



# PILLARS OF POWER



Handbook for trainers





**Name:**



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# INTRODUCTION

**Pillars of Power** is a method designed to foster empowerment and capacity building within community-based organisations.

It was developed by European partners with extensive experience in supporting people and initiatives working towards inclusion and participation.<sup>1</sup> Together, we created this accessible and practical approach to strengthen both individuals and organisations.

The method follows a **holistic approach**, combining physical and reflective exercises with sharing and dialogue. It connects personal development with collective growth and encourages participants to build confidence, resilience, and collaboration.

The method can be applied in a variety of contexts and is presented as a **flexible toolkit**. The training sessions can be used as a complete programme, as separate modules, or integrated into existing activities. It is adaptable and can be applied by both new and experienced trainers or facilitators.

This manual offers practical guidance and inspiration for trainers, including how to facilitate sessions, encourage positive group dynamics, and stimulate reflection throughout the learning process.

## **Professionals and non-professionals**

Pillars of Power is suitable for use by both professionals (trainers, social workers) and non-professionals who work in the support of women. These include volunteers at social organisations, language buddies or other people who support or accompany people in a particular context.

## **Participants**

The method is applicable in a broad sense within activities such as empowerment programmes, work and reintegration programmes, civic integration, language lessons, informal meetings at community centres, clubs, and associations, etc. Participants are mainly (vulnerable) women, with and without a migration background, who benefit from empowerment, connection and expanding their social network. The training sessions are meant to be given in groups.



1.  
INSTRUCTIONS  
FOR THE TRAINER

## Intake suggestions<sup>2</sup>

When a potential participant is interested, you assess whether Pillars of Power is appropriate for them by conducting an individual interview and addressing the following topics:

- Identify current needs and whether they can be met by the training.
- Provide information about the training.
- Ask about the motivation to participate. This is an important factor: ideally, the potential candidate is willing to engage in the process of (as far as possible) regaining their strength.
- Identify potential barriers to completing Pillars of Power
- Based on the information gathered, carry out an assessment of the potential participant's needs and motivation. Carefully consider whether these needs can be met by offering Pillars of Power.
- Decide with the potential participant whether Pillars of Power is the appropriate training course.

## Kick-off suggestions

The first meeting is important to create connection in the group and involvement of the participants from the start. Organise an information meeting or kick-off to which you invite participants. The trainer and the organisation will invest time and money in the training course and the participants are also expected to contribute in the training course.

For communication you can create a whatsapp group, with the consent of all participants. The coordinator or trainer takes care of the communication and sharing of videos, flip-charts, and homework.

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<sup>2</sup> Some of these instructions, such as organizing a joint kick-off, or reflecting on a previous meeting, when the method, or part of it, is used as a stand-alone course. Of course, these recommendations can be applied to any form of a series of meetings with a start and end.

## Recommendations for during the training sessions

### How we create a safe atmosphere in the group?

- By our own intention, attitude, openness, and energy as trainers.
- By making joint agreements at the first training session that are supported by everyone (you put up these agreements at every training session).

### Be aware of personal relationships within the group

Some participants may feel drawn to each other. The trainers must ensure that all participants are treated equally by the trainers themselves and by the members of the group. Make sure you address everyone and involve them in the training.

### Care about group cohesion

Use

- 1.) joint group activities, such as visits to cultural events, and companies.
- 2.) ceremonial elements, such as a certificate ceremony at the end or presentations by all participants on what has been learned, or worked with.
- 3.) joint responsibilities, e.g., have one participant lead the physical exercise, have another provide the drinks, have another monitor the time, etc.

### Reflection

Start each session by reflecting on the previous week. What have the participants done with the learned pillar? What went well, what needs more practice?

Reserve time at the end of the session to discuss how the session went, and time to talk about any challenges the participants may have had. Use the Sandwich Feedforward below for this.

### Make use of input from the group

Ask members of the group to share experiences, tell them about how they reacted in a similar situation, give advice and feedback to other participants. Let them serve as examples for each other, with an emphasis on success stories.

### **Provide snacks and refreshments**

The presence of snacks and drinks can contribute to a good atmosphere in the group and is recommended if possible.

### **Sensitivity**

People who have experienced trauma may have certain sensitivities. Make sure that things can be discussed openly and that the participants are respectful of the sensitivities of other members of the group. For this, the rules that you draw up together before starting the training will help.

## **The structure of the training**

The duration of one group session is approximately 2.5 hours. The discussion of the topics including the assignments for the group takes 2 hours. The remaining 30 minutes are meant for the group process (break, discussion, questions etc).

*If necessary, print out the material so that the participants have the exercises at their disposal. Or write the exercises on a flip-chart. The participants can use a handout consisting of the printed material handed out by the trainer(s), which they can keep after the training session if they wish.*

## **Preparation of the training session**

Study the Pillars of Power. Decide which assignments for your session are appropriate and feasible for the participants in question (e.g., taking into account any physical, cultural or age restrictions). It may be necessary to adapt or swap certain assignments, depending on the group. Have the printouts you need for each module available. If you need materials for certain assignments, make sure you have them.

If necessary, arrange for a translator or assign someone from the group to translate. Be aware of the importance of time management during a session. You can also ask participants to manage time for you. Be aware of the difference in language levels of the participants in the group and keep checking with the group whether everyone understands everything. Work with your flip-chart to make something clear by drawing or illustrating or ask someone in the group to explain something in their own words or in their own way.

## The structure of a session

### Beginning

Preferably, each session starts with the following components:

- Welcome, check how everyone feels and tell them what the subject of the training session is
- Review/reflection on previous training and how last week went? What have the participants done with what they have learned?
- A short physical exercise, such as a breathing or vocal exercise

### End

It is recommended that each session ends with the creation of an action plan/homework for applying the topic covered in daily life and in the time before the next training session.

## What to do in a second session?

Create an open atmosphere. You can ask neutral, open questions, such as:

- What was a good moment last week and how did the training help you?
- What went well last week?
- What helped you deal with your problems last week?
- What interesting, fun, or pleasant things did you do last week?

*Note: Be aware that when answering open-ended questions about last week, participants may tend to focus on problems or what caused stress. Make sure that participants stay focused on what they want instead of focusing on the old pain and stress.*

## How to cope with challenges in the group?

### Group dynamics out of balance

*The participants are not listening to each other.*

As a solution to this problem, a 'talking stone', or a ball or other object, can be used to ensure that each participant has time to speak, and to encourage everyone to express themselves without interruption.

## **Emotional overstimulation:**

### *Participants are overwhelmed by emotions or become unbalanced.*

Participants may have experienced traumatic events and their current situation may be difficult. Below there are some general tips that can be used to cope with situations where this happens. The best course of action depends on the individuals involved and the specific situation. Your own knowledge, experience, team, and intuition are tools you can use to choose the appropriate response to participants overwhelmed by emotions.

### **Tips**

The best way to react varies from person to person. Some options that may be useful in difficult situations:

- Name what you notice about the participant and see if they are overwhelmed.
- Focus their attention on the 'here and now', e.g., through grounding exercises: help the participant to become aware of the current environment and realize that their body is in contact with the chair and the floor.
- Provide hope/meaning, e.g., by making a plan for what the participant may do in the coming days, or by recalling memories or stories that promote empowerment.
- Make contact with the participant, e.g., by confirming that it is clear to you that they are overwhelmed, or by mentioning that you notice that the participant is struggling.

### **Please Note:**

- Never let the participant leave if they are still emotional.
- Stop the exercise if participants are overwhelmed by it.
- Give the participant space for her emotions and, if necessary, involve friends, family members or fellow trainers.

## **Writing assignments and adaptations**

This method contains writing assignments. For some participants this can be daunting if they are less fluent in the language. You can choose to discuss certain questions in class, or, if they are personal questions, participants can answer them by drawing. Decide which format best suits the group and the questions.

Afterwards write down 'new words'. At the beginning of each training session, let the participants know immediately if they do not understand a word. In addition, we advise you to always use a flip-chart or whiteboard to be aware of words that may be difficult for non-native speakers. Then ask whether people understand this word. Write down 'new words' with a definition that is as simple as possible.



# 2. MATEREIALS FOR TRAINERS

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## The Sandwich FeedForward

This tool can be used to reflect on the training after completion



### What went well:

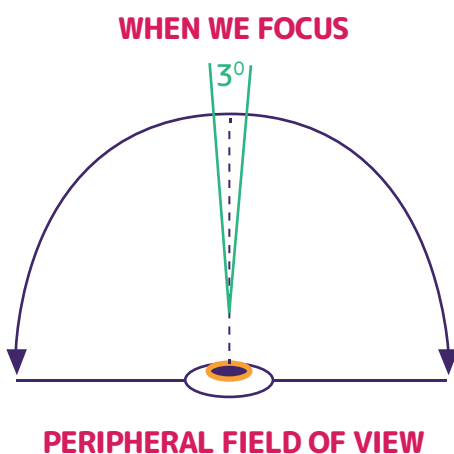
Highlight specific behaviors or skills that were particularly good. (Focus on maximum 2 or 3 key points).

### What can the person do better the following time:

Give a specific point of improvement. What can they do differently next time to make their performance even better? Tell them what they should do and how they should do it. (Focus on maximum 2 or 3 main points).

### What went better than normal:

Give a general positive statement about the person. A general, empowering compliment. (Focus on 1 point).



## The Learner State

People learn easily when they are in an open mood. Therefore, you want to put your group in a mood that supports the learning process. A relaxed and focused state.

Raise your eyes and centralise as if you want to look at the space between your eyebrows.

As soon as relaxation is created lower your eyes again and focus on the speaker/trainer, whilst perceiving your peripheral field of view

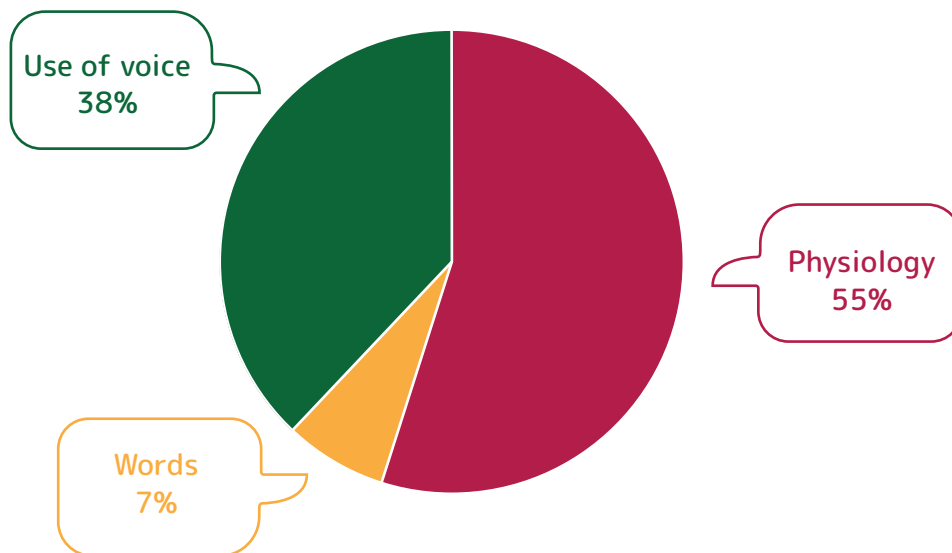
## The Trainer State

From Patanjali's Yoga Sutras – 900 B.C.

<b>Yana</b>	There is nothing in your thoughts
<b>Neama</b>	Let go of control
<b>Asanam</b>	Stand easy and strong; bend your knees, feet parallel to each other to channel your energy, take a rest and bring your attention to your stomach
<b>Pranayam</b>	Calm low breaths
<b>Pratyear</b>	Bring your attention to a point behind in the room
<b>Darna</b>	Concentrate on 1 point
<b>Dyana</b>	Enlarge your perception, go peripheral
<b>Samardi</b>	Become one with your audience

## How do we communicate our message?

### Communication Circle



#### Physiology - 55%

Body posture  
Gestures (hand movements)  
Facial expressions (eye movements/blinking)  
Breathing

#### Use of voice - 38%

Pitch  
Pace (speed)  
Timbre (quality)  
Volume  
Articulation  
Timing

#### Words - 7%

Predicates  
Key words/stop words  
Experiences and associations

## Non-verbal communication patterns

### Satir Categories:

Placater: Symmetrical open physiology, palms up, movement in upward direction.  
"I am very open; I would like to please you".

Computer: One hand on chin and arms folded. Thinker' pose. University Speakers Stand.

"I am the authority, I am rational, logical and astute. Here you have the facts"

Leveler: Symmetrical physiology, palms in a downward direction.

"This is how it is and not otherwise, this is the truth". This creates relaxation in yourself and in the group. You put your hands in front of you on a table, as it were, and then you sweep them aside over the table.

## Conveying mood

Square yourself in the mood you want. So, if you want to convey a positive mood to the group, make sure you are very positive yourself.

Ask the audience to remember a time in the past when they were in the desired mood.

Ask them to imagine a moment in the future when they will be in the desired mood.

Tell them a story that includes the mood.

## Usable moods for presentations

Energic  
Positive  
Open  
Warm  
Friendly  
Understanding  
Calm

## Personal reflection

What do I do well in my work as a trainer and what would I like to do differently?

What have I learned during/ from this training?

What will I do differently next time to achieve my results?



# 3. OVERVIEW OF THE TRAINING SESSIONS

## **0. Kick-off**

General introduction and getting-to-know you in the group

## **1. Hope: Positive thoughts and dreams**

Understand what contributes to change by a hopeful/positive attitude

## **2. Identity: Who am I?**

Understand what identity is, relationship between body and mind

## **3. Safety**

Develop skills for dealing with challenges in daily life

## **4. Connectedness: Connections and support**

Establish important (a) connections, (b) community functions and (c) social functions;  
Work on asking for and giving support

## **5. Resilience**

Values compass; Make use of strong points in difficult moments.  
Understand stress- and trauma reactions

## **6. The power of breathing**

Learn how important breathing is in coping with stress and challenges, including practical tools.

## **7. Working with talents**

Bring into focus your own unique qualities

## **8. Personal goals**

Knowledge of job market; Being able to convey personal goals



0.  
KICK-OFF

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*General introduction and  
getting to know the group.  
Expectations and  
agreements.*



**Time:** 75 minutes

**Goal:** General introduction and getting to know the group; Expectations of the participants: what do they think about empowerment? What does the trainer expect from the participants; Agreements (time, frequency, confidentiality)

**Materials:**

- Whiteboard/flip-chart
- Writing materials
- Planning (optional)
- List of participants/register (optional)

**Activity 1 – Getting to know you (30 minutes)**

Stand in a circle and ask each participant to say their name and make a movement at the same time (e.g., bend, jump, kick one leg in the air). The others repeat the name and the movement. Make sure everyone takes their turn. This helps to remember the names and to loosen the muscles.

Then invite a participant to repeat their name and say more about the name: where does it come from, what does it mean, what does the participant think of the name. The participant then gives a turn to someone else until the whole group has had their turn.





## Activity 2 – Expectations and explanation of the programme (30 minutes)

Explain the purpose of the programme and what the participants can expect from the trainer and the training sessions.

Go through the planning of the programme together and ask the participants what they expect from the different topics.

Draw a scale on the whiteboard and explain that there is a balance between the things that weigh you down (problems, worries) and the things that help you (support, hope). In this training, the participants will be given tools to help them with this balance. There are also things that we cannot help with but may be able to refer to: legal or financial help, health care etc. (depending on the organisation that offers the training).

## Activity 3 – General Agreements (15 minutes)

Depending on the organisation of the training and the group, you will discuss the following topics:

Frequency, time and location

Behavioural norms: treat each other with respect, listening to each other, confidentiality

Possible agreements about mobile phones, what language is spoken, etc.

What to do if you cannot come.

## Reflection (10 minutes)

Reflect on the meeting. Was everything clear, do participants have any questions? What agreements have we made?



# HOPE: POSITIVE THOUGHTS AND DREAMS



*Participants learn to understand what contributes to change by a hopeful/positive attitude.*





**Time:** 120 minutes

**Goals:** Understanding what contributes to changes by hopeful/positive attitude; Collecting positive beliefs and thoughts that can make participants stronger. Finding ways to apply positive thinking in our personal life

**Materials:**

Post-it notes

Pens/pens/drawing materials

Whiteboard/flip-chart

Writing materials

Hope is a positive feeling that gives you confidence in the future and that positive things can happen. If you have hope, you have energy to make plans for the future. You believe that your wishes can come true. Hope is good for your body and mind. Positive experiences often give you more hope. If you have experienced many things that make you sad or angry, it is sometimes difficult to maintain hope. Yet it is possible to let hope and trust grow.



### **Activity 1 – Putting pen to paper about positive thoughts (45 minutes)**

Have the participants write down positive thoughts about themselves. Spend enough time doing this, the more time, the more power the thoughts and beliefs will have.

Have the participants share these thoughts with each other when they feel safe to do so.

The exercise in Appendix 1 can be found in the Workbook. Have the participants answer the questions.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, have the participants read the sentences in Appendix 2 in their workbook and have them think about and share which beliefs appeal to them. Let them tick which sentences are useful for them.

### **Activity 2 – Action (15 minutes)**

Using Appendix 1, have the participants write down on various post-it notes with phrases that give them hope and strength and ask them to stick them on their mirror, on the fridge and in their bedroom at home.



### Activity 3 – Support from your environment (60 minutes)

Use the following introduction: *"There are different ways to get hope, for example by asking people around you for support, or by celebrating small successes.*

People you know can give you support and help you get more hope. For example, people who listen to you, who have been through the same things, or who have a different perspective on things. You can look for people with similar experiences. People who have been through different things can also help you to take the next steps and move on.

Ask the participants to answer questions 1 and 2 from Appendix 3 in their workbooks. Discuss the answers in the group and, if comfortable, have the participants share why these people give them support.

Setting personal goals and achieving them can make you feel positive about the little things you achieve. Ask the participants to answer questions 3 and 4 in Appendix 3 in their workbooks. Discuss the answers in the group and, if comfortable, have the participants share what a personal success of theirs was.

### Reflection (5 minutes)

Ask the participants:

- What will you take away from this session?
- What did you find important?
- What will you apply to your daily life?





## Positive Thoughts

**What positive thoughts make you happy?**

**Which thought helps when you have negative thoughts?**

**What advice has anyone given you about positive thinking?**



**I can do everything I want**

**I can do it**

**I am me and that's good**

**I am good just as I am**

**I accept myself with all my pluses and minuses**

**I can learn this lesson**

**I can feel love and give or receive it**

**I mean something to others**

**Everything passes**

**It's getting better**

**I am valuable**

**I have people who love me**

**I am loved**

**I can never make mistakes, I can only learn**

**I give myself consent to be a person and to learn**

**I mean something to others**





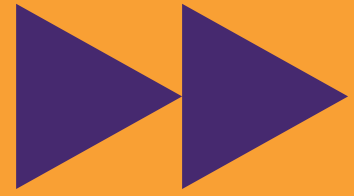
**Who are the people in your life that give you hope?**

**Who kept hope for you, even when you yourself had lost all hope?**

**What was a personal success for you?**

**How did you feel then?**

# IDENTITY: WHO AM I?



*Participants learn what identity is and how they relate to the people around them. Attention is paid to the relationship between body and mind.*



**Time:** 120 minutes

**Doelen:** Participants understand the connection between thoughts, body posture and how they feel. They understand the effect of different positive and negative life experiences on their lives; Participants gain insight into their own power to influence how they look at events.

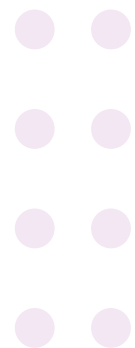
Ze begrijpen wat het effect is van verschillende positieve en negatieve levenservaringen op hun leven; Deelnemers hebben inzicht in hun eigen kracht om hoe ze naar gebeurtenissen kijken te beïnvloeden

**Materials:**

Whiteboard/flip-chart

Writing materials

Laptop, OHP, sound system





## **Activity 1 - Introduction (15 minutes)**

### **Nature & Nurture**

Nature is about the biology/genetics of humans, a part of who we are is written in our DNA. This is explained in more detail by the following questions. Explain that as humans, we have inborn characteristics (also called 'Nature') and learned characteristics ('Nurture').

- Explain to the participants: As human beings, we get our genes from our parents, grandparents and so on, it's in our DNA. Our DNA determines a large part of our appearance and our inner self. The inner self is determined by our DNA as well as by our environment (nurture).



### **Inner self**

- Question for the participants: Which characteristics of our inner self (explain word if necessary) do we get from our parents?
- Let the participants answer first by indicating them, if necessary, give an example yourself to get the participants started/or to help them.

#### *Possible answers could be:*

Personality and character

How social someone is

How quickly someone gets angry

How open someone is

How someone deals with stress

Explain to the participants that these are all character traits. And that some of these are indeed coded in our genes/DNA but some are also determined by our environment (or 'nurture').

### **Nurture**

- Explain to the participants: Another part of who we are is formed after we are born and throughout our lives. The most important people here are of course our parents, the people who take care of us when we are children, give us examples and teach us a lot. How our parents and the community we grow up in shape our identity and can be seen as our culture. There are many different cultures in the world and that is something very beautiful and rich.
- Ask the participants: What things are done differently in different cultures?
- Let the participants discuss this briefly with their neighbors (2-5 minutes) and then they can share this with the group.

#### *Possible answers are:*

Eating habits

Style of clothes

Language

Values and Norms

Beliefs Relationships

Geloof





### **Cultural identity**

- Explain to the participants: Culture is the self-image we get from our family, culture, and society around us.

Identity is something that can be very diverse and can consist of different cultures and roles. For example, someone can be a wife, a mother, and a teacher all at the same time. Your hobbies, ideas, desires, and people around you are also part of your identity.

A multiple cultural identity is when someone identifies with multiple cultures. For example, someone is a Belgian with Moroccan parents, and loves the Moroccan community. Someone can have Belgian and Moroccan friends, love Belgian and Moroccan cuisine, etc.

- Have the participants discuss in small groups:
  - What do you find interesting about your own culture?
  - What do you find interesting about the culture of the country you live in?
  - What do you know about the culture of the country you live in? What would you still like to discover?





## Activity 2 – Who am I, who was I, who will I be? (30-40 minutes)

### Goal

The purpose of this exercise is to revive qualities and dreams for the future.

### Instructions

Discuss how the participants describes themselves by answering the following questions: who am I, who was I, who do I want to be? In a group: Ask the participants to write down at least three keywords about themselves in each category. Discuss the differences. Discuss how the strong parts of the past and the desired identity can be incorporated into the current identity. Use the worksheet in the participant's workbook if necessary.

### Please Note

Keep in mind that identity is something that can change. In difficult periods in life, this can cause confusion. Therefore, monitor carefully whether participants are overwhelmed by the exercise. If participants are overwhelmed (confused, find it difficult to describe themselves, etc.), simplify the task by shifting the focus from personal identity (traits) to practical identity (roles). You may wish to shift the focus to the 'here and now' by doing a grounding exercise or talking about everyday life. Make sure the exercise ends on a positive note. Example: have each participant name something they are proud of when thinking about their identity.<sup>4</sup>





## Activity 3 – Body and Mind (20-30 minutes)

### Intro

As an intro, you can use music and images of people dancing or singing. Then ask the participants if they see the video as positive energy or as negative energy.

*Options positive energy:*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GA8z7f7a2Pk&ab\\_channel=dkellerm](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GA8z7f7a2Pk&ab_channel=dkellerm)  
(Guy starts dance party)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmctBYwo4Pk&ab\\_channel=Raw300tv](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmctBYwo4Pk&ab_channel=Raw300tv)  
(Violin dance New York)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a\\_426RiwST8&ab\\_channel=TheBlackKeys](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_426RiwST8&ab_channel=TheBlackKeys)  
(Man dances alone)

Ask the participants: What sort of energy do you feel by watching the videos. Why?

*Options negative/sad energy:*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OaLhSrdHCBs&ab\\_channel=PeterMagdy](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OaLhSrdHCBs&ab_channel=PeterMagdy)  
(Armenian sad instrumental)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4PKzz81m5c&list=PL1jUtM1tmw6CLyH-s7Goq9ofwMtAnrwD4&ab\\_channel=Sweetydu972M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4PKzz81m5c&list=PL1jUtM1tmw6CLyH-s7Goq9ofwMtAnrwD4&ab_channel=Sweetydu972M)  
(Chet Baker - sad Jazz)

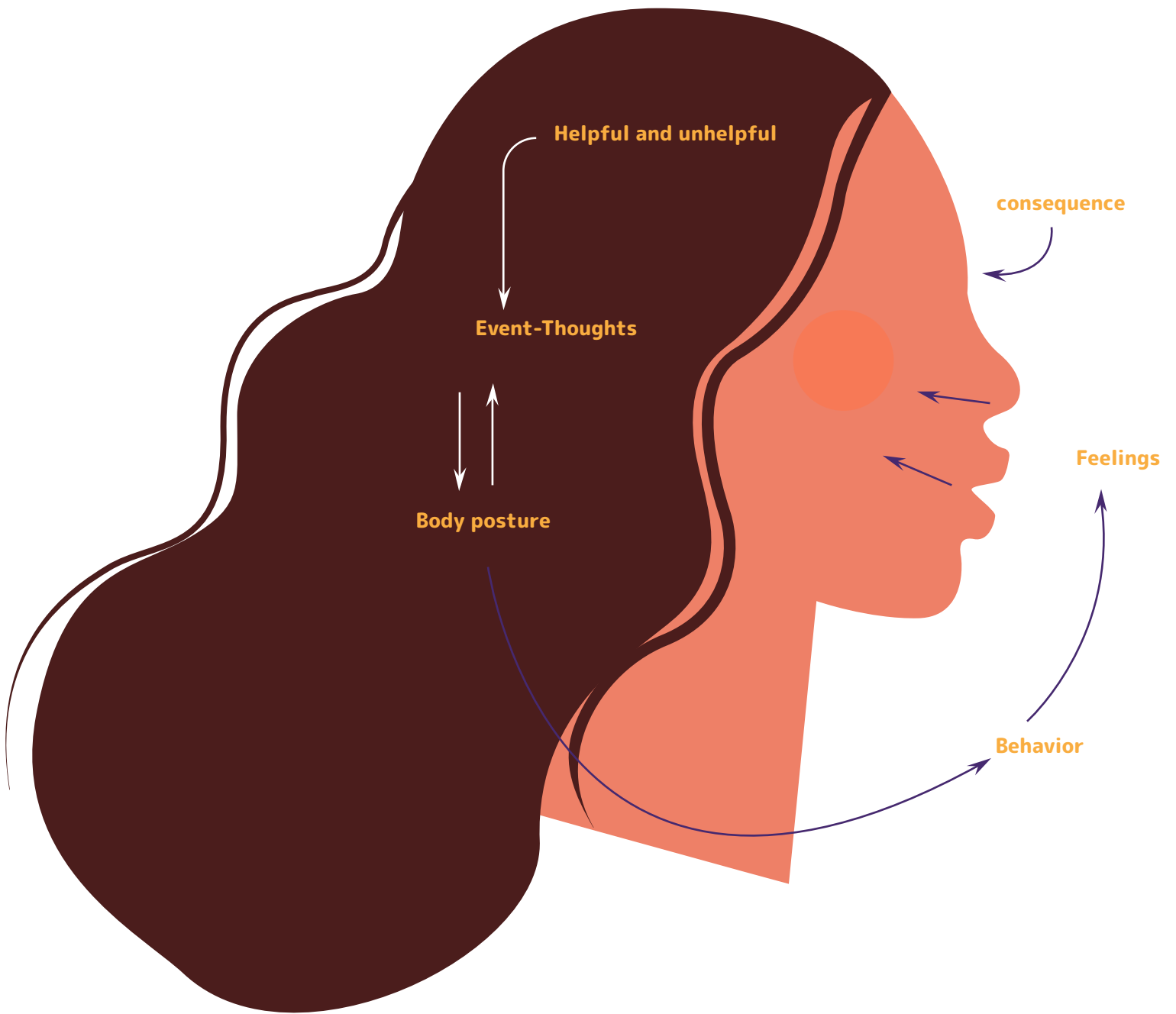
Ask the participants: What sort of energy do you feel by watching the videos. Why?

### Explanation

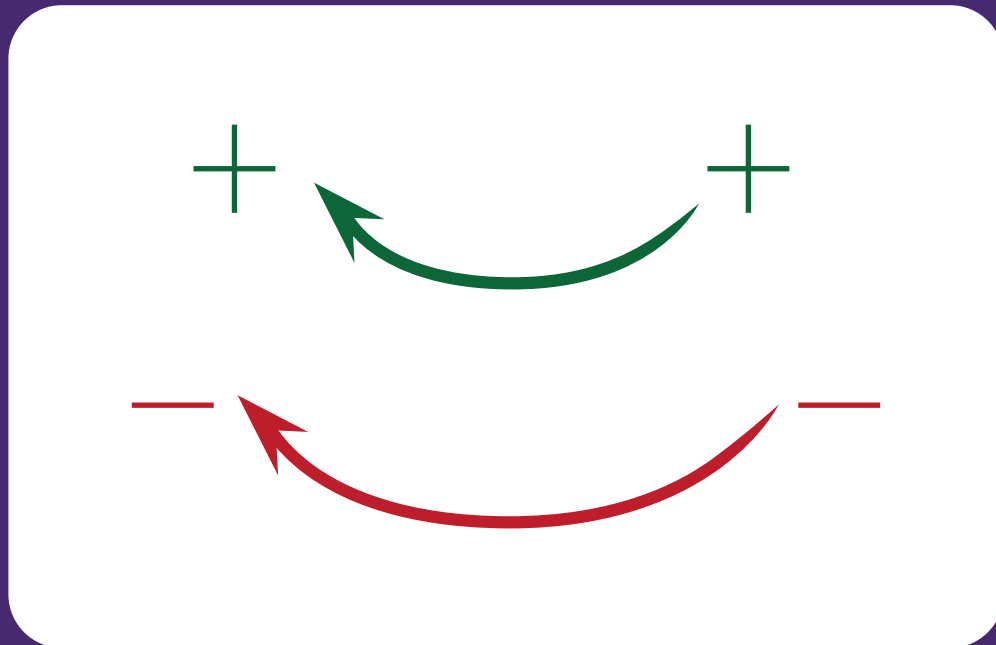
Other people, music and thoughts can affect our energy, how we feel and how we view a situation. Sometimes this happens without us being aware of it.

This is how it happens:

- > We record something with our senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling, and tasting).
- > What we record gives us a thought, which can be positive or negative.
- > What we think gives us an emotion, which can also be positive or negative.
- > That emotion enters our body and becomes a small part of us.
- > Our body is like a big pot with a mix of positive and negative emotions.
- > Those emotions can affect how we behave/how we react.
- > This becomes our reality.



## Thoughts- Emotion- Action- Experience



### Activity 4 – Tree of Life<sup>5</sup> (30 minutes)

#### Goal

The purpose of this exercise is to get a picture of positive and negative experiences of the participant, and to work towards letting go of the identification with negative experiences. The tree is used as a metaphor for life. In the tree, elements that are important to the participant are brought together in one drawing, so that a complete picture of the participant emerges.

### Instructions

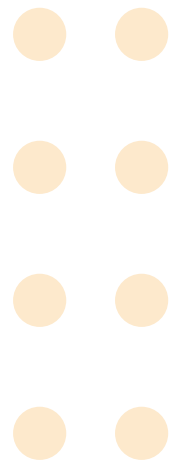
The participants make their own tree of life by drawing it and writing down key words for each part in their workbook. Explain that every tree can grow differently and that in its path there can be things that help the tree to flourish and things that can have a negative effect on it. Depending on the atmosphere in the group, you may decide to discuss these suggestions, but be aware that they may hinder your own creative process. Different parts can be identified, such as earth (culture), roots (family), trunk (early development), branches (later development), leaves (important people), fruits (highlights) and bugs (disappointments/trauma).

When all participants have completed their Tree of Life, you can bring the group back to the common position. Ask participants if they are comfortable sharing what they have drawn or written down. Which branches are important to them or stand out? Let the group share about this.

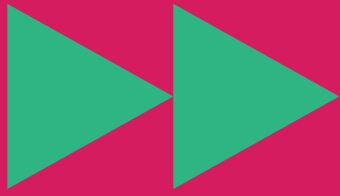
### Reflection (5 minutes)

Ask the participants:

- What will you take away with you from this session?
- What did you find important?
- What will you apply to your daily lives?



# SAFETY



*Participants develop skills  
for dealing with challenges  
in everyday life.*





**Time:** 120 minutes

**Goal:** Make participants aware of their unity as a person; Teach participants what their limits are, how they set their limits and why is it important? Making participants aware of emotional boundaries and the difference between love and crossing boundaries.

**Materials:**

Whiteboard/flip-chart  
Writing materials  
Post-it notes

**Activity 1 – Who are you?  
(60 minutes)**

Encourage the participants to describe themselves in two ways. The first way is by using the multiple identity (see training 2 - Identity). For example, someone is a wife, mother, colleague, friend, daughter, etc. The second way is the inner self, the world of experience. A person can describe the area of their inner self as bounded, full of feelings, competences, unique characteristics, etc.





- Place post-it notes with the following words on the table:

**Being a child, partner of, part of the family, being a mother or father, friends of, neighbors, colleagues, acquaintances, classmates, fellow citizens, fellow nationals, people...**

- Ask the participants to put each word in a circle. They may also add new words themselves. Participants discuss the roles people have.

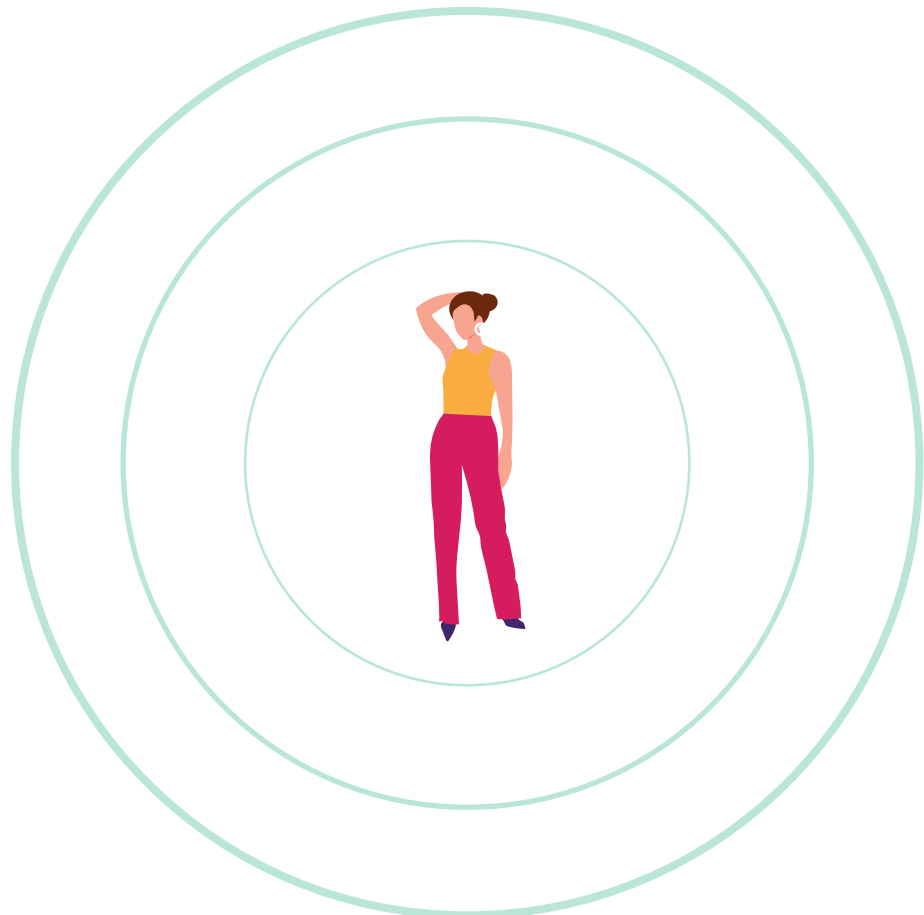
The aim is to discuss which identity they feel most connected to. What is closest to them?

## What does a boundary mean for you?

Let the participants brainstorm on the meaning of the word 'border/boundary'.  
What does it mean in **general**?

We start with geographical borders. Borders of a country, borders of a city, property boundaries (boundary of a house), etc.), then to go over to personal boundaries. Defining your boundaries means daring to say when someone is asking too much of you, asking things you do not want, telling yourself that it is enough, or acknowledging that you are not going to succeed. It is often experienced as difficult to set boundaries.

We go deeper into personal boundaries, and we divide these boundaries into 3 important groups.





## THEORY

### Physical boundaries

Physical boundaries are also called physical limits. These boundaries are set to indicate to others how far they may go with touching. By setting boundaries here, you indicate who is allowed to touch you and to what extent they are allowed to do so. This is a very important boundary, because it should not be the case that everyone is allowed to touch you just like that..

### Mental boundaries

Mental boundaries give you the possibility to form and have your own opinion and in addition they give you the possibility to express your thoughts. No one else can control your thoughts and you do not always have to go along with the thoughts of others.

### Emotional boundaries

Everyone has their own emotions. People around us can be manipulative. Your own emotional boundaries free you from these harmful external influences and allow your own emotions to play a role.





## Why is it important to set boundaries?

First name some advantages of setting your own limits. Then ask the participants to name other benefits themselves.

For example, by setting your own limits:

You get more self-confidence: By doing what you think is important, you get more self-respect, and your self-esteem grows.

You suffer less from fatigue: Because you do not have to please everyone, you simply have more energy.

You feel happier: You do what you think is important and that feels good.

You have less stress: you have less on your plate, and you can oversee it better.



## Activity 2: Exercise setting boundaries (50 minutes)

- Form pairs
- Please explain: You are going to answer three questions. Choose the option that is both good for your mental and physical health: set some clear, concrete boundaries. A set of rules that fits your norms and values, that protects your personal space and that makes it clear to yourself and to others what is and is not allowed.
- Ask the pairs to answer the three questions below together in their workbook.

1. Others must not \_\_\_\_\_.

For example:

"Others must not rummage through my things."

"... criticize me without reason."

"... make a fool of me whilst others are present."

2. I have the right to ask for \_\_\_\_\_.

For example:

"I have the right to ask for privacy."

"... to ask for help from the family with the household."

"... time for myself."

3. To protect my time and energy, I may \_\_\_\_\_.

For example:

"To protect my time and energy I may put my phone on stand-by at weekends."

"... change my mind."

"... keep a room at home for me alone."

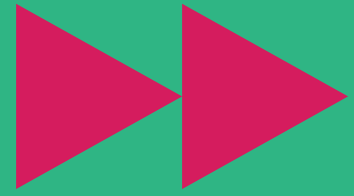
- Ask the participants to change partners and have them answer the questions again.
- Discuss each question and the different answers in class. Write down the answers if necessary.

## Reflection (10 minutes)

- Ask the participants to be conscious of setting limits for the next two weeks.
- Ask them to make a list in their workbook of the following points:
  - What others may not do/say to me
  - What do I find difficult when I want to set my limits?
  - Is it difficult to say No? How can I make this easier for myself?

# CONNECTEDNESS: CONNECTIONS AND SUPPORT

50



*Participants learn to recognise important social connections and start working on asking for support.*





**Time:** 120 minutes

**Goal:** Recognise connections, community, and social roles; Recognise and build trust in others.

**Materials:**

Whiteboard/flip-chart

Writing materials

Pens/writing and drawing materials

**Tips for the trainer activity 1:**

- 1) Talking about something personal can cause some stress or anxiety. You help to create a safe space by first telling them something personal about yourself.
- 2) If you notice that pairs are having a hard time talking about themselves, help them by joining in, giving tips, or letting them try again, so they can finish the exercise with a positive result.
- 3) Write down the pairs you make so that you can finish the exercise by making sure that each person has a chance to talk about/discuss someone else.
- 4) If the group consists of an odd number, you can make a group of 3, making sure that you are free to walk around and follow the other conversations.
- 5) During the training, use a flip-chart to write down 'new words'. Tell participants at the beginning of the exercise that they can raise their hands when they hear a new word. Try to explain this word with other words and write it down on the flip-chart. Encourage the participants to make notes of these words.

### **Tips for the trainer activity 3:**

Make sure there is enough space to carry out this activity

Ask questions such as:

- What do you notice about your body when you allow yourself to be led?
- Try again and focus on your breathing when you allow yourself to be led.  
Do you notice a difference?

At the beginning of the training session, it is useful to "tune the body" with each other, that is, to do a physical exercise. For example, start by moving to music, or introduce yourself by singing your name. By making the vowels in your name longer you are already singing.

You can also do a short body scan with the group and move from different body parts. These exercises help you to relax and ground yourself. They free up your body and voice and, by moving together, create a connection between the group members.

## Activity 1 – Social circle (30 minutes)

Start the activity by reading the following motivating text that will help the participants to get actively involved:

*Feeling connected to other people is an important part of life. It helps us to feel that we belong, and it can make us feel loved and supported. When we share feelings of joy, happiness, sadness, and grief we feel stronger and often find the strength to go on. A "social network" consists of people who are important to you. These are the people with whom you feel connected or who influence your life. It can be very difficult when you have to leave these people behind because you have had to leave your home or country. Sometimes it may not be safe to stay in touch with family and friends. Rebuilding a new social network can be difficult if you do not know the language or the culture. Even though it seems scary, it is very rewarding if you can build up a supportive social network again.*



Tell the participants that today they will learn what a network is and gain insight into their own social network. Explain what a network is by using the 'social circle' above.

- Explain that everyone can be in the network, people they see every day, but also people who play an important role without their physical presence (people you talk to on the phone, a mentor, etc.). Moreover, it is useful to make people aware of different sorts of connections (someone who offers support, friends, family, organisations, neighbours, other parents, etc.)
- Then have the participants fill in the social network circle in their workbook. Explain that these can be people in their neighbourhood, family, friends, people still living in their home country. They can be different types of contacts. Have them start with the people closest to them (mentally) and end with acquaintances.
- Have the participants draw lines between them and the people they can ask for support. Give them 5-10 minutes to complete the activity.
- Afterwards, tell them that they will also learn how to network: to actively approach people and maintain contacts that can be useful in their careers or personal lives, and to increase their social skills.
- Explain that networking means talking to people you know and people you don't know. Exchanging information about yourself and being interested in your conversation partner are important. Of course, you have a purpose in having these conversations, but that should not be your only focus. It is also about having social interaction. For example, when talking to someone, don't ask them directly if they have a job for you. You can tell them who you are, that you are looking for work and ask if they can help you.
- Explain that this next activity will help with conversation skills - There is always a 'hook' you can use to start a conversation. The first impression you make is also important! Sharing something personal will make the other person remember you.



- Take something out of your handbag, this can be a key ring, a mirror, a card of a place you have visited. Explain to the group what this object means to you, tell them about an event it reminds you of or use it to share a personal story.
- Ask each participant to take something out of their bag, something they can use to tell something about themselves.
- Form pairs and let the participants share their story with each other, 4 minutes in total per group.
- Swap groups and allow participants to talk for another 4 minutes.
- Repeat this one more time.
- Bring the group back to the joint meeting. Have each participant tell something personal about one of their interlocutors.

## Activity 2 – Healthy relationships<sup>6</sup> (15 minutes)

The aim of this activity is to make participants think about positive and negative relationships. Each participant may experience this differently. The aim is not to reach agreement on this topic, but to make participants aware of when a relationship contributes to their happiness and when a relationship creates stress or insecurity.

Draw a line on the whiteboard or the flip-chart: On one side you write characteristics of a healthy relationship, on the other side of an unhealthy relationship. Examples of healthy are respectful, listens, supports, gives a positive feeling, gives energy. Unhealthy: controls, manipulates, causes stress, etc. It may be that certain characteristics end up in both columns. This provides a starting point for discussion. Again, agreement does not have to be reached.

You can encourage participants to think about the relationships they have with others and what effect those relationships have on them. This does not have to be done in a group setting - it provides material for further exploration. Check to what extent participants feel safe to talk about this with the group.



### Activity 3 – Trusting each other<sup>7</sup> (20 minutes)

- Have the participants form pairs or, if there is an odd number of participants, a trio.
- They shake hands. One of the partners leads and the other closes their eyes.
- Let the pairs walk through the room, about 5 minutes.
- After about 5 minutes, give the following instructions:

What is happening in your body now?  
What is different?  
What is it like for you to lead or follow the other person?

Continue for another five minutes while consciously feeling the contact with the hand.

- End the activity by evaluating: What was it like to lead or to be led? Did you trust your partner?

Repeat the activity with other pairs..

## **Activity 4 – Message from a loved one (40 minutes)**

In this exercise, participants write a letter that they might receive from a loved one. If writing is a challenge, participants can also draw a picture that they might receive from a loved one, or they might write in their own workbook.

- Instruct the participants to write a message that they might receive from a loved one at a time when they are feeling depressed. It can be from someone close to them, someone from the past, someone they don't know, or someone who is no longer alive.
- Then let the participant make the assignment below: If someone else was feeling gloomy, what would you say to them? If the participants feel comfortable, they can read the letter to the group. It is also fine if they do not. Remind the participants that they can always read this letter back or cut it out and put it up somewhere to remind them of the support they have from those around them and from themselves.

If the participants feel comfortable, they can read the letter to the group. Remind participants that they can always read this letter back, or possibly cut it out and hang it somewhere to remind them that they have support from those around them and from themselves.

## **Reflection (5 minutes)**

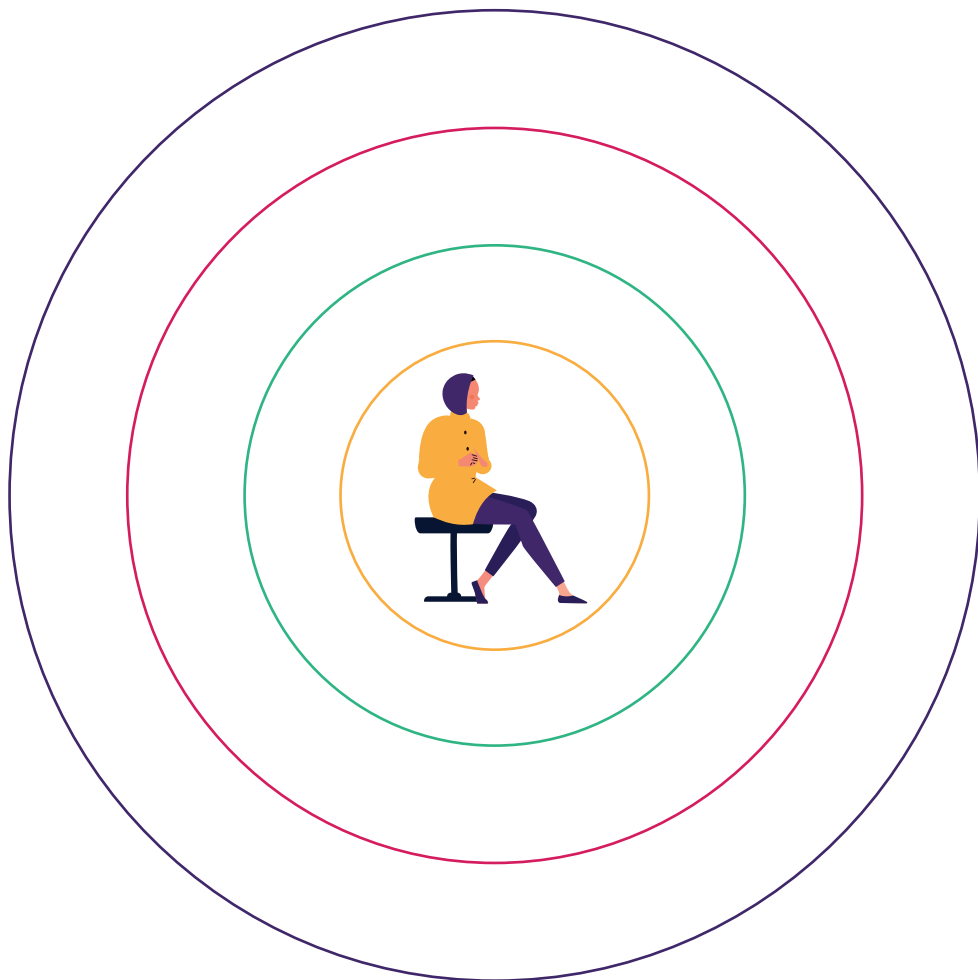
Ask the participants:

- What will you take away from this session?
- What did you find important?
- What will you apply to your daily lives?

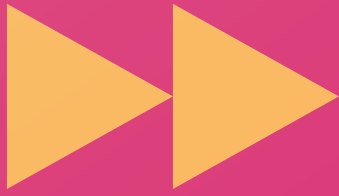
## Appendix 1

Feeling connected to other people is an important part of life. It helps us to feel that we belong somewhere, and it can make us feel loved and supported. When we share feelings of joy, happiness, sadness, and grief we feel stronger and often find the strength to go on. A "social network" consists of people who are important to you. These are the people you feel connected to or who influence your life. It can be extremely difficult when you have had to leave these people behind because you have lost your home or had to leave your country.

Sometimes it may not be safe to stay in touch with family and friends. Rebuilding a new social network can be difficult if you do not know the language or the culture. Even if it seems scary, it is very rewarding if you can build a supportive social network again.



# RESILIENCE



*Participants learn to draw up their values compass. They also learn to make use of their strengths in difficult moments, and to understand stress and trauma reactions.*





**Time:** 120 minutes

**Goals:** Participants know what stress is and know the positive and negative aspects of it; participants know the difference between emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping; participants know several techniques that can make them more resilient.

**Materials:**

Whiteboard/flip-chart  
Writing materials

**Intro (5-10 minutes)**

**Short explanation:** what are we going to talk about today? Stress, coping (how we deal with stress) and resilience (how to stay positive in difficult moments)

**\* Talking about stress can trigger negative experiences in participants. Pay close attention to how participants react. If necessary, go back to the trainer instructions to read about dealing with negative emotions in the group.**

**Activity 1 - Stress (20 minutes)**

Today we are going to talk about stress

What do you think about when you hear the word 'stress'?

- Notes on the board using a mind map  
Short introductory talk using the following questions:

Who sometimes has stress?

- This is meant to loosen up participants and break the taboo of not talking about stress, normally several people will raise their hands or react here.
- After the participants have answered, briefly explain that stress is a very normal thing and that we will go deeper into this.

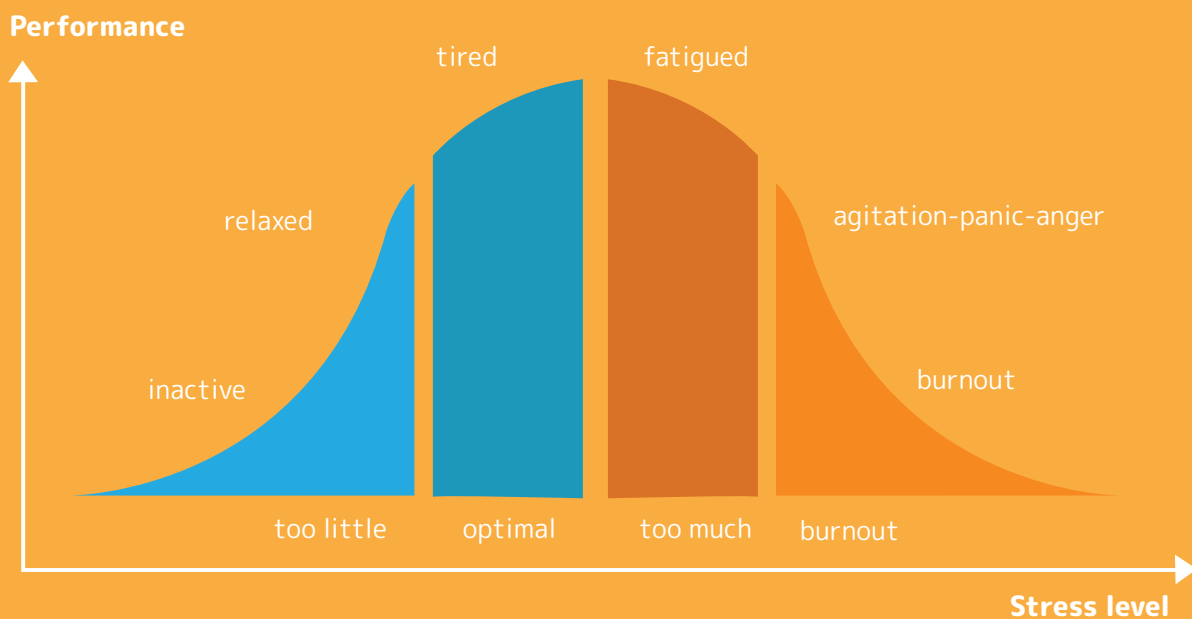
### What is stress?

Stress arises when you have to do more physically or mentally than is possible for your body. Stress also arises when there is danger.

### Why does stress exist?

Stress provides extra energy/motivation when we have to do something, it is there to help us. Stress becomes a problem especially when it is present for too long, when we do not rest enough, or when the smallest things cause us stress.

In the case of danger, stress helps us to react faster (run, fight), this helps us to survive.



*For the trainer: The chart above can help explain to participants that a certain level of stress is good, too much is not good and too little is not good either.*

## Activity 2 - Symptoms of stress (30 minutes)

Ask the group: Who can give some examples of symptoms of stress? Write answers on the board

### Short term stress -> can be positive

- **Bodily**

Higher pulse and blood pressure, more sweating, faster breathing, tense muscles.

- **Psychologisch/mentaal**

It incites you to action, gives you energy and motivation, it can protect you from danger.  
It is important to relax in time after a moment of effort/stress.

**Question:** Can anyone give an example of when stress is positive for you?

### Long term Stress = Chronic stress (negative stress)

- **Stress produces cortisol (stress hormone) in our bodies.**

In the short term, it is not bad, it allows us to react more quickly when needed (such as a challenging or dangerous situation), but it must be followed by relaxation in order to regain rest and keep the body in balance.

- **Stress that remains a long time without (enough) relaxation, we call chronic stress.**

The symptoms we have seen in the short term are also present in chronic stress, but in the long term, and chronic stress also makes you fall ill more quickly because chronic stress makes your body weaker.

- **Psychological/mental**

Anxiety and tension, irritability, difficulty concentrating, memory problems, depression, sleeping problems, worrying (thinking a lot), little desire to do anything, no energy, feelings of guilt.

- **Changes of Behavior**

Aggressive behavior, smoking, alcohol consumption, panic reaction, difficulty in talking, feeling like running away from everything.





### Statements:

*Now we are going to read out some sentences, you can tell us if it is about positive stress or negative stress, even if you are not sure you can try.*

**If I have something important to do, I get stressed and I want to be sure that I do everything right and haven't forgotten anything. (positive)**

- This is positive because it gives us extra motivation and energy.

**I found the Covid situation very tiring and long (negative).**

- This is negative because it takes a long time and can cause chronic (long-term) stress.

**When I suddenly hear a loud bang, I get scared. (Positive)**

- The feeling of being frightened makes us alert to action at that moment, so that we can react quickly in case of danger.

**If I have something important to do, I get so stressed out that it becomes difficult to think properly and I make mistakes more quickly. (negative)**

- This is negative because the stress is too high and blocks us more than it helps.

Stress is often seen as something negative. Stress itself is not always negative, but when it happens too often, lasts too long, or is not alternated with relaxation, then stress becomes something that can be negative.

### Activity 3 – Causes of Stress (30 minutes)

Your thoughts influence your perception of stress.

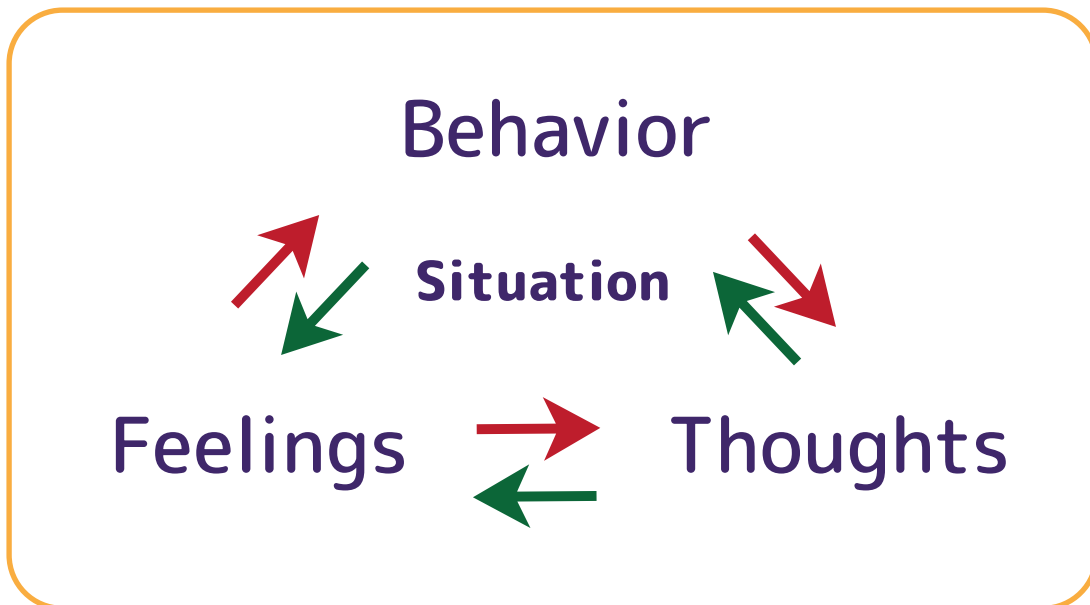
- Read aloud the sentences below.

Julie: "I won't succeed. I'll fail the exam."

Anna: "Maybe I can't answer all the questions, but I'll do what I can".

- **Question:** Who (Julie or Anna) is going to feel more stress? (Answer: Julie)

- **Question:** Which attitude is the most helpful?



This diagram shows that our thoughts, our feelings, and our behavior are connected with each other. We are going to give an example of a situation, you may think about how the person in the example could think differently, and what effect this could have on the situation.

*"Fatima is invited to a party. She has just had her hair cut and is not happy with it. It is not a bad haircut; it just looks different than she would have liked. Fatima thinks: 'nobody is going to like my haircut and people are going to laugh at me, it is better that I stay at home'. Fatima finally decides to go anyway. When she is there, she hardly dares to talk to anyone out of insecurity. When Fatima comes home, she is not happy and thinks: 'indeed, I should have stayed at home, I didn't like the party'.*

**Question:** How could Fatima have thought differently before going to the party to have had a more enjoyable experience?

- Have participants briefly discuss (5 minutes) with their neighbor and then answer.

(e.g. 'My haircut looks different than usual, but that's okay. If someone makes a remark, I'll laugh about it. I'll go anyway and have fun.' As a result, Fatima talks to more people, ends up having fun and is happy at the end of the evening)

## Resilience in coping with stress (30 minutes)

- Ask the group: What do you do to relax when you feel stressed?
- Give an example to start with. Then everyone can give the answer out loud, while drawing a mind.

### THEORY

There are two coping styles: emotion-focused and problem-focused coping. Coping comes from 'to cope with'. Coping mechanisms are about how someone deals with a problem.

Emotion-focused coping involves dealing with the emotions that a situation gives you. For example: feel like eating chocolate, feel like smoking, feel like crying or shouting, feel like going for a walk, feel like watching TV, and so on.

In problem-oriented coping, you deal with the problem itself. For example: You have had an argument with a friend and this causes you stress. You decide to solve the problem and have a talk with your friend to understand why you argued.

Often, problem-focused coping is the better option, but sometimes the problem cannot be solved or you have no control over the situation and then emotion-focused coping can be good to release the emotions.

- Explain to the group what a coping mechanism is and the difference between emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping.
  - Who can give an example of when they have used emotion-focused coping? How did you feel afterwards?
  - Who can give an example of when they used problem-focused coping? How did you feel afterwards?
  - You can give an answer yourself to start with, do not force participants to give an answer.



## Ways to relax and cope with stress

### Seek support from friends/family/close people

**Ask the group: Who do you like to see or speak to when you experience stress?**

*It can help to share our sadness/angst/frustration or other negative feelings with other people. However, this can strengthen the bond you have with the person(s).*

### Coping differently with events

**Ask the group: How can you think, feel, experience, or do things differently?**

*Sometimes it can help to look at a situation differently, as with the example of Fatima and the party we saw above.*

### Breathing exercises

**Ask the group: Who has experience with breathing exercises?**

- If people have experience of this, briefly discuss how they experienced it. If not, proceed to the explanation:

*Our body consists of two systems: one system takes care of action and the other of relaxation. When we do different things during the day, we activate the system that takes care of action. But it is very important that after the action (at the end of the day, before going to sleep, on a day off, at the weekend, etc.) the other system that takes care of relaxation is also activated.*

*In this way you can find peace and recharge, a bit like a battery. A battery can give energy, but when that energy runs out, you have to recharge it.*



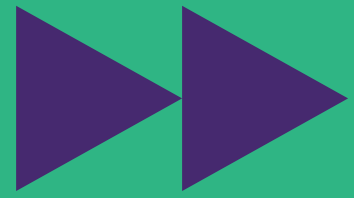


### Reflection (5 minutes)

Ask the participants:

- What will you take away from this session?
- What did you find important?
- What will you adapt to your daily lives?

# THE POWER OF BREATHING



*Participants learn to deal with stressful situations and use their bodies and breathing to draw strength from.*





**Time:** 120 minutes

**Goal:** Participants know ways to control stress; Participants know the importance of breathing and how to breathe properly. Participants can practice breathing for themselves.

**Materials:**

Whiteboard/flip-chart  
Writing materials

### Introduction (30 minutes)

We start by a small enquiry to the participants to get them to talk. Guiding questions can be:

- Which of you sometimes experiences (negative) stress? Do you know what causes this stress?
- How do you deal with this stress? What do you do to reduce it?
- What do you feel when you are stressed?
- What is your breathing like when you are stressed?

**\*Talking about stress can trigger negative experiences in participants. Pay close attention to how participants react. If necessary, go back to the trainer instructions to read about dealing with negative emotions in the group.**

A group discussion follows. This is an introduction that serves to open/introduce the topic of 'stress'. The starting point is that people report that their breathing rhythm can increase when they are stressed.



## Theory: What is breathing and why is it important? (75 minutes)

The first thing we do in life is breathe. We breathe our last when we die. Breathing is vital. Breathing is (mostly) completely automatic.

Breathing is perhaps the most important bodily process we can do both consciously and unconsciously. We breathe with our bodies. Breathing influences how we think and feel, on who we are. We breathe the air from the outside in. If we lose the connection with our breathing or only have shallow breathing, we lose the connection with life.

You breathe as you live. You live as you breathe.

Elements from which your breathing is built up:

- \* breathing in
- \* breathing out
- \* breathing space
- \* choice between nose or mouth breathing
- \* breathing speed

Why is good breathing so important?

Conscious breathing improves concentration and performance. Oxygen is directly linked to health. Oxygen feeds our body and provides energy. If there is little oxygen because we only breathe superficially this can cause various complaints.

The benefits of breathing techniques are endless, physically, mentally, and emotionally. You can do breathing techniques to calm your mind, to feel good about yourself or to improve your sports performance. Breathing is something very powerful and can bring about many things.

Benefits of conscious breathing:

We try to complement this with examples and experiences from the participants.



### **Better health**

Breathing is a physical activity. The inhaled oxygen immediately releases energy and makes you feel fit. Conscious breathing can make you healthier, happier and more relaxed.

### **More relaxation**

Breathing more consciously and at a slower pace calms all bodily functions. Your heart rate goes down and so does your blood pressure. This has a direct effect on other systems such as your digestion, metabolism, and blood circulation. A calmer body also improves mental health and calms your mind.

In a stressful situation (before a job interview, presentation, etc.) taking a few deep breaths in and out helps you to calm down and relax.

### **Stronger mindset more focus**

Breathing also has a mental effect. You can do a quiet breathing exercise which calms your mind. With a calmer mind without too much noise, you can concentrate better and pay more attention to what you are doing.

### **Feel better in yourself**

Improved sports performances

Both before, during and after your sports performance, correct breathing can increase your stamina and muscle strength.



## Activity 1: Feel the breathing space in your upper body as you inhale (5 minutes)

- Carry out this exercise together:

When	In the morning/during the day
Posture	Actively sitting
Goal	Activate your whole system
Time	2 minutes
Other	You can do this exercise anytime, anywhere
The exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Sit comfortably in an active posture</li><li>- Take 10 deep breaths in through the nose and relaxed breaths out through the mouth, at a slightly faster rate than normal</li><li>- Don't be frightened if you feel light-headed, it will pass when you breathe calmly again</li><li>- You will notice that you wake up and feel more active. You are as it were turning yourself on, ready to start the day.</li></ul>



## Activity 2: Abdominal breathing (10 minutes)

Breathing calmly is breathing into your stomach. It is about the movement of breathing in, whereby the diaphragm descends, and the abdomen expands as a result. That is, if there is room for it. If there is no room because of tension in that area, then the lungs remain small, and you will automatically move upwards with your breathing. We call this chest breathing. It is more frequent and shallower, which creates unrest.

What happens when you do not breathe properly?

- \* Restless feeling due to breathing too 'high
- \* Difficulty dealing with or suppressing emotions
- \* Back, neck, shoulders, tension in the abdomen and diaphragm area
- \* Feelings of anxiety and panic
- \* Bad or restless sleep
- \* Shortness of breath and shallow breathing
- \* Difficulty relaxing

Perform this exercise together:

When	Fine in the evenings
Posture	Actively sitting
Goal	Brain, mind, calm down
Time	Daily 10 minutes
Other	Decide the time before and set your alarm, you can do this exercise anytime, anywhere
The exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Sit up straight in an active posture.</li><li>- Close your eyes.</li><li>- Observe your breathing, without changing anything, without judging.</li><li>- Every time you discover that you are thinking of something else, bring your breath back to your breathing, that is where the focus of your mind lies.</li><li>- Follow your inhalation, then pause, then exhalation and keep repeating this.</li><li>- Conscious of a thought? No problem, let it go and return to</li></ul>



### **Reflection (5 minutes)**

Ask the participants:

- What will you take away from this session?
- What did you find important?
- What will you adapt to your daily lives?

As homework, the participants are given some exercises to do at home and see what the effect is.

# WORKING WITH TALENT



*Everyone has unique qualities and characteristics that they can use in their personal or professional development. In this training session, participants learn to identify and recognise these qualities.*





**Time:** 120 minutes

**Goal:** Insight into unique personal characteristics

**Materials:**

Printed quality game, cards cut loose (Appendix 1)

Whiteboard/flipchart

Writing materials

**Activity 1 – Strong points<sup>8</sup>  
(40 minutes)**

- Start with the quality game. Cut out the cards in Appendix 1 (print them on strongly coloured paper, if possible). If there are many different languages, have the translations written on the cards first so that everyone can read them. Make sure you have a few extra blank cards so that qualities can be added.
- Put all the cards in the middle of the table (choose how many cards, depending on the level and size of the group) and instruct the participants: Choose three of your own qualities from the cards or write down an own quality if you cannot find it in the cards.
- Let everyone choose and, if necessary, help by asking questions about what the participants can do or what they think is important, and connecting qualities to this. Example: What you can do:
  - fix things
  - What you value: being handy and kind to others
  - Quality: caring/helpful.
- Instructions: Present your three qualities to the group and try to give an example for each quality. Give each participant the opportunity to present their qualities and encourage the group to ask questions or give compliments.

## Activity 2 – I want/I can/I am/I know/ I have<sup>9</sup> (40 minutes)

### **Your strengths matrix**

Explain the five types of strengths so that participants feel more familiar with them:

#### **I CAN (talents and skills)**

Everyone has talents and skills. Playing a musical instrument, running, being socially at ease, speaking several languages, being a good student or cook, etc. Sometimes you have not done something for a long time. When searching for your talents, it can be useful to think of the things you used to be good at.

#### **I AM (characteristics, qualities)**

Examples are kind, caring, creative, humorous, patient, honest, loyal.

#### **I KNOW (what have I learned (about myself)**

Everyone has learned things in life. Your experiences are a source of strength. For example, you know how to drive a car or how to cheer someone up when they are sad. You have also learned from dealing with life experiences or problems. For example: "I know how to take care of my health", "I know how to relax", "I know how to ask for help" or "I know how to deal with my anger".

#### **I HAVE (strengths in my environment)**

Besides strengths in yourself, you also have strengths in your environment. It can be people: a friend who helps you or a contact who gives you hope. It can also be material: income, a house, etc. Cultural or spiritual places or rituals can also be sources of strength.

#### **I WANT (wishes and goals)**

Everyone has wishes or goals. They are about things you would like to do or hope to achieve. They give you energy. You can also have wishes and dreams for someone else, for example "I wish for a better life for my children".



- Have the participants fill in this matrix in their workbook. If necessary, show the list of strengths in Appendix 3 for inspiration.
- Give each participant the opportunity to present one of the parts of the matrix and encourage the group to ask questions or give compliments.

### Reflection (5 minutes)

Evaluate the activities: what did the participants think about identifying their qualities? Did it give them self-confidence?

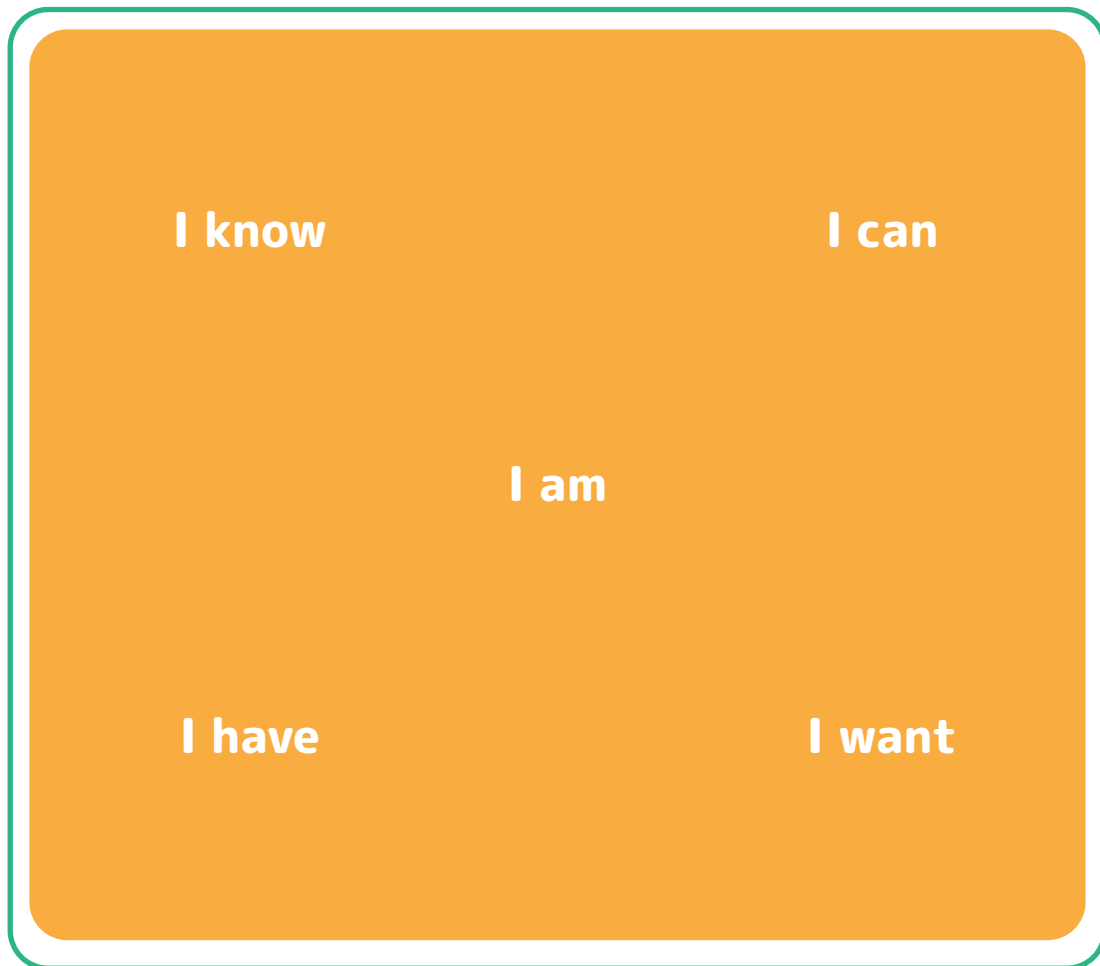
How did participants feel about filling in their strength's matrix? Did it give them new insights, and if so, which ones?



## Appendix 1

Caring	Happy	Self-confident
Easy Social Talker	More Organised	Optimistic
Modest	Friendly	Ambitious
Intelligent	Creative	Helpful
Sensitive	Trustor	Neat/clean/efficient
Determined	Versatile	Brave
Direct	Subtle	Enthusiastic
Funny	Independent	Calm
Serious	Generous	Respectful
Practical	Energetic	Attentive
Strong/powerful	Honest	Patient
Open-minded	Responsible	Spontaneous
Convincing	Flexible	Industrious
Useful	Mediator	Excited
Balanced	Adventurous	Committed
Goal-oriented	Go-getter (Never Surrender)	Relaxed
Interested	Good Listener	Resolute
Idealistic	Analysing	Disciplined
Tolerant	Inspiring	Stand Up For Yourself
Daring	Initiative Taker	Trustworthy

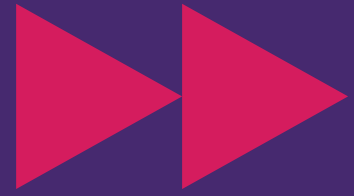
## Appendix 2



## Appendix 3

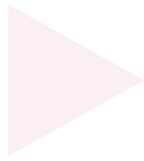
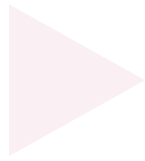
ambitious/eager to learn  
sincere  
multi-lingual  
caring  
brave  
creative  
dedicated  
flexible  
quick  
friendly  
generous  
good time manager  
good problem solver  
good listener  
helpful  
honest  
humorous  
kind/loving  
motivated  
optimistic  
open-minded  
tidy  
patient  
steadfast  
responsible  
controlled  
tolerant  
team-oriented  
trustworthy  
versatile  
efficient

# PERSONAL GOALS



*This training session helps participants to gain insight into their personal goals. Some participants have work experience and know their strengths. Others may not have worked in their country of origin. Everyone has developed skills that will be useful later in life. When looking for work, it is important to know your strengths. This is also the first step towards making a good CV.*





**Time:** 120 minutes

**Goal:** Participants learn to translate their dreams into achievable goals and actions; Participants know how to translate their qualities and goals into a strong personal pitch; Participants feel comfortable speaking in front of a group.

**Necessary:**

Whiteboard/flipchart

Writing materials

**Introduction (10 minutes)**

- Tell your participants that looking for work can be a difficult process, especially if you are new to a country. Many women want to find their dream job right away.
- Draw a dot on the flip-chart and explain that this can be the position of the participant: some may have a part-time job or do voluntary work, others may be looking for work.
- Then draw a second dot diagonally above it on the right - this represents their goal.





- Getting from point 1 to point 2 is a very big jump, practically impossible for anyone. Instead, draw a staircase between them. Explain that what we are doing in this training course is to help participants get up the first step. This means 'a step in the right direction', but it is still a small step.
- Indicate that their next activity or job will not be their dream job, but it does not have to be. This is where you improve your language, expand your network, gain more experience, build your CV.

Emphasise this: when you start looking, look for something that is realistic now.

## <sup>10</sup> **Activity 1 – Setting goals (40 minutes)**

It is important to explain the difference between dreams, goals, and action points. Start with a question: what is the difference between a goal and a dream? A dream is something you long for in your heart, even though it may be unattainable. Goals are the steps on the staircase that bring you closer to your goal. Action points are the concrete actions that will enable you to achieve your goal.

To explain the difference between desire, goal, and action points, you can use the following representation of the dream "to be healthy".



<b>Goals</b>	<b>Movement</b>	<b>Healthy Eating</b>	<b>Stop smoking</b>
<b>Action points</b>	<b>Every day 30 mins walking</b>	<b>Cook yourself</b>	<b>Ask help from a doctor</b>

- Have the participants make the assignment in their workbooks (see also Appendix 1).
- Let the participants discuss in the group what their step-by-step plan looks like and if they feel comfortable with it.



### **Goals-think about the following points:**

- 1. Think of a positive goal**
- 2. Choose a goal that you can attain**
- 3. Think of an action that you must do to attain this goal**
- 4. Think of specific goals, so that you will know when you have attained your goal**

## **Activity 2 – Your personal pitch (65 minutes}**

### **THEORY**

**A pitch is a short (1 minute) presentation about a product, idea, or yourself. By telling a story about yourself, your qualities and what makes you happy. This is different for everyone, but if you have a good pitch, people are more likely to remember you. You can use (parts of) your pitch during conversations in your network, in a job interview or in your application letter. Standing on stage and telling your story gives your self-confidence a boost!**



In this activity, participants work on their pitch, that one powerful message that suits them. So: write, adapt, practice out loud. Then we listen to each other's pitches and give feedback.

- Explain to the participants: Using the previous trainings about your skills and goals, write down a short story about yourself. They can use the format in their workbook for this (see also appendix 2). Consider the following elements:

- Who you are (name and possibly age, nationality)
- Your experience
- 2 or 3 qualities
- Your goal/wish/quest

- Tell the participants that they are going to work on the first version of the pitch - it does not have to be perfect! You and the other participants will give feedback and tips.

- After the participants have written down their story, continue with an introduction on posture and body language. Have all participants stand, feet hip-width apart, shoulders back and relaxed.

- Then do a short shake of the arms and legs to release any tension, take a deep breath and exhale slowly.

- The first participant can now make their pitch; they can keep the notes. Tell the group to pay attention to both the content and the form of the story.

- Ask the group to give feedback after each pitch - what did they do well? Are there things that can be improved? Give feedback as well, give concrete tips and pay attention to articulation, speed and volume of speech, body posture. And also: did what the participant wants to say really come across in the story?

- Thank the first participant and let them take their seat again.

- Repeat this until all participants have practiced their pitch.

### **Reflection (5 minutes)**

Evaluate the activity: what did the participants think about practicing their pitch? Did they find it exciting to speak in front of the group? Did it give them confidence?

Encourage the participants to continue practicing their pitch at home, and possibly practice it with family or friends.



## Appendix 1



Goals			
Action points			

### Goals-think about the following points:

1. Think of a positive goal
2. Choose a goal that you can attain
3. Think of an action that you must do to attain this goal
4. Think of specific goals, so that you will know when you have attained your goal



The background is a warm orange color with two stylized human silhouettes in shades of yellow and orange. There are also several large, overlapping, semi-transparent shapes in various shades of orange and yellow, creating a layered, abstract effect.

# APPENDIX – PHYSICAL EXERCISES

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## Connection between body and mind

### Goal (background for the trainer)

In the exercise on the relationship between body and mind, the relationship between body posture and emotional well-being is addressed. We are reminded that the way we perceive things is determined, among other things, by our posture. Awareness of this effect can help participants to see their world differently when they need to.

### What should I do?

#### Option 1: Walking

1. Walk through the room. Look at the floor. Walk around like this for a while (1 to 2 minutes). What do you notice? Do you feel happy, gloomy? What do you think? What do you see? How does your body feel? Stop when the time is over.
2. Now walk with your head held high and look around. Walk around like this for a while. What do you notice? Do you feel happy, gloomy? What do you think? What do you see? How does your body feel?

#### Option 2: Sitting

1. Sit on a chair with your head and shoulders bent forward. Say to yourself: "I am allowed to be here; I am worth it. What do you notice? Do you believe what you say?"
2. Now sit up straight, with your head held high and your back and shoulders straight. Now say to yourself: "I am allowed to be here; I am worth it. What do you notice? Do you believe what you are saying? What is the difference?"

Briefly discuss in group

### Assignment for the following session

Try next session to see what effect the energy of people around you have on how you feel.

Also try the opposite: what effect you can have on other people. For example, say 'good morning' or smile to someone you don't know, or give a compliment to someone in the shop (e.g., at the cash register). How does this person react? How does it feel? Remember two examples, we can discuss them in the next session.

## Shake to the music: shake it

- Feel your feet. Make contact with the earth or the floor beneath you. Be aware of your body, your breathing, your heartbeat.
- Listen to the music, start moving your body slowly up and down. Breathe in and out with your mouth open.
- After a minute, go faster, find a rhythmic form that makes you feel good. - Keep moving as long as you want. Follow your body and give in to your impulse. Try to let go of your thoughts and the steering of your body.
- After a few minutes, move more slowly, until you are standing still.
- Become aware of the ground beneath you. Stand or lie still and take time to feel what the shaking has done to your body.
- Feel where you feel energy, where your body is warm.

## Sound exercises

### For every exercise:

- Feel the ground with your senses. Feel the energy (upward pressure of the ground) flowing from the ground through your feet, ankles and upwards.
- Pay particular attention to your joints where the movement is. That is also where your body is often stuck.
- Take a deep breath in and out, to feel your lungs.

Exercises with sound - (massage on the inside and which is also good for your breathing)

- Feel the vibration while humming 'mmmmm' on your lips, jaw, neck, chest flanks etc.
- Then concentrate on your feet. The sound you hear is "uuuhm". Make this sound three times. The pitch is not important. The intention that accompanies it is 'grounding , grounding'.
- Shift your attention to your stomach (under your diaphragm). You can also place your hands there. The sound that goes with it is 'oooh'. Repeat this sound three times. The intention is "Safety, coming home".
- Shift your attention to your chest area around your heart. The sound is "aah". Repeat this sound three times. The intention is "longing, love.
- Shift your attention to your throat, head slightly bent. The sound is "èèhh". Repeat this sound three times. The intention is 'letting go of thinking'.
- Shift your attention to your crown. The sound is 'iiiiih', and the intention is 'transcending thought', connection between heaven and earth.

### Sing your name:

- Stand in a circle.
- Everyone sings their name: 'I am.....'. Note: actually, it is nothing more than extending the vowels that everyone has in their name (going back to the sounds). Others sing back: 'you are.....'. The singer 'receives' their name.

## Physical mindfulness exercise

### Contact met zelf/Het aanzetten van 'de waarnemer' / binnen-buiten:

Contact with self / Switching on 'the observer' / inside-outside

- Walk around the room, choose four things to look at carefully.
- Find a place and close your eyes. Check what you hear, again choose 4 sounds.
- Now observe, where and how you feel.
- Now focus on your breathing, feel how air enters and leaves your nostrils.
- Feel your body moving through the air. Concentrate on the different elements of breathing.
- Now focus your attention on your inner space. As if you were walking through your own body space, what do you perceive? Aches and pains, tension, tingling in the

stomach, heartbeat, lump in the throat, and more abstract feelings; tiredness, sadness, happiness.

- Choose one feeling that needs attention. Go to it with your full attention and try to give it a form. Is it hard, soft, light, heavy, rough, or smooth? What colour is it?

Is it large, small, hollow, solid...? Walk around it in your mind, look at it from different sides, sit down next to it (or on it, or behind it), let the "feeling" be there completely.

- Now focus your attention on the space around the feeling. Look at the rest of the inner space, as it were, while you are still sitting next to the feeling. Keep your attention on yourself, with the inner space and now carefully open your eyes. Now observe the outer space but remain present in your inner space.
- Repeat this several times.

**Notes:**

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