

ELINA SIILBEK

KAJA JAKOBSON

Programme STEPS

---

# TEACHING YOUNG PEOPLE COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION SKILLS



TEACHER'S HANDBOOK



Programme STEPS

**TEACHING YOUNG PEOPLE  
COMMUNICATION AND  
COOPERATION SKILLS**

TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

## **Programme STEPS: Teaching Young People Communication and Cooperation Skills. Teacher's Handbook**

Authors: Elina Siilbek (MA Pedagogy and Psychology),

Kaja Jakobson (MSc Geophysics; MBA Entrepreneurship and Technology Management)

Consultant, editor, compiler of the Teacher's Reading Materials: Eike Siilbek (MSc Psychology)

English translation: Mari Arumäe

Handbook design: Erge Edesi, Eike Siilbek

Illustrations: Mattias Siilbek

Cover design: Eike Siilbek

The handbook includes educational videos and worksheets that are part of this study program.

Worksheet design: Mattias Siilbek, Elina Siilbek

Producer of educational videos: MTÜ Planum

Author of educational video scripts, director of educational videos: Elina Siilbek

*This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein*

Partners:



© Kaja Jakobson, Elina Siilbek, MTÜ Planum

All rights reserved. The educational videos, worksheets, and teacher's handbook included in the program are copyrighted and permission is required for reproduction or distribution. No part of this manual may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Publisher:

MTÜ Planum

Tallinn, 2022

# Table of Contents

How to use the handbook.....	5
1. Introduction .....	8
Questionnaire for students.....	12
2. Assumptions .....	15
Description of the educational video: "Windmill Stop".....	21
Worksheet: Assumptions.....	22
3. Taking responsibility I .....	24
Description of the educational film: "Taking responsibility" .....	28
4. Taking responsibility II .....	29
5. I-messages.....	35
Teacher's reading materials: I-messages .....	41
Worksheet: I-messages .....	47
6. Needs: mine and others'.....	55
Worksheet: Jackal and Giraffe. Exercise .....	59
7. Rules for collaboration.....	63
8. Handling dissent I. Defensiveness.....	66
Description of the educational film: "Contesting a grade".....	70
9. Handling dissent II. Describing experiences. Listening .....	71
Teacher's reading materials: Active listening .....	78
Worksheet: Understanding and describing experiences.....	82
Worksheet: Rules for listening.....	83
10. Social exclusion I .....	84
Description of the educational film: "Social exclusion" .....	98
11. Social exclusion II .....	90
12. Effective conflict management I. Conflict.....	92
Description of the educational film: "Conflict" .....	97
Teacher's reading materials: Conflict management .....	98
13. Effective conflict management II. Aggressive behaviour.....	101
Description of the educational film: "Development interview" .....	105
Worksheet: Obstacles to listening .....	106

14. Self-management I .....	108
Description of the educational film: "Anxiety" .....	113
Teacher's reading materials: Emotion regulation.....	114
Worksheet: Emotion regulation .....	122
Worksheet: Self-Management: Basic Scheme.....	126
15. Self-management II .....	127
Description of the educational film: "One Day in Emily's Life".....	131
Worksheet: The three views of mindfulness; self-management: basic scheme .....	132
16. Time management.....	133
Description of the educational film: "Time Management" .....	140
Teacher's reading materials: Time management .....	141
17. Self-motivation.....	145
Teacher's reading materials: Self-motivation .....	148
Worksheet: Improving self-motivation.....	153
18. Values I. Differences in values .....	157
Description of the educational film: "Band" .....	161
Worksheet: Values .....	162
19. Values II. Making choices. Decision-making .....	164
Worksheet: Tetralemma .....	167
20. Self-understanding and self-analysis .....	168
Worksheet: Wheel of Life .....	172
Worksheet: The GROW model.....	174
Worksheet: Storyline .....	175
21. Review and summaries .....	176
Worksheet: Large icons.....	179
Worksheet: Student toolbox.....	186

# How to use the handbook

This handbook is intended for teachers (class teachers, human studies teachers, teachers of elective subjects, school psychologists) **to teach communication and collaboration to students** (mainly aged 15–19). The handbook includes 10 educational videos and worksheets. The educational videos and more information about the program can be found at [steps.ee/en](http://steps.ee/en). The worksheets are included with the corresponding lessons in the handbook. The handbook is divided into topics, allowing the teacher to pick up topics that are particularly relevant at the time. It is organised into lessons of 75 minutes, which can be shortened or extended depending on the available time and study organisation.

**The topics** have been presented in the order that seemed the most logical to the authors, but the order can be changed. Note that some topics can take 2–3 classes to finish, and those should be taught consecutively. Consecutive lessons are noted with Roman numerals by the subject line. Educational videos are also sometimes divided into two parts or even into two lessons, with half the film shown and discussed in each.

**The program is based** on the experience of communication trainers and scientific research on psychology. The program addresses communication and collaboration situations that occur in young people's daily lives and is structured in a varied and practical way – it intertwines theory with group work, educational videos, discussions and assignments, to allow the youth's learning experience to be as practical and immediate as possible. This approach was also chosen because making connections between the new knowledge and one's own life events and practicing certain exercises in class will make it more likely that the students will use this knowledge actively going forward.

**The educational videos are based on** real-life cases collected from young people and are intended for use in discussions about these topics and in group work. Their use for other purposes and their distribution is prohibited. The educational videos, worksheets and teacher's handbook included in the program are protected by copyright.

**The teachers' reading materials** present compiled theory on the study material and include references. While most of the theoretical material is covered in the lessons, the teachers' reading materials provide a comprehensive overview of the topics covered in the teaching materials and provide supporting information for those who would like to know more about the subject.

**The key to the fonts used.** The different activities for the teacher are distinguished by font in the handbook:

- ❖ Bold italics refer to teacher activities (e.g., "***distribute worksheets***")
- ❖ Italics refer to notes for the teacher (e.g., "*for this lesson, it is important to withhold the topic of the lesson from the students*")
- ❖ Text in regular typeface can be used by the teacher to pass the material on to the students.

The handbook provides **homework** that can be given to students. If no homework has been presented, it means that the program does not provide any. However, if necessary, the teacher can leave as homework different tasks that they want the students to practice or that were not covered in class.

The teacher can write **their own comments** directly in the handbook, in the space left for notes in the left-hand column.

The **key terms** to be introduced in the scope of each topic and the "**toolbox**" are listed separately. The toolbox features the most important techniques needed for this topic. Behaviours that should not be used or should be avoided are sometimes identified.

The icons in the toolbox have the following meanings:

Tool	Meaning
I-MESSAGES 	<p><b>The Paintbrush of I-messages.</b> This tool calls for the use of I-messages: I have to speak for myself, about my own feelings, thoughts and needs. I-messages are among the best tools in situations where you have to explain your point of view to others without coming across as accusatory or judgmental.</p>
CARING 	<p><b>The Key of Caring.</b> The key always lies in understanding, and if you want to understand your discussion partner, you should talk to them in a caring way. Approach them through curiosity, understanding and caring, not from a place of selfishness.</p>
FACTS 	<p><b>The Magnifying Glass of Facts.</b> Emotion-free, dispassionate assessment of the situation. Focus on facts, not judgements or assumptions. A fact is only that which is objective, something that can be recorded or filmed.</p>
PERSPECTIVE 	<p><b>The Prism of Perspective.</b> Refers to the need to look at the situation through the eyes of different people, from different people's perspectives. This tool is needed in collaborative situations or situations where a single person's perspective is not enough.</p>
LISTENING 	<p><b>The Ear of Active Listening.</b> Active, committed listening (incl. reflection, asking questions, providing summaries) is one of the most important tools for resolving conflicts and understanding the person you are communicating with.</p>
NOTICING FEELINGS 	<p><b>The Heart of Emotions</b> Emotions are always stronger than reason when it comes to determining the motives behind our behaviour and actions. As such, it is important to notice the feelings of both ourselves and our communication partner.</p>
IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS 	<p><b>The Iceberg of Needs.</b> Just like the majority of every iceberg is concealed, so are our wishes and needs. They may not be clear or visible to others (and sometimes to ourselves, too), but they exist.</p>
UNDERSTANDING MEANING 	<p><b>The Eye that Understands Meanings.</b> What does this situation mean to me? What does this situation mean for the other person? What are our needs and expectations? What do we want in this situation, together and individually?</p>
OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE 	<p><b>The Position of Observer.</b> A bystander's perspective, which is needed to calmly assess the situation. Ability to look at yourself "from the outside" in a specific situation, quickly analysing the meaning of the situation and the possible actions.</p>
FOCUS 	<p><b>The Focus of Concentration.</b> Focusing skills are one of the most important tools for time management and self-direction. A complete, focused presence in the situation provides the resources needed for commitment and self-direction.</p>

PLANNING



**The Notebook of Planning.** Planning helps to set clear goals that we want to achieve within a certain period of time. The plan should be as clear as possible. If necessary, larger tasks can be broken down into smaller pieces to get a better idea of what exactly needs to be done. Various planning methods exist and you can choose the one that suits you best.

SETTING PRIORITIES



**The Pedestal of Priorities.** Effective time management also includes the ability to set priorities, i.e., decide what is most important to do at any point. It is useful to distinguish between urgent activities and important activities.

FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE



**The Focus on Positivity.** Every situation has its upsides and downsides. What matters is what we focus on. Negativity eats into your valuable lifetime and does not benefit your development or coping. Focus on the positive!

**WHAT WE WON'T NEED:**

Tool	Meaning
ACCUSATIONS 	<b>The Hammer of Accusations.</b> Accusations towards your communication partner usually cause them to get defensive, and as a rule, it is not helpful for understanding or resolving the situation.
DEFENSIVENESS 	<b>The Shield of Defensiveness.</b> It is also useful to be aware of your own defensive reactions and to avoid getting defensive, for example, when you are given negative feedback.
JUDGEMENTS 	<b>The Knife of Judgements.</b> Making judgements quickly cuts off any opportunity to work with the other party. As soon as the other party perceives judgements and accusations, their defensive reaction is triggered and you get conflict rather than cooperation.

**SUGGESTIONS**

The authors recommend using as much **direct communication** with students as possible, sharing experiences, and using as few technical tools (e.g., slide shows) as possible to avoid restricting active participation and direct contact. Please note that some lessons require the element of surprise to drive the point home, so we would advise against mentioning the subject and purpose of the lesson at the beginning of the lesson.

**The environment.** For best results, we recommend smaller study groups (up to 15 people). In the classroom environment, we recommend regular 1-2-seat tables rather than round tables, as it is necessary to get the students' immediate attention back to address the theory that follows the group work (at the roundtable, discussions tend to continue).

**If you have time left over,** we recommend the occasional use of self-reflection individually or in pairs, i.e., time for students to make sense of what they learned or the thoughts and feelings that were triggered.

**What if students start coming up with difficult questions** or particularly in-depth problems that go beyond the scope this program? At this point, we recommend that you do not take on too much responsibility as a problem solver for students, but rather refer them to a professional who is qualified to deal with such problems. Of course, everything that students say in class must remain in the class. Confidentiality is vital.

*The authors extend their sincere thanks to all those who have helped to create and test the program and the educational videos – teachers, class teachers, psychologists, students and volunteers. If you have any comments or suggestions for improvement, please send them by e-mail to [elina.siilbek@gmail.com](mailto:elina.siilbek@gmail.com) or [kaja.jakobson@gmail.com](mailto:kaja.jakobson@gmail.com).*

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

KEY TERMS

- ❖ Communication and collaboration skills
- ❖ Personal skills



TOOLBOX

IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS



LISTENING



PREPARATIONS

- ❖ Prepare to write keywords on the board or on a sheet of paper
- ❖ Prepare your introduction and personal story
- ❖ Print questionnaires
- ❖ Have some music ready to play during the survey
- ❖ Have blank A4 sheets ready to make name tags

MY NOTES:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

1. INTRODUCTION (10 MIN)

The introductory lesson provides an overview of the course and lets us get to know each other and the topics we will be discussing.

Tell the class:

The content of the program is to learn and practice communication and cooperation skills based on the cases presented by the students themselves. We will also touch on personal skills such as emotion regulation, time management and self-motivation.

In this course, we learn to cope with complex communication and collaboration situations that are common in young people's lives and may occur in the future.

For example:

- ❖ If your desk mate or partner fails to do their share of work and you have to do the pair task alone, how could you best inform the partner of your displeasure without offending him or her?
- ❖ How to behave in a situation where someone has taken offense at you, is shouting or even aggressive? Can anything be done to calm down an aggressive person? If so, how would you go about it?
- ❖ How to deal with social exclusion? What if the exclusion is indirect and consists of small things?
- ❖ How to use I-messages in a situation where you need to give feedback to a teacher, companion or friend without blaming or judging them?
- ❖ How to regulate one's own emotions (anger, anxiety, sadness) and is it even possible?
- ❖ Why and in what situations do you experience time management problems? What time management methods could be used?

We will also work with topics such as defensiveness, needs, self-management and self-awareness, values, active listening and reflection.

The introduction is followed by an overview of the principles of assessment as previously planned and agreed, taking into account the specifics of the school (pass/fail, attendance, study journal).

2. INDIVIDUAL WORK. SURVEY COMPLETION (20 MIN)

Distribute the questionnaires to the class. You may want to play quiet background music while it is being completed. Ask



## INTRODUCTION

*When the students are ready, ask them to quietly share what they wrote with their partner. Give it 4 minutes (2 minutes each) and enforce the limit.*

*Once the students have finished, don't forget to introduce yourself: tell the class what you would like to learn more about and why this course seems important to you or what you think makes it particularly useful for the students. In order to break the ice and create rapport, we also recommend telling a few on-topic stories about yourself.*

## 5. GROUP TASK. MAKING AGREEMENTS (10 MIN)

*Divide students into groups of 3 or 4. Summarize the intent behind the course once more and ask the class what agreements would be needed to make it more useful and the learning process easier for all.*

**Ask the class:**



- ❖ How are we going to do all this and what agreements would help you learn best?
- ❖ For example: How are we going to go about mobile phones? What are we going to do when the classroom gets noisy? What if one or a few students don't care for a particular topic, but the rest would like to listen? What if the topic seems too personal?

## 6. GENERAL DISCUSSION. THE RESULTS OF THE GROUP TASK (12 MIN)

*Ask the class about the results, try to find common ground, and write the keywords for the resulting agreements for this group and course on the board or on an individual large sheet of paper.*

**Ask the class:**



- ❖ What rules will we agree on going forward?
- ❖ For this lesson, I propose keeping all the stories in this room between us. This means: when someone opens up and reveals more about themselves, we will not tell others about it. Does everyone agree?

*Point out that in general, before launching any kind of collaboration, it makes sense to work out its rules! Make sure to emphasize the need for confidentiality – after all, you would not want anything personal to be told to too many people, either.*

---

## 7. ANSWERING QUESTIONS (3 MIN)

---



**Ask the class:**

- ❖ Does anyone have any questions?

**Answer the questions.**



## INTRODUCTION

**When the students are ready, ask them to quietly share what they wrote with their partner. Give it 4 minutes (2 minutes each) and enforce the limit.**

**Once the students have finished, don't forget to introduce yourself: tell the class what you would like to learn more about and why this course seems important to you or what you think makes it particularly useful for the students. In order to break the ice and create rapport, we also recommend telling a few on-topic stories about yourself.**

## 5. GROUP TASK. MAKING AGREEMENTS (10 MIN)

**Divide students into groups of 3 or 4. Summarize the intent behind the course once more and ask the class what agreements would be needed to make it more useful and the learning process easier for all.**

**Ask the class:**



- ❖ How are we going to do all this and what agreements would help you learn best?
- ❖ For example: How are we going to go about mobile phones? What are we going to do when the classroom gets noisy? What if one or a few students don't care for a particular topic, but the rest would like to listen? What if the topic seems too personal?

## 6. GENERAL DISCUSSION. THE RESULTS OF THE GROUP TASK (12 MIN)

**Ask the class about the results, try to find common ground, and write the keywords for the resulting agreements for this group and course on the board or on an individual large sheet of paper.**

**Ask the class:**



- ❖ What rules will we agree on going forward?
- ❖ For this lesson, I propose keeping all the stories in this room between us. This means: when someone opens up and reveals more about themselves, we will not tell others about it. Does everyone agree?

**Point out that in general, before launching any kind of collaboration, it makes sense to work out its rules!**

**Make sure to emphasize the need for confidentiality – after all, you would not want anything personal to be told to too many people, either.**

---

## 7. ANSWERING QUESTIONS (3 MIN)

---



**Ask the class:**

- ❖ Does anyone have any questions?

**Answer the questions.**

# Survey: your interests and real-life situations

Dear reader!

Have you ever felt that school education covers science and humanities, but leaves out some essential life skills? With this program, we would like to help you learn practical skills to help you cope with difficult situations in your life. To do this, we want to better understand situations encountered by young people. Please answer the following questions so we can take into account your thoughts and needs when designing the content of this communication and collaboration skills program.

The survey is anonymous and the answers are only used to develop the program and to shape the content of the lessons.

1. Please indicate which of the following topics are most relevant to you. Which of them would you like to master? If any of the sub-topics speak to you in particular, underline them. If you are interested in something that is not listed, go ahead and add it.

Subject	very interested	interested	not particularly interested	not at all interested
<b>Group dynamics.</b> I as a member of a group (class). The nature and functioning of groups (including social exclusion).				
<b>Listening.</b> How to really listen to another person. Listening as a means to soothe and help.				
<b>Making assumptions.</b> The mechanisms of assumptions and prejudice and avoiding them in everyday communication. How to avoid making assumptions. How to avoid disappointments due to unfounded expectations?				
<b>Better self-expression and making yourself clear.</b> Explaining your perspective and needs to others. Distinguishing between facts, thoughts, feelings and wishes in your life.				
<b>I-messages.</b> How to speak neutrally, without judgment and accusation.				
<b>Giving (negative) feedback.</b> How to give feedback without offending the other? Describe your experience and listen to the other party's experience.				
<b>Emotional regulation.</b> Understanding yourself better and coping with negative emotions. How to manage emotions (anger, anxiety, resentment)?				
<b>Time management.</b> What are the different time management techniques and how to better plan your time?				
<b>Communication techniques.</b> Clear self-expression, avoiding accusations, coping with manipulation, handling conflict, etc.				
<b>Self-motivation.</b> Self-motivation in situations that require effort and discipline.				

2. What are the situations in your life where the other party **does not take responsibility and fails you**? E.g.: You are working together on a project, but most of the work is left to you. What else? Describe one such situation.

.....

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

3. Have you ever had a situation where you would have liked to better **manage your emotions** (anger, sadness, irritability, anxiety)? To feel something else instead of what you felt? Recover faster from an emotional blow? Describe one such situation.

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

4. What are **avoidance and social exclusion** in school? For example: no one is sitting next to you in the canteen, people don't come to the cinema when you invite them, you suddenly find yourself left out of the group. What else? Describe typical avoidance / social exclusion, using an example you have experienced in school.

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

5. When have you felt unable to **express yourself clearly**? What have been the situations at school, at home or with friends where you've felt like you're really trying but you're not understood? Describe a few situations:

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

6. What are the most **difficult communication situations** for you? For example: if you are engaging with an aggressive person, or if you don't dare to say what you're thinking, or if you can't cope with your feelings, or anything else? Describe some such situations from the recent past.

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

7. What makes you sad or unhappy? What are you worried about? Describe one **typical concern** for youth.

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

8. In what situations is it difficult for you to **motivate yourself**? If you need to motivate yourself to do something, in what situations do you find it difficult and why?

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

Thank you for answering!

## ASSUMPTIONS

## ASSUMPTIONS

## KEY TERMS

- ❖ Assumptions
- ❖ Different perspectives, different „stories“



## TOOLBOX

## THE FACTS



## PERSPECTIVE



## PREPARATIONS

- ❖ Have the video „Windmill Stop“ ready to watch.
- ❖ Print the worksheets and/or prepare the figures for this lesson to draw/display on the board.

## NOTE:

- ❖ Quite naturally, our brains make assumptions in order to save energy. However, it is wise to be aware of this tendency and, in similar situations, to ask yourself whether you know something or just assume it.
- ❖ The only way to know for sure is to ask the people involved, because our assumptions are just that – assumptions – and we often expect the worst, thinking that things are worse than they really are.

## 1. INTRODUCTION (4 MIN)

*For this class, you should withhold the topic of the class (assumptions) and its goals from the students. Doing so will help improve retention and use the element of surprise. This allows students to gain first-hand experience about making assumptions before they are taught about it. However, you can introduce the lesson by going over the previous lesson's discussions or the agreements that were made.*

This time, we are about to watch a video clip of a situation where Emily is waiting for a friend at their agreed meeting place.

## 2. VIDEO CLIP: "WINDMILL STOP" (5 MIN)

## PART ONE OF THE VIDEO CLIP

*Play the first part of the clip up to the question "Why didn't Kris show up?". At this point, pause the video to work in groups and have a general discussion.*

## 3. INTRODUCTION TO THE EXERCISE (3 MIN)

*Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4. The groups should discuss what they think may have been the reason Kris didn't come.*

## 4. GENERAL DISCUSSION (10 MIN)

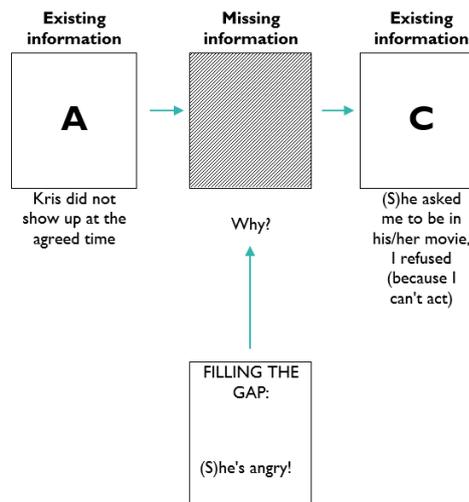
*Solicit a few opinions and mark the students' assumptions on the board as keywords. The developing list of assumptions may overlap with Emily's thoughts or include new ideas (all of which are still mere assumptions).*



## ASSUMPTIONS

And yet, the brain seeks to understand the situation as well as possible. We can't see another person's lived experience – we only perceive small pieces of it – so the brain fills in the gaps as best it can. We want to know why other people do what they do. This will help us anticipate their future behavior and be prepared to respond to it. If we don't understand something (the other person is behaving differently than usual), our brain wants to get a complete picture of the situation, and it is only normal for us to fill in the gaps (*draw on the board or hand out on the worksheets*).

EXAMPLE OF FILLING THE GAPS: THE STORY OF EMILY AND KRIS



This happens more often when another person does something unexpected or says something that is not in line with our current opinion of that person. We assume all the time and come up with stories about what others actually think, what they really want or feel.

## WHY, THEN, DO THE ASSUMPTIONS DEFAULT TO THE NEGATIVE?

When we make assumptions, they often tend towards the negative rather than the positive end of the emotional range. For example, in the video, Emily began to suspect that Kris was trying to avoid her, had gone with Monika, etc., instead of figuring, for example, that Kris had missed the bus because (s)he was currently buying a surprise gift for Emily, or other such explanations. The reason for default negative assumptions is likely to be evolutionary (Cacioppo et al., 2014). For early humans, paying attention to the negative and the dangerous was vital. If you experienced something whose cause was unknown (e.g., you heard rustling in the bushes), it was more useful to assume the negative (there is a tiger in the bush) than to ignore the potential danger (it's just the wind). Of course, not every situation turned out to be dangerous, but those who expected bad things had a better chance of surviving and passing on their genes. This means that we carry the genes of those of our ancestors who tended to expect the worst (because carelessness got people eaten).

**Draw a similar diagram on the board (or make a slide) or share the following image on worksheets:**

## ASSUMPTIONS

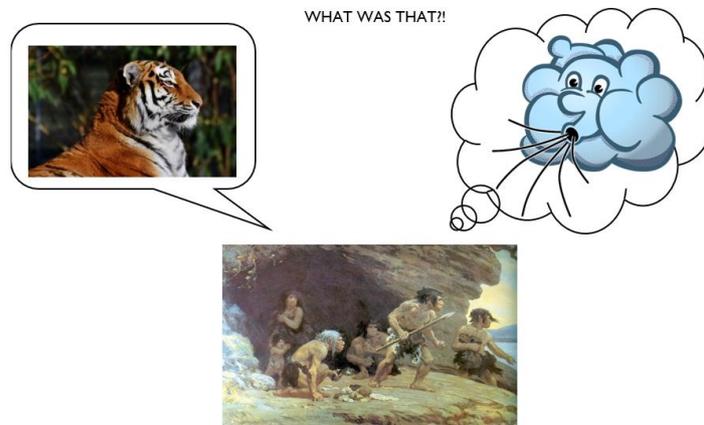


Figure 3. Why are our assumptions frequently negative? Evolutionary background.

Even today, negative assumptions can be useful in some cases, but they often prove problematic in communication.

## 6. GENERAL DISCUSSION ON THE VIDEO (12 MIN)

**Draw a scale on the board, ranging from very negative to very positive. Working together, place the students' assumptions about Kris on the scale.**

**Ask the class:**



- ❖ Were the assumptions of the girl in the video positive or negative?

**Questions for students to discuss:** When could negative assumptions prove helpful? What harm do negative assumptions do?

**Pair discussion and/or writing.**

## 7. TIPS TO AVOID MAKING ASSUMPTIONS (3 MIN)

In summary, what can be done to avoid assumptions causing damage?

**Tell the class:**

HOW TO AVOID MAKING ASSUMPTIONS?

### 1. STAY AWARE

The first step in avoiding assumptions is to be aware of your own assumptions. Get used to noticing when you are making assumptions and really consider the situation instead. What are the facts and what are assumptions? What information are you missing? Are your assumptions based on facts, or rather on previous experience, personal opinion, fears, or gut feeling?

### 2. ASK

## ASSUMPTIONS

---

In most cases, we do not verify our assumptions – we do not ask the person in question for their input. Sometimes we seek confirmation from a third party instead, or just assume we have the whole story. In reality, however, asking questions is one of the most effective ways to avoid making assumptions. If you are communicating with another person and feel that you may not have understood them exactly, ask questions and clarify the situation. By getting as much information as possible about the other's perspective, feelings, expectations, or intentions, the brain no longer has to fill all those gaps with assumptions.

### 3. LISTEN

Active listening also helps to better understand the other person's intentions. Have a sincere interest in their point of view, notice, reflect and ask further questions if necessary.

### 4. LOOK FOR DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

If the situation is difficult to understand and several people are involved, it is useful to look at it from several angles. Everyone has their own story and their own truth. Try to imagine the experience of others and check your assumptions. This is a better way to understand what is really going on.

---

## 8. THE REST OF THE VIDEO "WINDMILL STOP" (2 MIN)

---

Want to find out how Emily's story ended? Let's watch the rest of it.

---

## 9. DISCUSSION AND WORK IN PAIRS (14 MIN)

---

***Discuss the ending of the clip with the class once more. Work in pairs:***

Share with your partner some situations where you later realized that you had been making assumptions, without knowing the background or the actual reasons. With your partner, write down specific situations similar to Emily's that took place at your school or among your friends, where some relevant information was missing (for example, a classmate did not sit next to you and you thought...; someone seemed to be avoiding you, etc.). Describe real-life situations and your assumptions.

*Collect the sheets to find out which situations are most likely to create assumptions. You can use this knowledge in future lessons or examples.*

---

## 10. SUMMARY (2 MIN)

---

Quite naturally, our brains make assumptions in order to save energy. However, it is wise to be aware of this tendency and, in similar situations, to ask yourself whether you know something or just assume it. The only way to know for sure is to ask the people involved, because our assumptions are just that – assumptions – and we often expect the worst, thinking that things are worse than they really are. What's more, other people make their own assumptions about you, so it is wise to make your own thoughts and ideas known: no one can read your mind and assumptions about your behavior may also be negative.

ASSUMPTIONS

---

---

**11. STUDENT FEEDBACK AND SELF-REFLECTION (9 MIN)**

---

**WRITTEN SELF-REFLECTION AND SHARING WITH THE PARTNER**

What were the key things you remembered? What seemed the most useful to you on this topic? What could you do to assume less next time?

---

**12. HOMEWORK (1 MIN)**

---

Keep track of your assumptions (and note down your thoughts in the journal).

# WINDMILL STOP



This educational video deals with assumptions. However, the topic should not be revealed before watching the film to the end, as it ends with a plot twist and revealing it before watching the film will not profit the learning process. Therefore, we recommend first watching the film until the question “Why didn’t Kris come?” appears on the screen and then having students come up with their own solutions before continuing with the film. This allows them to gain first-hand experience of making assumptions and the issues with it (negative assumptions, jumping to conclusions without finding out the facts, etc.).

Emily is waiting for Kris at the bus stop, but for some reason, Kris is not coming or picking up the phone. The scheduled time has passed, but Kris is not on the next bus, either. Emily is getting upset wondering why Kris is not coming. Evelyn arrives at the bus stop and tries to help her understand the situation, but the real answer is revealed at the end of the film. The goal of the film is to introduce the topic of assumptions and kick off the theoretical section: why we make so many assumptions about the behaviour of others and what risks they pose with regard to communication and cooperation.

---

## WORKSHEET: ASSUMPTIONS

---

# ASSUMPTIONS

WHY DOES THE BRAIN MAKE ASSUMPTIONS?

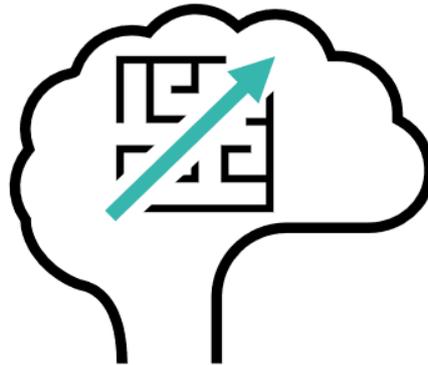


Figure 1. The brain's shortcuts.

EXAMPLE OF FILLING THE GAPS: THE STORY OF EMILY AND KRIS

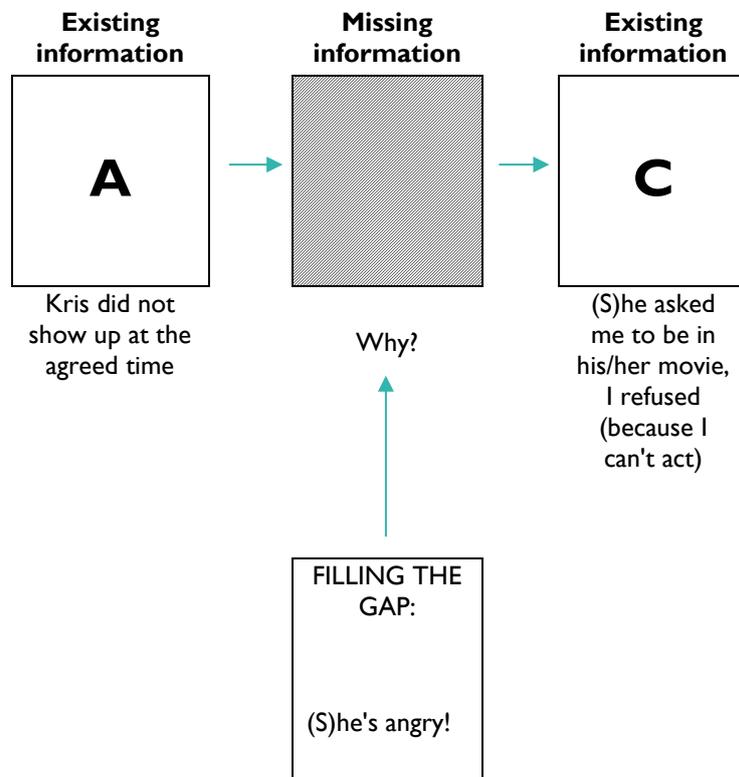
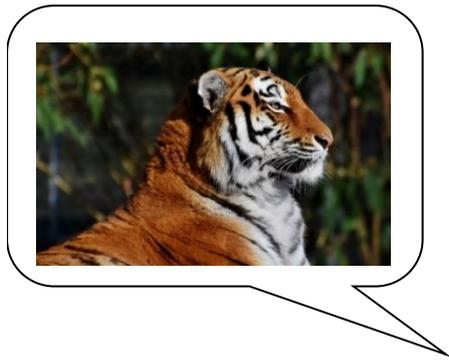


Figure 2. EXAMPLE OF FILLING THE GAPS TO GET THE WHOLE PICTURE: THE STORY OF EMILY AND KRIS



WHAT WAS THAT?!

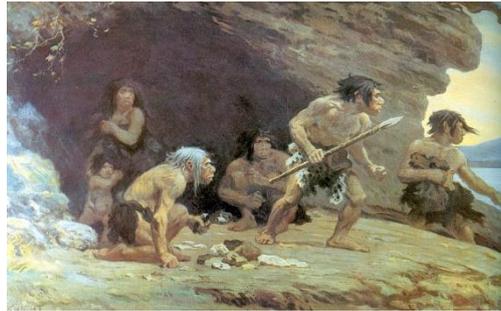


Figure 3. Why are our assumptions frequently negative? Evolutionary background.

## HOW TO AVOID MAKING ASSUMPTIONS?

### ❖ Stay aware

The first step in avoiding assumptions is to be aware of your own assumptions. Get used to noticing when you are making assumptions and really consider the situation. What are the facts and what are assumptions? What information are you missing? Are your assumptions based on facts, or rather on previous experience, personal opinion, fears, or gut feeling?

### ❖ Ask

In most cases, we do not verify our assumptions – we do not ask the person in question for their input. Sometimes we seek confirmation from a third party instead, or just assume we have the whole story. In reality, however, asking questions is one of the most effective ways to avoid making assumptions. If you are communicating with another person and feel that you may not have understood them exactly, ask questions and clarify the situation. By getting as much information as possible about the other's perspective, feelings, expectations, or intentions, the brain no longer has to fill all those gaps with assumptions.

### ❖ Listen

Active listening also helps to better understand the other person's intentions. Have a sincere interest in their point of view, notice, reflect and ask further questions if necessary.

### ❖ Look for different perspectives

If the situation is difficult to understand and several people are involved, it is useful to look at it from several angles. Everyone has their own story and their own truth. Try to imagine the experience of others and check your assumptions. This is a better way to understand what is really going on.

## TAKING RESPONSIBILITY I

# TAKING RESPONSIBILITY I

## KEY TERMS

- ❖ Taking responsibility in a cooperative situation
- ❖ The impact of your behavior on others
- ❖ The impact of another person's behavior on you
- ❖ Different perspectives
- ❖ Impact of the approach to communication
- ❖ The principle of positive intent



## TOOLBOX

CARING



PERSPECTIVE



LISTENING



## PREPARATIONS

- ❖ Have the film "Taking Responsibility" ready to play.
- ❖ Be prepared to show videos in class. You'll need a computer, a screen and speakers. We recommend testing the equipment before class begins.
- ❖ Papers in A0 format on the wall and markers.
- ❖ Notepaper for students.

## 1. INTRODUCTION (7 MIN)

### DISCUSSION ON THE PREVIOUS LESSON

**(ASSUMPTIONS).** What did you take away from the lesson? Did you notice yourself making any assumptions? Has the knowledge learned in the previous lesson affected you and if so, how?

Let's watch a video today. The situations and problems in this clip and the following ones have been gathered from other students. Please keep a close eye on the situation. What is happening and why? Afterwards, I will be asking you questions based on what you saw.

## 2. VIDEO CLIP "TAKING RESPONSIBILITY", PART I (5 MIN)

### PART ONE OF THE VIDEO CLIP

*Play the clip "Taking Responsibility" up to the question "What should I do in this situation?"*

## 3. DISCUSSION WITH THE CLASS (15 MIN)

### GROUP DISCUSSION IN GROUPS OF 2 TO 4.

- ❖ What did you see and why did this situation come to be?
- ❖ What might each party be feeling?
- ❖ How to avoid such situations in school?
- ❖ Is there anything that could be done?

**Ask the class** (select some students and/or questions)



- ❖ Have you been in similar situations? If so, what have you done in such situations?
- ❖ What do you think Fred felt? How about Alex?
- ❖ Why do you think such situations happen?
- ❖ What can such behavior lead to?

There may well be different ways to approach such situations (suggest to the teacher to let everyone choose their own partner, or agree on more detailed rules, talk, etc.).

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY I

**NOTE:**

- ❖ Communication affects collaboration. If one person fails to take responsibility, the others will be harmed and will no longer want to cooperate with them.
- ❖ If you do not speak up about something bothering you, the person not taking responsibility might not even realise that something is wrong. All the while, they may have their own reason, their own story. You need to listen to both sides, explain your position and try to understand the other.

**HOMEWORK**

Think about a specific situation in your life and the person you would like to express your displeasure to. Write down the situation.

**MY NOTES:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Ask the class:**



- ❖ What else could be done in such a situation?

**Comment:**

- ❖ For example: A possible solution suggested by the students (or, if it is not brought up, it can be suggested for discussion) is a proposal to have the teacher intervene in group formation. Students could ask the teacher to assign groups differently or let students choose their own partner(s): that way, groups of responsibility-takers would form, and the diligent ones would work together. What are the pros and cons of this approach?  
*Discuss!*
- ❖ Another option is friendly (unilateral) self-assertion. I understand that you are having a hard time, and so can I, and I can handle it, but how can we make sure that we both can "make it" through this situation?
- ❖ Each side should assert themselves gently and explain their perspective. For example, someone dodging responsibility may say: I feel like I just can't do it, and rather than not doing it, can you help me get started with something (or what could I do regardless). We will talk about this in more detail in the next lesson.

**4. THEORY (5 MIN)**

**THE PRINCIPLE OF POSITIVE INTENT**

- ❖ Humans are more than their behaviour.
- ❖ Every behaviour is useful in some contexts.
- ❖ Every behaviour is rooted in a positive intention (goal) for the person's own benefit – other people are not against you, they are for themselves.
- ❖ Understanding the principle of positive intent does not mean that I agree with the person's behavior, but that I understand its motives. This allows addressing the causes, not the consequences.

## TAKING RESPONSIBILITY I

## 5. INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP WORK BOTH PARTIES (10 MIN)

### THE STORY OF ALEX AND FRED

Let's get back to what each of them felt and why they did what they did.

Individual task and then the same task for pairs: Work in pairs: one of you will be Alex, the other is Fred. Each of you comes up with their story.

- ❖ Why might Alex have left it undone?
- ❖ What was Fred thinking?

Take a couple of minutes each to think this through and take notes. Imagine being this character: you probably didn't have any bad intentions or bad feelings for the other party. But you have your reasons, your background, your feelings and thoughts.

In preparation, work alone to note down:

- ❖ Write down 5 (positive) reasons why Alex (Fred) might have behaved the way he did.
- ❖ Write down 3 thoughts that you might have if you were the other side in this situation.
- ❖ Write down the first sentence you utter to the other to describe your thoughts and feelings to him in a way that is free of judgement.

Turn to your partner and tell them your story, why things turned out this way and how it made you feel.



#### Ask the class:

- ❖ What was your experience when you talked to each other?

#### **Important: Make sure the class understands:**

There could be many different reasons. You will always need to find out (understand) the other side's story, their motives. Why are they doing this? Learn about their (probably good) intentions and thoughts. First, understand that each behaviour has its reasons. We should not assume we know the reason – instead, we should ask.

## 6. THEORY. IMPACT AND INTENTION (15 MIN).

Let's return to the story of Fred and Alex, this time from the perspective of your influence on the other person and the influence of the other person on you. What was the effect of Alex's behaviour? What was the impression Fred got of him (arrogant, lazy, etc.)? Is the way a behaviour affected us a fact, objective reality? Does it match the (usually good) intentions of the other person? No. Often, the impact diverges from our thoughts. The other person's intentions are usually good, but it is their effect that sometimes bothers or even upsets us. You have probably noticed that other things also have an effect: clothing, behaviour, choice of words, body language, neatness, etc.

Let's look at this from another angle. If we had a negative impact, it doesn't really matter that our intentions were good – the other person still got hurt. At that moment, there is no point launching into an explanation about how we meant well. Rather, start out by listening to them and understanding their feelings. Start from the fact that they are feeling bad – offended, sad, frustrated, etc. You can't ask them to feel differently. You can't say, "Don't feel this way!" They have the right to feel what they feel, including being disappointed or offended, and the objective truth is not relevant in this. You have to start where they are at the moment – their feelings. If that's how they feel, this is how it is. It's their lived experience, their feeling, and you can't tell them how to feel. But

## TAKING RESPONSIBILITY I

you can understand them. To do this, you first need to listen, understand the other person's feelings, and only then explain your intentions in a way that allows them to understand your feelings and situation as well. You should always check your assumptions, ask questions and talk to the other if you sense a new tension.

The spoken word leaves a mark. You need to learn to analyse the impact of your own actions on others and to understand how others' actions may be rooted in intentions.

## 7. GENERAL DISCUSSION (10 MIN)

**Ask the class** (choose some students)



- ❖ Does anyone want to share their story?
- ❖ What was Alex's story in your group?
- ❖ How did Fred feel?

## 8. SUMMARY (9 MIN)

So, today we talked about situations where people need to work together, but it goes wrong because the responsibilities are not shared equally, resulting in tensions and conflicts. I am glad that you came up with so many solutions and thoughts for this situation.

What is the most important thing you're taking away from this lesson?

If one person avoids their responsibility in a collaborative situation, others will be harmed and will no longer want to collaborate with them.

If you do not speak up about something that bothers you, the person not taking responsibility might not even be aware that something is wrong. All the while, they may have their own reason, their own story. Both sides must be heard. Explain your position and try to understand the other side.

Don't assume, ask!

To change the pattern, you need to talk about problems right away, not postpone it or avoid it. But how do you talk about the problem so as to avoid attacking the other and prevent a defensive reaction? That's what we're going to learn in the next lessons.

Whether the other person is willing to listen to you and whether you can change the situation depends on how you talk.

Next time, we will see how Alex and Fred's story continued and what to do in such situations.

## 9. HOMEWORK (1 MIN)

Think about a specific situation of your own and the person you would like to express your displeasure to. Write down the situation.

# TAKING RESPONSIBILITY



This educational video discusses a frequent situation in school life: the teacher assigns a task to a group or a pair, and the responsibility for the implementation is left to its members equally. Unfortunately it turns out that only one person does any work... This has now happened to Alex and Fred.

What to do if your partner fails to take responsibility and you have to do the task alone? Should you let your partner know about your displeasure and if so, how, without ruining the relationship? How to use I-messages in a situation where you want to give feedback to a friend without accusing or judging them?

The film consists of two parts. In the first, the situation unfolds in a way that is unfortunately quite common among both young people and adults alike: the problem is swept under the rug, everybody hopes that things will work out on their own and that perhaps things will go differently in the future. Unfortunately, the pattern tends to repeat itself... After the group work and discussions based on the first part of the film, the next lesson picks up the second part of the film, which focuses on resolving the situation and the skill of using I-messages. This part teaches how to deliver I-messages and give feedback in non-judgmental way. In order to highlight specific activities and techniques, notes naming the activity or communication technique will appear at the top of the respective frames, to which the teacher can pay special attention both during and after the film.

## TAKING RESPONSIBILITY II

# TAKING RESPONSIBILITY II

## KEY TERMS

- ❖ Taking responsibility in a cooperative situation
- ❖ The impact of your behaviour on others
- ❖ The impact of another person's behaviour on you
- ❖ Different perspectives
- ❖ Impact of the approach to communication
- ❖ I-messages



## TOOLBOX

I-MESSAGES



CARING



FACTS



PERSPECTIVE



LISTENING



## WHAT WE WON'T NEED:

ACCUSATIONS



JUDGEMENTS



## I. INTRODUCTION (5 MIN)

### A BRIEF RECAP OF THE PREVIOUS LESSON

*Tell the class:*

Last time, we watched a video about Fred and Alex who had to work together, but the responsibility wasn't shared equally. Today, we will continue with this topic.

*Note: In order to use the element of surprise and allow students to reach the solutions on their own during the discussion, we advise against mentioning the subject and purpose of the lesson in the introduction.*

## 2. VIDEO. PARTS II AND III. COMMENTS (20 MIN)

Some of you said that they had experienced a similar situation themselves, but did nothing about it. This happens relatively often in life. Why?

Sometimes

- ❖ it is to avoid a fight;
- ❖ it is more convenient;
- ❖ it is hoped that the situation will not recur;
- ❖ people just don't know how to say things that are awkward.

Now let's see what happens if Fred decides to do nothing.

### VIDEO. PART TWO

**Show the second part of the video "Taking responsibility" to the point where Fred gets in trouble again.**

**Explain:**

If the problem is not discussed, it will happen again sooner or later.

**Revisit the connection between the topic of assumptions covered in the previous lesson and the topic of this lesson.**

First, understand that each behaviour always has its reasons. And we shouldn't assume that we know them: we should ask what the reason really was.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY II

**PREPARATIONS**

- ❖ Prepare the video as well as some paper and markers for notes.

**NOTE:**

- ❖ Communication affects collaboration. If one person fails to take responsibility, the others will be harmed and will no longer want to cooperate with them.
- ❖ If you do not speak up about something bothering you, the person not taking responsibility might not even be aware something is wrong. All the while, they may have their own reasons, their own story. You need to listen to both sides, explain your position and try to understand the other.
- ❖ The problem must be discussed using I-messages to avoid attacking the other and prevent a defensive reaction.

**MY NOTES:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**LET'S RECALL THE SOLUTIONS FOUND IN THE PREVIOUS LESSON:**

- ❖ *For example: A possible solution suggested by the students (or, if it is not brought up, it can be suggested for discussion) is a proposal to have the teacher take part in forming groups. Students could ask the teacher to assign groups differently or let students choose their own partner(s): that way, groups of responsibility-takers would form, and the diligent ones would work together. What are the pros and cons of this approach? Discuss!*
- ❖ *Another option is friendly (unilateral) self-assertion. I understand that you are having a hard time, and so am I, and I can handle it, but how can we make sure that we both can "make it" through this situation?*
- ❖ *Each side should assert themselves gently and explain their perspective. For example, someone dodging responsibility may say: I feel like I just can't do it, but instead of me not doing it, can you help me get started with something (or what could I do regardless).*

**Tell the class:**

Let's look at the other solution for Alex and Fred's story. Some of you thought the boys should talk to each other. How, though? What do you think is important here? What should Fred keep in mind when talking? (To avoid attacking, insulting, judging, and to be sure to speak for himself).

Pay attention to how Fred does it.

**VIDEO. PART THREE**

**Play the third part of "Taking Responsibility", where Fred talks to Alex, to the end.**

**Ask the class:**



- ❖ How do you think Alex felt now?
- ❖ What did Fred do? How did Fred tell Alex about the situation?
  - Describes the situation non-judgementally, through facts.
  - Talks about himself and the feelings he experienced (without blaming the other).
  - Tells what he wants to happen in the future.
  - The boys reach a new agreement with each other.
- ❖ What was important in this conversation?

## TAKING RESPONSIBILITY II

### 3. DISCUSSION AND THEORY (10 MIN)

#### DESCRIBING FEELINGS

**Tell the class:**

Everyone has the right to their feelings and there is no such thing as wrong feelings. Other people's feelings cannot be condemned – they can be understood.



**Ask the class:**

- ❖ Name some feelings that may arise in such a situation.

#### USE OF I-MESSAGES

I-messages are a useful tool for resolving conflicts as well as for e.g. giving negative feedback (for example, the case of taking responsibility). I-messages are a way of communicating where one talks about their own thoughts, feelings, wishes and observed events. Blame, judgements and guessing at the other's thoughts or feelings are avoided. The name of the technique comes from the fact that in the case of I-messages, sentences often start with the words "I" or "my" (e.g., "I feel", "I mean", "I want", "I need": "I'm upset because...", "I was worried because...", etc.). However, not every sentence that begins with the word "I" is a true I-message. For example, there are many assumptions, judgements, and accusations in the phrase "I feel like you're careless because you never bother to arrive on time."

#### THE COMPONENTS OF I-MESSAGES

1. **Facts – non-judgemental observation.** A non-judgemental description of the situation based on facts, not assumptions
2. **Feelings.** Talking about your feelings
3. **Needs.** I will state my needs or describe the harm I have suffered in this situation
4. **What I want.** I will state what I would like to happen in this situation, and we will try to reach an agreement to use going forward.

P.S. Talk about yourself and don't blame the other. Blaming the other leads to a situation where the accused gets defensive (because they are being attacked). It is difficult to reach any agreements like that!

**NB! Emphasise:**

Taking responsibility starts with acknowledging the problem and talking to the other(s). When you talk, describe the situation non-judgementally, through I-messages.

### 4. GROUP WORK (15 MIN)

#### GROUP WORK IN CLASS (GROUPS OF 3–4)

We will learn to state our positions and use I-messages through the example of a personal problem. At home, we had to write down a specific case where we wanted to express our dissatisfaction to the other party involved. If you haven't done it, think of such a situation now.

## TAKING RESPONSIBILITY II

The task is to find your example and state your position to your partner. Use a real case from your life (if you can't find one, use the example case in the video).

Advanced: Try different approaches (using and not using I-messages). Ask your partner how they felt about each and what the difference was.

**Tell the class:**

In this lesson, we will use situations in our lives to state our positions to our partner as if they were the person who had failed to take responsibility. First, think how you're going to bring it up and how to ensure you'll do it non-judgementally and without resorting to attacks. Two group members will act out the discussion: one will express dissatisfaction, the other will listen and give feedback on the feelings and thoughts they had while listening. The third (and, if necessary, the fourth member) acts as an observer, providing feedback afterwards on whether the statement was made non-judgementally and without attacking and whether it used I-messages. Both speakers will also be able to give feedback on the task and their thoughts and feelings about it.

**THINK ABOUT:**

- ❖ How do I tell the other that I don't like having to do the work alone (non-judgementally)? Address your neighbour – they will listen and answer if necessary. The observer will check if I-messages were used and if the statement was done non-judgementally. They will take notes and give feedback. The group members will take turns, each member acting out each role.
- ❖ How the other party responds to say that you must be angry with me now, but I feel that I can't do this group task, I don't know how start, I don't know how to help.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND THEORY (13 MIN)

### DISCUSSION WITH THE CLASS: HOW DID STATING YOUR POSITION GO AND WHAT WAS HARD ABOUT IT.

**Ask the class:**

- ❖ What was hard about making your case?

**Tell the class:**

In order to stand up for yourself and change existing patterns, you need to talk about the problem right away. Whether the other person is willing to listen depends on how you speak.

To change existing patterns, you need to talk about problems right away, not postpone or avoid it. The key lies in using I-messages. Whether the other person is willing to listen and whether you can change the situation depends on how you talk. Sometimes, having the conversation leads you to realise that the problem did not exist in the first place or that it cannot be solved, but in most cases, problems can be solved by talking.

*This time, point out that repetitive patterns of behaviour form between two people, and you are always involved. So learn to observe how you contribute to a pattern of behaviour, allowing it to occur again (e.g., in Fred's case, he did the work himself, did not set rules, did not talk about the harm done or his feelings, did not bring it up). What can you do to prevent the situation from happening again?*

## TAKING RESPONSIBILITY II

---

### NOTE:

If you have decided to assert yourself, expect resistance. The other party may feel threatened and get defensive. This is normal. Take the time to listen to them and try to really understand. Listening to the other must be alternated with explaining one's own thoughts and feelings, until both parties feel that they have been understood. Only then can we move on to discussions and agreements on what to do instead or how to ensure that this does not happen again.

### THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PARTNER IS IMPORTANT

Try to listen to your partner with curiosity, try to genuinely hear what they're saying and express your concern for your cooperation and relationship. Try to understand their point of view and experience, and your own as well.

### I-MESSAGES

Remember to use I-messages, to talk about your thoughts and feelings, without judging the other party. Be sure to distinguish the facts of the situation from your own feelings or thoughts about it. Describe the situation dispassionately and without judgement, sticking to the facts. This can sometimes be difficult when "tempers run high". In this case, it can be wise to take a break to cool down and then keep the focus on the facts when beginning the conversation. When you are calm, it is easier to listen to your partner as well. Make short summaries and provide reflections on your partner's statements. If you feel that your conversation partner has become insurmountably defensive, ask how they feel, whether they're angry, or whether they want to continue the conversation right now (but don't let the conversation get pushed back indefinitely or avoided altogether; if necessary, arrange another time within the same week). Ask what you can do to make them feel better and not close up. Listen with an open mind, don't try to give advice to or lecture your partner. Reflect, rephrase. Treat the story as two persons' different views of the situation, not as a judgement on you or them. The success of the conversation depends on the willingness of both parties to listen, to be curious and caring.

**Note:** *We will continue to practice I-messages and reflection because a single lesson is not enough to master it.*

---

## 6. INDIVIDUAL WORK (7 MIN)

---

### WRITE DOWN

*(if the class is running late, it can also be left to do at home)*

- ❖ What helps you to take responsibility?
- ❖ What kind of rules or cooperation can help you?
- ❖ How can you help somebody else take responsibility?

---

## 7. SUMMARY (4 MIN)

---

### WHY HAVE WE DEDICATED SEVERAL LESSONS TO THIS TOPIC?

- ❖ Because often, people don't talk to each other when tensions arise, and problems tend to pile up.
- ❖ Communication affects collaboration. If one person fails to take responsibility, the others will be harmed and will no longer want to cooperate with them.

## TAKING RESPONSIBILITY II

---

- ❖ If you do not speak up about something bothering you, the person not taking responsibility might not even be aware this is the case. All the while, they may have their own reason, their own story. You need to listen to both sides, explain your position and try to understand the other. Taking responsibility starts with acknowledging the problem and telling the other about it.
- ❖ The spoken word (and deed) leaves a mark. You will also need to learn to analyse the impact of your own actions on others and to understand how others' actions may be rooted in intentions or motivations that we don't know about. You have to learn to consider things from multiple perspectives and to differentiate between your own and other people's experiences.
- ❖ To change existing patterns, you need to talk about problems right away, not postpone or avoid it. The problem must be discussed using I-messages to avoid attacking the other and prevent a defensive reaction.
- ❖ Whether the other person is willing to listen and whether you can change the situation depends on how you talk. Sometimes, having the conversation leads you to realise that the problem did not exist in the first place or that it cannot be solved, but in most cases, the problems are solved by talking.

*The key takeaway: if issues arise, talk to the other person. Use I-messages. Listen to the other.*

---

### 8. HOMEWORK (1 MIN)

*There are no homework assignments planned for this lesson, but if you want to, or if you missed something in the class, you can add it here or later.*

## I-MESSAGES

## I-MESSAGES

## KEY TERMS

- ❖ Different perspectives
- ❖ The components of I-messages
- ❖ I-messages



## TOOLBOX

I-MESSAGES



CARING



FACTS



PERSPECTIVE



LISTENING

WHAT WE WON'T NEED:

ACCUSATIONS



DEFENSIVENESS



JUDGEMENTS



## PREPARATIONS

- ❖ Prepare the worksheets and think through the group task.

## 1. INTRODUCTION (7 MIN)

We discussed I-messages in the previous lesson, but since this is a topic that cannot be mastered in a single lesson, let's cover it in more detail.

**Tell the class:**

Last time we found: in order to stand up for yourself and change existing patterns, you need to talk about the problem right away, and the way you speak determines whether or not the other person is open to listening to you. The key lies in using I-messages. Today, we will continue with the topic of I-messages.

## THE COMPONENTS OF I-MESSAGES:

1. **Facts – non-judgemental observation.** A non-judgemental description of the situation based on facts, not assumptions
2. **Feelings.** Talking about your feelings
3. **Needs.** I will state my needs or describe the harm I have suffered in this situation
4. **What I want.** I will state what I would like to happen in this situation, and we will try to reach an agreement to use going forward.

An effective I-message usually describes facts, feelings, needs, and what we want in the current situation. Today, we will take a closer look at each component of I-messages.

## 2. THEORY (2 MIN)

## 1. FACTS – NON-JUDGEMENTAL OBSERVATION

**Tell the class:**

When we want to explain our point of view to someone else, it is often necessary to describe an event that led to a conflict or left a negative feeling. When talking about external events, it is important to describe only the facts (what exactly happened, what we actually saw or heard) and to avoid adding our assumptions or judgements.

## 3. GENERAL DISCUSSION (8 MIN)

**Assignment for the whole class:** Choose a student. Take them outside the classroom and explain to them what you'd like them to do: enter the classroom, go in front of the class, take a chair, chuckle, pick up their phone, type a message on the phone, suddenly look at someone, drum their fingers against the chair, then suddenly



## I-MESSAGES

The following table gives some examples of judgement-based or opinion-based sentences. Discuss them with your partner and provide their factual equivalents stated as I-messages.



**Ask the class:**

- ❖ Why is this not a factual description?
- ❖ What would be a fact-based version?

Then have a general discussion with the entire class. Ask a few pairs for their answers and discuss them.

**Comment:**

It is often difficult to tell what the other actually did. It is important to notice and understand how to describe the facts correctly.

Here is a summary of this exercise as examples and comparisons.

After the pair task, hand out the table with the example sentences.

## 5. THEORY (5 MIN)

### 2. FEELINGS

Another component of I-messages is feelings. When describing a situation, it is also useful to describe the impact of that situation on you. Of course, this should also be done without blaming. Sometimes a situation can cause clear material damage or waste time (e.g., "You didn't do your part in the group work and didn't let me know. As a result, I got a bad grade as well / This means I didn't get enough sleep at night because I had to finish the assignment myself"). Often, however, the main harmful consequence or effect lies in negative feelings, so describing feelings is one of the central elements of I-messages.

In general, when we communicate with somebody else, we want the other person to understand our point of view and feelings. I-messages let us express our feelings without blaming the other (e.g. "you make me angry") or making assumptions about the other's thoughts and feelings (e.g. "you do not understand me"). These examples are stated as you-messages (the opposite of I-messages) and generally have an accusatory effect.

When describing feelings, it is important to stick to your own feelings. This means that you should be able to distinguish between your thoughts and your feelings. We often begin sentences with the words "I feel" without actually expressing feelings (Rosenberg, 2005). For example, "I feel like it's useless" or "I feel like you don't understand me" are really thoughts, not feelings. In these sentences, the words "I feel (like)" could be replaced by the words "I think". In general, feelings are not clearly expressed in sentences where the words "I feel" are followed by the word "like" or "that". Sentences that express actual feelings describe a specific emotion (e.g. "I'm disappointed" or "I'm upset").

A distinction should also be made between words that describe true feelings and those that describe how we think others behave or feel. For example, "I feel misunderstood" may seem like an expression of feelings at first glance, but it actually expresses how we interpret the behaviour of somebody else. The actual feeling behind this statement could be irritation, disappointment, sadness, discouragement, and so on.

## I-MESSAGES

**6. WORK IN PAIRS AND DISCUSSION (10 MIN)**

**Hand out the worksheets with three example sentences. Work in pairs:**

The following table again shows some example sentences where the feelings are not actually expressed. Discuss them with your partner and find alternative sentences that might express the speaker's feelings.

**Then have a general discussion with the entire class. Ask a few pairs for their answers and discuss them.**

**Ask the class:**

- ❖ Why isn't this sentence a description of feelings?
- ❖ What would be a feelings-based version?

**Finally, hand out the table with example sentences.**

**7. THEORY (5 MIN)****3. NEEDS**

Beyond expressing feelings, it is helpful to express the reasons for those feelings. It might seem that we have already done so when we described the facts or the situation that caused the feelings. In reality, however, this is not enough to describe the reasons you feel the way you do. Take, for example, the phrase Fred used in the clip about taking responsibility, where he felt that Alex had treated him unfairly: "I had to stay up late and so I was disappointed." Although this sentence describes the situation and the feeling, it suggests that Alex is fully responsible for Fred's feelings. However, a principle of I-messages is to take responsibility for one's own feelings and to realise that our feelings are generally related to our own unmet needs and desires. The other person's behaviour may trigger the feelings without being their real cause. Take, for example, the same situation where Alex has not done his part of the work. In this situation, Fred's disappointment is a logical reaction, but it is not the only one possible. Another student in the same situation may experience fear, thinking about how the group project grade may affect the summary grade, and yet another student may even feel happy or relieved, having suspected that the other might not do their part as thoroughly as this student did it. So our feelings do not result directly from the external situation, but from how we interpret a situation and what our needs and expectations are in that moment.

That is why I-messages involve the expression of needs. Our negative feelings often arise from unmet needs. Many different needs exist. Some universal needs are, for example, independence, acceptance, recognition, emotional closeness, security, a sense of meaning, physical well-being, etc. However, we often analyse and blame others rather than notice and articulate our needs. For example, when we say, "You don't understand me," we're actually saying that our need to be understood is not met. Therefore, it is important to justify your feelings in the I-message not by referring to other people's actions but by describing your own needs or expectations.

**8. WORK IN PAIRS AND DISCUSSION (10 MIN)**

**Hand out the worksheets with three example sentences. Work in pairs (10 min):**

The following table again shows some example sentences where the needs are not actually expressed.

## I-MESSAGES

Discuss them with your partner and find alternative sentences that might express the speaker's internal needs.

**Then have a general discussion with the entire class. Ask a few pairs for their answers and discuss them.**

**Ask the class:**

- ❖ Why isn't this a description of needs?
- ❖ What would be the needs-based version?

**Hand out the table with example sentences.**

## 9. THEORY (5 MIN)

### 4. WHAT I WANT

Through the first three components of the I-message, we have expressed what we experienced in a given situation, what we felt, and why. All this can help the other to better understand our position. In general, however, in conflicts or when providing negative feedback, we're looking for something to change as well as to be understood. If our needs are not met, we can ask for action to help meet them. The fourth part of the I-message is expressing our wishes, i.e. what we would like from the other person.

There are also some things to keep in mind when expressing your wishes and requests so that the other would receive them as well as possible and that change would actually take place. Firstly, it is important to make clear what we want, not what we do not want. Negative requests (such as "I don't want you to do this again") often provoke resistance and may not provide specific guidance for changing the behaviour in question. Requests should be made in the clearest and most positive way possible. For example, the request "I need you to respect my privacy" is somewhat vague and can provoke a protective reaction (such as "But I do!"), misunderstanding, or confusion about what behaviours need changing. A more specific request would be, for example, "I would like you to knock before entering my room." In addition, it is important not to make the other feel punished or accused if they do not do as requested. Requests should be made with consideration towards the needs of the other person, rather than trying to feel guilty or make demands (e.g. "You should comply with my request," "I have the right to ask you to do so," etc.).

## 10. WORK IN PAIRS AND DISCUSSION (10 MIN)

**Hand out the worksheets with three example sentences. Work in pairs (10 min):**

The following table again shows some example sentences where the requests are not actually expressed.

Discuss them with your partner and find alternative sentences that might express the speaker's wishes.

**Then have a general discussion with the entire class. Ask a few pairs for their answers and discuss them.**

**Ask the class:**

- ❖ Why isn't this a description of wishes?
- ❖ What would be the version describing wishes and desires?

I-MESSAGES

---

*Finally, hand out the table with example sentences.*

---

**11.SUMMARY (1 MIN)**

---

*Briefly summarise the lesson or ask students to name the most important points they learned or picked up from the lesson.*

## I-MESSAGES

### What are I-messages?

I-messages are a useful tool for resolving conflicts (e.g. conflicts with a parent or the story about disputing a grade in learning materials), but also for giving negative feedback (for example, the story about taking responsibility). The term was coined by the psychologist Thomas Gordon in the 1970s. Originally intended to help parents communicate with their children (Gordon, 1970), the effectiveness of I-messages soon led them to be widely taught in the context of relationships, leadership, and general communication and conflict situations.

I-messages are a way of communicating where one talks about their own thoughts, feelings, wishes and observed events. Blame, judgements and guessing at the other's thoughts or feelings are avoided. The name of the technique comes from the fact that in the case of I-messages, sentences often start with the words "I" or "my" (e.g., "I feel", "I mean", "I want", "I need": "I'm upset because...", "I was worried because...", etc.). However, not every sentence that begins with the word "I" is a true I-message. For example, there are many assumptions, judgements, and accusations in the phrase "I feel like you're careless because you never bother to arrive on time".

An effective I-message usually describes facts, feelings, needs, and what we want in the current situation (Rosenberg, 2005). Let's take a closer look at each component of I-messages.

### I. Facts – non-judgemental observation

When we want to explain our point of view to someone else, it is often necessary to describe an event that led to a conflict or left a negative feeling. When talking about external events, it is important to describe only the facts (what exactly happened, what we actually saw or heard) and to avoid adding our assumptions or judgements. The following table gives some examples of judgement-based or opinion-based sentences and their factual equivalents stated as I-messages.

Example sentence	Why isn't this a description of facts?	Factual alternative
"Martin got angry at me for no reason"	"For no reason" is an assumption. Martin may have had a reason. Similarly, "Martin got angry" is an assumption. Martin may have been feeling fear, sadness, disappointment, or something else entirely.	"Martin told me he was angry" or "Every time I tried to ask Martin something, he turned away and didn't answer."
"You didn't do your part of the group assignment and didn't even bother to let me know"	"Didn't bother" is a judgement, an assumption. We don't really know why the other didn't let us know.	"You didn't do your part of the group assignment and you didn't let me know."
"Every time I ask you to do something, you start complaining."	Both "every time" and "complaining" are judgements.	"Yesterday I asked you to help with the dishes and today I asked if you could go to the shop. Both times, you told me that you didn't like those tasks."

## TEACHER'S READING MATERIALS: I-MESSAGES

When describing a situation, it is also useful to describe the impact of that situation on you. Of course, this should also be done without blaming. Sometimes a situation can cause clear material damage or waste time (e.g., "You didn't do your part in the group work and didn't let me know. As a result, I got a bad grade as well / This means I didn't get enough sleep at night because I had to finish the assignment myself". Often, however, the main harmful consequence or effect lies in negative feelings, so describing feelings is one of the central elements of I-messages.

## 2. Feelings

In general, when we communicate with somebody else, we want the other person to understand our point of view and feelings. I-messages let us express our feelings without blaming the other (e.g. "you make me angry") or making assumptions about the other's thoughts and feelings (e.g. "you do not understand me"). These examples use you-messages and generally come across as accusatory (Kubany, Richard, Bauer & Muraoka, 1992a).

When describing feelings, it is important to stick to your own feelings. This means, among other things, that you should be able to distinguish between your thoughts and your feelings. We often begin sentences with the words "I feel" without actually expressing feelings (Rosenberg, 2005). For example, "I feel like it's useless" or "I feel like you don't understand me" are really thoughts, not feelings. In these sentences, the words "I feel (like)" could be replaced by the words "I think". In general, feelings are not clearly expressed in sentences where the words "I feel" are followed by the word "like" or "that". Sentences that express actual feelings describe a specific emotion (e.g. "I'm disappointed" or "I'm upset").

A distinction should also be made between words that describe true feelings and those that describe how we think others behave or feel. For example, "I feel misunderstood" may seem like an expression of feelings at first glance, but it actually expresses how we interpret the behaviour of somebody else. The actual feeling behind this statement could be irritation, disappointment, sadness, discouragement, and so on. The following table again provides some example sentences that do not actually express feelings and some alternatives.

Example sentence	Why isn't this a description of feelings?	Feelings-based alternative
"I feel like Martin hates me"	"Martin hates me" expresses what the speaker thinks Martin feels, rather than what the speaker feels.	"I'm sad" or "I feel anxious in Martin's presence"
"I feel betrayed"	"Betrayed" expresses how we interpret the actions of others. Betrayal can cause many different feelings.	"I'm disappointed" or "I'm confused"
"It seems to me that you're a manipulator"	This is a thought rather than a feeling. You might as well say, "I think you're a manipulator". Furthermore, the word "manipulator" is judgemental and accusatory.	"I'm upset" or "I'm feeling disturbed"

## 3. Needs

Beyond expressing feelings, it is helpful to express the reasons for those feelings. It might seem that we have already done so when we described the facts or the situation that caused the feelings. In reality, however, this is not enough to describe the reasons you feel the way you do. Take, for example, a sentence that Emily might try to use in the story of disputing her grade, where she feels that the teacher has graded her unfairly: "I got a "3" and so I was

## TEACHER'S READING MATERIALS: I-MESSAGES

disappointed." While this sentence describes the situation and the feeling, it suggests that the grade "3" given by the teacher is entirely responsible for the way Emily feels. However, a principle of I-messages is to take responsibility for one's own feelings and to realise that our feelings are generally related to our own unmet needs and desires (Rosenberg, 2005). The other person's behaviour may trigger the feelings without being their real cause. Take, for example, the same situation where a student receives a grade of "3". In this situation, disappointment is a logical reaction, but it is not the only one possible. Another student in the same situation may experience fear, thinking about how the grade may affect the summary grade, and yet another student may even feel happy or relieved, having feared an even worse grade. So our feelings do not result directly from the external situation, but from how we interpret a situation and what our needs and expectations are in that moment.

That is why I-messages involve the expression of needs. Our negative feelings often arise from unmet needs. Many different needs exist. Some universal needs are, for example, independence, acceptance, recognition, emotional closeness, security, a sense of meaning, physical well-being, etc. (Kinyon, Lasater & Stiles, 2015). However, we often analyse and blame others rather than notice and articulate our needs. For example, when we say, "You don't understand me," we're actually saying that our need to be understood is not met. Therefore, it is important to justify your feelings in the I-message not by referring to other people's actions but by describing your own needs or expectations.

Example sentence	Why isn't this a description of needs?	Needs-based alternative
"I'm sad when Martin yells at me"	The real causes of sadness are not described in this sentence.	"I'm sad when Martin yells at me because I care about Martin's opinion and I want him to recognise me as a friend."
"I feel disappointed because you didn't do your part in the group assignment and didn't let me know."	This sentence grounds the feeling in the other person's actions, not the speaker's own needs or expectations	"You didn't do your part in the group assignment and you didn't let me know. I feel disappointed because I wanted the work to be evenly distributed."
"Yesterday I asked you to help with the dishes and today I asked if you could go to the shop. Both times, you told me that you didn't like those tasks, which irritated me."	This sentence grounds the feeling in the other person's actions, not the speaker's own needs or expectations	"Yesterday I asked you to help with the dishes and today I asked if you could go to the shop. Both times, you told me that you didn't like those tasks. I felt irritated because I need support, but I felt opposed."

#### 4. What I want

Through the first three components of the I-message, we have expressed what we experienced in a given situation, what we felt, and why. All this can help the other to better understand our position. In general, however, in conflicts or when providing negative feedback, we're looking for something to change as well as to be understood. If our needs are not met, we can ask for action to help meet them. The fourth part of the I-message is expressing our wishes, i.e. what we would like from the other person.

There are also some things to keep in mind when expressing your wishes and requests so that the other would receive them as well as possible and that change would actually take place. Firstly, it is important to make clear what we want, not what we do not want. Negative requests (such as "I don't want you to do this again") often provoke resistance and may not provide specific guidance for changing the behaviour in question. Requests should be made in

## TEACHER'S READING MATERIALS: I-MESSAGES

the clearest and most positive way possible. For example, the request "I need you to respect my privacy" is somewhat vague and can provoke a protective reaction (such as "But I do!"), misunderstanding, or confusion about what behaviours need changing. A more specific request would be, for example, "I would like you to knock before entering my room." In addition, it is important not to make the other feel punished or accused if they do not do as requested. Requests should be made with consideration towards the needs of the other person, rather than trying to feel guilty or make demands (eg, "You should comply with my request," "I have the right to ask you to do so," etc.).

Example sentence	Why isn't this a description of wishes?	Wish-based alternative
"I want Martin to not ignore me"	This sentence expresses what the speaker does not want, not what they want.	"I want Martin to tell me how he feels about my actions and what he thinks I could do differently."
"You should have done your part in the group assignment"	First of all, this sentence is about the past, which can no longer be changed. Second, it is a demand ("you should"), not a request.	"I would like you to ask me for help with the next assignment if you feel that you won't be able to complete your part on time."
"I'd like you to help me more with household chores"	"More" is vague and does not communicate any specific actions.	"I'd like you to do the dishes every Monday and Wednesday"

### The effectiveness of I-messages

How do we know that I-messages work? Why are they so effective?

In a conflict situation, the course of the conversation depends very much on the style of communication with which the conversation begins (Drake & Donohue, 1996). In communication, the *norm of reciprocity* usually applies, i.e. people's tendency to respond to another person's behaviour or communication style with similar behaviour (Park & Antonioni, 2007). Aggression provokes more aggression. An offensive communication style can also provoke a defensive reaction in the listener. There are various defensive reactions: for example, a person can respond with sarcasm, launch a counter-offensive, justify their behaviour, deny criticism or retreat and avoid further communication (Lane, 2016). The use of I-messages avoids the other party feeling attacked or accused. It is clear that the speaker is describing their own thoughts and feelings, not necessarily an objective truth. This communication style helps to avoid a defensive reaction, and the communication partner is more likely to respond calmly as well.

The effectiveness of I-messages has been tested in experiments where participants were asked to imagine a conflict situation in which their partner responds with a sentence provided by the experiment leader (e.g., Kubany, Richard, Bauer, & Muraoka, 1992a). The sentences provided used either I-messages or you-messages. After reading each sentence, participants were asked to evaluate the emotions that the sentence evoked and to imagine what they would do next in a conflict situation. It turned out that sentences phrased as I-messages evoked less negative emotions and more compassion. The same result has been found in studies with adolescents (Kubany, Richard, Bauer, & Muraoka, 1992b), married couples (Kubany, Bauer, Muraoka et al., 1995), and students (Kubany, Bauer, Pangilinan et al., 1995). The use of I-messages in real relationships has also been measured, finding that couples who used more I-messages and fewer you-messages were able to solve problems better and were generally more satisfied with the relationship (Simmons, Gordon & Chambless, 2005).

## TEACHER'S READING MATERIALS: I-MESSAGES

**Are I-messages enough?**

I-messages thus provide a useful tool for explaining one's point of view without blaming or attacking the other party. However, in addition to the principles of I-messages described above, some other things should be kept in mind in order to deal effectively with complex communication situations.

**1. Tone and body language**

There is more to any communication than just words. The tone of voice, body language, and facial expressions also send information about our feelings or thoughts to the other (Mehrabian, 1972). If we want the other person to understand us as well as possible, all these aspects should send the same message. The same applies to I-messages. For the previous sentences using I-messages, how we say them also matters. Even perfectly worded I-messages miss their mark if we state them, for example, with a voice dripping with irony, shouting or an accusing expression. For I-messages, it is important to maintain a calm and caring tone in order to reduce any negative emotions in the conversation partner. Of course, this may not be easy in situations where emotions seem to be about to "boil over" and it is difficult to stay calm. In such moments, it can be helpful to take time to calm down and come back to the problem later, when ready to discuss different perspectives (Darrington & Brower, 2012).

**2. Know yourself**

In order to be able to explain your point of view, you need to understand it. However, this may not always be easy or straightforward. For example, to express our feelings, we must first understand exactly what we feel. Articulating your feelings can be hard. Sometimes, we may think we know what we are feeling, but in fact, we don't really fully understand our emotions. For example, anger can conceal other emotions, such as frustration, disappointment, fear, etc. In order to express our needs and wishes, we often need to figure out the need behind our feelings or what we really want from the situation. For example, let's take a situation where our partner has not done their share in the group assignment. Initially, we may feel angry and believe that we want the teacher to punish our careless group mate with a bad grade. But would this outcome really make us feel better? Maybe we are actually feeling disappointed and confused and want to understand why our partner acted this way? Or maybe what we really feel is fear that a similar situation will happen again, and we would like some reassurance that things will turn out better next time? Understanding our true emotions, needs, and desires allows us to give both our partner and ourselves better information about the real nature of the problem and the best way to resolve it. Therefore, it is useful to take time to understand yourself before starting a difficult conversation (Darrington & Brower, 2012). We will talk about self-analysis in self-management lessons.

**3. The perspective of the other**

So far, our main focus has been on explaining our point of view to others. This is obviously an important skill, but it is just as important to remember that all communication has two sides. If we want our conversation partner to understand our position, we must be open to hearing out their point of view. This is the only way we can ensure mutual understanding and resolve the situation to the satisfaction of all (Todd & Galinsky, 2014). I-messages are most effective when they are used not only to express your own feelings and thoughts, but also to prove you understand the other person's feelings and thoughts (Bippus & Young, 2005). Therefore, our attitude is key to complex communication situations. Instead of focusing only on expressing and defending our own position, we should be prepared to listen to the other person and try to understand their perspective, even if we do not agree with it. Listening and reflection skills, which are covered in depth in the lessons on listening, are crucial to making the other person feel that we are making an effort to understand them.

## TEACHER'S READING MATERIALS: I-MESSAGES

**References:**

- Bippus, A. M., & Young, S. L. (2005). Owning your emotions: Reactions to expressions of self-versus other-attributed positive and negative emotions. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 33(1), 26-45.
- Darrington, J., & Brower, N. (2012). Effective communication skills: "I" messages and beyond.
- Drake, L. E., & Donohue, W. A. (1996). Communicative framing theory in conflict resolution. *Communication research*, 23(3), 297-322.
- Gordon, T. (1970). Parent effectiveness training: The "no-lose" program for raising responsible children.
- Kinyon, J., Lasater, I. & Stiles, J. (2015). *From Conflict To Connection: Transforming Difficult Conversations Into Peaceful Resolutions*
- Kubany, E. S., Bauer, G. B., Muraoka, M. Y., Richard, D. C., & Read, P. (1995). Impact of labeled anger and blame in intimate relationships. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 14(1), 53-60.
- Kubany, E. S., Bauer, G. B., Pangilinan, M. E., Muraoka, M. Y., & Enriquez, V. G. (1995). Impact of labeled anger and blame in intimate relationships: Cross-cultural extension of findings. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 26(1), 65-83.
- Kubany, E. S., Richard, D. C., Bauer, G. B., & Muraoka, M. Y. (1992). Verbalized anger and accusatory "you" messages as cues for anger and antagonism among adolescents. *Adolescence*, 27(107), 505.
- Kubany, E. S., Richard, D. C., Bauer, G. B., & Muraoka, M. Y. (1992). Impact of assertive and accusatory communication of distress and anger: A verbal component analysis. *Aggressive Behavior*, 18(5), 337-347.
- Lane, S. D. (2016). *Interpersonal communication: Competence and contexts*. Routledge.
- Mehrabian, A. (1972). *Silent messages: Implicit communication of emotions and attitudes*.
- Park, H., & Antonioni, D. (2007). Personality, reciprocity, and strength of conflict resolution strategy. *Journal of research in personality*, 41(1), 110-125.
- Rosenberg, M. B. (2005). *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*
- Simmons, R. A., Gordon, P. C., & Chambless, D. L. (2005). Pronouns in marital interaction: What do "you" and "I" say about marital health?. *Psychological science*, 16(12), 932-936.
- Todd, A. R., & Galinsky, A. D. (2014). Perspective-taking as a strategy for improving intergroup relations: Evidence, mechanisms, and qualifications. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 8(7), 374-387.

## COMPONENTS OF USING I-MESSAGES

### Facts – non-judgemental observation

When we want to explain our point of view to someone else, it is often necessary to describe an event that led to a conflict or left a negative feeling. When talking about external events, it is important to describe only the facts (what exactly happened, what we actually saw or heard) and to avoid adding our assumptions or judgements. **The following table gives some examples of judgement-based or opinion-based sentences. Discuss them with your partner and provide their factual equivalents stated as I-messages.**

Example sentence	Why isn't this a description of facts?	Factual alternative
"Martin got angry at me for no reason"		
"You didn't do your part of the group assignment and didn't even bother to let me know"		
"Every time I ask you to do something, you start complaining."		

---

WORKSHEET: I-MESSAGES

---

# COMPONENTS OF USING I-MESSAGES

## Feelings

In general, when we communicate with somebody else, we want the other person to understand our point of view and feelings. I-messages let us express our feelings without blaming the other (e.g. "you make me angry") or making assumptions about the other's thoughts and feelings (e.g. "you do not understand me"). **These examples are stated as you-messages (the opposite of I-messages) and generally have an accusatory effect. Discuss them with your partner and find alternative sentences that might express the speaker's feelings.**

Example sentence	Why isn't this a description of feelings?	Feelings-based alternative
"I feel like Martin hates me"		
"I feel betrayed"		
"It seems to me that you're a manipulator"		

---

WORKSHEET: I-MESSAGES

---

# COMPONENTS OF USING I-MESSAGES

## Needs

Our negative feelings often arise from unmet needs. Many different needs exist. Some universal needs are, for example, independence, acceptance, recognition, emotional closeness, security, a sense of meaning, physical well-being, etc. However, we often analyse and blame others rather than notice and articulate our needs. For example, when we say, "You don't understand me," we're actually saying that our need to be understood is not met. Therefore, it is important to justify your feelings in the I-message not by referring to other people's actions but by describing your own needs or expectations. **The following table again shows some example sentences where the needs are not actually expressed. Discuss them with your partner and find alternative sentences that might express the speaker's internal needs.**

Example sentence	Why isn't this a description of needs?	Needs-based alternative
"I'm sad when Martin yells at me"		
"I feel disappointed because you didn't do your part in the group assignment and didn't let me know."		
"Yesterday I asked you to help with the dishes and today I asked if you could go to the shop. Both times, you told me that you didn't like those tasks, which irritated me."		

---

WORKSHEET: I-MESSAGES

---

# COMPONENTS OF USING I-MESSAGES

## What I want

There are also some things to keep in mind when expressing your wishes and requests so that the other would receive them as well as possible and that change would actually take place. Firstly, it is important to make clear what we want, not what we do not want. Negative requests (such as "I don't want you to do this again") often provoke resistance and may not provide specific guidance for changing the behaviour in question. Requests should be made in the clearest and most positive way possible. For example, the request "I need you to respect my privacy" is somewhat vague and can provoke a protective reaction (such as "But I do!"), misunderstanding, or confusion about what behaviours need changing. A more specific request would be, for example, "I would like you to knock before entering my room." In addition, it is important not to make the other feel punished or accused if they do not do as requested. Requests should be made with consideration towards the needs of the other person, rather than trying to feel guilty or make demands (eg, "You should comply with my request," "I have the right to ask you to do so," etc.). **The following table again shows some example sentences where the requests are not actually expressed. Discuss them with your partner and find alternative sentences that might express the speaker's wishes.**

Example sentence	Why isn't this a description of wishes?	Wish-based alternative
"I want Martin to not ignore me"		
"You should have done your part in the group assignment"		
"I'd like you to help me more with household chores"		

# COMPONENTS OF USING I-MESSAGES

## Facts – non-judgemental observation

I-messages are a way of communicating where one talks about their own thoughts, feelings, wishes and observed events. Blame, judgements and guessing at the other's thoughts or feelings are avoided. The name of the technique comes from the fact that in the case of I-messages, sentences often start with the words "I" or "my" (e.g., "I feel", "I mean", "I want", "I need"). "I'm upset because...", "I was worried because...", etc.). However, not every sentence that begins with the word "I" is a true I-message. For example, there are many assumptions, judgements, and accusations in the phrase "I feel like you're careless because you never bother to arrive on time."

The following table gives some examples of judgement-based or opinion-based sentences and their factual equivalents stated as I-messages.

Example sentence	Why isn't this a description of facts?	Factual alternative
"Martin got angry at me for no reason"	"For no reason" is an assumption. Martin may have had a reason. Similarly, "Martin got angry" is an assumption. Martin may have been feeling fear, sadness, disappointment, or something else entirely.	"Martin told me he was angry" or "Every time I tried to ask Martin something, he turned away and didn't answer."
"You didn't do your part of the group assignment and didn't even bother to let me know"	"Didn't bother" is a judgement, an assumption. We don't really know why the other didn't let us know.	"You didn't do your part of the group assignment and you didn't let me know."
"Every time I ask you to do something, you start complaining."	Both "every time" and "complaining" are judgements	"Yesterday I asked you to help with the dishes and today I asked if you could go to the shop. Both times, you told me that you didn't like those tasks."

---

## WORKSHEET: I-MESSAGES

---

# COMPONENTS OF USING I-MESSAGES

### Feelings

When describing a situation, it is also useful to describe the impact of that situation on you. Of course, this should also be done without blaming. Sometimes a situation can cause clear material damage or waste time (e.g., "You didn't do your part in the group work and didn't let me know. As a result, I got a bad grade as well / This means I didn't get enough sleep at night because I had to finish the assignment myself". Often, however, the main harmful consequence or effect lies in negative feelings, so describing feelings is one of the central elements of I-messages.

When describing feelings, it is important to stick to your own feelings. This means, among other things, that you should be able to distinguish between your thoughts and your feelings. We often begin sentences with the words "I feel" without actually expressing feelings (Rosenberg, 2005). For example, "I feel like it's useless" or "I feel like you don't understand me" are really thoughts, not feelings. In these sentences, the words "I feel (like)" could be replaced by the words "I think". In general, feelings are not clearly expressed in sentences where the words "I feel" are followed by the word "like" or "that". Sentences that express actual feelings describe a specific emotion (e.g. "I'm disappointed" or "I'm upset").

The following table provides some example sentences that do not actually express feelings and some **alternatives**.

Example sentence	Why isn't this a description of feelings?	Feelings-based alternative
"I feel like Martin hates me"	"Martin hates me" expresses what the speaker thinks Martin feels, rather than what the speaker feels.	"I'm sad" or "I feel anxious in Martin's presence"
"I feel betrayed"	"Betrayed" expresses more closely how we interpret the actions of others. Betrayal can cause many different feelings.	"I'm disappointed" or "I'm confused"
"It seems to me that you're a manipulator"	This is a thought rather than a feeling. You might as well say, "I think you're a manipulator". Furthermore, the word "manipulator" is judgemental and accusatory.	"I'm upset" or "I'm feeling disturbed"

# COMPONENTS OF USING I-MESSAGES

## Needs

Beyond expressing feelings, it is helpful to express the reasons for those feelings. It might seem that we have already done so when we described the facts or the situation that caused the feelings. In reality, however, this is not enough to describe the reasons you feel the way you do. However, a principle of I-messages is to take responsibility for one's own feelings and to realise that our feelings are generally related to our own unmet needs and desires. The other person's behaviour may trigger the feelings without being their real cause. **So our feelings do not result directly from the external situation, but from how we interpret a situation and what our needs and expectations are in that moment.**

Example sentence	Why isn't this a description of needs?	Needs-based alternative
"I'm sad when Martin yells at me"	The real causes of sadness are not described in this sentence.	"I'm sad when Martin yells at me because I care about Martin's opinion and I want him to recognise me as a friend."
"I feel disappointed because you didn't do your part in the group assignment and didn't let me know."	This sentence grounds the feeling in the other person's actions, not the speaker's own needs or expectations	"You didn't do your part in the group assignment and you didn't let me know. I feel disappointed because I wanted the work to be evenly distributed."
"Yesterday I asked you to help with the dishes and today I asked if you could go to the shop. Both times, you told me that you didn't like those tasks, which irritated me."	This sentence grounds the feeling in the other person's actions, not the speaker's own needs or expectations	"Yesterday I asked you to help with the dishes and today I asked if you could go to the shop. Both times, you told me that you didn't like those tasks. I felt irritated because I need support, but I felt opposed."

---

## WORKSHEET: I-MESSAGES

---

# COMPONENTS OF USING I-MESSAGES

### What I want

Through the first three components of the I-message, we have expressed what we experienced in a given situation, what we felt, and why. All this can help the other to better understand our position. In general, however, in conflicts or when providing negative feedback, we're looking for something to change as well as to be understood. If our needs are not met, we can ask for action to help meet them. **The fourth part of the I-message is expressing our wishes, i.e. what we would like from the other person.**

Example sentence	Why isn't this a description of wishes?	Wish-based alternative
"I want Martin to not ignore me"	This sentence expresses what the speaker does not want, not what they want.	"I want Martin to tell me how he feels about my actions and what he thinks I could do differently."
"You should have done your part in the group assignment"	First of all, this sentence is about the past, which can no longer be changed. Second, it is a demand ("you should"), not a request.	"I would like you to ask me for help with the next assignment if you feel that you won't be able to complete your part on time."
"I'd like you to help me more with household chores"	"More" is vague and does not communicate any specific actions.	"I'd like you to do the dishes every Monday and Wednesday"

## NEEDS: MINE AND OTHERS'

# NEEDS: MINE AND OTHERS'

## KEY TERMS

- ❖ Different perspectives
- ❖ Needs
- ❖ I-messages



## TOOLBOX

I-MESSAGES



CARING



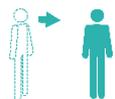
PERSPECTIVE



IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS



OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE



LISTENING



## PREPARATIONS

- ❖ Prepare the worksheets and think through the group task.

## 1. INTRODUCTION (3 MIN)

Today we will be talking about understanding the points of view and needs of others, as well as understanding and expressing your own needs. Our negative feelings often arise from unmet needs, and expressing needs is part of I-messages.

## 2. THEORY (5 MIN)

### THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE OTHER

So far, our main focus has been on explaining our point of view to others. This is obviously an important skill, but it is just as important to remember that all communication has two sides. If we want our conversation partner to understand our position, we must be open to hearing out their point of view. This is the only way we can ensure mutual understanding and resolve the situation to the satisfaction of all. I-messages are most effective when they are used not only to express your own feelings and thoughts, but also to prove you understand the other person's feelings and thoughts. Therefore, our attitude is key to complex communication situations. Instead of focusing only on expressing and defending our own position, we should be prepared to listen to the other person and try to understand their perspective, even if we do not agree with it. Listening and reflection skills, which we will cover in depth later on, are crucial to making the other person feel that we are making an effort to understand them. It is also important to understand the other person's needs.

## 3. THEORY OF NEEDS (5 MIN)

### Explain the topic:

Our negative feelings often arise from unmet needs. Many different needs exist. Some universal needs are, for example, independence, acceptance, recognition, emotional closeness, security, a sense of meaning, physical well-being, etc. However, people often analyse and blame others rather than notice and articulate their needs. When we express our needs through judgements and interpretations, others are likely to feel criticised and get defensive or launch a counter-attack. Thus, when someone communicates negatively, it is more useful to focus on the feelings and needs of both parties instead of blaming yourself or the other (M. B. Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*).



## NEEDS: MINE AND OTHERS'

to talk through this together, but it didn't turn out this way. I was disappointed in myself because I want to do better and I want to see myself as someone who handles situations well. So in this situation, my need for justice and my image of myself as a competent person were probably damaged. I got scared because I felt helpless and I don't want to feel that way about myself. That's why I got upset."

Once a person has understood themselves (their needs and feelings), they will also have a better understanding of what the situation might look like from another person's point of view and what their feelings and needs might be. (The surest way is to ask them, but in the beginning, and to develop empathy, it is good to practice imagining yourself in their stead). E.g.: "How did Alex feel? What could their needs have been?"

***After students have carried out the same analysis of their own conflict situations using the chairs (whereas each person's partner(s) verify they've done all chairs correctly), the task can be summarised and the outcome discussed.***

## 5. THEORY: KNOW YOURSELF (5 MIN)

In order to be able to explain your point of view, you need to understand it. However, this may not always be easy or straightforward. For example, to express our feelings, we must first understand exactly what we feel. Articulating your feelings can be hard. Sometimes, we may think we know what we are feeling, but in fact, we don't really fully understand our emotions. For example, anger can conceal other emotions, such as frustration, disappointment, fear, etc. In order to express our needs and wishes, we often need to figure out the need behind our feelings or what we really want from the situation. For example, let's take a situation where our partner has not done their share in the group assignment. Initially, we may feel angry and believe that we want the teacher to punish our careless group mate with a bad grade. But would this outcome really make us feel better? Maybe we are actually feeling disappointed and confused and want to understand why our partner acted this way? Or maybe what we really feel is fear that a similar situation will happen again, and we would like some reassurance that things will turn out better next time? Understanding our true emotions, needs, and desires allows us to give both our partner and ourselves better information about the real nature of the problem and the best way to resolve it. Therefore, before you initiate a difficult conversation, it is useful to take the time to understand your own position. We will talk about self-analysis in self-management lessons.

## 6. SUMMARY (5 MIN)

### SUMMARY

***Briefly summarise the lesson or ask students to name the most important points they learned or picked up from the lesson.***

## 7. OPTIONAL: GROUP WORK (12 MIN)

***Any extra time can be used to practice I-messages (repeating the group work in Taking Responsibility II).***

### GROUP WORK IN CLASS (GROUPS OF 3–4)

We will learn to state our positions and use I-messages through the example of a personal problem. At home, we had to write down a specific case where we wanted to express our dissatisfaction to the other party involved. If you haven't done it, think of such a situation now.

*The task is to find your example and state your position to your partner. Use a real case from your life (if you can't find one, use the example case in the video).*

NEEDS: MINE AND OTHERS'

---

*Advanced: Try different approaches (using and not using I-messages). Ask your partner how they felt about each and what the difference was.*

**Tell the class:**

In this lesson, we will pick situations in our lives and state our positions to our partner as if they were the person who had failed to take responsibility. First, think through how you're going to bring it up and how to ensure you'll do it non-judgementally and without resorting to attacks. Two group members will act out the discussion: one will express dissatisfaction, the other will listen and give feedback on the feelings and thoughts they had while listening. The third (and, if necessary, the fourth member) acts as an observer, providing feedback afterwards on whether the statement was made non-judgementally, without attacking and whether it used I-messages. Both speakers will also be able to give feedback on the task and their thoughts and feelings about it.

**THINK ABOUT:**

- ❖ How do I tell the other that I don't like having to do the work alone (non-judgementally)? Address your neighbour – they will listen and answer if necessary. The observer will check if I-messages were used and if the statement was done non-judgementally. They will take notes and give feedback. The group members will take turns, each member acting out each role.
- ❖ How the other party responds to say that you must be angry with me now, but I feel that I can't do this group task, I don't know how start, I don't know how to help.

**JACKAL EARS OUT**

**JACKAL EARS IN**

**GIRAFFE EARS IN**  
**My feelings and needs**

**GIRAFFE EARS OUT**

**The other person's  
needs**

---

 RULES OF COOPERATION
 

---



---

 RULES OF COOPERATION
 

---



---

 KEY TERMS
 

---

- ❖ Taking responsibility in a cooperative situation
  - ❖ Rules of cooperation
- 




---

 TOOLBOX
 

---

I-MESSAGES



CARING



FACTS



PERSPECTIVE



LISTENING




---

 PREPARATIONS
 

---

- ❖ You will need large sheets of paper, drawing or gluing tools for group work, paper and markers for notes.
- 

---

 1. INTRODUCTION (2 MIN)
 

---

**GIVE A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE PREVIOUS LESSONS AND SET A GOAL FOR THE LESSON.**
**Tell the class:**

In the previous classes, we talked about taking responsibility and we watched a video clip about Fred and Alex who had to do an assignment together. This comes up often in your own schoolwork, so today we will focus on the rules of cooperation in group work (and work in pairs). *Next time, when doing homework or a project together, everybody will benefit from remembering this topic.*

---



---

 2. GROUP WORK AGREEING ON RULES (35 MIN)
 

---

**Divide the students into pairs or groups of three. Students must give a free-form presentation answering the following question: "What are the rules or agreements that we consider important when working on a project?"**

*The primary goal is to let students experience a group work situation and to use the skills learned in previous lessons in the (communication) situations that arise in the context of group work.*

**Tell the class:**

I've split you into pairs or groups of three. Your task is to prepare a presentation with your partner or your group, answering the following key question: "What are our rules or agreements when working on a project?"

You need to give your presentation a title (e.g. "Our rules of cooperation", etc.) and agree on how to make the presentation. It can take the form of a list of rules, a drawing, a poem, a collage, a video, a sound recording, etc.

**GROUPS OF 2-5 MEMBERS WILL PREPARE A PRESENTATION BY WORKING TOGETHER TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

- ❖ What are the rules agreed with our class, group or partner for collaborating on projects?
- ❖ What should the whole process look like and how can avoidance of responsibility and other possible issues be avoided? Example: use a specific collaboration project done



RULES OF COOPERATION

---

---

#### 4. SUMMARY (3 MIN)

---

*Summarise the work, thank the students for their contribution, and express the hope that in the future, they will be able to cope well with situations where responsibilities need to be shared.*

## HANDLING DISSENT I. DEFENSIVENESS

# HANDLING DISSENT I. DEFENSIVENESS

## KEY TERMS

- ❖ Defensive reaction
- ❖ Attack in communication
- ❖ Avoidance of accusations
- ❖ I-messages
- ❖ Needs



## TOOLBOX

I-MESSAGES



FACTS



PERSPECTIVE



NOTICING FEELINGS



CARING



IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS



OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE



WHAT WE WON'T NEED:

ACCUSATIONS



DEFENSIVENESS



JUDGEMENTS



## 1. INTRODUCTION (3 MIN)

Today we are watching a video of a girl who is not happy with the grade the teacher gave her. Have you been in such a situation?

Please keep a close eye on the situation, what is happening and why. After that, I will ask you questions based on what you saw.

## 2. VIDEO CLIP "DISPUTING A GRADE" (3 MIN)

### PART ONE OF THE VIDEO CLIP

*Show the first part of the video "Disputing a grade" (until Emily finishes talking to the teacher for the first time and leaves)*

## 3. DISCUSSION (10 MIN)

### GROUP DISCUSSION IN GROUPS OF 2 TO 4.

- ❖ Let's stop the video here. What did you see and why did this situation come to be?
- ❖ Have you experienced similar situations yourself? Share with your deskmate or group.
- ❖ Tell them about how you felt and what you did in your situation.
- ❖ Back to the clip. What might each party have felt?
- ❖ Is there anything that could be done at all?
- ❖ How do you think her words affected the teacher?

**Ask the class** (choose some students)



- ❖ Have you been in such a situation? If so, what have you done in such situations? If nothing, why not?
- ❖ What do you think Emily felt? How about the teacher?

## 4. COMMENT (10 MIN)

### THEORY OF ATTACK AND DEFENSIVENESS

HANDLING DISSENT I. DEFENSIVENESS

PREPARATIONS

- ❖ Watch the video in advance.
- ❖ Have the film "Disputing a grade" ready to play.
- ❖ Prepare to show the clip in class. You'll need a computer, a screen and speakers. Make sure the equipment works before the class begins.

NOTE:

- ❖ Aggression creates aggression in return. Attacks can cause the other to get defensive.
- ❖ People who are feeling defensive are not ready to listen: they are busy dealing with emotions of their own.
- ❖ The problem must be discussed using I-messages to avoid attacking the other and prevent a defensive reaction.

MY NOTES:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

When a communication comes across as an attack, it can provoke a defensive reaction in the listener. There are various defensive reactions: for example, a person can respond with sarcasm, launch a counter-offensive, justify their behaviour, deny criticism or retreat and avoid further communication (S. D. Lane, "Interpersonal Communication: Competence and Contexts"). In the videos, for example, the teacher denies Emily's accusations ("I definitely didn't explain confusingly") and ends the conversation ("now go home... I don't need to be listening to your accusations"). Defensive reactions arise to protect some part of a person's self-image or self-esteem that they believe to be true (e.g. "I'm a good teacher," "I'm fair.") If the accusations challenge those beliefs and needs, the person may feel attacked (D. Soules, "Defensiveness: Addressing Barriers to Communication").



NB!

Note that when a person feels attacked, they start to defend themselves and it is difficult for them to understand you when they are caught in the emotion.

It is important to understand that people perceive what you say differently and can sometimes feel attacked, even if you feel that you have not insulted anyone.

5. INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP WORK (15 MIN)

Individual work.

Think of two situations where you experienced a defensive reaction from your conversation partner (or yourself). Write down the situations. Formulate and write down two sentences using I-messages to address your partner with.

**Group work:** In groups of three, try out the sentences. One expresses their thoughts and feelings through I-messages, pretending to be talking to the other person who was involved in their situation. The other listens and tries to figure out what reactions these sentences might provoke. The third acts as the observer and gives feedback on whether I-messages were used correctly, what their impact was, and what the statements seemed like to a bystander. Feedback is also provided by the person doing the addressing (how did it feel?) and the one doing the listening. Then, switch roles. Finally, discuss your thoughts and experiences on the topic.

6. GENERAL DISCUSSION (3 MIN)

---

## HANDLING DISSENT I. DEFENSIVENESS

---

How did it go? What was difficult? How did the statements come across to different parties?

---

### 7. GROUP WORK (10 MIN)

---

Now, let's look at the situation to see what Emily's and the teacher's NEEDS might have been.

- ❖ What did Emily need? How did she want to feel?
- ❖ What might the teacher have needed? How would they want to see themselves as a teacher?

#### GROUP DISCUSSION IN GROUPS OF 2 TO 4.

*Divide the class into groups and go through the jackal and giraffe exercise from the perspective of Emily's and the teacher's needs.*

---

### 8. EXERCISE. JACKAL AND GIRAFFE (15 MIN)

---

Place 4 chairs in front of the class. Place signs describing the different perspectives in front of them: JACKAL EARS IN (chewing on yourself), JACKAL EARS OUT (chewing on the other or blaming the other party), GIRAFFE EARS IN or MY FEELINGS and NEEDS, GIRAFFE EARS OUT or THE FEELINGS AND NEEDS OF THE OTHER. If needed, the teacher can play out their own example in front of the class, then telling the students in pairs or groups of three to present their own examples (take 4 chairs, place signs in front of them or just remember which chair was which). As an alternative to the teacher's own example, you can use the case of Emily in the film. To illustrate the example, the teacher takes turns sitting on each chair and providing examples of the respective point of view. Then, it's the students' turn. E.g.: "Jackal ears in" means that Emily accuses herself: "Why didn't I work harder! I could have asked what exactly she meant by that question! Why didn't I ask? I always jump to conclusions too quickly, assuming I know what the question means! Why was I so stupid and didn't check it?" Etc. Jackal ears out means blaming the teacher: "Why did she have to give me a "3"! This is so unfair! She doesn't even really pay proper attention to our work! If she had compared my work with my deskmate's, she would have realised that mine was actually more accurate! Teachers are so unfair!" Etc. The giraffe view is a top-down view, a "bird's eye view", which shows more, including both your and others' needs. Therefore, in this situation, it is wise to assume the position of a spectator or bystander and look at the situation from the perspective of your own and the other party's needs. For Emily: "How did I feel in this situation? What did I need? What did I want? Do I want to have only "5s"? No, that's not it. Rather, I was disturbed by the feeling of injustice and deep down also because I really want to know this subject better, but this time it didn't go well. I was disappointed in myself because I want to do better and I want to see myself as someone who handles situations well. So in this situation, my need for justice and my image of myself as a competent person were probably damaged. I got scared because I felt helpless and I don't want to feel that way about myself. That's why I got upset and overreacted."

---

### 9. DISCUSSION WITH CLASS (5 MIN)

---

**GROUP DISCUSSION** about Emily and the teacher:

- ❖ What did you conclude?
- ❖ What were the needs of each party?

*Let's share the results of the exercise with the class.*

**Tell the class:**

## HANDLING DISSENT I. DEFENSIVENESS

---

People's behaviour is often driven by their needs. **Let's write the results on the board.** What may have been...

- ❖ Teacher's needs
- ❖ Emily's needs

### **What could have been the teacher's needs?**

- ❖ The need to be accepted?
- ❖ The need to be recognised?
- ❖ The need to do meaningful, substantial work?
- ❖ The need to do well at work?
- ❖ The need to think of themselves as a fair person?

### **Comment:**

"What may the teacher have felt? What could their needs have been?" Maybe they also wanted to feel like a successful, good teacher, and my accusations suggested that they weren't? Maybe they wanted to think of themselves as a very good teacher, and my feedback made them feel bad, like they wasn't good enough? And then they started defending themselves because the feeling was so strong that at first, they couldn't think about how I felt?" Etc.

### **What could have been Emily's needs?**

- ❖ The need to be treated fairly?
- ❖ The need to be recognised?
- ❖ The need to do well in school?
- ❖ A need for the grade to reflect the amount of work?
- ❖ The need to maintain her self-image as a good student?

---

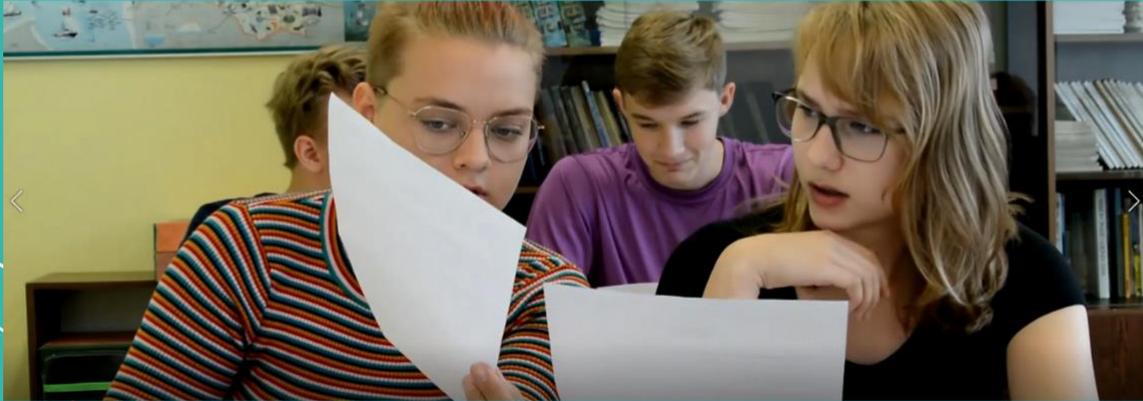
## **10. SUMMARY (1 MIN)**

---

We have now talked about accusations versus needs. It is important to understand your needs and the needs of the other in the situation. Understanding yourself and the other (and each of your needs) is the key to a solution.

- ❖ Aggression creates aggression in return. Attacks can cause the other to get defensive.
- ❖ People who are feeling defensive are not ready to listen: they are busy dealing with emotions of their own.
- ❖ The problem must be discussed using I-messages to avoid attacking the other and prevent a defensive reaction.

# DISPUTING A GRADE



Emily is not happy with the grade she got on a test. She feels that she has been treated unfairly and goes to report it to the teacher. In the first part of the film, she does it in an attacking rather than explanatory manner. The teacher, in turn, gets defensive and starts to justify themselves. The confrontation ends with tempers flaring. No agreement is reached, and Emily goes home upset. At home, Emily's mother notices her upset. Using listening and reflection techniques, she finds out more about what happened at school and asks questions that lead Emily to realise why her conversation with the teacher turned sour. Encouraged by her mother, she tries to talk to the teacher again the next day, this time using I-messages and without attacking, instead focusing on her own feelings and thoughts. Now, a peaceful understanding is reached.

The aim of the film is to teach you to understand why fights arise in such situations, what defensiveness means, and why people react differently to accusations than to being listened to and understood. The film also teaches reflection and listening skills. It is followed by work in pairs and groups, using listening tasks designed to practice and consolidate these skills.

## HANDLING DISSENT II. DESCRIBING EXPERIENCES. LISTENING.

# HANDLING DISSENT II. DESCRIBING EXPERIENCES. LISTENING

## KEY TERMS

- ❖ Describing experiences: the facts, the feelings, the needs, what I want
- ❖ Listening
- ❖ Reflecting
- ❖ I-messages



## TOOLBOX

I-MESSAGES



CARING



FACTS



PERSPECTIVE



LISTENING, REFLECTION



NOTICING FEELINGS



IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS



## 1. INTRODUCTION (2 MIN)

### *Tell the class:*

Last time we watched a video about the teacher and Emily, who felt she hadn't been treated fairly, but wasn't able to explain it to the teacher. Today, we will continue with this topic and explore a different way to look at the situation, along with possible solutions.

## 2. REVIEW (2 MIN)

### A BRIEF RECAP OF THE PREVIOUS LESSON

Some of you said that they had experienced a similar situation themselves, but did nothing about it. This happens relatively often in life. Sometimes people want to avoid a fight, sometimes it is safer this way. In school, after all, the teacher is in a position of power, and antagonising them may not be a good idea. But could it be done without antagonising them?

## 3. VIDEO CLIP "DISPUTING A GRADE". VIDEO, PART II (4 MIN)

Want to see how Emily's story continued?

### VIDEO. PART TWO

*Show the video "Disputing a grade", either the entire clip or only the second part to the end.*

## 4. GROUP DISCUSSION AND COMMENTS (5 MIN)

### *Ask the class:*



- ❖ What did you see? What thoughts did you have?
  - ❖ What did the mother do? What did she do right?
- If the students do not notice, direct their attention to the following activities by the mother: Reflection. No aggression. No blaming. Asking questions. Listening.*

HANDLING DISSENT II. DESCRIBING EXPERIENCES. LISTENING.

WHAT WE WON'T NEED:

ACCUSATIONS



DEFENSIVENESS



JUDGEMENTS



PREPARATIONS

- ❖ Prepare (print out) describing practice worksheets.
- ❖ Prepare (print out) worksheets with the rules for listening and reflection.
- ❖ Have the film "Disputing a grade" ready to play.
- ❖ Review or research the literature on the use of listening and reflection.

NOTE:

- ❖ When a problem arises, analyse the facts, thoughts, feelings, needs, and talk to the other person
- ❖ Use I-messages to avoid attacks and defensiveness.
- ❖ Listen to the other. Reflect. Try to understand both their and your feelings and needs.

MY NOTES:

.....

.....

.....

5. EXERCISE, WORKSHEET (8 MIN)

COMPLETING THE WORKSHEET IN CLASS

**Ask students to complete the worksheet. Explain:**

The worksheet depicts a person, and names separate areas with labels: **FACTS** (*observations*) - symbolised with eyes in the worksheet, because only those aspects of a situation that we see or hear, that can be filmed or recorded, are facts. The rest are our own thoughts, assumptions or interpretations of the other person's behaviour (but often, our thoughts about other people are already subjective). **FEELINGS** (*heart*); **NEEDS** (*the core, centre*); **WHAT I WANT** (*hand*). Another person is depicted next to the first one to symbolise the other party in the situation. Hands meet on the level of *requests*: only when we understand the facts of the situation as well as the feelings, needs and wishes of both parties can we move forward with proposals, i.e. a mutual discussion on what to do.

- 1) **First, the students fill in the gaps in the worksheet based on the situation shown in the video clip (from the point of view of both the teacher and Emily).**
- 2) **Preferably, the students would then take their own example and write it down as well.**

**Tell the class:**

Please write about both parties (Emily and the teacher) what the facts were in this story, what Emily's feelings, thoughts, wants and needs might have been, and what the teacher's were.

**THINK ABOUT:**

- ❖ What are facts in this story and what are not? What are Emily's judgements?
- ❖ What needs to happen if Emily wants her teacher to understand her?
- ❖ What should be the focus in this situation and what not?

## HANDLING DISSENT II. DESCRIBING EXPERIENCES. LISTENING.

**6. DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY (8 MIN)**

***Discuss with the class what they noticed when completing the worksheet and what is key if you want to avoid the other party getting defensive and for them to understand you.***

**SUMMARY OF THE EXERCISE:**

It is important to distinguish the facts from your own judgements or thoughts. Also, what your and the other party's feelings are and what lies under your feelings, i.e. what needs are unmet in this situation. The key lies in using I-messages. Whether the other person is willing to listen and whether you can change the situation depends on how you talk. Sometimes, having the conversation leads you to realise that the problem did not exist in the first place or that it cannot be solved, but in most cases, the problems are solved by talking.

**NOTE:**

Just like in the story of Alex and Fred, let's repeat the following basic truths of communication:

If you have decided to assert yourself, expect resistance. The other party may feel threatened and get defensive. This is normal. Take the time to listen to them and try to really understand. Listening to the other must be alternated with explaining one's own thoughts and feelings, until both parties feel that they have been understood. Only then can we move on to discussions and agreements on what to do instead or how to ensure that this does not happen again.

**THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PARTNER IS IMPORTANT**

Try to listen to your partner with curiosity, try to genuinely hear what they're saying and express your concern for your cooperation and relationship. Try to understand their point of view and experience, and your own as well.

**I-MESSAGES****USE I-MESSAGES AND REFLECT THE OTHER PERSON'S THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS!**

I-messages are the easiest way to prevent another person from feeling accused. Note: When you talk about your needs, you automatically use I-messages.

Remember to use I-messages, talk about your thoughts and feelings, without judging the other party. Be sure to distinguish the facts of the situation from your own feelings or thoughts about it. Describe the situation dispassionately and without judgment, sticking to the facts. Make short summaries and provide reflections on your partner's statements. If you feel that your conversation partner has become insurmountably defensive, ask how they feel, whether they're angry, or whether they want to continue the conversation right now (but don't let the conversation get pushed back indefinitely or avoided altogether; if necessary, arrange another time within the same week). Ask what you can do to make them feel better and not close up. Listen with an open mind, don't try to give advice to or lecture your partner. Reflect, rephrase ("Did I understand correctly that...?", "So, you mean...", "So, it seems to you that...?" Etc.) Treat the story as two persons' different views of the situation, not as a judgement on you or them. The success of the conversation depends on the willingness of both parties to listen, to be curious and caring.

## 7. THEORY: RULES FOR ACTIVE LISTENING AND REFLECTING (10 MIN)

*The following is based on One2One Learning by Monika Kėžaitė–Jakniūnienė and Mark E. Taylor, <http://www.salto-youth.net/Training-And-Cooperation> and [youthpass@salto-youth.net](mailto:youthpass@salto-youth.net)) etc (see also the reading list).*

The purpose of active listening is to fully understand the speaker's issue or point of view and to show your sincere interest in what the speaker says. This kind of listening requires active communication and an interest in mutual understanding between the two parties. The attitude of the listener is crucial: we can engage in active listening when we are ready to take a real interest in our conversation partner and their situation. Active listening consists of several techniques, which are described below. However, it is useful to remember that in addition to using these techniques, real attention, interest, and empathy for the speaker are important in active listening.

SOME TECHNIQUES:

**SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT DURING THE CONVERSATION:** Use a short phrase, gesture, or word to show the other person that you are listening. It also creates a friendly atmosphere. For example, "yes", "really?", "OK", "that's interesting!", nodding and/or smiling.

It is important for the speaker to sense that their partner is interested and listening. Demonstrating listening and creating a friendly atmosphere encourages the speaker to open up. Small verbal or non-verbal cues can be used to support and encourage the speaker. For example, smiling, eye contact, nodding, leaning towards the speaker, etc are helpful. Nor should you be afraid of moments of silence in the conversation. If it is difficult for the other to talk about a topic, they may need some time to compose their thoughts. In such moments, we can express support and understanding when needed, but we don't have to fill the silence with our thoughts right away.

**REFLECTION:** You can also use reflection to encourage people to continue talking. Reflection means repeating almost exactly what the speaker said. It should be short and simple. It is usually enough to simply repeat the keywords or the last few words that were spoken. Intonation plays a big role in this.

For example, if the speaker ends the sentence with the words "... and it made me so angry", then the listener may reflect the message with the words "it made you very angry". It is not necessary to use reflection after every sentence, as this can get annoying, but when used at the right moments, reflections give the speaker the impression that their message has been heard. In addition, reflection encourages the other to talk more, so it is especially useful when the listener does not immediately know what to say or wants the speaker to talk even more about their experience.

**REPHRASING:** Rephrasing means using other words to reflect what the speaker is saying. It shows that you are listening and trying to understand what the speaker is saying. When rephrasing, it is very important to avoid presenting your own ideas or questions about the speaker's thoughts, feelings or actions. The main advantage of rephrasing is that it helps the speaker to better understand themselves, their thoughts and ideas. It also helps slow down the pace of the conversation to let deeper analysis take place. Possible ways to start rephrasing:

- "If I understand you correctly, ..."
- "In other words, ..."
- "Let me put it this way ..."

## HANDLING DISSENT II. DESCRIBING EXPERIENCES. LISTENING.

- "Correct me if I'm wrong, but do you mean that ..."

Rephrasing is useful for several reasons. Firstly, it shows not only that we are listening to the speaker, but also that we are trying to understand them. It also helps to avoid misunderstandings, as it gives the speaker the opportunity to correct the listener. In addition, it gives the listener a better understanding of their thoughts and feelings and reduces the pace of the conversation to let deeper analysis take place.

**Summarising** is the extended version of rephrasing. It means summarising everything that has been said so far, including the speaker's feelings and key points. Summarising also helps reduce the pace of the conversation. It is useful to do this before ending the conversation or before moving on to a new topic.

**CLARIFICATION:** Because the idea of active listening is to understand the conversation partner as well as possible, it is often helpful to ask clarifying questions to get more information about the situation. In addition to helping understand the other better, clarification is also useful because it shows the speaker that we are interested in their story. Open-ended questions should be preferred (e.g. "What do you mean when you say...") and directing the conversation should be avoided.

*Note: Make sure to avoid the most typical listening mistakes when doing listening exercises. Common risks that can derail the listening process include:*

**ARGUING.** *If the other says something we disagree with, we may be tempted to argue. However, if we focus on arguing, we will not be able to really listen to the other. Active listening does not mean that we need to agree with the other person's views or that we should not express an opinion. However, we should try to understand the other person - why they think or feel the way they do.*

**EXCESSIVE FOCUS ON YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES.** *Often enough, another person's story reminds us of something in our own lives. Sharing these experiences can be good - for example, it may be comforting or exciting for a speaker to hear that the listener has experienced a similar problem, understands their feelings, and may be able to give advice. However, before describing your experience, you should take enough time to listen to the other person and focus on their experience. Different people may experience even very similar situations differently, so without listening to the other person, we may not really know how they feel. If we respond to each point only with our own stories, without letting the other person finish theirs, we can't really get to know or help them.*

**OFFERING ADVICE TOO SOON.** *When someone tells us about their problems, we often feel that we should give them some advice. Giving advice is not bad – sometimes we have really good ideas to help the other, and sometimes people come specifically to ask for advice. However, this may not always be the only thing your conversation partner needs. They may need the listener to genuinely listen to them and acknowledge the way they feel. Maybe they're not looking for advice, just for understanding or a chance to talk about their problem. Therefore, if the speaker is currently experiencing a negative emotion, it is useful to first let them talk about the problem and only then give advice if necessary.*

*We will return to derailing behaviours in the "Aggressive Behaviour" lesson. If you want to know more about the topic, read more in "Teacher's Reading Materials. Listening." You can also share these materials with students as further reading.*

---

## 8. INTRODUCTION TO THE EXERCISE ACTIVE LISTENING AND REFLECTING (3 MIN)

---

*Distribute worksheets with the rules of reflecting and introduce the theory of reflection. Review with the class:*

### **RULES FOR LISTENING:**

#### FOR THE SPEAKER:

1. I-MESSAGES! Speak only for yourself, about your feelings, thoughts and wishes, without judgements or accusations!
2. Speak in SHORT SENTENCES so that the listener can follow you and reflect your thoughts.
3. Leave PAUSES from time to time so that the listener can rephrase or summarise your sentences.

#### FOR THE LISTENER:

1. Get deep into the subject, really ABSORB what the other is saying. Try to focus completely.
2. Keep EYE CONTACT and wordless contact. The optimal amount of eye contact would be 70% of the time, according to research. Of course, individual comfort and consideration for cultural differences decide the actual amount.
3. DO NOT COMMENT! Focus on the speaker's thoughts and do not give advice, argue or comment.
4. THE EASY WAY TO CHECK THAT YOU UNDERSTOOD CORRECTLY IS REFLECTING – repeat what you heard, either word by word or using your own words, but as similarly as possible.
5. Ask open-ended questions, AVOID DIRECTING THE CONVERSATION.

The right approach to your partner and the basis of a good relationship is the following: I respect myself and the people I communicate with.

---

## 9. EXERCISE. REFLECTION (9 MIN)

---

*The teacher provides the sentences to be reflected.*

### **EXERCISE IN GROUPS OF THREE.**

One is the speaker, the other is the listener, and the third is the observer (giving feedback on whether the reflection was done correctly). The teacher writes on the board some (5-6) themes, which the students have to complete themselves (they will choose the topic according to which one is the most personal to them or which one they're comfortable talking about). For example: "I get the angriest when..."; "The most difficult situations for me are those where..."; "I hate..."; "I love..."; "Sometimes I really wonder why..."; "Last time I got into a conflict was when..."; "The most difficult situation at school for me is when..."; "When it comes to friends, the hardest thing is when..."; "My biggest problem right now is..."; "Something I don't like about myself is..."; "I like..." and so on.

HANDLING DISSENT II. DESCRIBING EXPERIENCES. LISTENING.

---

---

## 10. EXERCISE. REFLECTION (19 MIN)

---

Get into groups of three or four.

First, one pair goes through reflecting and being reflected.

The other two act as observers – they monitor the others and correct if necessary – if the reflection is not accurate enough – because this exercise involves the risk of assigning the wrong thoughts to the speaker or not daring to repeat the words too closely for the fear of "playing parrot" or looking ridiculous. In fact, the risk is the opposite – an inaccurate interpretation of the partner –, so it is important to make sure that reflections use the partner's own words as much as possible.

The roles are then switched, first with each other and then in pairs – the observers get to practice and the first pair become observers in turn.

Students should use their own situations that they would like to practice (it is useful to practice a situation in their own lives, with the partner standing in for the party to whom the speaker wants to describe their experience in real life). The role of the listener is **ONLY** to reflect and clarify the speaker's words and thoughts, not to give advice or start speaking in turn! You can use a situation from the previous lesson or a different one.

---

## 11. SUMMARY (5 MIN)

---

**Tell the class:**

Name two points that you will take with you from this lesson.

*If necessary, summarise what you learned and emphasise the key principles of the lesson.*

## ACTIVE LISTENING

Researchers took an interest in researching listening skills as early as in the 1940s, as the importance of developing these skills among students, leaders, and others such as e.g. health professionals began to become evident (Johnson, 2015). For example, research has shown that developing listening skills, and active listening in particular, contributes to better relationships, satisfaction and productivity in the workplace (Alessandra & Hunsaker, 1993; Cooper, 1997), improves doctors' and nurses' communication with patients (Duhamel & Talbot, 2004), and positively affects daily communication.

The purpose of active listening is to fully understand the speaker's issue or point of view and to show your sincere interest in what the speaker says. (McNaughton et al., 2008). This kind of listening requires active communication and an interest in mutual understanding between the two parties. The attitude of the listener is crucial: we can engage in active listening when we are ready to take a real interest in our conversation partner and their situation (Kėžaitė–Jakniūnienė & Taylor). Active listening consists of several techniques, which are described below. However, it is useful to remember that in addition to using these techniques, genuine attention, interest, and empathy for the speaker are important in active listening.

### Active listening techniques

#### 1. Support, encouragement and demonstration of listening

It is important for the speaker to sense that their partner is interested and listening. Demonstrating listening and creating a friendly atmosphere encourages the speaker to open up. Small verbal or non-verbal cues can be used to support and encourage the speaker. For example, smiling, eye contact, nodding, leaning towards the speaker, etc., help (Topornycky & Golparian, 2016). You can also use phrases like "yes", "really?", "OK", "mhmh", "that's interesting!" etc. Nor should you be afraid of moments of silence in the conversation. If it is difficult for the other to talk about a topic, they may need some time to compose their thoughts (Henderson & Byrne, 2016). In such moments, we can express support and understanding when needed, but we don't have to fill the silence with our thoughts right away.

#### 2. Reflection

Reflection means repeating almost exactly what the speaker said. Reflections should be short and simple. It is usually enough to simply repeat the keywords or the last few words that were spoken. (Briggs, 2016). For example, if the speaker ends the sentence with the words "... and it made me so angry", then the listener may reflect the message with the words "it made you very angry". It is not necessary to use reflection after every sentence, as this can get annoying, but when used at the right moments, reflections give the speaker the impression that their message has been heard. In addition, reflection encourages the other to talk more, so it is especially useful when the listener does not immediately know what to say or wants the speaker to talk even more about their experience.

#### 3. Rephrasing and summarising

Rephrasing means using other words to reflect what the speaker is saying (one2one). Possible ways to start rephrasing are, for example:

- ❖ "If I understand you correctly, ..."
- ❖ "In other words, ..."

- ❖ "Let me put it this way ..."
- ❖ "Correct me if I'm wrong, but do you mean that ..."

Rephrasing is useful for several reasons. Firstly, it shows not only that we are listening to the speaker, but also that we are trying to understand them. It also helps to avoid misunderstandings, as it gives the speaker an opportunity to correct the listener (McKay, Davis & Fanning, 2009). In addition, it gives the listener a better understanding of their thoughts and feelings and reduces the pace of the conversation to let deeper analysis take place.

Summarising is the extended version of rephrasing. It means summarising everything that has been said so far, including the speaker's feelings and key points (Briggs, 2016). Summarising also helps reduce the pace of the conversation. It is useful to do this before ending the conversation or before moving on to a new topic.

#### 4. Clarification

Because the idea of active listening is to understand the conversation partner as well as possible, it is often helpful to ask clarifying questions to get more information about the situation (McKay, Davis & Fanning, 2009). In addition to helping understand the other better, clarification is also useful because it shows the speaker that we are interested in their story. Open-ended questions should be preferred (e.g. "What do you mean when you say...") and directing the conversation should be avoided.

### Obstacles to listening

Active listening is often difficult because we tend to do things that don't really contribute to understanding the other person. Obstacles to listening are patterns that should be avoided because they make real listening and understanding more difficult and can even lead to conflict (McKay, Davis & Fanning, 2009).

#### 1. Comparison

It is very natural to compare another person's experience with our own, but bringing up certain comparisons can be detrimental to the conversation. For example, if someone tells us about their problem, we may think it's not such a big deal at all, because we have much bigger problems. Or, for example, we might think that we wouldn't get upset over something so small, we wouldn't have gotten into such a situation, and so on. All of this may even be true, but expressing such thoughts does not help the speaker in the slightest. We do not want to make the speaker feel that their worries are not big enough or that their feelings are not "correct".

#### 2. Preparing for your own turn to speak

It is also natural to think about what we are going to say before our next sentence. This is often good because it allows us to phrase our thoughts as well as possible, instead of saying whatever crosses the mind. Sometimes, however, preparing for your own turn to speak may start interfering with listening. Suppose, for example, that the speaker starts talking, and we are struck by an idea that we think would be a great way for them to solve their problem. Then we practice the wording of the idea and impatiently wait for our turn. At the same time, however, we no longer pay full attention to the speaker's story, and it may be that in the meantime the speaker mentioned some other important details that would have helped us realise that our idea was not as appropriate as we thought. It can also happen, for example, that we feel we do not know what to say. So we keep thinking about what to say next, and again, we don't really pay attention to the speaker. In this case, it would be better to listen to the speaker and take some time to formulate your thoughts before answering instead.

### 3. Mind-reading

Mind-reading means that instead of listening, we focus on making unfounded assumptions about the speaker. For example, thoughts like "He says he wants to spend time with me, but I bet he doesn't really want to" or "He must be thinking I'm stupid." Instead of paying attention to what the speaker is actually saying, we are trying to guess what they are "really" thinking without confirming these assumptions.

### 4. Selective hearing

Selective hearing means we only listen to certain things, but not others. For example, we may be afraid that a friend is angry with us, and we will focus on looking for any signs that may clarify this suspicion. As soon as we hear, for example, that a friend isn't really angry, we feel relieved, let our thoughts drift away and no longer pay attention to the conversation. Another example of selective hearing is avoiding acknowledging certain messages. For example, we might avoid listening to messages that seem negative, critical, or unpleasant.

### 5. Judgements and prejudice

If we have a negative prejudice about a person before talking to them, we probably won't pay enough attention to what they are actually saying. We may also pass premature judgement of some of the ideas or thoughts that the speaker is expressing (e.g. it is silly/hypocritical/crazy, etc.) without first listening to what they have to say.

### 6. Arguing

If the other says something we disagree with, we may be tempted to argue. However, if we focus on arguing, we will not be able to really listen to the other. Active listening does not mean that we need to agree with the other person's views or that we should not express an opinion. However, we should try to understand the other person – why they think or feel the way they do.

### 7. Excessive focus on your own experiences

Often enough, another person's story reminds us of something in our own lives. Sharing these experiences can be good – for example, it may be comforting or exciting for a speaker to hear that the listener has experienced a similar problem, understands their feelings, and may be able to give advice. However, before describing your experience, you should take enough time to listen to the other person and focus on their experience. Different people may experience even very similar situations differently, so without listening to the other person, we may not really know how they feel. If we respond to each point only with our own stories, without letting the other person finish theirs, we can't really get to know or help them.

### 8. Offering advice too soon

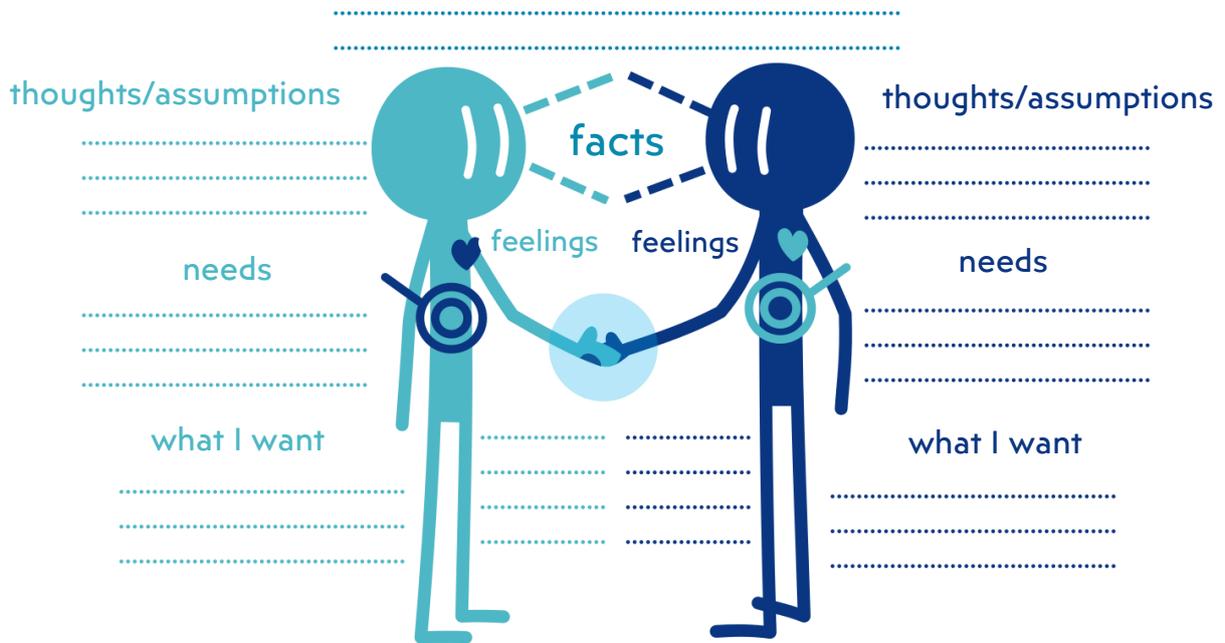
When someone tells us about their problems, we often feel that we should give them some advice. Giving advice is not bad – sometimes we have really good ideas to help the other, and sometimes people come specifically to ask for advice. However, this may not always be the only thing your conversation partner needs. They may need the listener to genuinely listen to them and acknowledge the way they feel. Maybe they're not looking for advice, just for understanding or a chance to talk about their problem. Therefore, if the speaker is currently experiencing a negative emotion, it is useful to first let them talk about the problem and only then give advice if necessary.

## References

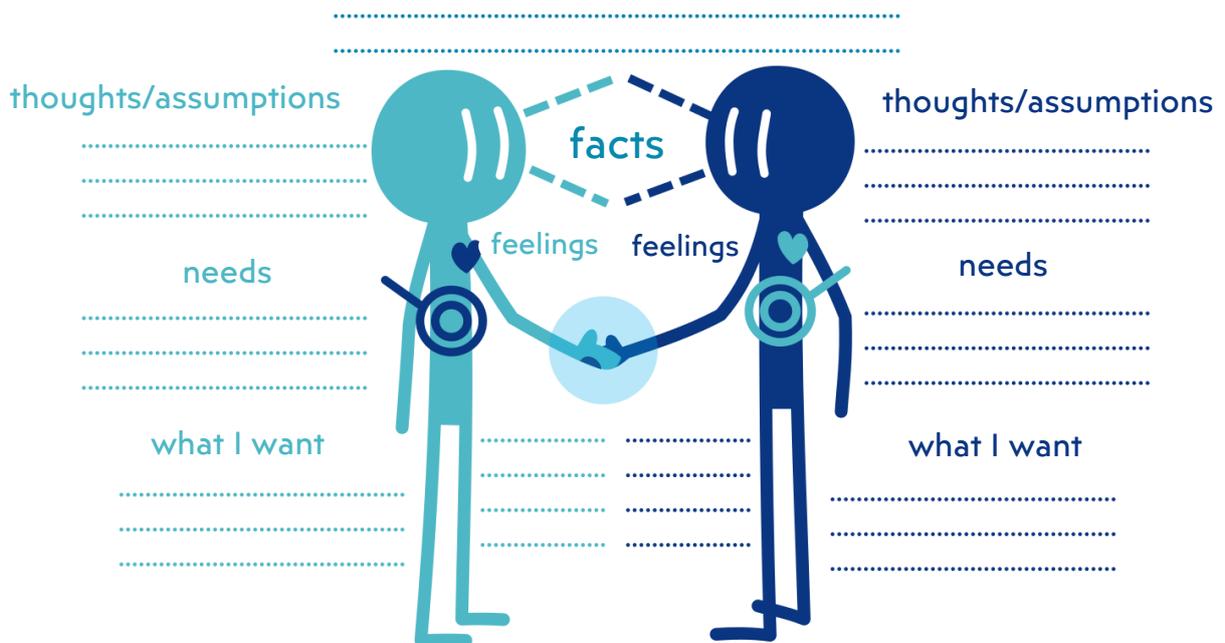
- Alessandra, T., & Hunsaker, P. (1993). Active listening. *Communicating at Work*. Simon & Schuster, Inc., New York, NY, 54-68.
- Briggs, K. (2016). Active Listening Skills.  
<https://www.bcbsnd.com/content/dam/bcbsnd/documents/general/ALS%20Handout.pdf>
- Cooper, L. O. (1997). Listening competency in the workplace: A model for training. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 60(4), 75-84.
- Duhamel, F., & Talbot, L. R. (2004). A constructivist evaluation of family systems nursing interventions with families experiencing cardiovascular and cerebrovascular illness. *Journal of Family Nursing*, 10(1), 12-32.
- Henderson, K., & Mathew Byrne, J. (2016). Developing communication and interviewing skills. *Skills for social work practice*, 1-22.
- Johnson, C. M. (2015). *Communication skills training with a coaching approach: Influencing organizational results in a long-term healthcare organization* (Doctoral dissertation, Capella University).
- Këžaitė-Jakniūnienė, M.; Taylor, M. E. One2One Learning, <http://www.salto-youth.net/Training-And-Cooperation>
- McKay, M., Davis, M., & Fanning, P. (2009). *Messages: The communication skills book*. New Harbinger Publications.
- McNaughton, D., Hamlin, D., McCarthy, J., Head-Reeves, D., & Schreiner, M. (2008). Learning to listen: Teaching an active listening strategy to preservice education professionals. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 27(4), 223-231.
- Topornycky, J., & Golparian, S. (2016). Balancing openness and interpretation in active listening. *Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching*, 9, 175-184.

# UNDERSTANDING AND DESCRIBING EXPERIENCES

1) Fill in the blanks according to the situation shown in the video clip (from the point of view of the teacher / of Emily):



2) Fill in the blanks based on your own example:



---

## WORKSHEET: RULES FOR LISTENING

---

# RULES FOR LISTENING:

---

### FOR THE SPEAKER:

- ❖ **I-messages!** Speak only for yourself, about your feelings, thoughts and wishes, without judgements or accusations!
- ❖ Speak in **short sentences** so that the listener can follow you and reflect your thoughts.
- ❖ Leave **pauses** from time to time so that the listener can rephrase or summarise your sentences.

### FOR THE LISTENER:

- ❖ Get deep into the subject, really **absorb** what the other is saying. Try to focus completely.
- ❖ Keep **eye contact** and wordless contact. The optimal amount of eye contact would be 70% of the time, according to research. Of course, individual comfort and consideration for cultural differences decide the actual amount.
- ❖ **Don't comment!** Focus on the speaker's thoughts and do not give advice, argue or comment.
- ❖ **The easiest way to check if you understood correctly is reflecting** - repeat what you heard, either word by word or using your own words, but as similarly as possible.
- ❖ Ask open-ended questions, **avoid directing the conversation**.

---

## WORKSHEET: RULES FOR LISTENING

---

# RULES FOR LISTENING:

---

### FOR THE SPEAKER:

- ❖ **I-messages!** Speak only for yourself, about your feelings, thoughts and wishes, without judgements or accusations!
- ❖ Speak in **short sentences** so that the listener can follow you and reflect your thoughts.
- ❖ Leave **pauses** from time to time so that the listener can rephrase or summarise your sentences.

### FOR THE LISTENER:

- ❖ Get deep into the subject, really **absorb** what the other is saying. Try to focus completely.
- ❖ Keep **eye contact** and wordless contact. The optimal amount of eye contact would be 70% of the time, according to research. Of course, individual comfort and consideration for cultural differences decide the actual amount.
- ❖ **Don't comment!** Focus on the speaker's thoughts and do not give advice, argue or comment.
- ❖ **The easiest way to check if you understood correctly is reflecting** - repeat what you heard, either word by word or using your own words, but as similarly as possible.
- ❖ Ask open-ended questions, **avoid directing the conversation**.

## SOCIAL EXCLUSION I

# SOCIAL EXCLUSION I

## KEY TERMS

- ❖ Causes and consequences of social exclusion
- ❖ The impact of your behaviour on others
- ❖ The impact of another person's behaviour on you
- ❖ Different perspectives
- ❖ Noticing social exclusion
- ❖ I-messages



## TOOLBOX

PERSPECTIVE



LISTENING



## PREPARATIONS

- ❖ Have the film "Social Exclusion" ready to play.
- ❖ Prepare to show the video in class. You'll need a computer, a screen and speakers. Make sure the equipment works before the class begins.
- ❖ You will need the workbook or worksheets for individual and group work
- ❖ Prepare to write the keywords of the most important theory concepts on the board.

## 1. INTRODUCTION (2 MIN)

Let's watch a video today. Please keep a close eye on the situation, what is happening and why. After that, I will ask you questions based on what you saw.

## 2. VIDEO CLIP "SOCIAL EXCLUSION" (3 MIN)

Show the clip "Social Exclusion" from start to finish.

### Ask the class:



- ❖ What did you see?
- ❖ Have you been in such situations? Yes/no
- ❖ Why do you think such situations happen?

## 3. GROUP WORK (15 MIN)

### DISCUSS IN GROUPS OF 2-4 MEMBERS:

- ❖ What did you see?
- ❖ Have you experienced or seen anything like this yourself? How did it impact you?
- ❖ How to avoid such situations in a school environment? Is there anything that could be done at all?

### LEADING QUESTIONS FOR GROUPS:

- ❖ What may the excluded person have felt? Write down at least three feelings.
- ❖ What might the other parties have felt? Write down at least three feelings.
- ❖ What could the excluded person do? Write down at least three options.
- ❖ What do you think the impact of their next step will be?

## SOCIAL EXCLUSION I

**NOTE:**

- ❖ Social exclusion may be almost invisible and consist of barely perceptible slights, but it is rough on the person involved.
- ❖ Various parties can and should intervene, but the conversations must be carried out without accusations and through I-messages.

**HOMEWORK**

Think of similar situations where you were excluded and what you could have done in that situation. How did you feel? How did it affect you? When describing the situation, make sure to avoid blaming the other party and describe your own feelings and thoughts, without assuming the other party's thoughts and feelings or making assumptions about their motivation.

**MANIFESTATIONS OF BULLYING**

- ❖ **INSECURITY** - the victim expresses their opinion less often and less freely;
- ❖ **LACK OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION** - the victim feels the need to carefully choose what they say and how;
- ❖ **EMOTIONAL INSECURITY** - the victim hopes for the partner to show their gentler and more vulnerable side;
- ❖ **CLOSING UP** - the victim begins to feel that it is wrong to tell other people about the relationship;

**4. CLASS DISCUSSION (6 MIN)**

**Ask the class** (select some students or groups)

- ❖ If you have experienced similar situations yourself, how have you felt in such situations?
- ❖ What do you think the excluded person felt? How about the others?
- ❖ If this situation is not resolved, what will it lead to?

**Write some keywords for the answers to the last question on the board.**

*Even if not all solutions initially offered are the best, it is good for the students to think about and discuss this with each other.*

**5. COMMENT: NOTICING AND UNDERSTANDING WHAT HAPPENED. THEORY (15 MIN)**

**The teacher starts out by telling their own story about social exclusion** (something they experienced in school, something they witnessed, something that happened to their students, etc.). *Note: Try to tell a personal story for each topic – students like to hear about the teacher's personal experience, and it contributes to mutual openness. Most of us have some first-hand experience with social exclusion.*

**WHAT IS SOCIAL EXCLUSION?**

**Tell the class:**

Social exclusion is often a form of mental violence, but it is sometimes not recognised. Social exclusion may be almost invisible and consist of barely perceptible slights, but it is hard for the person involved. The causes of the phenomenon lie in the distant past: in ancient times, when people lived as communities, survival depended on community cooperation. Expulsion from the community could mean death. That is why the fear of social exclusion has been coded in us since those ancient times. The subjective feeling that a person feels when they sense they're being excluded is more than mere sadness: it is a deep fear, sometimes terror bordering on panic. Therefore, we need to be very careful in our behaviour so as not to trigger these ancient fears; we must be careful not to even passively exclude anyone.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION I

- ❖ LIVING IN HOPE - the victim hopes that the situation will change, especially through greater love and understanding;
- ❖ DOUBT - the victim begins to doubt their memory, ability, reason to live, or sense of reality;
- ❖ VULNERABILITY - the victim feels unsafe;
- ❖ FEAR OF NEW VIOLENCE - the victim may become afraid of violence that hasn't yet happened;
- ❖ FEAR OF DEATH - the victim fears that "bad behaviour" could endanger their life;
- ❖ DEPRESSION - the victim feels that there is no longer a positive undertone to life;
- ❖ EXHAUSTION - the victim feels exhausted.

**MY NOTES:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

The effects of social exclusion are major and may extend far beyond their immediate impact.

Various parties can and should intervene: the person being excluded, anyone noticing the exclusion. We will now learn how to do it. The rule of using I-messages remains in effect: use I-messages to avoid attacking the other and triggering a defensive reaction.

EXAMPLE: One example of the effects of social exclusion is provided by experiments with video games (cyberball) (original: Williams et al, 2000). In the experiment, the participant believes that they are playing a ball-throwing game with two other virtual players on the computer. In fact, the other players are controlled by a computer program. At first, everyone throws the ball to everyone, but after a while, the other two "players" start to exclude the human player and stop throwing them the ball. The real participant feels terrible and research shows that the same areas of the brain are activated as in the case of physical pain, although there is no material consequence. Interestingly, the participant feels bad even when they know that they are playing against the computer or, for example, if they think they are playing against members of a group they hate (e.g. KKK members) and even if the ball is replaced with a virtual "bomb" that can explode at any moment and the player in whose hand it explodes will lose. In this case, it is actually a good thing if the others do not throw the ball at you, but we seem to prefer the risk of "explosion" to exclusion.

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_rejection#Ball\\_toss/\\_/cyberball\\_experiments](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_rejection#Ball_toss/_/cyberball_experiments))

*You can watch an introduction of the Cyberball experiment here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goK2rivxTqQ&ab\\_channel=NickMichelioudakis](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goK2rivxTqQ&ab_channel=NickMichelioudakis)*

Social exclusion is sometimes a form of school bullying. It is relatively common, including in the upper secondary school, but also earlier as well as later in the workplace. Sometimes, the subject of exclusion is someone who is different from others, but this is not primary. Anyone can be a victim of social exclusion and mental violence, just by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Social exclusion can take many forms. It can be expressed in bullying, humiliation, but also simply in ignoring the subject and treating them with silence. For example, if people are chatting but fall silent when you enter. Or if a joke is shared around but you are deliberately left out of the recipients. Etc. What other forms have you seen?

Other forms of mental violence include humiliation, insults, bullying, ridicule, nicknames, taking things, derogatory remarks, etc. - all of which can hurt a person.

## SOCIAL EXCLUSION I

Bullying is a problem with the bully, not the person being bullied, but it needs to be noticed and addressed.

(<https://bioneer.ee/ka-vaimne-v%C3%A4givald-v%C3%A4givald>)

However, most people have excluded someone in some way at some point, and a one-sided description of it from the perspective of the excluded may not convey the whole picture.

For example, in the video on social exclusion, it is not the case that all other students would have been hostile, narrow-minded, jealous, etc. Rather, they were upset and wanted to stand up for their interests (e.g. did not want to have to take a test). Social exclusion has its own evolutionary explanation - since survival depended on the cooperation of the community, we originate from the so-called winners or groups who worked well together. Thus, we reward and value cooperative, loyal members of the group and "punish" disloyalty. In a way, the excluded person betrayed the group (from the group's point of view) by using up their time and asking for a test (or so it may have seemed to the excluders).

Likely, social pressure and norms were also involved here (and tend to be with social exclusion in general) - if some members of the group (especially leaders, such as the talkative girl in the video) exclude others, then other group members may not want to interact with the excluded for fear of being excluded in turn.

Social exclusion also seems to be considered (even in the workplace) to be more socially acceptable, less harmful and less punishable than bullying or harassment. In fact, it can be even more harmful (<https://www-2.rotman.utoronto.ca/facbios/file/Ost%20vs%20has%20OS.pdf>)

## 6. GROUP WORK (15 MIN)

***Students are divided into groups of 3-5 members (the tasks of each group can be explained to the whole class first, then forming groups by drawing lots) and the tasks are divided between the groups. Groups can present their work either through a regular presentation or in a more creative fashion provided in brackets.***

THIS TIME, THE GROUPS HAVE DIFFERENT TASKS:

- ❖ "THE EXCLUDED". The first group will present the perspective of the person who is being excluded. One of you will come up in front of the class and present it as a monologue. Let's take it seriously – no joking – and get into how this person might feel. So please prepare a monologue from the perspective of the excluded and one of the group will come in front of the class and present it.

(Alternatively: the excluded (one of the group members) comes in front of the class and "calls" the self-help group, whose task is first to listen to the excluded (using reflection skills) and only then give advice)

- ❖ "SELF-HELP GROUP" The second group thinks about what the excluded person can do in this situation (talk to someone, do something differently, use self-help techniques, ask someone for help, etc.). But remember that the personality traits of the excluded must also be taken into account: they cannot change themselves completely. The question is: what could this person do in this situation, being the way they are? How to talk about the impact of the behaviour? How to deal with your emotions? The self-help group presents all possibilities from the perspective of the excluded - what could they do (about themselves or others)?

(Alternatively: answer the telephone call from the excluded person, listen to them and then give advice)

- ❖ "BYSTANDERS". The third group thinks about what the bystanders witnessing this situation could do. Is there any way to intervene, help? How? What can this entail and how to make sure that no one is offended and gets defensive?

## SOCIAL EXCLUSION I

(Two alternatives: draw a poster with solutions and provide an explanation. Or make a "TV show" about it using your phone. For example, in a newsreel format or advice show format. The goal is to answer the above questions.)

- ❖ "HELPERS". The fourth group discusses what those who were doing the excluding could do in this situation (should they say what was bothering them, how to do it without hurting anyone and causing further exclusion, etc.)? How to talk about the impact of the behaviour?

(Alternatively: a monologue by the excluder)

- ❖ "ANALYSTS". The fifth group formulates as precisely as possible the problems that arose in this video. What was the problem? What bothered people or caused the problem? State the perspectives of all parties.

(Alternatively: Analysts will write an article in collaboration with other groups and publish the article (or read it out in front of the class), but if it seems too work-intensive, it can be left as homework.)

---

## 7. PRESENTATION OF THE WORK (15 MIN)

---

**After the group work, each group must present their work (see the previous section for options). Ask the others to listen carefully and later answer:** Is such an output or proposed solution realistic in real life? Would it work? Why?

*For further thinking: This topic can be integrated with other subjects, such as literature, characters, history: what literary characters have experienced social exclusion?*

---

## 7. Q&A (2 MIN)

---

### SUMMARY AND ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS.

*If there are questions that you do not have time to answer, explain that you will continue with this topic in the next class and these questions will be answered. If necessary, search for further information or literature on the subject or direct the students to research it.*

---

## 8. HOMEWORK, OPTIONAL (2 MIN)

---

### Ask the students to write down:

Think of similar situations where you were excluded and what you could have done in that situation. How did you feel? How did it affect you? When describing the situation, make sure to avoid blaming the other party and describe your own feelings and thoughts, without assuming the other party's thoughts and feelings or making assumptions about their motivation.

*Insist on this task over any initial objections or responses that there haven't been any such cases. If, after thinking this over, students continue to insist they can't think of any, give an alternative task: think about what you could do next time you notice exclusion happening. But even in this case, it should be a real-life situation witnessed by the student.*

# SOCIAL EXCLUSION



Math class. Emma is an enthusiastic student who wants to get deep into topics and doesn't mind mathematics or tests, because she is very interested in mathematics, even if she doesn't understand everything right away. However, her questions and enthusiasm can bother her classmates, especially when their pleasantly test-free school day is at risk. During the break, Emma experiences subtle, almost imperceptible, yet very real social exclusion that is difficult to deal with.

This educational video is intended as an example situation to initiate a discussion and begin to analyse different perspectives. It does not provide direct instructions for acting in the situation, but plays out a situation that many will find familiar. Finding solutions and different perspectives (the excluded, the excluders, bystanders) will be left for the following lesson.

## SOCIAL EXCLUSION II

# SOCIAL EXCLUSION II

## KEY TERMS

- ❖ Dealing with social exclusion
- ❖ I-messages



## TOOLBOX

I-MESSAGES



CARING



PERSPECTIVE



LISTENING



OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE



## PREPARATIONS

- ❖ Watch the video once more in advance.
- ❖ Have the film "Social Exclusion" ready to play.
- ❖ Prepare to show the video in class. You'll need a computer, a screen and speakers. Make sure the equipment works before the class begins.

## NOTE:

- ❖ Various parties can and should intervene: the person being excluded, anyone noticing the exclusion.

## 1. INTRODUCTION (3 MIN)

Last time we watched a video of a girl who was being excluded. Today, it is your task to end this story. Let's start by re-watching this clip to let those who were absent catch up and remind the others of what happened. We will then split into groups. Each group will present their own ending of this story in front of the class.

## 2. VIDEO CLIP (3 MIN)

Let's watch the whole clip again.

## 3. GROUP WORK (20 MIN)

Work with your group to prepare an ending to this clip. You can approach it from a different angle, e.g. the point of view from the excluded girl, or the perspective of a bystander; feel free to add characters, set the situation at home, etc. Your play should be 3-7 minutes long.

## 4. PRESENTING THE PLAYS (25 MIN)

Let's look at the solutions found by the groups. Would anyone like to go first? Your group? Very good.

*You could let at least 3-4 groups present their work, more if the time allows. You can either discuss each play immediately after it is presented or let everybody present their plays first, ask others to take notes, and end with a general discussion of all plays.*

### Ask the class:



- ❖ How did the preparation of the plays go and what was the most difficult part?

*Discuss solutions with them. Remind them of the tools and the need for understanding.*

## 5. COMMENT (5 MIN)

### MORE ABOUT SOCIAL EXCLUSION FROM A PERSPECTIVE OF SELF-MANAGEMENT:



## EFFECTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT I. CONFLICT

# EFFECTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

## I. CONFLICT

### KEY TERMS

- ❖ Conflict
- ❖ Styles of approach to conflict: avoidance, surrender, competition, compromise, cooperation
- ❖ Stress reactions: fighting, flight, freezing
- ❖ I-messages
- ❖ Active listening, reflection



### TOOLBOX

I-MESSAGES



CARING



PERSPECTIVE



LISTENING, REFLECTION



NOTICING FEELINGS



IDENTIFICATION OF NEED



### WHAT WE WON'T NEED:

ACCUSATIONS



## 1. INTRODUCTION (2 MIN)

*Tell the class:*

Let's start with a video clip.

## 2. VIDEO CLIP "CONFLICT" (5 MIN) AND GENERAL DISCUSSION (7 MIN)

*Show the clip "Conflict" until the end of the video.*

*Discuss with the class what they saw and what such situations feel like.*

### Optionally, ask the class:



- ❖ What did you see?
- ❖ What did the mother do (generalise, make comparisons, minimise the problem, compare with herself)?
- ❖ What did Gloria do (argue, leave, avoid talking)?
- ❖ Have you had similar situations?
- ❖ How do you feel in such situations?
- ❖ What do you think the mother felt?
- ❖ What could the mother do differently?
- ❖ What could Gloria do?

## 3. INTRODUCTION TO THE EXERCISE (3 MIN)

*Ask students to write the following words in 2 columns (for mother and Gloria separately) on the page: feelings, needs, wants, values. The task is to write in each column what the feelings, needs, etc. of the mother and the daughter each might be.*

*For example, Gloria's values might say that she is learning for herself and grades are not important; her mother's values may say that the better you learn, the better off you will be in life. The mother may need to feel like a successful parent; Gloria may feel the need to spend as little time as possible on uninteresting subjects.*

EFFECTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT I. CONFLICT

DEFENSIVENESS 

JUDGEMENTS 

**PREPARATIONS**

- ❖ Watch the video once more in advance.
- ❖ Have the film "Conflict" ready to play.
- ❖ Prepare to show the video in class. You'll need a computer, a screen and speakers. Make sure the equipment works before the class begins.

**NOTE:**

- ❖ Conflict can arise when there is a disagreement on a subject that is important to us and strong negative emotions occur.
- ❖ If we want to calm down an angry person, it is useful to keep in mind their needs. Generally, an angry person wants to feel noticed, listened to, and understood.

**MY NOTES:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**4. INDIVIDUAL (5) AND PAIR WORK (8 MIN)**

*Perform the task described above first individually, then discuss it with a neighbour.*

**5. THEORY. DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO CONFLICTS (15 MIN)**

Tell the class: Conflict is a clash of interests, opinions, needs or values. As with many negative feelings, conflicts are often driven by the unmet needs of one or more people (you can read more about needs in the "Contesting a Grade" lessons and the materials on I-messages). However, not every disagreement has to lead to a conflict. It is often possible to disagree on something completely calmly. Conflict can arise, however, when we feel that disagreement or the subject of conflict is important to us and strong negative emotions come into play.

How we respond to a conflict depends on the person and the situation. Some of the conflict styles we may notice about ourselves or others follow. However, not all of them are necessarily effective in resolving conflicts.

**1. Conflict avoidance**

Sometimes people try to avoid a conflict by, for example, turning it into a joke, changing the subject, or denying that there is a problem. Conflict tends to be unpleasant, so avoidance can be used to protect oneself and avoid discomfort. Sometimes, people hope that the conflict will resolve itself without intervention.

**Ask the class:**



- ❖ How about you? Have you noticed that you use this style? Or have you noticed this in others?

**Comment:**

Of course, we do not have to get into a conflict over every disagreement, and sometimes we can decide that an issue is not important enough for us to spend energy on. However, when it comes to an important issue or relationship, habitual conflict avoidance tends to be detrimental. Unexpressed negative feelings can accumulate over time, and situations that bother us may keep recurring.

## EFFECTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT I. CONFLICT

**2. Surrendering**

A surrendering style means that we care more about the needs and feelings of others than our own. In this case, we are willing to sacrifice our own needs to some extent in order to maintain a good relationship with the other person and support their well-being.

**Ask the class:**

- ❖ How about you? Do you sometimes give in? Or do you expect the other party to give in?

**Comment:**

Such altruism may be appropriate in some situations. For example, we may give in to the wishes of somebody else when the subject is more important to them than it is to us, or when we realise that we were wrong. However, prioritising the wishes of the other too often or on very important topics is not the best option, as our own unmet needs and wants may be overlooked.

**3. Competing**

Competing is the opposite of surrendering. In this case, one prioritises only their own interests, ignoring the needs of others. Conflict is seen as a situation in which one either wins or loses, so we try to impose our opinion on the other.

**Ask the class:**

- ❖ What do you think of that way? How does it seem to you?
- ❖ What if the other person uses it?

**Comment:**

Such extreme self-assertion is generally appropriate only in exceptional situations where a very quick decision is needed and we know we are right. In everyday life, however, this approach to conflict tends to breed negative feelings because other people feel that their needs are not being taken into account.

**4. Making compromises**

When making compromises, we value justice and place an average importance to the needs of both ourselves and others. In this case, we believe that if we make some concessions to the other, they will respond in the same way. Both sides "win" and "lose" something.

**Ask the class:**

- ❖ How is a compromise different from surrendering? Fighting?
- ❖ In what situations can it be useful?

---

## EFFECTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT I. CONFLICT

---

**Comment:**

Compromise can be useful in situations where the sides have differing views that cannot be immediately changed and finding a quick (perhaps temporary) solution is desired. At the same time, making compromises fails to deal with the deeper reasons of the problem or the emotions that arise in the conflict. Such a solution may be faster and take less energy, but for major or recurring conflicts or important relationships, the cooperative style may be more useful.

**5. Cooperation**

In the case of a cooperative strategy, we place a high importance on the needs and feelings of ourselves and the other person alike. With the cooperative style, we take the time to truly understand the other's perspective and try to find a solution where both parties "win". This style is useful in situations where the issue is important to both parties, where we want to truly understand each other's views, or where we want to deal in depth with the causes of the conflict or the emotions that have arisen.

Collaboration can help find a more lasting solution and keep your relationship stronger. This often makes it the best strategy for resolving important conflicts.

---

## 6. THEORY. COPING WITH NEGATIVE EMOTIONS (12 MIN)

---

**Tell the class:**

Conflicts usually cause negative emotions. This is natural, but if the emotions that arise are very strong, we may not be able to focus on resolving the conflict. Therefore, we often need the skills to deal with both our own stress and the other person's reactions before we can calmly focus on resolving the conflict.

People may react differently to the stress of a conflict. A distinction is made between so-called fighting, flight and freezing reactions. In the case of a fighting reaction, the person feels angry or irritated and starts e.g. arguing, blaming or otherwise fighting the other party. In the case of a flight reaction, the aim is to get out of the conflict as soon as possible. This can be done, for example, by leaving the room or by checking out of the conversation emotionally or ignoring the other. In the case of freezing, the person feels irritated, but is unable to react to it externally. So they tense up and "freeze" in action.

These reactions, however, do not usually help to resolve the conflict. For example, it can be difficult to deal with an angry person because people in this state may not be capable of resolving disputes peacefully. In addition, other people's anger can provoke defensive reactions within us (see the lesson "Contesting a Grade" on defensiveness), and the conflict can become more and more intense. If we want to calm down an angry person, it is useful to keep in mind their needs. Generally, an angry person wants to feel noticed, listened to, and understood. If we ignore the other or start arguing with them right away, they may feel that their feelings and point of view are not understood. So it is useful to be attentive and patient. It is also helpful to exhibit empathy and show that we are trying to understand the other's feelings and thoughts. Active listening techniques such as reflection, rephrasing, clarification and friendly body language are helpful here (see the teacher's reading materials on active listening). If the other person is angry with us, apologising and asserting that we understand the problem and want to find a solution can also help.

---

## 7. GROUP WORK EXERCISE (15 MIN)

---

**Ask students to divide into groups of four. Go through the situation seen in the video. One group member plays the mother, the other plays the daughter (and the other two are observers who later comment on how it came out and what could be better), but in such a way that the daughter reflects the mother's sentences, feelings or needs and listens with the aim of letting the irritated party calm down before**

EFFECTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT I. CONFLICT

---

*anything else happens. The roles are then switched: the observers act out the situation and the actors observe.*

*If necessary, recall the previous lessons' principles of I-messages and active listenin.*

---

## **8. COMMENT (3 MIN)**

---

### **CONFLICT AVOIDANCE**

To avoid conflicts, you should also try to avoid certain mistakes : generalising ("You always ..."), minimising the problem ("It's not a problem!"), denying the others' feelings ("Don't worry!"), comparing ("Your sister is better..."), comparing with yourself ("I would do it differently"). Remember: others are not you, and this is natural, so they cannot be asked to act like you.

# CONFLICT



The mother finds out that her daughter got a "3" in history and this does not please her at all, especially since this is the daughter's second "3" this month. She is concerned about the child's learning progress (and, as it turns out, her health and habits) and expresses it in a way that inevitably leads to conflict. The mother's approach demonstrates ways that are often used in conflict situations, but that do nothing to improve communication: comparison with others, comparison with oneself, one's past experience, accusations, judgement, opposition, etc. The conflict escalates and culminates with the parties storming out, but after the conflict, the clip cuts to a "silent film" scene, where everybody at the dinner table is aware of the tension, but nobody talks about it.

The aim of the film is to show a typical conflict situation in order to analyse typical communication errors and the causes of conflicts.

---

## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

---

A conflict is a clash of interests, opinions, needs or values. As with many negative feelings, conflicts are often driven by the unmet needs of one or more people (you can read more about needs in the "Disputing a Grade" lessons and the materials on I-messages). However, not every disagreement has to lead to a conflict. It is often possible to disagree on something completely calmly. Conflict can arise, however, when we feel that disagreement or the subject of conflict is important to us and strong negative emotions come into play.

### Different approaches to conflicts

How we respond to a conflict depends on the person and the situation. Some of the conflict styles we may notice about ourselves or others follow (Schaubhut, 2007). However, not all of them are necessarily effective in resolving conflicts.

#### 1. Conflict avoidance

Sometimes people try to avoid a conflict by, for example, turning it into a joke, changing the subject, or denying that there is a problem. Conflict tends to be unpleasant, so avoidance can be used to protect oneself and avoid discomfort. Sometimes, people hope that the conflict will resolve itself without intervention. Of course, we do not have to get into a conflict over every disagreement, and sometimes we can decide that an issue is not important enough for us to spend energy on. However, when it comes to an important issue or relationship, habitual conflict avoidance tends to be detrimental. Unexpressed negative feelings can accumulate over time, and situations that bother us may keep recurring (Forsyth, 2018).

#### 2. Surrendering

A surrendering style means that we care more about the needs and feelings of others than our own. In this case, we are willing to sacrifice our own needs to some extent in order to maintain a good relationship with the other person and support their well-being. Such altruism may be appropriate in some situations. For example, we may give in to the wishes of somebody else when the subject is more important to them than it is to us, or when we realise that we were wrong. However, prioritising the wishes of the other too often or on very important topics is not the best option, as our own unmet needs and wants may be overlooked.

#### 3. Competing

Competing is the opposite of surrendering. In this case, one prioritises only their own interests, ignoring the needs of others. Conflict is seen as a situation in which one either wins or loses, so we try to impose our opinion on the other. Such extreme self-assertion is generally appropriate only in exceptional situations where a very quick decision is needed and we know we are right. In everyday life, however, this approach to conflict tends to breed negative feelings because other people feel that their needs are not being taken into account.

#### 4. Making compromises

When making compromises, we value justice and place an average importance to the needs of both ourselves and others. In this case, we believe that if we make some concessions to the other, they will respond in the same way.

Both sides "win" and "lose" something. Compromise can be useful in situations where the sides have differing views that cannot be immediately changed and finding a quick (perhaps temporary) solution is desired. At the same time, making compromises fails to deal with the deeper reasons of the problem or the emotions that arise in the conflict. Such a solution may be faster and take less energy, but for major or recurring conflicts or important relationships, the cooperative style may be more useful.

## 5. Cooperation

In the case of a cooperative strategy, we place a high importance on the needs and feelings of ourselves and the other person alike. With the cooperative style, we take the time to truly understand the other's perspective and try to find a solution where both parties "win". This style is useful in situations where the issue is important to both parties, where we want to truly understand each other's views, or where we want to deal in depth with the causes of the conflict or the emotions that have arisen. Collaboration can help find a more lasting solution and keep your relationship stronger. This often makes it the best strategy for resolving important conflicts.

## Effective conflict management

### Coping with negative emotions

Conflicts usually cause negative emotions. This is natural, but if the emotions that arise are very strong, we may not be able to focus on resolving the conflict. Therefore, we often need the skills to deal with both our own stress and the other person's reactions before we can calmly focus on resolving the conflict.

People may react differently to the stress of conflict (Segal, Robinson & Smith, 2020). The possible reactions are divided into fighting, flight and freezing. In the case of a **fight** reaction, the person feels angry or irritated and starts e.g. arguing, blaming or otherwise fighting the other party. In the case of a **flight reaction**, the aim is to get out of the conflict as soon as possible. This can be done, for example, by leaving the room or by checking out of the conversation emotionally or ignoring the other. In the case of **freezing**, the person feels irritated, but is unable to react to it externally. So they tense up and "freeze" in action.

These reactions, however, do not usually help to resolve the conflict. For example, it can be difficult to deal with an angry person because people in this state may not be capable of resolving disputes peacefully. In addition, other people's anger can provoke defensive reactions within us (see the lesson "Disputing a Grade" on defensiveness), and the conflict can become more and more intense. If we want to calm an angry person, it is helpful to consider their needs (Clare Norman Coaching Associates, 2018). Generally, an angry person wants to feel noticed, listened to, and understood. If we ignore the other or start arguing with them right away, they may feel that their feelings and point of view are not understood. So it is useful to be attentive and patient. It is also helpful to exhibit empathy and show that we are trying to understand the other's feelings and thoughts. Active listening techniques such as reflection, rephrasing, clarification and friendly body language are helpful here (see the material on listening). If the other person is angry with us, apologising and asserting that we understand the problem and want to find a solution can also help.

It is also important to **stay calm** when reassuring another person. It can be difficult, but like other skills, it can be practiced. Some strategies for dealing with your own negative emotions include breathing calmly and consciously relaxing your body (American Friends Service Committee. Respectful listening and dialogue curriculum). Another useful strategy is mindfulness, i.e. focusing our attention on the sensations we are currently experiencing, or, for example, imagining looking at the situation from a distance. It can also be helpful to keep in mind that sometimes, the anger of the other (or ourselves) can involve factors other than the behaviour of the other party. For example, stress or fatigue can make people more irritable, and while our conversation partner may say something offensive or hurtful in that state, we don't necessarily have to react with anger. In the case of very strong emotions, it can help to take some time to calm down, change the environment, or do something else in the meantime to return to the topic of

## TEACHER'S READING MATERIALS CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

conflict once tempers have had time to cool down. You can read more about various self-calming techniques in the self-management materials.

*PS: Calming down another person and yourself is generally possible and beneficial, but security is paramount. If you feel unsafe in the situation or the conflict starts turning aggressive, leave the situation or get help.*

**Conflict Resolution**

When we feel that we and our conversation partner are able to talk about the problem more or less calmly, we can start solving the problem. If we choose a cooperative strategy, we can use I-messages and listening techniques, which are discussed in more detail elsewhere in the materials. Listening to another person's thoughts and feelings and communicating your opinions without blaming the other contributes to mutual understanding. In this way, we can work together to find solutions that satisfy both parties. We don't always have to agree with the other – sometimes we may end up disagreeing, but at least we have a better understanding and we can still reach a compromise. At the same time, it is worth remembering that resolving conflicts this way takes time and energy. When it comes to a relationship or topic that is not particularly important to us, or when a conflict seems to be rooted in a recurring or fundamental difference in values (see the lesson on the band, i.e. values), getting into the conflict or dealing with it in depth may not be sensible.

**References:**

American Friends Service Committee. Respectful listening and dialogue curriculum

<https://www.afsc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Respectful%20Listening%20and%20Dialogue%20Curriculum.pdf>

Clare Norman Coaching Associates (2018). Managing Conflict – Handout

<https://www.clarenormancoachingassociates.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Managing-Conflict.pdf>

Forsyth, D. R. (2018). *Group dynamics*. Cengage Learning.

Schaubhut, N. A. (2007). Thomas-Kilmann conflict mode instrument. *CPP Research Department*.

<https://www.skillsone.com/Pdfs/smp248248.pdf>

Segal, J., Robinson, L., & Smith, M. (2020). Conflict Resolution Skills. <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships-communication/conflict-resolution-skills.htm?pdf=13749>

## EFFECTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT II. AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

# EFFECTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT II. AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

## KEY TERMS

- ❖ Conflict
- ❖ Aggression
- ❖ Listening, reflection
- ❖ Obstacles to listening: comparing, mind-reading, arguing, giving advice too soon, preparing for one's own turn to speak, selective hearing, judging and prejudice, focusing too much on one's own experiences.



## TOOLBOX

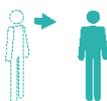
PERSPECTIVE



LISTENING, REFLECTION



OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE



## WHAT WE WON'T NEED:

ACCUSATIONS



JUDGEMENTS



## 1. INTRODUCTION (2 MIN)

*Tell the class:*

Let's start with a video clip.

## 2. VIDEO CLIP "DEVELOPMENT INTERVIEW" (5 MIN)

*Show the video clip "Development Interview" until the question "How to behave when you encounter an aggressive communication style?" appears on the screen.*

## 3. WORK IN PAIRS (6 MIN) AND GENERAL DISCUSSION (5 MIN)

Discuss with your partner whether you have encountered situations where the person you're talking to is aggressive or angry and what you have done in such cases.

**Ask the class:**



- ❖ What did you see?
- ❖ Have you had similar situations?
- ❖ How do you feel in such situations?
- ❖ What have you done in such cases?
- ❖ Do you think anything can be done at all?

## 4. THEORY (10 MIN)

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION

If we want to calm down an angry person, it is useful to keep in mind their needs. Generally, an angry person wants to feel noticed, listened to, and understood. If we ignore the other or start arguing with them right away, they may feel that their feelings and point of view are not understood. So it is useful to be attentive and patient. It is also helpful to exhibit empathy and show that we are trying to understand the other's feelings and thoughts. Active listening techniques such as reflection, rephrasing, clarification and friendly body language are helpful here (see the teacher's reading materials on

EFFECTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT II. AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

**PREPARATIONS**

- ❖ Watch the video once more in advance.
- ❖ Have the clip "Development Interview" ready to play.
- ❖ Prepare to show the video in class. You'll need a computer, a screen and speakers. Make sure the equipment works before the class begins.
- ❖ You will need the worksheets "Obstacles to Listening" and an hourglass or timer

**NOTE:**

- ❖ Listening to another person's thoughts and feelings and communicating your opinions without blaming the other contributes to mutual understanding.
- ❖ It is also important to stay calm when reassuring another person.
- ❖ Obstacles to listening are patterns that should be avoided because they make real listening and understanding more difficult and can even lead to conflict.

**MY NOTES:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

active listening). If the other person is angry with us, apologising and asserting that we understand the problem and want to find a solution can also help.

When we feel that we and our conversation partner are able to talk about the problem more or less calmly, we can start solving the problem. This is where I-messages and active listening come in handy. Listening to another person's thoughts and feelings and communicating your opinions without blaming the other contributes to mutual understanding. In this way, we can work together to find solutions that satisfy both parties. We don't always have to agree with the other – sometimes we may end up disagreeing, but at least we have a better understanding and we can still reach a compromise.

At the same time, it is worth remembering that resolving conflicts this way takes time and energy. When it comes to a relationship or topic that is not particularly important to us, or when a conflict seems to be rooted in a recurring or fundamental difference in values (see the lesson on the band, i.e. values), getting into the conflict or dealing with it in depth may not be sensible.

**Now, review the theory on active listening techniques with the class:**

- ❖ **Reflecting**
- ❖ **Clarification**
- ❖ **Paraphrasing**
- ❖ **Giving short summaries**

**5. WATCH THE VIDEO CLIP "DEVELOPMENT INTERVIEW" TO THE END (3 MIN)**

*Play the video clip until the end.*

**6. WORK IN PAIRS. ROLE PLAY: REFLECTION (10 MIN)**

**PRACTICE IN PAIRS.**

First, one student takes the role of the mother and the other plays the daughter (son), then the roles are switched. The situation is as follows: The daughter (son) comes home late, the mother is worried and angry because the child did not call and came home several hours late. The exercise has two stages. In the first, play through the situation without using any listening or reflection skills, "raw". Both the mother and the child can be upset, justify themselves, just like conflicts can escalate in real life. It's a noisy but highly educational experience. After that, the participants will discuss with the whole class what it was like to be in each role and what it felt like not to be listened to.

---

## EFFECTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT II. AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

---

The situation is then revisited. This time, the mother uses reflection, does not express an opinion at all, only listens. Afterwards, the class will again come together to discuss how each of them felt in this situation, what they experienced and what they learned.

---

### 7. THEORY. STAYING CALM (5 MIN)

---

It is also important to stay calm when reassuring another person. It can be difficult, but like other skills, it can be practiced. Some strategies for dealing with your own negative emotions include:

- ❖ Calming your breathing
- ❖ Conscious relaxation of your body
- ❖ Mindfulness, i.e. attention to the sensations we are currently experiencing
- ❖ Imagining that we are observing the situation from a distance.

It can also be helpful to keep in mind that sometimes, the anger of the other (or ourselves) can involve factors other than the behaviour of the other party. For example, stress or fatigue can make people more irritable, and while our conversation partner may say something offensive or hurtful in that state, we don't necessarily have to react with anger.

In the case of very strong emotions, it can help to take some time to calm down, change the environment, or do something else in the meantime to return to the topic of conflict once tempers have had time to cool down.

*You can learn more about the different self-calming techniques in the upcoming lessons on self-management.*

---

### 8. OBSTACLES TO LISTENING. INTRODUCTION TO THE EXERCISE (3 MIN)

---

**Tell the class:**

Active listening is often difficult because we tend to do things that don't really contribute to understanding the other person. Obstacles to listening are patterns that should be avoided because they make real listening and understanding more difficult and can even lead to conflict.

Now please form groups (4 groups in total) and I will give each group a description of an obstacle to listening, which is something that hinders listening to others attentively and understanding them. Each group thinks about how to convey the nature of their obstacle to the others without words, through a pantomime, and others need to guess the obstacle to listening. This is a version of the well-known game "Alias", where some students demonstrate a concept and the rest of the class guesses at it. When the topic is guessed (or if it is not guessed), the group briefly introduces the obstacle to listening to the class and then sticks their worksheet on the wall. **Each group has 3 minutes to discuss how to do it or what they could do, and then 3 minutes to present their concept to others.**

---

### 9. GROUP OR PAIR WORK (3 MIN)

---

**Cut up the worksheets with the 4 obstacles to listening and hand them out to the groups: COMPARING, MIND-READING, ARGUING, GIVING ADVICE TOO SOON (page 1).**

**Group work follows. Students discuss how best to introduce their obstacle to fellow students and decide on who does what. The pantomime can be performed by one person from the group, a pair, or the whole group.**

## EFFECTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT II. AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

**10. "ALIAS" (21 MIN)**

**The groups will then present their pantomimes.** There are 3 minutes to guess each obstacle (NB! Use an hourglass or a timer!). This is followed by a short (1-2 min) comment by the group or teacher (review the introductions to the obstacles to listening on the worksheets distributed to the students; if the students leave out something important, add it). The total time should not exceed 4 minutes per group/pair/performer (16 minutes in total). Don't forget to stick the worksheet on the wall after each pantomime.

**After these performances, give an overview of the remaining four obstacles on page 2 (5 min):**

Preparing for your own turn to speak

Selective hearing

Judgements and prejudice

Excessive focus on your own experiences

Finally, a set of 8 methods (4 presented by the teacher and 4 by the students) is displayed on the wall.

**Ask the class:**

- ❖ How did it feel? Was it easy to guess?
- ❖ What did you take away from the lesson?
- ❖ Have you used any of these before?

**I. SUMMARY (2 MIN)**

**Summarise the key points.**

# DEVELOPMENT INTERVIEW



The theme of this film is coping with an aggressive communication style. In a way, the film is a sequel to "Conflict", where your mother's aggressive behaviour raised questions about what to do if someone yelled at you and blamed you. This time, two possible courses of action are shown: what happens when you try to silence an aggressive person, "calm them down", try to reject their emotion and argue with them, and what happens when you use listening techniques instead of arguing and try to understand the partner better instead of opposing them.

The mother, the student and the teacher are conducting a development interview, and in the first part of the film, the teacher is taken aback by the mother's accusations against the school and the teacher. Unable to anticipate the attack and trying to find justice in the situation, the teacher tries to draw the mother's attention to the goals of the developmental interview ("Let's listen to the student first") and direct her feelings ("Calm down!"), but to no avail. In the second part, the teacher knows how to communicate with the aggressive mother, listen to her and examine her negativity, while avoiding arguing. As a result, the mother feels that she is being listened to and attempts are made to understand her, and as a result, she becomes calm and cooperative. The film teaches how to handle an aggressive person, as well as the distinction between effective and ineffective calming techniques, and the use of an exploratory and understanding attitude instead of confrontation.

## DRAWING COMPARISONS

---

It is very natural to compare another person's experience with our own, but bringing up certain comparisons can be detrimental to the conversation. For example, if someone tells us about their problem, we may think it's not such a big deal at all, because we have much bigger problems. Or, for example, we might think that we wouldn't get upset over something so small, we wouldn't have gotten into such a situation, and so on. All of this may even be true, but expressing such thoughts does not help the speaker in the slightest. We do not want to make the speaker feel that their worries are not big enough or that their feelings are not "correct".

---

## MIND-READING

---

Mind-reading means that instead of listening, we focus on making unfounded assumptions about the speaker. For example, thoughts like "He says he wants to spend time with me, but I bet he doesn't really want to" or "He must be thinking I'm stupid." Instead of paying attention to what the speaker is actually saying, we are trying to guess what they are "really" thinking without confirming these assumptions.

---

## ARGUING

---

If the other says something we disagree with, we may be tempted to argue. However, if we focus on arguing, we will not be able to really listen to the other. Active listening does not mean that we need to agree with the other person's views or that we should not express an opinion. However, we should try to understand the other person - why they think or feel the way they do.

---

## OFFERING ADVICE TOO SOON

---

When someone tells us about their problems, we often feel that we should give them some advice. Giving advice is not bad in itself - sometimes we have good ideas to help the other, and sometimes people come specifically to ask for advice. However, this may not always be the only thing your conversation partner needs. They may need the listener to genuinely listen to them and acknowledge the way they feel. Maybe they're not looking for advice, just for understanding or a chance to talk about their problem. Therefore, if the speaker is experiencing a negative emotion, it is useful to first let them talk about the problem and only then give advice if necessary.

# PREPARING FOR YOUR OWN TURN TO SPEAK

---

It is also natural to think about what we are going to say before our next sentence. This is often good because it allows us to phrase our thoughts as well as possible, instead of saying whatever crosses the mind. Sometimes, however, preparing for your own turn to speak may start interfering with listening. Suppose, for example, that the speaker starts talking, and we are struck by an idea that we think would be a great way for them to solve their problem. Then we practice the wording of the idea and impatiently wait for our turn. At the same time, however, we no longer pay full attention to the speaker's story, and it may be that in the meantime the speaker mentioned some other important details that would have helped us realise that our idea was not as appropriate as we thought. It can also happen, for example, that we feel we do not know what to say. So we keep thinking about what to say next, and again, we don't really pay attention to the speaker. In this case, it would be better to listen to the speaker and take some time to formulate your thoughts before answering instead.

---

## SELECTIVE HEARING

---

Selective hearing means we only listen to certain things, but not others. For example, we may be afraid that a friend is angry with us, and we will focus on looking for any signs that may clarify this suspicion. As soon as we hear, for example, that a friend isn't really angry, we feel relieved, let our thoughts drift away and no longer pay attention to the conversation. Another example of selective hearing is avoiding acknowledging certain messages. For example, we might avoid listening to messages that seem negative, critical, or unpleasant.

---

## JUDGEMENTS AND PREJUDICE

---

If we have a negative prejudice about a person before talking to them, we probably won't pay enough attention to what they are actually saying. We may also pass premature judgement of some of the ideas or thoughts that the speaker is expressing (e.g. it is silly/hypocritical/crazy, etc.) without first listening to what they have to say.

---

## EXCESSIVE FOCUS ON YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES

---

Often enough, another person's story reminds us of something in our own lives. Sharing these experiences can be good - for example, it may be comforting or exciting for a speaker to hear that the listener has experienced a similar problem, understands their feelings, and may be able to give advice. However, before describing your experience, you should take enough time to listen to the other person and focus on their experience. Different people may experience even very similar situations differently, so without listening to the other person, we may not really know how they feel. If we respond to each point only with our own stories, without letting the other person finish theirs, we can't really get to know or help them.

## SELF-MANAGEMENT I

## SELF-MANAGEMENT I

### KEY TERMS

- ❖ Event
- ❖ Focusing
- ❖ Interpretation
- ❖ Reappraisal
- ❖ Reaction
- ❖ The position of observer
- ❖ Emotion as a choice
- ❖ Action plan



### TOOLBOX

NOTICING FEELINGS



IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS



UNDERSTANDING MEANING



OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE



### PREPARATIONS

- ❖ Have the film "Anxiety" ready to play.
- ❖ Prepare to show the video in class. You'll need a computer, a screen and speakers. Make sure the equipment works before the class begins.
- ❖ Have some paper and markers for taking notes.
- ❖ Worksheet: "Emotion regulation"
- ❖ Worksheet "Self-Management: Basic Scheme"

## 1. INTRODUCTION (2 MIN)

*Tell the class:*

We have now explored resolving a variety of complex situations using numerous examples. But often, the most complicated part is managing your own feelings: how to regulate your own emotions without getting stuck for too long in your negative feelings such as anger or resentment. All of the previous topics are related to this and include self-management and coping with one's own feelings in one way or another. Self-management requires the ability to observe yourself from an external position and analyse your own feelings and thoughts.

## 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE VIDEO (2 MIN)

Today we are watching a video taken from school life. See if you are familiar with this situation.

## 3. VIDEO CLIP "ANXIETY" (3 MIN)

*Show the clip "Anxiety" from start to finish.*

*Ask the class:*



- ❖ What did you see?
- ❖ Have you been in such situations?
- ❖ If you have experienced similar situations yourself, how have you felt in such situations?

## 4. GROUP WORK (10 MIN)

**DISCUSS IN GROUPS OF 2-4 MEMBERS:**

- ❖ What did you see?
- ❖ Have you experienced anything like this yourself?
- ❖ How do you usually behave in such situations? How do you get out of them? Have you got any good suggestions? Is there anything that could be done at all?

SELF-MANAGEMENT I

**NOTE:**

- ❖ An emotion begins with a past or future situation or event. The brain responds by focusing on certain information. The person then interprets the situation, i.e. gives a subjective meaning to what is happening. The reaction is ultimately expressed as an emotion with the accompanying physical and mental changes.
- ❖ Our reactions stem from the assessments we make of the situation.
- ❖ It is important to understand that you can influence your own feelings, even choose them, and that it is not good for your health to get stuck in negative emotions for too long.

**HOMEWORK**

Write up behaviour maps for a possible future difficult situation: How will you deal with such a situation in the future? What is your action plan? What are you going to practice ahead of time? Write down your thoughts (behaviour instructions) on each card and save them for future reference.

**MY NOTES:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**5. INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE (10 MIN)**

**The teacher tells their own anxiety story** (something they experienced at school, something they witnessed, something that happened to their students, etc.). *Note: Try to tell a personal story for each topic – students like to hear about the teacher's personal experience, and it contributes to mutual openness. Most of us have some first-hand experience with anxiety.*

**Tell the class:**

Think of a situation that was emotionally difficult for you. It could be a difficult communication situation or a moment of conflict, fear, social exclusion, despair, anxiety, resentment, or anger. How do these feelings impact you? Which of these feelings would you like to feel less? **Draw a picture or diagram** and add keywords to it.

*You can put on background music for this exercise. It is important to focus on this issue for some time, so the students should be able to think and write or draw without distraction.*

**6. GENERAL DISCUSSION AND COMMENTS (10 MIN)**

**Ask the class:**

- ❖ Are negative feelings good?
- ❖ In what situations can they be useful?
- ❖ How do these feelings impact you?
- ❖ Which of these feelings would you like to feel less?

**Discuss whether negative feelings are good and in which cases they can be helpful (e.g.: anger as a motivator or energy accumulator; anxiety can motivate you to do tasks carefully and properly; etc.). In which situations is it not helpful to feel negative feelings for too long?**

**Comment:**

Negative feelings are useful and acceptable in some situations, but often people tend to "get stuck" on negative emotions for too long. Negative feelings consume your energy, whereas positive feelings bring solutions and have a positive effect on your health and even life expectancy.

## SELF-MANAGEMENT I

It is important to understand that you can influence your own feelings, even choose them, and that it is not good for your health to get stuck in negative emotions for too long. So you should decide what feelings you don't want to feel too much because they are harmful, and then practice noticing in what situation and when those feelings hit you. You can then decide how long you want to experience that feeling so that you don't stew in the negative emotion for too long. It is up to you!

## 7. THEORY (19 MIN)

**Hand out the worksheet "Emotion regulation". Explain the scheme of the phases of emotion generation and expression and strategies for changing emotions.**

The emergence of emotions and their expression can be divided into the following four phases (Gross, 1998):



An emotion begins with a past or future SITUATION or EVENT. The brain responds by focusing its ATTENTION on certain information. The person then INTERPRETS the situation, i.e. gives subjective meaning to what is happening. Our REACTIONS thus stem from the assessments we make of the situation. The reaction is ultimately expressed as an emotion with the accompanying physical and mental changes.

Emotion can be dealt with in several ways by intervening in these different phases. However, some possible courses of action are more effective than others.

It is possible to deal with the first phase, i.e. the initial event itself, by trying to avoid situations that cause negative emotions or to try to change such situations. However, this is not always possible and may not work in the long run.

Ways exist to change the ultimately developing emotion in the fourth phase. There are helpful strategies such as working out or going to sleep. However, others, such as suppressing emotions, are generally harmful (see "Teacher's Reading Materials. Emotion regulation.").

Interventions in the second and third phases, i.e. consciously directing your attention and especially reappraisal, are considered to be the most effective. In the attention phase, attention can be diverted away from the negative emotion to focus on the positive instead. However, reappraisal of the situation may be even more effective. Thinking differently about the same event can change its emotional tone.

For example, you can consider the situation an exciting learning opportunity. Or look at the situation as one of a series of incidents you'll experience and overcome in your life. You can ask yourself if you have resolved similar situations before, and remember what you did and how you did it.

**Comment on each strategy listed on the worksheet.** You can find more information and background on this topic, along with references, on the "Teacher's Reading Materials" page. Note: The topic is long and can take time to grasp, so it's a good idea to dedicate several lessons to strategies such as mindfulness and switching. Therefore, review the plan for the next lesson and return to the worksheet in the next class if necessary.

### Comment on the strategies:

Naturally, the choice of strategy also depends on the situation. For example, if the emotion is very intense, it may make more sense to divert your attention elsewhere at first (e.g. focus on breathing, etc.) and only return to reappraising the feeling after a while.

## SELF-MANAGEMENT I

**DEFINING AN ACTION PLAN.**

It is important to make an action plan. What can I do in this situation? What next? So what really happens when the worst comes to pass, and what will I do about it? Specific thoughts leading to an action plan. For example: If we fight and the relationship turns bad, what happens next? What do I do? Will I rebuild the relationship? Decide to move on? Propose something? Etc. What is the worst that can happen? What do I do then? What will I really do?

This is not about not permitting yourself to feel various emotions. Rather, you should decide how long you'll allow yourself to dwell on the emotion.

There is no point in being endlessly sad about things you can't change. So: think about whether you can change anything. If not, it is time to decide how long you'll dwell on this and when you'll move on.

People often get overwhelmed by anxiety, failing to think about an action plan and make decisions. It has to happen, though. Anxiety wears you out and can lead to depression. Making a plan, any plan, reduces anxiety. If the anxiety is so intense that thinking is impossible, use physical techniques to relieve the anxiety (breathing exercises, body scanning, mindfulness exercises).

**Ask the class:**

- ❖ What breathing exercises do you know or use?
- ❖ What self-calming techniques have you used?

**Comment:**

In the next lesson, we'll look at some techniques that you may find helpful in the future.

**8. INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE (10 MIN)**

**Hand out the worksheet "Self-Management: Basic Scheme"**

**Tell the class:**

Come back to the picture or diagram you drew about your situation and describe (write/categorise) the situation according to the keywords (Notice, Name, Describe, Decide, Act). Write down keywords for the action plan (What can you do in this situation? What options do I have? Write a summary with the key points of each question.

**9. GENERAL DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY (6 MIN)**

**Ask for the student's thoughts and comments about the task.**

**SUMMARY:**

- ❖ NOTICE (What is happening? How important is this situation or person to me really? What is happening to my emotions? Am I upset? Would I like to change my emotion?)
- ❖ NAME (What feeling are you experiencing?)
- ❖ DESCRIBE (What is the need that is not met?)

SELF-MANAGEMENT I

---

- ❖ DECIDE what you want to do about that feeling. What is the quickest way to get over it?
- ❖ ACT (Reappraise the situation for yourself, use different perspectives, make an action plan, etc.)

*The key takeaway should be that you can choose and manage your feelings, but it must be the focus of your attention, the most important thing for you at that time. The ability to choose what to focus on and to shape your mood is an indisputable part of the art of living (M. Pank).*

---

## 10. HOMEWORK (3 MIN)

---

Draw up behaviour maps for a possible future difficult situation: How will you deal with such a situation in the future? What is your action plan? What are you going to practice ahead of time? Write down your thoughts (behaviour instructions) on each card and save them for future reference.

# ANXIETY



Exams. Which of us hasn't experienced exam nerves? Feeling like you'll never be ready, especially when those who exit the exam room only increase your tension: one of your mates complains about how difficult the questions were, while the other's self-confidence and effortless mastery make your anxiety hit the roof. The film is a situational example intended to start a discussion.

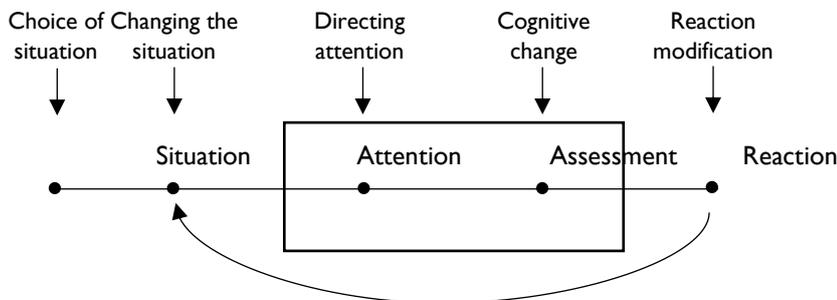
## EMOTION REGULATION

Self-management includes the skills to analyse and develop yourself and achieve your goals. Central to self-management is self-regulation, i.e. the ability to monitor and control your behaviour and feelings and to cope with strong emotions.

### Emotion regulation

Emotions are generally useful. They have evolved over time and help us, for example, to find solutions to everyday problems (Keltner & Gross, 1999), communicate and collaborate effectively (Averill, 1992), and better remember important events (Phelps, 2006). However, emotions are not always helpful. Depending on the situation, they may help or hurt. For example, slight anxiety before an important race may be entirely appropriate and help us prepare better, but too much anxiety can completely paralyse or upset us. Anger, on the other hand, can help us stand up for our rights in a situation where we have been seriously misled. At the same time, it is probably pointless to be angry all night because there was a long traffic jam on the way home and the shop had run out of your favourite yogurt. Emotions tend to be harmful if they are not in line with the actual situation or our own goals, i.e. if they are of the wrong type, the wrong intensity, or if they come at the wrong time (Parrott, 2001). In such situations, we may want to try to regulate our emotions.

Regulating emotions means trying to change what emotions we experience, when and how we experience them, and how we express them (Gross, 1999). In order to understand how emotion regulation works, Gross and Thompson (2007) have proposed the following model:



*Emotional regulation strategies, originally by Gross & Thompson (2007).*

The first step in the model is an **event** or **situation** that evokes an emotion. It could be an external event or something in our own thinking. The second factor is **attention** and the **importance** we attach to some aspects of the situation. The third step is an **assessment** of the situation and the fourth is the **emotional reaction** that occurs as a result of the event. The reaction in turn affects the situation. In theory, you can intervene at every step to adjust your emotions.

### Strategies for regulating negative emotions

#### I. Choice and modification of the situation

The easiest way to control negative emotions is, of course, to **avoid** or exit the situations that cause them (e.g. avoiding a moody acquaintance). Sometimes it is also possible to deal directly with the problem, i.e. to change the

environment (for example, to ask a neighbour to turn down the loud music or to mitigate the sense of loneliness by calling a friend).

Such solutions can be simple and in many cases useful, but may not always be possible. There are often emotionally intense situations that we cannot or do not want to avoid or change (such as an exam that creates anxiety). There are, of course, also situations whose nature or impact we do not foresee (e.g. an unexpected conflict). Finally, there are situations that may be avoidable but where avoidance is not beneficial in the long run. For example, if we decide to avoid a difficult conversation with a friend about a problem, the problem may get worse later. In such situations, other ways of regulating emotions are more likely to be helpful.

## 2. Directing attention

Our response to a situation depends, among other things, on what we **focus our attention** on. For example, worrying and rumination are common but generally ineffective patterns of negative emotion. Rumination means passive and repeated attention to our current negative emotions and their causes and consequences (Smith & Alloy, 2009). Similarly, we may replay negative experiences of the past. In general, rumination increases the severity of negative feelings and is also associated with the development of depression. Worrying is a somewhat similar process related to future events. In this case, we pay attention to thoughts and imaginations related to potentially negative future events (Borkovec et al, 1983). Although worrying can sometimes help solve a problem (for example, some worry about an upcoming exam may motivate you to prepare better), worrying too often or too intensively is more likely to be harmful and is also associated with a risk of both depression and anxiety.

### 2.1 Redirecting attention

Unlike worrying and rumination, **redirecting attention** can be an effective way to manage emotions (Nolen-Hoeksema & Morrow, 1993). This strategy means turning our attention away from the negative emotion or its cause and focusing on something neutral. For example, when a person who is afraid of heights is using a glass-walled elevator, they can focus on talking to somebody or making a shopping list in their mind instead. Studies have shown that redirecting attention actually helps to reduce the intensity of negative emotions and reduces, among other things, the activity of the amygdala in the brain (this part of the brain is associated with feelings related to emotional events, especially stress and fear) (Kanske et al, 2011).

It should be pointed out that redirecting attention is not the same as suppressing distracting thoughts. When trying to avoid and suppress negative thoughts, they may come back stronger (Wegner et al, 1993). When we redirect our attention, we become aware of our negative feelings, but instead of suppressing them, we simply turn our attention to something else. For example, suppose you are on a plane and you are disturbed by the crying of a child sitting nearby. Simply telling yourself "don't think about it, don't notice it" (suppression of emotions) is probably not very effective. However, if you pick up a book and manage to concentrate on reading (distraction), you are more likely to forget the child altogether.

While redirecting attention can be effective, it is by its nature a short-term solution. It can help change momentary emotions, but it does not prevent the recurrence of those emotions or address their deeper causes. Thus, for recurring or significant negative emotions, it may be more beneficial to work through them more thoroughly or to try longer-term strategies (see also: cognitive change). However, there are also situations where redirecting attention is the most appropriate strategy. For example, due to its rapid effect, it can be useful in very intense emotional situations, which are impossible to process more thoroughly in that state of mind (Sheppes et al, 2011).

### 3. Cognitive change

In the case of cognitive change, we no longer deal with changing the situation or redirecting attention, but work directly with our emotions and thinking. In other words, we are trying to change the way we interpret the situation and our part in it (Gross, 2013). While it may be more complex than the strategies mentioned above, it may lead to more lasting and stronger positive change. Through the use of cognitive techniques, we can begin to better understand and regulate our emotions even in situations where we cannot change the external environment. Therefore, such strategies have been extensively studied and a number of techniques have been proposed.

#### 3.1 Reappraisal of the situation

When an emotion arises, what matters is not so much the situation itself, but our assessment of that situation, that is, the interpretation and meaning we attribute to what is happening. Therefore: if we think about the situation differently, we can change its emotional impact (Gross, 2013). Reappraising the situation means attempting to interpret the events differently or to see the bigger picture. For example, suppose you are a student who is nervous about a high school entrance interview. Instead of thinking of the interview as a test that somehow shows your worth, you can approach it as an opportunity to find out whether you would like it to be your future school and your future teachers. This change in thinking is likely to help reduce anxiety.

Studies have shown that **reappraising the situation** can indeed help to reduce the effects of negative emotions (Gross, 1998). When scanning the human brain during the reappraisal process, the activity of the prefrontal cortex (this part of the brain is related to the coordination and planning of thoughts) increases and the activity of the amygdala (related to emotions, fear) decreases (Ochsner et al, 2004). People who use reappraisal on a regular basis also generally have higher levels of well-being and better relationships than those who prefer to e.g. suppress emotions (Gross & John, 2003).

#### 3.2 Mindfulness

Mindfulness means deliberate attention to the present in a way that is not judgemental (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). In this state, we notice the sensations, thoughts, and emotions we are currently experiencing and accept them. With regard to regulating our emotions, it means that when we feel bad, we don't blame ourselves for that feeling, and we don't immediately focus on changing either the emotion or the situation. Instead, we take a step aside to observe our feelings and thoughts. Curiosity and kindness towards yourself are important. From the point of view of regulating emotions, it is important that while we are aware of the emotions we experience, we do not necessarily have to react to them (Chambers et al, 2009). When an emotion or thought seems useful, we can devote our energy to it. However, if we experience disturbing or harmful emotions, we do not have to identify ourselves with them. After all, feelings and thoughts are only events that happen in the brain, not absolute truths.

In that regard, mindfulness differs from reappraisal, which is aimed at changing an unpleasant state of mind. With mindfulness, however, we do not necessarily have to change the negative emotions and thoughts we experience, but simply become aware of them and choose what we want to respond to. In a sense, mindfulness is a kind of reappraisal, but while reappraising a situation means trying to change our thinking about external negative events, mindfulness focuses on changing the way we identify with or relate to our own inner emotions and thoughts (Chambers et al, 2009).

Learning mindfulness can be difficult and requires a lot of practice. At the same time, it is a longer-term strategy that can become automatic over time and can be used in a wide variety of emotional situations.

Practising mindfulness can help us learn to understand and express our emotions without devoting too little (such as avoiding/suppressing emotions) or too much (e.g. worrying too much) attention to them (Ivanovski & Malhi, 2007). Prolonged practice can even lead to visible changes in the brain, increasing the amount of nerve tissue in the parts of the brain involved in learning, memory, regulating emotions, and changing perspectives (Hölzel et al, 2011).

#### 4. Modification of the reaction

Emotions that have already arisen usually lead to an emotional reaction. This may include, for example, physiological reactions (e.g. sweating, trembling, etc.), changes in behaviour (e.g. shouting at a friend), changes in the expression of emotions (e.g. facial expressions, changes in tone, crying) and the way we experience emotions in general. When we modify a reaction, we are trying to change the emotional reaction that has already occurred, not the situation or thoughts that triggered the emotion (Gross, 1998). This includes some generally harmful strategies, such as suppressing emotions or visible reactions, or e.g. using alcohol and other drugs.

However, some helpful strategies exist that can help tame emotional reactions. For example, it is quite common to use various **breathing and relaxation exercises** to calm yourself down. In a stressful situation, the most common reactions are rapid breathing and increased muscle tension. Such automatic responses, in turn, can signal to the brain that the situation is "dangerous" and thus increase the stress response (Damasio, 1996). However, we may be able to break this cycle by consciously calming our breathing and relaxing our muscles.

There are also simple but important strategies such as **movement and adequate sleep**. Exercise, for example, can help reduce the effects of negative emotions (Gross & Thompson, 2007), and regular exercise helps both to prevent stress and to improve the ability to regulate emotions (Oaten & Cheng, 2006). Most of us have probably noticed how sufficient or insufficient sleep affects our mood. Studies have found that the reactivity of the amygdala decreases during sleep, especially during REM sleep, thus protecting us from stress (Walker, 2009). However, a lack of sleep is related to overreacting to negative events. This is due to both increased activity of the amygdala and a weakening of the connection between the amygdala and the cerebral cortex. As mentioned earlier, the cerebral cortex is important in regulating emotions, so a lack of sleep can lead to weaker emotional control, which in turn leads to mood swings, impulsivity, and depression.

**Seeking social support** (such as talking to friends, family, or a partner) will also help reduce physiological stress reactions (Uchino et al, 1996). In addition, it can help on several other levels. In addition to changing the reaction, talking to another person can also help to solve problems (see also changing the situation) or to interact with the situation and your thoughts differently, i.e. to change your perspective (cognitive change).

#### What strategy to use?

Considering the strategies described above, you might wonder which strategy should be used when. Of course, there are some strategies that are almost always ineffective (suppression of emotions, rumination, alcohol, etc). In the case of other techniques, however, the situation is more nuanced. Many strategies can be helpful, but which one would be the most successful depends on the specific situation, the emotion being experienced, and the individual. However, the papers and research cited can provide some general tips for dealing with negative emotions:

##### 1. Understand your emotions.

It is difficult to regulate emotions without understanding them. Often, an important first step in regulating our emotions is to understand what we are feeling. Awareness of and describing one's emotions is more difficult for some people than others, but this skill can be improved through practice. So it is important to know what we are feeling and not to blame ourselves for feeling this way. At the same time, this does not mean that we should react

immediately to all emotions.

## **2. Remember that emotions and thoughts are just events occurring in the brain.**

Emotions are not absolute truths that are created and change through changes in the external situation alone. How we experience something depends on us and the meaning we give to a situation or emotion. This does not mean that emotions don't matter or that we should not experience or take seriously any negative emotions. In many situations, emotions can give us important information and help guide our behaviour. However, we control the way we interpret and react to our emotions. We can distinguish between beneficial and harmful emotions and choose what to respond to and what to change. Emotions can be our helpers, but they do not have to be our masters.

## **3. Set a goal.**

When we experience a negative emotion, it is helpful to think about what we would like to feel instead, or what the desired change would be. That goal should be realistic. For example, if you are currently experiencing extreme anxiety, it would probably be very difficult to suddenly feel unwavering peace and confidence. Instead, you can aim to feel only mild anxiety. By setting goals in this way, we first get a better idea of the direction in which to direct our emotions. Secondly, we can experience success if the goal is achieved or progress is made. This in turn can motivate you to continue practicing emotion regulation.

## **4. Think about how you can regulate your emotions.**

When we know our current and desired emotions, we can start thinking about what would help us move from the current situation to the goal. This is where the different techniques mentioned above enter the picture. You can ask yourself questions, such as:

- ❖ Can I improve my physical condition to achieve the desired emotion? (change in reaction: e.g. breathing exercises, relaxation, exercise, sleep)
- ❖ Can I directly change a situation that causes negative emotions? (change in the situation: e.g. problem solving)
- ❖ Can I modify my own behaviour in the current situation? (change in reaction: e.g. looking for social support, doing something pleasant)
- ❖ Can I look at the current situation from a different perspective or focus on the bigger picture? (cognitive change: reappraisal)
- ❖ Can I look at my emotions from a different perspective or change the way I relate to them? (cognitive change: mindfulness)
- ❖ Can I turn my attention to something else instead? (redirecting attention)

## **5. Practice and observe.**

Regulating emotions is not easy and needs to be practiced like any other skill. It is natural that sometimes we succeed and sometimes not. It is important to maintain motivation and a positive attitude – any difficult situation can be an opportunity to practice emotion regulation, and every success and failure teaches us something and allows us to improve that skill. It is useful to get to know the patterns of your emotions. For example, you may be asking yourself: what situations provoke what emotions in me? What patterns do I notice? Which emotion regulation techniques work best for me? (In what situation? For which emotion?) If emotion regulation does not work in some situations, why? (In what situation? For what emotion?).

## 6. Maintain your physical and emotional health.

Good physical and emotional health helps both to prevent negative emotions and to better manage them. Adequate sleep, a healthy diet, exercise, etc. are important for the health of your body. In terms of emotional health, for example, a social support network (people you can talk to) is useful, as is practising positive emotions (see the following chapter).

### Strategies for regulating positive emotions

We have been focusing on dealing with negative emotions, as this is the main case where people feel that they need skills to regulate emotions. However, we may sometimes want to feel more positive emotions or prolong the pleasant emotions we experience. There are also useful techniques for this.

First, consciously enjoying your positive emotions helps you experience them for longer. This technique is called savouring, which means paying conscious attention to experiencing pleasure (Bryant, 1989). To encourage savouring, you should first focus on the sensations, noticing what is happening in your mind (Bryant & Veroff, 2017). Second, it is useful to create a small memory picture of memorable moments. Instead of thinking about something else or feeling rushed, it is important to stay attentive and congratulate yourself on experiencing such a pleasant moment. It is also good to savour the moment with your partner and tell each other about the moment that is being enjoyed. In addition to savouring the moment you are experiencing, it is also possible to turn your attention to upcoming or past positive events. For example, when going on a holiday trip, you can prolong positive emotions by thinking about the arrival of the plane at the destination ahead of the trip, savouring great moments during the trip, and reminiscing about pleasant experiences with your travel companions after the trip. Celebrating good events or telling others about them also helps to extend the duration of positive emotions. You might even take some time to savour past events, to relax and recall recent good experiences, big and small successes, or even pleasant memories from your childhood (Smith, 1990). Studies have shown that savouring does indeed increase happiness (Jose, Lim & Bryant, 2012). While for some people, spontaneous savouring is easier than for others, it is a skill that we can practice and use to increase the duration and strength of positive emotions.

So when we get into a pleasant situation, it is possible to increase the impact of the emotions that arise. But how to experience more positive emotions in ordinary or even negative situations? The strategy for reassessing the situation mentioned above may be helpful here (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007). One common technique is to find something positive in negative events. It is also possible to give a positive meaning to completely ordinary events (e.g. to take pleasure in a compliment received, a beautiful sunrise, etc.). Such strategies can help to experience positive emotions even in stressful situations (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). Practising mindfulness can also help facilitate this process. As mindfulness broadens our awareness and thinking, it can make it easier to notice or find positivity (Garland, Gaylord & Fredrickson, 2011).

### References:

- Averill, J. R. (1992). *The structural bases of emotional behavior: A metatheoretical analysis*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Borkovec, T. D., Robinson, E., Pruzinsky, T., & DePree, J. A. (1983). Preliminary exploration of worry: Some characteristics and processes. *Behaviour research and therapy*, 21(1), 9-16.
- Bryant, F. B., & Veroff, J. (2017). *Savoring: A new model of positive experience*. Psychology Press.
- Chambers, R., Gullone, E., & Allen, N. B. (2009). Mindful emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Clinical psychology review*, 29(6), 560-572.
- Damasio, A. R. (1996). The somatic marker hypothesis and the possible functions of the prefrontal cortex. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B: Biological Sciences*, 351(1346), 1413-1420.

## TEACHER'S READING MATERIALS EMOTION REGULATION

- Folkman, S., & Moskowitz, J. T. (2000). Stress, positive emotion, and coping. *Current directions in psychological science*, 9(4), 115-118.
- Garland, E. L., Gaylord, S. A., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2011). Positive reappraisal mediates the stress-reductive effects of mindfulness: An upward spiral process. *Mindfulness*, 2(1), 59-67.
- Gross, J. J. (1998). Antecedent-and response-focused emotion regulation: divergent consequences for experience, expression, and physiology. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 74(1), 224.
- Gross, J. J. (1999). Emotion regulation: Past, present, future. *Cognition & emotion*, 13(5), 551-573.
- Gross, J. J. (Ed.). (2013). *Handbook of emotion regulation*. Guilford publications.
- Gross, J. J., & John, O. P. (2003). Individual differences in two emotion regulation processes: implications for affect, relationships, and well-being. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 85(2), 348.
- Gross, J. J., & Thompson, R. A. (2007). Emotion regulation: Conceptual foundations. In J. J. Gross (Ed.), *Handbook of emotion regulation* (pp. 3–24). New York: Guilford Press.
- Hölzel, B. K., Carmody, J., Vangel, M., Congleton, C., Yerramsetti, S. M., Gard, T., & Lazar, S. W. (2011). Mindfulness practice leads to increases in regional brain gray matter density. *Psychiatry research: neuroimaging*, 191(1), 36-43.
- Ivanovski, B., & Malhi, G. S. (2007). The psychological and neurophysiological concomitants of mindfulness forms of meditation. *Acta neuropsychiatrica*, 19(2), 76-91.
- Jose, P. E., Lim, B. T., & Bryant, F. B. (2012). Does savoring increase happiness? A daily diary study. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 7(3), 176-187.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). University of Massachusetts Medical Center/Worcester. Stress Reduction Clinic. Full catastrophe living: using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness. *Delta*, New York.
- Kanske, P., Heissler, J., Schönfelder, S., Bongers, A., & Wessa, M. (2011). How to regulate emotion? Neural networks for reappraisal and distraction. *Cerebral Cortex*, 21(6), 1379-1388.
- Keltner, D., & Gross, J. J. (1999). Functional accounts of emotions. *Cognition & Emotion*, 13(5), 467-480.
- Nolen-Hoeksema, S., & Morrow, J. (1993). Effects of rumination and distraction on naturally occurring depressed mood. *Cognition & Emotion*, 7(6), 561-570.
- Oaten, M., & Cheng, K. (2006). Longitudinal gains in self-regulation from regular physical exercise. *British journal of health psychology*, 11(4), 717-733.
- Ochsner, K. N., Ray, R. D., Cooper, J. C., Robertson, E. R., Chopra, S., Gabrieli, J. D., & Gross, J. J. (2004). For better or for worse: neural systems supporting the cognitive down-and up-regulation of negative emotion. *Neuroimage*, 23(2), 483-499.
- Parrott, W. G. (2001). Implications of dysfunctional emotions for understanding how emotions function. *Review of General Psychology*, 5(3), 180-186.
- Phelps, E. A. (2006). Emotion and cognition: insights from studies of the human amygdala. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.*, 57, 27-53.
- Sheppes, G., Scheibe, S., Suri, G., & Gross, J. J. (2011). Emotion-regulation choice. *Psychological science*, 22(11), 1391-1396.
- Smith, J. C. (1990). *Cognitive-behavioral relaxation training: A new system of strategies for treatment and assessment*. Springer Publishing Co.
- Smith, J. M., & Alloy, L. B. (2009). A roadmap to rumination: A review of the definition, assessment, and conceptualization of this multifaceted construct. *Clinical psychology review*, 29(2), 116-128.

TEACHER'S READING MATERIALS EMOTION REGULATION

---

Tugade, M. M., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2007). Regulation of positive emotions: Emotion regulation strategies that promote resilience. *Journal of happiness studies*, 8(3), 311-333.

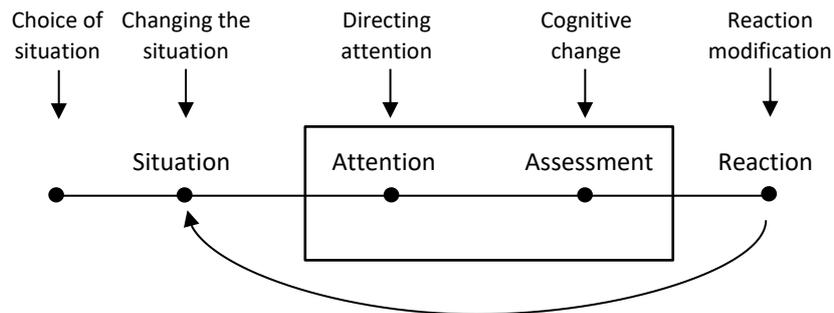
Uchino, B. N., Cacioppo, J. T., & Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K. (1996). The relationship between social support and physiological processes: a review with emphasis on underlying mechanisms and implications for health. *Psychological bulletin*, 119(3), 488.

Walker, M. P. (2009). The role of sleep in cognition and emotion. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1156(1), 168-197.

Wegner, D. M., Erber, R., & Zanakos, S. (1993). Ironic processes in the mental control of mood and mood-related thought. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 65(6), 1093.

# EMOTION REGULATION

Regulating emotions means trying to change what emotions we experience, when and how we experience them, and how we express them (Gross, 1999). In order to understand how emotion regulation works, Gross and Thompson (2007) have proposed the following model:



*Emotional regulation strategies, originally by Gross & Thompson (2007).*

The first step in the model is **an event** or **situation** that evokes an emotion. It could be an external event or something in our own thinking. The second factor is the **attention** and **importance** we attach to some aspects of the situation. The third step is an **assessment** of the situation and the fourth is the emotional **reaction** that occurs as a result of the event. The reaction in turn affects the situation. You can intervene at every step to adjust your emotions.

## Strategies for regulating negative emotions

### 1. Choice and modification of the situation

The easiest way to control negative emotions is, of course, to avoid or exit the situations that cause them (e.g. avoiding a moody acquaintance). Sometimes it is also possible to deal directly with the problem, i.e. to change the environment (for example, to ask a neighbour to turn down the loud music or to mitigate the sense of loneliness by calling a friend).

Such solutions can be simple and in many cases useful, but may not always be possible. There are often emotional situations that we cannot or do not want to avoid or change (such as an exam that creates anxiety). There are, of course, also situations whose nature or impact we do not foresee (eg an unexpected conflict). Finally, there are situations that may be avoidable but where avoidance is not beneficial in the long run. For example, if we decide to avoid a difficult conversation with a friend about a problem, the problem may get worse later. In such situations, other ways of regulating emotions are more likely to be helpful.

### 2. Directing attention

Our response to a situation depends, among other things, on what we focus our attention on. For example, worrying is generally an inefficient pattern of behaviour in which we pay attention to thoughts and imaginations related to potentially negative future events. Although worrying can sometimes help solve a problem (for example, some worry about an upcoming exam may motivate you to prepare better), worrying too often or too intensively is more likely to be harmful and is also associated with a risk of both depression and anxiety.

## 2.1 Redirecting attention

Unlike worrying, redirecting attention can be an effective way to manage emotions. This strategy means turning our attention away from the negative emotion or its cause and focusing on something neutral. For example, when a person afraid of heights is using a glass-walled elevator, they can focus on talking to a bystander or a shopping list in their mind instead of the height.

While redirecting attention can be effective, it is by its nature a short-term solution. It can help change momentary emotions, but it does not prevent the recurrence of those emotions or address their deeper causes. Thus, for recurring or significant negative emotions, it may be more beneficial to work through them more thoroughly or to try longer-term strategies.

## 3. Cognitive change

In the case of cognitive change, we no longer deal with changing the situation or redirecting attention, but work directly with our emotions and thinking. In other words, we are trying to change the way we interpret the situation and our part in it. While it may be more complex than the strategies mentioned above, it may lead to more lasting and stronger positive change.

### 3.1 Reappraisal of the situation

When an emotion arises, what matters is not so much the situation itself, but our assessment of that situation, that is, the interpretation and meaning we attribute to what is happening. Therefore: if we think about the situation differently, we can change its emotional impact. Reappraising the situation means attempting to interpret the events differently or to see the bigger picture. For example, suppose you are a student who is nervous about a high school entrance interview. Instead of thinking of the interview as a test that somehow shows your worth, you can see it as an opportunity to find out whether you would like it to be your future school and your future teachers. This change in thinking is likely to help reduce anxiety.

### 3.2 Mindfulness

**Mindfulness** means deliberate attention to the present in a way that is not judgemental. In this state, we notice the sensations, thoughts, and emotions we are currently experiencing and accept them. With regard to regulating our emotions, it means that when we feel bad, we don't blame ourselves for that feeling, and we don't immediately focus on changing either the emotion or the situation. Instead, we take a step aside to observe our feelings and thoughts. Curiosity and kindness towards yourself are important. From the point of view of regulating emotions, it is important that while we are aware of the emotions we experience, we do not necessarily have to react to them. When an emotion or thought seems useful, we can devote our energy to it. However, if we experience disturbing or harmful emotions, we do not have to identify ourselves with them. After all, feelings and thoughts are only events that happen in the brain, not absolute truths.

## 4. Modification of the reaction

Emotions that have already arisen usually lead to an emotional reaction. When we modify a reaction, we are trying to change the emotional reaction that has already occurred, not the situation or thoughts that triggered the emotion. There are some helpful strategies that can help tame emotional reactions. For example, it is quite common to use various breathing and relaxation exercises to calm yourself down.

There are also simple but important strategies such as **movement and adequate sleep**. Exercise, for example, can help reduce the effects of negative emotions, and regular exercise can both help prevent stress and improve your ability to regulate emotions.

**Seeking social support** (such as talking to friends, family, or a partner) will also help reduce physiological stress reactions. In addition, it can of course help on several levels. In addition to changing the reaction, talking to another person can also help to solve problems (see also changing the situation) or to interact with the situation and your thoughts differently, i.e. to change your perspective (cognitive change).

### **What strategy to use?**

Many strategies can be helpful, but which one would be most successful depends on the specific situation, the emotion being experienced, and the individual. However, research can provide some general tips for dealing with negative emotions:

- 1) **Understand your emotions.** It is difficult to regulate emotions without understanding them. Often, an important first step in regulating our emotions is to understand what we are feeling. Awareness of and describing one's emotions is more difficult for some people than others, but this skill can be improved through practice. So it is important to know what we are feeling and not to blame ourselves for feeling this way. At the same time, this does not mean that we should react immediately to all emotions.
- 2) **Remember that emotions and thoughts are just brain events.** Emotions are not absolute truths that arise and change through changes in the external situation alone. How we experience something depends on us and the meaning we give to a situation or emotion. This does not mean that emotions don't matter or that we should not experience or take seriously any negative emotions. In many situations, emotions can give us important information and help us guide our behaviour. However, we control the way we interpret and react to our emotions. We can distinguish between beneficial and harmful emotions and choose what to respond to and what to change. Emotions can be our helpers, but they do not have to be our masters.
- 3) **Set a goal.** When we experience a negative emotion, it is helpful to think about what we would like to feel instead, or what the desired change would be. That goal should be realistic. For example, if you are currently experiencing extreme anxiety, it would probably be very difficult to suddenly feel unwavering peace and confidence. Instead, you can aim to feel only mild anxiety. By setting goals in this way, we first get a better idea of the direction in which to direct our emotions. Secondly, we can experience success if the goal is achieved or progress is made. This in turn can motivate you to continue practicing emotion regulation.
- 4) **Think about how you can regulate your emotions.** When we know our current and desired emotions, we can start thinking about what would help us move from the current situation to the goal. This is where the different techniques mentioned above enter the picture. You can ask yourself questions such as: Can I improve my physical condition to achieve the desired emotion? (change in reaction: e.g. breathing exercises, relaxation, exercise, sleep); Can I directly change a situation that causes negative emotions? (changing the situation: e.g. problem solving); can I modify my own behaviour in the current situation? (change in reaction: e.g. looking for social support, doing something pleasant); Can I look at the current situation from a different perspective or focus on the bigger picture? (cognitive change: reappraisal); Can I look at my emotions from a different perspective or change the way I relate to them? (cognitive change: mindfulness); Can I redirect my attention to something else? (redirecting attention)
- 5) **Practice and observe.** Regulating emotions is not easy and needs to be practiced like any other skill. It is natural that sometimes we succeed and sometimes not. It is important to maintain motivation and a positive attitude - any difficult situation can be an opportunity to

practice emotion regulation, and every success and failure teaches us something and allows us to improve that skill. It is useful to get to know the patterns of your emotions. For example, you may be asking yourself: what situations provoke what emotions in me? What patterns do I notice? Which emotion regulation techniques work best for me? (In what situation? For which emotion?) If emotion regulation does not work in some situations, why? (In what situation? For what emotion?).

- 6) **Maintain your physical and emotional health.** Good physical and emotional health helps both to prevent negative emotions and to better manage them. Adequate sleep, a healthy diet, exercise, etc. are important for the health of your body. In terms of emotional health, for example, a social support network (people you can talk to) is useful, as is practising positive emotions.

But how to experience more positive emotions in ordinary or even negative situations? The abovementioned strategy for reassessing the situation may be helpful here. One common technique is to find something positive in negative events. It is also possible to give a positive meaning to completely ordinary events (e.g. to take pleasure in a compliment received, a beautiful sunrise, etc.). Such strategies can help you experience positive emotions even in stressful situations. Practising mindfulness can also help facilitate this process. By broadening our awareness and thinking, mindfulness can make it easier to notice or find positivity.

## BASIC SCHEME: SELF-MANAGEMENT

---

- ❖ **Notice** (What's going on? How important is this situation or person to me really? What is happening to my emotions? Am I upset? Would I like to change my emotion?)
- ❖ **NAME** (What feeling are you experiencing?)
- ❖ **DESCRIBE** (What is the need that is not met?)
- ❖ **DECIDE** what you want to do about that feeling. What is the quickest way to get over it?
- ❖ **ACT** (Reappraise the situation for yourself, use different perspectives, make an action plan, etc.)

SELF-MANAGEMENT II

# SELF-MANAGEMENT II

## KEY TERMS

- ❖ The position of observer
- ❖ Emotion as a choice
- ❖ The three views of mindfulness
- ❖ Positive focus



## TOOLBOX

NOTICING FEELINGS



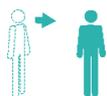
IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS



UNDERSTANDING MEANING



OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE



FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE



## PREPARATIONS

- ❖ Have paper and markers ready to take notes
- ❖ Print and share worksheets with the three views of mindfulness, either to each student or one set per group (alternatively, display them on the wall).

## 1. INTRODUCTION (2 MIN)

*Tell the class:*

Today we will be continuing with the topic of self-management and look at different techniques and exercises to redirect attention and reappraise the situation.

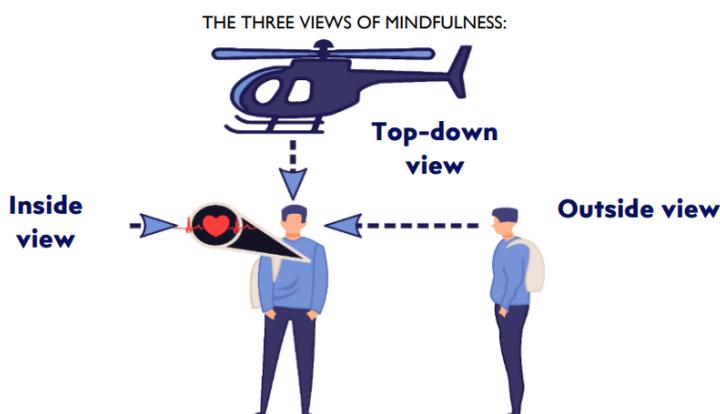
**Hand out the worksheet "The Three Views of Mindfulness".**

## 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE EXERCISE (10 MIN)

### SELF-MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE. THE THREE VIEWS OF MINDFULNESS.

*Tell the class:*

We should maintain as realistic and kind an approach as possible towards ourselves and those around us, staying aware of the broader perspective and not getting stuck on feelings or thoughts. We can learn to notice the focus of our attention and the way it shifts. We can also learn to change it if necessary. We can observe feelings, thoughts, and physical sensations – to be in contact with ourselves and those around us as an Observer. Self-management is the knowledge of one's options and conscious use of one's choices – the realisation of the broader perspective, meaning and choices.



KEY:

Meanings / Top-down view: "THE BIGGER PERSPECTIVE"

- ❖ Strategic level, the Vision, "out of the box" view, copter view, world view
  - Pursuing higher goals

SELF-MANAGEMENT II

**NOTE:**

- ❖ We can learn to notice the focus of our attention and the way it shifts. We can also learn to change it if necessary.
- ❖ Negativity eats into your valuable lifetime and does not benefit your development or coping. Focus on the positive!

**HOMEWORK**

Make a list of everything you are grateful for. What you've got, what is well.

**MY NOTES:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- Focus on the basic values of life – valuing the individual and the world
  - What is the core value that directs actions?
  - What actions develop me? Somebody else?
  - How will I look back at the situation in 1, 5, n years?
  - What is the role of inescapable situations? How much freedom and restriction are there?
- ❖ Body and other inner feelings / Inside view (inner view): Knowledge and control of signs of physical excitement-anxiety-alertness
    - Monitoring and control of energy levels, existing strength
    - Monitoring of vigilance, alertness
    - Monitoring of the emotional state – mood
    - Monitoring of concentration, effort and relaxation
    - Use of imagination (visual, physical)
    - Monitoring of internal monologue
  - ❖ Monitoring of behaviour, compliance with norms / Outside view: best practices, social norms, cultural norms
    - Rules of ethics
    - Behavioural culture, etiquette
    - Knowledge, skills, including professional knowledge – worldview

**3. INDIVIDUAL AND PAIR WORK (15 MIN)**

*First, give the class an example of how you used these views in a difficult situation of your own.*

*Then ask students to describe, first individually and then in pairs, how they could be thinking in the example situation of their own — what the helicopter view, the outside view, and the inside view would look like.*

*If necessary, ask the class to take out the previous lesson's worksheet on self-management strategies and discuss different ways to regulate emotions.*

**4. VIDEO CLIP "ONE DAY IN EMILY'S LIFE" (5 MIN) AND GENERAL DISCUSSION (5 MIN)**

## SELF-MANAGEMENT II

Show the clip "One Day in Emily's Life" until the question "What did Emily write?" appears on the screen.

**Ask the class:**

- ❖ What did you see?
- ❖ What did you take away from the lesson?
- ❖ What do you think she wrote in her diary?

Show "One Day in Emily's Life" until the end. Discuss with the class whether they found the end surprising and why they think Emily did what she did.

## 5. INTRODUCTION TO THE EXERCISE (5 MIN)

### SELF-MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE. POSITIVE FOCUS.

**Tell the class:**

Both negative and positive can be found and perceived in any situation. What matters is what we focus on. Negativity eats into your valuable lifetime and does not benefit your development or coping. It uses up a lot of energy and will, giving you nothing in return. It's also bad for your health. Focus on the positive! It can be practiced. It is possible to focus on the positive aspects, even if at first glance it seems that the only possible emotions in a given situation are negative. For example, rejoice when you finally gain control of your negative feelings. Note: When learning habits and storing information, the brain behaves as follows: repeated stimulation creates bridges between neurons, similar to a highway of information. With repeated practice, information (or a learned reaction to a situation, outburst of anger, etc.) can be accessed faster in the future. This applies to learning poems, developing bad habits, as well as moods and a sense of happiness. Everything can be practiced! Neuronal connections are formed and "released" throughout life. Practice good feelings!

## 6. INDIVIDUAL WORK (16 MIN)

**Perform one or all three of the exercises listed above. If you run out of time, ask to do one of these exercises as homework:**

**POSITIVITY EXERCISES:**

- 1) Make a list of everything you are grateful for. What you've got, what is well.
- 2) Think of one of your recent negative experiences. Write down all the positive aspects that come to mind about this situation.
- 3) Make a list - what are the things in life that help you most when dealing with hardship? E.g.: being accepting of others (at least trying to), thinking positively; or when you've lost your path, reflecting on what you need, what you want, why, and where you want to be.

You can also repeat the homework for the previous lesson, if time ran short last time or if the students did not yet have enough knowledge and ideas to do it: Write up behaviour maps for a possible future difficult situation. How will you deal with such a situation in the future? What is your action plan? What are you going to practice ahead of time? Write down your thoughts (behaviour instructions) on each card and save them for future reference.

---

## 7. INDIVIDUAL WORK (5 MIN)

---

*The exercise was developed by Mare Pork.*

Tell yourself: "I'm already very happy with a lot of things in my life."

Now focus on your feelings: how much did you identify with this internal sentence, how much satisfaction did you experience? How much do you believe yourself?

---

## 8. GROUP WORK (11 MIN)

---

***Distribute sheets of paper and masking tape, each taking one piece. If possible, go outside the classroom or push the desks together.***

***Tell the class:***

Take a sheet of paper and stick it on your back with the tape or ask somebody else to do it. Next, I'll play some music, and you should go to as many classmates as possible and write something appreciative or positive about them on their backs. You can only write appreciative, positive sentences and opinions about others! Be as specific as possible! Not "I like you", but rather "I like your courage and kind attitude towards others". Afterwards, you can take the sheet and see what others have written about you.

*Note: Write your own positive, appreciative, encouraging sentences on the students' backs!*

***At the end of the lesson ask:***

How do you feel now? Good? Positive emotions increase energy. Create positive emotions for yourself and others!

---

## 9. HOMEWORK (1 MIN)

---

Make a list of everything you are grateful for. What you've got, what is well.

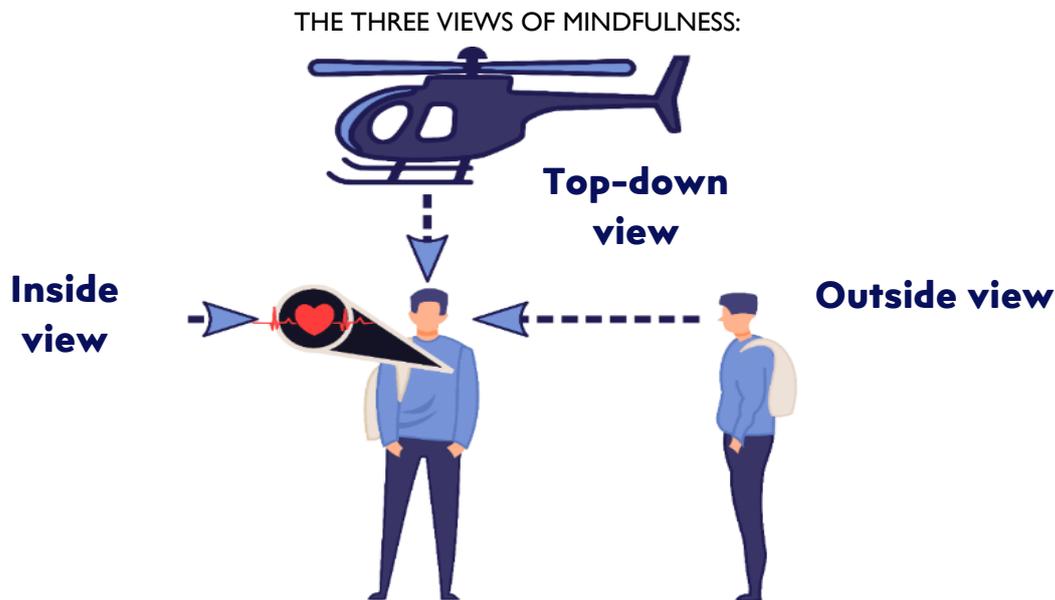
# ONE DAY IN EMILY'S LIFE



Emily has injured her leg and now has to use crutches for a month. In the old 4-storey school building, it's not very easy – you have to get to class on time and then go from the 4<sup>th</sup> floor all the way down to the canteen, where you have to manage the tray along with the crutches. During physical education classes, Emily can only watch, and unfortunately, the same happens at the bus stop, where she's left staring at the rear of the departing bus. The psychologist advises Emily to write down what happened to her. So she does, and that's why we will see the floral notebook given to her by the psychologist through various situations. What does she write in it? We will ask this question from the class, followed by a discussion (and assumptions!). Only then will the class be shown the contents of Emily's notebook. Turns out she has written down everything that happens, only that ... she's only written down good things.

The film introduces the technique of positive thinking that is important in self-management, based on the principle that in every situation it is possible to find both good and bad things and a lot depends on the chosen focus. By getting the brain used to focusing on the positive, you can gradually get used to noticing and focusing on the positive aspects of future situations, and this, in turn, helps you cope better with any situations that come up.

# THE THREE VIEWS OF MINDFULNESS. THE BASIC SCHEME OF SELF-MANAGEMENT



## Explanation of the figure, key:

### Top-down view: "THE BIGGER PERSPECTIVE"

- ❖ Strategic level, the Vision, "out of the box" view, copter view, world view
  - Pursuing higher goals
  - Focus on the basic values of life – valuing the individual and the world
  - What core value of the organisation/individual governs their actions?
  - What actions develop me further? Somebody else?
  - How will I look back at the situation in 1, 5, n years?
  - What is the role of inescapable situations? How much freedom and restrictions are there?

### Inside view / a view into yourself:

- ❖ Physical and other inner feelings: knowledge and control of signs of physical excitement-anxiety-alertness
  - Monitoring and control of energy levels, existing strength
  - Monitoring of vigilance, alertness
  - Monitoring of the emotional state – mood
  - Monitoring of concentration, effort and relaxation
  - Use of imagination (visual, physical)
  - Monitoring of internal monologue

### Outside view:

- ❖ Behavioural monitoring, compliance
  - Best practices, social norms, cultural norms
  - Rules of ethics
  - Behavioural culture, etiquette
  - Knowledge, skills, including professional knowledge – worldview

## REMINDER: THE BASIC SCHEME OF SELF-MANAGEMENT:

- ❖ **NOTICE** (What's going on? How important is this situation or person to me really? What is happening to my emotions? Am I upset? Would I like to change my emotion?)
- ❖ **NAME** (What feeling are you experiencing?)
- ❖ **DESCRIBE** (What is the need that is not met?)
- ❖ **DECIDE** what you want to do about that feeling. What is the quickest way to get over it?
- ❖ **ACT** (Reappraise the situation for yourself, use different perspectives, make an action plan, etc.)

## TIME MANAGEMENT

# TIME MANAGEMENT

## KEY TERMS

- ❖ Time management
- ❖ Time tracking
- ❖ Planning
- ❖ Establishing priorities
- ❖ Focus
- ❖ Coping with procrastination
- ❖ Long-term projects: shorter deadlines and buffer times



## TOOLBOX

FOCUS



ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES



PLANNING



## PREPARATIONS

- ❖ Have the film "Time Management" ready to play.
- ❖ Prepare to show the video in class. You'll need a computer, a screen and speakers. Make sure the equipment works before the class begins.
- ❖ Draw the figure on the board and divide the sheets of paper into quadrants for writing down activities
- ❖ Prepare to write time management techniques on the board or on individual sheets

## 1. INTRODUCTION (2 MIN)

**Tell the class:**

Today we will explore time management and look at different techniques for it.

## 2. TOPIC INTRODUCTION (3 MIN)

**Tell the class:**

Time management means tracking time and changing one's behaviour to use time as efficiently as possible in order to achieve one's goals. If we can manage our time well, we will be more likely to complete tasks on time, set priorities and plan our time better. Good time management skills help to reduce stress and increase overall well-being, allow to get more done within a set amount of time and enjoy our leisure time more. Let's think about this together for a moment.

## 3. WORK IN PAIRS (4 MIN)

### DISCUSS WITH YOUR PARTNER

- ❖ In what situations have you felt that you have had trouble planning your time?
- ❖ Why do you think this happens and what are the biggest obstacles for managing your time well?

## 4. VIDEO CLIP "TIME MANAGEMENT" PART I (3 MIN) AND GENERAL DISCUSSION (3 MIN)

**Show the video clip "Time Management" until the question "What did you see?" appears.**

**Discuss with the class whether they identified similar situations in the previous exercise or whether they noted any other connections to their lives.**

TIME MANAGEMENT

**NOTE:**

- ❖ It is useful to have a good overview of your current time usage.
- ❖ Planning helps to set clear goals for specific periods of time. Plans should be as specific as possible and, if necessary, larger tasks can be broken down into smaller pieces.
- ❖ It is useful to distinguish between urgent activities and important activities.
- ❖ It is important to work in a focused way and avoid distractions.
- ❖ It is also important to remember that not everything goes according to plan.

**HOMEWORK**

Create a plan for a longer-term project (research paper, exam preparation, reading of required literature – NB! Indicate the number of pages) where you split the work into shorter sections and leave 1 to 2 weeks as a buffer.

**MY NOTES:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Ask the class:**



- ❖ What did you see?
- ❖ What did you take away from the lesson?
- ❖ Did anything feel familiar?

**5. VIDEO CLIP "TIME MANAGEMENT" PART II (9 MIN) AND GENERAL DISCUSSION (3 MIN)**

**Show the clip "Time Management" until the end. The clip ends with the text "How do you manage your time?"**

**Discuss with the class whether they have heard about or used any of these methods.**

**6. THEORY (17 MIN)**

**Tell the class:**

A number of different methods have been proposed to achieve better time management. What works best depends on the individual and the situation. It is useful to be aware of your use of time, try different strategies and find out which ones work best in a given situation.

**TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES.**

**Write on the board (or on multiple large sheets of paper, which you can then stick on the wall and have students add their experiences) the name of the first time management strategy to be introduced:**

**TIME TRACKING**

Remember Anna's words in the time management video and her app? To make better use of your time, it's a good idea to get a sense of how you use your time. To do this, we can monitor when we are doing something and how long for. It can be useful to track time on paper or use a dedicated app. This gives us an idea of, for example, how long a certain activity or task takes us. In general, people tend to underestimate how long it takes to complete a task. When we think about how long an activity might take, our prediction is often based on an optimistic outlook, where everything goes according to plan. However, this is often not the case in life, and a better way to predict the use of time is to refer to how long a similar activity took in the past.

---

 TIME MANAGEMENT
 

---

For example, we might think that creating a presentation takes about an hour, but if we're actually tracking our use of time, we may find that the whole process is more likely to take 2 or even 3 hours. Tracking the use of time also gives an idea of which activities tend to waste time.

Let's remember what Maria, who is a morning person, said in the movie clip. In addition to tracking the time spent on various activities, it is helpful to be aware of your most productive time. For example, we may have the most energy and focus in the morning, so we can schedule activities that require intense thinking for the morning. When we find our most productive time, it is useful to earmark it for work and try to plan other activities on other times.

**Write on the board or on paper:**

## PLANNING

**Comment:**

Time planning is probably one of the most commonly used time management methods. For good reason: good planning helps to implement all kinds of projects more successfully. Planning works for longer-term projects (e.g. studying for exams, research, etc.) as well as daily chores. Various planning methods exist and you can choose the one that suits you best. Some options include to-do lists, calendars, diaries, planning apps, and more. What have you used? What do your parents use? Planning helps to set clear goals for specific periods of time. The plan should be as clear as possible. If necessary, break down larger tasks into smaller pieces to get a better idea of what exactly needs to be done. Another advantage of planning is that it lets us feel good about what we have already achieved. Furthermore, it helps us avoid stress and enjoy our free time, knowing that work is under control.

**Write on the board or on paper:**

## SETTING PRIORITIES

Even with the best planning, we may not always have the time for everything we want or need to do. Effective time management also includes the ability to set priorities, i.e. decide what is most important to do at any point. It is useful to distinguish between URGENT activities and IMPORTANT activities. Covey and Merrill divide activities into four categories.

**Draw a square on the board or paper, divided into four quadrants, with importance on one axis and urgency on the other:**

<p><b>I</b></p> <p><b>Important and urgent</b></p> <p>so-called "fires" to put out</p>	<p><b>II</b></p> <p><b>Important, but not urgent</b></p> <p>e.g.: planning</p>
<p><b>III</b></p> <p><b>Not important, but seems urgent</b></p> <p>e.g.: other people's urgent things</p>	<p><b>IV</b></p> <p><b>Not important and not urgent</b></p> <p>e.g.: killing time, excessive social media use, etc.</p>

---

 TIME MANAGEMENT
 

---

**Comment on each quadrant:**

- 1) Important and urgent: These are activities that are important to us and need to be done quickly. This could include, for example, revising for the following day's exam, an impending deadline, an unexpected crisis, or an issue that needs to be addressed immediately. These are things we should get done as soon as possible.
- 2) Important, but not urgent: These are activities that are important to us, but which are not necessarily urgent. This includes, for example, longer-term projects and goals, such as an exam taking place in two months, choice of university, an important personal project or hobby, etc. For example, suppose you want to practice writing because you definitely want to be writing in the future. Or, for example, it's important for you to exercise to maintain a healthy lifestyle. These things are easy to put off because they don't seem particularly urgent. Of course, this is not great, because it risks important things falling through the cracks or getting postponed to the last minute. Therefore, it is important to keep these activities in mind and schedule time for them.
- 3) Not important, but urgent: These are activities that seem urgent but are not terribly important to us or do not need our attention specifically. This could include some phone calls, messages, or other people suddenly asking us for small and insignificant favours. These activities often eat up our time, because they may seem important at first, but they do not really help us achieve our goals. Such activities can be delegated to others, or you could check whether they are really so urgent. Sometimes you just have to say "no" to some activities.
- 4) Not important and not urgent: These are activities that are neither important to us nor urgent. This can include, for example, excessive use of social media, constant checking of emails or messages, or other time-consuming activities that we find ourselves doing but which do not really add value to our lives. It is better to avoid these activities or at least not spend time on them until everything that is more important is done.

---

**7. INDIVIDUAL WORK (5 MIN)**


---

**Distribute blank sheets of paper and leave the description of the quadrants up as a reference.**

Now, make a similarly subdivided square on your paper sheet (quadrants I, II, III, IV) and write each of your weekly activities in the respective quadrant.

---

**8. GENERAL DISCUSSION (5 MIN)**


---

**Ask the class:**

- ❖ What did you write in the first quadrant? Second? Third? Fourth?

**Discuss with the class:**

Is it always easy to decide what belongs in which quadrant? For example: When my mom wants me to clean my room, is this urgent for me or for her? Answer: It depends on whether this topic or your relationship with this person is important to you. Chances are the relationship with your mother is important, so it makes sense to listen to what she says. Emily also referred to this in the clip we saw earlier. But if you still receive a lot of tasks from others that are only seemingly urgent, but not really important for you, it's a good idea to notice it and consider whether to respond immediately or ask for more time.

## 9. THEORY (CONTINUED) (6 MIN)

**Write on the board or on paper:**

### FOCUS

Let's say we have created a plan and we want to achieve a goal by a specific deadline. How we approach the task matters. Let's say you have earmarked two hours to write a short essay. Clearly, what you do during these two hours will affect both the quality of the work and whether you will actually complete it during that period. If you start writing an essay, but then get distracted by a message or decide to take a 5-minute break, which actually stretches to 20 minutes, then your pace of work is probably not very effective. Remember how Evelin's attention in the video was increasingly distracted by new stimuli? It is important to work in a focused way and avoid distractions.

One method used to increase productivity is the pomodoro technique, which you have already seen (*If the students don't remember it, you can repeat the concept*: This method sets a goal and divides the working time into 25-minute chunks called pomodoros. The timer is set to 25 minutes, during which you work on the task without pauses or interruptions. When the timer goes off, there is a short pause of 3-5 minutes. After every four pomodoros (i.e. four 25-minute intervals of work), take a longer break of 15-30 minutes. Work and breaks continue in this rhythm until the goal is met. Taking breaks is important to let us rest and allow the work done or material learned to sink in. However, sticking to specific periods of time helps prevent excessively long pauses or distractions.

There are other useful strategies to prevent getting distracted. For example, it's a good idea to work in as unobtrusive an environment as possible, whether it's a desk in your room or a quiet corner in a library or coffee shop.

## 10. GROUP DISCUSSION AND COMMENTS (5 MIN)

### Ask the class:



- ❖ What is a time and place where you can work without interruption? Is there a time when there is no one distracting you? How do you avoid distractions?

**Tell your story** about how you found a time when you could concentrate well. Is it the evening? Is it Sunday morning? Etc

### Ask the class:



- ❖ Do you think multitasking (doing several things at once) is possible? Useful?

Researchers argue that multitasking should be avoided. Although we may feel productive in this way, research has shown that it does not really save time. On the contrary: if we constantly shift our focus between several things,

## TIME MANAGEMENT

it means, firstly, that nothing may get full attention and, secondly, we lose time to switching – it takes time for the brain to refocus on an interrupted activity or thought.

---

## 11.THEORY (CONTINUED) (7 MIN)

---

**Write on the board or on paper:**

### COPING WITH PROCRASTINATION

Sometimes the problem with time management is not necessarily a lack of time, but rather our tendency to postpone or procrastinate doing important but unpleasant work. There are some techniques that can help you deal with this problem as well.

For example, in a video clip, Alex introduced the 5-minute technique. As a reminder, the technique is that when faced with a task, we don't tell ourselves to get it all done, but decide to give it 5 minutes. Often, these five minutes get us in the flow and we keep working. However, if the work seems too unpleasant even after five minutes, we can stop working on the task for the time being. In this case, we are 5 minutes' worth of work closer to the goal, which is better than not starting at all. This technique works because when you think of the work as a 5-minute chunk, it no longer seems like such a big and insurmountable task, making it easier to get started.

Another technique is to do the most unpleasant task first. That way, we don't have to worry about it for long, and the rest of the work will seem easier in comparison.

**Write on the board or on paper:**

### LONG-TERM PROJECTS – SHORTER DEADLINES AND BUFFER TIME.

For many people, long-term projects are the most difficult to plan, and important things can be left to the last minute. Work tends to expand to fill the time available for its completion. This means that even if we leave ourselves more time than we need to reach our goal, we may not actually be able to get it done faster. This is due to our tendency to postpone work, which is particularly easy to do with longer deadlines. In this case, setting shorter deadlines may be helpful. For example, you can divide a larger task into smaller parts and set a deadline for each part. Suppose we have a month to write a paper. In this case, we can set a deadline to complete the literature research and create a draft outline by the end of the first week. We can aim to write the first two chapters by the end of the second week, another two chapters the following week, and so on.

It is also important to remember that not everything goes according to plan. Maybe, for example, in the third week of the paper-writing process, we had an unexpected test. Studying for it used up a lot of time and we were able to complete just one chapter instead of two. To manage such unexpected situations, it is useful to leave some buffer time, i.e. plan to leave a little extra time between the planned completion of the work and the actual deadline. For example, in the case of the paper, we can plan to complete it two or three days ahead of the deadline. If everything goes according to plan, we can enjoy a couple of days off, but if something does come up, we will have enough time to finish the paper.

---

## 12.INDIVIDUAL WORK (3 MIN)

---

**Ask students to go up to the board or sheets of paper and mark the methods they plan to use over the next week.**

---

### **13.HOMEWORK (1 MIN)**

---

Create a plan for a longer-term project (research paper, exam preparation, reading of required literature – NB! Indicate the number of pages) where you split the work into shorter sections and leave 1 to 2 weeks as a buffer.

# TIME MANAGEMENT



Evelin is having trouble managing her time. Things are piling up, and one morning in class, she discovers that a piece of homework has fallen through the cracks. The teacher gives her a new task, which is to collect and film time management methods, using the experience of her classmates. Evelyn starts filming her classmates, who tell her about their time management methods.

The aim of the film is to introduce time management methods, and referring to the characters will help to exemplify what the teacher is saying in the next lesson.

---

## TIME MANAGEMENT

---

Time management means tracking time and changing one's behaviour to use time as efficiently as possible to achieve one's goals (Eilam and Aharon, 2003). If we can manage our time well, we will be more likely to complete tasks on time, set priorities and plan our time better. Good time management skills help to reduce stress and increase overall well-being, allow to get more done within a set amount of time and enjoy leisure time more (Claessens et al., 2007; Nadinloyi et al., 2013). A number of different methods have been proposed to achieve better time management, which are described below. What works best depends on the individual and the situation. It is useful to be aware of your use of time, try different strategies and find out which ones work best in a given situation.

### Time management strategies

#### 1. Time tracking

To make better use of your time, it's a good idea to get a sense of how you use your time. To do this, we can monitor how long we spend on something and when we do it (Pagana, 1994). It can be useful to track time on paper or use a dedicated app. This gives us an idea, for example, of how long a certain activity or task takes us. In general, people tend to underestimate how long it takes to complete a task (Buehler, Griffin & Ross, 1994). When we think about how long an activity could take, our prediction is often based on an optimistic outlook, where everything is going according to plan. However, this is often not the case in life, and a better way to predict the use of time is to refer to how long a similar activity took in the past. For example, we might think that creating a presentation takes about an hour, but if we're actually tracking our use of time, we may find that the whole process is more likely to take 2 or even 3 hours. Tracking the use of time also gives an idea of which activities tend to waste time.

In addition to keeping track of time spent on various activities, it is helpful to be aware of your most productive time (Center for Clinical Interventions, 2008). For example, we may have the most energy and focus in the morning, so we can schedule activities that require intense thinking for the morning. When we find our most productive time, it is useful to earmark it for work and try to plan other activities on other times.

#### 2. Planning

Time planning is probably one of the most commonly used time management methods. For good reason: solid planning helps to implement all kinds of projects more successfully (Serrador, 2013). Planning works for longer-term projects (e.g. studying for exams, research, etc.) as well as daily chores. Various planning methods exist and you can choose the one that suits you best. Some options include to-do lists, calendars, diaries, planning apps, and more. Planning helps to set clear goals for specific periods of time. The plan should be as clear as possible. If necessary, break down larger tasks into smaller pieces to get a better idea of what exactly needs to be done. Another advantage of planning is that it lets us feel good about what we have already achieved. Furthermore, it helps us avoid stress and enjoy our free time, knowing that work is under control.

#### 3. Setting priorities

Even with the best planning, we may not always have the time for everything we want or need to do. Effective time management also includes the ability to set priorities, i.e., decide what is most important to do at any point. It is useful to distinguish between urgent activities and important activities (MacKenzie, 1990). Covey, Merrill, and Merrill (1994) divide activities into four categories:

## TEACHER'S READING MATERIALS TIME MANAGEMENT

- 1) Important and urgent: These are activities that are important to us and need to be done quickly. This could include, for example, revising for the next day's exam, an impending deadline, an unexpected crisis, or an issue that needs to be addressed immediately. These are things we should get on with as soon as possible.
- 2) Important, but not urgent: These are activities that are important to us, but which are not necessarily urgent. This includes, for example, longer-term projects and goals, such as an exam taking place in two months, choice of university, an important personal project or hobby, etc. For example, suppose you want to practice writing because you definitely want to be writing in the future. Or, for example, it's important for you to exercise to maintain a healthy lifestyle. These things are easy to put off because they don't seem particularly urgent. Of course, this is not great, because it risks important things falling through the cracks or getting postponed to the last minute. Therefore, it is important to keep these activities in mind and schedule time for them.
- 3) Not important, but urgent: These are activities that seem urgent but are not terribly important to us or do not need our attention specifically. This could include some phone calls, messages, or other people suddenly asking us for small and insignificant favours. These activities often eat up our time, because they may seem important at first, but they do not really help us achieve our goals. Such activities can be delegated to others, or you could check whether they are really so urgent. Sometimes you just have to say "no" to some activities.
- 4) Not important and not urgent: These are activities that are neither important to us nor urgent. This can include, for example, excessive use of social media, constant checking of emails or messages, or other time-consuming activities that we find ourselves doing but do not really add value to our lives. It is better to avoid these activities or at least not spend time on them until everything that is more important is done.

#### 4. Focus

Let's say we have created a plan and we want to achieve a goal by a specific deadline. Now, however, it is also important how we approach this task. Let's say we've earmarked two hours to write a short essay. Clearly, just what we do during these two hours will affect both the quality of the work and whether we will actually complete it during that period. If we start writing an essay, but then get distracted by a message or decide to take a 5-minute break, which actually stretches to 20 minutes, then our pace of work is probably not very effective. It is important to work in a focused way and avoid distractions. A frequently used method to increase productivity is the Pomodoro technique (Cirillo, 2006). In this case, a goal is set and the working time is divided into 25-minute chunks called pomodoros. The timer is set to 25 minutes, during which you work on the task without pauses or interruptions. When the timer goes off, there is a short pause of 3-5 minutes. After every four pomodoros (i.e. four 25-minute intervals of work), take a longer break of 15-30 minutes. Work and breaks continue in this rhythm until the goal is met. Taking breaks is important to let us rest and allow the work done or material learned to sink in. However, sticking to specific periods of time helps prevent excessively long pauses or distractions.

There are other useful strategies to prevent getting distracted. For example, it's a good idea to work in as unobtrusive an environment as possible, whether it's a desk in a separate room or a quiet corner in a library or coffee shop.

Multitasking should also be avoided. While multitasking can make us feel productive, studies have found that it does not actually save time (Rubinsteim, Meyer, and Evans, 2001). On the contrary: if we constantly shift our focus between several things, it means, firstly, that nothing may get full attention and, secondly, we lose time to switching – it takes time for the brain to refocus on an interrupted activity or thought.

#### 5. Coping with procrastination

Sometimes the problem with time management is not necessarily a lack of time, but rather our tendency to postpone or procrastinate doing important but unpleasant work. There are some techniques that can help you deal with this problem as well.

One such example is the five-minute technique. This is: when faced with a task, instead of ordering ourselves to get it all done, we can resolve to work on it for 5 minutes (Centre for Clinical Interventions, 2008). Often, these five minutes get us in the flow and we keep working. However, if the work seems too unpleasant even after five minutes, we can stop working on the task for the time being. In this case, we are 5 minutes' worth of work closer to the goal, which is better than not starting at all. This technique works because when you think of the work as a 5-minute chunk, it no longer seems like such a big and insurmountable task, making it easier to get started.

Another technique is to do the most unpleasant task first. That way, we don't have to worry about it for long, and the rest of the work will seem easier in comparison.

### **6. Long-term projects – shorter deadlines and buffer times**

For many people, long-term projects are the most difficult to plan, and important things can be left to the last minute. Work tends to fill the time available for its completion (Parkinson's law, 1955). This means that even if we leave ourselves more time than we need to reach our goal, we may not actually be able to get it done faster. This is due to our tendency to postpone work, which is particularly easy to do with longer deadlines. In this case, setting shorter deadlines may be helpful. For example, you can divide a larger task into smaller parts and set a deadline for each part. Suppose we have a month to write a paper. In this case, we can set a deadline to complete the literature research and create a draft outline by the end of the first week. We can aim to write the first two chapters by the end of the second week, another two chapters the following week, and so on.

It is also important to remember that not everything goes according to plan. Maybe, for example, in the third week of the paper-writing process, we had an unexpected test. It took a lot of time to learn and we were able to complete just one chapter instead of two. To manage such unexpected situations, it is useful to leave some buffer time, i.e. plan to leave a little extra time between the planned completion of the work and the actual deadline. For example, in the case of the paper, we can plan to complete it two or three days ahead of the deadline. If everything goes according to plan, we can enjoy a couple of days off, but if something does come up, we will have enough time to finish the paper.

### **References:**

- Eilam, B., & Aharon, I. (2003). Students' planning in the process of self-regulated learning. *Contemporary educational psychology, 28*(3), 304-334.
- Claessens, B. J., Van Eerde, W., Rutte, C. G., & Roe, R. A. (2007). A review of the time management literature. *Personnel review*.
- Nadinloyi, K. B., Hajloo, N., Garamaleki, N. S., & Sadeghi, H. (2013). The study efficacy of time management training on increase academic time management of students. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 84*, 134-138.
- Pagana, K. D. (1994). *Teaching students time management strategies*.
- Buehler, R., Griffin, D., & Ross, M. (1994). Exploring the "planning fallacy": Why people underestimate their task completion times. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 67*(3), 366.
- Serrador, P. (2013). The impact of planning on project success-a literature review. *The Journal of Modern Project Management, 1*(2).
- MacKenzie, A. (1990). *The Time Trap* (3rd ed.). New York: American Management Association.
- Covey, S. R., Merrill, A. R., & Merrill, R. R. (1994). First things first. *Executive Excellence, 11*, 3-3.

TEACHER'S READING MATERIALS TIME MANAGEMENT

---

Cirillo, F. (2006). The pomodoro technique (the pomodoro). *Agile Processes in Software Engineering and*, 54(2), 35.

Rubinstein, J. S., Meyer, D. E., & Evans, J. E. (2001). Executive control of cognitive processes in task switching. *Journal of experimental psychology: human perception and performance*, 27(4), 763.

Centre for Clinical Interventions, 2008. <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/-/media/CCI/Consumer-Modules/Put-Off-Procrastinating/Putting-Off-Procrastinating---05---Practical-Techniques-to-stop-Procrastination.pdf>

SELF-MOTIVATION

# SELF-MOTIVATION

## KEY TERMS

- ❖ Motivation
- ❖ Objectives
- ❖ Procrastination

## PREPARATIONS

- ❖ Prepare the worksheets for yourself and the class, as well as the tools to stick them on the wall later.
- ❖ Print and distribute the worksheets on self-motivation methods to the groups.
- ❖ Have an hourglass or timer ready (3-4 min).

## NOTE:

- ❖ The ability to motivate ourselves allows us to start, commit to and complete the things we need to do.
- ❖ Various strategies have been proposed to improve self-motivation. It is useful to monitor yourself, try out different methods and notice what works best.

## MY NOTES:

.....

.....

.....

.....

## 1. INTRODUCTION (3 MIN)

### Tell the class:

Today we will be looking at the topic of self-motivation, which according to surveys is one of the most difficult areas among students.

Sometimes we procrastinate or don't do things we really should do or even want to do. While sometimes this is due to a lack of skills or difficulties with time management (see the materials on time management), other times the main problem is a lack of motivation. Motivation is a force that drives us to act in a certain direction and way. People can be motivated by a variety of things: internal factors such as interest, pleasure or desire to try oneself out and learn, as well as external motivations such as good grades, money, avoiding other people's displeasure, etc. There may be enough motivation for some activities, but at other times we may be hampered by a lack of motivation, especially for complex, boring or unpleasant activities. Self-motivation is therefore an important skill. This allows us to start, commit to and complete things we need to do. In this way, we can achieve our goals and avoid excessive stress.

## 2. THEORY (15 MIN)

### Tell the class:

The tendency to procrastinate is natural and various reasons have been proposed for it. First, people often tend to prefer immediate rewards or pleasures over focusing on longer-term goals and benefits. For example, we may know all too well that starting to study well in advance of an exam can help you avoid stress later and possibly improve your exam results. However, it can be difficult to resist the immediate pleasure of going out with friends or playing computer games instead of studying.

Another reason for procrastination is difficulty coping with negative emotions. The tasks we postpone are often those that seem unpleasant, boring or difficult. Thus, procrastination helps to avoid these emotions in the short term.

A third reason why we sometimes procrastinate may be the desire to avoid a sense of failure and a threat to our self-esteem. For example, we may subconsciously fear that if we start studying for an exam, it will prove to be too difficult for us, and if the exam goes badly, we will doubt our skills or even our worth. However, if we procrastinate studying and the exam goes badly, we can blame it on procrastination, not on our own abilities.

In the long run, of course, procrastinating or not doing important activities won't help. Rather, it can cause additional stress and guilt and lower our self-esteem, learning outcomes and overall well-being.

## SELF-MOTIVATION

Various strategies have been proposed to improve self-motivation. It is useful to monitor yourself, try out different methods and notice what works best.

I'm going to introduce one of them now, and then you'll be able to see and introduce other methods to the class.

**Write down the points on the board or, at the end of the introduction to a method, stick a piece of paper with a description of the method on the wall (this will be needed in the last exercise).**

## SET GOALS

Usually, our actions have a purpose, but our goal may be more or less motivating depending on how it is set. A good goal should be:

- a) **Specific** - If the goal is too general or vague (e.g. "do well in the exam", "practice the guitar more", "do your best"), it may not provide enough guidance on what to actually change and how to reach that goal. Therefore, goals should be as clear and precise as possible (e.g. "Practice the guitar for 4 hours next week"). Dividing large works into smaller pieces helps here as well, as it lets us set smaller specific goals (e.g. "read three sources and write a summary of each" is more motivating than "finish the research paper").
  - b) **Difficult, yet achievable** – overly simple goals may not motivate us to make enough effort. At the same time, the goal should be realistic. Setting fantastically high goals risks falling far short of achieving them, reducing our motivation. It is worth thinking about what goal would be achievable considering our current situation, abilities, time limit, etc.
  - c) **Measurable** – for goals, it is important to know when we have achieved them and be able to tell how much progress we have made. For example, let's say we want to get more exercise. But how much? What does "more" mean? In that case, we should think about how we measure success (for example, "I will go to the gym twice a week" or "I want to be able to run 1 km in 6 minutes by the end of the month" or "I will walk at least 10,000 steps every day, using a pedometer for counting").
  - d) **Has a time limit** – if we set a goal but don't specify a deadline, it can feel easier to postpone. Some tasks (e.g. schoolwork) come with a deadline, and some goals (e.g. walking a certain number of steps each day) allow us to check our achievement every day. Sometimes, however, we have to set our own deadlines. Suppose, for example, that at some point, we will want to start researching what we want to do after high school (e.g. researching university programmes, jobs, etc).
- This task does not necessarily have a specific deadline, so it may be easy to postpone. Therefore, it may be useful to set yourself a time limit (e.g. to research programmes offered at universities X and Y by the end of the month). Time management, which is discussed in the materials on time management, is also relevant here.
- e) **Behavioural rather than result-based** – a result-based goal means that we aim for a result or output (e.g. "I will get at least 70 points in the national maths exam", "I will lose 5 kg in two months", etc.). They are sometimes suitable for longer-term goals, but it would be useful to give yourself shorter-term behavioural goals to improve your motivation. Behavioural goals aim for a specific change in behaviour (e.g. "I will study vectors this week until I can solve all the sample exercises in the workbook" or "I will cycle at least three times a week for the next two months and ride at least x minutes / y km each time"). We can control our behaviour more directly than any outcome, so this kind of goal-setting provides better guidance for achieving the outcome and can be more motivating.

---

### 3. INTRODUCTION TO THE EXERCISE (2 MIN)

---

**Tell the class:**

Now form groups or pairs (9 groups in total) and I will give each group a description of a method, which is essentially something you can do to improve self-motivation. Each group thinks about how to convey the nature of their method to the others without words, through a pantomime, and others need to guess the method. This is a version of the well-known game Charades where some demonstrate a concept and the rest of the class guesses at it. When the topic is guessed (or if it is not guessed), the group briefly introduces the method to the class and then sticks their

## SELF-MOTIVATION

worksheet on the wall. Each group (pair) has 10 minutes to discuss how or what they could do and then 3-4 minutes to present it and for the others to guess it.

#### 4. GROUP OR PAIR WORK (7 MIN)

*Distribute worksheets to the groups. This is followed by group work. Students discuss how best to introduce their methods to fellow students and decide on who does what. The pantomime can be performed by one person from the group, a pair, or the whole group.*

#### 5. CHARADES (45 MIN)

*The groups will then present their pantomimes. The time limit to guess each method is 4 minutes (NB! Use an hourglass or a timer!). This is followed by a short (1-2 min) comment by the group or teacher (review the introductions to the methods provided on the worksheets distributed to the students; if the students leave out something important, add it). The total time used by each group/pair/performer should not exceed 5 minutes. Don't forget to stick the worksheet on the wall after each pantomime. Finally, a set of 10 methods (1 presented by the teacher and 9 by the students) is displayed on the wall.*

**Ask the class:**

- ❖ How did it feel? Was it easy to guess?
- ❖ What did you take away from the lesson?

#### 6. INDIVIDUAL WORK. CHOOSING THE RIGHT METHODS FOR YOU (3 MIN)

*As a final exercise, ask students to stand up, go up to the wall, and mark (for example, with a smiley, or give the students small stickers to use) all methods they intend to use. It's up to each individual student how many to mark – whether 1, 3, or even 10.*

*The activity is spontaneous, with the only limit set by time, everyone can do it at the same time. If necessary, the pages can be rearranged in the classroom to create more space. This activity can be continued during the break.*

#### 7. SUMMARY (1 MIN)

*During the exercise, mention the methods you would use yourself and encourage students to use the methods. If possible, leave the sheets in the classroom for about a week to consolidate the knowledge.*

*Further development of the topic: If you want to help the topic consolidate even more, you can ask them next time or in a different class to take one of their specific life situations or a larger project where they are having self-motivation difficulties (e.g. a research project) and write down how and what methods they could use for the project (e.g.: How to divide the research project into smaller chunks?). Drawing connections to real life and using them for real is more likely to ensure that this knowledge is put to use by students.*

---

## SELF-MOTIVATION

---

Sometimes we procrastinate or don't do things we really should do or even want to do. While sometimes this is due to a lack of skills or difficulties with time management (see the materials on time management), other times the main problem is a lack of motivation. Motivation is a force that drives us to act in a certain direction and way (Pintrich, 2000). People can be motivated by a variety of things: internal factors such as interest, pleasure or desire to try oneself out and learn, as well as external motivations such as good grades, money, avoiding other people's displeasure, etc. (Ryan & Deci, 2000). There may be enough motivation for some activities, but at other times we may be hampered by a lack of motivation, especially for complex, boring or unpleasant activities. Self-motivation is therefore an important skill. This allows us to start, commit to and complete things we need to do. In this way, we can achieve our goals and avoid excessive stress.

### Motivation problems and procrastination

The tendency to procrastinate is natural and various reasons have been proposed for it. First, people often tend to prefer immediate rewards or pleasures over focusing on longer-term goals and benefits (Steel, 2007). For example, we may know all too well that starting to study well in advance of an exam can help you avoid stress later and possibly improve your exam results. However, it can be difficult to resist the immediate pleasure of going out with friends or playing computer games instead of studying.

Another reason for procrastination is difficulty coping with negative emotions (Blunt & Pychyl, 2000). The tasks we postpone are often those that seem unpleasant, boring or difficult. Thus, procrastination helps to avoid these emotions in the short term.

A third reason why we sometimes procrastinate may be the desire to avoid a sense of failure and a threat to our self-esteem (Urđan & Midgley, 2001). For example, we may subconsciously fear that if we start studying for an exam, it will prove to be too difficult for us, and if the exam goes badly, we will doubt our skills or even our worth. However, if we procrastinate studying and the exam goes badly, we can blame it on procrastination, not on our own abilities.

In the long run, of course, procrastinating or not doing important activities won't help. Rather, it can cause additional stress and guilt and lower our self-esteem, learning outcomes and overall well-being (Duru & Balkis, 2017).

### Improving self-motivation

Various strategies have been proposed to improve self-motivation. It is useful to monitor yourself, try out different methods and notice what works best.

#### I. Divide large tasks into smaller pieces

Large long-term projects (e.g. research papers, essays, preparing for exams, etc.) may seem too large and therefore decrease motivation. However, we can make the project seem less intimidating by dividing it into smaller tasks (Wolters, 1998). For a research paper, for example, we can divide the work into pieces such as literature research, figuring out the structure of the theory section, writing each chapter, and so on. If necessary, these parts of the work can be further subdivided. For example, when researching literature, we may plan to first look for possible sources on the Internet, then read through one source, write down the most important points to use in the theory section, then move on to the next source, and so on.

## 2. Set goals

Usually, our actions have a purpose, but our goal may be more or less motivating depending on how it is set (Locke, 1996). A good goal should be:

- a) **Specific** - If the goal is too general or vague (eg "do well in the exam", "practice the guitar more", "do your best"), it may not provide enough guidance on what to actually change and how to reach that goal. Therefore, goals should be as clear and precise as possible (e.g. "Practice the guitar for 4 hours next week"). Dividing large works into smaller pieces helps here as well, as it lets us set smaller specific goals (eg "read and write a summary of three sources" is more motivating than "finish the research paper").
- b) **Difficult, yet achievable** - overly simple goals may not motivate us to make enough effort. At the same time, the goal should be realistic. Setting a fantastically high goal risks not getting close enough to achieving it, reducing our motivation. It is worth thinking about what goal would be achievable considering our current situation, abilities, time limit, etc.
- c) **Measurable** - for goals, it is important to know when we have achieved it and be able to tell how much progress we have made. For example, let's say we want to get more exercise. But how much? What does "more" mean? In that case, we should think about how we measure success (for example, "I will go to the gym twice a week" or "I want to be able to run 1 km in 6 minutes by the end of the month" or "I will walk at least 10,000 steps every day, using a pedometer for counting").
- d) **Has a time limit** - if we set a goal but don't specify a deadline, it can feel easier to postpone it. Some tasks (e.g. schoolwork) come with a deadline, and some goals (e.g. walking a certain number of steps each day) allow us to check our achievement every day. Sometimes, however, we have to set our own deadlines. Suppose, for example, that at some point, we will want to start researching what we want to do after high school (e.g. researching university programmes, jobs, etc.). This task does not necessarily have a specific deadline, so it may be easy to postpone it. Therefore, it may be useful to set yourself a time limit (e.g. to research programmes offered at universities X and Y by the end of the month). Time management, which is discussed in the materials on time management, is also relevant here.
- e) **Behavioural rather than result-based** - a result-based goal means that we aim for a result or output (e.g. "I will get at least 70 points in the national maths exam", "I will lose 5 kg in two months", etc.). They are sometimes suitable for longer-term goals, but it would be useful to give yourself shorter-term behavioural goals to improve your motivation. Behavioural goals aim for a specific change in behaviour (e.g., "I will study vectors this week until I can solve all the sample exercises in the workbook" or "I will cycle at least three times a week for the next two months and ride at least x minutes / y km each time"). We can control our behaviour more directly than any outcome, so this kind of goal-setting provides better guidance for achieving the outcome and can be more motivating.

## 3. Focus on the reason you are doing something

Short-term small goals are useful, but at the same time, it's good to keep in mind the big picture, i.e., why we do something in the long run. What benefits do we expect? For example, we might want to do well in the math exam in order to get into university and study a subject that interests us a lot. Or, for example, we want to exercise to get more energy, improve our self-esteem, and so on. Or we might want to tidy up our wardrobe so that it will be pleasant to use it later. In any case, it can be motivating to imagine the positive consequences of an action and the satisfaction we will feel when the goal is met (Lombardo, 2017).

## 4. Make a public promise

When setting goals, it is especially effective to state them publicly (Klein, Cooper & Monahan, 2013). For example, we might share our goals with a friend or family member and perhaps even ask them to check in on our progress from time to time. Or, for example, if we are doing work that someone else is checking (for example, a boss at work, or a

classmate waiting for us to do our part in a group assignment), it also helps to promise them a specific deadline when the task will be ready. Stating our goals helps to anchor them, and it is more likely that we will indeed commit and achieve the goal because in general, we do not like to give up our promise or "fail" when others know about it.

### 5. Reward yourself

Rewarding yourself is a common method of motivation (Wolters, 2003). This means that we will only give ourselves some kind of reward or prize if we achieve the goal we've set. This prize can be a physical item (e.g. "When I finish reading this chapter, I will buy myself an ice cream") or an activity we enjoy (e.g. "When I've finished writing this chapter, I will watch an episode of my favourite series"). Rewarding yourself is generally effective (Jackson & Molloy, 1985), but it should only be left for tasks that we would not otherwise enjoy or want to do. If we start rewarding ourselves for activities we enjoy anyway (such as sports, reading, etc.), our motivation and enjoyment may decrease. This is because the brain subconsciously assumes that being rewarded for something must mean the reward is the only reason to do it, meaning that we can't really like the action itself that much (Kruglanski, Alon & Lewis, 1972).

However, the reward you promise yourself does not have to be anything physical. Self-praise and positive internal speech can also be very effective (Graham, Harris & Troia, 1998). For example, if we solve a task, we can tell ourselves, "Good job! I did it, and this time, I did it especially fast. I am making progress and I am now closer to the goal." Noticing small achievements while working helps us stay motivated.

### 6. Create a routine

If you need to repeat an activity over a long period of time (e.g. preparing for an exam, working out, homework, etc.), it's a good idea to turn it into a habit, i.e. to add it to your daily routine (<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/learn/study-motivation.html>). For example, we may decide to study for the exam between 6 pm and 7 pm every day from Monday to Friday. Such a routine helps to avoid both procrastination and distraction, because we know for sure that this time is intended for work. You will soon find it easier to motivate yourself, as it develops into a habit.

### 7. Create interest and variety

If you lack motivation because the task seems too boring, it is sometimes possible to change your activities or thinking a little to make the task seem more enjoyable. For studying, for example, there are different methods of learning, whose effectiveness depends on the situation and the person (<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/learn/study-motivation.html>). For example, if we try to remember facts from history, we can either just read our notes, or make a concept map, draw pictures, use *flashcards*, try to teach the material to someone else, come up with a little poem or song to help remember the facts, and so on. Variety can also be created, for example, by focusing on learning different subjects on different days, working in different places (e.g. in the library, café, outdoors, etc.), or working together with other people. Tasks that seem otherwise boring can thus be made more interesting or enjoyable in several ways. For example, you may enjoy running more if you listen to good music or an audiobook at the same time, or if you decide to take a new route. Many tasks can also be made more playful (Wolters, 1998). Good examples of this are the productivity apps that have gained popularity in recent years, allowing you to set goals (studying without using your phone for a while, reaching a certain number of steps/exercise, learning a language, etc.) and try out different challenges, compare yourself to others, get small virtual prizes, and more. Of course, you can think of similar playful ways yourself.

### 8. Avoid catastrophising

One of the main reasons for procrastination is the fear that the work will cause too many negative emotions. We often tend to catastrophise, that is, imagine things are worse than they are (Lombardo, 2017). For example, when we

imagine how difficult, boring, terrible, or intolerable a task is. In reality, boredom and hard work generally do not kill us. However, postponing work generally leads to worse consequences. So it is useful to take a more positive attitude - "this may not be my favorite job, but I can do it". The 5-minute technique described in time management materials can also help you start tasks that seem particularly unpleasant. In this case, we tell ourselves that we will only do something for 5 minutes - if we get in the flow and do more, great, but if not, 5 minutes is better than nothing at all.

### 9. Avoid negative internal monologue

Both before starting and during the pursuit of a goal, we may find ourselves experiencing negative thoughts. This is especially likely if we encounter obstacles (e.g. we set a goal but did not achieve it, or it turned out that there is actually more work than we thought). People with lower self-esteem or previous negative experiences with similar tasks are also more likely to have a negative internal monologue. In the case of a negative internal monologue, for example, we may start to doubt our abilities or the meaningfulness or achievability of the task at hand (e.g. "I can't do it", "It's too complicated", "It's just a very stupid and pointless task", "I didn't get anything done again because I keep procrastinating", etc.). This kind of thinking decreases motivation. It would be better to treat the obstacles with curiosity and not with contempt - "Hm, what an interesting situation! What can I do about it?", "How can I do better next time?" (Lepisk, 2020).

### 10. Create the right environment

Focusing and maintaining motivation is easier when our environment encourages it (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1986, 1990). For example, when studying, we may turn off the phone or mute notifications while doing a task to avoid distractions. We can also choose a quiet place for work that requires concentration, asking others nearby not to interfere, and so on. With other activities, we may be motivated by other things - perhaps, for example, we feel motivated when we listen to a particular type of music or when we work towards our goal together with another person. Of course, a generally healthy lifestyle, adequate sleep, social support, a positive mindset, etc. are always important to maintain motivation (see also the materials on self-management).

### References:

- Blunt, A. K., & Pychyl, T. A. (2000). Task aversiveness and procrastination: A multi-dimensional approach to task aversiveness across stages of personal projects. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 28(1), 153-167.
- Duru, E., & Balkis, M. (2017). Procrastination, self-esteem, academic performance, and well-being: A moderated mediation model. *International Journal of Educational Psychology: IJEP*, 6(2), 97-119.
- Graham, S., Harris, K. R., & Troia, G. A. (1998). Writing and self-regulation: Cases from the self-regulated strategy development model.
- <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/learn/study-motivation.html>
- Jackson, H. J., & Molloy, G. N. (1985). Some effects of feedback alone and four types of self-consequence on selected measures of problem solving. *Perceptual and motor skills*, 61(3), 1005-1006.
- Klein, H. J., Cooper, J. T., & Monahan, C. A. (2013). Goal commitment.
- Kruglanski, A. W., Alon, S., & Lewis, T. (1972). Retrospective misattribution and task enjoyment. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 8(6), 493-501.
- Lepisk, H. (2020). Õpimotivatsioon eriolukorras – ajaplaneerimine ja enesemotivatsioon. (Motivation to study in a state of emergency - time planning and self-motivation.) <https://inspiratsioon.ee/eriolukord/>
- Locke, E. A. (1996). Motivation through conscious goal setting. *Applied and preventive psychology*, 5(2), 117-124.

## TEACHER'S READING MATERIALS SELF-MOTIVATION

- Lombardo, E. (2017). 11 Ways to Overcome Procrastination. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/better-perfect/201703/11-ways-overcome-procrastination>
- Pintrich, P. R. (2000). An achievement goal theory perspective on issues in motivation terminology, theory, and research. *Contemporary educational psychology, 25*(1), 92-104.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary educational psychology, 25*(1), 54-67.
- Steel, P. (2007). The nature of procrastination: a meta-analytic and theoretical review of quintessential self-regulatory failure. *Psychological bulletin, 133*(1), 65.
- Urdu, T., & Midgley, C. (2001). Academic self-handicapping: What we know, what more there is to learn. *Educational Psychology Review, 13*(2), 115-138.
- Wolters, C. A. (1998). Self-regulated learning and college students' regulation of motivation. *Journal of educational psychology, 90*(2), 224.
- Wolters, C. A. (2003). Regulation of motivation: Evaluating an underemphasized aspect of self-regulated learning. *Educational psychologist, 38*(4), 189-205.
- Zimmerman, B. J., & Martinez-Pons, M. (1990). Student differences in self-regulated learning: Relating grade, sex, and giftedness to self-efficacy and strategy use. *Journal of educational Psychology, 82*(1), 51.
- Zimmerman, B. J., & Pons, M. M. (1986). Development of a structured interview for assessing student use of self-regulated learning strategies. *American educational research journal, 23*(4), 614-628.

## SET GOALS

---

Usually, our actions have a purpose, but our goal may be more or less motivating depending on how it is set. A good goal should be:

a) **Specific** - If the goal is too general or vague (e.g. "do well in the exam", "practice the guitar more", "do your best"), it may not provide enough guidance on what to actually change and how to reach that goal. Therefore, goals should be as clear and precise as possible (e.g. "Practice the guitar for 4 hours next week"). Dividing large works into smaller pieces helps here as well, as it lets us set smaller specific goals (e.g. "Read three sources and write a summary of each" is more motivating than "Finish the research paper").

b) **Difficult, yet achievable** - overly simple goals may not motivate us to make enough effort. At the same time, the goal should be realistic. Setting a fantastically high goal risks not getting close enough to achieving it, reducing our motivation. It is worth thinking about what goal would be achievable considering our current situation, abilities, time limit, etc.

c) **Measurable** - for goals, it is important to know when we have achieved it and be able to tell how much progress we have made. For example, let's say we want to get more exercise. But how much? What does "more" mean? In that case, we should think about how we measure success (for example, "I will go to the gym twice a week" or "I want to be able to run 1 km in 6 minutes by the end of the month" or "I will walk at least 10,000 steps every day, using a pedometer for counting").

d) **Has a time limit** - if we set a goal but don't specify a deadline, it can feel easier to postpone it. Some tasks (e.g. schoolwork) come with a deadline, and some goals (e.g. walking a certain number of steps each day) allow us to check our achievement every day. Sometimes, however, we have to set our own deadlines. Suppose, for example, that at some point, we will want to start researching what we want to do after high school (e.g. researching university programmes, jobs, etc.). This task does not necessarily have a specific deadline, so it may be easy to postpone it. Therefore, it may be useful to set yourself a time limit (e.g. to research programmes offered at universities X and Y by the end of the month). Time management, which is discussed in the materials on time management, is also relevant here.

e) **Behavioural rather than result-based** - a result-based goal means that we aim for a result or output (e.g. "I will get at least 70 points in the national maths exam", "I will lose 5 kg in two months", etc.). They are sometimes suitable for longer-term goals, but it would be useful to give yourself shorter-term behavioural goals to improve your motivation. Behavioural goals aim for a specific change in behaviour (e.g., "I will study vectors this week until I can solve all the sample exercises in the workbook" or "I will cycle at least three times a week for the next two months and ride at least x minutes / y km each time"). We can control our behaviour more directly than any outcome, so this kind of goal-setting provides better guidance for achieving the outcome and can be more motivating.

---

## DIVIDE LARGE TASKS INTO SMALLER PIECES

---

Large long-term projects (e.g. research papers, essays, preparing for exams, etc.) may seem too large and therefore decrease motivation. However, we can make the project seem less intimidating by dividing it into smaller tasks. For a research paper, for example, we can divide the work into pieces such as literature research, figuring out the structure of the theory section, writing each chapter, and so on. If necessary, these parts of the work can be further subdivided. For example, when researching literature, we may plan to first look for possible sources on the Internet, then read through one source, write down the most important points to use in the theory section, then move on to the next source, and so on.

---

## FOCUS ON THE REASON YOU ARE DOING SOMETHING

---

Short-term small goals are useful, but at the same time, it's good to keep in mind the big picture, i.e., why we do something in the long run. What benefits do we expect? For example, we might want to do well in the math exam in order to get into university and study a subject that interests us a lot. Or, for example, we want to exercise to get more energy, improve our self-esteem, and so on. Or we might want to tidy up our wardrobe so that it will be pleasant to use it later. In any case, it can be motivating to imagine the positive consequences of an action and the satisfaction we will feel when the goal is met.

---

## MAKE A PUBLIC PROMISE

---

Once we have set goals, it is especially effective to announce them publicly. For example, we might share our goals with a friend or family member and perhaps even ask them to check in on our progress from time to time. Or, for example, if we are doing work that someone else is checking (for example, a boss at work, or a classmate waiting for us to do our part in a group assignment), it also helps to promise them a specific deadline when the task will be ready. Stating our goals helps to anchor them, and it is more likely that we will indeed commit and achieve the goal because in general, we do not like to give up our promise or "fail" when others know about it.

---

# REWARD YOURSELF

---

Rewarding yourself is a common method of motivation. This means that we will only give ourselves some kind of reward or prize if we achieve the goal we've set. This prize can be a physical item (e.g. "When I finish reading this chapter, I will buy myself an ice cream") or an activity we enjoy (e.g. "When I've finished writing this chapter, I will watch an episode of my favourite series"). Rewarding yourself is generally effective, but it should only be left for tasks that we would not particularly enjoy or want to do otherwise. If we start rewarding ourselves for activities we enjoy anyway (such as sports, reading, etc.), our motivation and enjoyment may decrease. This is because the brain subconsciously assumes that being rewarded for something must mean the reward is the only reason to do it, meaning that we can't really like the action itself that much. However, the reward you promise yourself does not have to be anything physical. Self-praise and positive internal speech can also be very effective. For example, if we solve a task, we can tell ourselves, "Good job! I did it, and this time, I did it especially fast. I am making progress and I am now closer to the goal." Noticing small achievements while working helps us stay motivated.

---

# CREATE A ROUTINE

---

If you need to repeat an activity over a long period of time (e.g. preparing for an exam, working out, homework, etc.), it's a good idea to turn it into a habit, i.e. to add it to your daily routine. For example, we may decide to study for the exam between 6 pm and 7 pm every day from Monday to Friday. Such a routine helps to avoid both procrastination and distraction, because we know for sure that this time is intended for work. You will soon find it easier to motivate yourself, as it develops into a habit.

---

# CREATE INTEREST AND VARIETY

---

If you lack motivation because the task seems too boring, it is sometimes possible to change your activities or thinking a little to make the task seem more enjoyable. For studying, for example, there are different methods of learning, whose effectiveness depends on the situation and the person. For example, if we try to remember facts from history, we can either just read our notes, or make a concept map, draw pictures, use flashcards, try to teach the material to someone else, come up with a little poem or song to help remember the facts, and so on. Variety can also be created, for example, by focusing on learning different subjects on different days, working in different places (e.g. in the library, café, outdoors, etc.), or working together with other people. Tasks that seem otherwise boring can thus be made more interesting or enjoyable in several ways. For example, you may enjoy running more if you listen to good music or an audiobook at the same time, or if you decide to take a new route. Many tasks can also be made more playful. Good examples of this are productivity apps that allow you to set goals (learning without your phone for a while, reaching a certain number of steps/exercise, learning a language, etc.) and try out different challenges, compare yourself to others, get small virtual prizes, and more. Of course, you can think of similar playful ways yourself.

---

## AVOID CATASTROPHISING

---

One of the main reasons for procrastination is the fear that the work will cause too many negative emotions. We often tend to catastrophise, that is, imagine things are worse than they are. For example, when we imagine how difficult, boring, terrible, or intolerable a task is. In reality, boredom and hard work generally do not kill us. However, postponing work generally leads to worse consequences. So it is useful to take a more positive attitude - "this may not be my favorite job, but I can do it". The 5-minute technique described in time management materials can also help you start tasks that seem particularly unpleasant. In this case, we tell ourselves that we will only do something for 5 minutes - if we get in the flow and do more, great, but if not, 5 minutes is better than nothing at all.

---

## AVOID NEGATIVE INTERNAL MONOLOGUE

---

Both before starting and during the pursuit of a goal, we may find ourselves experiencing negative thoughts. This is especially likely if we encounter obstacles (e.g. we set a goal but did not achieve it, or it turned out that there is actually more work than we thought). People with lower self-esteem or previous negative experiences with similar tasks are also more likely to have a negative internal monologue. In the case of a negative internal monologue, for example, we may start to doubt our abilities or the meaningfulness or achievability of the task at hand (e.g. "I can't do it", "It's too complicated", "It's just a very stupid and pointless task", "I didn't get anything done again because I keep procrastinating", etc.). This kind of thinking decreases motivation. It would be better to treat the obstacles with curiosity and not with contempt - "Hm, what an interesting situation! What can I do about it?", "How can I do better next time?"

---

## CREATE THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

---

Focusing and maintaining motivation is easier when our environment encourages it. For example, when studying, we may turn off the phone or mute notifications while doing a task to avoid distractions. We can also choose a quiet place for work that requires concentration, asking others nearby not to interfere, and so on. With other activities, we may be motivated by other things - perhaps, for example, we feel motivated when we listen to a particular type of music or when we work towards our goal together with another person. Of course, a generally healthy lifestyle, adequate sleep, social support, a positive mindset, etc. are always important to maintain motivation.

## VALUES I. DIFFERENCES IN VALUES

# VALUES I. DIFFERENCES IN VALUES

## KEY TERMS

- ❖ Prerequisites for cooperation
- ❖ Different perspectives, different "stories"
- ❖ Impact of the approach to communication
- ❖ When can cooperation become very difficult or even impossible?
- ❖ Different values



## TOOLBOX

PERSPECTIVE



NOTICING DIFFERENT VALUES,  
FEELINGS



IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS



UNDERSTANDING VALUES



## PREPARATIONS

- ❖ Have the film "The Band" ready to play.
- ❖ Print out the value chart worksheets.

## 1. INTRODUCTION (2 MIN)

Today we are going to watch a video about a group of friends who found themselves in a difficult situation. After that, I will ask you questions based on what you saw.

## 2. VIDEO CLIP "THE BAND" (5 MIN)

Show the clip "The Band" until the end

## 3. GENERAL DISCUSSION (15 MIN)

**Ask the class** (choose some students):



- ❖ What did you see?
- ❖ What did you think?
- ❖ Thinking about people in general, what kinds of differences can be resolved and what kinds can not?
- ❖ How can you tell when it makes sense to continue working together and when it doesn't?
- ❖ Tell us about your experience:
  - Have you had such situations and how many (where continuing does not make sense)?
  - How do you decide in your life which way to go? What to do? What have you based the decisions on?

## 4. COMMENT (10 MIN)

**Explain:**

It would be nice if everything in life went according to plan. Or if life had fixed rules: for example, if you are dutiful and study hard at school, things will go well in your life. While some patterns do exist in life (for example, a good education is indeed associated with a later successful career), accidents do happen or things don't go as you expect. And sometimes you just fail. What remains to be done then? How to get over it quickly? The

VALUES I. DIFFERENCES IN VALUES

**NOTE:**

- ❖ Different values cause conflicts and misunderstandings, and cooperation is sometimes very difficult or impossible.
- ❖ If you do not speak up about something bothering you, the other person might not even be aware this is the case. All the while, they may have their own reason, their own story. You need to listen to both sides, explain your position and try to understand the other.
- ❖ The problem must be discussed using I-messages to avoid attacking the other and prevent a defensive reaction.
- ❖ If you have repeatedly tried to talk and explain your position, but the conflict is rooted in different values, then it is up to you to decide how much time and energy you are willing to invest in attempting cooperation (or whether cooperation should be terminated).
- ❖ When mental violence or forcible imposition of the other's views enters the picture, hard boundaries must be set or the violent relationship terminated.

**MY NOTES:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

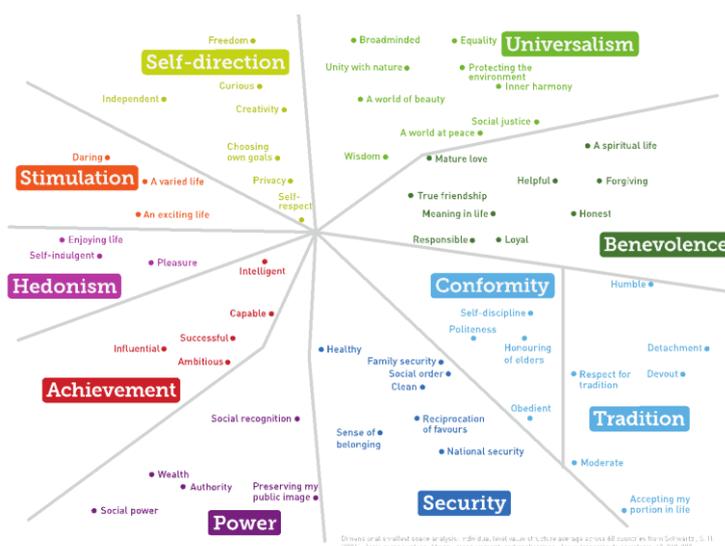
.....

.....

question of how to avoid bad things from happening is always less important than the question of how to get over the bad things that happen as quickly as possible.

In this lesson, we will approach cooperation from a different perspective. While we have considered so far that most problems can be solved by talking to the other party, things are not always that easy. Today, we are going to look at how to understand when cooperation is not a sensible choice and it's time to move on, and how to leave negative emotions behind as quickly as possible (once it becomes clear that the situation cannot be changed).

Among other things, we will be talking about values. In general, values are things that are considered right or important. Values shape attitudes, which in turn influence behaviour (Talur, 2006). Shalom Schwartz (1992), for example, maps the core values of different people as follows (*distribute the worksheets*):



The values closer to each other in the figure are more closely connected and the values opposite each other are in opposition.

## VALUES I. DIFFERENCES IN VALUES

**5. EXERCISE (16 MIN)**

*This exercise is also provided on the worksheet under the figure:*

- ❖ Read the lists of values and write down the values you subscribe to or consider to be important to you (honesty, friendship, caring, loyalty, abiding by agreements, respecting others' opinions, etc.). What else?
- ❖ Share with your deskmate why these values are important to you and what they mean to you.
- ❖ Write down: What does honesty mean to you? Friendship? What makes a friend?
- ❖ Share the last topic with your deskmate/partner. Tell each other what friendship means to you and what makes a friend.

**6. COMMENTS AND THEORY (10 MIN)**

People understand friendship differently. For example, some feel that a friend is somebody who supports you at a difficult time. For them, friendship is first and foremost about support. Others consider a friend to be someone who dares to tell them the bald truth and helps by pointing out your shortcomings. When these two visions meet, they clash. Sometimes it's good to discuss with your friends what friendship means to all of you. Sometimes the values are similar (friendship is important), but the understanding of the concept (what friendship means) is different.

We all have our value systems. Different people will see different behaviours as appropriate. People with different values can often co-exist in harmony. Sometimes, however, people's values can clash and the clash can be reflected in their behaviour. This can lead to a conflict of values. For example, in the video, Alex probably valued personal success, while the rest of the band valued loyalty, honesty, and so on. To each side, the other's behaviour seemed fundamentally incomprehensible. Resolving value conflicts can be difficult because the value systems of others cannot be changed quickly. Understanding each other, accepting differences and focusing on needs instead of values can help overcome conflicts. Sometimes the behavioural styles of some people simply do not fit together, and this is fine (<https://nordicpassionista.eu/vaartuskonflikti-volu-ja-vaev/>). Ultimately, however, shared values are important for day-to-day collaboration, the development of real trust, and the good functioning of longer-term relationships (Jones & George, 1998).

It is also important to remember that other people cannot impose their values on you. You don't have to put up with somebody restricting you or treating you disrespectfully. For example, if you are thinking of a relationship that should be equal (for example, between friends), but where the parties are not actually in equal positions, would you notice it? In certain situations, you should have the courage to admit that it doesn't work for you. However, in most cases, problems can be solved by talking. There is just a small percentage of cases (value clashes, but what else?) when they cannot.

*The conclusion of the discussion should be that value clashes often make cooperation very difficult:*

Similar values are important in longer-term relationships/cooperation, but on the other hand, it cannot be said that value clashes render cooperation impossible. Even different values can allow for cooperation: they may not always get in the way or be relevant to a given task. Sometimes, however, they can become an obstacle, especially in the case of longer-term relationships/cooperation. It is up to us to decide when and how much energy to spend resolving conflicts. When values clash, you can try to work through conflicts and it can be successful. If conflicts happen too often and the energy and stress spent on them outweigh the importance of

## VALUES I. DIFFERENCES IN VALUES

---

maintaining the relationship or cooperation, it can be better to end the cooperation - but in other cases (most often), situations can be resolved.

---

### 7. GROUP WORK: "AQUARIUM" (16 MIN)

---

Finally, we will explore a technique that can help you make decisions and find the solutions that work for you.

#### **TECHNIQUE: "ADVISING A FRIEND" OR "AQUARIUM"**

This exercise is done in groups of three. The goal is to get help from others to find solutions for your problem. One of the three (the roles will later be switched) describes a problem that has bothered them recently or one that they will need to address in the future. While they speak, the others listen. When the speaker is done, it is the others' turn to talk. They should avoid offering direct advice and focus on describing the associations that the topic creates for them. At the same time, the person who presented the problem is listening, as if in an "aquarium", picking out what resonates for them. The process looks like this:

- 1) One participant talks about a current or upcoming problem that they need to resolve. They describe it to the others and state the problem or a question. The others listen silently until the problem has been defined.
- 2) Then the person who presented the problem remains silent while the other two enter a dialogue about their problem, as if talking "behind their back". They must not offer advice or address the first person in any way!  
Note: You can only tell the other what the problem reminds you of, what you have done in similar situations, what thoughts came up when listening to the problem, use metaphors, etc. The third person listens and takes notes on useful thoughts.
- 3) The third person, i.e. the person who posed the problem, gives their own assessment of whether they found the others' thoughts useful and what they got out of it.
- 4) All three share their experience of the exercise and the feelings and thoughts it created.

Each part of the process takes about 4 minutes.

---

### 8. SUMMARY (1 MIN)

---

The takeaway here should be that you should not give up every time and you should make an attempt to discuss problems, however for long-term cooperation, matching values are important.

# THE BAND



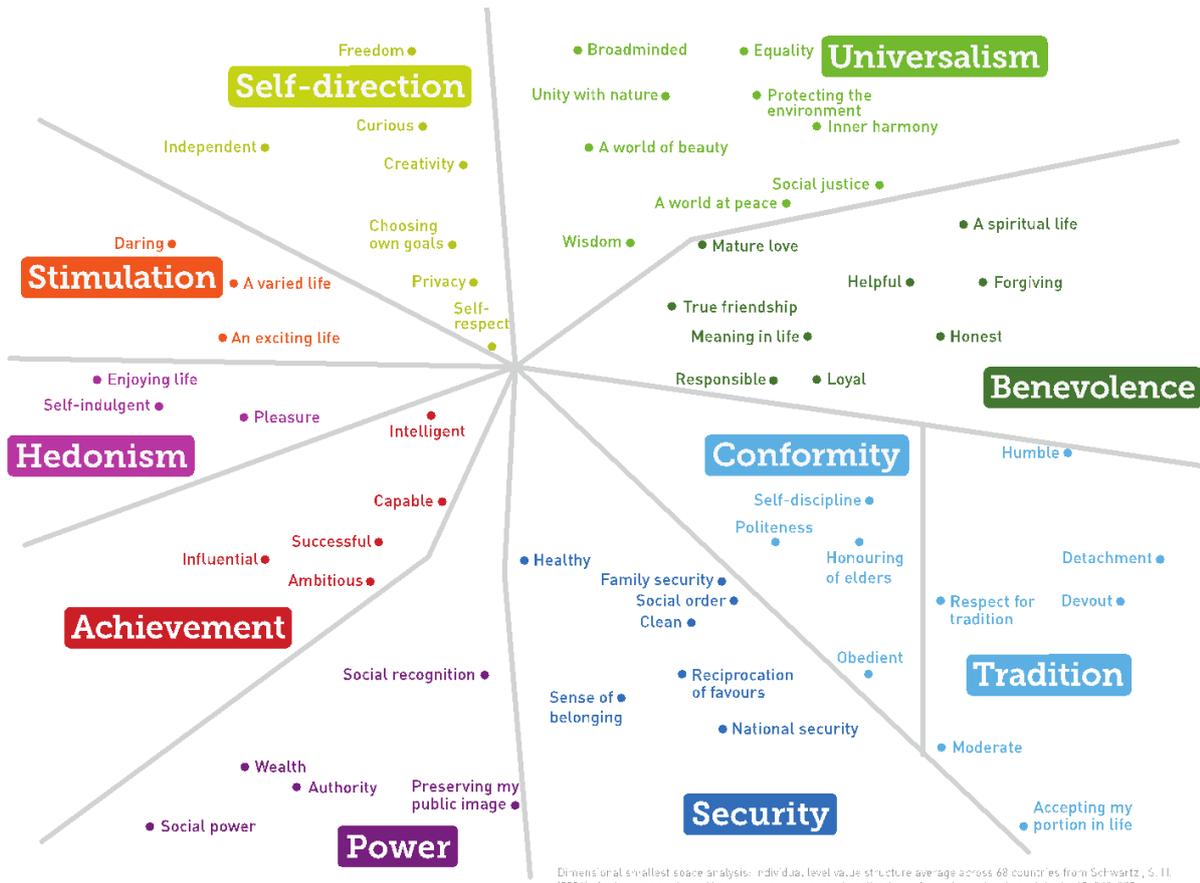
Throughout the course, we have suggested ways to talk to the other parties in different situations. But what to do in a situation where there is no point in talking and no possibility of consensus due to fundamentally different values? The film probes this theme and considers the topic of different values.

A youth band discovers that their singer has left them, taking along their joint work: the singer claims that this is all their work, and has taken jointly written songs to their new band. Our band feels betrayed. Unfortunately, joint authorship has not been formally established anywhere and nothing can be done in this unfair situation. The singer thinks they did most of the work and the others just helped a little bit, and doesn't see the others' point about fairness, deciding that they have done nothing wrong. These parties have different views on fairness. Our band has to decide what to do and how to feel in this situation.

**WORKSHEET: VALUES**

# VALUES

SCHEME OF VALUES:



**EXERCISE**

1) Read the lists of values and write down the values you subscribe to or consider to be important to you (honesty, friendship, caring, loyalty, abiding by agreements, respecting others' opinions, etc.). What else?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....  
.....

2) Write down: What does honesty mean to you? Friendship? What makes a friend?

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

3) Share the last topic with your partner. Tell each other what friendship means to you and what makes a friend. What makes a good friend? What do you expect from a friend? What should a friend not do? When would you feel like they weren't acting the way a friend should? What is friendship and what is not? What beliefs or values should you have in common?

## VALUES II. DECISION-MAKING

# VALUES II. DECISION- MAKING

## KEY TERMS

- ❖ Prerequisites for cooperation
- ❖ Different perspectives, different "stories"
- ❖ Impact of the approach to communication
- ❖ When can cooperation become very difficult or even impossible?
- ❖ Different values
- ❖ Tetralemma



## TOOLBOX

FACTS



PERSPECTIVE



LISTENING



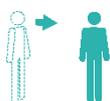
NOTICING FEELINGS



IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS

UNDERSTANDING  
MEANING

OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE



## 1. INTRODUCTION (1 MIN)

Last time, we watched a video about a group of friends who found themselves in a difficult situation, and talked about values.

## 2. OPTIONAL: THE VIDEO "THE BAND" (5 MIN)

If necessary, replay the whole clip.

## 3. INTRODUCTION TO THE EXERCISE (4 MIN)

Today we will be looking at one way to find out what you want to do in a particular situation. This method is especially suitable for dilemmas - when considering whether to choose one way or another (whereas the two can sometimes be directly opposed).

**Ask the students to place 5 chairs in front of the class (description of the exercise below).**

## 4. EXERCISE. TETRALEMMA (40 MIN)

We will now introduce the exercise in front of the class using the example of the video clip "The Band". After that, the students will question each other and go through the tetralemma using situations in their own lives.

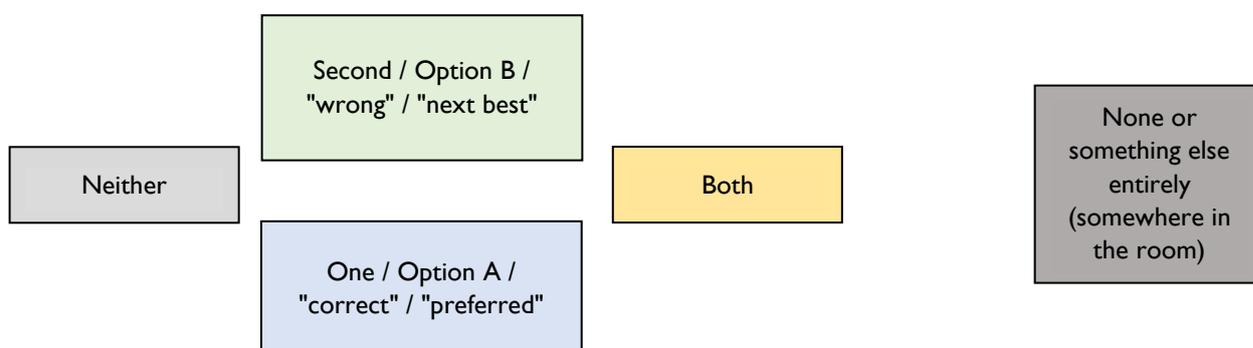
### AN EXAMPLE OF SETTING QUESTIONS WITH DIFFERENT CHOICES BASED ON THE STORY OF THE BAND:

Should we go on together without Alex and start from scratch with our music, knowing that they are in another band using work we did together, or give up on the whole thing altogether? Should we fight for justice or move on and leave it all behind? Etc., using options to solve different situations. E.g.: Move to another city or not? Go abroad to study or not?

### LET'S MOVE ON TO THOSE DECISIONS IN OUR OWN LIVES - DO THIS OR THAT?



## VALUES II. DECISION-MAKING



\* The technique was taught at the training "ONE 2 ONE" supporting learning face-to-face, 28 May - 3 June, 2017, Budapest, authors Monika Kéžaitė-Jakniūnienė, Mark E. Taylor, Hazel Low

## 5. CONSOLIDATION (24 MIN)

Another technique to consolidate what you have learned so far follows.

**Fix either a large sheet of paper or cut-out words to the wall in 6-7 places, using 3 words in each place (corner of the sheet), each of which represents previously learned concepts or fragments. For example: honesty; friend; social exclusion; assumptions; positive attitude; speed of recovering from a blow; anxious situations; values; tolerance; understanding; etc. Add your own words that you think are relevant or important to this group.**

**Now ask the students to form groups of 3-5 and literally walk through all the topics, moving from one sheet to another and taking ca 4 minutes at each sheet to discuss their associations with each of the given words or phrases. They can recall what they have learned about the topic, but also discuss other things that are random or important to them that they associate with these keywords.**

*This method may seem very simple, even chaotic, yet it helps to process and consolidate the material you have learned. In addition, students will be able to hear other students' perspectives on these topics and notice what connections others have made.*

## 6. SUMMARY (1 MIN)

Decision-making can sometimes be difficult, but it's good to know some tools to help you reach decisions when you need them. Sometimes it is enough to tell someone about your problem and they will ask you questions to explore the topic.

If you don't know what to do, consider both options and synthesise the options.

Listening to another person's point of view and borrowing ideas from other people also helps to synthesise.

# TETRALEMMA

ONE

THE OTHER

BOTH

NEITHER

SOMETHING DIFFERENT

## Overall goal

This is a creative way to broaden your perspective and perception of a problematic situation (especially in the case of dilemmas). Instead of seeing only a single option or the right and wrong decision, the "tetralemma" invites you to look beyond this apparent conflict. Instead of "right" and "wrong", there may be a "preferred option" and a "next best option."

## Both (acknowledging the link between the two options)

Compromise, iteration (first one, then the other), false opposition, changing assumptions or beliefs, adding both to achieve a new result, integrating the discarded option into the one selected, tolerating ambiguity, allowing more interpretations, different context for the two options.

## Neither (seeing a new context)

What is behind the "dilemma"?

What does the "dilemma" conceal?

## None or something else entirely

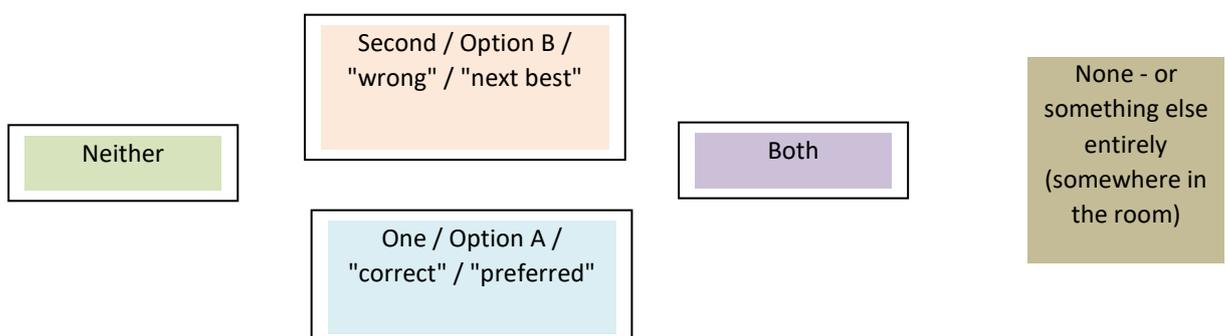
Achieving a whole new perspective; it reminds us that even if we have a solution in the short run, it is never eternal; keep a critical eye on your beliefs and perspectives.

## When to use the tetralemma?

In the event of a forced choice between two ways to act (either one or the other), a conflict between something you did/chose and something you didn't do or didn't choose. Conflict of values or points of view. Remember: the goal is to broaden your perspective, not to force a decision.

## How to do it?

You can do it yourself or you help others to go through the process. You can do this simply with thoughts noted down on paper or positions staked out in the room (for example, with chairs).



## SELF-UNDERSTANDING AND SELF-ANALYSIS

## SELF-UNDERSTANDING AND SELF-ANALYSIS

### KEY TERMS

- ❖ Self-reflection
- ❖ Self-analysis
- ❖ GROW technique



### TOOLBOX

CARING



PERSPECTIVE



LISTENING, REFLECTION



NOTICING FEELINGS



IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS



### WHAT WE WON'T NEED:

JUDGEMENTS



### PREPARATIONS

- ❖ Prepare (print out) the "Wheel of Life" worksheets and, if necessary, the "Storyline" and "GROW" worksheets.
- ❖ Prepare for the "Storyline" exercise: get an appropriately sized piece of string for each

## 1. INTRODUCTION (2 MIN)

The following is based on *One2One Learning* by Monika Kėžaitė-Jakniūnienė and Mark E. Taylor, <http://www.salto-youth.net/Training-And-Cooperation> and [youthpass@salto-youth.net](mailto:youthpass@salto-youth.net).

### **Tell the class:**

Today, we will practice some techniques that help us analyse ourselves and consider the facts or beliefs in our lives. All of the techniques we're working on today are designed to be done in pairs, so first, find a partner with whom you'd like to do these exercises.

## 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE INDIVIDUAL AND PAIR WORK (5 MIN)

### "WHEEL OF LIFE"

#### **Tell the class:**

Before the exercise, I will give you worksheets for both of you fill out. Then choose who talks first. Choose what you'd like to mark on these 8 sectors and what areas of life you will place there (health, studies, financial situation, relationships with loved ones, relationships with friends, etc.). You don't have to spell out each word - you can also use a symbol or a letter that only you can understand. Paint 0% to 100% of the sector to reflect your satisfaction with this area of life. This is followed by work in pairs. Briefly introduce one of the sectors to your partner (choose what you want to talk about). Then, the partner will interview you using the questions in the worksheet. The goal is for you to better understand yourself with their assistance. Then switch roles. You decide how much you want to open up. You can talk as much or little as you find necessary.

## 3. INDIVIDUAL AND PAIR WORK (25 MIN)

### **THIS IS FOLLOWED BY COMPLETING THE WORKSHEET AND WORK IN PAIRS**

**Hand out the worksheets. During the exercise, walk around the classroom and see how the students are helping each other. If necessary, help them and point out any matters needing more attention to the whole class.**



## SELF-UNDERSTANDING AND SELF-ANALYSIS

---

## 7. DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY OF THE EXERCISE (5 MIN)

---

*Discuss with the class what they noticed during the exercise and what is important if you want to help somebody else understand themselves.*

### SUMMARY OF THE EXERCISE:

**Tell the class:**

Sometimes, you can help another person simply by giving them some time and asking a few questions. Asking questions helps the person talking to stay focused and look at their situation more closely; it helps them think "out loud" and to understand themselves better.

---

## 8. INDIVIDUAL WORK (5 MIN)

---

Based on the last exercise (times and moments in life when things were going well), write down 3 keywords or sentences: how can you get more of the good things in your life? Think about whether and how you could create more of the positive things. Ask yourself: What should I do for this?

---

## 9. OPTIONAL EXERCISE

---

*If you have the time, you can choose the following exercise instead of the previous exercise, or do it as a separate exercise on a different occasion, as it takes time to interview each other more thoroughly. The exercise below can also be used in career lessons to focus on future goals and help students think about the topic, using another student as an interviewer and coach.*

---

## 10. INTRODUCTION TO PAIR WORK (7 MIN)

---

### GROW MODEL

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE METHOD

*There are several versions of the GROW model. Here we look at the original presented by John Whitmore in his book "Coaching for Performance". The GROW model is a simple but powerful framework for structuring counseling and mentoring sessions.*

**Hand out the worksheets with the GROW model questions. Explain that it is like a roadmap to guide them toward their learning goals or any other goals in their lives.** *Note: Being a model, it can be turned into a method in several different ways. It presents a basic structure that the interviewer should keep in mind when interacting with the other party. However, the teacher can easily turn this worksheet into a set of written questions for the youth to make a collage or a drawing.*

**Tell the class:**

The purpose of this method is to help a person solve problems or set goals by asking them clarifying questions from a different perspective that should help them better understand their future and goals. The name of this

---

## SELF-UNDERSTANDING AND SELF-ANALYSIS

---

model derives from a set of English words, each of which covers a specific point of view. This will help you keep the sequence of your questions on track.

GOAL

REALITY

OPTIONS

WAY FORWARD

The goal is the end point that the individual wants to reach. The goal must be defined in such a way that it is very clear whether it has been achieved or not. Reality is where a person is now. What are the challenges? How far are they from their goal? Once you have explored the current reality, it is time for a brainstorming session to decide what can be done to achieve the goal. It summarises all aspects, such as what needs to be done, when and by whom. The task of the partner is to ask these and other clarifying questions and keep the speaker from getting off-topic.

---

### 11. PAIR WORK (45 MIN)

---

As with the previous pair tasks, the task starts with one partner asking questions and the other answering them, after which the roles are switched.

*As there are many questions, this exercise may take some time and may require occasional intervention and assistance, so move around the class during the exercise and answer any questions that come up.*

---

### 12. GENERAL DISCUSSION (12 MIN)

---

**Discuss with the class:**

What did you notice? Did this method help you? What was helpful? What surprised you the most?

*Further reading: alternatives to GROW*

*OSCAR is one of many other models developed by practitioners who have based their own alternative acronyms on GROW: O = outcome / G = goal S = situation / R = reality C = choices / O = options A = actions / W = way forward R = review / (categorised under W in GROW model)*

---

### 13. SUMMARY (2 MIN)

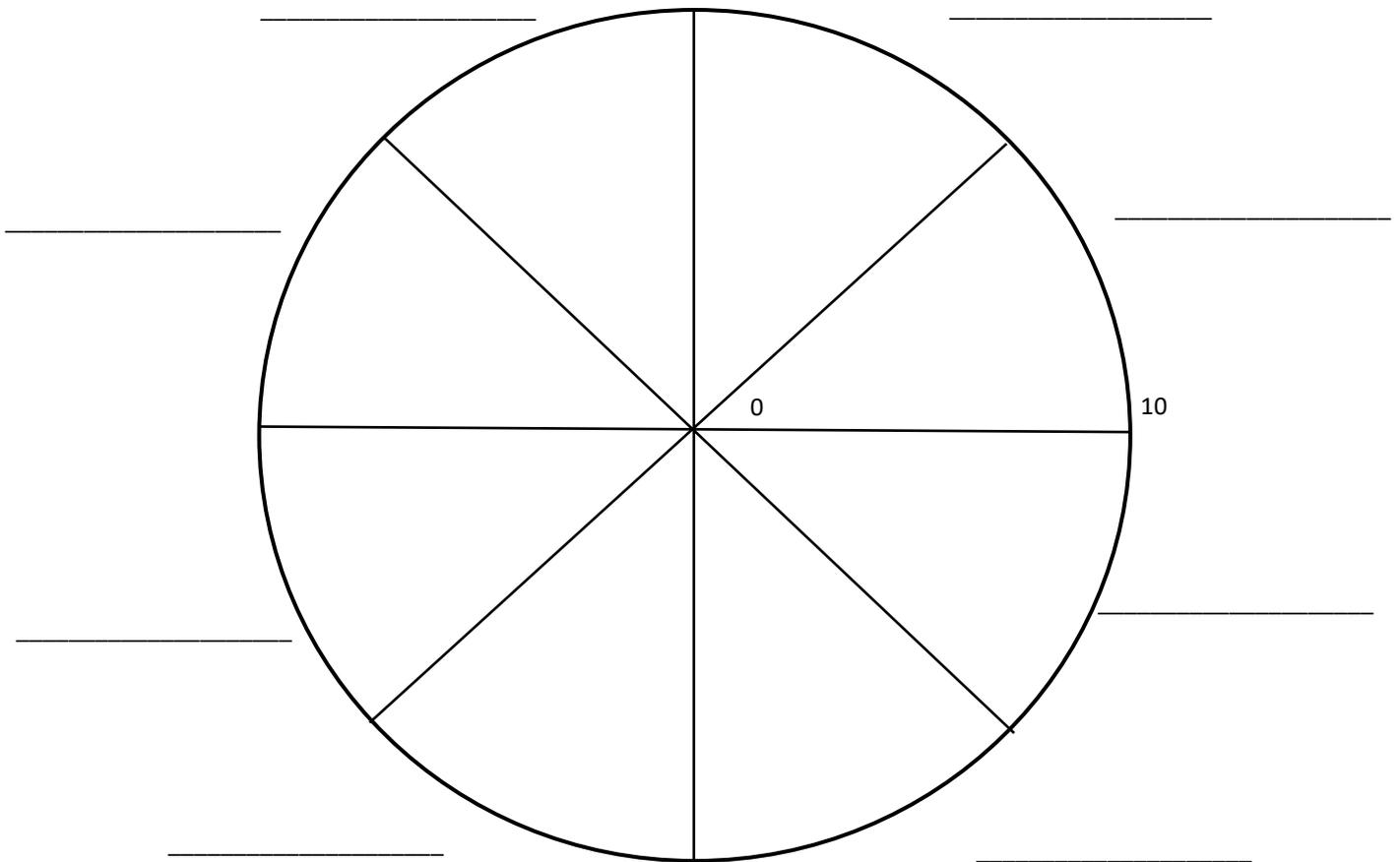
---

**Summarise the lesson and highlight the key points and knowledge learned.**

# "WHEEL OF LIFE"

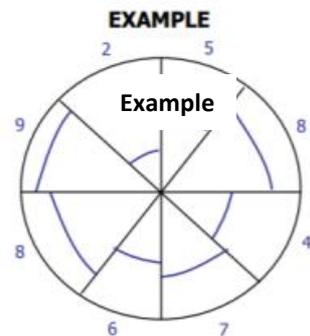
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



### Instructions for the Wheel:

- The 8 sections on the wheel represent different areas of your life (e.g. studies, health, relationships etc)
- Feel free to change, split, or rename any category in a way that is more meaningful to you.
- Next, considering the centre of the wheel as 0 and the outer edge as 10, evaluate your level of satisfaction (or dissatisfaction, etc.) with each area on a ten-point scale by drawing a straight or curved line to create a new outer boundary (see the example).
- The new circumference of your circle represents your wheel of life. How bumpy is your ride?



**Leading questions about the Wheel of Life:**

What do you want from this wheel?

What will you be like when you have achieved that?

What will be the impact of this achievement on other areas of your life?

How does achieving this affect other people close to you?

What other things that you want will achieving this give you?

What other things that you don't want will achieving this give you?

**Leading questions for single categories:**

Which sector should change or expand to have the greatest and broadest impact on the wheel as a whole? Explain.

What will a change in this sector give you? Why is this important? How motivated are you to do it? Note down your motivation on a scale of 1-10.

What actual actions can you take to improve this sector? Which steps would you start from?

What exactly do you want with regard to that sector?

What skills do you already have to help you achieve this?

What skills do you want to acquire to help you achieve this?

Where can you learn these skills?

What will be the impact of this on other areas of your life?

What other options do you have?

Who can you ask to support you in this? When can you have these conversations?

# THE GROW MODEL

---

## GOAL

## REALITY

## OPTIONS

## WAY FORWARD

THE GOAL OF THE METHOD is to help people solve problems or set goals. The goal is the end point that the individual wants to reach. The goal must be defined in such a way that makes very clear whether it has been achieved or not. This is where the person is now. The role of the facilitator is to help their partner understand their challenges and how far away they are from their goal.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR EACH STEP (NB! You don't always have to use these questions! If necessary, move on according to the partner's answers, but keep the focus!) are asked by the facilitator for each area, the answers are clarified and reflected:

<p><b>GOAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What area (skills, competencies) would you like to focus on?</li><li>• What would you like to achieve in the long and short term?</li><li>• What does your goal look like?</li><li>• How do you know you have succeeded (...)?</li><li>• What will work better than it does now?</li><li>• What are your milestones / first steps?</li><li>• Do they present a sufficient challenge?</li></ul>	<p><b>OPTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are your preferred courses of action?</li><li>• What actions could you take to achieve your goal?</li><li>• What other options can you suggest?</li><li>• What other alternatives can you think of?</li><li>• What would you do if you had more energy / confidence / money / time?</li><li>• If you could start again, what would you do?</li><li>• If the current difficulties were overcome, what would you do?</li><li>• What support would you need (from me and others) to do this?</li><li>• Who can help you?</li></ul>
<p><b>REALITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the current situation? (Try to focus on the facts!)</li><li>• What works? What doesn't?</li><li>• In what situations have you needed this skill / competence?</li><li>• Can you name your greatest achievement in this area so far?</li><li>• What does this say about your strengths?</li><li>• What strengths of yours could help you achieve your goals?</li><li>• What are the biggest external (or personal) challenges in developing this competence?</li></ul>	<p><b>WAY FORWARD</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What steps / actions do you intend to take?</li><li>• How difficult are these steps for you?</li><li>• What can you do to reduce / eliminate these difficulties?</li><li>• Who needs to know about your plans?</li><li>• How motivated are you to take these steps on a scale of 1 to 10?</li><li>• Why is your motivation less than 10? What can you do to change that?</li></ul>

# STORYLINE

---

## STORYLINE

**Aim of the technique:** To help others reflect on their experiences. This helps them see the whole picture, not just the highs or lows.



**Description of the activity:** Ask a student to create a graph or a line (using string, chalk on the floor, paper, etc.) that shows the good (high) and bad (low) times of their recent lived experience (for example, a year or half a year). This can be done, for example, by drawing a scientific-looking graph on paper, or by using a visual metaphor like a river, a road, or something else. A more active option is to use a piece of string to mark out a line on the floor. You can then walk along the rope together while you ask questions about their storyline. With each up-and downhill turn, you can probe what brought it about, what they felt and thought at the time. You can use the sample questions below to help them understand their storyline.

### Possible questions to ask:

1. Name five feelings you felt at different points of the line.
2. Tell me a five-sentence story, moving along the line.
3. What helped you reach a top?
4. What helped you recover from a downhill tumble?
5. What (if anything) did you do to make a good situation bad and vice versa?
6. How did other people (or other factors) turn a good situation into a bad one and vice versa?
7. How did your feelings affect what you said or did?
8. How did your feelings affect what others said or did?
9. Were others aware of your feelings?
10. How aware were you of the feelings of others? Did they follow a similar or different pattern?
11. If you were in a similar situation again, show what your storyline might look like next time.

## REVIEW AND SUMMARIES

# REVIEW AND SUMMARIES

## KEY TERMS

- ❖ All key concepts learned so far



## TOOLBOX

ALL THE TOOLS YOU HAVE  
LEARNED SO FAR

## PREPARATIONS

- ❖ Prepare for group work in advance. Bring or ask students to bring old magazines, pencils, glue, scissors, paper (preferably larger than A4) from home
- ❖ Print out the pages with toolbox icons (those displaying the icon and term but no explanation)
- ❖ Print out the worksheets with the explanations of the toolbox terms

## MY NOTES:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## 1. EXERCISE (30 MIN)

**Prepare for group work in advance. Bring or ask students to bring old magazines, pencils, glue, scissors, paper (preferably larger than A4) from home. Play music.**

### Tell the class:

Let's warm up with a future-facing exercise. Make a map of your future for the next 10 years. Who will you be and what will you do during/after the next 10 years? What do you want to have and increase in your life? Make a collage from magazine and newspaper clippings. You can also use words, sentences, and pictures. Let your imagination run free! Dream big! You can put the completed poster in a visible place at home.

## 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE EXERCISE (2 MIN)

**Print out the pages with toolbox icons (those displaying the icon and term but no explanation). You will distribute the worksheets with explanations to students in the second half of the lesson). Some of them are tools and some are concept maps to remind and consolidate the knowledge. Stick them on the walls around the room or place them around the space in a way that allows groups of 3-4 people gather next to each. Alternatively, distribute the sheets to the groups and ask them to swap them every 4 minutes.**

### Tell the class:

In today's lesson, we will summarise and review what we have learned.

## 3. GROUP WORK (20 MIN)

### Tell the class:

First, form groups of 3 or 4. Each group should walk up to a concept and discuss what it means to them.

- ❖ What associations does it bring up?
- ❖ What do you remember?
- ❖ In what situations is it needed?

Every 4 minutes, I will give a signal and each group moves on to the next note and discusses it in turn.

## REVIEW AND SUMMARIES

**Time the exercise and signal every 4 minutes for the groups to move on. This is a good exercise to do standing up, allowing the students to move and the discussion to be livelier.**

#### 4. GENERAL DISCUSSION AND COMMENTS (10 MIN)



**Ask the class, listen to the answers and direct the conversation accordingly:**

- ❖ What did you discuss?
- ❖ What thoughts did you have?
- ❖ What did you discuss about (a particular) concept?
- ❖ What would you say is one of the most important tools for communication?
- ❖ Did you have any questions?

#### 5. REVIEW. WORKSHEET (8 MIN)

**Hand out the worksheets with the explanations of the toolbox terms. If necessary, stop longer on specific topics. The content of this lesson depends largely on what issues students bring up or want to discuss.**

**Tell the class:**

Please read the information on this page again. Does anyone want to comment or ask anything else?

#### 6. DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY OF THE COURSE (4 MIN)

**Discuss with the class what they noticed during the course and what is key if you want to avoid the other party getting defensive and for them to understand you. Find out what other topics seem important to them. Recall what you learned during the course and make summaries.**

#### 7. SUMMARIES

- ❖ Communication affects collaboration. If one person fails to take responsibility, the others will be harmed and will no longer want to cooperate with them.
- ❖ If you do not speak up about something bothering you, the person not taking responsibility might not even be aware this is the case. All the while, they may have their own reason, their own story. You need to listen to both sides, explain your position and try to understand the other.
- ❖ Aggression creates aggression in return. Attacks can cause the other to get defensive.
- ❖ People who are feeling defensive are not ready to listen: they are busy dealing with emotions of their own.
- ❖ When a problem arises, analyse the facts, thoughts, feelings, needs, and talk to the other person.
- ❖ The problem must be discussed using I-messages to avoid attacking the other and prevent a defensive reaction. I-messages are the easiest way to prevent another person from feeling accused.
- ❖ Quite naturally, our brains make assumptions in order to save energy. However, it is wise to be aware of this tendency and, in similar situations, to ask yourself whether you know something or just assume it, and verify your guesses by asking the other what they really thought or felt.

REVIEW AND SUMMARIES

---

- ❖ Listen to the other. Reflect. Try to understand both their and your feelings and needs. Note: When you talk about your needs, you automatically use I-messages.
- ❖ It is important to understand your needs and the needs of the other in the situation. Understanding yourself and the other (and each of your needs) is the key to a solution.
- ❖ An emotion begins with a past or future situation or event. The brain responds by focusing on certain information. The person then interprets the situation, i.e. gives a subjective meaning to what is happening. The reaction is ultimately expressed as an emotion with the accompanying physical and mental changes.
- ❖ Our reactions stem from the assessments we make of the situation.
- ❖ It is important to understand that you can influence your own feelings, even choose them, and that it is not good for your health to get stuck in negative emotions for too long.

*The key takeaway should be that if issues arise, you should analyse the facts, the thoughts, the feelings and the needs and talk to the other person. It is also important to learn to manage your own feelings and, above all, to maintain a respectful and curious attitude towards your communication partner and to explore their point of view, thoughts and feelings.*

*Thank you for your contribution to the teaching of communication, cooperation and personal skills!*

**I-MESSAGES**



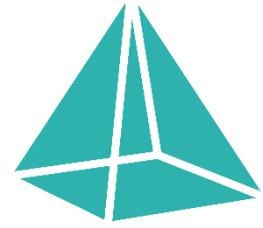
**CARING**



**FACTS**



**PERSPECTIVE**



**LISTENING**



**NOTICING  
FEELINGS**



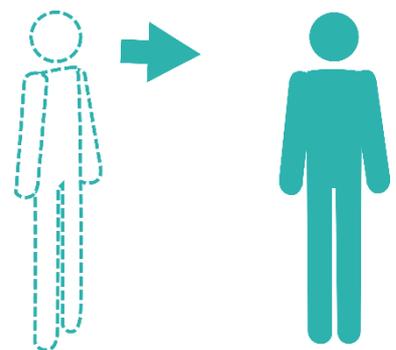
IDENTIFICATION  
OF NEEDS



UNDERSTANDING  
THE MEANING



OUTSIDE  
VIEW



**ACCUSATIONS**



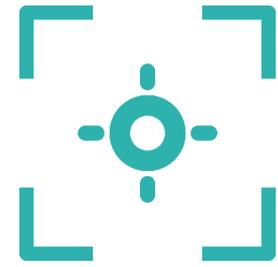
**DEFENSIVENESS**



**JUDGEMENTS**



# FOCUSING



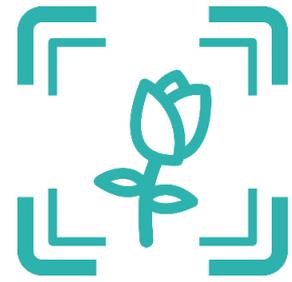
# PLANNING



# SETTING PRIORITIES



**FOCUS  
ON THE  
POSITIVE**



**SELF-  
MANAGEMENT**



**TIME  
MANAGEMENT**





**SELF-  
MOTIVATION**



**CONFLICT**

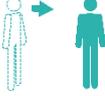


**REFLECTION**

## WORKSHEET: TOOLBOX

# TOOLBOX

WHAT WE NEED:

Tool	Meaning
I-MESSAGES 	<b>The Paintbrush of I-messages.</b> This tool calls for the use of I-messages: I have to speak for myself, about my own feelings, thoughts and needs. I-messages are among the best tools in situations where you have to explain your point of view to others without coming across as accusatory or judgmental.
CARING 	<b>The Key of Caring</b> The key always lies in understanding, and if you want to understand your discussion partner, you should talk to them in a caring way. Approach them through curiosity, understanding and caring, not from a place of selfishness.
FACTS 	<b>The Magnifying Glass of Facts.</b> Emotion-free, dispassionate assessment of the situation. Focus on facts, not judgements or assumptions. A fact is only that which is an objective fact, something that can be recorded or filmed.
PERSPECTIVE 	<b>The Prism of Perspective.</b> Refers to the need to look at the situation through the eyes of different people, from different people's perspectives. This tool is needed in collaborative situations or situations where a single person's perspective is not enough.
LISTENING 	<b>The Ear of Active Listening.</b> Active, committed listening (incl. reflection, asking questions, providing summaries) is one of the most important tools for resolving conflicts and understanding the person you are communicating with.
NOTICING FEELINGS 	<b>The Heart of Emotions</b> Emotions are always stronger than reason when it comes to determining our behaviour motives and actions. As such, it is important to notice the feelings of both ourselves and our communication partner.
IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS 	<b>The Iceberg of Needs.</b> Just like the majority of every iceberg is concealed, so are our wishes and needs. They may not be clear or visible to others (and sometimes to ourselves, too), but they exist.
UNDERSTANDING MEANING 	<b>The Eye that Understands Meanings.</b> What does this situation mean to me? What does this situation mean for the other person? What are our needs and expectations? What do we want in this situation, together and individually?
OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE 	<b>The position of observer.</b> A bystander's perspective, which is needed to calmly assess the situation. Ability to look at yourself "from the outside" in a specific situation, quickly analyzing the meaning of the situation and the possible actions.
FOCUS 	<b>The Focus of Concentration.</b> Focusing skills are one of the most important tools for time management and self-direction. A complete, focused presence in the situation provides the resources needed for commitment and self-direction.

PLANNING



**The Notebook of Planning.** Planning helps to set clear goals that we want to achieve within a certain period of time. The plan should be as clear as possible. If necessary, break down larger tasks into smaller pieces to get a better idea of what exactly needs to be done. Various planning methods exist and you can choose the one that suits you best. Some options include to-do lists, calendars, diaries, planning apps, and more.

SETTING PRIORITIES



**The Pedestal of Priorities.** Effective time management also includes the ability to set priorities, i.e., decide what is most important to do at any point. It is useful to distinguish between urgent activities and important activities.

FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE



**The Focus on Positivity.** Every situation has its upsides and downsides. What matters is what we focus on. Negativity eats into your valuable lifetime and does not benefit your development or coping. Focus on the positive!

#### WHAT WE WON'T NEED:

	Tool	Meaning
ACCUSATIONS	A teal icon of a hammer, representing accusations.	<b>The Hammer of Accusations.</b> Accusations towards your communication partner usually cause them to get defensive, and as a rule, it is not helpful for understanding or resolving the situation.
DEFENSIVENESS	A teal icon of a shield, representing defensiveness.	<b>The Shield of Defensiveness.</b> It is also useful to be aware of your own defensive reactions and to avoid getting defensive, for example, when you are given negative feedback.
JUDGEMENTS	A teal icon of a knife, representing judgements.	<b>The Knife of Judgements.</b> Making judgements quickly cuts off any opportunity to work with the other party. As soon as the other party perceives judgements and accusations, their defensive reaction is triggered and you get conflict rather than cooperation.