluation of the workshop

## **Attachments/additional sources:**

### **Attachment 1:**

Psychological resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, and significant sources of stress.

When someone is psychologically resilient, it does not mean they do not experience difficulties and unpleasant emotions (sadness, fear, disappointment, anger, etc.). Emotional pain and sadness are common to people who have experienced and survived difficult circumstances or events in their lives. The path to psychological resilience often involves significant emotional difficulties.

### **Attachment 2:**

Psychological resilience is also characterized by the relationship between risk and protective factors that occur in various areas of life - family, school environment, peer group, social community, and personality itself. Risk factors increase the likelihood of problematic behaviors, while protective factors protect individuals by mitigating or eliminating the influence of risk. The significant difference between these two groups of factors is that protective factors protect us from entering stressful situations, while psychological resilience enables adequate coping with difficulties when they arise.

### **Attachments 3:**

Positive factors influencing psychological resilience, as mapped in research, include intellectual abilities, temperament, positive self-view, faith, a positive outlook on life, emotional stability, good self-regulation, sense of humor, self-awareness, independence, initiative-taking, creativity, morality. Relationships also play a significant role in resilience formation and maintenance. Some of the key factors related to relationships that influence the formation of psychological resilience include having accessible, nurturing adults while growing up. Effective parenting is also an important factor, as well as being surrounded by friendly peers who respect rules, and the collective efficacy of the community in which one lives. Some research has shown that a child needs to be in frequent contact with at least 12 different adults to build resilience. This number of adults provides sufficient diversity of models that a child can adopt, which later allows for a greater number of different ways to react in various situations.

Risk factors are those that increase the likelihood of an unfavorable outcome. They include negative experiences such as substance abuse and trauma exposure, such as experience of family

or peer violence. In addition to these obvious factors, risks also include less noticeable factors that have cumulative effect, such as stress, poor health, poor education, poor school performance.

If there are risk factors, this does not automatically mean that resilience is bad or that you are doomed to failure. Risk factors are inevitable. Moreover, resilient people often accept the fact that life is not fair, that bad things happen to everyone, and that therefore they can also happen to them. It is necessary for challenges to exist for us to be able to grow and realize some of our potential. Excessive “comfort”, although pleasant in the short term, leads to stagnation and dissatisfaction in the long term.

Family, peers, school, and the broader community can be risky but also protective factors.

Factors that contribute to psychological resilience (resiliency):

- nurturing and supportive relationships within and outside the family; a strong network of social support is the most influential factor in enhancing psychological resilience and strengthening psychological immunity
- capacity to make realistic plans and take steps toward their implementation.
- positive self-image and belief in one's strengths and abilities.
- communication skills and problem-solving abilities.
- capacity to manage strong emotions and impulses (emotional intelligence).

Psychological resilience is not innate and we are not born with it. It can be practiced and developed.

#### **Attachment 4:**

In the APA (American Psychological Association) handbook "The Road to Resilience", ten ways to build and nurture psychological resilience are cited:

1. Build good relationships with people
2. Do not see crises as problems that are impossible to overcome
3. Accept that change is an inevitable part of life
4. Go to your goals
5. Take steps to solve problems
6. View crises as opportunities to better understand yourself
7. Nurture a positive self-image
8. Look at the situation in a broader context

9. Maintain hope and optimism
10. Be kind and nurturing to yourself.

**Attachment 5:**

Ways we can be kind to ourselves:

paying attention to our emotions,

resting,

breathing exercises,

physical activity,

emotional hygiene,

advocating for ourselves and our needs,

maintaining personal boundaries,

accepting our vulnerability and imperfections,

nurturing joy and optimism,

laughter, dreaming.

### **1.3. Workshop title: RECOGNIZE YOUR STRESS: WHAT'S BOTHERING ME AND WHAT WILL I DO ABOUT IT?**

#### **Learning objectives:**

- Understanding the concept of stress and its impact on students' health and well-being
- Identifying sources of stress in school and their effects on students
- Developing self-awareness and self-regulation skills regarding stressful situations
- Exploring stress management strategies and applying them

**Duration:** Up to 90 minutes

**Participants:** Students aged 14-18

**Number of participants:** 20

#### **Materials needed:**

- Tangram shapes
- Stickers
- Papers of different colors and markers/pencils for each student
- Flip chart or board for students to write their thoughts and ideas
- Media device (phone, laptop, projector) for research and presentation of slides/videos

**Description** (content, instructions, methods):

#### **1.Introduction (15 minutes)**

On a scale of 1-10, rate your current stress level, with 1 indicating you are not stressed and 10 indicating the highest level of stress.

Students are tasked with creating a figure (animal, object, person, number, letter, etc.) from given shapes, whatever makes sense to them, yet remains recognizable (Appendix 1)

After the allotted time and presentation of their work, the workshop facilitator asks questions such as:

- Did you enjoy the activity?
- What was your goal?

- Did you understand the instructions?
- How did you come up with your idea?
- Did you collaborate with others?
- Did you find it enjoyable while working?
- What did you like/dislike?
- What were your expectations?

## **2. Central part (60 minutes)**

### **Stress... is for me?**

The facilitator asks students about the sources of stress in school. Students write down their answers on stickers, one answer per sticker. Each student can use as many stickers as they want. The facilitator then collects the stickers, categorizes the responses, and summarizes them into categories like:

- Assessment
- Teachers (their methods and approaches)
- Peer relationships
- Expectations of parents regarding students' achievements

The facilitator summarizes the students' responses and briefly explains what stress is and why it is important to understand its sources and impact on us.

### **Researching stress sources**

Brief explanation of stress and why it's important to understand its sources and impact on us (Appendix 2)

- Students are divided into smaller groups to explore different identified sources of stress in school (assessment, peer relationships, teachers, parental expectations). Each group selects one stress source for exploration. They have access to mobile phones and/or laptops but can also arrive at conclusions through discussion and exchange of opinions. Questions to offer answers to:
  - Is the one they picked stressful or not?
  - Why is it stressful or not?
  - How common is this source of stress?
  - What are their expectations for overcoming such stress?
  - Can they control such situations?
- Each group presents their findings recorded on differently colored papers placed on a flip chart or board and gives a brief oral summary of their research.

- Group discussion: With the facilitator's help, a discussion develops on the results of all groups and draws a common conclusion (direct the discussion towards recognizing the importance of developing stress management skills and overcoming stress).

### **Development of stress management skills**

- Start with questions like:
  - What do you do when you're stressed?
  - Do you talk to someone?
  - Do you have a strategy, method, model that you usually apply to overcome stressful situations?
- The facilitator summarizes the answers by providing examples of methods and self-help techniques: breathing techniques, progressive muscle relaxation, mindfulness techniques... (students will also receive material related to these techniques at the end of the workshop, so they can apply them later – Appendix 3). The facilitator can demonstrate these techniques.
- Presentation of slides or videos presenting different strategies for stress management, such as deep breathing, physical activity, meditation, engaging in hobbies or favorite activities (music, dance, organizing living space, artistic expression...), conversation, etc.
- Discussion on how each of these strategies can be applied in different situations (insist on situations perceived by participants as most critical when it comes to stress).

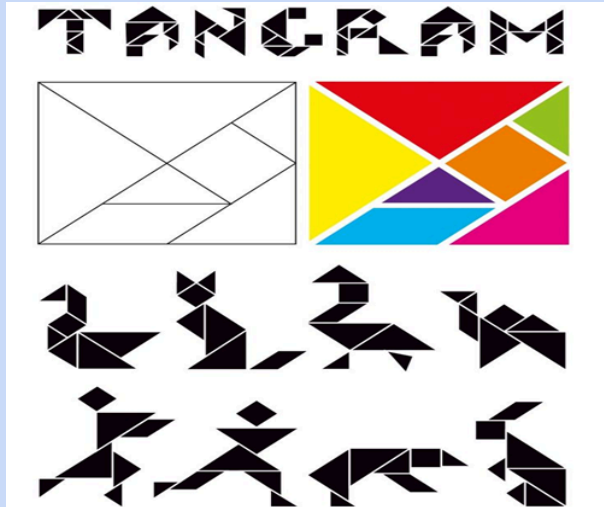
### **3. Final part (15 minutes):**

-On a scale of 1 to 10, did you feel any less stressed than you were at the beginning of the workshop?

-Workshop evaluation

### **Attachments/Additional resources:**

#### **Attachment 1: Tangram**



## Attachment 2: Brief material on stress and stressors

Stress is your body and mind's reaction to challenges or pressures in your life. This reaction can be physical, emotional, or psychological. It's important to understand the sources of stress because they can impact your health and well-being.

Understanding stressors helps us learn how to cope with them and develop strategies to manage stress. Stress can lead to various health problems such as anxiety, depression, sleep issues, and physical illnesses. Therefore, it's important to be aware of our stress and learn how to control and reduce it.

Stressors can be diverse and vary from person to person. Common stressors for young people often include:

- *school and education*: grading, exams, homework, choosing a school or college
- *family*: family conflicts, divorced parents, changes in the household (moving, arrival of a new family member)
- *social life and friends*: peer relationships, friendship problems, adapting to social norms and expectations
- *finances*: lack of money, financial pressures and expectations, concerns about scholarships
- *health and personal issues*: health problems, concerns about appearance, loss of a close person

These stressors can significantly impact a young person's well-being and should be addressed with appropriate support and coping strategies

## Attachment 3: Self-help techniques

### *Deep breathing exercises*

This procedure reduces restlessness, fears, unpleasant bodily sensations such as palpitations and rapid heartbeat, a feeling of “pressure in the chest”, trembling, discomfort in the stomach, etc. It is performed as follows:

The air is breathed in slowly through the nose (the mouth is closed). While inhaling air, the person needs to concentrate on how the air slowly enters the body and fills the lungs. The air should be inhaled enough to feel the initial tension in the lungs, not too much, that is, the lungs should not be filled with air so much that it becomes an unpleasant feeling. The inhaled air should be held for 5 seconds. After that, we begin to exhale air through the mouth counting to 10 slowly.

Important notes:

- do not release the air suddenly but slowly, as if it were sliding
- position the mouth during exhalation as when we want to whistle
- while the air leaves the lungs, we concentrate on it and the pleasant feeling of relaxation and relief that arises on that occasion
- exhalation can end before we count to 10, but we do not take the next breath until we have finished counting.
- a new cycle begins with a new inhalation, repeated for 5 minutes.

When we practically apply this method, we repeat the cycle until we feel a reduction in complaints.

### *Slow breathing exercise*

The procedure is applied most often in states of fear when rapid breathing occurs as an accompanying symptom. Rapid breathing can lead to disturbances in the balance of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the body and consequently to metabolic changes. Such changes in metabolism contribute to the emergence of panic. By preventing rapid breathing, the possibility of severe fear and panic is reduced.

The procedure is as follows: Hold your breath for 10 seconds. It is important to note that you only need to stop your breath (without taking in or expelling air from your lungs - that means a neutral position). After that continue breathing, but by inhaling and exhaling for three seconds each:

inhale (3 sec), exhale (3 sec), inhale (3 sec), exhale (3 sec), inhale (3 sec), exhale (3 sec) etc.

After one minute, you stop your breathing again for about 10 seconds and continue with the slow breathing exercise.

You repeat the described one-minute cycle 5 times.

### *Abdominal breathing*

Abdominal breathing is considered much better and more useful than chest breathing, given that when we breathe dominantly with the stomach, the lungs are filled with air and a greater amount of oxygen enters our body. This exercise is useful for everyone, but especially for those who feel faint during a fear attack.

One hand is placed on the stomach and the other on the chest (above the sternum). Breathing is correct if the hand that is placed on the stomach rises more during inhalation than the other hand that is on the chest. This technique should be practiced as often as possible.

### *Progressive muscle relaxation*

Progressive muscle relaxation is a technique that anyone can use in moments of great stress or nervousness.

Muscle aches, tension, and stiffness are common symptoms brought on by stress and anxiety. The technique of progressive muscle relaxation has the opposite effect on the body, causing a relaxation reaction, lowering the heart rate, calming the mind and reducing body tension. By relaxing the body, one can get rid of anxious thoughts and feelings.

#### Progressive muscle relaxation step-by-step

First step: Make yourself comfortable. You don't have to lie down to do progressive muscle relaxation, you can also sit in a chair. The only important thing is that no one disturbs you. Close your eyes if that makes you more comfortable.

Second step: Breathe in deeply through your nose, feeling your belly rise as you fill your diaphragm with air. Then slowly exhale through the mouth, pulling the belly towards the spine. Repeat three to five times.

The third step: Starting at the feet, tense and release the muscles. Bend your toes and press your heels toward the ground. Squeeze firmly a few times, then relax. Now bend your feet, pulling your toes towards you. Hold for a few seconds, then release.

The fourth step: Continue to contract and relax each muscle group. Go in this order: legs, glutes, stomach, back, arms, shoulders, neck and face. Try to tighten each muscle group for a few breaths, then slowly release.

Repeat any areas where you feel particular stiffness or tension.

The fifth step: Finish the exercise with proper breathing. Notice how calmer and more relaxed you feel. The exercise should last about twenty minutes.

To be able to rely on this technique when you need it (when you are in a stressful or anxiety-provoking situation), you need to learn how to perform it when you are not under pressure. Practice progressive muscle relaxation several times a week to become aware of what it feels like to feel relaxed. Understanding this feeling can help you release tension more easily when stress and anxiety rise.

## **2. EMOTIONS AND EMOTIONAL LITERACY OF ADOLESCENTS**

### **2.1. Workshop title: Emotional Literacy and Emotional Intelligence for Mental Health**

#### **Learning objectives:**

Participants will understand what emotional literacy and emotional intelligence are

Participants will practice recognizing and naming their own emotions.

Participants will notice emotions in others and develop empathy.

Participants will develop a positive attitude towards expressing emotions.

**Activity duration:** max 90 minutes

**Participants:** students aged 14-18

**Required materials:** Attachment No. 1 Situation cards, Attachment No. 2 List of “YOU-messages”, Attachment No. 3 template with questions for keeping an “Emotional Diary”.

#### **Introduction (15 minutes)**

Before we start the activities, I want us to think together – how often do we stop and ask ourselves: “What am I feeling right now?” Emotions are an integral part of our everyday. Yet, we often do not recognize them, do not understand them, or suppress them. That is why it is important to talk about emotional literacy – the ability to recognize, name and healthily express our feelings. And when we build on this by understanding the emotions of others, managing our reactions, and nurturing good relationships, we arrive at emotional intelligence – a broader concept that encompasses the understanding, control, and use of emotions in everyday life. After this introduction, the facilitator asks the participants questions: "Which emotion is easiest for you to recognize?", "Which is easiest and which is hardest to express?", "Have you ever tried to hide a feeling - why, what happened?", "Have we been taught that we are allowed to show some emotions and not others?"...

#### **Middle part: (60 minutes)**

### **1. Activity: Circle of emotions (15 minutes)**

The facilitator sets up the “Circle of emotions” (a table or poster with basic and complex emotions). Basic emotions: joy, sadness, fear, anger, surprise, disgust. Complex emotions: pleasure, nostalgia, jealousy, envy, gratitude, pride, guilt, shame, insult, disappointment, security. Participants receive slips of paper or cards with situations - Attachment 1. The task is to connect the situation with the emotion and share in the circle what they would feel and why.

### **2. Activity: Emotions on the face (10-15 minutes)**

Divide participants into pairs. One participant shows an emotion with facial expressions and gestures, without speaking. The other participant guesses and explains: “I think you feel... because you look like...”, and then the pair swaps roles.

### **3. Activity: “I messages” instead of “You messages” (15 minutes)**

The facilitator explains the difference between “You messages” (e.g., “You always ignore me!”) and “I messages” (“I feel hurt when you ignore me, because it is important for me that you hear me.”). “You messages” are often used in everyday communication, but they do not lead to recognition and expression of one’s own emotions, some to criticism, accusations, belittling of the other party, and their use can lead to damaged relationships and conflict with the other person. Therefore, it is important to practice using “I messages”. Participants choose several situations from the list that they should formulate in an “I message”. Attachment number 2 - "You-message" list. Participants can do this activity in smaller groups of 4-5 participants.

### **4. Activity: Emotional diary (10-15 minutes)**

Participants receive a template with questions for keeping an "Emotional diary" that they should fill out:

Which emotion did I feel the strongest today?

What caused it?

How did I react?

What could I do differently next time?

When they have finished filling it out, the facilitator can ask someone who wants to read their answers and explain to the participants that this template, i.e. questions, can be used at the end of

each day to practice recognizing and naming their own emotions, which will help them to better recognize the emotions of other people in their environment.

**Final part: Workshop evaluation (10-15 minutes)**

**Attachments:**

**Attachment No. 1 Situation Cards**

1. My friend didn't reply to my message.
2. My teacher praised me in front of the class.
3. Someone was rude to me in the group.
4. I suddenly received a gift.
5. A planned activity was canceled.
6. Someone said something that made me laugh.
7. I lost something important.
8. My family gave me a surprise.
9. Someone criticized my work.
10. A friend excluded me from a game.

**Attachment No. 2 List of “YOU-messages”**

“You never listen to me!”

“You are selfish.”

“Everything always has to be your way!”

“There is no way I can talk to you!”

“You are just in my way!”

“You ruined everything!”

“You are annoying me on purpose!”

“You are to blame for everything!”

“Why are you so frivolous?”

“You are late again, as always!”

**Attachment No. 3 template with questions for keeping an “Emotional Diary”:**

What emotion did I feel most strongly today?

What caused it?

How did I react?

What could I do differently next time?

## 2.2 Workshop title: Developing Emotional Intelligence

### Learning objectives:

- Understanding what emotional intelligence is and why it is important.
- Developing self-awareness and the ability to recognize one's own emotions.
- Understanding self-regulation and personal responsibility in responding
- Encouraging empathy and understanding of others.
- Identifying one's strengths in emotional intelligence

**Duration of activity:** max 90 minutes

**Participants:** students aged 14-18

**Required materials:** Attachment No. 1-Cards with descriptions of everyday situations, Attachment No. 2- My reaction - my choice, Attachment No. 3 - In someone else's shoes, Attachment No. 4 - My emotional superpower.

### Introductory part: What do I feel? (15 min)

Participants draw cards with descriptions of everyday situations (Attachment No. 1), read them, and answer: "In this situation I would feel... because..." Other participants comment on whether they would feel the same or differently in such a situation, and why?

### Central part: (60 min)

#### Activity 1: My reaction - my choice (20 min)

The facilitator instructs the participants that each of them will receive material for individual work (Attachment No. 2. My reaction - my choice). The material lists different situations that can occur in everyday life. The participants' task is to choose at least 3 situations from the list, and then fill in the table by describing their usual (spontaneous) reaction and one different, thought-out reaction, i.e., for each selected situation, how they could react differently. They have 10 minutes for individual work, and then the students read which situations they chose and how they described their usual and deliberate reactions. The facilitator encourages discussion about possible differences in the ways students react to the same selected situations, about the difference between spontaneous and self-regulated reactions, and about the consequences that spontaneous and self-regulated reactions have on relationships with other people.

#### Activity 2: In someone else's shoes (20 min)

Participants are divided into smaller groups (4-5 participants). Each group draws one situation - a scenario (Appendix no. 3 - In someone else's shoes) Each scenario describes an emotionally challenging situation from the life of a teenager, and the task of the participants is to: imagine

how that person feels, identify their emotions, think about how they can support that person. When they finish, each group presents. The other groups follow, comment, and make their suggestions...

### **Activity 3: My Emotional Superpower (20 min)**

The facilitator hands out Attachment No. 4 - My Emotional Superpower to the participants and gives instructions for the work: "Think about a time when you acted like an emotional hero – when you stayed calm, supported someone, or acted wisely in an emotionally challenging situation. In the template below, write down your emotional superpower and give a specific example of when you used it".

My emotional superpower is:

Description of a situation when I used it:

### **Final part (15 min)**

1. Facilitator's summary of what emotional intelligence encompasses and why it is important to develop it: Emotional intelligence affects our relationships, mental health and self-confidence, and success. It helps us to understand ourselves better, which will make it easier for us to understand others. When we learn to understand ourselves and others, we are truly strong. An emotionally intelligent person recognizes their emotions, controls and chooses how they react emotionally, can "put themselves in someone else's shoes" and understand how others feel, knows how to solve problems constructively, is assertive and confident - able to say what they feel and think, without fear or aggression, and recognizes their qualities, i.e. their emotional superpowers.

2. Workshop evaluation

## **ATTACHMENTS**

### **Attachment 1: Cards with everyday situations**

You sent a message to a friend, but he/she doesn't reply all day.

The teacher praised you in front of the whole class.

A friend told you a secret and asked you not to tell anyone.

Your classmates formed a group without you.

You got a bad grade on a test even though you tried your best.

Someone left a note in your backpack with a nice message on it, but without a signature.

A classmate tore up your notebook as a joke, but you didn't find it funny.

You heard someone say nasty things about you when they thought you weren't listening.

Your best friend won a prize that you wanted too.

You forgot to learn your lesson and were called out in front of the whole class.

You planned a class trip, but it was canceled due to bad weather.

Your friend told you, "You're the best person I know."

Someone posted an inappropriate photo of you on social media without your permission.

There was a rumor about you at school that wasn't true.

Your friends threw you a birthday surprise.

**Attachment 2: My reaction - my choice**

Situation description:

1. A friend said something to you that hurt you in front of others.
2. You got a bad grade, even though you studied and expected a better result.
3. Someone laughs while you are presenting something in front of the class.
4. A friend promised something important, but forgot.
5. You see someone whispering and looking in your direction – it seems like they are gossiping.
6. You participated in a group project, but someone else got all the praise.
7. Someone wrote something negative about you in a comment on a social network.
8. Your teacher criticized you for something you did not do.
9. A friend has excluded you from a Viber/social network group without explanation.
10. Someone makes fun of you because of your appearance or the way you speak.

Reaction table

| Situation number | How I would usually react | How could I react differently |
|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                  |                           |                               |
|                  |                           |                               |
|                  |                           |                               |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Attachment 3: In Someone Else's Shoes**

Scenario 1: Ivana is a new student in the class. For weeks, she has been trying to get involved in society, but no one has invited her to join the group that the class has on the social network, no one wants to sit next to her. during recess, she usually stands alone.

Scenario 2: Petar recently found out that his parents are getting divorced. He often seems thoughtful, but sometimes reacts rudely for no reason. He has stopped coming to extracurricular activities and talks less with the students in the class.

Scenario 3: Marija forgot the line at the main rehearsal for the school play, and everyone started laughing. After that, she did not come to school for several days and did not even respond to messages sent to her by her friends.

Scenario 4: Aleksandar is an excellent student, but lately he has been complaining more and more often that he can no longer meet the expectations of his parents and teachers. She gets all A's, but she seems exhausted and has no desire to socialize.

Scenario 5: Jelena is not going on the field trip because her family doesn't have money. She hasn't told anyone directly, and she told her friends that she doesn't want to go. Some students say that she's trying to be important, and that's why she doesn't want to go.

Scenario 6: Someone posted a photo montage of Nikola in a social media group, which is why they started teasing him. Because of that, he feels very uncomfortable when he comes to school, thinks that everyone is just talking about it and making fun of him, he's not in the same mood as before, he isolates himself, and he tells his best friend that he doesn't want to go to this school anymore.

**Attachment 4: My Emotional Superpower**

Student Instructions:

Think about a time when you acted like an emotional hero – when you stayed calm, supported someone, or acted wisely in an emotional situation. Below, write your emotional superpower and give a specific example of when you used it.

My emotional superpower is:

Description of the situation when I used it:

# 3. DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND MENTAL HEALTH

## 3.1 Workshop Title: Speak and Learn About the Effects of Social Media

### Learning Objectives:

- Identify the effects of social media on the mental health of young people
- Raise awareness about the importance of balanced social media use
- Self-assess the impact of social media on one's mental health

**Duration:** Max 90 minutes

**Participants:** Students aged 14–18

**Number of Participants:** 20

**Required Materials:** Scissors, a set of colored pencils (red, orange, yellow, green) for each participant, a set of 20 cards with descriptions of social media effects, a coloring template, and a box.

### Workshop Material Preparation:

Before the workshop, participants prepared the necessary materials – cards with descriptions of the effects of social media on the mental health of young people. Each participant prepared one card describing a specific effect, resulting in a total of 20 cards with different descriptions. Before the workshop begins, the facilitator checks that the cards include various effects of social media on youth mental health. Additionally, a coloring template containing 20 numbered fields (1–20) must be printed for each participant.

### Workshop Flow:

Inside the box, there are 20 cards with different descriptions of how social media affects the mental health of young people.

A participant draws one card from the box and tries to explain what is written through gestures, without speaking and without showing the card to others (1 minute).

If unsuccessful, the participant then attempts to verbally explain the meaning of the sentence on the card, but without using any of the specific words written on it (1 minute).

The facilitator provides help if necessary.

Once the group guesses what is written on the card, each participant uses their own coloring template to self-assess by coloring the field marked with the number of the drawn statement, according to the level of impact on their own mental health.

Red represents a strong impact

Orange represents a moderate impact

Yellow represents a slight impact

Green indicates that the statement has no impact on their mental health

This process is repeated until each participant has drawn one card from the box.

### **Final Part:**

The facilitator collects the self-assessment templates and, together with the participants, analyzes the results of the self-assessed impact of social media on students' mental health. Based on the results, the facilitator suggests solutions to potential problems using scientific approaches and encourages participants to propose their possible solutions.

Workshop evaluation

## 3.2 Workshop Title: Relieve Your Mental Health With Fingers

### Learning Objectives:

Demonstrate finger exercises that can reduce the negative impact of excessive use of social media and digital devices.

**Duration:** 60 minutes

**Participants:** Students aged 14–18

**Number of Participants:** 20

**Required Materials:** A quiet and comfortable environment

### Introduction:

In the introduction, the facilitator explains to the participants that the workshop will include demonstrations of 5 exercises for the brain and mental health. These exercises involve finger movements, help improve mental well-being, and can significantly increase feelings of relaxation. They also stimulate the pituitary gland, encouraging the release of mood-enhancing hormones. The exercises include breathing techniques that further contribute to calmness and improve focus and concentration. Additionally, they help reduce stress caused by excessive use of social media and digital devices.

### Central Part: Exercise Demonstration

- **First Exercise (30 seconds):**  
Gently press the front and back of your thumb's nail using the fingers of the other hand. The pressure should be light, without too much force.
- **Second Exercise (30 seconds):**  
Similar to the first exercise, but this time, apply pressure to the sides of the thumb's nail.
- **Third Exercise (10 repetitions):**  
Place your palms together, with the middle fingers at eye level, about 30 cm apart. Inhale deeply through your nose. As you exhale, move your palms apart, keeping the fingertips touching.
- **Fourth Exercise (10 repetitions):**  
Hold your hands in front of your face, palms facing you. Keep the pinky fingers and the outer edges of your hands together. As you inhale, fold your fingers into a fist starting with the thumb. As you exhale, unfold them in the same order.
- **Fifth Exercise (10 repetitions):**  
Make a fist with one hand, leaving the thumb outside. Hold the other hand upright, palm

facing you, with fingers resting on the fist of the first hand. With each exhale, switch the position of the hands.

After the demonstration, participants perform the exercises independently, with the facilitator providing guidance and support.

**Final Part:**

- The facilitator explains that these exercises can be done every morning to improve concentration, reduce stress, and prepare for a productive school day.
- Workshop evaluation

# **4. MUSIC AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH: STRENGTHENING CONNECTION AND SOLIDARITY AMONG YOUTH**

## **4.1 Workshop Title: The Impact of Music on Youth Mental Well-being – Mood Music Journal**

### **Learning Objectives:**

By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to identify and express at least five different emotions in response to various musical compositions.

While maintaining a music journal, adolescents will improve their expressive writing skills, reflected by a 20% increase in the use of descriptive language and emotional vocabulary in their entries.

**Duration:** 60 minutes

**Participants:** Students aged 14–18

**Number of Participants:** 20 students

### **Required Materials:**

- A diverse playlist of songs
- Journals or digital writing tools
- Speakers or headphones for listening to music

### **Activity Description – Step by Step**

#### **Introduction part**

#### **Playlist Preparation:**

Create a playlist with songs from various genres and moods (e.g., classical, pop, rock, instrumental, calming music).

#### **Central Part**

**Mood Music Journal:**

Participants are provided with journals or digital tools for writing.

A calm, comfortable, and focused environment is created for listening and writing.

The facilitator plays one song at a time from the playlist, allowing students to focus and immerse themselves in the music. After each song, students write their reflections. These include emotional reactions, memories the music evokes, and general thoughts about the song.

**Sharing and Discussion:**

Participants are divided into pairs or small groups to share their reflections and thoughts.

A group discussion follows about how different types of music affect their emotions and mental well-being.

**Final Part**

- Participants analyze patterns in their emotional reactions to different music styles. The group discusses how music can be used to manage emotions and moods in daily life.
- Workshop evaluation

**Additional Resources – Playlist:**

- *Clair de Lune* – Claude Debussy
- *River Flows in You* – Yiruma
- *Happy* – Pharrell Williams
- *Walking on Sunshine* – Katrina and the Waves
- *Fix You* – Coldplay
- *Yesterday* – The Beatles
- *Fight Song* – Rachel Platten
- *Stronger* – Kanye West
- *Perfect* – Ed Sheeran
- *All of Me* – John Legend

## 4.2 Workshop Title: Building Bridges – Strengthening Connection and Solidarity

### Learning Objectives:

By the end of the workshop, students will be able to:

- Explore the importance of connection, community, and solidarity in their lives and within their community
- Develop cooperation and empathy through creative and reflective activities
- Acquire skills for building stronger relationships and promoting unity within groups

**Duration:** 45–60 minutes

**Participants:** Students aged 14–18

**Number of Participants:** 20 students

### Required Materials:

- Paper and markers for group brainstorming or poster creation
- Optional: Tokens or stickers for the team activity

### Activity Description – Step by Step

#### Introductory Part – “Two Truths and One Connection” (10 minutes)

Each student shares two true things about themselves and one thing that connects them with others (e.g., hobbies, values, shared experiences, etc.). The facilitator supports students if needed to help them identify what connects them to others.

#### Central Part – “Together We’re Stronger” Challenge (25–35 minutes)

##### 1. Activity: Team-building Game (10–15 minutes):

**Scenario:** “A new student has arrived at your school and feels isolated. Your team needs to come up with a plan to include them and help them feel accepted.”

Students are divided into groups of 4–5 members and brainstorm solutions (e.g., organizing an event, peer mentoring systems, creating an inclusive space).

##### 2. Activity: Creative Reflection (15–20 minutes):

Groups turn their plans into a visual representation: a mini-poster, diagram, or short skit.

Each group presents their idea to the others. The facilitator encourages discussion about the presented ideas.

#### Final Part (15 minutes)

- Group discussion on how everyday actions can promote solidarity and connection in the classroom and school
- Each student writes a personal commitment aimed at strengthening connection and solidarity in their school community
- Workshop evaluation

# Evaluation Questionnaires

## 1. Sample Evaluation Questionnaire for Workshops

Please rate the quality of the listed aspects of the workshop on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is the lowest and 4 is the highest score. Circle the appropriate number for each statement.

The workshop topic is important for adolescents

1 2 3 4

The way the topic was presented is good and suitable for young people

1 2 3 4

The content of the workshop is useful and applicable for youth

1 2 3 4

The knowledge I gained will be useful in my work with other young people as a peer educator

1 2 3 4

The facilitator's approach made learning easier

1 2 3 4

The atmosphere in the workshop was encouraging and supportive

1 2 3 4

Would you change anything about the workshop? YES / NO (circle one)

If your answer is yes, please specify what you would change:

## **2. Sample Evaluation Questionnaire for the Peer Support Program**

Dear Participants,

Please answer the following questions honestly to design the final version of the Peer Support Program.

Please rate the program as a whole using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means “not useful at all” and 5 means “extremely useful and applicable”. Circle the appropriate number for each statement.

Overall program rating

1 2 3 4 5

Work of the program leader

1 2 3 4 5

Usefulness of the content for young people

1 2 3 4 5

Interestingness of the content for young people

1 2 3 4 5

Workshop methodology

1 2 3 4 5

Topics covered by the program

1 2 3 4 5

Participating in the program helped me feel prepared to work with other young people as a peer educator

1 2 3 4 5

Atmosphere in the group

1 2 3 4 5

Working conditions

1 2 3 4 5

What did you like the most?

What did you like the least?

Your suggestions and recommendations:





## **DISCLAIMER**

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