

Relationships in a Project

How to Support Youth in a Group Process
Handbook for Educators





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INTRODUCTION

Within every working group, including a student team carrying out an educational process, a **group process** takes place.

A group process involves all of the interactions and phenomena which occur between people who are part of one group; the mutual likes and dislikes, the uncertainty at the beginning when the participants do not know each other, divisions in the team when a conflict takes place, and the desire to belong to a group or identify with it. All of these phenomena are linked to the group process.

The details of this process are beyond your control but it is up to you whether you will try to facilitate it consciously in the educational setting so that it brings as much benefit as possible to the students. By including the perspective of the group process in an educational project, you will enrich the activities undertaken by young people with this new, important dimension. In this way, the team of students will learn twice as much.

Not only will students have the opportunity to learn how to set project goals but they will gain the support of others, and develop an action plan. As the facilitator turns their focus to the group process, youth will grow their soft skills, useful in adult life. They will learn how to find their place in the group and will understand how to cooperate better. They will practice efficient communication in a safe space, acknowledging and expressing their emotions, naming challenges which come up in relationships and learning to cope with them.

By working on the group process in collaboration with students, you will also benefit. This is your chance to develop your know-how which will enable you to lead groups skilfully and with more confidence.

You are holding two publications which go together:

- **“Relationships in a Project** – How to Support Youth in a Group Process Handbook for Educators”
- **“Power Up Your Team Building Skills** – How to do a Group Project and Keep on Liking People? – Exercises for Individual work“

The first publication will be the basic resource for you as the team leader. Thanks to it you will:

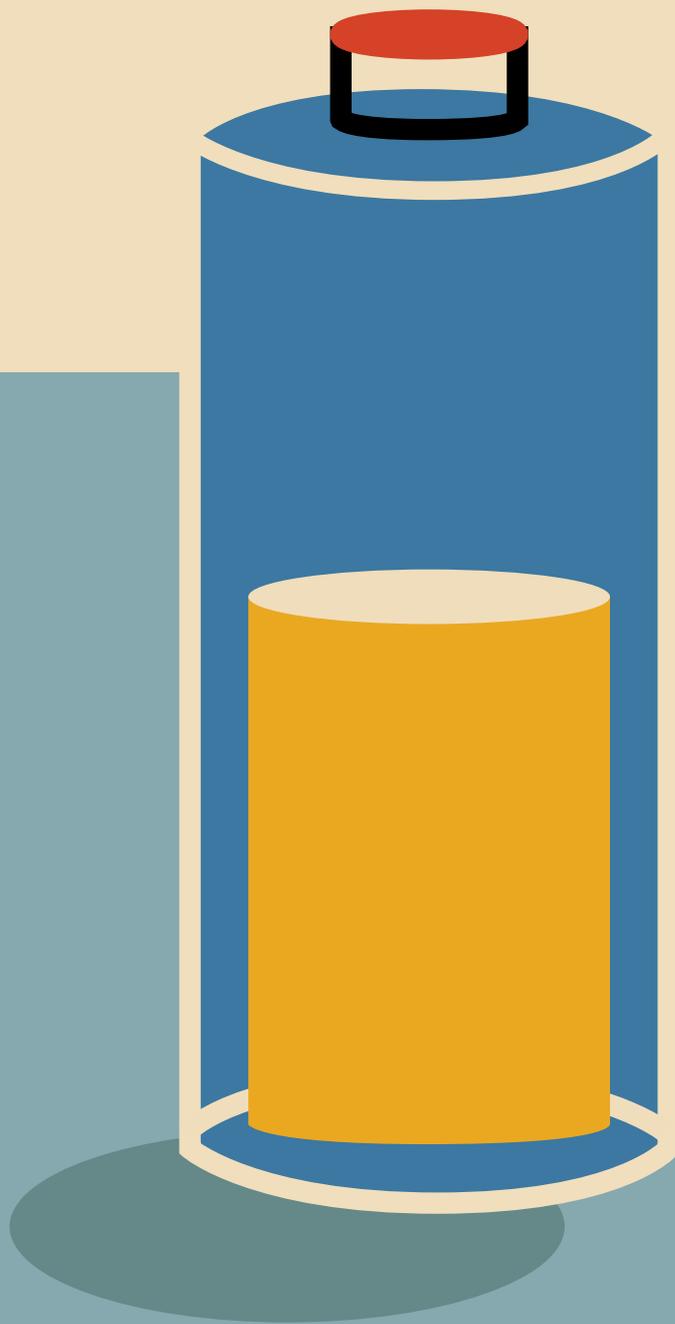
- Learn how the group process evolves in a group of students.
- Think through your role as a teacher and team leader through different stages of the process.
- Get familiar with the tools to work collaboratively with students.

The second one, i.e. the student journal, is an individual self-assessment tool. The material is constructed in such a way that the participants can fill it in any sequence, return to their work and modify it. This encourages honest and in-depth reflection. In order to enable this kind of experience, we encourage you **NOT TO CHECK** how the people in your group fill in the journal. Instead, invite the students to voluntarily share their written reflections and refer back to their exercises.

You will find tips on how to work with the student journal in the publication aimed for you (“Relationships in a Project”). We also suggest what kind of exercises are worth discussing with the whole group, depending on the stage of working with the team.

We hope that these materials will allow you and your team not only to gain new know-how and skills but also to get to know one another and build relationships based on trust and the willingness to work together.

Chapter 1



START

Author: Judyta Ziętkowska



From this chapter you will learn:

- **How to take care of yourself when working with a group of students.**
- **How to determine pre-existing personal goals, resources and values when you are starting to work with a group.**
- **Types of forces in school (including the ones supporting change and resistant to it) impacting group work.**

Inside of each work group, including a student team carrying out an educational process, we say that a “group process” occurs. The fine details are beyond your control but it depends on you whether you will consciously guide the process within the educational setting so that it brings as much benefit as possible to the students. Operating from the perspective of the group process, you will enrich the youth activities with this new, important dimension. In this way, the team of students will learn twice as much. Young people will not only have the opportunity to learn how to set project goals, gain the support of others, develop an action plan and put it into life. As the facilitator turns their attention to soft skills, they will then have the opportunity to grow these skills, useful in adult life. They will begin to find their place in the group and will understand how to cooperate better. They will practice efficient communication under safe conditions, noticing and expressing their emotions, naming challenges which come up in relationships and coping with them.

It is not easy to steer this ship. You can probably sense, or you may already know, that nurturing a group process in your team requires a lot of time and energy. In order for the group to move in the right direction and to foster self-development, it is worthwhile to devote some attention to the captain of this ship. This means you. As you lead your students through the group process, you will come across certain situations which will require a specific kind of attention or reflection. During this adventure you might come across topics which leave young people vulnerable – it is important to care for them.

That is why we encourage you to look after yourself first. Take a look at the expectations you have towards the whole venture. Think about what motivates you in taking on this challenge. Set the goals you want to meet. Name your fears or doubts. Knowing your goals, your resources and needs is an important step on the path towards becoming a leader who is attentive to the process.

A deep self-reflection at the beginning of the path might make it easier for you to navigate the group process. Once you figure out what you want and what kind of possibilities and limitations you have, you will stand before your students as a person who is more self-aware. Let’s say that one of your doubts is whether you can deal with low morale among group members.



Recognizing and naming this fear is already a success. You can take it one step further and reflect on how, until now, you have dealt with the topic and what your results have been. You can reflect on the emotions you have concerning this situation. Consider the resources you have which might be helpful. What kind of problems can you solve by yourself and what kind of support do you need? Even if your fear does come true and the motivation of the group flags, you will have a starting point, as you have already started reflecting on it.

Working in a group process is an experience which has a teaching value not only for the team. As a facilitator you will have many opportunities to learn new things (learn new working methods with young people), deal with various challenges, look for solutions (when a conflict arises in the group or someone is excluded from the group). Treat this first chapter as a resource supporting you in charging your batteries and investing in your own growth.

By doing the exercises from this part, pay attention to a few things:

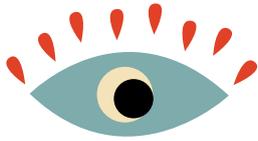
- **Be honest.** When responding to questions in this chapter, note exactly what you are thinking and feeling. This may be hard, especially when you have negative feelings about the topic. Nevertheless, the benefits of honesty can outweigh the losses. Perhaps you will discover something new and you will be able to set the goals you are seeking to meet more accurately. Remember that it is entirely up to you if you want to share your notes with someone.
- **Find the right time.** Self-reflection requires calm and slowing down. Instead of doing the exercises in between your responsibilities, find a moment when you won't have to hurry. Sit back comfortably, limit the background noise, have some tea and devote time just for yourself.
- **Write down your reflections.** Thanks to your notes, you can keep going back to your reflections during and at the culmination of the group process. Your goals, expectations, needs and even how you define your challenge, can change as you experience the process with your group. Once in a while, it is good to stop and briefly summarise to see what has changed and what can be useful in the given moment. For example, you might want to write down a strength which you will recall at a later stage of the process.
- **Take as much as you need.** Explore those topics which seem to be important in that moment, especially in the context of leading the team through the group process. You might feel that you know your strengths but the challenge is to determine the individual goals you want to achieve thanks to this experience.

After this short introduction now let us go to the practical part.





EXERCISE:
WHAT AM I STARTING OUT WITH?



NOTE:

In this exercise you will take a closer look at your approach to the topic of the group process, i.e. everything which happens with the group when they try to cooperate together, in particular during an educational project.

Why did you become interested in the topic of the group process?

What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase “group process”?

What is your attitude to working in the group process of a student team?
What is your emotional state as you are starting this activity?

How can your students benefit from you dealing with this topic? What can you gain?

What are your experiences in working with a group so far? Which of these do you think were successful and which were a challenge? Why?

What would you do differently?

On a scale from 1-10 how do you feel about a group process?

Very uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Very confident**

What are your experiences with working with youth so far? Which of these do you think were successful and which were a challenge? Why?

What would you do differently?

How confident do you feel in an educational project on a scale from 1-10?

Very uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Very confident**

How do you see your role in the whole process?





EXERCISE: MY PERSONAL GOALS

When planning a project with young people, you will want to determine the goals together i.e. what you want to achieve through your actions. These will be project goals. It is on them that the group usually focuses, at least at the beginning, as they justify the group's existence. Members of the team can have their own goals linked to being engaged in a common initiative. This is when we talk of individual or personal goals.

In the chapter devoted to the stage of formation of a group you will find the exercise which will support you in getting to know the individual goals and you will learn how to include them in the group process facilitation. For now, focus on what you want to take from this experience for yourself. Think about your goals. The answer will not always be obvious. Determining what you are aiming for might be harder than the actual planning of how you will get it done. The WOOP method might be helpful. It is based on thinking with images and free reflection instead of detailed analysis so it tends to be more accurate in determining goals linked to soft skills.

What is the WOOP method about?



- **W** – *wish* is a goal you want to achieve. It should be a challenge to you but be in scope of your capacities.
- **O** – *outcome* is the best possible result from achieving your goal.
- **O** – *obstacle* is the potential difficulty which can arise on the way of achieving the planned goal.
- **P** – *plan* is a set of specific actions which can be undertaken if an obstacle does arise¹.

Use the method in practice to determine your personal goal and how you want to achieve it. Think about the goal which is linked to a task awaiting you, i.e. facilitating the group process.



REMEMBER:

You can have more than one personal goal. In that case, try to analyse each of them separately starting from the most important one.



Goal (*wish*)

Imagine a goal you want to achieve for yourself, by facilitating a group process of a student team. What gives you satisfaction? What will be a challenge for you? When will you have the sense it is worth getting involved? How do you see the possibility of meeting the goal?

¹

This app allows you to go through the WOOP process: <https://woop-mylife.org/en/home>. [Accessed on 10.12.2021]

Desired result (outcome)

Imagine that you have achieved your goal. What is the best possible outcome? What has changed and what is the current situation? How do you feel about this? How do others react to this situation?

.....
.....
.....

Challenges (obstacles)

Think about the difficulties which can impede meeting the personal goal. What internal obstacles do you foresee? What stops you from achieving what you want?

.....
.....
.....

Plan (plan)

What will you do if any of the obstacles occur? What kind of actions will you undertake? What will you think? What can you do to make it more efficient for you? You can do this exercise by using the template if/then.

If (some kind of obstacle).....
then (action, thought)

REMEMBER:

The plan will help you to cope with problems but also prevent them from happening.



If you prefer to work with analytical methods we recommend getting to know the SMART method ².

**EXERCISE:
MY INTERNAL RESOURCES**



We usually have quite a blurry sense of what we are good at and what our strong points are. Generally speaking, we can only name a few of our positive qualities. It is much easier to pin-point our own deficits. We lose sight of some of our assets because we do not think of a given trait in terms of our potential in that area. Even if we do name our quality we do not always know how to use it in a specific area of life, e.g. at work.

² "A Beginner's Guide to Goal Setting for Teens", www.powerfuleyouth.com/beginners-guide-goal-setting-for-teens-smart-goals [online], [Accessed on 10.01.2022].



That is why we encourage you to do an exercise which will help you to identify your talents and think how they can help you lead the group process with a team of students and achieve personal goals linked to the task. When we think about talents, we usually come up with stereotypical things such as music or sport skills. Nevertheless, the Gallup Institute has created a list of 34 talents divided into four groups: executing, strategic thinking, relationship building and influencing.

1. Look at the list of talents taken from the Gallup Assessment (Clifton Strengths) ³. Underline all those which match yours. If there is a quality missing, add it below.

Talents linked to execution: achiever, arranger, belief, consistency, deliberative, discipline, focus, responsibility, restorative.

Talents linked to relationship building: adaptability, connectedness, developer, empathy, harmony, includer, individualization, positivity, relator.

Talents linked to influencing others or the situation: activator, command, communication, competition, maximiser, self-assurance, significance, woo.

Talents linked to strategic thinking: analytical, context, futuristic, ideation, input, intellection, learner, strategic.

Other:

.....

.....

.....



NOTE:

Your group will also become acquainted with a list of talents. It is a good opportunity to have a conversation with students about their strong points. Young people will have the chance to learn something more about you and you about them.

In this way you will be able to look at your team from a different perspective. You may discover that a group charmer can contribute to easing tensions in the group.

2. Which talents do you think are useful in facilitating a group process and which are less important in this context? How can you use your talents in working on the group process?

.....

.....

.....

³

www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/253715/34-cliftonstrengths-themes.aspx. [Accessed on 10.01.2021].

Here we encourage you to recall your personal goal. How can your talents (and their use in facilitating a group process) can bring you closer towards that goal? Which talents do you think are essential to be able to carry out your plans?



How can your talents help you overcome obstacles towards your goal?

NOTE:

You can also suggest the second step of this exercise to the group. Students can explore how they have been using their talent so far and how it can be of use to them in carrying out their project.



**EXERCISE:
MY SCHOOL**



The whole group process, just as the educational process itself, does not happen in a void. All of the activities will be happening in school. It is a place where you are already playing a role, you have specific tasks to do and which exceed the project that you planned. The school environment is also composed of groups which have various functions and their own responsibilities: other teachers, students, the school administration and the other members of staff.

The atmosphere in the place of work, attitude towards new initiatives or your level of independence in school are also important. Everything can impact working with the educational project including the perspective of the group process, as well meeting personal goals.

It is worth reflecting upon which elements of the school system will be helpful in meeting the goal and which can make it more difficult. We recommend Kurt Levin's approach called the Force Field Analysis ⁴.



⁴

G. Jones, R. Correl, "50 Top Tools for Coaching", Kogan Page 2009, p. 98.

1

1. Write your goal in the chart below. It can be your personal goal or a goal which is closely related to the inclusion of the group process in working with youth, e.g. "I want to include the group process in project work with the student team". You can also write down the goal you described in the second point of this chapter.

2

2. Think about what can help your school achieve this goal and what can stop you. Make sure that you include all of the forces for change and forces resisting change.

3

3. Decide how you see the intensity of the given force: low (1), average (2) or high (3).

4

4. Analyse the results and think how you can work with them.

GOAL :

| Forces for change: | | | Forces resisting change: | | |
|---|--------------|-----------|--|--------------|-----------|
| Low 1 | Average 2 | High 3 | Low 1 | Average 2 | High 3 |
| <i>All clear from the school administration (3)</i> | | | <i>Number of my responsibilities (2)</i> | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
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| | | | | | |
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| | | | | | |

What activities can you undertake in order to strengthen the forces for change?
Add new ones which will be crucial in meeting the goal. Who can support you?

What actions can you undertake to weaken or eliminate the most important resisting forces? Who can support you?

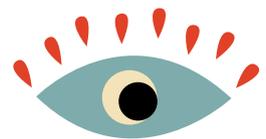
REMEMBER:

Not everything in school depends on you. Focus specifically on strengthening those forces which you can influence. Just as in the case of forces resisting change, choose those you see as the easiest to change and which can impact the activity the most.



NOTE:

In the first exercise which determined the personal goal through the WOOP method, we focused primarily on internal obstacles. In the second exercise we analysed the internal resources and possibilities of using them. In exercise three we looked at the opportunities and difficulties presented by the school environment.

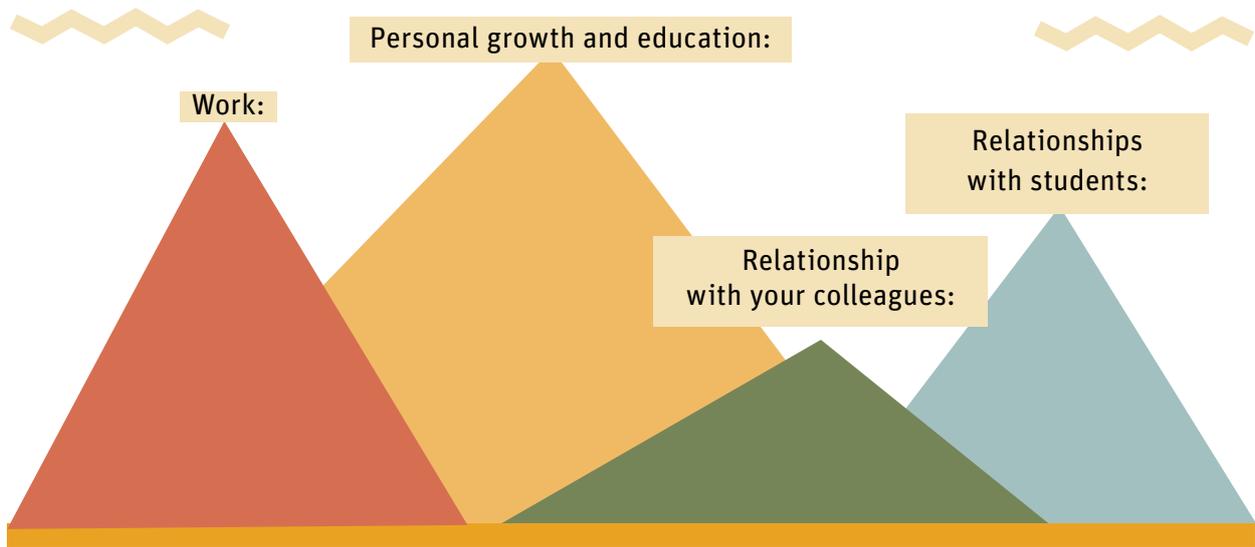


**EXERCISE:
MY VALUES**



Values give direction to our lives. In other words, these are principles which are important to us. Including them in our actions makes us more motivated and engaged. If, on the other hand, we do something which is inconsistent with our values, it could bother us, be a source of discomfort and even make us resist. That is why, it is worth exploring whether what we are planning to get involved with is close to our values.





1. Think about what values are important to you. Take into consideration the following areas: a) work

b) personal growth or education, c) relationship with students, d) relationships with your colleagues. Write down the values in the right place:

Work:

.....

Personal growth or education:

.....

Relationships with students:

.....

Relationship with your colleagues:

.....



GUIDING QUESTIONS:

What values are important to you? Which of these guide you? What gives you the sense that you are authentically who you are? When do you feel satisfaction? In what situations did you act according to your beliefs? What were the values in question?

Examples of values: safety, acceptance, responsibility, cooperation, play, humour, helping others, taking on challenges, courage, humility, loyalty, fame, pleasure, experiencing, freedom, trust, strength, self-control, wisdom, justice, spirituality, empathy, progress, learning, improvement, patience, self-confidence, equality, care, individual approach, compassion



2. Think about why these values are important to you. In what way and what situations do they guide you in the areas above? What do you get from them?



How does your personal goal align with the values which are important to you?

To what extent is working with the group process consistent with those values?

Which of them are most important when carrying out the project together with students? Which of them are key to leading the group process in your team?



3. Create a plan. Write down specific ideas for looking after your values in the course of the group process in the student project.



Example: area (relationships with students) – key value (individual approach) – idea to include that value (I will plan moments in the process of the project when I will give each student individual feedback.)

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dotted lines.

Chapter 2



GROUP FORMING

Author: Michał Tragarz [stage 1 i 2]

Author: Judyta Ziętkowska [stage 3,4 i 5]



In this chapter you will learn:

- **What are the characteristic stages of a group process.**
- **What should the teacher pay attention to at each stage.**
- **Exercises that can be useful while working with a group at a given stage.**

STAGE 1. GROUP FORMING

Stage 1 begins while a group is being formed. Generally speaking, a group consists of a minimum of three people and interactions between them which help them to reach a common goal. That is why one might say that in the case of a group which is supposed to carry out an educational project, the stage of forming begins at the first meeting.

The group is not formed in a vacuum as all of its members come with background knowledge and preconceived ideas. It is possible that, in a school context, people in the group know each other and already have relationships which you as the facilitator might not be aware of even though these relationships can influence this stage of the process.

The bigger the group, the more changes in its composition (new people coming in, others leaving) and the greater the probability that the elements of the forming stage will return. From the point of view of a facilitator it is best when all of the members of the group know each other and the composition remains the same throughout the whole project. Yet, if that is not the case, then you should take note the elements below.

Typical features of that stage – how to recognize them?



- Uncertainty and stress

If the people are strangers or merely acquaintances, then entering a new group will always be linked to some kind of stress. Youth are especially afraid of being judged by their peers so many of them feel stress at the first stage of the process. It can be seen in reluctance to speak one's mind as well as to "show off" and make an impression on the group. As a facilitator, you should assume that what the people say or how they behave is caused by stress and uncertainty.



- The formation usually happens once at the start.

Usually the forming of the group happens only once but the group can be in that stage again if a lot of the people change e.g. in the case of a rotation of members or new people joining.



- Appearances

As the participants of the project lack confidence in the group setting, they rarely disclose their needs and emotions. That is why you may observe a temporary, superficial integration or cooperation.



- Participant expectations towards the facilitator

In the case of groups that have a formal structure, such as a project team, it is natural to expect the facilitator to establish the ground rules of teamwork. If this does not happen (or not to a sufficient degree), the uncertainty and stress will make it more difficult for the group to continue. This situation can result in the loss of motivation.

REMEMBER:

Each time you are working with the group, think about what rules and principles will be obligatory (because of external circumstances, the requirements of the given action as well as the age and experience of the participants) and what you will decide together. Under no circumstances should the facilitator make up all the rules.



- Guiding the group and the tasks ahead

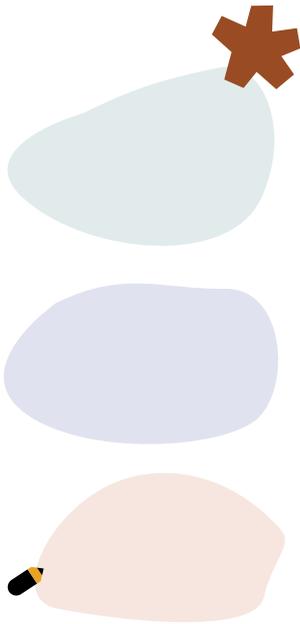
It might seem obvious but usually people form their opinion about the person they have just met based on first impressions. It is possible to modify this, with time and effort. That is why it is of key importance to build a good base at the very beginning; to feel that the group is a friendly, safe place, the tasks are interesting and the leader is competent.



- In the end the superficiality is rejected.

The end of this stage is marked by the fact that the people begin to drop their guard. They begin to express their needs and expectations authentically and may even show signs of resistance. First conflicts in the group arise.





Milestones

Milestones are key moments of working on a project. Setting them allows us to determine what is needed in order for our actions to move forward. Here, we are talking about milestones in the development of the project group.

Milestones of the first stage of the group process

- Planning the framework of the group work and preparing information for potential participants
- Recruitment and creation of the group
- Deciding on the rules of cooperation
- Team-building

Below we discuss two milestones which require particular attention: deciding on the rules of cooperation and team-building.



Milestone: Deciding on the rules of cooperation



Milestones of the first stage of the group process

This milestone should happen as soon as possible; preferably during the first meeting. You might expect the participation of the group in co-creation of the rules to be limited. The rules proposed by the youth will probably not reflect their real needs as they cannot formulate them or are afraid of being too exposed. That is why it will be important to revisit the rules during subsequent stages of the work, especially during the stage of stabilization. It is vital to determine the rules from the beginning in order to address the need for structure and a sense of safety. Instructions for how to create an agreement in an interactive way can be found in the Exercise **RULES OF COOPERATION**.

When developing the rules, pay attention to some aspects which are important from the point of view of a group process:

- **Rules which are imposed.** Some of the rules can be suggested by you as a facilitator or result from the way the school or the place where you are working functions (e.g. time of meeting, limitations linked to the use of space). In such a case it is important to tell the group that these rules are non-negotiable and why.
- **Specific and real rules.** The creation of an initial agreement is quite common in schools but we often see that they contain many general, imprecise statements (we are nice, we care for a good ambience, we have a sense of humour etc.) This is not to say that such statements cannot be found in the contract, especially if they are suggested by the participants themselves but if there are many of them, then it is impractical to use this agreement. If during the meeting somebody says they have a headache and are feeling unwell, does this mean that they are ruining a good

atmosphere? It is always worthwhile to check which specific behaviours are governed by the contract items. Some of the rules should also refer to how the workload will be organized. For example, state if attendance at the meetings is required, the number of the absences allowed and if we should be punctual.



- **Rules which determine the nature of the group and the extracurricular character.** Project work is, of course, academic work and can serve to carry out the basic curriculum but is different from regular lessons. That is why, especially in the case of long-term projects which require students to do extra work, we should make sure that the group feels their work is something different from other school requirements. Examples of rules which indicate that it is a group outside the school include the possibility of eating and drinking at meetings (as long as it doesn't make the life of others difficult), having tea and cookies at meetings, calling by first name (if it is okay for you as the tutor of the team). These rules can be introduced with time, depending on what needs arise.

- **Pay attention to recognition.** If we are doing a project as a part of regular classes, it might be necessary to grade students. Nevertheless, we should clearly state what the criteria are! If not, then say it clearly and also write it down. A good idea is to acknowledge the group as well as the individual (e.g. having done something important we go for ice cream, we mark our success on the board which we fill in after every meeting). It is important that the rules are not only connected to limitations but also reinforce the self-esteem of the participants. Don't delay celebrating success for later because, without such positive reinforcement, some people might drop out before the project ends.



- **Apply all rules consistently and refer to them.** This is your primary responsibility as the leader who needs to be an attentive guardian of the rules. Secondly, you should model them i.e. keep them yourself. If either of these do not happen, the agreement you made with the group will remain a piece of paper hanging on the wall and forgotten after the first meeting. Should one of the rules be broken, it is better to review and/or revise it. Perhaps we do not need it after all?

- **Avoid over-regulation.** Rules should refer to things which are really important. It is best to present them visually and on a single sheet of paper.

- **Rules of cooperation are dynamic.** The contract set up during the first meeting will probably be more technical but after subsequent stages of the process the members of the group will be more aware of their needs and will know whether the rules make the work more effective. That is why it is good to come back to the contract, especially after conflict and difficult situations. You might have new ideas, and feel more grounded in the reality of the group.



Milestone: Initial team-building

In some groups this milestone can be reached very early on, even during the first meeting, and sometimes you need to wait a bit. Integration might happen by itself but it might also be initiated by the facilitator through different team-building activities. We recommend this in project groups which are comprised of people who do not normally work together.

What should you pay attention to during the group integration?

- Use the team-building so that the students have the opportunity to talk about their interests and talents and to show their strengths. Do not expect that at this stage the group is ready for profound conversation.
- Be cautious about exercises requiring physical ability and physical contact. Students could potentially feel unsafe and their personal space violated. This could make some people withdraw or increase their feeling of uncertainty in the group.
- Try activities during which the participants will be able to talk about themselves or introduce themselves to others. It is good to start with working in pairs or small groups.
- Use team-building exercises to highlight similarities between the people in the group. This need is linked to a psychological mechanism which makes people feel better among people who are like them. It also allows building a common ground for further cooperation. Examples of safe team-building exercises can be found in the section below: **WHAT DO WE HAVE IN COMMON?, A QUESTION TO ALL, TALENT SHOP.**



exercise:
What do we have in common?,
p. 34

exercise:
A question to all,
p. 34

exercise:
Talent shop,
p. 36



REMEMBER:

Team-building exercises are also an opportunity to collect important information about the participants. In which activities did the students engage willingly? Which drained their energy or did not catch their interest? Did any of the exercises show their weak points or lack of ability? Did anything come up which would indicate some kind of existing or new, mutual dislikes which could interfere with some people's feeling of safety? It is good to catch these situations from the very beginning and discuss them with the group, referring to the contract or if necessary to reformulate some of the rules.



Emotions and behaviours of the participants which might arise at this stage of the process.

| Emotions weakening the group | Emotions reinforcing the group |
|---|---|
| Anxiety, incertitude, tension, fear | Curiosity, excitement |
| Fear of being judged and rejected or fear of specific people in the group | Contentment, joy from meeting new people and new challenges |
| Reluctance towards some people in the group | Desire for belonging |
| Discouragement, doubt | Desire to act, enthusiasm |
| Lack of trust | Feeling of relief |
| Frustration, being upset | Trust, feeling of safety |

At this stage the emotions of the participants can be varied and contradictory. The role of the facilitator is to understand what kind of emotions can arise and to what behaviours this might lead. In this way you can prevent destructive practices in the group.

Behaviours which can result from these emotions

First behaviours of the students, as it has been said before, can be characterized with superficiality, pretence and incertitude. People deal with stress in different ways. Examples of behaviours which result from emotions that the participants have at the beginning of the project are:

- **Reducing tension by joking.** It is a normal, positive way of dealing with stress which can transform into ridiculing others (including the facilitator) or the objective of the action itself. Such a type of behaviour is most likely a consequence of insecurity and the desire to build a strong position in the group. If jokes are not directed at others and do not disrupt the work of the group, they are helpful in releasing tension in the group.

- **Passive acceptance, submission and expressing agreement.** The facilitator needs to be prepared that students might not reveal their needs and expectations at the stage of group forming. This does not mean that they do not have them at all. We might have to wait until they decide to speak about them.
- **Asking about information, explanation, repetition in regards to framework of work, rules etc.**
- **Revealing rivalries, putdowns.** This kind of behaviour occurs if some of the members of the group already know each other and the people bring in conflicts or items from past groups or relationships. The facilitator needs to be very mindful of such behaviours. From the very beginning it makes sense to show that they are not acceptable (referring to the rules of cooperation written down earlier).
- **Sympathizing with others, elevating someone, giving help, rewarding them.** If you observe a group carefully, you might see that some people in the group are highly valued. From the point of view of the facilitator, this allows us to understand whether there are likes and dislikes in the group because of earlier relationships. Is there a risk of divisions in the group? Are there members who are behaving negatively towards their peers? Are such behaviours approved by the rest or are there some people in the group not reacting?

The role of the teacher at this stage



- **Think how you will recruit people to the group.** It is best when joining the group is voluntary. It helps if all the people in the group know each other or do not know each other at all. It is much more difficult for individuals to enter a closely-knit group.
- **Dedicate the first meeting for the students to get to know each other and to set the rules.** The success of further work will depend on the feeling of safety among the participants.
- **Make sure that the framework of cooperation is clear for all.** Provide as complete information about the project foundations and time frame as possible. Together with your group, work out the rules of further cooperation.
- **Make sure there is time to address all the questions and doubts.** They might be formulated in various forms. One of the first activities could be asking the participants about their expectations, fears and doubts concerning the project and collecting answers on post-its. This will allow them to express doubts anonymously and in writing. After each important information or sum-up of what has been decided, give the group a moment to ask any additional questions. Openness to talk about doubts could also be emphasized in the contract.
- **Recap and present the next steps and tasks before the group.**

- **Plan for which areas of the project the students will take responsibility.** Will they be able to work everything out from the beginning, including the goal and the theme or will their impact be limited to fine-tuning the idea and planning a public event? It is important information which should be given at the very beginning. You will be able to read more about in the sub-section “How to assure the participants feel they have an impact on the stage of group forming”.
- **Remember to enable each person to make a positive impression.** At the beginning this should not be too revealing for anybody – it is enough that everybody says what their name is. After some time once the people are a bit bolder you can ask them to share what they like doing or talk about their strong points. You can use the exercise **WHAT DO WE HAVE IN COMMON?**.
- **Respond to objections and doubts.** At this stage it is especially important that everybody feels that their opinion is taken into consideration. This does not mean that you have to include all of their suggestions but it would be good not to leave them unanswered.
- **Be attentive to answers and behaviours which could threaten the sense of security and comfort of other people.** You need to react strongly to any kind of attempts to ridicule others, debase their position in the group, or break the rules. If, at the initial stage, the participants see that you do not keep order it will be a sign that they cannot feel safe in this group. It might also encourage others to escalate their negative behaviours.



How to assure the participants feel they have an impact on the stage of group forming, p. 30



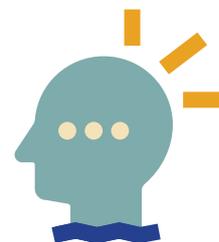
Exercise:
What do we have in common?, p. 34



Exercise:
My motivation – snowballs, p. 38

THINK:

What kind of motivation caused the participants to come to the group? You might find out from a direct conversation or your own observations. How can you respond to these needs? We recommend you to do the exercise: **MY MOTIVATION – SNOWBALLS**.



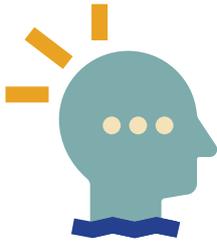
The investment of the participants is one of the strongest factors supporting engagement. If, during the time of forming, the participants do not feel they can influence the outcome, it will be much more difficult to engage them. From the point of view of citizenship education, strengthening engagement among students is a goal in itself, as it builds up a proactive attitude and a sense of responsibility for one’s environment.

Before starting the project, the team leader should determine what kind of impact they want the youth to have. There is no one right answer to this question. This will be very different with a group in fourth grade and working with seventeen-year-olds who are experienced in community projects. Nevertheless, you always need to know where that zone of influence is and communicate it clearly to the participants.

How do we assure that the participants have a sense of ownership of the project during the group forming phase?

Main impact areas of the participants:

- Determining the area, problem or topic (in older and more experienced groups)
- Setting the goal of action or elaborating it
- Determining the rules of work for the group
- Selecting and choosing the idea of an action
- Planning specific steps and tasks
- Planning ways of checking progress at work and monitoring them
- Carrying out the specific tasks by individuals or small groups.

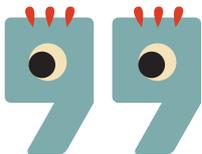


THINK:

To what extent are you ready to allow the participants to have an impact on the project? On which of the elements above will the group have an impact? Take into consideration the level of experience and competence of the group but also think about your own readiness to relinquish control of the process. Balance the educational value of the group process as opposed to the potential for success or failure of the project.

It is important that the influence the students have is real. Telling the group that you will decide together what you will do when, in reality, you have already mapped out a concept in your head, your students may sense a false note and lose their trust in you. Being frank from the very beginning can influence how the group will work or how the individual elements of the activity will look like.

The greater the influence of the students, the longer and more difficult the process will be for the facilitator. To come to a decision about what and how you are going to do it can be a big challenge and cause conflicts. Naturally, the experiences of the students and their engagement in the process are the biggest added value. The group who understands that they have an impact on what is happening, usually feel more independent and are more willing to take initiative. They do not wait for the approval of an adult with each little item. This also means less work for you as the team leader.



Example

The facilitator of the science club, inspired by examples found on the Internet, decided to invite the members of the club to prepare a field exercise on the topic of ecology. It was the first time she had decided to do such a project. That is why she decided to propose a specific format to the students. She already had experience as a participant. She also took part in a practical training and was prepared to organize the game. She decided that the student team should decide what the game will be about, how it will be planned and what the tasks will be. The students would take charge of making all of the elements of the game, recruitment of the participants as well as the execution of the game.

Self-reflection

| | |
|---|------------------------------|
| Application to the project group was on a voluntary basis. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| The participants are clear about what we will do and what their role will be. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| The group has the space to clarify any questions or doubts concerning technical and organizational questions, including the role of the students. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| All of the people had the chance to introduce themselves in a positive way in front of the group. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| There is a palpable sense of security in the group. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| The rules of cooperation are accepted and understood by all of the participants. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| The participants know what areas they will have an impact. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| The activities are within the scope of possibilities and competence of all the people in the group. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |

MY CONCLUSIONS

Look back at your answers. What conclusions can you draw from them?

.....

.....

.....

.....

MY CHALLENGE

In the nearest future I want to focus on these elements:

MY GOALS

Think about the goals you want to achieve at this stage (remembering all the names of the participants, making everybody understand the goals of the work etc.).

Think about what your milestones will be as the leader at this stage of the process.

1.
2.
3.

Exercises from the student journal “Power Up” which might inspire you:

| Title of the exercise | Short description | Page |
|---|---|------|
| WHAT AM I STARTING OUT WITH, MY EXPECTATIONS TOWARDS THE PROJECT | Allows you to check the mindset with which the students are starting the project. | 13 |
| MY RESOURCES | Enables the leader to get to know talents, skills, values which certain people have in the group. | 14 |
| MY PROJECTS SO FAR | Shows what kind of experiences the group has had in similar projects. | 19 |
| SHARED UNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT THE PROJECT | Makes it easier to determine common framework of the project. | 20 |



Tools for working with the group

EXERCISE:

WHAT DO WE HAVE IN COMMON?



Simple activity to get to know each other better and bring to the surface the common qualities and interests in the group

 **Time of duration:** 10 min

 **Materials:** none

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. Player one is at a distance of 5-6 meters from the others who are in the group. The person says: “Those who like chocolate, go to the right”. Those to whom the statement applies will take one step forward. The player who will be the first to touch the right hand of player one stays beside them. The others come back to the group.
2. Player one now says a new sentence, e.g. “I invite someone who likes youth meetings to stand at my left”. This process is repeated using subsequent, different declarations. In the next rounds, the players standing next to player one, in turn, call out other questions so that new people will grasp their free hands. The line of players keeps holding hands. At the end of the game, the last two people each have one free hand. In order for the group to form a circle, they must find a question they can mutually answer.

EXERCISE:

A QUESTION TO ALL



 **Time of duration:** 10 min

 **Materials:** sheets of paper, pens

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. Hand out sheets of paper to the participants and ask each person to think about one question they would like to ask the others. This can be linked to the project or refer to the interests or experiences of others. The important thing is that this question is universal – so that each of us could answer and that it doesn't concern personal or controversial things. Do take part in the game as the facilitator! Write the questions down at the top of the sheet of paper.

2. The task of each person is to talk to all the participants of the group. The students come up in turns to each other and ask questions. They write down the questions on pieces of paper in order to be able to tell about it after the exercise is finished.
3. Sum up the exercise. Ask if there is anything that surprised them or caught their interest in the responses they received? Can you say anything about the whole group based on those responses? Allow all who wish to speak to do so.



EXERCISE: CONVERSATION ABOUT EXPECTATIONS

 **Time of duration:** 15–20 min

 **Materials:** post-its, flipchart

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

The exercise can be done at the very beginning of working with a group. This allows to investigate the expectations of people participating and their needs related to the project. In this way, the facilitator will be able to assess the potential risk of conflict between people with various expectations, as well as address the needs of the participants and decide which of them could be met.

1. **[2 min]** Write down the question on the flip chart of packing paper: “What are my needs and expectations towards taking part in the project?” Explain that, by expectations, you mean what they want to happen in the project from the perspective of personal benefits as well as more general outcomes e.g. skills gained, results of the project. Explain that “needs” are things which will allow you to be engaged in the project and feel well within the group, e.g. “My mistakes will not be laughed at”, “Meetings will end on time”.
2. **[8–15 min]** Students write down the needs and expectations on post-its (if possible needs on post-its of one colour and expectations on the second one). After the activity is finished, ask the participants to share what they have written down. You can do it openly e.g. each person tells the group about the needs and expectations and then sticks them to a flipchart. You can also guide this part of the exercise anonymously: the participants stick their post-its on the flipchart and then you discuss them all together.
3. **[3–5 min]** As you discuss the needs and expectations, say which of them could be met, which ones depend on all of you (perhaps this means that the contract needs to be modified) and which of them cannot be met because of external circumstances. The most important thing is that there are different needs and expectations. During the project work, others will come up. In order for the work to be effective, it is important to communicate needs openly and to think about what we can do so that most of them can be met.

EXERCISE: TALENT SHOP



The goal of this exercise is to learn about the strengths of the different people in the group and allow each person to present themselves positively. This exercise can be one of two versions. One uses a ready-made list of personal strengths (recommended with a younger, less experienced group) or you can proceed without it.

 **Time of duration:** 20-30 min

 **Materials:** flipchart or packing paper with a drawing of shop shelves; paper strips or post-its (a couple of items per person) or paper strips with strengths written on them – a set for each student.

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. **[2 min]** Draw shop shelves on a flipchart or packing paper. Say that together you will create an offer of a talent shop which will display the strengths of the whole group.
2. **[7–10 min]** Version A. Hand out cut out strips of paper – each person gets one set and a couple of empty strips. Ask students to choose two or three out of the list of strengths which concern them the most and add their name. Should they have qualities that cannot be found on the strips – ask them to add them.

This version of the exercise has this benefit that each person has to choose between the strengths which might be easier than coming up with them alone.

3. **[10 min]** Version B. Hand out post-its or strips of papers to participants. Ask them to think about what kind of talents or strengths they have. Tell them this could be things they like doing – they do not have to be champions at them. Emphasize that these could also be little things, not necessarily connected with what you will be doing as a group, e.g. “I can make scrambled eggs”, “I can draw a figure from manga”. The more talents they name, the better.

If you think this task can be too hard, you can do a warm-up. Encourage the participants to talk in pairs on their skills. Only afterwards ask them to write down their strengths on paper strips.

Students add their names on the strips with qualities so that you can see who they refer to.

4. **[5–10 min]** Ask the people to present their skills and stick them to a sheet of paper with shop shelves drawn on it. Each person in the group can be given time to ask questions, especially if they are interested in something in the presentations of their peers.

Try to group the strips with talents so that the similar qualities are close to each other e.g. art talents, sport talents, scientific etc.

5. [3 min] Sum up the exercise, stressing how many strong points you have as a group. Encourage the participants to think about what they are good at and try to develop their strengths as they plan the actions. Remind that people who focus on working with your strong points than catching up on what they might be missing are much more effective.
6. Remember that whatever came up in this exercise might be useful when distributing roles in the project. Try to make sure that the members of the group can at least to some extent do what they are good at. At times, you might want to reformulate the idea for a project or add on new actions, if we will be able to grow the engagement of the group.



EXERCISE: RULES OF COOPERATION

 **Time of duration:** 30–45 min

 **Materials:** flipchart to write down the rules, sheets with rules written down

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. [5–10 min] At the beginning provide the group with the framework, or rules, which are the result of external circumstances and cannot be negotiated e.g. the topic of the activity, the meeting after lessons, students will not be dismissed from classes for project activities, whether the action will be marked or not, what are the criteria of marking, time framework and possible times of meetings, necessary presence at meeting and number of admissible absences. Check if any of these things can be decided with the group.
2. After they have been presented and the goal of the group work explained (to the extent it has been determined), make sure that everything is clear and group participants have no more questions.
3. [7 min] Divide the group into pairs and ask the people to exchange examples when they have managed to do something in the group (these can be various situations e.g. winning a football match, preparing a birthday party, bicycle trip, collecting pet food). Let the participants tell each other about this experience and share what made the group work well and succeed. If you have less time, those who want to can share with the whole group.
4. [7 min] As a next step, ask the people to think about what they need in order to work well and effectively in the group to feel well and comfortable. Let them think about technical and organizational issues (conditions and a way of organizing meetings, the work of the group), as well

as principles of communication and cooperation. Students write down proposals of specific rules in pairs.

5. [5–15 min] Each pair should present one proposed rule, beginning from the most important one. Each of the rules should be accepted by the whole group. If there are any objections, try to change the rule so that it is accepted by all. To find a version which will be accepted by the whole team is especially important if the given issue is crucial for some students. Leave out those rules which are not a key concern for those who propose and incite objections. Remember to formulate rules in a positive way e.g. “One person speaks at a time” instead of “We don’t shout at each other.”
6. After all the group has agreed to has been written down, say that these rules will apply to your next meetings. Stress that these are not permanent. You can return to them from time to time to check whether they need to be modified.
7. Finally, have all the people sign the agreement.

EXERCISE:

MY MOTIVATION – SNOWBALLS



 **Time of duration:** 30–40 min

 **Materials:** post-its or small papers (a dozen per person), empty flipchart or board

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. [2–3 min] Tell the participants that you want to discuss why they have decided to take part in the project (note at this stage the exercise is only to be done in a group in which the participants have decided to join on their own). Write open questions on the board or a paper, such as:
 - Why have you decided to join the project?
 - What is your motivation to join the project?
 - What additional benefits will you have from joining the project?
2. [5–7 min] Hand out post-its to the group and ask them to think about a question for five minutes and write down their responses on the post-its (one item per slip).
3. [5–7 min] Ask students to get in pairs. Let them talk about the things they have written down. If the two partners have similar motivation, they should join the two post-its into one (the things they wrote down do not have to be identical, similar is enough).
4. [5–7 min] the two pairs join together in a group of four. In fours the dyads share their motivations but only those which were common (individual post-its stay on the side). If there are motivations that are common to both dyads, we join the post-its again.

5. [5 min] The fours join in eights or if the group is smaller they come all together.
6. [10 min] Sum up the exercise. First of all ask about those motivations which were common for groups of eight and for the whole team – put these post-its in the centre of the board. Ask about the motivation which was common for fours and stick them in the centre. Then elicit motivations which are common for the dyads and finally the individual ones. Think together if anything comes out of it for you as a group? Can you as the group do anything to strengthen the motivations which are common? You might have ideas for new rules which are worth adding to the contract.

You can refer to those needs which can be met in the project as well as those which probably will not.

7. As the facilitator, think about what this exercise means to you. What can you do to strengthen the motivation of the participants? What can you do not to weaken their zeal?

STAGE 2. THE CLASH

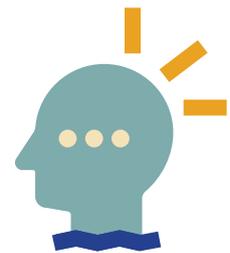


The first stage is over when the facilitator and the group have managed to develop mutual trust and a sense of safety. The emotions which are most often expressed are positive.

The group leader needs to be aware that, just as at the stage of the group forming, participants might have a lot of deeper feelings and emotions. If it was possible to create a safe space during the first stage, then individual needs of participants will begin to manifest. This will inevitably lead to clashes and conflicts, which is a sign that the group is now entering into the second stage of growth. The intensity and the steps of this phase depend on many factors but will be largely determined by your behaviour as the leader. This stage might pass unnoticed or go very smoothly but it could also end in a group storm, and the consequence is the disintegration of the group. Conflict is a natural part of group interactions and cannot be avoided. However, you do have an impact on how the group will cope with the conflicts. Not only will this period influence the final result of the project but also the well-being of the group and the motivation of the participants to join similar activities in the future.

THINK:

What are your first associations with the word “conflict”? What is your attitude towards conflict in a project group? Do you treat it as something which should be avoided at all costs or rather an opportunity to create a new quality to the work of your group?



How can you recognize this stage?



- The group is initially integrated.

On the outside, positive emotions dominate but inside the group people are still afraid of being rejected and judged. They might not feel well with other members of the team, the leader, the goal and the way of working. As they start to feel more confident in the group and establish first relationships, they begin to express the emotions and needs that have not been revealed so far.



- Revealing resistance.

Students begin to show their true emotions, manifesting resistance. It can be expressed in different ways: from passiveness to limited activity, through excessive joking and ridiculing, expressing reluctance to other people in the group and you as the facilitator.





- First conflicts arise.

Due to the fact that the needs of the students are usually divergent, they start to clash. The bigger the group, the bigger the chance that the expectations of individual people will be contradictory. It is inevitable that conflicts will arise and that is not negative. The key thing is to work out an open communication about needs.



- Phases of stagnation and ineffective work.

The group begins to have moments of stagnation and slower, less efficient work. They might be a result of an unrevealed conflict and be a sign of the resistance of the group or individual members. It could be also linked to a natural slackening of motivation and energy at further stages of the project.



- The second life of the group.

This means all kind of activities which happen outside official situations and which concern the whole group as well as the facilitators. The second life of the group can be harmless and natural (the youth discuss what happened in the project while being in a café or on the way home), but this might be a problem if it is an outlet of all the unrevealed conflicts. Different sub-groups and fractions come to life and some people can be excluded from the group and rejected by the others. Negative emotions are manifested “on the side” or in a destructive way. Anti-norms can arise, i.e. behaviours contradictory to the rules start to be accepted and seen as positive by some people in the group or everybody. In particular, the second life of the group develops in situations when the members spend a lot of time together also outside official meetings, people living in a boarding school or a residential facility).

As the facilitator you cannot quite avoid this kind of phenomenon, nevertheless you can prevent its harmful manifestations which may lead to the disintegration of the group. Some participants might be subject to bullying or become the so-called scapegoats. What can prevent such behaviours from happening is to introduce a standard of discussing all the topics in front of the whole group, reacting to signs of conflicts and solving them together.



- A storm – a violent conflict in the group.

A clash might but does not have to turn into a storm, i.e. an open and ardent conflict engaging the whole group or the majority. Very often the storm does not happen. This does not mean that the group did not go through the stage of clash, only that the conflict was mild or hidden.

Milestones:

- Seeing open signs of resistance
- The conflict is revealed – there is a communication in the group about it
- Learning to deal with the conflict situation by the participants constructively.

Emotions and behaviours which can manifest while the group clashes.

| Emotions reinforcing the group | Emotions weakening the group |
|---|---|
| Sense of safety | Fear from opening up further and being judged |
| Friendliness towards the other people in the group | Aversion to some people in the group |
| Friendliness towards the facilitator | Tension, irritation resulting from feeling negative emotions in a group |
| Satisfaction, joy from dealing with a conflict situation | Fear of violating own interests, needs or values |
| Bonding with other people and trust that you can speak openly about your needs in front the group | Rejecting the whole or a part of the group, lack of trust |

Behaviours which can result from these emotions:

- **The participants observe each other and the facilitator.** It may seem that students are only busy with themselves and their tasks, when in reality they are observing the situation attentively, as they still feel unsure and not entirely safe. They catch signs of tension in the group and, what is especially important to you, they pay attention to what you do with revealed resistance, bending or breaking rules, conflicts that arise. If they see that you cannot deal with the situation, you pretend not to see, ignore, avoid revealing yourself, they will lose their trust and sense of security very quickly.
- **First relationships are formed, as well as first conflicts between the participants arise.** It is natural that there are likes and dislikes in the group. In the case of project groups it is the conflicts based on relationships which are most frequent and it is difficult to avoid them completely. More about these kinds of conflicts can be found in the subsection “Conflict its causes and types of conflicts”.





Conflict
– reasons and types
of conflict
p. 46

- **Struggling for control over the situation.** Some of the participants might have a strong need to control the situation – decide about the way of work, rules and tasks. They may try to dominate the peers or the facilitator. This can be expressed through ostentatious violation of rules, interrupting, taking the floor all the time and non-constructive criticism of ideas of others.
- **A non-formal leader appears or a couple of people are fighting for leadership.** When in the group there are a few people aiming at taking over the situation and strengthening their position, this might be a source of conflict. A right task distribution might be a solution to the problem, so that each person is responsible for an important part of the project. In this way, you minimize the number of potential conflict areas and direct the energy towards performance. Leaders who identify with a common goal and are accepted by the group can be a big source of support for each other (at the stage of conflict and later).

The role of the teacher at this stage of the process



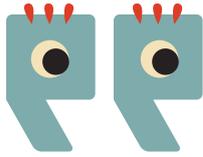
- **Treat the people who are objecting to how the group works as your allies.** Even though expressing objection can be uncomfortable and incite resistance, it will make the group go forward. This objection should be expressed clearly. Very often the role of the facilitator is to support the group in articulating it. Otherwise, it could be manifested in the second life of the group. The faster a problem or difference of opinions will surface, the better. You can discuss it as it happens with the whole group. Ignoring the critical voices or trying to mitigate the situation by the facilitator will not make the sources of conflict disappear. What is more, the participants will see that there is no place for open communication. Conflicts which have been quieted down and “swept under the rug” usually do not get solved by themselves but blow up out of proportion or gradually destroy the relationships in a group.
- **Catch any signs of conflict, reveal them and manage them.** Participants will not always be able to communicate their resistance, difference of opinions or contradictory needs. They might do it indirectly – resistance could be expressed through passivity and silence. This might be a big challenge because if you ask these people directly, they will say that “it is fine” but their behaviour will contradict them. The role of the facilitator will be to observe what is happening in the group and react to any signs of resistance – to notice them, name them and try to talk about them with the group. Revealing and naming resistance and conflict behaviours is a basic method of resolving them. The longer the conflict remains hidden, the greater the frustrations and bad emotions. They will contaminate the work of the group for a long time, they can also lead to a destructive and violent exposure of the conflict, after which the return to effective cooperation will be hard or even impossible.

Remember that whatever happens at the meetings is visible to all and, even if it does not concern everyone, it should be addressed openly in the presence of the whole group. Leave individual talks for situations which

concern individual persons. Usually, the group sees if there is anything happening and it should take part in the conversation about the given behaviour – this builds up a positive climate for future talks and binds the group together, it also teaches open communication.

- **Do not be afraid of a conflict as something destructive, treat it as an opportunity for growth.** Very often we are ready to deny some of our needs and expectations to be nice. Conflict is a word with a negative connotation. Sometimes you can hear that it was good to work in this group as there were no conflicts. It is not conflicts themselves which make us work well and function in a group but the way they are solved. By working with a conflict, we can come up with new, better ideas and solutions. At the same time, everybody can express their needs. A conflict, which has been worked through, can be a positive resource for the group.
- **Strive for open and clear communication.** Provide space to talk about things that bothers, annoys or frustrates people in the group. Talk, ask about opinions, model such a communication – speak about your feelings toward the behaviours of people in the group if they are difficult for you. Show that you do not treat negative comments as an attack. Do not be defensive about them. Instead treat them as a starting point for a conversation.
- **Share principles of giving constructive and open feedback with the group – make sure they use the “I” message.** You cannot speak about open communication without using the “I” message which makes it much easier to hold difficult conversations and to refer to behaviours of other people. You will learn its basic elements in the chapter about communication.
- **Show respect to everybody and try to understand where difficult behaviours come from.** Irritating behaviours often originate from resistance, negative emotions or what has happened in the second life of the group. That is why we try to uncover what lies underneath. Try to talk with the other person alone and ask them about the given situation and, if the behaviours concern a part of the group, open up the conversation to the whole group. Behaviours which disrupt your work are a perfect opportunity to model the I message to the group.
- **Refer to the rules and situations and in situations of the conflict coming out in the open, together with the group work out strategies to avoid it in the future.** Rules of conduct determined with the group could be a very efficient tool, unless they remain a poster on the wall. At this stage most often it can be seen whether the facilitator is consistent with the rules not only when they consider them convenient. Conflict situations are an opportunity to refresh the contract – alter it or add up to it. After such experiences the group will feel a stronger connection with the rules and will be able to refer to them independently or initiate changes.





Example

From the very beginning Adam wanted the attention and appreciation of the facilitator as well as of the whole group. He would take more and more space with every meeting. Very often they had nothing in common with the group activity. These were anecdotes or not very funny jokes. At the beginning the facilitator did not pay attention to it. She was happy with the boy's active participation. However, these behaviours irritated some people in the group. They thought that Adam was trying to elevate himself and show others how much experience he already had in voluntary activities. Some people were irritated that the meetings were taking longer than foreseen and they could not speak up about questions concerning the project. Quite quickly a part of the group started to show resistance towards Adam's behaviour. Whenever he spoke, snide remarks and smirks were evident. It became clear for the facilitator that she should react. It was evident to her that some people were clearly hostile to the boy. She asked the group to have a conversation.

She said she felt tension in the group and she wanted to discuss it, in order for the work to happen in a positive atmosphere. She asked the participants to remember the principle of speaking with the "I" message. The volunteers had learned what the message was and how to articulate it at the meeting during which the rules of cooperation were decided. They had no possibility of practicing it.

She asked (in relation with the rule of respecting each other in the contract) why Adam was ridiculed lately whenever he spoke up. At first everybody was silent and did not want to speak but after some time a few people said what they felt concerning Adam's behaviour and where their reactions came from. Adam also spoke about his perception of the situation. You could see that it was not easy for him to take in the criticism of the group but he did admit that sometimes he talked too much. Every member of the group could speak about his or her feelings and expectations. The facilitator made sure that the people kept to the "I" message, which was not easy and demanded constant reminding. In the end the conversation did not turn into mutual accusations. The group formulated the rule that when we you take the floor you do it briefly and to the point. The group has the right to give the person speaking that they are waffling by a gesture of making a wave with a hand.

The air was cleared up and although Adam did look downhearted, he continued coming and you could see that he was trying to change his behaviour. Thanks to the new rule it was easier for people in the group to communicate if he forgot. It was a very practical way to go through the "I" message and it became part of the group's language.

Conflict – reasons and types of conflict

5

J. Gut, W. Haman, "Psychologia szefa", 2nd edition, Gliwice 2014.

"It is not the conflict which is a source of misunderstandings and fight but the way it is solved"⁵. – This quote describes an important aspect of working with the group process. It is not possible for the people in the group to think and feel the same. Even if you are working with a very homogenous group of similar people, you will not avoid differences. There are many reasons for conflicts. As facilitators we are not able to prevent them all

from happening. Some of these causes can be foreseen. Nevertheless, you need to accept the fact that conflicts do come up in the group.

Major reasons of conflicts in the group:

- **Individual frustration of a participant.** In the case of a project group this could be a result of forced participation, misunderstanding the goal of the action, or not accepting a selected form of action by the group or their own tasks. It could also result from external factors, such as a personal situation etc.
- **Contradictory goals of the participants.** In a youth group this could result from different motivations. Some people in the group mostly want to be exempt from taking part in lessons, some want a good grade, and others are passionate about the topic.
- **Contradictory values of the participants.** Conflicts of values are usually not to be solved (nor is the project group a place for that), especially if worldviews are concerned. Nevertheless, they should be named and brought to the surface. Rules which can help people work together should be agreed on.
- **Rivalry about taking the place in the group.** A classical example is the rivalry of people wanting to perform the function of a leader. This can also be rivalry concerning working with given people or doing certain tasks.
- **Rivalry for the attention of a person facilitating the activities.** In youth groups a leader often has the authority so young people want to be appreciated and seen.
- **Disappointment in the way the group is facilitated.** The reason for the conflict is the behaviour of the facilitator, e.g. inconsistency (not respecting rules), a too authoritarian or a laissez-faire way of leading the group. This is not always something you have influence on as the facilitator. Your working style could be appreciated by some people and irritate others. Hence, it is more difficult to get a direct message from the group. Instead, you need to trust your intuition.
- **Disappointment in the behaviour of other participants**
- **Fear of new and difficult situations.**

Usually, the reasons for conflicts co-exist in a group and overlap with in each other. They are important to individual people to varying degrees. In general, they are linked to the fact that people differ in their needs towards the group and their functioning on the team. The idea of solving a conflict is to come to a situation where the members will communicate openly and look for solutions to meet everybody's key needs.

The aforementioned reasons can lead to a couple of different kinds of conflicts ⁶:

6

Typology of conflicts is based on the "circle of conflict" by Christopher Moore.

- **Relationship conflict.** Very common in groups, frequent in youth teams in which relationships play an important role. It is practically unavoidable. It is manifested through negative emotions which we have towards other people or towards the facilitator.
- **Values conflict.** It is a result of divergent systems of values. It is seen as unsolvable under the assumption that neither of the parties will change their point of view. Actually, it is an item worth discussing. It is important to set the rules which will allow further cooperation. At times educational projects are based on specific values. In that case if the members do not agree with their essence, it is best to let them leave the group. Let us imagine that a group has decided to organize a campaign to stop logging of a valuable stand of trees in a nearby forest. If in the group there are people convinced about the necessity of cutting down trees in order to secure the source of revenue for inhabitants then this could be a source of an unsolvable conflict of values.
- **Data conflict.** It results from a lack of information or their different interpretation and is caused by gaps in communication or a weak information flow. You can prevent it from happening in a project group almost entirely. If gaps in communication continue, then they can turn into a relational conflict.
- **Structural conflict.** It usually results from external circumstances, independent from the people in the group. Usually, it is caused by limited resources, e.g. lack of time or resources. If we do not have the possibility to influence external circumstances, this could be an unsolvable conflict (e.g. the school headmaster does not permit the students to leave classes early and so the group needs to meet late in the afternoon). In such a situation the group should decide whether they want to continue working together.
- **Interest conflict.** It arises if the possibility of meeting the needs of individual persons is limited. This concerns psychological needs (self-esteem, growth, respect), as well as material ones (money, material profits) and procedural ones (way of operating, problem solving). As the group is constantly evolving, this type of conflict is seen as inevitable. At the same time these are conflicts which can be solved if the people communicate their interests and are cooperation oriented.

When working with youth we will see relationship conflicts most often. It is difficult to find the initial cause of such a conflict – usually there are more than one and they overlap. Frequently it starts from an easily solvable situation but weak communication or divergent perspective on the same situation can lead to first negative emotions. At this moment, unless we focus on solving the situation, the conflict gets worse and other emotions from the past can come out. The conflict begins to be visible and usually at this stage people go deeper into it. There are more and more negative feelings and more people are dragged into the conflict. In the minds of the people involved stereotypes and prejudice towards the other side are strengthened, and little place remains for communication and real information about the causes of specific behaviours.

To sum up, relational conflicts are fuelled by:

- faulty communication
- opposite view of situation
- stereotypes and prejudice
- negative emotions.

A storm in the group is when the conflict is dynamic and emotional, engaging the whole group or some of the members. It is important to remember that, even if people in the group are not taking sides in the conflict, they are usually involved in some way.

The storm can lead to a group disintegration, if the facilitator ignores the signs or fears revealing the conflict. When different misunderstandings and emotions bottle up, then the tension can be escalated and work is much less efficient and the atmosphere is worse.

How do you know that the storm is coming? Signs of the coming storm are similar to other conflicts but they are more intense. If you see that malicious comments between people begin to appear often and this is happening in front of the whole group, if signs of hostility are growing quickly and the efficiency of the group is falling rapidly, then you can treat it as a sign of a serious crisis coming closer.

If you see such behaviours in the group, do not count that this situation will just blow over. The faster you show the group that you see the situation, the faster you will share it with them in the “I” message and invite them to talk, the bigger the chances that you will be able to solve the conflict in a non-destructive way. The group will probably see it as creative and constructive. The more violent the conflict, the bigger the emotional cost for the whole group and that is why all the people should be a part of seeking a solution.

Conflicts are the inevitable part of life and that is why every person has their own ways of reacting to them. Our choice of strategy will depend on our personal experiences, traits of character and approach to needs (our own as well as others). Among various strategies of reacting to conflict⁷ we can find:

- **Avoidance.** This is a situation in which a person ignores one’s own needs in favour of the other side. In this moment the key value is peace and quiet or the sense of security. People who react to conflict in this way could be seen as nice and non-confrontational but could often feel unfulfilled. If this method of dealing with conflicts dominates in the group, then actions might be conservative, careful and tense. We risk that this bottled-up frustration will transform into a violent storm at the least expected moment.
- **Rivalry.** It arises in the moment when the parties of the conflict are primarily focused on their own needs being met and see the conflict as

Storm in the group

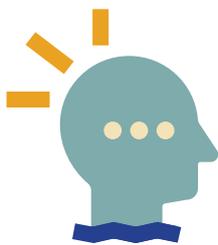
Ways of reacting to the conflict

⁷

The typology of conflicts is based on the book by A. Kozak “Proces grupowy. Poradnik dla trenerów, nauczycieli i wykładowców”, Gliwice 2019, p. 76-77.

a situation which could be won or lost. People who have a competitive approach often see relationships in a binary way, therefore they divide people in a group into friends and enemies. They do not see any possibilities of making any concessions. If such a type of conflict dominates in the group, it will be difficult to focus on a common success. At the same time, it will be much easier for the facilitator to notice rivalry, name it and deal with it within the group.

- **Adaptation.** This happens when one of the sides of the conflict thinks that their needs are less important and agrees to take the perspective and accommodate the needs of the partner. This could result from a lower confidence or wanting to maintain good relationships with others. Usually, this kind of behaviour comes up in conflicts with informal leaders of groups or people with a strong standing. In a way, some people cede their needs and identity in the name of bond with an informal leader. Such a conflict could stay concealed as the leader keeps getting positive reinforcements (is liked in the group), despite the fact that among members of the team, who do adapt, can accumulate frustration and a sense of being used.
- **Compromise.** The most frequent way of reacting to conflict is looking for compromise, i.e. a solution which is in the middle and which meets some of the needs of each party. This might not be the best solution as it involves giving up a part of one's needs by each of the parties. Everybody needs to give something up to come to an agreement with the other side. Compromise is problematic because both sides could stay dissatisfied and this could fuel new conflicts. On the other hand, the advantage of the compromise is that sometimes it is the only possible solution.
- **Cooperation.** It is a situation in which we acknowledge that the interests of all the sides of the conflict are equally important and we look for such solutions which make everybody feel a winner. Together we analyse what are the interests and needs of the different sides and then we look for ideas how we can meet them. An approach in which we step away from our initial positions and try to come up with new ideas, taking into account the interests of both sides can be very creative and lead to a synergy effect. However, if there is a conflict of contradictory interest the solution may require some elements of compromise.



THINK:

Think about conflict situations which you have been involved in. What ways of reacting did you choose? Were they similar or different, depending on the situation? What makes you choose such ways of reacting?

Regardless of what kind of reactions to conflicts dominate in the group, your task as the facilitator is to aim for an open conversation about needs behind the conflict and reinforcing the conviction that everybody's needs are important and it is possible to find a solution which will include the majority of them.

In this chapter we have stressed that the most efficient way of problem solving in the group is open communication. Successful implementation largely depends on the facilitator, caring for the sense of safety in the group, setting rules and the framework of the conversation. However, there is a tool which makes open communication much easier. It is simple and you could say that it works in any circumstance: the "I" message.

Using the "I" message when talking about our needs determines the ability to introduce open communication in the group.

The "I" message

REMEMBER:

It is best to start practising the "I" message in situations of lesser importance than an open conflict. The role of the facilitator is to model this message in the right way, for example when somebody is late to a project meeting repetitively. Instead of saying "You are late, how impolite" you can use the "I" message and say: "You come 15 minutes late for the third time in a row. This makes the work of the group more difficult because we only have 45 minutes for the meeting. It is difficult to end it on time. By agreeing to take part in the project, you accepted the time commitment. I would like you to make sure you come on time."



Self-reflection

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <p>The members of the group feel safe enough to express their resistance or dissatisfaction with what is happening.</p> | <p>I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree</p> |
| <p>Likes and dislikes are more visible in the group.</p> | <p>I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree</p> |
| <p>I know what to do when tension arises in the group.</p> | <p>I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree</p> |
| <p>Participants have revealed their needs and expectations towards working in the group – there was space to talk about them.</p> | <p>I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree</p> |
| <p>The people in the group know and can apply the “I” message in the conversation.</p> | <p>I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree</p> |
| <p>In conflict situations and with difficult behaviours I can name the situation and discuss it with the group.</p> | <p>I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree</p> |
| <p>I refer to behaviours which I find difficult in the group, by using the “I” message.</p> | <p>I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree</p> |
| <p>When I see behaviours violating the agreed rules, I react to them and I refer to the contract.</p> | <p>I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree</p> |
| <p>I avoid revealing and discussing problematic situations if this could negatively affect the atmosphere in the group.</p> | <p>I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree</p> |

MY CONCLUSIONS

Look back at your answers. What conclusions can you draw?

MY CHALLENGE

In the nearest time I want to focus on these elements.

MY GOALS

Think about the goals which you would like to achieve as the facilitator at this stage (remembering names of all the participants, assure that everybody understands the goals etc)

Think about your milestones as the facilitator at this stage.

1.
2.
3.

Exercises from the student's journal "Power-up" which can inspire you.

| Name of the exercise | Short description | Page |
|---------------------------------------|---|------|
| WHAT ARE YOU ACTUALLY FEELING? | Allows to explore one's own emotions | 27 |
| WHAT ARE THE OTHERS FEELING? | Makes it easier for the students to understand how others feel. | 30 |
| HOW TO FIGHT "WELL"? | Encourages reflection about what fuels conflict situations and facilitates their solution. | 34 |
| 3D PERSPECTIVE | Allows to look at the conflict situation from different perspectives and to understand it better. | 35 |

| Name of the exercise | Short description | Page |
|---|---|------|
| ALL DIFFERENT, ALL EQUAL | Shows how to notice the benefits of diversity in the group. | 65 |
| WE ARE ALL IMPORTANT | Shows how to notice the benefits of diversity in the group. | 66 |
| WHY IS THE WHOLE BAR OF CHOCOLATE BETTER THAN ONE PIECE? | Shows how to notice the benefits of diversity in the group. | 67 |
| HOW NOT TO LOSE ONE'S MIND IN A GROUP | Encourages us to think about ways of releasing tension in the group. | 71 |
| ASSOCIATIONS WITH ANGER | Collects associations with feeling anger | 52 |
| MY ANGER | Allows one to have a closer look at one's anger, to understand where it comes from and how it can be helpful. | 52 |
| HOW I COPE WITH ANGER | Encourages reflection on how to deal with one's anger | 55 |



Tools to work with the group



exercise:
Six thinking hats,
p. 78

exercise:
What are my needs and emotions,
p. 137

exercise:
Get to know your motions,
p. 141

The exercise **SIX THINKING HATS** is a good tool to solve conflicts resulting from different ideas.

A good starting point of a conversation about emotions which arise in difficult moments in the project can be the exercises: **WHAT ARE MY NEEDS AND EMOTIONS**. Ask the students to do the exercise and then discuss it with the whole group. The exercise **GET TO KNOW YOUR EMOTIONS** will work well if the conflict is revealed. Then every person can think it through and share the emotions they feel in this situation.

EXERCISE:

WHAT AM I STARTING OUT WITH? AND WHAT ARE MY TAKEAWAYS?



This is a basic exercise which enables everyone to have a say at the beginning and/or the end of the meeting. At the same time it is a source of feedback about the ambience in the group for the facilitator.

Time of duration: 5-10 min depending on the size of the group

Materials: none but you can make the exercise more dynamic by using emotion cards or by using physical movement, for example, throwing a ball.

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

Ask the people sitting in a circle to say what they are starting or ending today's meeting with (the day, the week etc.). It could be something they remember from the day or a word important to them, an association or emotion they are ending or starting with. The people speak one by one or call each other to speak, by throwing the ball (unless there are people in the group who have trouble moving or a weaker movement coordination) or by passing over a symbolic microphone.

The exercise can be varied by putting flashcards on the floor (from the Dixit game or other flashcards with pictures symbolizing emotions and allegories). Ask the participants to choose a card which reflects their feelings in the given moment. Each person quickly presents their card and says why they chose it (how it reflects their emotions).

If you use this exercise during next meetings, you will notice how the energy and mood is taking shape in the group. Naturally, there is no place for additional questions or deepened reflection in such a round but a skilled observer will easily catch signs of resistance, drop in motivation, negative emotions toward others, if they do come up. If you notice that most people in the group speak about tiredness, discouragement or negative emotions, you can refer to that in a different part of the meeting: "I can see that lately more of you have mentioned discouragement or expressed it indirectly. Let us talk about where it may come from and we will look for solutions together."

EXERCISE:

WHEEL OF EMOTIONS



This activity works well as an introduction to a conversation about communicating one's needs and emotions. It gives the facilitator basic information on wellbeing and mood in the group. Below you can see how to conduct the exercise at the end of the class.

Time of duration: 5 min

Materials: **Version A:** flipchart or packing paper with a picture of a circle divided into four parts; **version B:** small post-its or strips of paper

Each of the quadrants of a circle means a selected aspect of well-being in the group:

- “Today I felt good in the group.”
- “I have motivation for further work.”
- “I understand what and why I am supposed to do.”
- “I felt anger and irritation today.”
- “I feel tired or overwhelmed with tasks.”

Naturally, you can combine statements related to emotions with others, concerning the same project – the choice is up to you. Make sure the sentences are as precise and understandable as possible.

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. On the flipchart draw a circle divided into quadrants and ask the participants to do the same on a sheet of paper.
2. Add a statement to each of the quadrants.
3. [5 min] Ask the people to mark to what extent they agree with the statement (the more they see it as true, the closer to the middle of the circle they should put a mark). In version A students evaluate their well-being on the flipchart (this is how you gain a group picture, although it could be distorted by the lack of anonymity), and in version B they do it on their post-its (more material to make sense of but there is more chance for honest answers).
4. If you repeat this exercise regularly, you will have an image of how main emotions change in the group. If at some point you see a significant change, then you can speak about it during the next meeting.



EXERCISE: DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

It is a method which you can use in a moment when a conflict surfaces or when you want to bring it to the surface as the facilitator and discuss it with the group.

⌚ Time of duration: 45 min or more, depending on the topic and readiness of the group to talk

📎 Materials: principles of the “I” message written down on a flipchart, contract with the other rules; tea and cookies or anything that will create a positive atmosphere.

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. [5 min] Start by defining the situation and modelling the “I” message. Describe what happened and how this situation has affected you. For example: “I have noticed that when we have been working as a group

or in smaller groups, many negative comments or malicious jokes are directed at Kamil. This is against the rules we agreed on. Together we wrote down that we respect each other and do not mock each other. I feel bad about the fact that such behaviour has come up in our group and I would like us to talk about it and together think what we can do to avoid such situations in the future.”

2. **[5 min]** Say that it is important to you to discuss this situation openly and that everybody gets the chance to speak about their feelings and expectations. Recall the guidelines of the conversation (the “I” message and other agreements concerning communication). Stress the confidentiality of the conversation. Nobody can talk about the statements of others outside the group.
3. Encourage other people to speak how they feel in the given situation, what behaviours of other people are difficult to them and what kind of change they expect.

If this is a first conversation of this kind participants might be silent at first and nobody will volunteer. This is something you should wait out. As the facilitator you need to emphasize that without clearing the situation you cannot imagine further work in the group.

4. You can use an object for such a conversation, for example a “microphone” (a bottle, a marker). Only the person who is holding it in their hands can speak.
5. **[20 min or more, depending on the situation]** With time students will start to speak. The deeper the conflict, the more there is to be said. The role of the facilitator is to safeguard rules and reformulate messages given by people participating in them, interrupting when they hear “you” messages or judging. This will be difficult and tiring at first but it should quickly bring in a desired result because the group is going to be mindful of themselves.
6. **[10 min or more, depending on the situation]** At the beginning let people speak about the emotions they have. Once everybody has had a say, ask them about needs, what kind of behaviours they expect in order to feel good. The role of the facilitator in the second part of the conversation is to gather specific expectations, paraphrase them and check with people that concern them if they are understandable and possible to accept. All specific agreements should be written down.
7. **[10 min]** It is good to end the conversation with the question: how do you feel? In this way students will share emotions with which they are ending the meeting. If new topics have come up, agree to have another conversation.



STAGE 3. STABILISATION

Until recently, your group tackled such challenges as discord or a conflict between the members of the team. The clash could have quickly ended in a reconciliation or in a more complex conflict. Nevertheless, after such an experience of clashing, the group may need stabilisation. A new stage is on the horizon: stabilisation.



How will you recognize this stage?



- The atmosphere in the group is improving.

You can notice positive signs of the end of the former stage, such as relief from overcoming the crisis, satisfaction from overcoming the difficulties together, the will to be together, increased trust towards other members of the group as well as you as the facilitator. A sense of uniqueness of the group arises, desire to belong and to adjust to the others. Thus, your students will be relaxed, content and even excited to work on a project together. They might be more willing to speak of their expectations and needs than at the beginning.



- The team could also be tired and less motivated.

Overcoming a crisis can be costly. Members of the group might be tired (physically as well as emotionally) might not have the energy to take specific actions. You can observe a lessening of motivation to act which will manifest itself in being late for business meetings or not speaking up.



- Group thinking

The students probably feel that they are finally getting along. They might care more about keeping good relationships in the group and protecting the cohesion of the team than getting to know different points of view or approaching what the group is doing critically. We call this group thinking. In particular, group thinking can manifest in: ignoring information which is inconsistent with the opinion of the majority of the group, withholding critical opinions out of the fear of being judged by the group, being disrespectful to the people outside the group (“we are better”) and a strong conviction that as a group we are unanimous and infallible.



- Aiming for regaining balance

If, during the previous stage, the group (including you) had the impression that everything is upside down and many things were unclear, now the team will aim for regaining balance and transparency. What can help? Reorganising such areas as:

- goals, expectations, possibilities and needs of the people who are in the group
- roles in the group of the individual students
- group norms, i.e. the rules of the game.

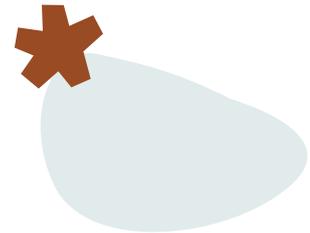


- Undesirable norms (anti-norms) can appear

The situation in the group could be seemingly stable but not healthy. Instead of making it easier for the team to cooperate, these developments will destabilise it. Someone might be excluded from the group or one person may take over the whole communication and will speak on behalf of everyone. Undesirable norms might surface at any stage of the group process but they are especially relevant in the phase of stabilising when the group has just experienced a conflict.

Milestones

- Checking out the goals, expectations and needs of the group
- Finding out how individuals feel in the group
- Looking at the group norms and updating them
- Naming undesirable norms (anti-norms) and generating rules which support the group.



You have probably discussed the topic of individual and group goals as well as what your students expect and need. Even so, the stage of stabilisation is a good moment to come back to it. You might ask why we should come back to something which has already been discussed and which has been settled.

First of all, if they have been together for some time and have been tackling first challenges, the group members feel much safer together, trust each other more and know each other better. This results in increased honesty in articulating and sharing expectations, desires and even what is too difficult for them. For example, at the beginning, your student might not have had the courage to admit that he is stressed by public speaking and would prefer to get a different task or another student would admit only after some time she prefers shorter project meetings.

It is equally important that the expectations and needs can change as the group gets to know each other and begins to act together. In order to translate the team's focus into action, you need to inventory your knowledge thus far. This will help you to include the personal goals of the youth in project planning.



Milestone:
Checking out the goals, expectations and needs of the group

**REMEMBER:**

You know how much time and space to spend with your group over goals, possibilities, needs and expectations. You can set your own minimal plan. It might be enough to look at the goal of the project. At this stage youth are more willing to share their thoughts about what they want to achieve through this project and what interests them.

**Milestone:
Finding out how
individuals feel
in the group**

One of the helpful elements to organise the life of the group is knowing the place the individuals take in it. The students' understanding of their designated position is important as well as the way that other people see it. If a member of the team finds their role unsatisfactory or unacceptable, this could result in a gradual withdrawal from the group, marginalising others, and causing a new conflict. This gives each person a transparency, a feeling that they are an important part of the group. This enables the group to regain balance after a conflict. This can also boost motivation if it has faded in the last stage.

**REMEMBER:**

The position that the student has in the team not only depends on that person but also on how they are perceived by other members of the group. Their role within the group needs to be embraced or at least satisfactory to the student, but could also be a source of frustration, especially when they are not included. The role of the facilitator is to make sure that each person on the team feels happy to be a part of it.

**NOTE:**

When we talk about a group structure we very often speak of a "team role". There are so many typologies of team roles, such as by Meredith Belbin, Elżbieta Sołtys or Marek Grondas. In our manual we have avoided them because, in our experience, introducing team roles can lead to putting people in boxes. This includes the youth as well as the facilitator. Instead, we encourage you to think about your place in the group and take into consideration the feedback from individual members.

Group norms are rules stating which behaviours are admissible in the group and which are not. They can be stated orally and written down in a form of contract. Some remain unnamed and not written down. They result from practice. When a specific behaviour or action repeats itself the group tends to acknowledge it as a rule. This second type of norms, less obvious and more difficult to grasp, is more powerful. It affects the group's adherence to the written contract.

Unwritten norms can impact the group members deeply. They determine the choice of topics and taboos, the time when we can speak up in the group, and the acceptable voice intensity (loudness). These norms are an important element of the existence of the group because they integrate it, organise it and create a sense of safety. Members of the group know which behaviours will be appreciated and which will be criticised.

The rules enable the group to save time and energy which people would otherwise have to use to decide whether a given behaviour can be seen as acceptable. They reduce the probability of an undesirable reaction. What is more, very often the group will decide which are the allowed exemptions from the norm. If, for example, the team decides that it is important to be punctual at meetings, members will be reluctant to break it. There might be an exemption from the rule such as health problems.



Milestone:
Looking at the group norms and updating them

REMEMBER:

Negative reactions from the group might be a stronger sanction for the person than your criticism as the facilitator. Make sure that the whole team agrees to the rules because it will encourage people to uphold them.



Rules start to emerge already at the first meeting. There is little chance that somebody will jump on the table and start dancing. Unless you are starting a dancing project and somebody wants to present their idea but that is a different story.

As you are working together, new situations do come up which require you to stop and check if your agreements are sufficient. Should they be changed or expanded? Let us imagine that during the first meeting we did not have the rule on how to discuss things together. Most probably at the next meetings the students will shout, interrupt, and fight. You will come to the conclusion that it is not possible to work effectively in this way. At that point you can adopt a norm that you will listen to yourselves mutually and refrain from interrupting. The group will be more open to suggest items in the contract than at the beginning. Firstly, the people know each other better and feel more at ease. Secondly, students have the experience of working together in the team and it is easier to name what they need in order to work better. You may find the exercise **A NEW LOOK AT THE CONTRACT** helpful.



exercise:
A new look at the contract,
p. 67



**Milestone:
Naming undesirable
norms (anti-norms)
and generating
rules which support
the group**

Anti-norms are rules which are followed by the group but they do not contribute to effective cooperation or good relationships between people. They are often a reaction to the lack of clear rules (unwritten contract) or when they are imposed by the facilitator. When the leader is inconsistent with the rules, they react differently depending on who broke the rule. Anti-norms could be a result of group thinking. The group might want to get along no matter what so it will protect it from unwanted norms. An example of the anti-norm is when the group never questions the formal opinion of the team leader. This may mean that the official norm, that the voice of each person in the group is equally important, has not been stated and approved. Anti-norms can divide the team, leading to a conflict. On the other hand, they can strengthen the team. You can address this problem through the exercise **HOW TO TRANSFORM AN ANTI-NORM INTO A DESIRABLE NORM**.



exercise:
How to transform
an anti-norm into
a desirable norm,
p. 70



REMEMBER:

The group will be particularly sensitive to whether the facilitator keeps the group norms. If you have decided that the given rule concerns everybody including you, they will notice if you break it. This will affect the group negatively. Other rules could be broken by students, there could be resistance and questioning your authority. The group will be equally affected if you do not react to anti-norms.

Emotions and behaviours which can come up at the stage of stabilisation

| Emotions reinforcing the group | Emotions weakening the group |
|---|--|
| Relief that a conflict is over | Feeling tired after a group crisis |
| Satisfaction with coping with a challenge | Discouragement with further work |
| Trust | A sense of being ill-adjusted to work and feeling rejected |
| A sense of wanting to find one's place in the group | Fear of upsetting the group |
| Desire to act | |

Examples of behaviours linked to the emotions:

- **Presenting one's point of view, talking about one's expectations and needs.** This is a very positive sign as the students trust each other and feel safe. Reinforce such behaviours and encourage people to speak up about what they think and what they need in order to feel comfortable in the group.
- **Presenting one's point of view, talking about one's expectations and needs.** This is a very positive sign as the students trust each other and feel safe. Reinforce such behaviours and encourage people to speak up about what they think and what they need in order to feel comfortable in the group.
- **Not voicing critical voices about the ideas of others, agreeing with them passively.** This behaviour could be a sign of violating the relationships and destroying the atmosphere in the group. It is important that the facilitator notices such situations and shows how to separate judging ideas from judging a person and appreciates a diversity of opinions.
- **Group members are less active and engaged, are late for meetings, do not speak up.** This could mean that the team is tired after the last stage and is less motivated. It is a good moment to come back to the goal of the project and the personal objectives and expectations of individuals in the group. This will remind the students why they are taking part in the whole venture.
- **Stressing the uniqueness of your group, elevating its position.** As a facilitator you will need to be mindful and rely on your intuition. On the one hand, this could mean that the team has bonded and enjoys spending time with each other. This is what we want. On the other hand, this could lead to a patronising attitude and lack of regard for the people outside the group.
- **Marginalising some people, undermining their position.** This could signal that an unwanted norm showed up in the group which allows some of the people in the team to be excluded. The facilitator should make it clear that this is unacceptable.



Emotions,
p. 131

REMEMBER:

The reactions above could be present in your group but do not have to be. There is no exhaustive list of emotions or behaviours for a given stage of the group process. Thus, you could find very different behaviours in your team. In the chapter concerning emotions, you will find clues how to work with different feelings of the group at any given stage of the process.



The role of the teacher at this stage



- **Check how the group is feeling after the crisis.** See how the team has ended the last stage of the process. Are the members motivated to act or are they tired or reluctant to undertake further project steps? Choose your reaction depending on the dominant approach in the group. If the group is full of energy, recall the group goals and begin working to achieve them. If, on the other hand, you see that the team's morale has gone down, work on boosting it. You can also devote a moment to take a second look at expectations, needs and goals of each individual in the group. This will help you to motivate the students.
- **Amend the contract.** Do name the rules in place, recall them at any time of the process. Check whether the rules are sufficient or if they need to be updated. Make sure that they are clear and acceptable for everybody.
- **Catch anti-norms.** Watch out for the dysfunctional rules on your team. When you come across them, do not ignore them. Try to name them and reformulate them into something that is constructive.
- **Aim for action.** Prepare your team for the action stage. Remind your students of the group goal, check with them whether it requires change and what kind. If you do have the ability, begin planning tasks already and share them with the team. Reflect on what you want to achieve for your goal as a group. The exercise **GOAL IN CONSTRUCTION** might be useful.

exercise:
Goal in construction
p. 71



REMEMBER:

Whether the change of the goal is major or small depends on many factors. What counts is being open to alter the initial proposal, even a bit, especially in relation to the expectations and possibilities of the group. For example, initially the group wanted to do an online campaign but it turned out that students want to do something offline and are now planning a flash mob.



Example

Some time ago a new student joined the team. The teacher noticed the girl stayed on the sidelines. She was shy and was not joining the activities. The other people cooperated with the girl during the exercises but in their free time they did not connect with her. The teacher was afraid that it would become a group rule which in longer perspective would menace the cohesion of the group and affect the relationships in the team. He proposed an activity through which the members could see the commonalities in the group (including the student who had just joined). He

asked everyone to stand in a row and said that now he would read out some instructions. If the statement was true for anybody, this person was asked to take a step forward. The sentences were so that everyone could take at least one step forward, “I have got a dog or cat”, “I have been bored during class”. Finally, the facilitator asked the group to share what was surprising, what they found out about each other and what kind of similarities they saw.

Self-reflection

| | |
|---|------------------------------|
| I know the expectations, needs and goals of each person in the group. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| The group is motivated to continue working together. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| The relations in the group improved in comparison with what was at the beginning. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| All the people feel content about their place in the group. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| Most of the key rules are written down and have been expressed clearly. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| Everybody in the group accepts the group contract. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| I am able to see the anti-norms in the group and react to them. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| My team knows what to continue doing. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |

MY CONCLUSIONS

Look back at your answers. What conclusions can you draw from them?

.....

.....

.....

MY CHALLENGE

In the nearest future I want to focus on these elements:

MY GOALS

Think about the goals you want to achieve at this stage, e.g. remembering all the names of the participants, making everybody understand the goals of the work etc.

Think about what your milestones will be as of the leader at this stage of the process.

1.
2.
3.

Exercises from the student journal “Power up” which might inspire you:

| Title of the exercise | Short description | Page |
|---|---|------|
| ME AND THE TEACHER | Facilitates the conversation about the expectations of the team towards the teacher | 43 |
| EVALUATION OF THE WORK OF THE PROJECT LEADER | Facilitates the conversation about the expectations of the team towards the teacher | 46 |
| BATTLING THE PROCRASTINATOR | Addresses the topic of the drop in motivation and discouragement | 56 |
| ALL DIFFERENT, ALL EQUAL | Shows how to see the meaning of each person in the group | 65 |
| EVERYBODY IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT | Shows how to see the contribution of each person in the group | 66 |
| WHY IS A WHOLE BAR OF CHOCOLATE BETTER THAN ONE PIECE? | Makes it easier to appreciate individuals in the group. | 67 |
| COMPLETELY DIFFERENT | Makes it easier to find your place in the team. | 69 |



Tools for working with the group

EXERCISE:

TEAM-BUILDING TREE



This exercise allows us to determine how each person sees their place in the group and would like to be there.

Time of duration: 30 min

Materials: One printout with the tree of the team for the whole group or a copy for each person, one board or flipchart.

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

- [5 min]** Put the picture with the tree in a visible place or give away a copy of a tree to each person. Ask everybody to think which spot in the illustration shows his place on the team best.
- [10 min]** Divide the team into dyads or triads and encourage them to respond the questions:
 - Which place in the tree did you choose ?
 - How do you feel about it?
 - What impacts the fact that you are here?
 - Where do you want to be?
- [15 min]** Sit down together with your team. Ask the questions:
 - How do you feel after this exercise?
 - What was the new thing you found out about others?
 - What was the new thing you found out about yourself?
 - What do you need in order to find yourself where you want to be?

REMEMBER:

Sharing such an experience in smaller groups or with the big group can be a challenge for youth. They need trust and a sense of security. Do that exercise once you feel that the group has bonded enough. You can also do it earlier but in that case this should be an exercise for volunteers, discussed during feedback.





EXERCISE:
A NEW LOOK AT THE CONTRACT

⌚ Time of duration: 35 min

📎 Materials: a written contract, post-its in two colours, flipchart, markers

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. **[10 min]** Hang the contract in a visible place. Divide the group into pairs. Give each person post-its in two different colours and encourage a conversation around the questions:
 - What made our work in the group difficult so far?
 - What has been helpful?

Write down the responses to each question on a corresponding colour of post-it.

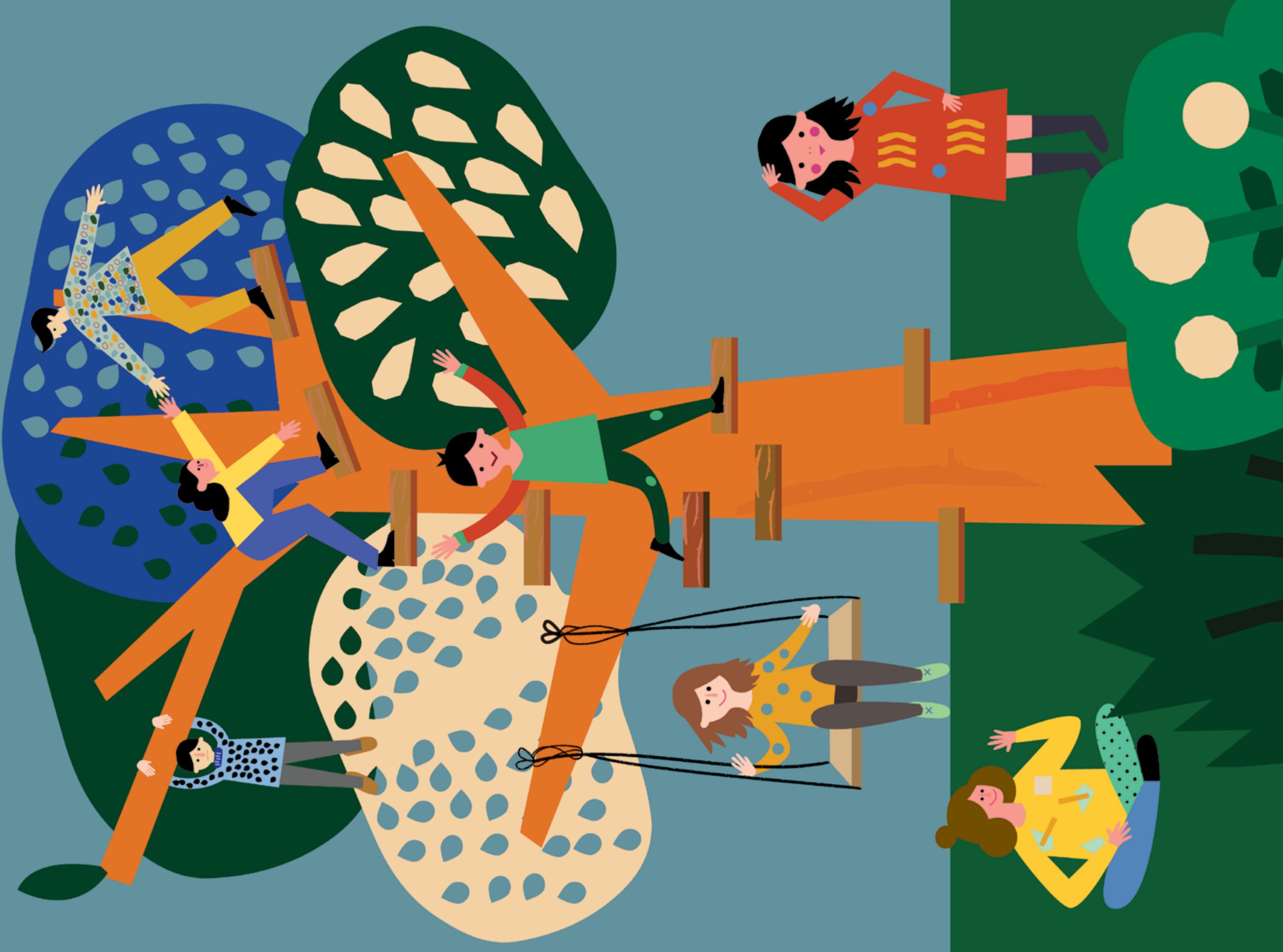
2. **[5 min]** Divide the board or flipchart into two columns and write down the questions from point 1. Ask students to stick post-its with responses in the corresponding column. Read all the responses and put them in similar categories.
3. **[15 min]** Initiate a discussion with the whole group. Ask:
 - Which rules from the contract are especially helpful?
 - What rules are you missing in the contract?

Write down all the responses. Pay attention whether you have managed to find rules responding to all the difficulties.

Difficulty: I felt pressured to give an answer.

Response: You can say “I will pass this time” if you do not want to talk about something.

4. **[5 min]** Read each of the new rules and ask the group which they want to include in the contract. Add those items which the group agrees about.



Examples of rules:

Rules

Which apply to students:

- I do my tasks on time.
- If I see that I might not make it on time or need help, I will inform the group immediately.
- I can say “I pass” if I do not want to take part in a conversation.

Which apply to the teacher:

- I make sure the contract is kept.
- I help if someone from the team asks for my support.
- I make sure that meetings do not take longer than we decided.

Which apply to everybody:

- We listen to each other and do not interrupt.
- We ask if something is unclear.
- Our phones are muted.
- We are allowed to make mistakes.

EXERCISE:

HOW TO TRANSFORM AN ANTI-NORM INTO A DESIRABLE NORM



 **Time of duration:** 10 min

 **Materials:** written contract

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. **[1 min]** Name the anti-norm which arouses your doubt – a habit, a practice or behaviour which came up in the group. For example, “Lately I have noticed something which made me anxious. I want to share my reflection with you.”
2. **[2 min]** Check if all the people in the group are aware of the anti-norm and if they see the problem. For example, “I would like to know how you see it. Do you think it is a difficulty? Does it worry you?”
3. **[2 min]** If a group also sees harmful effects of the anti-norm you could ask for permission to re-frame it. For example, “If we agree that it is a problem, then let us think of changes that can be made.”
4. **[2 min]** Recap what has been decided. For example, “If I understand correctly, we have agreed that from now on we will...” You can add the new item to the contract, if your group has agreed.



EXERCISE: GOAL IN CONSTRUCTION

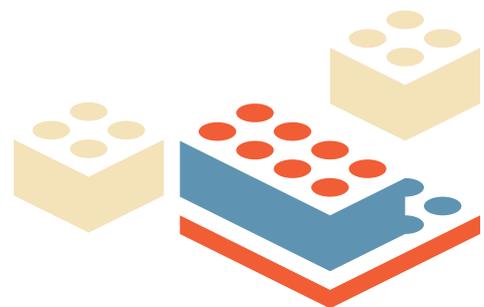
The purpose of the exercise is to boost the motivation of the group..

 **Time of duration:** 30 min

 **Materials:** Lego blocks

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. **[3 min]** Make a pile of the blocks in a place where each person will have easy access. Write down the goal of the project on the board or on a flipchart. Explain that you will ask the group to get creative and think about what will happen if you manage to reach your goal.
2. **[15 min]** If a group is up to four people, you can work together. If it is larger, divide it into teams of up to three or four people. Ask each team to show, using the blocks, how they imagine reaching the project goal. You can write down the questions which will allow students to activate their imagination.
 - What will change if we reach that goal?
 - How will others react to the change?
 - How will you feel?
 - What will you do?
3. **[12 min]** Ask each group to briefly present their project in response to the questions above. The other groups can ask about given elements of the construction.
4. **[10 min]** Together, group the same or similar ideas for student projects. You can write them down on a board or flipchart. Present the result of your work in a prominent place. It will be useful when planning other actions.



STAGE 4. ACTION



This stage is visible if you have managed to go through the former stages, especially the time of clash and stabilisation.

How will you recognize this stage?



- Being action-oriented

At this stage you will see the effects of passing successfully through the former stages of the group process. Not only is the group motivated to act but it is also aware of its options and can collaboratively take full advantage. What is more, the group is closely-knit and there is enough trust that individual people are ready to agree to concessions if the good of the team depends on it.



- Open communication

Trust in the group means there is more acceptance. Youth usually support other participants instead of attacking them. If you have managed to lead the group through the previous phases, the time has come to harvest the fruits of your labour. There is open communication on the team and an effortless flow of information. At this stage, students feel they can express their opinions, including negative ones, as they will not be rejected by the group.



- Seeing the benefits of being in a group

Mutual engagement is worth the effort. Students begin to see the double benefits for themselves (they can learn something) and the group (the group really cares to accomplish the final result). Students feel proud of being a part of the team. You can feel the desire to be together, excitement, enthusiasm and optimistic perspective towards tasks ahead.



- Taking responsibility for tasks

Pride in belonging to the group, positive emotions, trust and sense of safety pave the way to taking responsibility and even accepting necessary risks. The efforts of the team are results and goal oriented. At this stage, the team can work most effectively.

**NOTE:**

Until now, it was more important to develop a group, to set common goals and rules of the game. In the action phase, the facilitator focuses their effort on mobilising the participants to act.



- A new conflict may emerge.

When the group faces specific tasks in practice, they meet new obstacles and challenges. This can lead to conflict which will need to be solved together. Fatigue and a natural decline of motivation could arise in longer and more demanding tasks, especially if the results are not yet in sight.

It may seem that the group is “going in reverse” but that is only an illusion.

**REMEMBER:**

In order to reduce the risk of another conflict, you need to put emphasis on strengthening the coherence of the group. You can do that by focusing on the quality of relationships, celebrating successes and facing challenges together.

Milestones

- Monitoring progress in tackling the project tasks by the group
- Supporting the team in solving potential difficulties
- Ensuring good communication between team members

Emotions and behaviours which can come up at the action stage

| Emotions reinforcing the group | Emotions weakening the group |
|---|---|
| Excitement, enthusiasm about being in the group and doing things together | Frustration and disappointment in case of a difficulty, for example a conflict in the group, a difficult situation in the project |
| Pride in belonging to the group and doing something important | Fear of whether it will be possible to fulfil the commitments of the whole group and individuals |
| Trust in team members and the facilitator | Pressure not to let the group down and “mess up the task” |
| Trust, feeling of safety | Doubt whether it will work out to reach the goal |

Examples of behaviours linked to the emotions:

- **Volunteering to do tasks, sharing ideas with others.** This is a sign of engagement and motivation. Notice and appreciate such behaviours but stay alert so that none of the students start dominating the whole group.
- **Shouting over each other, ridiculing ideas of others, supporting one specific statement.** This could be a sign of how much students want the project to succeed – they push ideas which they think are best. In that case, recall the rules the group has adopted and remind them that discord and discussion should be expressed with care. In particular, wait until somebody has finished speaking to take the floor and do not shout. If you do not react in these kinds of situations, that could result in another conflict in school.
- **Supporting concepts that might be difficult to carry out, expressing the desire to do them in the project.** The group might have so much confidence that they will want to do much more than planned. You need to be attentive and sensitive. Do not dampen the energy and the initiative of students. On the other hand, show what can really be done. Remind them about the project agenda and invite them to think what the potential risks are.
- **Avoiding giving answers, delaying doing tasks, and rejecting help.** People who behave like that might not deal with their responsibility and at the same time feel pressure not to let the group down. It is good to talk with the student separately: ask how you can be of help and how to bring it up in a large group.
- **Reluctance to do tasks, delays, not speaking up.** These could be signs of fatigue and decreasing motivation. With longer projects this is natural. Even people who are deeply engaged in the project can also behave this way as they do not see the results of their actions yet. The facilitator can prevent this from happening, monitor the actions and make sure that individuals do not take on too much, find time for rest and enjoy the group's small victories.

The role of the teacher at this stage

- **Monitor whether the tasks are being carried out.** This is a time when your group wants to take over initiative and take independent decisions. Allow them. Give as much decision making to the team as it is acceptable to you and does not put the group or the project at risk. At the same time, keep an eye on the group's progress and look out for any situations needing intervention. Make sure that nobody takes more than they can handle. You will find the list of questions to monitor the group in the exercise **MONITORING TASKS**.



exercise:
Monitoring tasks,
p. 78



REMEMBER:

A tool to monitor tasks and their progress e.g. a poster on the wall or a Google chart is very helpful. At each meeting you can go back to the plan and go through the tasks, checking what there is to do, add new information, and update their status. For example, “nothing happened”, “in progress”, “done”. In this way, the group can see what is happening and how much more work they have left. You can also write down your milestones and ideas on how to celebrate them. This will reinforce the team’s motivation.



Communication,
p. 101

- **Do not underestimate communication.** Communication difficulties can appear even in a tightly-knit and engaged group. Misunderstandings and differences of opinion can easily happen in the hustle and bustle of trying to get the project done. Look out for these kinds of situations and solve them together with students. Make sure there is a smooth flow of information. Check if everybody knows what the agreements are.
- **Strengthen the team.** The stronger the team, the easier they will deal with tasks and overcome difficulties. Plan such activities which will reinforce the desire to be together on the path to reaching the goal.
- **Encourage a proactive attitude and problem solving.** Set the right level of challenge. Support but do not do their job for them. Use exercises that will activate creative thinking and enable youth to look at a problem differently. Satisfaction from solving difficulties together will keep up the momentum and help the group stay motivated. At the end of the chapter, you will find the exercise **STIMULATING CREATIVE THINKING** which can make this task easier.
- **Show how to cope with difficulties.** It is quite probable that something will not work out. This could undermine the team’s confidence and discourage action. That is why we take a moment to pause. Do not pretend that it does not exist. Name the situation and stress that working on a project is always risky and it is completely natural if something goes wrong. Transform this experience into a constructive talk with the group about what could be done to avoid a similar problem in the future. The exercise **COPING WITH FAILURES** will be helpful.
- **Allow yourself to be imperfect.** Let the group know that you foresee the possibility of changes in the plan and not everything has to go as planned. The important thing is that the team feels they can count on your support and appreciation, even if they will not carry out the project exactly as planned.
- **Let the group rest.** Encourage rest and celebrating small successes. Not every meeting has to be a working one. If you can, devote one meeting to celebrating together, like celebrating a milestone. This can boost the group’s motivation for further work.



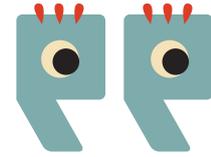
exercise:
**Stimulating
creative thinking**
p. 84



exercise:
**Coping
with failures**
p. 82

Example

The group was planning a campaign encouraging people to vote in the coming election. It included an information stand in school, a mock election and a flash mob with a few hundred people. Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic stood in the way and it was impossible to carry out the initial plan. Students were disappointed and discouraged. The teacher organised a meeting online and discussed an alternative plan with them. The team managed to organise an online debate on the possibility of organising elections online. The leader made sure to acknowledge the effort put into adapting to changes, as well as carrying out the project under adverse conditions and launching a new and up to date topic. He emphasised that even though the initial plan included more spectacular activities, the experience gained in reacting to this challenge was much more valuable.



Self-reflection

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| I allow the group to make some of the decisions in relation to the project. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| Each of the participants has their area of responsibility and autonomy. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| I assure there is an equal distribution of tasks, adapted to the potential of the individuals. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| I set challenges before the group which they can manage. I allow them to look for their own solutions. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| Communication in the team works well. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| I am able to intervene if I see that the work is not productive. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| My team is prepared to cope with failures. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| You are okay with the fact that something might not go according to the plan. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| I make sure that project work is interesting for my group. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| I make sure that there is time for rest and enjoying small successes. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |

MY CONCLUSIONS

Look back at your answers. What conclusions can you draw from them?

MY CHALLENGE

In the near future I want to focus on these elements:

MY GOALS

Think about the goals you want to achieve at this stage, e.g. remembering all the names of the participants, making everybody understand the goals of the work etc.

Think about what your milestones will be as of the leader at this stage of the process.

1.
2.
3.

Exercises from the student journal “Power Up” which might inspire you:

| Title of the exercise | Short description | Page |
|------------------------------------|--|------|
| HOW TO DEFEAT GREMLINS | Shows what to do in situations when students lose their self-confidence. | 24 |
| FAILURE AS CHANCE | Encourages us to look at failure as a chance to learn. | 51 |
| FAREWELL TO THE TORMENTOR | Instructs how to cope with difficulties in the project, such as lack of self-confidence or incertitude concerning the general direction. | 76 |
| BATTLING THE PROCRASTINATOR | Encourages discussion about the drop of energy and motivation within the group. | 56 |
| I APPRECIATE MYSELF | Makes it easier for students to see their strong points. | 73 |



Tools for working with the group

EXERCISE: MONITORING TASKS



Time of duration: 5-30 min depending on what the group brings into the conversation

Materials: none

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

Ask the group some prompting questions:

- How are you? How do you feel?
- How is doing tasks going for you? What is easier and what is harder? Why do you think it is so?
- Do you think that it will be possible to end the task on time? If not, what kind of changes should be introduced in the schedule?
- Do you need support in carrying out the task? What kind of support? Will my support or someone else's from the group be more useful?
- Are you meeting any challenges? What kind? How can we solve them?
- Does everybody know what to do? What needs explaining?

EXERCISE: SIX THINKING HATS



Six thinking hats is a method by Edward de Bono⁸. It can be useful to analyse the problem from different perspectives and choose the best solution. It allows us to see the discussed topic from many perspectives. It is based on choosing six colours of hats. Each colour represents a different way of thinking. During the discussion each person puts on one of the hats, trying to think and talk in the way symbolised by the hat.

The following observations inspired de Bono to design the method:

- It is very difficult to have a constructive discussion in the situation when you have emotions, facts, observations, beliefs and values at once. It is very difficult to recognize and separate them.
- Nowadays, a common form of discussion is about winning and competing. It is very difficult to keep a common perspective and look for best solutions for the group when the most important thing is to be right.

8

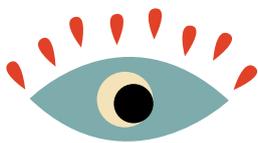
E. De Bono, "Six thinking hats",
UK: Penguin Random House
2017, p. 6-17.

When you use this method remember:

- Hats are not there to describe and divide people. They only present a specific way of thinking or behaviour. React if a hat is used to judge people: “She always wears a black hat.”
- Each person should be able to see various perspectives, to use hats in various colours. Avoid situations in which people have only one hat colour during the whole discussion.
- Emphasise that it is not about one side winning the argument. The real winner is the person who tries to feel the different perspectives represented by colourful hats.
- There are six thinking hats but a smaller number can be used (three or four), depending on what will be useful to the group in the given moment.

Why the method of six hats can be useful:

- Cooperation instead of competition. Participants look in one direction, they aim for common constructive results instead of fighting.
- Experiencing various perspectives. Each of the persons can see how it is to present the given approach in the discussion and what benefits it brings.
- Saving time. To come to a common solution and focusing on one way of thinking takes less time and effort than proving you are right to other people or doing many things at once, like having emotions, looking for solutions, thinking about facts.



NOTE:

The Six Thinking Hats is quite time-consuming so use it when you want to make key decisions. For example, you want to choose a project goal or group you want to reach. You can also use it in the clash phase as getting to know different perspectives will make it easier for the group to reach an agreement or a compromise.

 **Time of duration:** 45 min

 **Materials:** six hats (paper or made from other material) or other colourful objects (it could be six sheets of paper, six headscarves), a board or flipchart.

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. [2 min]] Choose a topic for discussion together with the group. You can ask the participants what they would like to talk about. Try to keep the topic important and engaging. This could be a dilemma the group is facing.
2. [8 min] Take out the hats (or their symbolic equivalents) and explain what the discussion will be about:

- Each colour of the hat represents a different perspective (You will find the colours of the hats and their meaning in the additional notes.).
 - Each person should choose a hat before speaking.
 - With the hat in the selected colour, the student should adopt a specific perspective (“Once you put the hat on, you play a certain role. It is important to feel that role as best as you can”).
 - Hats can be changed at any moment (“If you change the colour of the hat, so does your role. Try to be equally convincing”).
3. [25 min] Have a discussion through your thinking hats.
 4. [10 min] Present the findings from the discussion and ask the group if they agree. Check how the students felt during this whole experience.
 - How do you feel now?
 - What do you think we managed to work out?
 - How has it been for you to work with the thinking hats?
 - Which hat was the easiest to use? Which was the hardest? Why do you think it is so?



Additional Notes: Description of hats

White hat – gathers information, collects and arranges data, presents them, completes them but does not present any opinions. Gives information which is objective and possible to verify. It is logic-driven.

Examples of statements used by the white hat:

- I know that...
- I have checked that...
- According to the data I have...

Red hat – is responsible for impressions, sensations and emotions which arise in link with the topic. It is intuitive, does not analyse. Tells its subjective opinion.

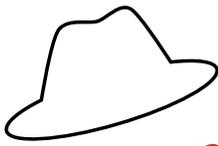
Examples of statements used by the red hat:

- I feel that...
- This makes me feel...
- When I think about... then I feel...

Yellow hat – responsible for the optimistic perspective. It shows benefits and possibilities which come from the idea or solution. This hat is enthusiastic and convinced that it will be possible to finalise the idea successfully.

Examples of statements used by the yellow hat:

- In this way we are going to gain...
- I can see that this could bring some benefits...
- The advantages of such a solution are...



Black hat – is responsible for a pessimistic outlook. It criticises and undermines the idea, looking for weak areas in the presented options. It is the opposite of the yellow hat.

Examples of statements used by the black hat:

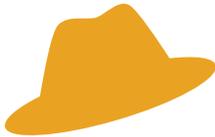
- The weak side is...
- Notice that this could cause....
- I disagree because...



The green hat – is responsible for other options than those which have already have been presented. Shows alternative solutions, other perspectives, is complementary to the existing ideas.

Examples of statements used by the yellow hat:

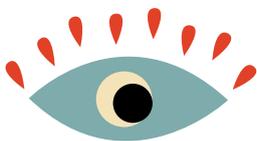
- Why don't we look at it this way...
- What if...
- I have another idea...



Blue hat – leads the discussion. Gathers conclusions, makes sure the conversation flows, mitigates conflicts if they do come up.

Examples of statements used by the yellow hat:

- And ... is speaking...and then...
- Let us sum up....
- Let us check if we understand it the same way...



NOTE:

Even though people can change the colours of the hats, the blue hat is quite specific. As the facilitator you can have the role of facilitating the discussion so that the team can focus on the other perspectives in safe conditions.



**EXERCISE:
SWAPPING PLACES**

You can do this exercise if there are competing ideas and the team is dividing into camps which are finding it difficult to come to an agreement.

Time of duration: 30 min

Materials: post-its, pens, flipchart or board

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. [2 min] Divide the team into smaller groups: the persons who support the first idea (presentation of the project in a traditional school gala) and the people who support the other idea (presentation in the form of a field exercise around the neighbourhood).

2. [10 min] Explain that the task of each group will be to find advantages of the other idea and weak points of one's own idea. The people write down their reflections on post-its.
3. [8 min] Invite the groups to share the effects of their work. Collect and arrange the post-its on the flip chart or board.
4. [10 min] Sum up the discussion. Say that the students will have the chance to look at the two ideas from a different perspective. The conclusions, advantages as well as disadvantages, are on the board. Ask the group for their thoughts when they see all of the arguments. Which solution seems to be most convincing and why?

EXERCISE: COPING WITH FAILURES



The assumption is that we have the right to make mistakes. It is okay that something did not work out. We can turn failure into something valuable and helpful.

Recall a situation which is linked to failure. The conversation might be delicate and difficult. If you want to use this method, remember that:

- It is easier to talk about situations linked to failure in smaller groups. Divide the larger group into subgroups if possible.
- Regardless of whether students speak in front of a larger group or a smaller circle, give the choice to share or not.
- If you ask the group to recall failure, give the right instruction so that the examples given by youth are engaging but not too personal. For example, linked to the family situation of the student.
- Before you encourage the team to think about their failure, try to anticipate what answers they might give. Think whether they might be too difficult to discuss.
- Give the students time for individual reflection.
- If you ask students to recall a failure, do it only with the intention of transforming it into a resource. Show the group how they can do it.

 **Time of duration:** 20 min

 **Materials:** flipchart or board

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. [3 min] Ask people from the group to recall a situation when something did not work out. Emphasise that whether they tell others about this situation is up to them. Helpful questions:

- What was the situation about?
 - How did you feel?
 - What were the consequences of this situation for you?
 - How did you cope?
 - What solutions do you see from today's perspective?
2. [7 min] Depending on the size of the group, divide it into teams of three or four people. Encourage students to talk about their situation. Ask the group to listen attentively when others are talking.



NOTE:

In order to divide the group into smaller groups you may use quotes from songs about failure – ask each person to draw on a piece of paper and find other students who drew the same excerpt.

3. [10 min] Sum up by asking questions:
- How do you feel? Was it difficult or easy to recall the failures?
 - How did you experience the conversation?
 - To the person speaking: How was it to speak of failure? What made sharing easier? What was the challenge? Why?
 - The people listening: How was it for you to listen about failure? What did listening make easier? What made it more difficult? What was a challenge? Why?

Write down the conclusions about what was helpful and what made it difficult to speak and listen. Note that even though it is not easy to speak about your failure, very often sharing with others enables you to see the situation from a different perspective. If you are a group and you have a common goal, sharing failures allows you to look for ways to avoid the pitfalls in the future.



EXERCISE: STIMULATING CREATIVE THINKING⁹

 **Time of duration:** 15 min

 **Materials:** flipchart or board, post-its, pens

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. [2 min] Write an abstract question on the flip chart or on the board:
- What arguments can you use in order to convince the school administration to buy an elephant as a school pet?
 - What useful things could you do for others if you could fly?
 - What could you do if you were a character in an action movie?

9

A modified version of the “Solo storming” described in the material “Team building Activities” [online], University of Wisconsin-Madison fyi.extension.wisc.edu/wi4h/citizenship/files/2018/04/YACH-Handbook-Ideas.pdf. [Accessed on 12.01.2021].

2. [2 min] Write an abstract question on the flip chart or on the board:
 - What arguments can you use in order to convince the school administration to buy an elephant as a school pet?
 - What useful things could you do for others if you could fly?
 - What could you do if you were a character in an action movie?
3. [5 min] Ask the group to write down all the answers they may have. Next, invite participants to choose ideas which the students think are most creative and ask them to write them down.
4. [5 min] Read the responses out loud.
5. [5 min] Sum up the exercise. Ask:
 - Was coming up with responses easy or hard? Why?
 - What can stimulate imagination, for example thinking about abstract questions?
 - How can we use this in our work?

EXERCISE:
TRIP TO THE NORTH



This exercise deals with communication in the team, decision taking, making agreements about work.

 **Time of duration:** 30 min

 **Materials:** list of objects, board or flipchart

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. [5 min] Explain to the participants that the group will roleplay a group of researchers who are taking part in the North Pole expedition. The plane crashes. Everybody is safe and sound but unfortunately they are 100 km from the base. There were 15 things in the plane which could be useful. Unfortunately, the group can only take 5 objects. They need to make a decision about what they will take.

List of things on the plane:

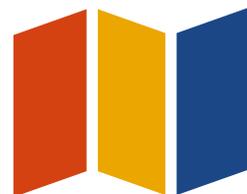
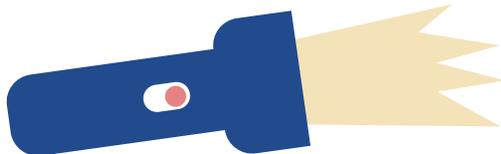
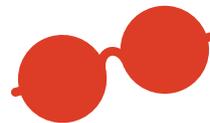
- flashlight with batteries
- sunglasses
- a rubber raft
- four woollen blankets
- box of matches
- transistor radio
- box of cereals
- thermos with coffee
- six chocolate bars
- map of the area
- an axe
- a pair of skis

- three pairs of shoes
 - a compass
 - a gun.
2. [10 min] Give the group time to make a decision. Ask them which objects were chosen.
3. [15 min] Sum up the exercise. You can use these questions:
- Why did you choose the objects?
 - What convinced you? What were the most convincing arguments? Why?
 - What helped you to make the decision?
 - Was the opinion of each person taken into consideration? Why?
 - How would you like us to make decisions in our group?



REMEMBER:

You can use this exercise at the stage of stabilisation when you make decisions and update them with the team.



STAGE 5. SEPARATION

How will you recognize this stage?

When the group is coming to the end of the project they are less eager to begin new actions. Students need to sum up what happened during their work together and think how they can use it outside the project and outside the group. They feel various emotions linked to the coming separation.

REMEMBER:

Separation is usually the last stage of a group process. If during the project the group structure changes, for example some people leave the team divides into smaller subgroups, it can also find itself in the separation phase. At that moment the most important thing is to rebuild the feeling of community in the team.



- Satisfaction with achieving the goal and finishing work

This is a time of joy and relief that the goal has been achieved and that the work is done. Tasks to which the whole team has committed itself are over and there is rest as well as more free time on the horizon.



- Reluctance to the coming goodbye

Young people could be going through a specific grief linked to the coming separation. The more effort, work, time and energy they have given in the whole endeavour, the stronger the feeling. They feel sadness, fear or even reluctance to end the group process. They have concerns about their relationship with others, once they will no longer meet on a regular basis. These feelings are much stronger in the group which is parting for good because it will be much more difficult to be in touch afterwards. If these are students from the same class, this stage could be much less complicated.



- Plans for staying in touch

Sometimes the members of the group will take the initiative to stay in touch after the project is over. Such plans will allow the team to feel that the bonds can survive after the project.

Milestones

- Summing up the work done together.
- Talking with the team about plans for the future.
- Ending the time together in an appreciative way.



Looking back at the team work and working on the project will give your students a chance to reflect and draw conclusions which will be useful after the action is finished. The participants could think about how they felt in the group, what was helpful and what made their job difficult. They indicate how happy they are with the results. They also look at the relationship with you, as facilitator, and the support they received whether and it was sufficient for them. They think about the gains and the sacrifices they had to make. This kind of inventory is not only good for the youth but also for you as the facilitator. This could be a real learning moment, a time of feedback and evaluation.

Your students know that their time as a group is coming to an end. That is why they may be asking the question “What is next?” more frequently. Some could already see new goals and make plans. Others could hope that this experience will be useful in the future and that the effort will not be in vain. They are not clear how to use it. Some will mostly view the project as something fun and will not see it as something useful. Thus, support the students in generating ideas for making future use of experiences from this project.



REMEMBER:

Think about the last training you have participated in. Remember what it concerned and what it was supposed to give you. What hopes or plans did you have afterwards? Did you manage to carry them out? To what extent? Was it an easy task? Did you see how to use the knowledge and skills at once?

In the same way, look at your students. If it was a challenge for you to see the links between the project and everyday life, think that for the young people this could be an insurmountable mountain. Help them climb.

Emotions and behaviours which can come up at the separation stage

Examples of emotions:

| Emotions reinforcing the group | Emotions weakening the group |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Joy from reaching the goal | Sadness and anxiety linked to the separation |
| Relief in relation to ending the work | Reluctance to part ways |

Examples of behaviours linked to the emotions:

- **Breakdown in discipline, jokes, conversations on the side, reluctance to do and finish tasks.** These behaviours might show that the group is feeling the separation approaching and it is more difficult to focus on work because the relationships on the team are more important. It is good to name this situation and address it, by giving the group time to think how they want to celebrate the end of the project and reaching the goal.
- **Keeping at distance, not speaking up or speaking briefly.** This could mean that the people have some difficult emotions about the parting or mentally they are in a different place. They feel that in this group and in this project they have done their part and are waiting for the official ending. It makes sense to respect this need and try not to push people to engage in group business. Try to include these members in summing up your work together and celebrating with the group. This will be a closure for you as well as the team.

The role of the teacher at this stage

- **Recap.** Encourage the group to reflect on how they evaluate the results of their work, what they are happy with and what they would do differently next time. Start a conversation about how the cooperation went, what helped them and what the obstacle was. Make sure each person in the group has the chance to speak up. Taking stock of the work together will give the team a sense of closure and will make it easier to draw useful conclusions for the future. You may find the exercises **TIMELINE** and **THE BULLSEYE** helpful.
- **Help the students see what the group has learned.** Together with every person on the team, have a look at where they started (what kind of knowledge, skills, expectations, goals, needs) and where they have ended up. This will enable the youth to use their existing experience gained from participating in other projects or through everyday life. Help them see that they did not waste their time and that taking part in the project was a good investment.
- **Support students in creating plans for the future.** Show the participants new initiatives where they can use what they learned. Take into consideration the interests and expectations of all involved individuals. Explain how engaging in new initiatives can help them grow. Show different possibilities and let the students decide by themselves what they want to engage in. You can use the exercises **MY TAKEAWAYS** and **A LETTER TO MYSELF**.
- **Show appreciation.** The team made an effort to carry out a project. Reaching a goal can be a reward in itself but your validation is equally important if not more important. Notice the efforts of the group as a whole but try to give each student a moment in which you will acknowledge their contribution. You may find the exercises **GOODBYE CARD** and **BOOSTER NOTES** helpful.
- **Celebrate with your team.** Give a moment of rest to you and your team. Plan a celebration together. A festive atmosphere will give the group the sense that they managed to do something big which is worth celebrating.



exercise:
**Timeline
and the bullseye**
p. 91

exercise:
The bullseye
p. 92



exercise:
My takeaway
p. 96

exercise:
A letter to myself
p. 96



exercise:
Goodbye card
p. 94

exercise:
Booster notes
p. 96

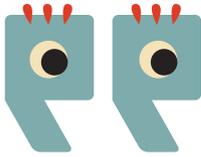


exercise:
Planning a celebra-
tion together
 p. 98

This will give the group a sense that you have been in this together and that you have reached so far. Celebration increases the chances that everybody will part in a good mood. You might want to use the exercise:

PLANNING A CELEBRATION TOGETHER.

Example



At the final meeting some people noticed that they do not know what they have learned while working on the project and do not know how to use this experience in the future. The teacher referred to those doubts and suggested that the students brainstorm what they are taking away and how this might be useful. She made sure that each student presented one item they were taking from the team work and gave one example of what they could do as follow-up in school or outside.

Self-reflection

| | |
|---|------------------------------|
| I did an evaluation of our work together which was valuable for the group. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| We talked about how it was for the students to work with me and other people. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| Each person from the group expressed their opinion during the evaluation. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| People on the team know what they have learned in the project. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| Students can say how they will use what they have learned in the project in the future. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| Students feel appreciated for their effort. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| Everybody in the group is happy with what they achieved. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |
| I know what I would like to do differently when facilitating a project group. | I disagree 1 2 3 4 5 I agree |

MY CONCLUSIONS

Look back at your answers. What conclusions can you draw from them?

MY CHALLENGE

In the next project I want to focus on these elements:

MY GOALS

Think about the goals you want to achieve at this stage (e.g. remembering all the names of the participants, making everybody understand the goals of the work etc.)

Think about what your milestones will be as of the leader at this stage of the process.

1.
2.
3.

Exercises from the student journal “Power Up” which might inspire you:

| Title of the exercise | Short description | Page |
|-----------------------------------|--|------|
| TIME FOR CHANGE | Encourages reflection on what you can engage in after the project is finished. | 24 |
| MY BEST DAY IN THE PROJECT | Enables the group to recall the best moments in the time of working together. | 51 |
| NEW BRAND | Helps to reflect on how the participation in the project has influenced communication competencies of the team. | 76 |
| I EVALUATE AND GO ON | Helps to reflect on how the participation in the project has influenced communication competencies of the team. | 56 |
| HOP UP! | Sums up what made it easier and what made it harder to work on the project. Includes the individual perspective. | 73 |
| PLANS FOR THE FUTURE | Encourages to think about what the people on the team want to engage in after the project ends. | |



Tools for working with the group



EXERCISE: TIMELINE

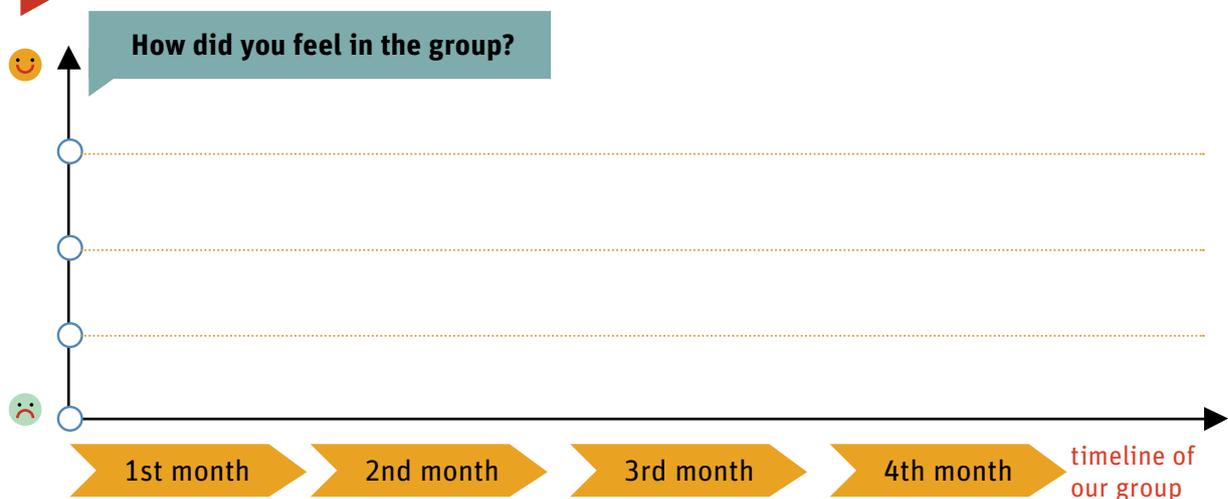
🕒 **Time of duration:** 35 min

📎 **Materials:** sheets of paper, pens or markers, board or flipchart

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. [2 min] Ask the students to draw two lines: a vertical and horizontal one. The horizontal one will show the timeline of the work of your group. Divide the time line into time units such as weeks or months depending on your history. The vertical line corresponds to the state of wellbeing of each person in the group.
2. [5 min] Each person from the group draws a line on the diagram which illustrates how they felt in different moments of the project.
3. [8 min] Divide the group into pairs. Encourage students to talk about what influenced their diagram. Ask about significant rises and drops on the line:
 - What impacted the growth on your diagram?
 - What impacted the drop on your diagram?
4. [15 min] Gather the team. Encourage everyone to talk about the person he was paired with.
5. [5 min] Sum up the work. Notice the correlations between fluctuations. Ask whether it was an easy or hard exercise. Why?

Example of a completed timeline:



REMEMBER:

This kind of analysis can be very valuable for you. Look through the students' diagrams and see if you observe any similarities or differences. What could have impacted the biggest shifts on the timeline?



EXERCISE: THE BULLSEYE



 **Time of duration:** 5 min

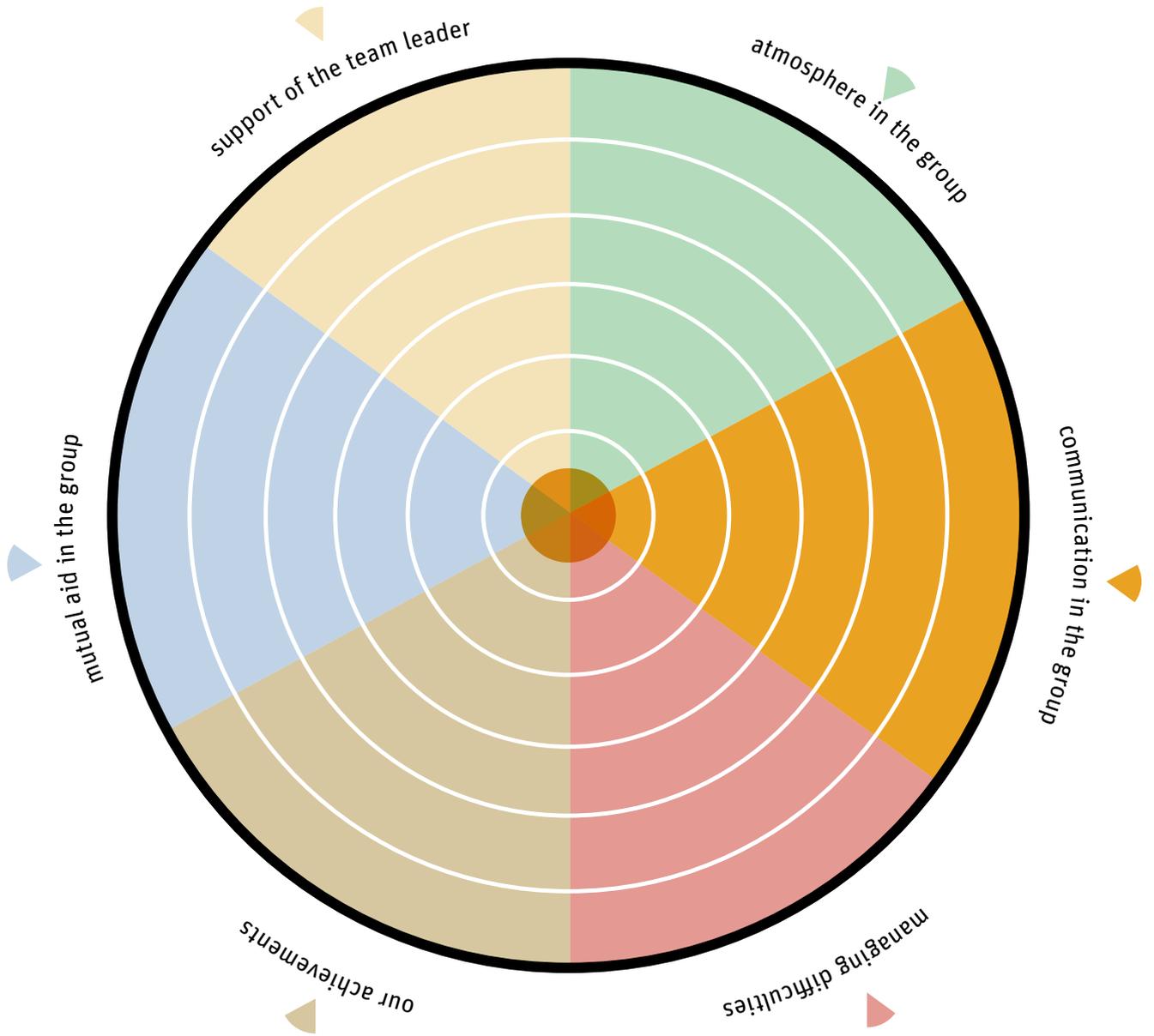
 **Materials:** flipchart, coloured markers, post-its

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

- [2 min]** Draw a bullseye on the flipchart. Divide it into the following areas:
 - support of the team leader
 - atmosphere in the group
 - communication in the group
 - managing difficulties
 - our achievements
- [8 min]** Hand out coloured pens to students. Ask the group to think how they would mark each point on the target. Explain if needed what each area covers and give examples. Then have each person come and put their mark in each area (the closer to the centre of the target, the higher the mark).
- [15 min]** Talk with the group about the given areas:
 - What influenced your mark?
 - What could make it higher?

Note the findings from the discussion on the flip chart or stick post-its.

BULLSEYE



EXERCISE:

WHAT I AM TAKING WITH ME



 **Time of duration:** 45 min

 **Materials:** As many worksheets as there are people in the group, flip-chart or board

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. [2 min] Explain to students that in this exercise they will be able to think about their goals for the future and see what kind of experience they acquired in the project that can help them.
2. [12 min] Give out worksheets. Depending on the size of the group, divide it into teams of three or four people. Encourage each person to respond to the question:
 - What have you learned while working on this project?
 - What strong points have you noticed?
 - What are you taking with you?

The other people in the team can ask for more cues if something is unclear. Next each person writes their responses on the worksheet.

3. [5 min] Ask the students to individually reflect about new goals they have on the horizon. Add that these do not have to be goals linked to school or other projects but also their interest or a planned career path. Ask them to write these goals down. Each person can have as many goals as they want. If needed, you can help students to clarify the goals.
4. [5 min] Ask each person to choose one goal you can share with the others. Encourage them to have a look at which of the skills can be useful in meeting that goal.
5. [12 min] Have the other students share the results of their work, including their selected goals and plans in the same groups they had worked before. The other people can ask questions or suggest what else could be added to the plan.
6. [5 min] Sum up the exercise. Ask volunteers to share their plans with the large group.
7. [4 min] If you have enough time, ask the students to reflect individually. What do you want to say before undertaking a new challenge? The response can be put in the right place on the worksheet.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SAY TO YOURSELF BEFORE TAKING UP A NEW CHALLENGE?

WHAT ARE YOU TAKING WITH YOU?

WHAT STRONG POINTS DO YOU SEE?

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?



GOAL

GOAL

GOAL

WHAT CAN YOU USE TO ACHIEVE IT?

WHAT CAN YOU USE TO ACHIEVE IT?

WHAT CAN YOU USE TO ACHIEVE IT?

EXERCISE:
LETTER TO ONESELF ¹⁰



Time of duration: 15 min

Materials: sheets of paper, pens or markers, board or flipchart

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

- [10 min]** Encourage students to think about what they have learned, what they have experienced while working together. Next, show questions written on the board or flipchart and ask to journal about minimum three:
 - What did you most like in the group? What did you like the least?
 - What have you tried for the first time?
 - What challenge was the hardest for you? How did you manage to solve it?
 - What was the most important thing for you while working on the project?
 - Who did you meet? Which of these relationships are important for you?
 - What are you most proud of?
 - What skills have you used? What skills have you developed?
 - How can you use what you have learned in the future?

Emphasize that you will be happy to read the reflections of your students but you will not read them without their consent. They can save the reflections for themselves.

- [5 min]** When everybody finishes writing, give out envelopes to the group. Explain that in a month's time you will send them notes as a reminder of what they felt and what they found important, having finished their actions together. Ask them to write down their first and last name, fold the sheet of paper and close the letter.

Before sending the letter, you can add your own comments to the person. A word from you will be a form of acknowledgement.

EXERCISE:
A GOOD-BYE CARD



Time of duration: About 15 minutes per card

Materials: A4 sheets of paper or postcards, pens

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

Your students will feel appreciated and seen if they receive individual feedback at the end. If you have no means to have a conversation individually, you can give them a short letter. You can use the following format.

- [15 min]** Before you start writing, think about each student in the context of the project and their relationship with you as the leader. Think about what you want to tell this young student.

¹⁰

Modification of the exercise "Mirror Mirror" described in the material "Team Building Activities" [online], University of Wisconsin-Madison. www.fyi.extension.wisc.edu/wi4h/citizenship/files/2018/04/YACH-Handbook-Ideas.pdf [Accessed on 12.01.2021].

For:

I appreciate:

I see in you:

For the future:

I want to tell you that:

Thank you for:

EXERCISE:
BOOSTER NOTES



Time of duration: 20 min

Materials: post-its, flipchart

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

- [5 min]** Hand out a few post-its to students. Ask them to write a positive message to a different person in the group, in particular to say what they are grateful for, such as, “Thank you for helping me to prepare the presentation” and what skills they appreciate, like, “I think you are a great listener”. The note should be stuck to the back of the person it is meant for. Make sure that each person gets the note. You can ask the students to draw their names from the pool.
- [5 min]** Give the group time to read their notes in silence.
- [10 min]** Discuss the exercise. You can ask:
 - What did you learn today?
 - What surprised you especially? What was it?
 - How did you feel reading the news about yourself?
 - How did you feel reading positive news about others?
 - What do you think you can give to each other? Why do we appreciate each other?

EXERCISE:
PLANNING A CELEBRATION TOGETHER



Time of duration: 15 min

Materials: post-its, pens, flipchart or board

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

- [5 min]** Tell the group they can plan a final celebration together. Encourage others to think about other members of the team and what they like and how they would like to spend the time. Ask them to write down three things which make celebrating a good time for others.
- [10 min]** Listen to students. You can ask questions such as:
 - What are the resemblances among your ideas? What are the differences?
 - How do you feel when you think that celebrating could be important for someone else, if not for yourself?
 - How do you want to celebrate as a group?



FREE THOUGHTS

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing.

Chapter 3



FOUNDATIONS OF THE GROUP PROCESS

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COMMUNICATION

In this chapter you will learn:

- **What are the foundations of the group process.**
- **How to nurture communication, emotions and motivations while working with the group.**
- **How the communication, emotions and motivation change at given stages of the group process.**

Before you enter the classroom, pause for a moment. Listen to the buzz after the bell.

What are the students talking about? What are they laughing at? Who is speaking and who is listening? Are they shouting over each other? Or perhaps it is silent in the classroom? What is their body saying? What can you see in their eyes or their hands? Are they making gestures? Are they holding their arms loosely on the sides or are their arms folded across their chests?

The word “communication” comes from the Latin communion (“a sense of fellowship”) and *communico* (“make common”). One of the foundations of the group is an efficient, sensitive and open communication style. Without it, it is impossible to build a well-bonded team and have a common goal.

What happens to communication at given stages of the group process?

During the **formation** of the group, there is a dominating sense of insecurity, anxiety and curiosity in people and tasks at the same time. In the group process this is the time of greatest dependence on the teacher. The group’s attention is focused on you as the facilitator. You initiate the conversation and suggest team-building exercises. At this stage, clear and specific messages make the participants feel safe, more engaged and proactive. Students need messages which allow them to be more grounded. They should understand why they have found themselves in the group and how they will work together.

REMEMBER:

A contract will help students to feel safe and introduce the rules of communication. Remember that the contract needs to be developed together. It is the first important moment which will mark your dialogue (or the lack of it).

Invite the students to sit in a circle. Sit down, take a few deep breaths and calm your thoughts. Smile at the students. Open up your body posture and look with attention and curiosity. Allow your students to feel you are interested and open.

Remember to write down items concerning communication. Very often students will say things automatically, the way they were in their former school or project group. These can be such rules as: we listen to one another, we listen attentively, we use the “I” message, we do not interrupt, we do not judge.

How do children and young people understand these rules? How do we understand them?



Active listening relies upon the acceptance of the speaker, tolerance for their emotions and views. Active listening shows that not only are you listening but also that you hear and understand. You express interest, and that shows that what the other person is saying is important to you. Sometimes we assume that, as young people are not mature enough, they do not know how life works and we can ignore what they are saying. Children often hear such things at home, e.g. “What do you know about life, you will understand once you grow up”, or at school, “No discussion!”. It is said that children should be seen and not heard. Young people often complain that nobody listens to them. Teachers and parents ignore what the people in the group have to say and their opinion is not treated seriously. Asked to do a project, they are like tools to execute tasks (make a survey, cut out an invitation, hang posters).

Do you ask your students about their opinion? Do you let them decide? Do you support their decisions? Realistically, not every idea can be carried out. With their heads full of ideals, the students do not always understand this. On the other hand, we have stopped believing that many things are possible. Talk to them. Do not say “No, because I said so”. Let them understand the situation and ask questions, talk it out and show their anger. Many times such a gesture of listening and giving the space to talk is more important for the group than pushing through their idea. Youth really need to be seen and heard.

What is authentic listening about? It is not just about focusing on what somebody is saying but listening on many levels at once. It means noticing word choice, physical expression of emotions, and observing body

Authentic listening



language. Try to catch contrary signals and the unspoken needs and emotions. Active listening is an attempt to understand all of the signals. For this to happen, youth need space where they feel safe and accepted.

EXERCISE: ACTIVE LISTENING

Time of duration: about 30 min

This exercise is recommended when:

- The group is forming and you want the students to get to know each other.
- You want to introduce principles of attentive communication.

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

Divide the group in pairs so that there is person A and person B.

Encourage person A to tell their partner something about themselves. If you see that students have a problem, suggest a few questions:

- What do they like doing after school?
- What did you do over summer holidays?
- What film or series have you seen lately?

Give the pairs three minutes. Next, come to the circle and ask person B to tell the rest of the group what they learned about their partner.

Now the partners swap roles. There is a small change though. Having finished the conversation, the listener will say what they have learned.

After the exercise has finished, discuss:

- How was the listening different in these two situations?
- If you didn't have to retell what your friend said later, would you have listened as attentively? Justify your answer.
- When did you feel most heard? What did the listener do, how did they behave? When did you feel unheard?
- What did you do so that the speaker knew and felt that you were really listening and you were genuinely interested?
- Did you ask your partner for additional explanations or information? Why yes and why not? What were these questions about?
- Were there any times when you were so absorbed with what you wanted to say that you did not pay attention to what the other person was saying?

Thank the group for their openness to the conversation and the other person. Say that active listening is a difficult task on which we work all our life. Emphasize that listening without interruption does not mean that we agree with the other side – it only means that we try to communicate efficiently.



Active listening to the other person is only half the success. The other side of it is to communicate one's needs clearly. The aim of effective communication is to be understood. We need to communicate clearly and concisely. Let us avoid understatements which make the person have to guess (which can lead to conflicts) and make them extract the information from you. The first step towards clear communication can be to recall the situation when you felt unheard or misunderstood. What did you say then? What did the other person ask about? A clear message has two steps: first think and then speak. Learn to reflect on what you want to say and the consequences. Even if you are sure that the other person understands you perfectly – ask.

Remember that words stay there forever. Some add wings, some put you off for life. It is vital for everybody but especially important for a sensitive teacher. Acknowledge and mobilize, give feedback, but be careful what you say. Your message, as leader, might have a very different weight than a casual exchange between the students.

EXERCISE:

**WAIT... I AM TRYING TO CONNECT
THE DOTS OR HOW TO TALK SO THAT OTHERS UNDERSTAND ME**



 **Time of duration:** 30 min

 **Materials:** computer with internet, projector, sheets of paper and hard pads, pens, list words from various traditions, eras, degrees of formality

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

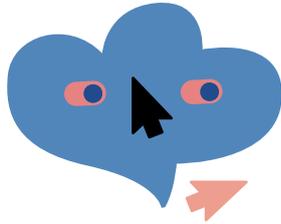
Before the students enter the classroom, project a meme on the board with the phrase “What’s up?” There are a lot of memes with this sentence if you look in the search engine. You can create your own using a generator, such as <https://www.memegenerator.net>.

Once the students enter, ask them: Have you had a situation when you were asked the question you saw on the board? Have you ever wanted to say or ask for something so that the other person understood it differently? What was the situation?

Give students flashcards with phrases or words from youth slang, regional dialects, archaic English. Ask them to decode it.

After their presentations ask how using these words could distort communication. Ask them what clear communication means and what the difference is depending on who we talk to.

You can ask students to create their own memes on clear communication. They can use ready-made formats (e.g. a photo of a cat with a speech bubble) or create their own.



HELPFUL CLUES AT THE FORMING STAGE

Members usually meet because they have a common goal. However, it can be understood differently. What can you do to support communication with the new team?

- Give detailed information about new tasks and rules.
- Ask about expectations.
- Respond honestly.
- Encourage students to ask clarifying questions if they are confused.

First meetings could be stressful so encourage them to:

- Talk about themselves and their interests (this will strengthen the connections in the group).
- Listen to others, asking open end questions, paraphrasing, nodding.
- Tune into one's own needs, naming them and communicating them clearly.

During the **clash stage** there is an atmosphere of conflict with emotional resistance to any requests by the team leader. This could be a moment of resistance or even mutiny against the leader. This could cause tension which could lead to infighting, division into sub groups or even a disintegration of the team.

Very often the communication is distorted. Students adopt different strategies, from aggressive confrontation to mentally checking out or even leaving the group. The group stops listening and does not pay attention to what others are saying. People are waiting to interject and present their point of view. They listen selectively and hear what they want to hear. They tend to interrupt and finish others' sentences in order to fit the message to their own purpose.



EXERCISE: ME OR YOU?

🕒 **Time of duration:** about 20 min

This exercise is recommended when:

- You want to release tension in the group.
- You want to show students how to solve conflicts.
- You want to practice the principles of the "I" message.
- You want to develop new rules of communication in the group.

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP:

Invite the students to sit in a circle. Ask everybody to close their eyes and take three deep breaths. Say: “When was the last time you heard the beating of your heart? Keep your eyes closed, listen to it. Allow it to calm down. Now open your eyes.”

Ask students to join in pairs. Each pair will have a roleplay:

1. Your sister has been playing on the tablet for an hour. She promised she would finish the last round and give it back to you.
2. You try to revise for a test during school recess and your classmate has been fooling around loudly.
3. Your friend uploaded a picture of you on Instagram even though you asked her not to.
4. You lent a game to your friend and he was supposed to give it back to you after a week. Three weeks have passed.
5. Your friend was making fun of your new shoes in everybody’s presence.
6. You lent your favourite CD to your friend and he brought it back damaged and scratched.
7. Your friend is one hour late to the meeting. Finally, he comes and pretends nothing happened.
8. Your friend has been showing your text to others even though you asked them not to.

Ask them to roleplay the scene using the “you” message (“You are malicious, hopeless.”) and then repeat the same task but using the “I” message (“I feel upset when you”...)

Encourage students to develop the scenes and experiment. It can be more than one exchange.

Harvest the learning by asking:

- What have you learned?
- How did you feel in the roles?
- How did you feel in the roleplay when using the “you” message and the “I” message?
- Did you manage to come to an understanding?
- What did your conversation look like in both cases?
- What was the hardest thing for you?
- Did you ask for an explanation? How?
- What kind of arguments did you hear?
- Which model of conversation would you like to use in your group?
- How can you adapt this exercise to the communication in your group?

Emphasize that the “I” message not only works in conflict situations but also when giving praise and expressing appreciation.

You can also put a short summary of it in a visible place.



The “I” message

The “I” message allows us to express our feelings and expectations towards the other person in such a way that they are not perceived as hurtful and they do not affect the self-esteem of the receiver. The problem is named in detail and explained so there is no room for guesses which might create misunderstanding. In addition, the “I” message is solutions-oriented.

There are four steps of the “I” message: (1) describing one’s feelings, (2) naming a specific behaviour of the other person (3) describing the consequences of the behaviour for you (what it does to you).

We can use a simple construction:

- I feel... (expressing one’s emotions)
- When you... (describing situation based on facts)
- Then I am... (naming the consequence)
- I would like to ... (expectations for the future)

It is important to follow some principles. Discuss them with the group.

1. Speak in your name only, not in general.
2. Stick to the facts. Talk about what happened, what you saw or what you experienced, not about what you heard of or other indirect things.
3. Do not judge. Do not speculate about the intentions of the other person, focus on the effects that the behaviour had.
4. Give examples of concrete behaviours.
5. Show understanding! Do not accuse. Do not assume negative intentions.

These principles can be elements of a general contract or be proposed before a more difficult conversation.

The “I” message is not taught by our culture so it needs to be learned. This requires a lot of attention from the facilitator during the first attempts of the participants. At first, correcting participants can be tiring but with time they will start to notice when they fail to use the “I” message.



Nonverbal communication

At the clash stage the nonverbal communication (body language) is very important. Examples of nonverbal communication are: clenched fists and pursed lips – anger, crossed arms and crouched back – withdrawal, blush – anger, embarrassment or agitation, waving hands in the air – anger. Our bodies will often say more than we would like.

We communicate our friendliness through eye contact, warm tone, and modulated voice which is neither whisper nor shout and often standing at a distance which is close but does not violate the other person’s comfort zone. Do you know how your body behaves when you do not like somebody?

The ability to understand body language can help you with group work, especially with students who have problems with communicating their needs and emotions (they are shy, withdrawn or do not know how to name what is happening to them).

EXERCISE

I RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS MY BODY IS GIVING ME

 **Time of duration:** about 10 min

 **Materials:** printed sentences to fill in

This exercise is recommended when:

- You want to introduce the notion of non-verbal communication.
- You want to teach students to interpret physical cues.

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

Give each person a paper with the exercise.

1. When the discussion is boring, how do you usually express your feelings?

verbally:

nonverbally:

2. If a friend upsets you, how do you express that?

verbally:

nonverbally:

3. If somebody says or does something which hurts your feelings, how do you show that?

verbally:

nonverbally:

After the exercise is over, ask a few people to act out one of the situations nonverbally. The rest of the group is to guess what kind of situation is portrayed.

Invite the students to discuss:

- Is it difficult to guess information from the gestures, facial expressions, and body language? Justify your answer.
- What is non-verbal communication? What is it composed of?
- Are we able to identify intent on the basis of nonverbal messages? What mistakes can we make?
- What does nonverbal communication give us?

Nonverbal communication is not only the stance of the body (how we sit, stand, walk) or face (frowning, smiling) but also proximity to the speaker. It is whether we keep eye contact, what the tone of our voice is (quiet and frightened, loud and authoritative, balanced and confident) and any other sounds we make such as sighing, crying and grunting. Even our appearance impacts how we are perceived by others.



REMEMBER:

It is not about being an actor and controlling each gesture or mouth twitch. Try to be natural. Encourage students to look at what the body is communicating and whether the verbal messages are consistent with the nonverbal one. Pay attention to yours.



EXERCISE:

MY NONVERBAL MESSAGES

 **Time of duration:** about 10 min

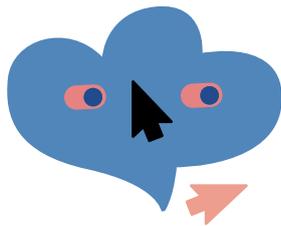
 **Materials:** sheets of paper

Ask the students to divide the sheet of paper into four columns and fill each one.

- First column: list of nonverbal cues such as crying, shouting, doing different things at the same time, silence, touch, talking to someone at close range, interrupting, looking around, rapid gestures, towering over the speaker, folding arms, looking intensely into the eyes.
- Second column: students mark “+” or “-“ if they like what the speaker does.
- Third column: students mark “+” or “-“ if it contributes to the communication with the other person.
- Last column students mark “+” or “-“ if they do the gesture themselves.

| Non-verbal cues | Do you like when the speaker does that? | Does it contribute to the communication? | Do you do that? |
|---|---|--|-----------------|
| crying | | | |
| shouting | | | |
| doing different things at the same time | | | |
| silence | | | |
| touch | | | |
| talking to someone at close range | | | |
| interrupting | | | |
| looking around | | | |
| rapid gestures | | | |
| towering over the speaker | | | |
| folding arms | | | |
| looking intensely into the eyes | | | |

Ask if there are people who would like to share their insights after the exercise. Finally, encourage students to think if there are any behaviours and nonverbal signals they themselves would like to work on.



HELPFUL TIPS AS THE STAGE OF CLASH

- Talk, talk, talk.
- Allow time to be silent and cool off for both your students and yourself.
- If the conflict intensifies and the words become insulting or aggressive, pause. Invite the group to the circle and remain in silence for a few minutes. This is also a form of communicating.
- Always use the “I” message. At first, follow a rigid process so that the students remember it.

Open communication and the desire to cooperate are both aspects of the third stage of **stabilization**. This stage is a moment to suggest exercises supporting effective communication. Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is a model of communication rooted in empathy and honest expression, described by Marshall Rosenberg. The group, which has passed the clash stage, is now stronger. They are more prepared to give feedback and support each other in honesty. The group is starting to be bound by an identity and speak a common language. This might also be a good moment to include social media such as Facebook, Instagram or Tiktok. Earlier, this style of communication might have created confusion because of unclear messages, lack of eye contact and voice intonation. Now, it can be an additional space to exchange thoughts.

Try to use the stage of stabilization to secure closeness inside the group and create a sense of community which will translate into a sense of responsibility for the project’s success.



EXERCISE: THE PROTECTIVE COAT

 **Time of duration:** about 20 min

 **Materials:** Sheets of paper or postcards, pens

This exercise is recommended when:

- You want to build more connection in the group.
- You want to awaken the creativity of the students and support symbolic thinking.

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP:

Invite the students to sit in a circle. Divide them into pairs, for example by drawing postcards. Those people who draw the same postcard are a pair.

Explain the task:

Imagine that one of you is a dressmaker and the other orders a coat. Decide who will play which role. The goal of the dressmaker is to sew a coat in their head. Imagine what it would look like. This is no ordinary coat. It will protect you whenever needed.

The role of the dressmaker is to describe the coat to the other person. You can close your eyes and begin like this: "I want to give you a magic coat. It is made of ..." Let yourself be carried away by your imagination.

After the two people in the pair have given coats to each other and share their experiences, give each of them some time to draw and colour the coat they received. In this way, they will be able to come back to their coats whenever needed.

Assure the group that the greatest success of the project is not to carry it out but to build up a group whose members will support and cheer each other on.

During the **stabilization** phase, the students who stayed in the group have moved beyond the clash stage. It is an important moment to keep up the rapport and ensure a good atmosphere. Working in a team where the members like each other is energizing and a friendly atmosphere makes it easier to overcome difficulties.

EXERCISE: TOWARDS THE SUN



Time of duration: an entire day

This exercise is recommended when:

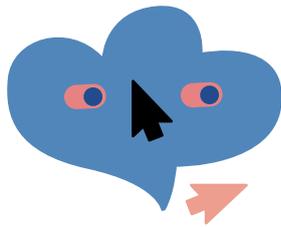
- You want to show the importance of a positive atmosphere in the team.
- You want to recall the principles of nonverbal communication.

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP:

Suggest this unusual exercise to students which is about smiling warmly to acquaintances as well as strangers you meet on your way from school, on the bus, in the shop and while walking your dog.

The next day, ask the group about the reactions and whether people returned the smile? How does it feel to give others some of your kindness and joy? How did they feel when somebody smiled back or did not? Is it important for them to smile when working in the group?

IMPORTANT: Tell the students they can feel bad at times and they need not force themselves to smile, if they are not in the mood. We have the right to various types of emotions and they should be accepted.



HELPFUL CLUES AT THE STABILIZATION STAGE

- Propose activities which will allow the team to get to know each other better and connect more.
- Remember about using the “I” message.
- Ask regularly for feedback and have the participants submit it to each other.
- Review the contract with the group. Think about whether you are keeping the agreements. Does any of them require clarifying or removing? Would you like to add anything to feel better in the group and communicate more efficiently?

At this stage, communication is not only based on honesty but empathy as well. The group sees the effects of their work, feels joy and likes to meet not only during the project but also outside. This ignites a sense of unity which, in turn, liberates empathy. It is easier for the participants to feel the emotions of others and to perceive sadness, joy and fears. This is the time when you can work with students on empathy, nonverbal communication, understanding the other person and their emotions.

This is the time when quick decisions are often needed. The finale of the project can be very unpredictable; needing simple and efficient communication. It is a good time to discuss with students the principles of one and two way communication and to think about how and when to apply them in the project.



EXERCISE: ONE WAY AND TWO WAY COMMUNICATION

Time of duration: an entire day

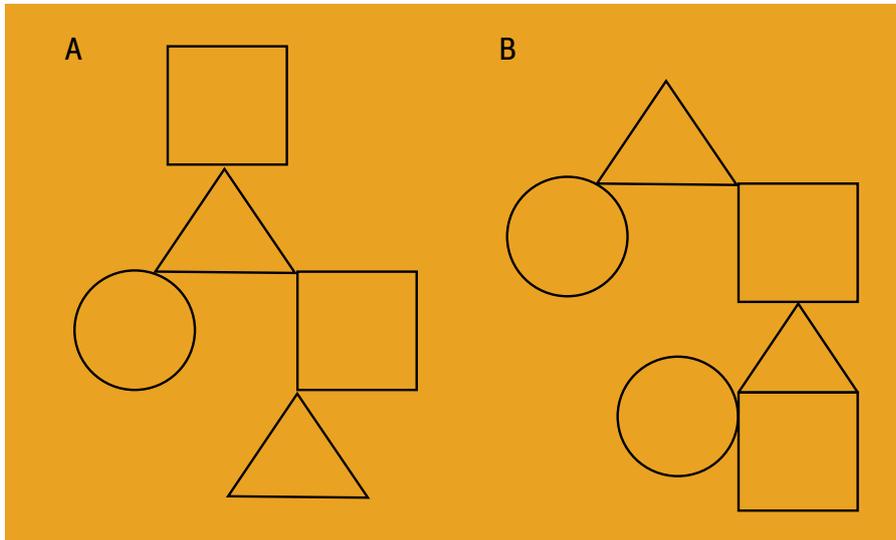
Materials: sheets with geometrical figures, empty sheets, pens

This exercise is recommended when:

- You want the group to understand one way and two way communication
- You want to prepare the students for receiving and understanding short messages (at times necessary during the project work).

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

Assign one person or ask a volunteer to come forward. This person sits on a chair opposite the group and gets a piece of paper with a drawing on it. Their task is to describe it as clearly as possible so that the group can recreate the pattern of figures on their sheets.



The exercise has two steps:

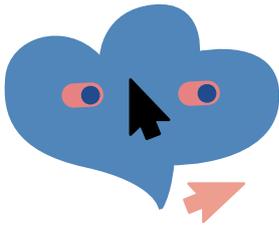
Step 1: The person presenting is facing the group and is not allowed to answer any questions.

Step 2: The person presenting is still facing the group but is allowed to answer questions.

Harvest the learning by asking:

- What was easy and what was hard for you in this exercise?
- How different was the communication in both of these exercises?
- When does it make most sense to communicate as in the first example (one way) and in the second one (two way)?

Introduce the definition of one and two way communication. As the name suggests, the first one entails communicating in one direction and is fast. It works one way and is fast and so works in urgent situations, like the finale. Two-way communication goes in two directions between the sender and the receiver. It takes more time, is more precise and feedback allows the speaker to clarify as they speak. This kind of communication allows us to resolve doubts about the details of the project.



HELPFUL CLUES AT THE ACTION STAGE

- Encourage the group to cheer each other on: “That was great!”, “I am so impressed!”, “I am sure you can do it.”.
- Check if the flow of information is working in the group. Does every person know what they are responsible for and if the group is exchanging information on their progress.
- Find time for an informal meeting. When ending the project, tying up loose ends is one must. It is equally important to chat over coffee. Thus, aside from discussions about posters, writing to the media or building the play set, find time to talk about how you are.

The stage of separation can be a time of mixed emotions; the joy of carrying out the project but also the sadness of the group having to say goodbye. Take care of the group. Allow them to say goodbye. Show them sadness is natural. Do not be afraid to show it or talk about it, if you feel it.

Celebrate! Talk about what you are proud of and give yourselves the space to recall funny moments from the project. Go out for pizza or have cake and coffee. Talk!

The essential element of communication at this stage is to give each other feedback. Every person in the group should have the chance to hear what others want to tell and also have the space to speak. It is a time when students practice revealing their reflections about others and putting them into words. They learn the rules of constructive feedback – giving feedback as well as accepting it.

At this stage, students receive feedback from the leader but they should also be able to share their own thoughts with the teacher. In this way, they can experience closure, understand the project and discover what they have gained.

A second form of feedback is the popular sandwich. At times, it can be overlooked but it is a useful tool of evaluation. As it has quite an elaborate form, it will work well as a feedback loop between the facilitator and the student. It can be also used in smaller project groups.

Start with positive feedback. Emphasize the strong points of the other person, the way they contribute to the group and communicate with others. The second layer of the sandwich consists of areas for further improvement. You need to refer to facts in order to show the concrete change and benefits it will bring.

The first layer of the sandwich allows the student to accept the other, more difficult, part. The person who knows in advance that their work has been seen and appreciated will be more willing to accept the feedback about improvement. Show students that the second stage of feedback supports their growth and is not a personal attack. It is not that they are completely on the wrong track or that they will have to improve overnight.

There is one more layer to the sandwich. This is expressing our conviction that we believe in the other person. This is also the moment when we appreciate the effort they contributed to the project. Use a specific example. Season the top of the sandwich by recalling the strong points of the person; motivating them to continue working.

Structure of the sandwich

Basis: positive feedback, appreciation (showing specific situations and their meaning for the group).

Middle of the sandwich: what to improve

- Precise facts (no emotions)
- Describing how it has influenced you and how you feel about it. Not how this has impacted the group. Talk about only your own emotions.
- Give clues about problem areas and changes they can make. (“If you want to work on that, you could...”)

Top of the sandwich: arguments, benefits which working on this area will bring, once again expressing appreciation, invitation to a conversation (“What do you think about it?”)

What do you think about this?

arguments, benefits which working on this area will bring, once again expressing appreciation, invitation to a conversation

Request: I would like to... How to do it?

Precise facts (no emotions).

Impression: How has this impacted me?

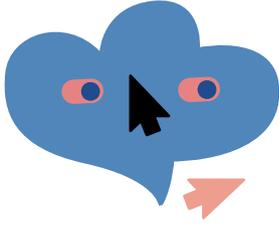
Event: clearly and concisely

Prompt: What and how it can be changed
 (“If you want to work on that, you could...”)

Positive feedback, appreciation

(showing specific situations and their meaning for the group)

Based on the notes from trainings by the Psychological Centre of Elżbieta Sołtys, 2014
www.pezmi.pl



WHAT IS HELPFUL AT THE STAGE OF SEPARATION

- Remind the group of the elements of constructive feedback:
- Speak directly to your colleague.
- Evaluate the behaviour not the person.
- Be specific, describe the behaviour.
- Do not make quick assumptions.
- Do not judge circumstances where your friend had no influence on the outcome.
- Share ideas, not advice.
- Give as much as the person accepting feedback is willing to take.

What else should you remember at every stage?

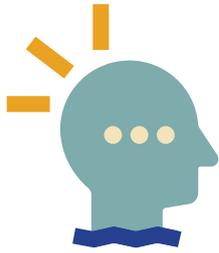
Most of the exercises are preceded by inviting the students to the circle. Regardless of the stage of the process a circle is a great communication tool. Why is it so powerful?

The circle became a form of meetings once fire was discovered. People started to gather around it and tell stories. Today, very often, people sit facing the speaker or performer whether in cinema, theatre, or the classroom. Even in buses, we sit in rows one behind the other, without the possibility to look one another in the eyes. Sometimes we organize meetings at large rectangular tables which, in fact, separate us. In a circle we are all equals. A circle is like a pot and the empty space in the centre is a place where we can create something together. A circle as a form of communication upholds what is important for all parties. It highlights common values rather than problems.

A circle can also be seen metaphorically. In order to feel a part of it, you do not have to sit physically around it. In particular, this occurs in later phases of the process when the group is connected through the project and privately. Being in the circle means being part of the community. The actual call to form a circle (“Take the chairs and create a circle”) is at the same time a symbolic one. There students will find a safe space to talk, exchange ideas and open up and show their emotions.



MOTIVATION

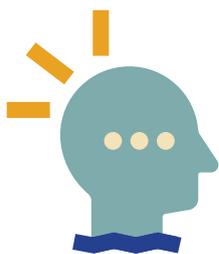


STOP FOR A MOMENT AND THINK.

What motivates you to work with the group during a project? When do you have more motivation? When do you feel your energy and your engagement drop? What could motivate members of your group to take action or become part of a group? Looking at your own motivation and the motivation of your team will allow you to understand and lead the group process better.

Working with the group and being a part of it, you need energy, a drive. This is motivation which stimulates action. At the beginning the energy is directed at making the group and finding common goals. At a later stage, when the group is able to work efficiently, this energy is appropriately distributed for given tasks, maintaining the integrated team and meeting the needs of its members.

The level of motivation changes during the project. You can observe a different sort of energy at the beginning of the project and as you go along. Some are motivated by doing something together, learning new and interesting things, working with institutions or organizations, and embracing the topic of the project. For others the need to be appreciated or gain popularity in the group could be motivating. In other moments, exhaustion and burn-out could become apparent. Some tasks will engage the group quickly. Others will be a challenge. This is quite natural. Motivation is a process. It fluctuates. Do not get discouraged if you notice that either you or your students are less motivated.



Think about what kind of language you use in order to motivate others? How do you motivate yourself to work with a group? What do you find convincing? What supports your motivation?



EXERCISE:

WHAT IS YOUR LANGUAGE OF MOTIVATION LIKE?

- Time of duration:** 20 min (depending on the size of the group and how far you want to go into discussion)
- Materials:** A board to write down ideas

This exercise is recommended when:

- You want to get to know the group and understand what motivates the members, in particular in the group forming phase.
- You feel that the motivation is dropping, especially during the stabilization phase.

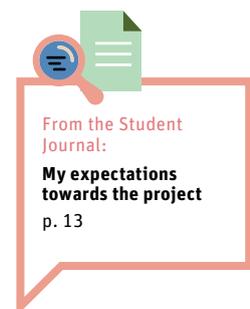
You can do an advanced version of the exercise with an in-depth analysis and self-reflection in older grades. Older teenagers will be more aware of which messages strengthen and which ones weaken motivation. With younger kids you can treat this exercise as an excuse to talk about how different things can encourage us to act.

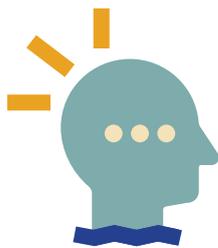
EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. Encourage participants to individually consider what arguments they use to motivate others.
2. Clench your fist and ask the group to persuade you to open up your hand (only with words, no touching). You can ask them to write down proposals or present them before the group.
3. Collect the ideas and discuss:
 - What kind of arguments do you use?
What is your language of motivation like?
 - Which arguments are efficient and why?
 - Which of the techniques can you use while working with the group?
4. During the harvesting of the exercise, emphasize that each person can have different motivations. This is applicable to your project. Our individual levels of motivation and energy can be higher or lower. Find out what works for you so that you can draw from the right source when you feel that you have no strength.

What happens to motivation at given stages of the group process?

At the **group forming** stage you are just learning the needs and values of students. Take this moment to notice if the people are truly motivated to join or if they are resistant, as they are not here by choice. The difficulty with getting to know the expectations and needs of the group is the initial caution and uncertainty of the members in expressing their opinions. Give your group and yourself time. Ensure that there is a good atmosphere of the meetings, they are held regularly and in a friendly place. Encourage the students (but do not pressure them) to reflect on why they are here, what they would like to do, learn, and spend their time in order to achieve that. Feel free to use the exercise **MY EXPECTATIONS TOWARDS THE PROJECT**, found in the student journal. First stage of the group process is marked by curiosity towards others, activities, topics and our way of working. What can be demotivating is the fear of the unknown, making an effort, a new working method, low self-esteem and low self-confidence. The participant will be asking themselves whether they will make it and if there is a place for them.





Stop for a moment and think about the conditions under which you are starting the project. What kind of expectations, needs and resources are you bringing into the group? Write them down. You will be able to come back to them later. How can this project meet your own needs?

While the group is **clashing**, you might feel some of the participants are less motivated to work or cooperate with you. You already know that this difficult and tense time is when the group identity is shaping. It can indeed be a time of growth. Nevertheless, the weakening of your place of leadership, visible tension, exhaustion and rivalry can dampen your allotted energy to lead the group through the crisis. Use this moment to focus on problem solving, give others space to speak, and share their frustrations. What will be most motivating for the group? Using observations instead of judgements, giving them your attention and time, supporting collaboration, and remembering to put the team first. Focusing just on the task and the schedule can have a demotivating effect.

Even though the group has overcome the crisis and has reached the **stabilization phase**, it can be tired and stagnant, having moved through so many strong emotions. Use the fact that the group is feeling more confident having handled the crisis. Review the goal and alter, if necessary. What can be motivating for the group? Looking at the division of tasks, expressing acknowledgement, looking for meaningfulness, showcasing the strong points and interests of the members of the group.

At this stage, the group is working together to execute tasks. What can energise the group? The friendly and inclusive atmosphere which makes the participants feel part of the group. They like each other, feel accepted and are not discouraged in moments of difficulty. Group cohesion is a driving force at this stage. That is why young people will be more engaged if you pay attention to each individual in the group and you empower them to act. This is also a good time to review individual goals and check if they are doable in the context of the project.

The participants can be tired at the **separation** phase. Group energy becomes dispersed. To motivate the youth at this stage is crucial. You will find summing up what has been achieved, appreciating engagement, and highlighting the knowledge and skills gained helpful. These kinds of measures will help you to redirect knowledge and skills towards future initiatives.

NOTE:

Motivation is an energy to act and persist. It can result from external circumstances, such as expectation of a reward or fear of punishment. On the other hand, it can also be a consequence of internal circumstances. An activity could be attractive to you because of the topic of new skills. Many studies have been published which show the advantage of internal motivation over external. Rewards and punishments may seem efficient but they work in the short term only. They are not sufficient to fully engage and interest members of the group. In contrast, the pleasure of doing something, meeting people or learning topics of interest is engaging. Therefore, in the group process, focus on supportively strengthening the internal motivation.



REMEMBER:

Only you know how much time and space you have to engage in supporting the group process which happens simultaneously with the project.

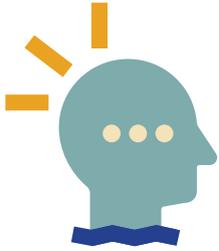
Think how much you can and want to contribute, how motivated you are and what level of motivation you expect from others in the project. You can set your minimum plan which will allow your group to carry out the project and share its effects. If you have the capacity, you can also aim for a maximum plan which entails satisfaction from your achievements and reflection from the learning.



What could help reinforcing the motivation of the group?

The activities, which you find in this chapter, are about developing the team, working out a common goal and expressing appreciation. These exercises will support you in creating a group which is motivated and wants to do things together. The tips will help you to navigate the group process happening in your group. Remember that your group might be in other group processes on which you have no influence.

- **A tightly-knit team.** The group can be a source of mutual support and a driving force for taking action if its members work together and know how to achieve it. Creating a team is a process through which you guide the participants by getting to know them and integrating them, setting and respecting the rules.

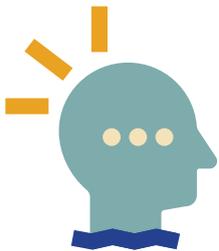


Think about how much time you can dedicate to team-building. Do you have a space to meet or a possibility to go outside and meet in a less formal venue? Is it within your power to make this happen?

If you meet with a group regularly, think about introducing small activities in order to develop cooperation. This could be a ritual for the students to get to know each other better, team-building exercises, or doing something fun together like going for a walk. If you have a fixed venue, prepare it together. You could decorate it with posters about your project and group, have a flipchart with your goal written down, tea mugs from home etc. Let yourself be known, too. Your students could do an interview with you. They would find out how you spend your time, why you are doing this project, what your experience is, what you can learn from others and what you want to learn from the group.

If you do not have frequent and regular meetings or you are scattered and meet in a different place each time, then team-building might be harder but not impossible. Ensure that the first meetings are an opportunity for the group to get to know each other. You can create a name for the group, a logo, a gesture of greeting. Stay in touch on social media and agree how that will work.

- **Division of tasks.** Even if you have an idea what tasks might suit whom, give everybody a choice. People tend to find those activities motivating that are close to their interests, talents and capacities.



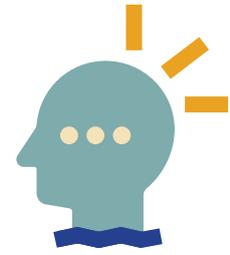
Pause for a moment and think how the division of tasks looks in your group. Do you know what talents and skills the participants have? What tasks in the project do you take on and do you know why? How do you feel about this?



From the Student
Journal:
My resources
p. 14

Write down the tasks you have as the group. Think about what kind of know-how, skills and resources these tasks require. Take a stock of the strong points of students. You can use the following exercise described in the student journal: **MY RESOURCES**. Each person should create their own list of tasks in which they will describe what they will do, in what time and who they are working with. If there are a few people who want to do the same thing, create a subgroup between three and five people. The team could select a leader, secretary or PR person. Other people could be responsible for the circulation of information, keeping deadlines, taking notes, filling in reports or being a liaison with the teacher. Make sure that participants take turns in fulfilling these roles.

Where on the project time line are you? What is awaiting you in the nearest future? What are the tasks ahead? What could help you?



- **Action plan, schedule, timeline.** A task schedule or action plan are tools which make it easier to plan work, monitor and verify the stage you are at and what is yet ahead. It is good to prepare such a plan at the stabilization phase when the participants feel more secure and they know what they would like to accomplish in the project. Even if you have made a plan during the beginning of the project work, you can always revise it. By regularly modifying the schedule, you can keep up the motivation. Everyone knows what to do, when and why. Have the project schedule for the whole group in a large format and visible for everyone.

Make your own individual schedule and come back to it often. You may find the exercise below helpful.

EXERCISE:

MY ACTION PLAN – HAVE I SUCCEEDED OR NOT YET?



 **Time of duration:** about 45 min

 **Materials:** sheets of paper, marker

Do this exercise once you have divided the tasks in the group and you are planning to start.

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. Give the participants blank sheets of paper, markers and pens.
2. Ask the group to imagine a multi-layered cake. You need to prepare many layers. Each of them has a distinct taste but only once you put them together in the right sequence they taste delicious. The project works the same. Plan the activities in the right sequence.
3. Each person prepares the action plan for the immediate future, using the questions from the table below. The schedule could be presented in a form of multi-layered cake.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| What needs to be done? | | |
| What are the tasks step by step? | | |
| Until when? | | |
| What do you need? | | |
| Why are you doing this? | | |
| Is it successful? | | |
| Why? | | |

Guiding questions:

- **What needs to be done?** Does everybody know what tasks they are responsible for?
- **What are the tasks step by step?** What smaller steps can they be broken into?
- **Until when?** Decide on the deadline. If you are doing the task with the other person, then choose the date together. If you do it later than planned, could it block the project? Are the dates realistic, taking into consideration outside commitments the participants have and their anticipated pace of work?
- **What do you need?** What resources are needed, including those material ones (crayons, cardboard, computer, phone) as well as in terms of time (one afternoon, weekend) and special requirements (room)?
- **Why are you doing this?** Is this activity teaching you something new and making you grow? Perhaps without this attraction the project will be less valued?
- **Is it successful or not yet?** Reassess your actions and acknowledge what has been done. Consider why something has not worked yet. Are you lacking something?

COMMENTARY ABOUT THE EXERCISE:

Should new tasks come up, put them in the schedule.

If you feel that the group's performance is dropping, then take stock of what has been done and what is ahead of you. Are there too many tasks? Do you feel that some initiatives are too much for the students? Discuss it with the team openly and determine why there is a "not yet".

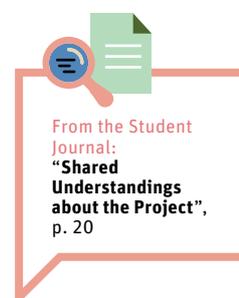


Think about what you need in order to go forward. Do you need some cheer, acknowledgement, rest or support? Which of the things can you give yourself and what kind of support should be looked for within the project group or even beyond?



- **A common, visible goal.** Dedicate the time to work out a specific, measurable, attractive, realistic goal with a timeline. It is equally important to agree on a group goal, as it is to have the individual goal.

Think about the purpose of the existence of the group. What goal do you want to reach in the project, how did you set it? Do all people in the group know what the goal is and accept it?



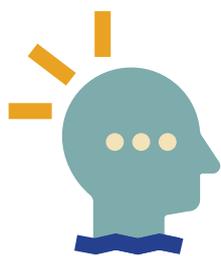
Keep in mind that individual as well as group goals can change. With a group goal it is important that the team is aware of the changes, accepts them, knows where they come from. Give them the time to convert the new goal into results and actions. Changing the goal does not mean that you have failed or did bad planning. There are often external circumstances. For example, you may become aware of a new social problem affecting the capacity of group members.



Review your goal whenever you feel the motivation is dropping. Why are you carrying out the project, what needs do you want to meet? What did you want to change in your neighbourhood and in the students? What did they want to learn? Ask your students what they managed to achieve. What brought you closer to the goal? What milestones are behind the group and what is the biggest obstacle?

Think about modifying the goal. If the group feels that their actions are not bringing them closer to the goal, individuals do not find their efforts meaningful. Highlight what cannot be changed and where you have no influence (might be restricted by the school statutes). If the group is ready, think about modifying the group goal so that it is accepted by others and realistic at the same time. Make sure that the group is aware of what is changing and how it could influence the tasks.

- **Make sure the group feels that their work is meaningful.** Reviewing the goal shows us that we are aiming for something and that our actions are leading up to something.



THINK:

have you learned anything new about yourself, your working style or your skills? What was it? Have you learned anything new about working with the group? How can you use this experience in the future?

Influence the motivation of your students, showing them how they draw from their current experiences. Discuss what kind of skills are acquired during project work and group work. Write down as many ideas as you can in a visible place, using the language of benefits. You, as the facilitator, can also suggest a list of qualities and skills that improve through working on a project. Ask the participants to indicate those competencies they can work on through project work, such as problem solving, decision taking, communicating, taking on responsibility, independent and creative thinking, planning and team work organizing, collecting and selecting information, cooperation, evaluating the course of the project and results, and public presentation. Discuss which of these things can be useful in the future. How can students use them in other areas of life?

- **Appreciation.** Problems with motivation often come up when the group is making a lot of efforts but you cannot see the results. That is why it is so important to notice success and appreciate even the smallest achievements of the group. Designate time during meetings to talk about what has worked and where the difficulties are. Encourage the group to share successes on social media and show them to others. This could be through a blog, fanpage or calendar of the project with a space to leave comments. Celebrate the little things. Plan small celebrations during the project when reaching a milestone. Plan a bigger party at the end. The form of celebrating depends on the group preferences. This might be a picnic, an outing to the cinema, afternoon snacks, inviting an important guest, a photo session signed “Good job” or “We are halfway through the project”. You can prepare encouraging pins like “I did it!”. Appreciate engagement, efforts, cooperation and not just the final result.
- **Apply positive reinforcement.** Notice the efforts and good will of the students. Give them and yourself the chance to improve things which are not working out. Say, “Let’s try again, don’t get discouraged”. Don’t forget feedback can boost motivation and increase the sense of belonging, if given individually and expressed with care. Seek out and reinforce positive habits, ideas and actions for each person. At the same time, give them tips on how to make their participation in the group more satisfying and effective. You may find the following questions help to boost self-confidence of the student:

- How did the task go?
- What was the greatest source of joy?
- What did your cooperation with the team look like?
- What would you change if you did this task all over again?
- What aspect of the task was the hardest for you?
- What did you learn? What stuck out most in your mind?

If something does not work in the project, the calming message “not yet”¹² can also be helpful. Instead of saying, “You have not done the information poster about the project”, you can say “You have not done the poster yet. What could help you?” “Not yet” could support us to deal with challenges as it reminds us that we are still on the path towards the goal.

What else can foster motivation in the group process – a few tips:

- **Create a space** in which a young person can be open about their likes and dislikes while honouring the contract.
- **Uplift yourself and others.** Even if something did not work out or was not done on time, think about what you have learned about yourself or the group. Show that even a failure could be of value. Together think what and why things went wrong (or differently than expected). What do we think about it? What have we learned? What can we change in the future? Try to work out some solutions and adopt a contingency plan. You can use the exercise **COPING WITH FAILURES**.
- **Help the students to see their strengths.** Talk with the participants about what interests them, what they like doing outside school, what they are happy about and what they would like to learn. Think about how these interests and superpowers can be used in the project.

The following exercises can be useful to determine your strong points:

- Introducing through an object which is important to you (speaking through metaphor).
- Mutual learning – divide the group into pairs and suggest that they learn something from one another in a specific time period (a week, by the next meeting).
- Observing yourself. Encourage the students to observe themselves during a week. The goal of this exercise is to notice what worked out in the past day or week, what they learned, how many hours they spent doing their job and their interests, what was a source of joy and what made them sad.

Having others notice our know-how or skills. A short group exercise will be helpful: **WHAT CAN I LEARN FROM...**



¹²

TED talk by Carol Dweck professor of psychology from Columbia University, talks about the power of “not yet”. See: C. Dweck, “The power of believing that you can improve” [online video], www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve#t-22624 [Accessed on 28.11.2020].





EXERCISE:
WHAT CAN I LEARN FROM...

Time of duration: about 30 min

Materials: worksheets for the participants

This exercise is recommended when:

- The group already know each other (stage of stabilization and action)
- You want to strengthen the team and help individuals find their strong points.

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

- Prepare the worksheets with blank spaces with the names or two categories “know-how” and “qualities” to be filled in later. Give out the worksheets and ask each person to write their name.

What can I learn from...

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Know-how which could be useful in the project:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Qualities which could be useful in the project:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- Each person fills in the worksheet of the person on their right and then passes it to the person on the left. The worksheets make a full round and come back to the owner. Once the owner gets their worksheet back, they highlight three statements in green they agree with and in red those which they find most surprising.
- Discuss what was most surprising. Was it easy to see the quality of the other person? How can these skills and qualities be useful in the project?

Exercises from the student journal “Power Up” which might inspire you:

| Title of the exercise | Short description | Page |
|--|---|------|
| SHARED UNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT THE PROJECT | Enables to get to know goals and expectations towards the project. | 20 |
| HOP UP! | Makes it easier to analyse what had a positive or negative influence on motivation. | 87 |
| BATTLING THE PROCRASTINATOR | Allows to face the decline of motivation. | 56 |



EMOTIONS

Stop for a moment and think about what you are feeling now while working on the project and observing students. Do you feel the emotions that are present in the group? Are your impressions changing? If so, how? If you have a moment, take a mental snapshot of your emotions at various moments during the project. You can show them with emoticons, body posture, gestures, or colours. What do you see? How do you express your emotions? How will you know the type and intensity of emotions among the members of the project group? Looking at your motivations and the motivations of your team will allow you to understand and lead the group process better.



REMEMBER:

Wanting to have full control over emotions and the actions in the process could cause tension, frustration and stress. Not everything is under your control. The members of the group are in other processes. They meet in other places.

Awareness of emotions generated by a process is like being aware of the stages of children's development. It provides an understanding and broader perspective. **The awareness of what the group is experiencing, and why, will help you, as the facilitator, to accommodate the emotions of the group as well as your own.** You will no longer be afraid of them and can avoid the pitfalls of negative thinking.

The group process engages the emotions as it is a collaborative effort between the participants. If you want to make the best use of the potential in the group, allow yourself to experience the full spectrum of emotions openly. If there is a friendly atmosphere in the group and a space to express doubts, satisfaction, or the lack thereof and any other opinions, then the participants have the awareness that their emotions really count.

Treat the emotions you observe as a guide to the needs of the group and individuals. They will vary depending on the stage of the process.

What do you feel when you are starting to work with the group?

What emotions are there during the first meeting and are they there during the next ones? How do situations influence the fluctuations of your emotions?

At the **group forming** stage uncertainty and anxiety of the participants surrounding how they will be accepted by the group will dominate. The group does not know each other yet and individuals do not know what to expect. You will surely notice different emotions but they might not be too strongly expressed. The group is just getting to know each other and

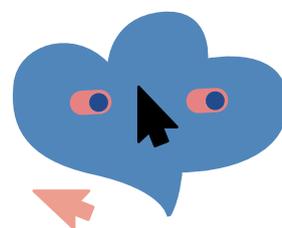
does not want to reveal all of their feelings. On the one hand, you can have people in the group who feel alienated, do not speak up, or do not manifest enthusiasm. On the other hand, there are those who seek your attention as the facilitator as well as of the group members. They look for support and protection or try to jockey for leadership roles. It could happen that some people behave in a way which is irritating for other members of the group, including you.

Already at this stage feelings of upset or embarrassment might come up. Possibly, some things which are important for the group have not been named or not everybody might be here by choice. Asking many questions, or asking none at all, could mean that the participants are confused with the unfamiliar method of project work. It could also mean that the participants have a low level of trust in themselves and others. At this stage, emotions and strategies adopted by the students reflect a need for acceptance, safety and being liked.

HELPFUL CLUES AT THE FORMING STAGE:

In order to mitigate the uncertainty and anxiety, focus on showing the common ground through exercises such as team-building activities. Discuss the qualities and interests the group members have in common. The students will be more confident and will feel part of the group. Together with the group, you can demonstrate shared emotions: “If I find out that we will be working with a different method than we have been, I also feel anxious”, “It makes me nervous to be in a group with people I don’t know”.

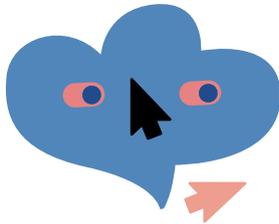
- A sense of clarity about the working structure (when and how often you meet) as well as your role in the process will help to ease the anxiety. It will be easier to take on new challenges.
- Do observe the group at the very beginning and note if there are any old conflicts brought into the group. If you see such situations, you can have an open conversation following the guidelines below.



If you feel a lot of strong emotions in the group and in yourself, do stop for a moment and take a deep breath. Where do these emotions come from, which needs, and how can you respond to them?

At the clash stage, emotions are most visible. Nevertheless, their variety and intensity varies. The conflict can take a different form and so arouse various emotions. Behaviours such as being late, withdrawal, lack of engagement, questioning ideas, and reluctance to take action, are

a manifestation of resistance and disagreement. On the level of emotions we can see: unhappiness, disappointment, anger, frustration, rejection and loneliness, confusion, anxiety, defiance or indifference. This is a key moment to watch out for because, if these emotions are not embraced by the facilitator, the atmosphere in the team could be spoiled and somebody could even leave the group.



exercise:
**What are
my needs?**
p. 137

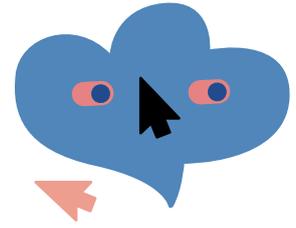
HELPFUL CLUES AT STABILIZATION STAGE:

- Pause the tasks linked to reaching the goal. In particular, if there is a lot of anger and difficult emotions in the group, address the anger first. You can propose an open conversation and give space to everybody to talk about what is difficult while respecting others.
- Avoid triggers such as: “They always”, “Nobody cares”, “I have to do everything by myself”, “This won’t work”. They lead to anger and frustration. What does help in toning down the unpleasant emotions is being mindful, staying connected with the group and remaining interested.
- Ask yourself what needs the participants want to address. Do not focus just on the external symptoms such as obvious discouragement or lack of engagement. What is behind it? Help the group find out. You may find the exercise **WHAT ARE MY NEEDS?** helpful.
- Practice self-care. The clash phase can be stressful, tense and frustrating.
- Ensure that everybody can express what they are missing or what is upsetting them. You will find the language of observations, free from interpretations helpful. Describe what you see without judgment (as if through the camera lens) and encourage others to do the same. If you hear, for example, that “Every time I have an idea, you criticize it without even listening to it”, you will know that this is an interpretation. Approach the situation differently, “I suggested inviting the local museum to work with us. You said it was a bad idea. Why?”. The detailed description of what happened enables us to move aside emotions and focus on solutions.

The **stage of stabilization** is a period of relief and enjoyment of the time of being together after the crisis. You know that the group is stronger and is more truthful towards each other. There is no visible tension. It is a time to focus on tasks and work together. New subgroups could emerge. Some will be excited and zealous. Others may be withdrawn and tired. They could be concerned about the possibility of a new crisis or unable to find their place in the group.

Emotions could be less expressive than at the former stage. Should you notice any signs of boredom or sadness, this could mean that not everybody is happy about being part of the group, the responsibility they have, the agreed norms and so forth.

The emotions which are most apparent at the stage of stabilization are the need to be noticed, sense of meaningfulness, feeling part of the team and community, and finding one's place in the group.



HELPFUL CLUES AT THE STABILIZATION STAGE:

- Notice if all the people have their place in the group and whether somebody feels let out and ignored. Even if somebody does not say directly that they cannot find their way in the group, their emotions might signal otherwise. Make an effort to include everyone. When you divide people into pairs or groups, you can do it in a form of play, without pressure of being selected.
- Should new subgroups emerge, try to make sure that there is open communication between them.
- If you notice anxiety or tension, review the content of the contract. Is it time to add new agreements? What should they be? Specify them with the group. You may find the exercise **A NEW LOOK AT THE CONTRACT** useful.
- Be mindful of the group coherence, relationship building and positive emotions. Celebrate success. Share even small achievements and introduce a ritual which can be a permanent element of the meetings.



The **action stage** is manifested through calm, joy, enthusiasm and optimism, especially if the effects of work start being visible. Students start to enjoy being together. Even in the case of another conflict or some other organizational difficulties, the emotions of uncertainty, frustration or anger are not as strong as at the stage of clash. The group feels more confident and knows the strong points of its members. The need for value, belonging, appreciation, visibility, unity and competence is most significant.



exercise:
The team-building tree
p. 66



exercise:
**Goodbye card
Booster notes**
p. 96–98

HELPFUL CLUES AT THE ACTION STAGE:

- If you see signs of discomfort, you can encourage the group to check if they are happy with the division of labour. Something might have happened which makes the person feel better taking on a different type of activity.
- Regular meetings sustain the energy of the team but people also need rest. If you see that some people cannot take part in meetings, do not exclude them right away. Perhaps they can be included in some other way? Communication can also take place on a social media platform or by e-mail.

The separation stage is marked by the usual emotions when having to say goodbye and leave. The more connected the team is, the stronger those emotions may be at the end of the project. On the one hand there is joy and relief. And on the other, sadness and concern that the group will not meet again. Very often, the group will present the conclusions of the project publicly. This could cause additional agitation, stress and withdrawal.

WHAT IS HELPFUL AT THE STAGE OF SEPARATION?

- If you feel a sense of discouragement linked to separation and exhaustion which is slowing the group down, you could stress that the end of the project is not necessarily the end of connection between the members of the team. You might want to create a mailing list or other platform which will allow the group to continue communicating after the project is over.
- Use the sense of relief and relaxation in the group to give students the possibility to express gratitude for the time together. Do something nice and memorable. You could write each other a thank you note or card, using the prompt “Thank you for...”, “Thanks to you I found out...”. You can use the exercises **GOODBYE CARD AND BOOSTER NOTES**.
- Recall all that happened during the whole process in order to illustrate what the participants have learned. Remember the need for closure. If you have any photos from the project, organize a slideshow. Recall what was interesting and what was hard. An ending ritual could help the members to accept the sadness of ending the project and deal with their anxiety. Ensure that each person has the space to speak.

First of all, many emotions are not directly linked to what is happening in your group but to other events and processes.

Secondly, difficult emotions that come up in the group are not against you. They are an expression of certain needs that have not been met. Encourage students to explore their feelings and emotions. How can they express them in a different way? You may find the exercise **WHAT ARE MY NEEDS?** helpful.

Just focusing on the project tasks can make people who do not feel good about the responsibility they have or their place on the team feel confused and lost. Friends enjoy them as a joker but you, as the leader, expect them to do their job. If there is a disparity between the expectations of the group and you, this can be a source of discomfort. Be encouraging and uplifting. Invite the participants to try different activities and support each other. Your flexibility and attentiveness can support people in dealing with embarrassment or anxiety. Stress that we are all learning and that the most important thing is not the end but the means. You can use the exercise **THE TEAM-BUILDING TREE**.

1. Knowing what emotions are and what they are for.

Regardless of age, job or temperament we all have the same emotions which result from our needs. Emotions inform, mobilize and facilitate communication. They allow us to see what is important as they are the true internal indicator of meeting needs.

As you observe the emotions in the group, think about what is within your influence and what is outside your control. What needs are revealed in relation to the project? Are they apparent or hidden? Do you know which of your needs has become most urgent? Do you have the opportunity to meet them?

Exploring one's needs could help you to look at the group with more empathy. Human needs are the same. There are different strategies to meet them. Most importantly, there are no contradictory needs. There may be clashing strategies to meet them which can be a source of conflict. Everything we do, say or feel is a way to meet a need¹³.

The following exercise will be helpful: **WHAT ARE MY NEEDS?**

What else should you remember at every stage?



exercise:
What are my needs?
p. 67



exercise:
The team-building tree
p. 66

What helps to express emotions safely?



exercise:
What are my needs?
p. 67

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Basic information about Nonviolent Communication can be found on the website of BayNVC: www.baynvc.org/basics-of-nonviolent-communication [Accessed on 10.01.2022].



EXERCISE: WHAT ARE MY NEEDS?

 **Time of duration:** 45 min

 **Materials:** list of needs, blank sheets of paper, something to write

This exercise is recommended when:

- You want to understand emotions in the group and the participants' behaviours.
- You feel there is trust and a sense of safety in the group. At the forming stage, when people do not know each other well, it could be difficult to share feelings.
- You as the facilitator feel that you have difficult emotions while working with the group.

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

This exercise could be done in two ways: individually or in the group (if you want to talk about how to meet your own needs and be a part of the group).

Individually:

1. Prepare a list of needs. You can use the list attached to this exercise and add those needs which seem important in your group. Cut up the list so that each need is on a separate sheet.
2. Spread out the sheets in front of you and have a look. Observe the thoughts and signals from the body that arise as you look at each need. Choose one to four needs which will be most important during the project.
3. Note why these particular needs are important to you in the context of the current group process. How do you understand them? What feelings and expectations come up? How are they manifested in the project?
4. What specifically can you do in order to meet your needs? Choose at least one thing which you could do in the near future, for example, during the next team meeting.

In the group:

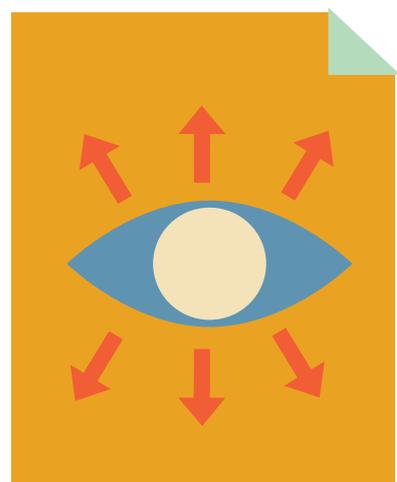
Before introducing the exercise, make sure that there is the right atmosphere. Announce that you will put the tasks aside for a moment to understand the underlying emotions better.

1. Prepare the list of needs so that each pair or a group of four has a copy.
2. Each group displays the sheets and talks about the thoughts and behaviours linked to each need. Each person chooses from one to four needs which will be most important during the project.

3. Listen to the conversations and explain if anything is unclear. You can add that we think about needs which arise while doing the project tasks, as well as those which result strictly from being part of the group, such as cooperation.
4. Each person writes down why these needs are important during the group process, what they mean and what kind of emotions and expectations are linked to them. Next, each person thinks about what specifically they can do in order to meet their own needs. Invite the participants to share their notes with the members of their little group. The listeners should think:
 - What are other possible ways of meeting that need?
 - How can other members of the group support meeting this need?

Sum up the conversation with the whole group, naming strategies of meeting the given needs.

¹⁴ More examples of needs can be found in the Needs Inventory on the website of Centre for Nonviolent Communication (CNVC) www.cnvc.org/training/resource/needs-inventory. [Accessed on 09.01.2022]



Examples of needs

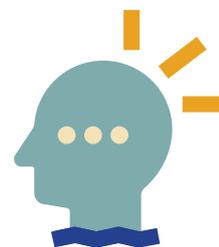
Need of...

| | | | |
|--------------|-------------|------------------------|---------------|
| challenges | awareness | rest | trust |
| learning | creativity | self-acceptance | freedom |
| clarity | self-growth | empowerment and agency | equal chances |
| appreciation | self-esteem | unity | sense |
| competence | mutuality | growth | ... |

2. Treating all emotions as valid, not as good or bad

All emotions are equally important. Do not divide them into right and wrong. Accepting emotions impacts the way we deal with them. That is why it is very important to accept all of the feelings which arise in the group. What you can do is refer to behaviours which violate the boundaries of others and make it difficult to work together but are a manifestation of emotions.

Are there any emotions you are afraid of? What emotions are these and why are you concerned about them? How does this impact your work with the group and their emotions?



Some emotions like fear or anger tend to be perceived as negative. Nevertheless, they are vital. They inform us about a danger, our boundaries being violated, or something is against our values. Fear alarms us about danger and risk, allowing us to prepare for an event. Sadness helps us to prepare to accept a new, difficult situation. It orients us towards reflection and finding the source of the problem. Joy helps us to relax and makes us more understanding towards others. It helps us to connect and boosts our confidence.

Therefore, emotions are necessary. Not only do we need the pleasant ones but also those difficult ones which might make us feel uncomfortable.

It is especially helpful to name feelings in difficult situations. These conditions can include criticism, judgment, hearing a no to a request, not keeping commitments, imposing someone's opinion on us, being compared or ignored. Emotions in the group process, the pleasant ones and those difficult ones, can have many causes. By naming the feelings, we can identify our needs and then look for a strategy to meet them. By hiding our feelings deep down and pretending that everything is alright, we lose the chance to understand what is important to us. This is the way to delay finding solutions and dealing with the situation.

If you feel that emotions are piling up and you are close to expressing them in a way which might be difficult to hear or hurtful, stop and take three breaths. Look at this situation from a distance. This will help you to better describe and understand what you are feeling and why.

Talk with students about emotions, emphasizing there are no bad or good emotions. It is only the manner of showing emotions which could be hurtful or harmful. Tell the students that, as we work together, we feel different feelings. It is important to name them, talk about them, notice when they appear and find ways of dealing with them. These questions could be helpful while talking with young people. How do you recognize when your emotions are changing? Which emotions do you like and which ones are difficult for you? Do you have your own favourite way of expressing anger, sadness, or joy?

Just naming emotions is helpful when dealing with them and minimizing their impact.

You can use the exercise **GET TO KNOW YOUR EMOTIONS**



EXERCISE:
GET TO KNOW YOUR EMOTIONS¹⁵

Time of duration: 45 min

Materials: kflashcards with lists of feelings, blank sheets, markers, crayons.

This exercise is recommended when:

- You feel your emotions are bubbling up and it is difficult to take action.
- You see there are many unprocessed emotions which need to be let out.

You feel there is trust and a sense of safety in the group. At the forming stage when people do not know each other well it could be difficult to share feelings.

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

This exercise could be done individually or by the group. If you do it in the group, make sure that the right atmosphere is present. Announce that you will put the tasks aside for a moment to understand the emotions better.

1. Put the chairs in the circle to allow access to the free space in the middle of the room. Explain why it is so important to talk about emotions in the context of the group process. Emphasize that very often, by naming the feelings, we can identify our needs and then look for a strategy to meet them.

Prepare the strips of paper with the feelings list so that each pair or a group of four has a copy. Spread them around the class and ask each person to stand next to the emotion they are feeling the most in the project. Some people might choose the same one.

- After everyone has selected an emotion, invite people to share with the whole group. Start with feelings which are linked to already met needs. To accomplish this, start with emotions that are perceived as positive (joy, trust) and then proceed to those which are seen as difficult.
- If somebody does not know what exact emotion they are experiencing, they can take a blank sheet and then say how they are feeling right now.

¹⁵

Based on the Nonviolent Communication theory by Marshall Rosenberg. You can find a feelings inventory on the website of CNVC. www.cnvc.org/training/resource/feelings-inventory [Accessed on 09.01.2021].

2. Come back to the circle and discuss the emotions. Was it easy or difficult to describe your feelings? What was the most difficult problem? Ask a few guiding questions:
 - How do you locate these emotions in the body? Where do you feel the tension or anxiety? Is it fast breathing, beating of the heart, pressure in the abdomen, tension in the neck?
 - In what kind of situations does this feeling arise?
 - Where do you focus your attention?
3. Ask the participants to imagine they are placing a difficult emotion a few meters below them. Ask them to look at it from a distance, draw and sign what they see and sign it.

Guiding questions:

- What is the colour of the emotion?
- What is the size?
- What is the shape?
- How strong is this feeling?
- What is the pace at which it is moving?
- What is the texture? How is it to touch it?
- Now ask the students to explore their emotions again through the descriptions.

Consider:

- What do you think about the feeling, what is your attitude towards it? Has anything changed during the exercise? Why?
- What would you say to a different person who experiences this emotion?
- What can be done about these emotions? We can express it by laughter (joy), running (anger), saying a good word (gratitude), crying (anxiety).
- Where does this feeling come from? What is it caused by? Does it last long or pass quickly? What makes the feeling stay and what makes it pass?

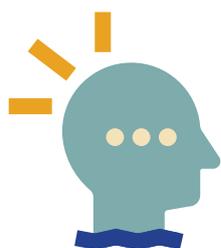
LIST OF FEELINGS¹⁶

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Calm , satisfied, serene, relaxed | Grateful , appreciative, delighted, moved, radiant | Scared , anxious, doubtful, shocked, panicked, fearful, terrified |
| Joyful , bold, inspired, energized | Upset , worried, tense | Apathetic , wary, lethargic, beat, depleted |
| Uncomfortable , worried, irritated, embarrassed, confused | Dissatisfied , disappointed, lonely | Not interested , bored |
| Relaxed , refreshed, strong, glad | Tired , exhausted, sleepy, weak, overwhelmed | Full of energy , enlivened, invigorated, passionate |
| Disheartened , concerned, gloomy | Agitated , indignant, aggravated | Comfortable , content, safe, satisfied, carefree |
| Happy , hopeful | Furious , irritated, frustrated, enraged | |

3. Atmosphere of kindness, being understanding with oneself

As a person organizing the group work, you are not able to determine, understand or meet all the needs of the members all by yourself. That is why, when working with the group, try to build a safe and supportive relationship with the participants. The time you dedicate to creating a friendly, open and inclusive atmosphere will pay off. The group will learn to talk about emotions, needs and cooperation.

Create and use the existing opportunities to talk. Show your interest. Check in with the group often.

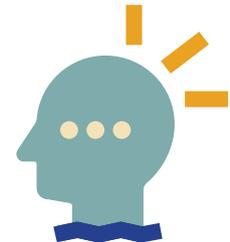


Stop for a moment. Imagine you are facing a choice between going with the flow or what was pre-planned for the project meeting. What are you going to do?

What would the group prefer: focusing on project tasks or talking about the atmosphere of the meetings? When something important is happening and the emotions are intense, it makes sense to focus on the relationships between the members. This does not mean we are losing sight of the goal. Very often, the topics that are most emotional for the group are linked to the project itself so it is worth spending time on them.

4. An open conversation is more than solving a conflict.

How do you solve conflicts in a group? When do you decide to stay out of it? Do you suppress the conflict? Are you looking for someone to punish? How does the strategy impact the group? Think about the results here and now but also about the long-term goals. Think: What happens to anger when we talk about it?



Undoubtedly, open communication helps to express emotions. How should we talk when there is tension in the group?

- Listen. Try to hear different points of view. Give each person who wants to speak a similar amount of time. You can ask to describe the situation on a piece of paper. Focusing on the description of the event will help to calm down emotions. Encourage students to use the language of facts, not opinions, and stick to observations. Imagine that the event which upset people is an image. Who is in that image and where? The use of the language of observations allows us to be objective.
- Show that you understand, accept and listen. Even a small gesture of nodding or smiling can be comforting.
- State what happened using facts and observations.
- Look for a solution together with the group or the people involved. What is the next step? How to address this problem? What would you like to do? Do you need help? If yes, who can support you? Does anybody have an idea for how to move forward?

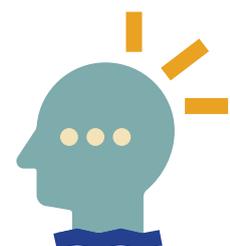


Other tools can be found in the chapter “Communication”.

5. Self-empathy and empathy for others.

You are supporting the group, observing the process and the project. You see a group who clashes and then works together. At every stage there are emotions. These are your emotions as well as the emotions of the other members. They can be a source of tension or of energy. As you dive into emotions, remember to empathize with yourself and others.

Do you take action when you are emotional? Observe your thoughts. Why do you react so strongly to a given word or behaviour? What really happened? What did you hear or see? What is important to you at this moment? How do you behave when you feel a difficult emotion?



You can use the structure below to talk empathetically about emotions in the group. You can invite the group to practice in pairs, in particular in the time of clash.

1. Recall **facts** by quoting what someone said or saying what they did and when. Avoid generalizations, sharing your judgements, interpretations and assumptions.

When you hear/see...

2. Ask about **feelings**. Guess what the person might feel. Be curious and open. Somebody might react completely differently than you. Don't tell the other person what they are feeling. Ask.

Do you feel....?

3. Ask if the **needs** of the person have been met. Do not confuse needs with strategies of coping with emotions.

Because ... is important for you.
Because you need...?

4. **Ask** if your guess is right, by giving enough space to the person to share what they are feeling and needing.

Did I understand you?

You can also try to guess what the request could be.

So you want ... to happen?

Exercises from the student journal "Power Up" which might inspire you:

| Title of the exercise | Short description | Page |
|---|---|------|
| WHAT ARE YOU ACTUALLY FEELING? | Encourages us to look at one's own emotions. | 27 |
| WHAT ARE THE OTHERS FEELING? | Makes it easier to understand how others in the group feel. | 30 |
| HOW TO FIGHT WELL | Hints on how to cope with situations which are emotionally intense. | 34 |
| 3D PERSPECTIVE | Hints on how to cope with situations which are emotionally intense. | 35 |
| HOW NOT TO LOSE YOUR MIND IN A GROUP | Encourages us to think of ways to release tension in the group. | 71 |
| ASSOCIATIONS WITH ANGER | Collects the associations we have with anger. | 52 |
| MY ANGER | Allows to explore one's anger, grasp where it comes from and how it can be helpful. | 52 |
| HOW I COPE WITH ANGER | Encourages you to reflect on how you can cope with your own anger. | 55 |

Chapter 4



LEADERSHIP THAT IS SENSITIVE TO THE PROCESS

Author: Monika Prus-Głaszczka



In this chapter you will learn:

- **What is leadership that is sensitive to the group process.**
- **What is the role of a leader at the various stages of the group process.**
- **How you take care of yourself as an empathetic leader.**

The role of a sensitive leader

The role that should never be undermined in the group process is the one of a group leader. Very often, you hear that it is great leaders who are behind a project's success. They lead the project, inspire and uplift others. These leadership skills are associated with the career path towards success. A project undoubtedly needs a leader but should this role focus on leadership qualities only? In this part of the manual, we will endorse you as the natural leader of the project. It is your initiative that counts.

Everything starts with the myth of the great leader. It is high time we confronted the role of the leader and tried to deconstruct it. As serious as this may sound, we simply want to encourage you to look at this topic differently, i.e. to incorporate the perspective of the group process and be more aware of how you function in this role. It can be tempting to acknowledge the extrovert qualities of leaders such as the efficiency to motivate the group to accomplish goals. According to the myth, the group should be led by a charismatic person, one who has a vision, is confident and can delegate tasks.

What if we treated the student project as a learning process? It's a chance for students to acquire new personal competence and grow. Perhaps it is not something which is a by-product of success but a conscious choice? It is then that your leadership becomes the **leadership that is sensitive to the process.**

Leadership that is sensitive to the process is a way of facilitating the group which not only engages others to carry out a project goal but also involves:

- Being aware of a dynamic group process and understanding that some behaviours can be a consequence of that process.

- The skill to build foundations of the group (communication, motivation, emotional awareness, safety).
- Treating failures, difficulties and crises as an element of experiential learning.
- Creating conditions for collaboration to flourish.
- Providing the members with ongoing feedback which helps the group to take on new tasks and tackle challenges.
- Being attentive to the needs of the group, delegating responsibility through handling challenges independently and democratic decision-making by the group.
- Giving space to those members who are not leaders at first sight but can potentially take initiative and lead if needed.
- Recognizing that each person is needed to carry out the project and at the same time support them to find their way in the group they might not feel is up to their expectations.

Below, you will find an exercise which is an invitation to reflect on how you are utilising the elements of leadership that is sensitive to the process and how important they are to you. At first glance, the number of aspects the leader should be aware of is staggering. In particular, a student project has additional requirements for content and educational level. However, we encourage you as the facilitator to develop your own leadership style and your strong points. The exercise below helps to highlight the resources which are readily available and those for which you will have to dig a little deeper.



EXERCISE



Mark the items in the table which you **apply consciously and the ones you have not used so far**. If you mark yes, you can also write down how it manifests in your work. In the third column, on a scale from 1–10, mark how important this aspect is to you. Consider your experiences so far and future plans. Under the table you will find further instructions.

| During the project work | I USE (How? How does it manifest in my practice?) | I DON'T USE | scale from 1-10 |
|---|---|----------------|-----------------------|
| I am able to see the stages of the group process. | | | |
| I adjust the work in the project to the stage at hand. | | | |
| I make sure everyone in the group feels safe. | | | |
| I know what supports the motivation of the team with whom I am carrying out the project. | | | |
| I can create an atmosphere of open communication. | | | |
| I notice the needs of the group and of the individuals and respond to them. | | | |
| I reflect on the purpose, values and principles of the group. I am open to change. | | | |
| I am able to recognize the moment in which the group can work constructively and undertake action. | | | |
| I give the feedback to the members of the team on various stages of the project on their achievements, as well as their contribution. | | | |
| I treat the failure or difficulties in the project as an opportunity to learn. | | | |
| I reinforce the independence of the group. The group is able to take autonomous decisions at various stages of the project. | | | |
| I will not always delegate leadership tasks only to those who display leadership qualities. | | | |
| I know how individuals see their role in the group. | | | |

Now, think of the elements you have marked as important. These are the resources you can rely on. Do not judge whether there are too many or too few. What counts is that they are valuable to you. Write your reflections below.

Consider the elements not already present in your practice but that you believe are important. How do you want to incorporate them into your practice? Write your reflections below.

Sensitive leadership means being attentive to the place the participants occupy in the group and how comfortable they feel with it. In particular, be cautious if one of the group members is in the role of the “class clown”. This role has many negative consequences for the group, especially for the clown. If you want to support them, find out their reasons first. The student usually takes on the role of a clown in order to meet one of their needs. It could be said that they have “misguided misbehaviour goals”.

Usually, in the group process, either the clown wants to attract the attention of the group towards them or they are lacking self-confidence.

In the first case, they need attention from the leader. This is quite natural. Unfortunately, by focusing on such behaviours as disturbing others or comments unrelated to the topic, we end up reinforcing them instead of enhancing the motivation of the student. If you want to work with such a person, you need to be delicate and use your intuition. It also depends on whether you already know this student or not. Try to be non-confrontational, not to make anyone embarrassed, ashamed or ridiculed. The task of the leader is to support the person to change their place in the group so that they feel safe and can re-direct their attention to productive collaboration.

Secondly, the role of the clown can be caused by low self-esteem or lack of confidence. You can help by making them aware of her strong points.

Here are some ideas:¹⁶

Situation 1¹⁷ : The behaviour of the student is an attempt to get attention.

- Try to meet this need in a way that serves the group goals. Give a productive task to the person where they will have the group’s attention.
- Try to devote more attention to the student once in a while.

How can the leader help a person in the role of the class clown be liberated from it?

- Smile as if to suggest that you know exactly what they mean and that you are going to play the game. Then say: “Remember we said that we would talk during the break”.
- Decide on a special gesture with the student, for example by putting your hands in the letter “t” shape, you will mean that you are ready to listen to them if they stop shouting. At the same time, show that you believe in them and you know they can follow the rules of the meeting.
- Use the time when the student is in a good mood to show more acceptable ways of behaviour.
- Don’t talk. Take action. Instead of reproaching them, give the student a marker and ask them to record what the group is saying.
- Show the student that you care and say: “I want to support you in difficult moments”, “I will help you ...”

Situation 2: The student does not believe in themselves.

- Give the student time to do the task and demonstrate support so they can succeed.
- Show positive appreciation for every little positive behaviour.
- Don’t expect perfection from your students.
- Show the student that you care and say: “I appreciate when...”, I want to help with”...

By taking on the role of the class clown, the students show the need for belonging and acknowledgement. Try to show them that this sort of behaviour will not ultimately meet their needs.

Remember:

- The conversation needs to be kept in a friendly tone.
- It is best to talk directly to the student.

In order to find out about authentic needs which are behind the behaviour:

1. First, ask the student if they know why they are behaving in a certain way. Define the behaviour. Usually participants cannot say why they are doing something.
2. If the student is unable to respond, ask if you can try to guess.
3. Ask questions which start with “Perhaps...” waiting for the answer each time.
 - “Perhaps you are fooling around to attract my attention?”
 - “Perhaps you are fooling around because you are not able to do the task and you do not want to even try?”

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Based on the works of Jane Nielsen and the concept of positive discipline. More information on the author’s website. www.positivediscipline.com. [Accessed on 10.01.2021]

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The situations refer to the concept of four “misguided goals of misbehaviour” described by J. Nielsen. She defines misbehaviours as misguided choices which are not a display of ill intent but a search for significance and belonging by children and adults. These are: seeking attention, power, revenge and lack of confidence. 1 I am important and belong if you pay attention to me. 2. I belong if I win and control. 3. I hurt if I feel I don’t belong so I will hurt others. 4. I don’t deserve to belong and matter so I give up and I will not show what I can do.

Two reactions might be a sign for you that the person is aware of the real reason:

- a gesture of acknowledgement by smiling,
- a verbal confirmation.

The teacher as a leader that is sensitive to the process

In the first part of the manual we have explored the possible group reactions, challenges and the support needed by the team from the facilitator. Let's go back to these phases but in a different way. What could the leader do to help themselves? Not only is the group important but so is the facilitator's self-care. We encourage you to reflect on a few questions we have added to each stage. They will guide you in choosing the most adequate and supportive action.



Group forming stage

Let's begin with the first stage. You already know that the group is not formed in a void. The participants come with their stories and experiences. They might or might not know each other. This stage is usually marked with uncertainty and fear but also curiosity. Curiosity is often followed by superficial cooperation. It is superficial because not all of the group needs have emerged yet.

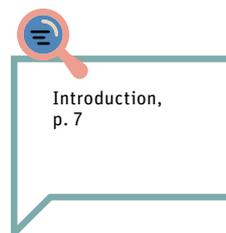
What can you do to feel more confident as a leader from the very beginning?

- Make sure you know what you are getting yourself into (topic, time, conditions, especially if it is an external programme).
- Look for the benefits you could reap from the project. What are your goals?
- Decide if you are going to do this project by yourself. You may want to ask a colleague or friend to support you.
- Prepare yourself for this stage. Recall any favourite team-building activities. Look for new ideas. The Centre for Citizenship Education has a vast pool of resources.

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON:

1. What do you need to carry out a project? Do you have the right resources in time and know-how? Who could support you?
2. What will you get from this project?

More self-reflection exercises can be found in the introduction.



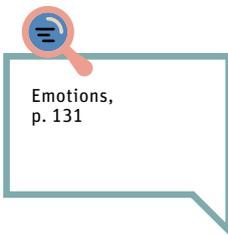


The clash stage

At this stage, individuals start revealing their intentions, conflicts arise, and resistance starts to gather. An informal leader becomes the voice of the group. Many things happen on the level of emotions. You might find new, difficult behaviours. You might have thoughts like: “This will not work” or “When will this be over and they will take on their responsibilities, instead of fighting?”. The challenge you are facing is to transition towards a workflow with which the team could be satisfied.

How can you support yourself at this stage?

- Treat the team’s behaviour as a natural development and not as targeted at you.
- Gather tools in case of resistance or conflict (some ideas have been provided in this manual).
- Be mindful of your own emotions. Separate them from the group’s emotions.
- You do not have to solve the problem all at once. Give yourself time and an opportunity to think the situation through.
- If you feel uncomfortable, ask the school counsellor for help. In fact, it is more important to process this stage with the group than to manage it all by yourself.



QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON:

1. How do you react in conflict situations? How would you prefer to react?
2. How do you solve conflicts when working with students? How do you deal with group resistance?
3. How do you deal with an informal leader? How can you make use of their status for the benefit of the group? What can this situation give you?



Stabilisation stage

At this stage you can see the light in the tunnel, and you can breathe with relief. You should still pay attention to what is happening in the group, though. The group is regaining balance after a stormy period and is beginning to apply the agreed norms. You can see signs of willingness to take action. The group feels safe enough to meet and collaborate. You may need to modify the goals of the project. Individual goals may change as well. It is a very important phase if you want the project to be successful.

How can you take care of yourself?

- Remember that norms adopted by the group also concern you and that you have a say in what they involve.
- How do you see your role now? Check in with yourself if you have a different outlook on the group. You also need to periodically adjust the project goal for yourself.

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON:

1. At what moment do you feel that you are losing control of the group? Is it upsetting you?
2. How ready are you to delegate responsibility to the group? What does it mean to you?
3. What does power and control over the group mean to you? Do you need it?



Action stage

At this stage, your efforts focus on project goals: setting challenges linked to action, identifying needs and skills of students. A crisis might appear and you could even feel that you are taking a step back. This will strengthen the group, provided that the group has been skilfully led through the earlier stages of the process. Your leader's radar will detect the energy as well as a drop in motivation. There might also be an air of resentment about unfulfilled group or individual goals.

Here are some tips how to practice self-care at this stage:

- Delegate as much as you can to the group. If you think this is a big responsibility, try breaking it into smaller tasks or giving major tasks to more than one person.
- Do not feel guilty if something is not going according to plan.
- Allow yourself to make mistakes.
- Celebrate small successes, look for satisfaction in small steps.

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON:

1. How do you delegate tasks? Which of the tasks do you delegate easily? Why?
2. How do you cope if something is not done the way you expected it to be?
3. How do you show your appreciation for your own achievements and those of others?



Separation stage

This is a time to close the project. Your role as leader ends. Focus on being together and celebrating. You are absolutely evaluating your actions but also do not forget to address the difficult emotions which might come with your group parting.

What can help you to take stock of this experience for yourself?

- Visualise this project as a pathway from the perspective of a sensitive leader. You can imagine it in your head or draw it on paper.
- Appreciate yourself. Write down the experiences which developed your competencies in project and process management.
- Don't stop there. You must know how much it means if you have reached this far!

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON:

1. What did you learn about yourself during this project?
2. What would you have done differently?
3. For what are you grateful to yourself?

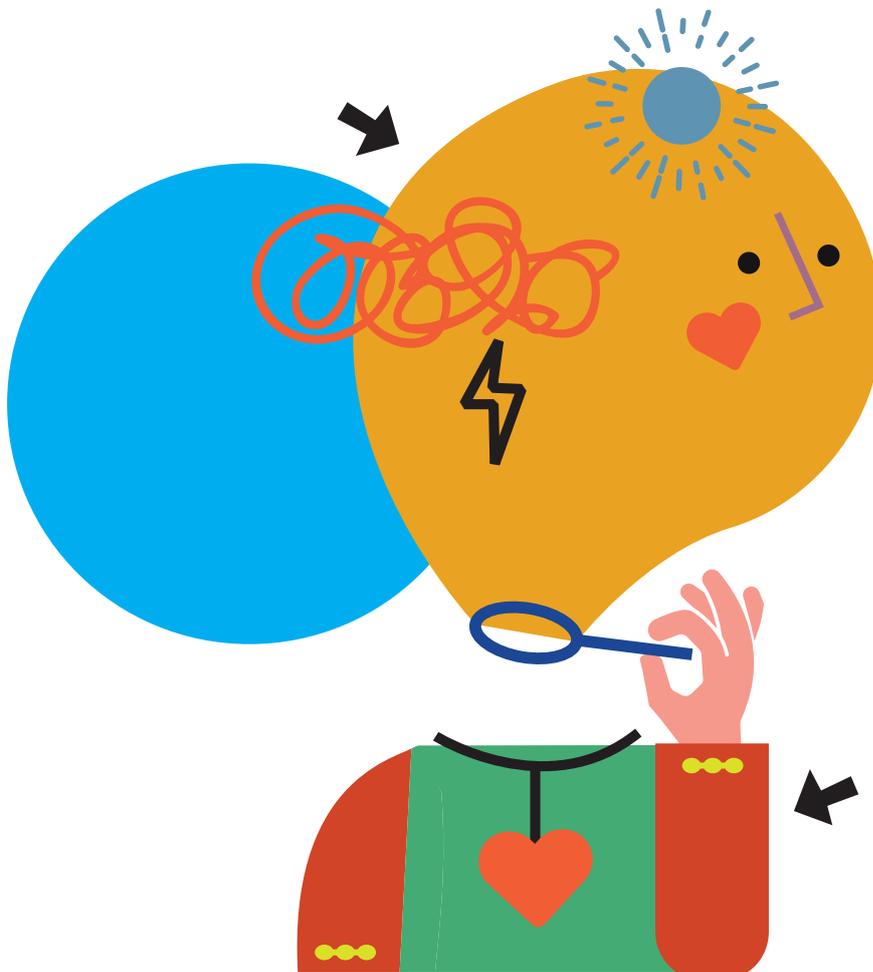
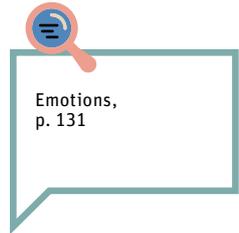
A sensitive leader should be aware that emotions are something you work on all the time. You will find a separate chapter about how to support the group in dealing with their emotions. Here we focus on your emotions as the leader. They also impact the group. Checking in with your emotions contributes to developing your leadership skills.

Self-awareness of one's emotions

4. See with what emotions you are starting the project and how they change, especially in difficult situations.
5. Observe how you are feeling in different moments. Remember that all of your feelings are acceptable and are a manifestation of your needs. Note that your needs as the leader also count.
6. Often ask: "What am I feeling?" "What do I need in order to..." (Finish the sentence depending on what your needs are).

There can be situations and behaviours of the team which are challenging. It can be helpful to become aware of which behaviours of the members make you feel uncomfortable. Naming these emotions in silence will make them easier to approach.

Look at the situations below. Remember that these are frequent signs of the needs of the team. They are not targeted at the leader. Respond to the questions and note down your reflections. Finally, consider what is supportive and what needs improvement.



| Example of situation or behaviour of the group | What emotions do you observe within yourself at that moment? | What would you usually do about it? | Your confidence on the scale from 1-10 in this situation | How would you like to react? |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Evident breaking agreed rules | | | | |
| Mocking others | | | | |
| Criticising every idea | | | | |
| Prolonged silence even though you asked for a reaction | | | | |
| Whispering | | | | |
| Avoidance of having the problem out in the open | | | | |
| Passive giving in to and accepting every decision | | | | |

Burnout of the students



You might observe some people withdraw. They stop being active or will not do their jobs on time. There is a whole chapter on motivation of the project group. Sometimes you may need an honest conversation to identify the difficulty. Could the task be too difficult? At other times you need to accept that the participants are burnt out. The student should be able to leave the group without negative consequences. Even if you try to reach the person who is quitting, you need to accept that this does happen and it is not your fault as the leader. One of the basic principles in a project is voluntary participation. This means the possibility to get engaged as well as to quit. You might wonder if we are teaching young people to be accountable. If we treat the educational project as a way to acquire and develop social skills, then letting go of an activity can be a learning experience.



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Chapter 5



DIFFICULTIES

Authors: Monika Prus-Głaszczka [difficulty 6],

Agnieszka Jarmuł [difficulties 3,4 i 5], Anna Pająk [difficulty 1,2]



In this chapter you will learn:

- You will learn about case studies of difficult situations of working with a group during the project.
- You will see how these difficulties were overcome.
- You will reflect on your experience of working with the group.

We have prepared a few case studies which show the difficulties that the facilitator had. Combining efficient project work, the right pace and attentiveness to the needs of the group can be challenging. The group process takes place parallel to project tasks. In order for the project to work you need to set goals, make an assessment of the situation, create a schedule and finally take action. At the same time, the group might be resistant, going through a conflict or experiencing a decline in motivation. Sensitive leadership is about following the process. It is the process which is the foundation of working with the team. From this perspective, experiencing difficulties could be of equal value for the leader as for the group. At the end of the chapter you will find suggestions on what can be done in such situations. Let us analyse a few authentic case studies.

First difficulty: motivation

Our first school project in the scope of the Centre for Citizenship Education Foundation's programme "Youth in Action" was fantastic. We wanted to show our town's "past and present", using the memoirs of seniors and the dreams of children in kindergarten. We were bursting with motivation. We managed to get honorary and media patronage, and sponsors... All of the elements were coming together and our partners supported us and cooperated with us. We held a gala during which we presented the material.

Then, Autumn 2018 came. At the beginning of the school year, the students were carried by the wings of success. They wanted even more. We were motivated by the Centennial of the Polish Independence. We met up with important figures of the region and discussed the meaning of contemporary patriotism. We organized concerts and poetry recitals for our partners. However, we could not plan the final event which would combine all of the aspects of the project. The whole group was preparing for the final exam at the end of primary school (the so-called eighth grader's exam). We had to give up the idea of the gala. We faced the challenge of focusing on the curriculum which requires time and effort. As a leader, teacher and educator I was concerned with the school performance of the students which

becomes very important in the eighth grade. Their energy should focus on studying. The motivation of the team as well as mine dropped. It was as if somebody had cut our wings. It seemed that we would not accomplish anything cool.

Luckily, the good energy came back. After a long discussion, we decided to take small steps. Instead of one big event, we organized smaller events. Each individual outreach with the partner institution is a part of our project.

What was helpful? First of all, we allowed ourselves not to do everything as planned. Autumn makes it more difficult to start. Time passes quickly. Generally speaking, we are slightly weaker. Sometimes you need to slow down. Even if something does not work out, it can be a valuable experience. We do not always have to be at 100% of our capacities. This was not easy because we wanted to keep up the momentum of the summer while wanting to work hard and efficiently.

What did we learn? Action can be divided into smaller steps and each can be summed up. The biggest challenge of the project is students' motivation. At the beginning, it is powerful. Then it fluctuates. Some young people tend to lose it when faced with new challenges. Others become determined. I have observed a changing motivation in all projects. I have learned that the role of the facilitator and coordinator is to constantly support and discover the potential of the students. Time pressure is not the answer. At times the group needs a short break in the action to look at what they have done so far.

COMMENTARY:

Above you can see how external circumstances can weaken the group's motivation. They can feel overwhelmed with the size of the task. You can assume that, at the moment of the crisis, the group was already at the action stage. Obviously, what made it easier for the leader to name the situation, to pause and take the decision to reduce the size of the project, without losing the satisfaction. It was the alertness of the facilitator to the level of motivation and their acceptance that something could go wrong that made it possible to come up with new solutions and gain new experiences by the team.

Second difficulty: Unforeseen circumstances

In February 2020 I started another project with the eighth grade in the framework of the programme “Youth in Action”. We wanted to choose the path “Let’s read together”. During the Polish literature lessons in the Spring term, we tackled the reading list before the exam. And we continued to have fun reading after the exam. The plans were ambitious and most of the group was motivated. Students joined the activities willingly; each engaging as they could. Suddenly, the Covid-19 pandemic came and we started the remote learning mode. I was afraid that most of our plans would fail, as we could not even meet up with our partners.

During the social isolation, we moved to the Internet. We communicated through Messenger and Teams. These became our project platforms. One of the students ran our fanpage and showed the effects of our brainstorm and the group’s ideas. The team was smaller and not everybody joined. But those who stayed on did amaze me. Suddenly I stopped being the leader of a project group. This role was taken over by one of the students. We supported each other in exploring and learning the tools which could help us do what we wanted. It was not possible to organize a presentation and a finale with guests but we did do a few events online.

I think the project was a success. The methods we used could be replicated in various situations and also in remote and hybrid learning.

We learned that remote learning could be fun. The changing world demands new solutions and youth copes with social media brilliantly. Allowing the group of students to take the initiative can result in new, interesting solutions and inspire other students.

COMMENTARY:

The leader can adapt to the changing reality. The process is about change, after all. The group is a dynamic organism, with changing emotions and behaviours. The composition of the team also changes. You need to adapt to ways of working with the new persons and to others leaving. The crisis in the project was caused by the changes in the whole educational system. The group was completely reorganized. Students became motivated to manage the project differently and they felt confident enough to take over. What could the leader have done? She could have worried about the success of the project and questioned the capacities of the team. Instead, she gave the reins to the students. The teacher withdrew from leadership of the project and let the project run in a new rhythm, regardless of the effect. It turned out that the students learned something new and reinforced their group competence.

Third difficulty: Risk of failure

The project was about showing the history of the school through stories of seniors. Students met with the alumni of their school. They were willing to share their stories from school days. Some of the stories were controversial and not what you would call educational.

The students decided to show those memories on film and make their modern visual version. They got the green light from the school administration. In the film you could see innocent comparisons such as blackboards with multimedia boards. However, it also referred to negative aspects of school life: fights, copying during tests and methods of fooling around during lessons, like using the paper notes vs. the smartphone.

On the day of the presentation, the students were prohibited from screening it under the pretence that the school is shown in a bad light. The public, including the seniors, were already waiting in the room...

What did the leader do?

The first step was to talk with the project group and allow them to express their emotions, as they were in that moment. Next, a fast brainstorm took place. One of the things that the group practiced was what to do in case the film was not ready on time. What if there was a power outage? The projector stopped working. It turned out that the dry run helped to face this difficulty and work out a contingency plan.

There was an idea to engage the allies present in the room, the seniors. As their stories could not be screened, they could share them. The leader supported their group, by sitting with them and showing he was on their side. He cheered them on, encouraging them to go on stage.

The students started to interview the seniors. The stories which were told encouraged the school administration to show the film. During the evaluation round the leader expressed his appreciation that the group kept their cool and continued the presentation, adapting to the situation. He helped the group to draw conclusions for the future.

COMMENTARY:

The leader was put in a difficult situation which could potentially lead to the failure of the project and to the group's disappointment. He made sure to take care of the group and hear out the difficult emotions. Only then, did he encourage them to find new solutions. As the group felt heard, they were ready to react. The experience of working in a crisis was definitely educational.

Fourth difficulty: The group is not aware of their tasks and the plan

The project was about organizing an outing of the project group and taking people with disabilities to an animal shelter. The idea was born out of a series of workshops in which the group had taken part in. The trainers worked with young people on various topics, Nevertheless, it turned out that the schedule had not been made and tasks had not been distributed. The group did have an idea but the responsibility was scattered. Everybody knew that there was to be a walk, that they needed to contact people with disabilities but nobody knew how and when. Even though the meetings lasted two months and the participants met to discuss them, nobody took any action.

What did the leader do?

After the initial round, when it turned out that the idea was not put into action and there was no plan, the trainer decided to alter the workshop. An empathetic leader responds to the needs of the group, adapting the scenario of workshops.

Despite having planned a workshop on promoting projects, the trainer suggested working on setting goals and creating a schedule. He asked the youth questions, guiding them to the point where they were sure of what they wanted to do. He allowed them to brainstorm and suggest even the wildest ideas which they then broke down into action steps. The trainer did not criticize any of the ideas. He let the group arrive independently at a conclusion that some could not be carried out because of lack of time and human resources, and thus, needed to be reformulated.

Participants left the training with a concrete action plan, target group, and, in particular, the task division and dates.

COMMENTARY:

The group was ready to take action but many elements were missing such as an action plan or schedule of activities. Such chaos does impact the group process. It can lower motivation, a sense of safety and group belonging. The participants could ask what they were doing there and what was their task and goal. In a team where they have not set the goals and distributed the responsibilities, the team could easily be scattered and even break apart. In reaction to what was happening, the leader altered his training plan and took a step back with the group. This allowed them to manage the group's anxiety and focus on constructive planning. The students recovered the sense of meaning of the project.

Fifth difficulty: The group did not evaluate the project

The project was about getting to know neighbours (their stories and interests) and then presenting the collected information to a wider audience in an interesting form. The team carried out a series of unusual activities – especially for a youth project. The choice of the “neighbour” was especially surprising. They decided to visit a neglected park near the school.

Students collected old photographs from the town archive, and listened to stories of the senior population. They also held a competition for children about what they dreamt to have in the park. They presented their collected stories, pictures and ideas for the renovation of the park. In the same way, the team reminded the people that a forgotten neighbour is “living” in the town. After the presentation, the group scattered and did not continue working on the follow up.

What did the leader do when he gathered the former group?

The first project activity was to get to know the competencies of the individual participants of the project. The leader had heard of the presentation, which was praised widely. It turned out that the youth lacked confidence in their project, did not know how to respond to questions about what they learned and could not identify their strong points. They were only able to talk about deficits and things to improve.

The empathetic leader noticed that what was missing was closure. He decided to return to the project and evaluate it. He suggested a few exercises which could highlight their creativity and originality. One of the elements consisted of expressing personal acknowledgement to each team member. The second step was self-appreciation, noticing one’s own strong points and trying to say it aloud in front of the group. The exercise was difficult and rewarding, they said.

The meeting brought the group closer and there was a desire to continue collaborating.

COMMENTARY:

The group was left with emotions of the separation phase and could not experience them together. From the perspective of the project, there was no closure. This could have been the reason for not being clear about what worked. Perhaps the group was dominated by the sense of void instead of satisfaction. The group did not have the full experience of the project. This situation shows how important it is to do, not only a final evaluation of what worked, but also what the individual participants learned.

The sixth difficulty: Leader ignorant of the group process

The project was prepared by a few people who had been highly motivated all year. The final phase involved two week workshops for kids and teens. Volunteers from diverse countries also took part. These were people who did not know each other and were not connected with previous stages of the project. At first the work was going well. The group worked very efficiently and got along well. However, in the key moment of the project when all the energy of the team was needed, motivation dropped significantly. Individuals started complaining that they were tired and stopped engaging themselves. Leaders could not understand why the group was being cranky and grumpy. They feared a year of work would be for nothing. They could not understand how it could be that the participants were not identifying with the important goal of the project. The leaders had many ambivalent emotions because they did not understand the group had too much to do, was in the stage of resistance and could not identify with the goal. There were many reasons at once. In the end, it was possible to overcome the crisis because of the will of both parties. The eventual beneficiaries also became interested in the project. Nevertheless, had the leaders been more aware of the group process, then they would have ensured the group had time to bond. They then would have been ready to accept their resistance and decline in motivation.

COMMENTARY:

At times, the project is happening in two realities. The leader has their own motivation and is ignorant of the needs of the group. They can be misled by what seems to be a stabilization phase and think they can expect the group to be active at full capacity. They take a lack of action personally. In this situation, the leader did not recognize the clash stage, which manifested through growing resistance to them and more conflict. The project could have taken a different turn if, at the very beginning, the leader had focused not only on the steps of the project but had been able to see the needs of the group. If only the leaders had been able to understand that their own intensity of motivation was different than that of the group. That resistance was an important signal not to be missed.

The examples above are just a few of many as each group has its own dynamics and difficulties. The good news is that these difficulties could develop your leadership skills. Try to recall the type of challenges you came across as a leader. By responding to these questions, you will be able to reflect on this experience.

1. Recall a tough situation from a project. Describe it in detail (don't interpret). What was the issue?

2. What emotions are you feeling towards this situation?
3. What did this situation look like from the perspective of the group process?
4. What kind of solutions do you see?
5. What would you do, taking into account your current awareness of the group process and its pillars (communication, motivation, working with emotions)?

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As we are coming close to the end of this guidebook, we would like to leave you with some tips for people who have the awareness of what the group process is. You might find them useful in a time of difficulty:

- The experience of collaboration could be more valuable in the development of the competence of students than the success of the project on paper.
- Working on the group process may result in the leader feeling that they are not progressing. When the leader focuses on what is happening in the group, certain activities may be paused. In spite of this, it is then that the team has the chance to learn.
- Hearing out and noticing the needs of the group contributes towards harmony.
- Crisis can be a moment to bind the group and allow it to grow.
- Good relationships in the group and communication are a resource the group can draw in times of challenge. Invest in it from the beginning.
- The more independent the team, the better leader you become.
- The wellbeing of a leader impacts the work of the whole team.

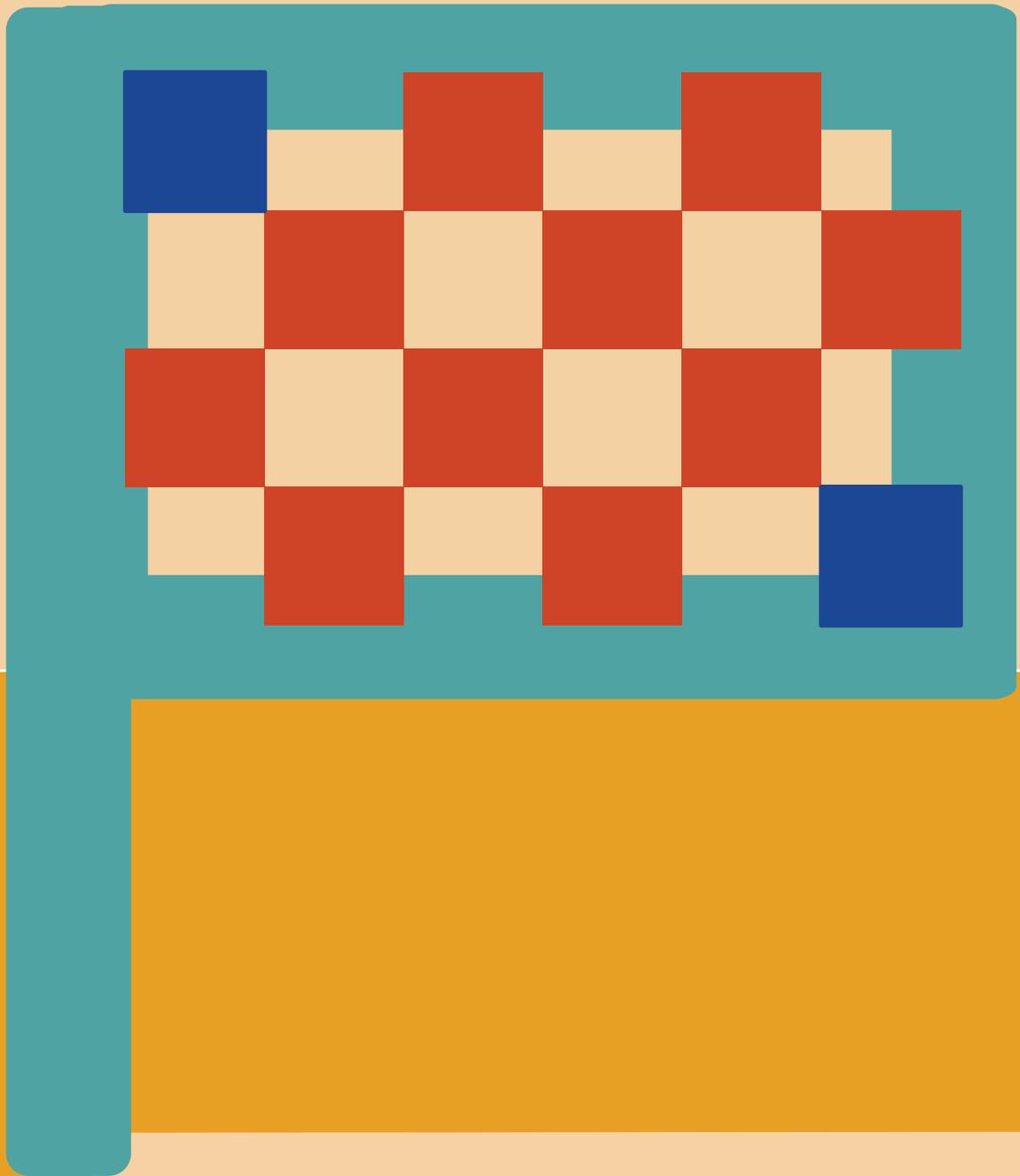
And finally...the path to becoming a leader sensitive to the group process is empathy!



FREE THOUGHTS

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing.

Chapter 6



THE FINISH LINE

Author: Judyta Ziętkowska



In this chapter you will learn:

- **Assess your personal goals, resources and values with which you are ending your group work.**
- **Analyse the forces for change and resisting change present in your school which have influenced the group process.**
- **Plan your next challenge.**

We have reached the finish line together. On the way you have probably come across challenges, doubts and sought new solutions. You might have also seen the fruits of the experience of the group process for you and the students. We hope that, through facilitating the group process, you have gained satisfaction, gotten to know yourself and the student team better and learned something new. Your group has had a facilitator who is self-aware and mindful of their needs.

Regardless of how much time you had for supporting the group process, we want to thank you. We are grateful for your interest and effort to understand the evolving process. We are convinced that it is a significant step towards becoming a leader that is sensitive to the process.

As a final step, we would like to invite you to do a short evaluation. Review your personal goals. To what extent have you achieved them? How have internal resources changed? To what extent have you managed to uphold your values? How do you see the school's support affecting your working environment?

Just as in the beginning, find the time to think through what your takeaways are. Be honest. Write down your reflections and take as much as you need. How will you embrace the group process long-term as you continue to work with students? Remember that looking back and making conclusions for the future is an important step towards becoming a leader that is sensitive to the process.

EXERCISE:

WHAT ARE MY TAKEAWAYS?



What is your approach towards working with the group process after this experience? What kind of emotions do you have?

What does “the group process” mean to you now?

Has working on the group process influenced your perception of the students? How?

How have your students gained? What about you?

In working with group you were successful in:

In working with group the challenging part was:

Next time you would do the following things differently:

How confident are you about leading the group process for students on the scale from 1-10?

Very uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Very confident**

How confident do you feel in an educational project on a scale from 1-10?

Very uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Very confident**



EXERCISE:
MY PERSONAL GOALS

At the beginning we encouraged you to think about what you would like to get out of this experience. In other words, we asked you about your personal goal. What is it like at the end of the road?

What personal goal did you set at the beginning?

To what extent do you manage to achieve it? Why do you think so?

I did not manage at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **I have achieved it fully**

What are the outcomes of trying to reach this goal? How do you feel about this? What was the reaction of the people around you?

What was the challenging part about trying to reach this goal? Why? What obstacles did you overcome (internal and external)?

What would you have done differently in order to accomplish your goal?

To what extent was it worth it to get involved? Why do you think so?

It was not worth it at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **It was totally worth it**

Was your personal goal the same all this time? If not, how did it change? Why?

EXERCISE:

MY INTERNAL RESOURCES – WHAT HAS CHANGED?



We invited you to look at your talents and think how they could help you to facilitate the group process and achieve your own goals. Take a look back at your conclusions and see how they look from today's perspective. Perhaps the experience of working with a group has given you a different perspective on your internal resources.

1. Come back to the exercise **MY INTERNAL RESOURCES** and do the first two steps again. If you did this exercise at the beginning, try not to read your notes. Keep a fresh mind.
2. Compare your current outcomes to what they were at the start. Think:



Which talents were useful in facilitating a group process?

Which of them do you see as useful now? What changed? Why?

Which talents were less useful in facilitating a group process? Which of them do you see as useful now? What changed? Why?

Which talents did you use ? How?

Which of them would you like to use more in the future?

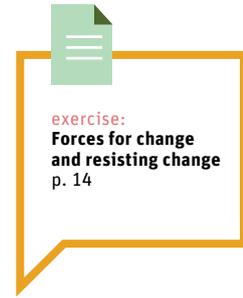
How did these talents help you in reaching the goal?

EXERCISE:

FORCES FOR CHANGE AND RESISTING CHANGE: WHAT HAS CHANGED?



Leading a student group and doing an educational project is unique. The school operates within a certain framework. Both you as well as the youth are in specific roles. That is why, at the beginning, we encouraged you to consider how the school can support you and what can be an obstacle.



1. Come back to the exercise **FORCES FOR CHANGE AND RESISTING CHANGE**. Check what kind of forces for change and resisting change were present in your school. Did you put it in the chart and, if so, what was their intensity?

2. Think:
What forces for change did appear?

How did you strengthen them? Who helped you?

What forces resisting change emerged?

How did you cope? Who helped you?

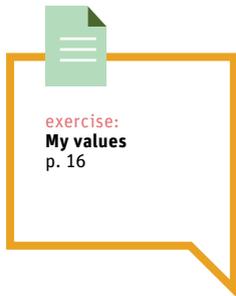
Are there any forces you did not foresee? What were they?

What did you do about them?

What happened that you did not include them at the beginning?



EXERCISE:
MY VALUES : WHAT HAS CHANGED?



As you began the project with a group, you had the opportunity to reflect on the values which really count for you. We also talked about how it is easier to engage in actions which are aligned to our values. You can now check to what extent this experience allowed you to maintain your integrity.

1. Consult the graphics from the exercise **MY VALUES**. Check what you wrote in the following areas: a) work b) personal growth or education c) relationship with students d) relationships with your colleagues. Underline those which you drew from when you were doing the group process.

2. Think:

Why did you underline these values?

What have these values given you?

Were there any important values missing on the graph? Which ones? Add them to the drawing.

What values did you neglect? Why?

How can you cultivate them in the future?

EXERCISE:
LOOKING AHEAD



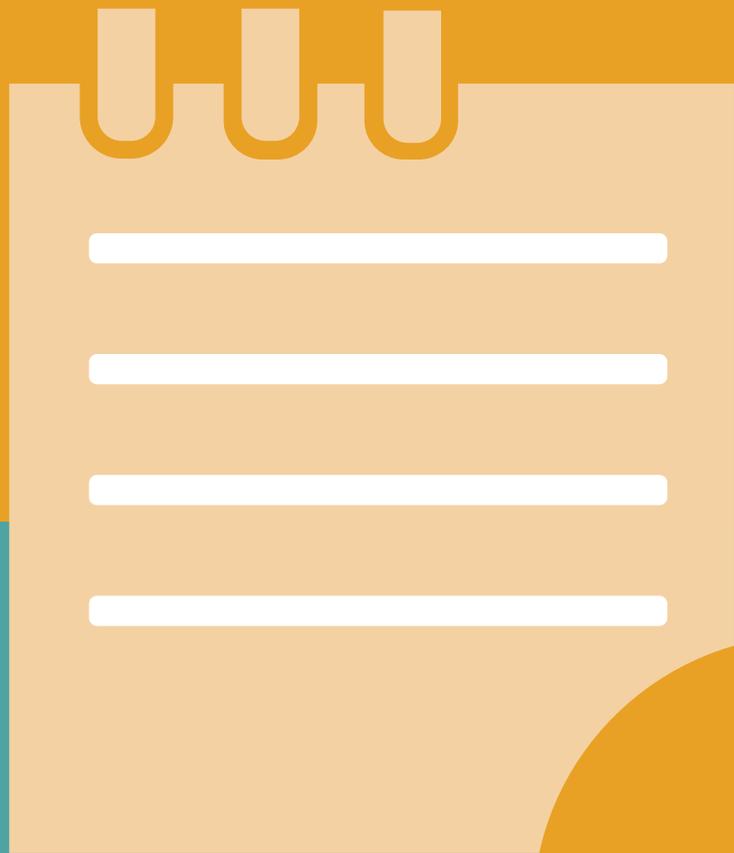
We encourage you to reflect on different ways you can use the skills and insights you gained during the group process in your future projects. Give yourself time to think about new personal goals. Even pausing for a moment before planning new initiatives will increase the chances you might be able to draw from your experiences in your everyday professional practice.

What is the existing opportunity to facilitate the group process?

What do you want to remember?

What would you like to achieve for yourself? What is your new personal goal?

Additional Material



HOW TO WORK WITH THE STUDENT JOURNAL “POWER UP”

Author: Aneta Derda



In this chapter you will find:

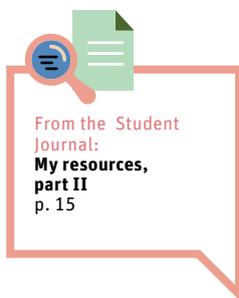
- **Examples of exercises to work with the student journal.**

Have a look at the journal “Power Up” for students. It contains exercises designed for individual work, self-reflection and self-directed learning. Most of them can be successfully adapted to working in a group format. Encourage students to use the workbook also during the meetings of the team, treating them as a starting point for a free discussion or individual work, depending on the desires of the students. Some of the exercises from the student journal are about sensitive information. Disclosing it among the whole group could be a source of embarrassment for their author. In such a situation, it is recommended to do the exercise but, at the same time, to allow the participants not to show one’s responses and create space for voluntary sharing. Whatever the students want to share will be sufficient. Even if they do not say anything, they will probably re-think it at the right moment. Below, you will find cues on how to work with selected parts of the journal. We hope that they will be an inspiration to develop your own ideas on how to work with this material..



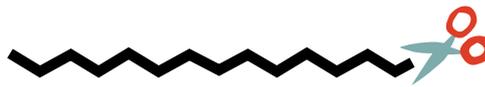
Surfacing resources

You probably know how hard it is to get youth to say one good word about themselves and not just because they have low self-esteem. In our culture, we tend to focus on weak points and things to improve rather than what we are good at. That is why we have suggested a few exercises based on a list of talents by the Gallup Institute (**MY RESOURCES, PART II**). As a first step, give the group simpler tasks which could positively influence the cooperation in the group.



EXERCISE:

WHAT AM I BRINGING WITH ME?



Time of duration: 15 minut

Materials: basket, post-its, Bristol board

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

It is a simpler exercise in which you can participate together with the students. You can do it online or offline.

1. Each person receives five post-its and the task to write down five skills, talents or strong points. These can be closely related to project work, such as former experience or the skill to give interviews. They can also be related to skateboarding, cake baking or other things. The students put their post-its into the basket.
2. Read them and think how you can use this potential in the project. Some will be useful and you will “park” the other ones for the future. Make sure at least one skill per person is seen as necessary. In this way everybody feels included.
3. Based on the list of talents create a vision board of skills and strong points. It will be useful throughout the project and will help you to distribute the tasks.

EXERCISE:

WHAT WILL WE TAKE?



Time of duration: 15 min

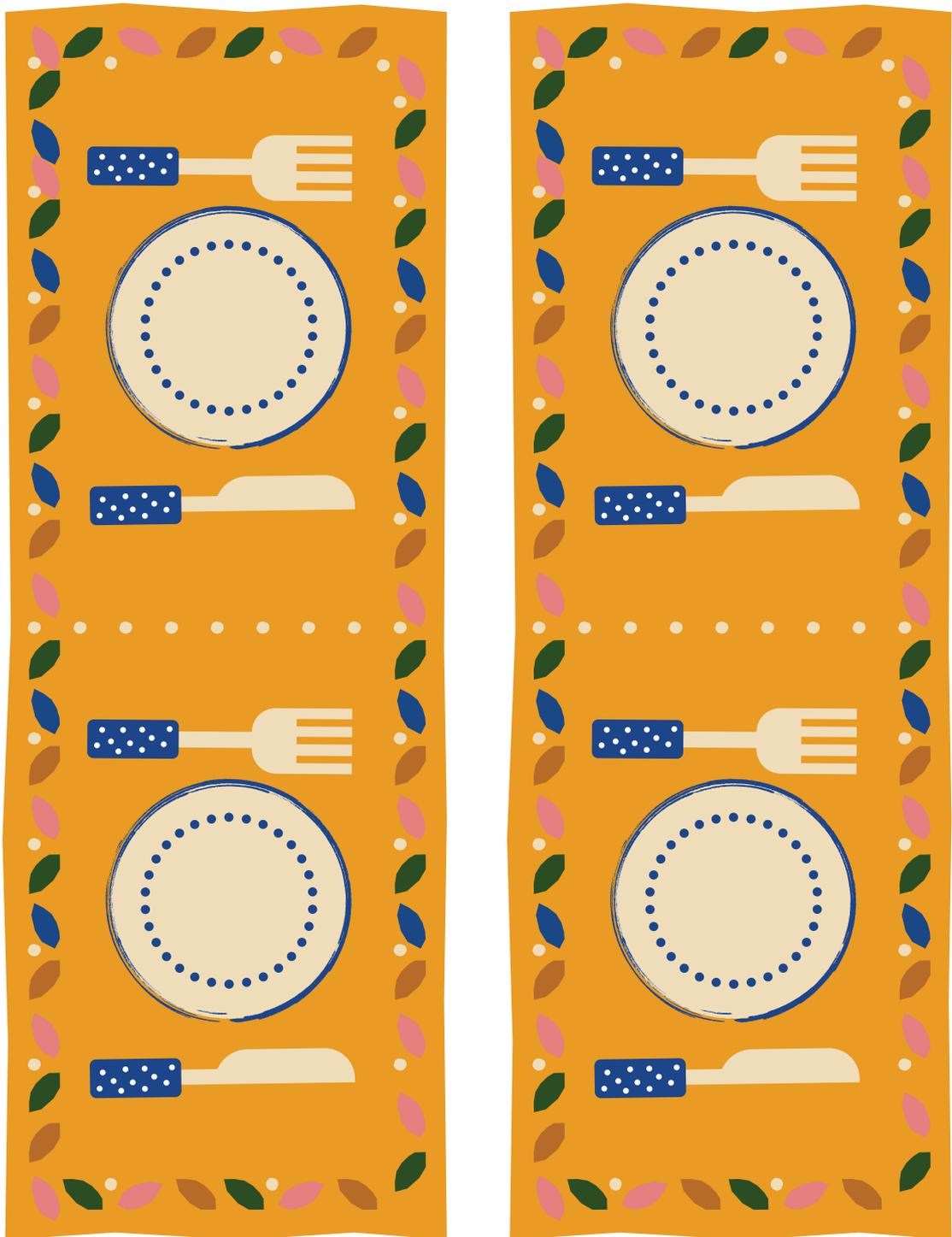
Materials: drawing of a plate, post-its, markers

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

This exercise is a further step towards surfacing strong points.

1. Together with the students, think about which skills (not in the basket) that are still needed in the project
2. The participants write them down on post-its or inside the image of an empty plate. At this stage, these will be hard skills rather than soft skills. They are easier to name for young people. You might see film editing, writing articles, doing surveys.
3. Once the plate is full, ask if there is a person in the group who could take care of one of the things on the plate. It might be that someone can write well or has been taking pictures for years. Somebody else knows how to conduct interviews.

4. Add the post-its from the previous exercise to the board.
5. What about the post-its left on the plate? They are a great excuse to talk about finding allies and partners who can help you in the project.



EXERCISE: OUR EXPERIENCE



 **Time of duration:** 10 min

 **Materials:** Flashcard with questions

If, among the participants, there are people who have worked with project methodology outside school, co-coordinating an event or participating in group action, then encourage them to share the experience.

1. Arrange the cards with questions so that the questions are visible. Students who have any experience in project work will draw one card.
2. Ask them to recall a project they have been working on and respond to the question. Before they respond, give them two minutes to think. You will find examples below:
 - Which part of the project are you most proud of?
 - What do you think was the biggest success in the project?
 - What was the greatest difficulty?
 - What problem did you come across in the project and how did you solve it in the group or how did you solve it by yourself?
 - What would you have done differently? In what kind of situation did you have to change your plans or project schedule?
 - How did you solve the conflict situation in the group?
 - Who helped you carry out the project?
3. Give everybody time to speak. If the speakers wish they can choose another question.

Write down a short list of best practices.



What do we expect?

Checking expectations is useful at the beginning of the project, during the planning phase. However, you can do this exercise if the participants signal a crisis or disappointment with some elements. They can then verify if their personal goals can be fulfilled and if the assigned task meets their needs.

You already know what you expect from the project as the facilitator and what your goals are. Your students also have the opportunity to think about their own goals and needs (**MY EXPECTATIONS AND NEEDS TOWARDS THE PROJECT**). Some of them will not relate to the topic of the project and that is perfectly fine!

Some of the individual goals will be managed very well. Others will complicate the project. You will not even know about most of them as students do not know how to articulate them. Nevertheless, it is clear that their personal aspirations will influence the atmosphere and quality of work in the project. Dedicate a moment to them. The more intense the so-called hidden life of the school, such as incidents of aggression and violence linked to informal hierarchies among youth, the more important this is. Even then,



it is still possible to do the project but you need to be very vigilant to the group process and group emotions, including those expressed nonverbally. To be aware of individual goals of the group members makes it easier to manage content and the educational component as well.



Goals of the students

Karol likes the topic of the project. Ada needs points for volunteering. Michał, Tomek and Ksawery always apply for projects together. Marta likes new challenges. Tosia cannot afford extra-curricular workshops so she engages in school projects. For Zosia this is an opportunity to move past bad grades. Ignacy had no choice. Marcel would like to overcome shyness and make new friends. Are their motivations important? Everybody has needs and with or without them, work must go on. Even without your intervention the project will somehow move towards the finale.

Unless... Michał, Tomek and Ksawery will be so impressed with their sense of humour that they will make it impossible to work at every meeting. Karol will not be interested in any critical remarks. Zofia and Ignacy will stop doing their job and Marcel will still be on the side-lines, all alone. This can happen too, right?

Most of these situations you will probably notice yourself, with no additional exercises. You probably know how to mitigate such situations. You might support Karol with strategies you would use with gifted children. You will split the girls up and give challenging tasks which will bring them satisfaction. Separate Michał, Tomek and Ksawery on different tasks so they do not dominate the group. Gently join Marcel with friendly people or use other methods, depending on what experience and knowledge tells you to do. Why talk with students about their goals?

First of all, assure them that it is alright to have their own goals. Let them know that if they want to share them, you are ready to hear them. Students need to be aware that their goals and needs are important and can be met as long as they do not impede the project and do not harm others. Students have the opportunity to be engaged in the project and cooperation with others more deeply. In addition, you have the opportunity to get to know the youth better. If students decide to share some of their needs with the group, perhaps you will be able to come up with something which will help the project grow, such as the need to play, a group outing or additional points on the report card.



What are we afraid of?

What can go wrong? A lot can go wrong especially if somebody feels lost in the project or a new group. Fear of working in the group and fear of failure tends to be paralyzing (including for the students). Below you will find an exercise to disarm that.

EXERCISE:
THE WORST POSSIBLE SCENARIO



This exercise works well when the group reacts nervously and when people are afraid of new challenges and failures.

Time of duration: 15 min

Materials: none

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

This is an exercise which stimulates the imagination. It allows one to get rid of fear of failure and focus on real difficulties. Encourage the group to come up with scenarios of what might go wrong in the project - a meteorite, mass coma or the school collapsing? Getting the most absurd fear into the open could help to deal with the possibilities of making mistakes and probability of failing. When students list their fears and laugh at them, it will be easier to find solutions to concrete problems.



EXERCISE:
THE GREMLINS



This is an exercise which works well at various stages even when everything has already been planned and the work is in progress. It allows us to pause and think whether the project is in jeopardy.

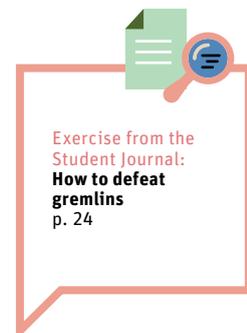
Time of duration: 25 min

Materials: sheet of paper or board, markers

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

The students know what gremlins are from the Student Journal. These cute creatures become monsters in unfavourable conditions, destroying everything and everybody.

1. Name and write down all the potential (and perceived) gremlins, like being late, lack of time, activities which clash with meetings, bad weather on the day you are planning events outdoors...



2. If you have a list of potential tragedies, allow the group to analyse every item on the list and how likely each threat is and how to disarm it. In most cases, the group will find the right solutions by themselves.

If you do this task at the outset of the project, you can include some of the potential obstacles at the stage of planning initiatives and creating a project schedule.



EXERCISE: THE BALLOON

 **Time of duration:** 20 min

 **Materials:** drawing of a balloon, post-its

This exercise allows us to do a check-in of emotions and needs of the group. It can be done at any moment you want to collect basic information about the resources and goals.

EXERCISE STEP BY STEP

1. Start a conversation about the project with the whole group or in pairs. You can hand out sheets to each person for individual reflection.
2. The balloon is your project. Think about what you want to achieve and where you want to fly to. Write these things in the canopy of the balloon.
3. Write what you want to take with you inside the basket, including your resources and skills, as well as people who could help you. In other words, anything which could make your work easier. If you do this exercise as a recap of any stage of the project, then write down all that you have achieved inside the basket.
4. Finally, discuss what burdens comprise your ballast and may impede meeting the goal. Look for coping strategies.

Thanks to this exercise the students will name their resources and difficulties. They will also see how much of the journey they have made and what they have achieved.

An altered version could also be a good exercise to evaluate the whole activity or project.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

A large, light-brown hot air balloon with a decorative border of colorful leaves (green, blue, pink, brown) and a blue pencil icon on the left side. The interior of the balloon is filled with horizontal white lines for writing.

WHAT WILL YOU TAKE WITH YOU?

A yellow hot air balloon basket with a decorative border of blue dots and three pink teardrop shapes hanging from the bottom. A blue pencil icon is on the left side, and a yellow pencil icon is on the right side. The interior of the basket is filled with horizontal white lines for writing.



Let us talk about values

In the **MY VALUES** exercise in the student journal we have presented an abbreviated list of values (assuming that a list which is too long can discourage and overcomplicate a conversation). Here they are:

Acceptance, safety, efficiency, creativity, helping others, truth, empathy, family, friendship, love, pleasure, achievements, working with others, independence, wisdom, leadership, respect, freedom, faith, engagement, beauty, curiosity, passion, patriotism, ingenuity, admiration, play.

The goal of the exercise is to reflect on those values, corresponding to the projects, that will be our focus. This kind of conversation is a good point of entry into a discussion about values in general. It allows us to address such aspects as the choice of career path or education, a conflict of values, or life choices.

At the beginning show them the list of values and ask the students what these values mean to them. As a first step, you can ask them to have a conversation in pairs and only then collect their answers to write them down.

Ask the group to recall the topic and goal of the project. Ask about the values they associate with the project and why they think so. Mark the more divisive values.

Give your students three minutes to individually think and note those values which are important to them in personal life. Those who may want to share their choice can tell the rest of the group but there is no obligation to give a justification.

Let it be a free discussion. What values were most important when you chose the project? When can having diverse values help and when can it be an obstacle? When can values be in conflict?

After each longer statement, paraphrase what has been said. Finally, sum up the exercise with the students. Note the most important conclusions on a flipchart and hang it on the wall together with other posters.

You will be able to come back to them and check whether you are going in the right direction.

You will also find exercises on planning individual and group work. (**WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING?**). Make sure that everybody knows what they are supposed to do, who to contact and what deadlines to meet.



They will get into a fight anyway

Arguments do happen in a project, especially when the group is clashing. You might also feel a lot of doubts, discouragement and want to slam the door. You will get through it.

In the period of increased tension the project might be in jeopardy but the situation will calm down eventually. Things will move forward. The presence of a person who mitigates tension is very important. At the “clash stage”, initial enthusiasm subsides, resentment emerges and the group might lose its unity. It is a natural stage for which you can prepare. The last chapter in the student journal “Let us talk about emotions” is dedicated to this. You will also find excerpts on having an argument and talking. These exercises help to name one’s own emotions and those of others, look at them and accept them so as to focus on problem solving. In order to support students in this process, here are some clues:

1. Introduce the “I” message to limit accusations.
2. Paraphrase what students are saying, highlighting the essence and making sure that everybody understands.
3. Allow criticizing behaviours but not people.
4. Make sure that loud people with a strong character do not dominate the conversation. Give everybody space to speak. If there are people who cannot refrain from interrupting, then introduce a “talking stick” (or any other object). Only the person holding it can speak.
5. If anybody has problems with speaking, help by asking opening questions.
6. Direct the conversation toward goals and problem solving.
7. Look for allies in mediators (including peer mediators), school counselors or other people who can help you gain perspective.

By adopting these rules students learn how to cope with difficult situations without undermining the achievements which the group already has. Do not forget you are a part of this group, although you have a special role. You are also subject to the mechanisms of the group process. You have your points of view and doubts. You are allowed to express them. On the other hand, the students have the right to respond to them when they disagree or they feel resentment towards you. If you overcome the impasse together, then this will be a great shared success.



Other actors

Communication is the basis of group cooperation but your rules should include all the partners. Your code of conduct should be equally valid when you communicate with the school administration, allies. Discuss who and how will contact the allies at different stages of the project from establishing cooperation, to executing the task and thanking them for help. In general, leave this up to the students. They will have the opportunity to



organize events with the help of other adults and communicate with them. Not only is this a good way to practice new skills but will give them the sense of success. If your team is afraid of contacting strangers or does not know how to behave, practice roleplaying the meetings with officials, inviting guests, and looking for sponsors beforehand.



Instead of a sum up

A sensitive leader is someone who agrees to be mindful towards everybody, including themselves. By being open minded and attentive, you teach respect, the language of emotions and empathy. The success of the group is not only about completing the project but a lot of small, personal victories. Regardless of what the project is about and what its principles are, your job is much more than being the supervisor. You can get to know the students better, include the excluded or help to spread wings to those without confidence. For that we are grateful to you.

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