WAVES

EXCERCISES FOR MUSEUM LESSONS TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH



LEIKKI THE MUSEUM OF PLAY

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Foreword

This handbook has been compiled for museum pedagogues and others who conduct museum classes, but a large part of the exercises and games can also be used in kindergartens and schools, and even at home under the instruction of a parent. These activities that support mental health have been prepared and gathered by psychologists and therapists and can be used in any museum regardless of the theme. The exercises are intended for children and youngsters of 4 to 15 years of age.

In recent years, people working in the education sector have noticed a robust decline in children's concentration ability, ability to cope with emotions, problem-solving skills, and cooperation and communications skills, as well as an increased frequency of mental health struggles – be it anxiety, withdrawal, tendency to depression, or other problems. The causes are multiple: in addition to the pandemic which forced people into isolation as well as the withdrawal into computers or smartphones which has by now been happening for a long time, children's joint playtime and communication is also reduced by the decreasing birth rate (fewer families have more than one child), as well as school and cyber bullying. Unfortunately, several of these factors tend to create a vicious circle: the less time spent together, the more natural the comfortable bubble of being alone becomes and the thinner the courage and skill to communicate grow along with other social skills developed by communicating. Decreased interaction also impairs the development of emotional skills, such as understanding, considering emotions, and empathy, which in turn are the foundations of a good relationship. As we know, noticing a problem is the first step, but how do we move forward?

Closed-circle problems can mostly be resolved by changing one denominator. One of the most efficient ways to support children and young people is the development of social and emotional (SE) skills. When children's communication skill is good – which means that they know how to listen and be empathic, and dare, wish and know how to express their thoughts – it is easy for them to communicate and thus they probably do not feel a deep loneliness and depressive thoughts do not take hold. It is easier for a good communicator to cooperate with others, which in turn develops their problem-solving skills and courage to do things – necessary in all areas of life. The skill to adjust and peacefully express strong emotions and to ask for time and space, if necessary, are also important. When children are able to create and maintain healthy relationships and to find solutions and alleviate anxiety, their self-esteem and self-confidence grow. As we can see, all the mentioned skills are like a foundation that supports us throughout life – not just in childhood and adolescence. The SE skills are closely interconnected and therefore by strengthening some skills, it is possible to create good preconditions for also developing other skills.

In Estonia, the effect of the Minutes of Silence exercises has been physiologically proven and it has been noted that the development of mindfulness and SE skills should have a natural place in the education system (*Vaikuseminutid*, 2025). A study conducted on the same topic by the University of Tartu also proved a drop in the stress hormone level and stated that "systemically learning mindfulness and social and emotional competences significantly improves the mental wellbeing of young people and supports teachers" (University of Tartu, 2024). Responsibility here does not fall only on teachers, or only on parents or youngsters themselves. If everything functioned as a regular balanced system, children and young people would obtain the necessary skills in the course of everyday life – from here and there, from home and school, communicating with grown-ups and friends over the internet and face to face. Children should still be raised by the entire village and museums are happy to be of support.

This selection of exercises is mostly a cross-section of the everyday toolbox of Estonian and Finnish psychologists and therapists, but there is also

a number of those that have been created specifically with a museum environment in mind. We would like to express our gratitude to the specialists who have compiled this handbook: music therapist, teacher and children's emotional skills coach Arja Kalistaja-Tikka, school psychologist Cätlin Tuuling, game therapist Eleri Saarik, sports psychologist Elina Kivinukk, psychotherapist Marjukka Westerlund and organisational consultant and executive coach Minna Lehmusjoki. We are also grateful to everyone, including the specialists of NGO Head Matters (MTÜ Peaasjad), who have helped test the exercises and make them more user-friendly. As the exercises, games and methods are widely used among psychologists, activity and game therapists and training instructors, their authorship is often obscure. Many methods or games have become so commonly used that referring to the original source is difficult. In such cases, we have decided to go with the term 'commonly used', but if our readers know the authors, please let us know!

Before delving deeper into the use of the exercises, we would like to touch upon how they fulfil their purpose. Lehmusjoki explains: "According to the polyvagal theory, a safe experience calms the nervous system and increases social cohesion and learning. Physical methods, such as rhythmic breathing, specific positions and calm movement support the activation of the ventral vagal pathway and the creation of a psychological sense of security." (Porges, 2011). Thus, the effect of mindfulness exercises has in various ways (together with the above) been scientifically proven. (You can read more about what to keep in mind when conducting exercises that include imagination, calm movement and breathing techniques on page 11). Westerlund notes that exercises which involve self-awareness or an analysis of emotions (e.g. "Return mail", "Human statues", "A shared story of friendship", "Counting together", "I am listening to you") strengthen a sense of identity and self-esteem. These exercises also allow the participants to see themselves and their actions through the eyes of others. The exercises designated with the keyword of 'communication skills' develop social skills, helping to accept differences, while also encouraging the participants to express their thoughts and remain themselves. Westerlund separately points out the following about exercises that develop emotional intelligence: "Emotion exercises strengthen the ability to recognise and adjust one's own emotions and the related reactions. The exercises also increase the courage to express one's own opinions and improve the skill to make choices and endure setbacks. These exercises (e.g. "Emotion detective", "On a desert island", "Pantomime") are used for instance in children and youngsters' dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) where self-acceptance and the need to change oneself are emphasised as change-creating elements." (Dorado and Zarkzewski, 2013). A human being and their mind is a complex and multifaceted whole and several skills mostly need to be simultaneously strengthened and many variables simultaneously addressed in order to support mental health. We hope that this compilation is a playful and simple supportive tool in this. Below, we will give you an overview of how to use this handbook.

How to use this handbook?

We have gathered nearly a hundred activities that develop SE skills and alleviate anxiety. Through museum classes, these exercises are intended to reach the repository of general education pedagogues, similarly to the Kernels that support the development of SE skills, recommended by peaasi.ee. Most can also be played at home with one's own child. The secret of success is, of course, no secret at all: development is brought by **regularity and consistency**. As is evident from the study of the effect of the Kernels (Durlak, et al, 2010: 45, 294–309), change is created even by 5 to 10 minutes of purposeful activity once a week – like a wave eroding a cliff.

These exercises, games and methods, which we therefore call the Waves, have been gathered for the handbook and created with a museum environment in mind by psychologists, therapists and counsellors who – together with the authors of the Kernels – emphasise yet another key to success: before any activity, it is important to explain to the children which skill is developed by the game, activity or exercise you are about to do together. It is known that **formulating the skill to be learnt in advance** helps to better acquire that skill. **Examples of where and for what the skill might be needed** help instil what is being learnt – it is good to talk of that at the end of the activity. To conclude, you can also ask how the participants feel or what they noticed about themselves, even after a simple and brief activity. Everyone yearns to be heard and understood and this way they can immediately share their feelings or experience (which also gives a chance to train organising and analysing and formulating their own thoughts and to speak in front of others!).

This compilation of exercises has been prepared primarily with children and youngsters from **pre-schoolers to the 8th grade** in mind. However, activities that can also be conducted with younger children are marked with the respective age. In the interest of convenience of use, we decided to organise the contents by age groups, as activities are mostly sought and (museum) classes planned for a specific age group. The upper age limit (without wanting to actually call it a limit, as the playful activities are also suitable for and – as the studies mentioned above have shown – help grown-ups as well) in this handbook is 15 years. The designation 'Yrs 6+' therefore means that the exercise is suitable for participants of 6 to 15 years of age, and the designation 'Suitable for all age groups' covers the entire age range, from 4 to 15 years. The **adaptation options subsection** offers additional possibilities for working with different age groups, as well as possibilities of adjusting according to the number or cultural diversity of the participants, varying the motive or the tools used, and changing the emphasis, difficulty or duration of the exercise.

The activities have been created as **universal**, so that they can be as easily used in a history museum as in an architecture museum, a road museum or a sports museum. The exercises can be regarded as a template, as a spine that supports the head: mental health, as well as creativity. Intertwining an exercise specifically with the theme of your museum, exhibition, or educational programme is a creative opportunity for the instructor to bring the theme closer to the participants. Here are some examples of linking an exercise to a museum environment.

- Mindfulness exercises can easily be linked via an element used. Perhaps the museum is near a mountain or sea mentioned in the exercise or perhaps they are depicted at the exhibition? Leaves and feathers – might the participants encounter birds at the exhibition or could their thoughts be guided to the current season of the year? Perhaps it would be easy to find a connection through lightness, cyclicality, patterns, or sensory sensations? In order to associate colours, it would be convenient to conduct the exercise in a room with large coloured surfaces or coloured items.

How to use this handbook?

- For exercises that use music, music or sounds played at the exhibition can be put to use – or you can choose a song that is linked to the exhibition theme, a specific exhibit, or the back story of a museum item.
- Roleplaying games offer an opportunity to personify any inanimate objects. Never underestimate children's imagination!
- Exercises that include movement can be linked to exhibits or the exhibition theme, using body language to convey driving a car, pushing a millstone, the rhythm of one's day, volcanic eruptions, the expansion of cities, the nature of a style of art, the development history of industry… Imagination is the only limit: everything can be transposed into movement.

You can also replace elements or tools for the purpose of association. However, it is good to keep in mind that topics which could be sensitive for some or remind them of traumatic events **should be avoided**. For instance, psychologists do not recommend creating a variation where worries are addressed. Although worries are a natural part of life, it is not possible for a museum instructor (who also might not have the knowledge or skills) to handle a painful problem or trauma reaction. It is also not good to use an exercise for analysing a specific problematic situation that has taken place. Such situations mostly tend to have two or more counterparties and someone would very probably feel slighted or offended, particularly if group pressure arises and the discussion veers from a neutral bearing, which mostly tends to happen when we wish to let the participants talk (and we do wish that). A museum visit should not evoke difficult or sad emotions in anyone. In the case of exercises which do tentatively touch upon tender topics and emotions (e.g. discussing the feeling of disappointment), we recommend informing the teachers who book the museum visit in advance, so that they can give their students preparatory information. Below, you can also find recommendations for **trauma-informed, culture-sensitive and simply inclusive instruction** (pp 8–10).



By clicking on the video icon, you can watch a sample video showing how to conduct the exercise.



Activities marked with the Earth symbol are also suitable for groups of participants with different mother tongues or of different cultural backgrounds. These activities also include exercises that do not require the participants to write or talk and are therefore language-neutral. The instructor still needs to understand the participants, but these exercises also contain possibilities for Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) or for adjustment for that purpose. Under the heading of each exercise, you will find the keywords which tell you what competence or topic the exercise involves. There is a total of 10 of these: concentrating, communication, empathy, emotional intelligence, self-awareness, sense of cohesion, problem-solving, calming down, anxiety, stress. Communication and emotional intelligence could in turn include numerous sub-topics, but the more specific focus of these keywords – as of all the other keywords – is explained in the subsection that describes the effect of the exercise. As the structure of the handbook is for convenience of use built on age groups, you can use the search function (Ctrl + F) for finding exercises with a specific keyword.

At the end of the handbook, you will find printable emotion cards. For multicultural groups or kindergarten groups, you can use simpler and easily recognisable emotion cards. If necessary (depending on the number of children), you can print several sets of cards for an activity.

How to use this handbook?

As it is not always possible to touch everything or dash about in a museum, the exercises here are undemanding: mostly based on our mind and body. The tools used are few and likely to be at hand. However, some games require a large or quiet room. You should analyse whether an exercise is suitable for the planned room and, if necessary, freely adapt or choose another one that helps fulfil the same purpose.

Kadri Toomsalu, compiler of the handbook

9 Inclusive instructor

The ABC of a caring and inclusive instructor of children naturally includes:

- active listening and open questions,
- reflection of emotions and thoughts,
- making agreements,
- trusting the making of proposals and choices to the participants,
- questions/exercises that emphasise creativity, not factual knowledge
- and many other things.

You can also find good ideas in the 10 Principles of Child Participation compiled by the Estonian Union for Child Welfare and the Office of the Chancellor of Justice (2025). It is also included in an annex at the end of the handbook.

However, when we dig into deeper layers, we have to note that as people's behaviour is influenced by their thoughts and emotions, we must also be honest and friendly with regard to our own mindset and attitudes: do we have attitudes towards certain groups of people? Do we have beliefs that some cultural groups, qualities or character traits prevent people from learning? Do we have favourites or tend to prefer some groups of people? These are important questions for us to face our attitudes, but above all it is a good chance to develop our instruction techniques with caring curiosity: when we notice our own bias, we can learn more about such topics and cast doubt on our own principles. For instance, an instructor may notice his or her own thought pattern: "Boys are generally messier", which can result in his or her behaviour towards boys being different, even if only slightly. Instead, we could recall examples of diligent boys and thereby adjust our own beliefs – to be more inclusive and open and thus also more professional.

As instructors, it is our opportunity as well as obligation to notice different children and instruct them in a way that supports them and does not harm them.

Elina Kivinukk and Kadri Toomsalu

10 Culture-sensitive instructor

Instructors increasingly have to face situations where a group includes different children, with a different mother tongue or a different cultural and religious background. With regards to different cultural backgrounds, instructors can be respectful and inclusive, which in turn may make the museum visit a colourful experience and thereby enrich the children's inner world.

Here are some recommendations on how to better include participants who speak different mother tongues.

- Give each participant a chance to express themselves in a language comfortable for them – this offers everyone a sense of competence which, as we know, also supports motivation. You can offer a chance for discussion in joint language groups. (George Lucas Educational Foundation (2021)
- Learn new terms in all the (represented) languages: why not learn the emotional vocabulary in Estonian, Russian, Ukrainian, French, and Võro?
- Use the non-verbal language wisely: demonstrate, use gestures. For instance, if the class includes regular parts (drinking break, cleaning up), let the participants know with an agreed gesture or by clapping. This way, everyone can understand the task equally and at the same time.
- Allow everyone to make mistakes, experiment and try when learning a language. Just as the expression of emotions can be individually specific, mistakes are also allowed in linguistic expression. Learning a foreign language from each other is also allowed. (George Lucas Educational Foundation (2021)
- Support intercultural diversity – for instance, the participants may highlight the specifics of their culture in discussions necessary for resolving a disagreement. As a background for this activity, you can use the music of the cultures represented by the participants – either songs in their mother tongue or wordless melodies.
- Use 'layered' questions. Ask the participants questions according to their language skill: it is easier to answer yes/no questions than to formulate/describe one's emotions. (George Lucas Educational Foundation (2021)
- Use statement exercises, which can be easily prepared for by writing sentences on large pieces of paper, say, in three languages. Agree on the location of the *Yes* and *No* answers in the room and ask the participants to indicate their answer to each statement by relocating accordingly. This way, instructions reach everyone more or less on the same basis and everyone can start with the activity without having to wait for a translation.

Elina Kivinukk on the basis of the George Lucas Educational Foundation (2021)

11 Trauma-informed instructor

The trauma-informed approach is based on the fact that a great many people have experienced a trauma in their life. Children may have experienced neglect or abuse, lived through accidents or disasters, or seen such deeply impacting events as bystanders. Experiencing a trauma may often influence which situations they perceive as safe and which as dangerous. This in turn influences the emotions felt. The trauma-informed approach takes this into account and tries not to traumatise people again.

Here are some ways to be trauma-informed in instructing exercises.

- **Be inclusive in your use of language** – offer opportunities rather than give instructions. It is important to let children and youngsters know that they themselves can decide on how much they wish to participate in an exercise. This helps to add value to everyone's experience. When you would like to get the children to sit in a circle, it is better to say, "I now invite you to sit in a circle", than "Let us all now sit in a circle".

- **Be prepared for different reactions.** Children and youngsters who have experienced a trauma may find it difficult to tolerate touch, perform deep breathing exercises or close their eyes during an exercise, because all of that may evoke a sense of danger. Thus, you can prepare for different options, for instance by offering: "Close your eyes, if you wish, but you can also keep your eyes open and look at that wall, if this feels more comfortable."

- **Support healthy curiosity** – as an instructor, try to avoid establishing expectations or prescribing certain feelings. The question "Did you feel calmer after this exercise?" may seem as an assessment and the children who did not feel calmer – for whatever reason – may feel excluded or adjust their opinion under the pressure of belonging to the group. It is better to support curiosity towards one's own feelings and ask the participants to tell how an exercise influenced their feelings, expressing understanding in each case.

This is an important principle in this entire collection of exercises: everyone's emotions and skills are unique and everyone's journey is a valuable learning experience.

You can also find supportive material from the homepage of Traumateadlik Eesti.

Elina Kivinukk on the basis of Dorado ja Zarzewski (2013)

Good practices for instructing exercises with a mindfulness background

- It is good to start the exercises with small tasks that practice silence and where attention is directed to a bodily feeling or a sensory sensation.

- It is useful for the instructor who is guiding the mindfulness exercises to have personal experience in performing similar exercises. In addition to various courses, the internet offers many exercises intended for grown-ups, which you can review beforehand, if you wish.

- It is recommended for the instructor to take part in the exercises. When instructing a group of children, it is good for the instructor to keep his or her eyes open throughout the exercise. Speech should be clear and include a sufficient number of calming pauses.

- During the exercises, it would be useful to be in an upright (back straight, the soles of the feet on the floor when sitting on a chair) but relaxed position (shoulders not tense, hands relaxed in the lap). Each participant can assume a position natural and comfortable for them, if that does not disturb the other participants. No one should ever be pressured to perform exercises. It is also important to ensure that all the participants in the group find it peaceful to concentrate and participate throughout the exercise.

- At the beginning of an exercise, it is good to ask the participants to close their eyes for the duration of the whole exercise, as it calms the participants and helps them focus on their sensations. If closing the eyes feels distressing for anyone, you can recommend that they turn their gaze downwards, for instance to the floor.

- There is no need to intervene if anyone falls asleep during an exercise. The situation can be influenced with the exercise position or the instructor's speech rhythm.

- It is good to plan the beginning and end of the exercises in advance. One option is to use a singing bowl, the soft sound of which is suitable both for starting and ending the exercises. At the end of an exercise, it would be good to take a moment for a joint discussion. Questions such as "How did the exercise make you feel?" or "What did you notice?" help the participants to put their experience into words. The instructor should also point out in the discussion that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions.

Arja Kalistaja-Tikka

Nest of Peace – a place to support a child's emotional development

One way to develop children's emotional intelligence and self-regulation is to create a Nest of Peace at the museum (or educational establishment). The Nest of Peace is a quiet and safe place where a child can go to calm down, to notice their strong emotions and learn to cope with these. It is an environment where children are supported in their development of self-regulation. The Nest offers various activities which help regulate emotions, for instance reading a book, listening to calming music, sensory games, kneading a stress ball, laying down, or simply being in silence. The aim of the Nest of Peace is to develop children's awareness of calming techniques and support their skills of understanding, noticing and regulating their emotions.

The Nest of Peace should be set up in a peaceful and quiet place, away from noisier areas. It should be comfortable (cushions, bean bags, a mattress, fleece blankets, and other such) and offer a possibility to hide from others (tipi, hut). There should be supportive materials on the walls, for instance images of emotions, calming techniques, and questions that stimulate self-analysis ("How do I feel today?", "What helps me calm down?"). A shelf or a basket should contain calming tools, such as books, peaceful music, earphones, glitter bottles, stress balls, sensory games, sandglasses, etc.

Before using the Nest of Peace, the instructor should explain to the children what the Nest of Peace is, what it is created for and when and how to use it. It is important to emphasise that the Nest of Peace is not created for **punishing children** – instead, it is a safe and supportive place where children can befriend their emotions under the guidance of a grown-up. Make joint agreements with children on the use of the Nest of Peace – for instance, for how long children stay there and how the others behave during that time and how to signal a wish to go there. You could also show them the tools and how to use these. If necessary, demonstrate the activities yourself or via a roleplaying game, so that the children understand the purpose and functioning of the Nest. This way, it becomes a safe and supportive part of the children's day, a place they can knowingly and responsibly use. In the Nest of Peace, a child can act alone, with a friend or a safe grown-up. If creating such a place permanently at the museum proves difficult, there is a more compact and simpler version – the Basket of Peace which can be used right next to educational activities and which you can find in the section of exercises on the next page.

Eleri Saarik on the basis of the Rahupesa's webpage (Võik, L.-M.)

Photos: Rahupesa's webpage





14 Basket of peace

ANXIETY | CALMING DOWN | CONCENTRATING

Suitable for all age groups

EFFECT

The basket of peace relieves anxiety.

NECESSARY TOOLS AND PREPARATION

A basket or box for storing items.

Stress balls, different clocks (such as liquid hourglasses and sandglasses), pop-it toys, noise- cancelling headphones, headphones with peaceful music or sounds of nature, books, drawing tools, glitter bottles, pictures of emotions, and other such.

It is worth thinking through how an anxious participant can be instructed to take a look in the basket of peace so that he or she does not disturb other participants and disrupt their concentration. If possible, place the basket of peace in another room and send a child to it together with an adult accompanying the group.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The basket of peace is for participants who are feeling anxious or do not want to take part in group activities. The basket should be placed nearby, ready for use. Looking at and touching and using the aforementioned items helps children or youngsters to calm down and relieves their anxiety, supports their ability to concentrate.

It is worth keeping in mind and stating that the basket of peace is not a place of punishment, but a place of safety, a place of peace. A child can be directed to the basket of peace by saying, for instance: “I can see you are struggling/ not feeling comfortable. Would you like to take a moment to go to the basket of peace?”

SOURCE: Angela Jakobson’s Emotion Cards.

15 Acting emotions

10 MIN

COMMUNICATION | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | SELF-AWARENESS

Suitable for all age groups

EFFECT

This activity develops the players' emotional vocabulary and emotional skills.

NECESSARY TOOLS AND PREPARATION

Printed words of emotion with images (e.g. Angela Jakobson's Emotion Cards)

Simpler or more difficult words that describe emotions should be chosen according to the players' age.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor could explain that it is important to know words that express emotions in order to better understand what we ourselves feel and what others feel and how we can cope with these feelings.

For instance, when I don't know from which side of the road I should catch a bus, I feel fear and anxiety, because I'm confused. When I understand that I'm confused, I know that I need clarity. I can then go and ask someone for help. Now I can feel calmer!

Another example: I go to the kindergarten, but I cry in the morning, because I'm sad and afraid that my best friend is not at the kindergarten today and I have to be alone. When I know that I'm sad and afraid, I can tell that to Mum/Dad/the teacher and then they understand why I'm crying and they can comfort me – or we can discuss together what to do to make me feel better at the kindergarten.

Every participant gets one emotion card/slip and has to express that emotion with their facial expression and body language. The others try to guess what the emotion is. This is followed by a discussion of where in the body you can feel the emotion and what to do to feel it less or more.

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

- With kindergarten and primary school children, all the emotion cards may be shown and all the relevant emotion words named before the guessing starts. For each emotion, an example could be given of where in the body the emotion might be felt. This step may be necessary to make sure that all the participants know the emotions to be addressed.
- In the case of kindergarten children, it is recommended to use the basic emotions (sadness, anger, joy, disgust, fear, surprise).
- With participants of at least 8 years of age, more complex emotions may be used (e.g. disappointment, guilt, anticipation, restlessness, elation).
- In the case of a smaller group (up to 5 pupils), everyone can act the emotion.
- In the case of a large group (more than 20 participants), the participants can be divided into pairs or smaller groups and the activity can be conducted in groups.
- It is also possible to make the entire group to express one emotion, with only one member of the group in the role of the guesser. For this, the guesser at first turns their back to the other players. The instructor shows the emotion card to the others and asks everyone to express that emotion with their body language and facial expressions. When everyone is ready,

the guesser turns to face the others and tries to guess the emotion. As an alternative, the others can be shown the name of the emotion from behind the guesser's back, written on a piece of paper in large letters.

- In a group where no one wishes to try acting emotions or cannot yet do it, the instructor may demonstrate the emotions.

SOURCE: Angela Jakobson's Emotion Cards.

17 What cheers you up? 5 MIN

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | SELF-AWARENESS | EMPATHY | SENSE OF COHESION | Suitable for all age groups

EFFECT

This game brings out cheerful emotions and helps create a supporting and safe environment in the group or class. By listening to what makes others happy, the participants get to know each other better, which may strengthen ties of friendship. The game also develops empathy and concentration ability. The participants practice expressing their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment.

NECESSARY TOOLS

A ball

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor starts the game by explaining that the participants will share with each other what cheers them up. To create an open and trusting atmosphere, the instructor first sets an example by saying, for instance: "It cheers me up when I see you smile." The instructor then takes the ball and throws it to a participant, asking: "What cheers you up?" The participant then replies with a full sentence, for instance: "It cheers me up when I play outside with my friends." After answering, the participant throws the ball to the next player who then also shares something that cheers him or her up. The game continues until all the participants have had a chance to reply. At the end, the instructor guides the participants to discuss whether some of them had the same sources of joy and whether anyone discovered something new about their friends.

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

- While the ball may otherwise be thrown to any player, with kindergarten children the ball may be passed from hand to hand along the circle.
- Kindergarten children may be asked simple questions such as "What cheers you up?", but with older participants age-appropriate more substantive questions which develop thinking skills may be used, so that the game is more challenging and allows the participants to analyse their feelings and thoughts more deeply.

The instructor may pose questions and requests, such as:

  - Name three wishes.
  - What helps you calm down or makes you feel better when you are upset?
  - How can you support a friend when he or she is having a bad day?

- If there are shy participants in the group, the game can also be played in writing. Before the start of the game, every participant writes down three things that bring them joy. When the ball reaches them, they can choose whether they wish to share something from their piece of paper or add something new. This allows those who prefer more reserved self-expression also to participate.
- The game can also be conducted in smaller groups or pairs.

SOURCE: Caron Harbour Wedeking (2012). Exercise Feelings Hot Potato. Supplemented by Eleri Saarik.

18 Check-in

5 MIN

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | EMPATHY | COMMUNICATION

Suitable for all age groups

EFFECT

This exercise helps create an emotional contact and a supporting environment, while also helping the participants to acknowledge their emotions and learn to listen to each other.

NECESSARY TOOLS

Tunnekortit tai tunteita kuvaavat kuvat

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the beginning of the exercise, the instructor explains that before everyone gets down to activities, a joint arrival will be held, so that everyone knows the emotions with which the others have arrived. Each participant gets a chance to share one word to describe how their day has begun. This word may express a feeling, a thought, or an overall mood. For instance, the participants may say: *dreamy, tired, peaceful, fast-paced, happy, confused,* as well as *pancake, dog*, etc. It is important that no one comments on or judges what the others share – this is a quiet moment aimed at supporting mindful presence and consideration for each other.

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

- Children of 4 to 7 years of age need more visual and linguistic support. They can be offered pictures or word cards from amongst which they can choose the emotion that fits them. Simpler and more familiar words are used, such as *cheerful, sad, sleepy, excited, shy,* etc. Visual tools help children to more easily recognise and express their emotions.
- With school-aged children, the substance of the exercise may be made more meaningful, for instance by asking them to say one word that describes their morning, mood, or the coming day. The participants can share their word orally or write it anonymously on a piece of paper, if that feels safer.

SOURCE: Sirli Kivisaar, Estonian Academy of Game Therapy, a game therapist's qualification training. Adapted for different age groups by Eleri Saarik.

19 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

2 MIN

ANXIETY | CALMING DOWN | CONCENTRATING

Suitable for all age groups

EFFECT

This exercise develops attention, concentration ability and sensory skills, helps in coping with and relieving anxiety, stress, and overwhelming emotions. Helps create a peaceful mood.

NECESSARY TOOLS AND PREPARATION

If there is nothing that can be tasted in the classroom or group room, the instructor may bring some such items.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor asks the participants to scan the surrounding environment and spot 5 things they can see, 4 things they are currently touching or can feel by touching, 3 things they can hear, 2 things they can smell, and 1 thing they can taste.

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

- The exercise can be made shorter for participants of 5 to7 years of age by adjusting the number of things, e.g. asking them to find 3 things they can see, 2 things they can touch, and 1 thing they can hear. It is possible to use visual support, e.g. image cards of things related to senses. Movement may also be involved, e.g. by asking the participants to find something blue in the room or to place their hand on something soft.

SOURCE: A commonly used method

20 Boiled and unboiled spaghetti

3 MIN

ANXIETY | SELF-AWARENESS

Suitable for all age groups

EFFECT

This exercise helps in coping with tension and stress, teaches to sense one's own body and to relax.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

To begin with, the instructor shows the players what boiled spaghetti and unboiled spaghetti look like. The participants then first play unboiled spaghetti which is hard and straight like a stick. They strain all their muscles as hard as possible, even until their body starts to tremble with the effort. The participants then turn into boiled spaghetti – they let their muscles to fully relax, being soft and flexible like boiled spaghetti.

At the end of the exercise, the instructor explains the link between the body and emotions: "We may sometimes be scared or even angry. At such moments, our muscles may become too tense and even our head may start aching. For our muscles not to be too tense, it is good to play boiled spaghetti and relax! By tensing our muscles, we can be like unboiled spaghetti and physically express the irritation that is inside of us. By then relaxing our body – imagining that we are boiled spaghetti – we can calm our body and feel better!"

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

- Participants of at least 10 years of age can be given an explanation of how the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems work. The sympathetic nervous system becomes active when we are in danger or stressed or anxious. The parasympathetic nervous system becomes active when we are calm or resting. The body activates the sympathetic nervous system when we are in a dangerous situation or perceive the situation as dangerous (e.g. "I'm afraid that something might go wrong."). The sympathetic nervous system prepares the body for a fight and is therefore very useful to us. However, it may entail muscle tension and we ourselves may not even realise that we have, for instance, tensed our shoulders. So, in order to get rid of unnecessary muscle tension, it is good to play boiled spaghetti and relax. Or simply try to discern which parts of the body are tense and then try to relax those muscles.

SOURCE: Angela Jakobson's "Cards for Coping with Strong Emotions"

21 Different emotions

6 MIN

EMPATHY | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | COMMUNICATION | PROBLEM-SOLVING | Suitable for all age groups

EFFECT

This exercise develops empathy and problem-solving skills.

PREPARATION

Think of suitable examples to go with suitable museum exhibits.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

While looking at an exhibit with the participants, the instructor opens a discussion of how different people or characters can feel different emotions in the same situation. It is important to summarise the situation on an optimistic note and draw conclusions.

At a display of teddy bears, for instance, the instructor may tell a story of a Mummy Bear who was cooking a casserole for her Baby Bear. Baby Bear did not really like casserole, but he knew it was healthy and he should eat it. However, Mummy Bear burnt the dish while cooking and they couldn't eat it.

Possible questions for discussion:

- Naming the emotion of the character feeling a positive emotion, and the reason: "What may Baby Bear have felt? Why would he feel that?" (Possible answers: "Baby Bear was happy, because he didn't want to eat it. He may also have felt a bit sorry for Mummy Bear.)
- Naming the emotion of the character feeling a negative emotion, and the reason: "Why might Baby Bear have felt sorry for Mummy Bear? What could Mummy Bear have felt? Why might she have felt that?" (Possible answers: "Baby Bear may have felt sorry to see his mother sad. Mummy Bear may have been sad, because she had put a lot of effort in cooking, and now the meal was ruined.")
- Linking personal experience to the story: "Have you recently worked hard on something, and then it has gone wrong? How did you feel?" (The instructor lets the participants to share their experiences and emotions.)
- Finding a solution to the situation: "What could Baby Bear do to make Mummy Bear feel better? What helped you when you messed something up?" (Possible answers: "Baby Bear could comfort Mummy Bear and give her a hug.")

The situation can be summarised by drawing a conclusion, for instance by saying: "Although Baby Bear was glad, he understood that Mummy Bear needs comforting, and now Mummy Bear also feels better. This kind of behaviour shows Baby Bear's empathy, or compassion and caring and understanding."

ADAPTATION OPTION

The story and the questions can be adapted according to the exhibit and the age of the participants. It is important to choose a situation where at least two characters feel different emotions in the same situation.

SOURCE: Inspiration from the methodology for developing social problem-solving skills (I Can Problem Solve, or ICPS), supplemented by Cätlin Tuuling.

22 Animal of power

5 MIN

CONCENTRATING | SELF-AWARENESS | ANXIETY | EMPATHY

Suitable for all age groups

EFFECT

This exercise develops empathy and creativity.

PREPARATION

Visual access to museum exhibits or items

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Every participant chooses one item in the museum. The instructor helps direct the participants' attention: "Look at the item carefully. What interests you in this item? Does it have a special property? How do you like the colour of this item? What do you think it smells like? If you could touch it, what would you feel? Does it feel like you have become familiar with this item?

Now imagine that this item is your friend. What would it say to you? Could it give you courage? Or joy? Or something else you need? Take a moment and think about it. What does it feel like to know that you have a friend here at the museum, who can support you and help you?"

To end this exercise, the instructor may ask the participants what they noticed or what they would like to say about this exercise.

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

- The animal of power can also take away worries, habits, or a trait of character. For instance, you can give away your laziness which makes you not to want to make your bed after the afternoon nap.
- The name *animal of magic* may also be used, if *animal of power* sounds unfamiliar to the children.

SOURCE: Author Elina Kivinukk

23 A safe place

6 MIN

CALMING DOWN | CONCENTRATING | SELF-AWARENESS | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | Suitable for all age groups

EFFECT

The exercise helps the participants to calm down, improves their concentration and relieves stress.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor calmly guides the participants:

"Assume a comfortable position and close your eyes. Calm down to monitor your breathing. Feel what it is like right now, and where in your body you can sense your breathing.

Bring to mind a special place that you like. A place where you feel good and safe.

The place can be very familiar and real to you, such as your own bed, a summer cottage beach, a hammock, grandma's house, or some imaginary place. The most important thing is that it is a place where you feel good and where you can completely relax.

How does your body feel in that place? For instance, are you warm, relaxed or calm?

How does your mind feel in that place? For instance, is it safe, calm or content?

Are there any familiar sounds or smells associated with your place?

Now memorise how you feel in your safe place and how your mind and body feel being in that pleasant place.

You can stay there for a few more moments.

Remember that you can return to your safe place at any time in your mind to calm down or gather strength.

In a moment, we will return to our shared space. When you are ready, open your eyes and gently stretch a little."

At the end of the exercise, the participants can be told that the exercise can help them quickly calm their mind, even in a tense situation.

SOURCE: The exercise has been compiled by Arja Kalistaja-Tikka.

24 The heel swing

5 MIN

ANXIETY | CALMING DOWN | CONCENTRATING

Suitable for all age groups

EFFECT

The exercise helps reduce tension, anxiety, aggression, and other feelings of overexcitement.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor asks everyone to stand in a circle or any other desired formation. The instructor then instructs:

"Stand tall with your shoulders relaxed and rise onto your toes. Then, without resisting the movement, let your whole body hit your heels.

The movement causes a gentle jolt to pass through your body.

Get up on your toes again and let your body hit your heels again.

Repeat this a few times while breathing calmly."

SOURCE: Niemi (2014). *Hyvää mieltä & tunnetaitoja*. Päivä Oy. The exercise has been adapted by Arja Kalistaja-Tikka.

25

Flipping the lid

3 MIN

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | CALMING DOWN | SELF-AWARENESS | EMPATHY | Suitable for all age groups

EFFECT

This method helps regulate emotions and develop empathy.

PREPARATION

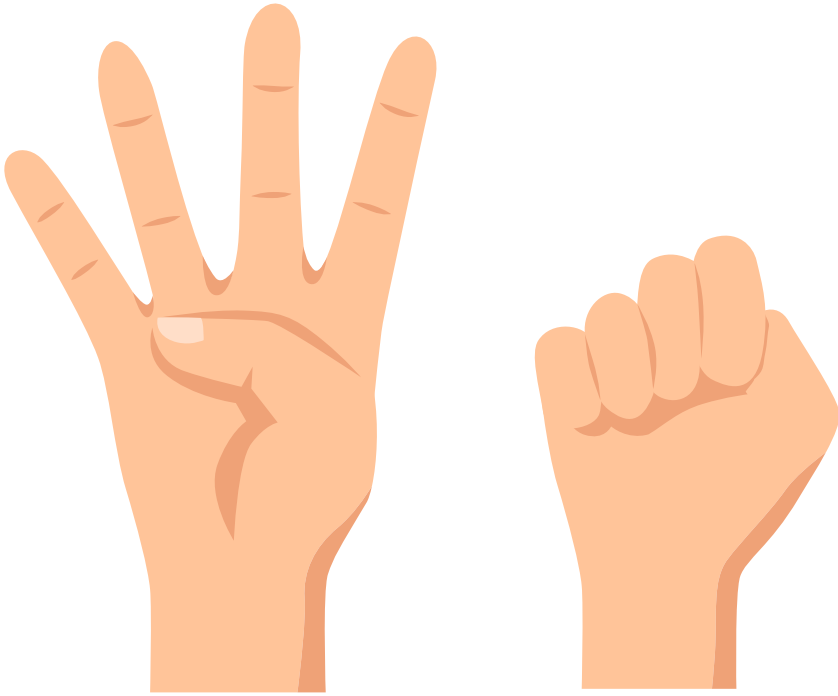
For background information, watch Daniel Siegel's description of the 'Flipping the Lid' model on the YouTube platform or read about the model elsewhere.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor describes: "When emotions become overwhelming when someone gets angry or irritated, emotions in a person's brain grow stronger than the power of thought – thoughts just can't keep up. We can imagine it as a pot that boils over and flips the lid. Let's do it together, everyone with their own hand." The instructor shows the participants how to use their hand to act out getting angry.

What helps at such a moment? Taking a break to breathe, stepping away from the situation for a moment. The instructor can discuss this with the participants, encouraging them to propose their own solutions that help them.

The participants can also be encouraged to come and show during the museum visit when such an irritating situation arises: they can then be given a hug or invited to do a joint breathing exercise or some other activity that has been agreed before.



SOURCE: Adapted for play on the basis of Daniel Siegel by Elina Kivinukk

26 Yes, and ...

5 MIN

COMMUNICATION | EMPATHY | PROBLEM-SOLVING

Suitable for all age groups

EFFECT

This improvisation exercise develops creativity in a playful way, while also teaching the participants to accept the thoughts of others.

PREPARATION

Think of suitable examples to go with suitable museum exhibits.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor asks the participants to form or helps them form pairs or groups of three and the participants together then choose a museum exhibit or item. The instructor then asks them to take turns making statements about the possibilities of use of that item. The other participant should always approve the statement (by clapping, laughing, or hooting, if desired) and then add a new thought.

An example for a truck:

"It is a beautiful blue truck."

"Yes, and it can carry many things."

"Yes, and it can carry apples."

"Yes, and it can carry blocks." Etc.

It is important not to restrict or criticise, and to go along with the first thought that occurs.

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

- If the group is small (6 to 7 children), the game can be played all together, standing in a circle – this way, the fun can be shared and a supportive group feeling can be created.
- This game is also suitable when the members of the group speak different languages – in such case, language-based groups can be formed.

SOURCE: A commonly used exercise at the Improvisation Theatre

27 Finding common ground

7 MIN

PROBLEM-SOLVING | SENSE OF COHESION | EMPATHY | COMMUNICATION | CALMING DOWN | Suitable for all age groups

EFFECT

This exercise develops conflict-solving skills and increases the sense of unity in a group.

PREPARATION

Prepare for a situation of disagreement among the participants.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

If a disagreement arises among the participants during a class or activity, the instructor needs to address and mirror the disagreement: "I see you have a difference of opinions here." The instructor listens to all the parties.

The instructor could then give the participants a chance to express their emotions: "How do you feel?"

The instructor can then find common ground: "You both like this colour, you're so alike."

The situation can be summarised by saying that it is normal for people to have quarrels or disagreements, but talking about these helps people to overcome difficult situations and still remain friends.

SOURCE: Adapted on the basis of the methodical materials of the Greater Good Science Center by Elina Kivinukk.

28 Three similar qualities

5 MIN

EMPATHY | COMMUNICATION | SENSE OF COHESION

Suitable for all age groups

EFFECT

This exercise supports the sense of unity in a group and develops creativity

PREPARATION

Music

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The participants move freely about to cheerful music. When the music stops, they quickly find a partner and then find three things, qualities, feelings, preferences, etc., that the two of them have in common – it may be the colour of their hair or that they both have a green shirt or that they both like apples. When the partners have mutually shared, the music resumes and the participants again move about alone and when the music stops, they find a new partner.

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

- In a museum environment, pairs can be formed and a museum item can be chosen as the third member of the group – and then the partners can find common qualities or other aspects.
- A musical instrument can also be used for playing music.
- The game can also be used for forming new groups or pairs for subsequent activities.

SOURCE: Elina Kivinukk on the basis of a commonly used method

29 Museum items speak

7 MIN

EMPATHY COMMUNICATION

Suitable for all age groups

EFFECT

This exercise develops empathy and creativity.

NECESSARY TOOLS AND PREPARATION

Visual access to museum exhibits or other items

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The participants are divided into pairs or groups of three. The instructor asks the participants to walk around in the museum and find two items that look interesting to them. The instructor encourages the participants to impersonate these items and start a dialogue between the items, inspiring them by saying, for instance: "At night, these items can get together. What do they talk about? What do they play? What do they give each other? Why do they like each other?" It must be emphasised that there are no right or wrong approaches or thoughts in this exercise. The participants can then perform the dialogue.

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

Can be adapted according to items and age groups. With students 10 to 15 years of age, deeper and more complex and abstract reasoning and topics can be used, such as relationships, thoughts, or emotions – and why not imagine and resolve a conflict situation.

SOURCE: Author Elina Kivinukk

30 Objects and emotions

4 MIN

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | SELF-AWARENESS | EMPATHY

Suitable for all age groups

EFFECT

This game helps the participants to notice that the same situations cause different emotions.

PREPARATION

Choose a museum room with different objects.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor encourages the participants to move around in the room and take a look at the objects around them. The instructor asks questions, wanting to know which objects cause which emotions, and the participants can go up to the objects or point at the objects. It is important to emphasise that there are no right or wrong answers.

- Which object in this room cheers you up? Why?
- Which object causes interest/curiosity? Why?
- Which object surprises you? Why?
- Which object scares you? Why?
- Etc.

To summarise the game, the instructor can point out that different things cause the same emotions in people, and one person may feel one emotion and another person a different emotion in the same situation.

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

This activity is also very suitable for participants of different cultural backgrounds. Emoticons or words describing emotions in different languages can be printed out and used instead, so that the participants do not have to verbally express themselves and everyone receives the necessary information simultaneously.

SOURCE: Author Elina Kivinukk

31 An exercise of gratitude

6 MIN

CONCENTRATING | SELF-AWARENESS | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | COMMUNICATION | Suitable for all age groups

EFFECT

This exercise teaches the participants to notice good things, creates a good feeling, and offers emotional support. It also develops concentration skills.

NECESSARY TOOLS

- A talking stick or a soft toy, which can be thrown from participant to participant (optional)
- Chairs, rugs, or sitting cushions (optional)
- Place the chairs, rugs or sitting cushions so that the participants can form a circle when sitting down.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The participants sit in a circle and take turns articulating things they are grateful for. Gratitude may arise from things, people, or situations – it is important to emphasise that there are no right or wrong answers. The participants take turns expressing gratitude by saying, for instance: "I am grateful…" or "I am glad that…". An item designating the current speaker helps focus attention and concentrate on listening.

After the exercise, the instructor and the participants may discuss what they noticed and how the exercise of gratitude made them feel.

SOURCE: Created by Elina Kivinukk on the basis of the Greater Good Science Center.

32 A resting bat

3 MIN

CALMING DOWN | ANXIETY | Yrs 4 to 9

EFFECT

This game teaches the participants calming techniques to be used when feeling strong emotions. The exercise is also a good way to take a break from the class and calm the participants down.

NECESSARY TOOLS

Pictures of a bat stretched out and in a resting position (for kindergarten children and primary school children)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor introduces the game. Very young participants may be asked whether they all know what a bat looks like, and they may be shown pictures of bats. The instructor then instructs:

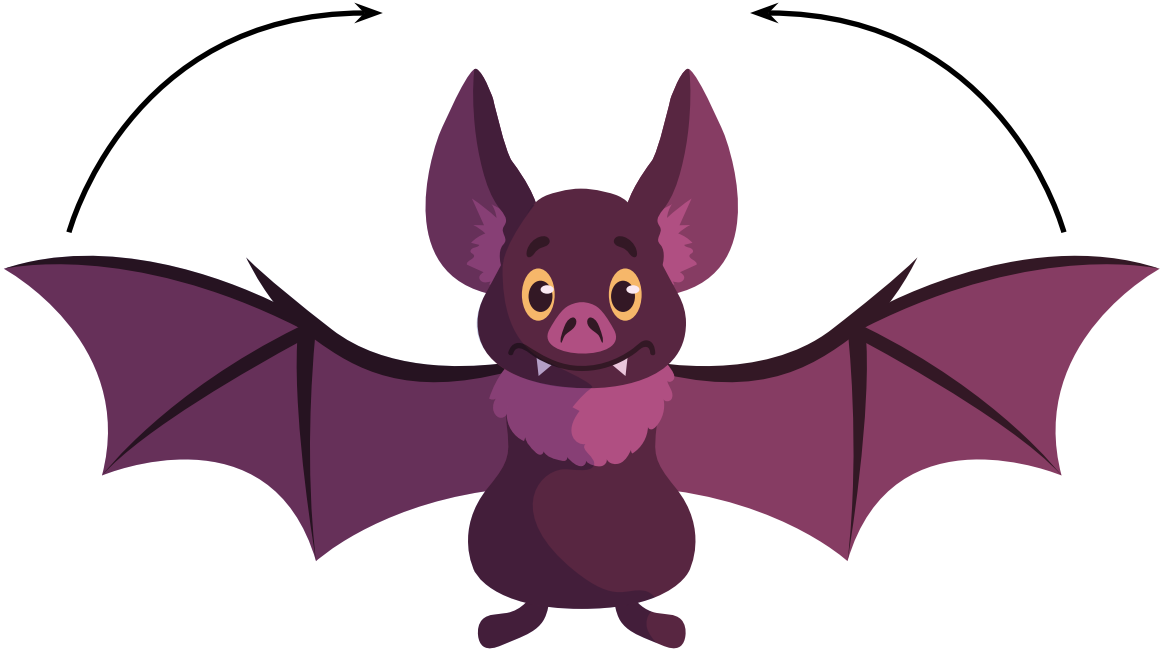
- Stretch like a bat:
  - "Stand straight."
  - "Deeply inhale, and slowly stretch your arms out to your sides and up, like a bat stretching its wings.
  - When your arms are at the highest point, rise to your tiptoes, if possible, and imagine that you are on a branch high up in a tree."
  - "Hold this position, until I count to three: 1, 2, 3."

- Relaxation and "resting":
  - "Now exhale, slowly and smoothly."
  - "Let your upper body sag down – arms and head hanging loose, like a bat hanging and resting."
  - "Stay in this relaxed position, until I count to five: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5."

- Repeating:
  - "Slowly rise back up and repeat the exercise!" (The exercise should be done at least 5 times, so that the students can feel the calming effect of calm breathing.)
  - "Try to breathe deeper and relax even more every time."

Help the participants to enjoy the exercise – use a calm voice during the exercise, move along with them, and emphasise that calm breathing is as important as the movements. At the end of the exercise, it is recommended to draw their attention to how they are feeling – are they feeling calmer? The instructor may also add at the end of the exercise that when we feel fear, anxiety, irritation, we can do this calm breathing exercise also without movements, for instance, by imagining this bat exercise in our head. Calmly breathing in and out helps our body to calm down and feel good.

SOURCE: A common relaxation exercise used after workouts, adapted by Cätlin Tuuling.





34 A fluttering feather

5 MIN

CONCENTRATING | CALMING DOWN

Yrs 4 to 10

EFFECT

This exercise teaches the participants to notice their own breathing, helps them relax from a state of tension and regulate strong emotions, while also developing concentration ability.

PREPARATION

Calm music or the sound of wind (optional)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor guides the participants throughout the entire exercise. To start with, the instructor asks the participants to imagine that they are light and airy feathers – so light that the wind easily carries them through the air. Each feather moves silently and lightly, as if dancing in the air. The participants move freely around, imitating a soft flutter – swaying, whirling, gliding. The instructor can demonstrate movements in order to guide and support the smoothness and flow of movements. After a while, the wind dies down and the feathers slowly fall to the ground – the participants remain still, turning into stone statues. They stand unmoving, calmly breathing in and out, sensing the silence and stillness. The instructor breathes together with the participants, guiding them to deep and calm breathing. The wind slowly picks up again and the feathers rise up again – the participants again become moving feathers, softly gliding across the room. The exercise can be repeated several times – the goal is for the participants to feel calm and focused at the end.

If so desired, soft music can be added as a background. When the music stops, the feathers become still and turn into stone statues.

ADAPTATION OPTION

The activity can be adapted according to seasons – for instance, in autumn the participants can fly like colourful leaves.

SOURCE: Brigid Caffrey and Shiloh Waldron. Calming Down Strategies For You and Your Preschooler Tried and True Techniques.

35

A squeezed orange

5 MIN

CALMING DOWN

Yrs 4 to 10

EFFECT

This exercise helps the body to relax and relieves tension, while also practising a calming technique which helps in coping with strong emotions.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor asks the participants to imagine that they are standing underneath an orange tree and stretch tall to grasp an orange with both hands. They then squeeze the imaginary oranges hard to get all the juice out. After a few hard squeezes, everyone throws their orange into a basket and shakes their hands to relax. The exercise is repeated several times – each time with a new orange. After the last squeeze, the children shake their whole body in addition to their hands, and calmly breathe in and out.

ADAPTATION OPTION

If a child does not know what an orange is or has never held an orange, other imaginary items can be used – for instance, a wet sponge, a small soft ball, a piece of dough or even imaginary snow. It is important for the children to experience the flexing of hands and then relaxing.

SOURCE: Save the Children Federation (2025). Relaxation activities to do at home with kids. Lemon.

Show your emotion

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | SELF-AWARENESS | EMPATHY | COMMUNICATION | Yrs 5 to 10

EFFECT

This method supports the development of empathy, develops emotional vocabulary and teaches the participants to express emotions.

NECESSARY TOOLS

Emotion image cards (optional)

Music (optional)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor starts the activity with a brief introduction, explaining that all the people feel many different emotions – joy, sadness, anger, fear, anxiety, surprise, fatigue, etc. Every emotion is allowed and everyone's feelings are important.

The instructor then names an emotion, e.g. "joy", and the participants express that emotion with body language, facial expressions, or movements. The participants express the emotion exactly how they think is the best and most natural way to convey it. For instance, for "joy", they can laugh, jump, clap their hands, or make other gestures which express joy. The instructor points out that everyone can express the emotion in their own way.

Afterwards, the instructor can discuss with the participants which emotion was the easiest to express and which was the most difficult to express. The participants can also talk about when and in which situations they have experienced that emotion and whether they have noticed other people feeling similar emotions.

Music that matches the currently expressed emotion may be used as a background for the game. For instance, fast-paced and cheerful music can be played during a cheerful emotion, and slow and quiet music during a sad emotion.

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

- For participants of 5 to 7 years of age, emotion pictures and words can also be shown, so as to make it easier for them to recognise and articulate emotions and express the emotions with their body language.
- Instead of oral instructions (e.g. for foreign-language participants), emotion cards can be shown, and the folk music of participants from different cultures can be used as the musical background.

SOURCE: Inspiration from Olga Luptova's training course "Teaching Social Skills to Children", supplemented and altered by Eleri Saarik.

37 Life in the museum

20 MIN

COMMUNICATION | SENSE OF COHESION

Yrs 5 to 12

EFFECT

The exercise encourages the participants to use their imagination as they make observations about the museum and its exhibits. The exercise strengthens the participants' narrative thinking, supports the development of their language and interaction skills, and increases their sense of community.

NECESSARY TOOLS

Visual access to museum exhibits

Photos if exhibited objects

A large piece of paper, a magnet board or any other large surface for a shared story

A felt-tip pen or a board marker

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor asks the participants to form pairs and choose an exhibited object that is of interest to them. The instructor then gives a photo to each pair and the participants introduce their object to everyone else, briefly telling its name, skill, or characteristic. If necessary, the instructor can ask additional questions, such as how the object moves or whether it has friends. The instructor or the participants (depending on the age level) add the objects to the common 'world' (a large piece of paper or a magnet board) by writing the details briefly next to the photo.

Next, the participants create a short adventure story together. The instructor begins the story: "Once upon a time there was a museum that was not an ordinary museum. One night, when everyone had gone home, something amazing happened..." The story can, for instance, be about preparations for a party at the museum or a wild adventure in the museum's attic.

The instructor asks the participants what happens first, which of the objects starts moving and what it encounters on its journey. The story is structured in such a way that each pair gets to tell in turn what their object does and how it relates to the common story. This creates a story in which each object gets a voice, meaning, and personality. The instructor moves the story forward according to the age of the participants and the needs of the group and encourages everyone to participate, for instance by asking the following questions:

- Who first noticed that…?
- What did your character do when…?
- Who led the others back to safety?

In the final scene of the story, all the objects return to their places or remain in the shared imaginary world of the story. The instructor ends the story in a way that is appropriate to the situation and thanks the children and their objects: "Today a new world was born in the museum, where all the objects had adventures together."

To conclude, the instructor can guide the participants to discuss:

- What was the funniest or most exciting moment in the story?
- What did it feel like to create a joint story?

SOURCE: The exercise was compiled by Minna Lehmusjoki.

38 Broken telephone

7 MIN

COMMUNICATION | PROBLEM-SOLVING | CONCENTRATING | SENSE OF COHESION | Yrs 5+

EFFECT

This game develops attention, and social and problem-solving skills.

PREPARATION

Think of a sentence to tell the players.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor asks the players to form a line and tells the player at the end of the line a word or a short phrase/sentence. The players have to whisper what they heard to each other one by one along the line (e.g. *a yellow butterfly is dancing*). If the message reaches the other end of the line in its original form, the participants can be praised for their good expression and listening skills and given a more difficult/longer sentence to pass on next. If the message does not reach the end of the line in its original form, the instructor and the participants could discuss why the information changed and how that is linked to real life. In real life, there are also rumours that are not actually true, because stories usually do not reach the final recipient of the information in exactly the same form. What could be done to learn what was actually said? At the end, the instructor guides the players to the answer that the surest thing is to ask the person who initially spoke. The instructor shows the participants how to ask the first player about the correctness of the message (e.g. "John told me that you said "jellied super mice can't sing" – was this the sentence you said?").

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

- The level of difficulty of the exercise can be adjusted by changing the complexity of the phrase. With kindergarten and primary school children, simpler words and shorter phrases can be used, such as a tortoise nibbled grass or a ladybug sang in the forest. With older players, longer and less logical phrases with more complex words can be used, such as a three-legged stick insect bustled under the trees.
- With a multilingual group, the exercise can also be conducted by conveying gestures, i.e. by playing a broken body telephone. For this, the participants stand in a line with their backs turned, so that the gesture is only seen by the person who receives a knock on the shoulder and is shown the gesture. The game gets funnier, as the previous players can watch how the gesture tends to change along the line.



SOURCE: A commonly used game

Finger breathing

CALMING DOWN | ANXIETY

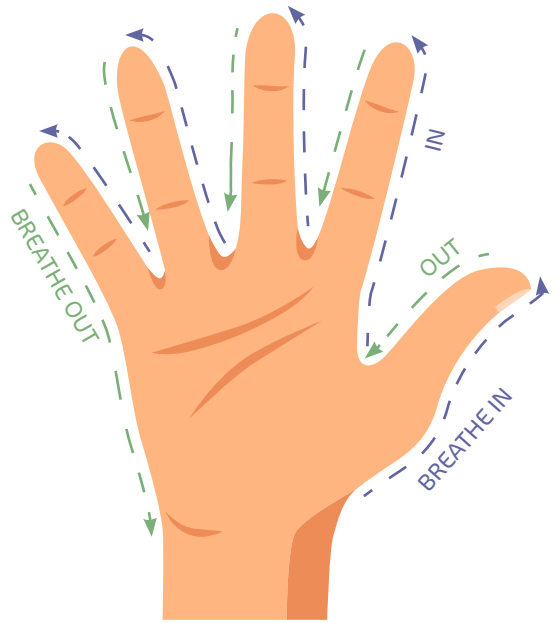
Yrs 5+

EFFECT

This method teaches the participants to consciously breathe in order to support the regulation of emotions, relieve anxiety, and support the ability to concentrate in different situations.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The participants place the fingers of one hand straight in front of themselves. They then slide the index finger of the other hand up and down every finger: up a finger when inhaling and down the same finger when exhaling. The exercise should be done slowly, at a calm pace and by breathing deeply. If necessary, it is recommended to repeat the exercise, performing it on both hands or moving back and forth on the fingers of one hand.



ADAPTATION OPTIONS

Starting from the 6th year of age, numbers can be counted to ten instead, pausing between certain numbers. The relaxing effect of the exercise can be enhanced by having the participants stand and lean their full weight against the wall.

The instructor explains: “Place one hand lightly on your chest and the other on your lower belly. Feel the movement of your breath.

Breathe in through your nose and count to three. When you reach number four, pause for a bit.

Calmly breathe out through your mouth, counting 5, 6, 7 and 8. Before the numbers 9 and 10, pause again for a bit.

Count from one to ten at least three times, breathing calmly and feeling the movement of your breath with your hand.”

Breathing in: 1, 2, 3, pause 4; breathing out: 5, 6, 7, 8, pause 9 and 10. Repeat at least three times. Continue the exercise for as long as needed to relax or calm down.

At the end of the exercise, the participants can hold a brief discussion led by the instructor:

- How did the exercise make you feel?
- What did you notice?

SOURCE: Väljaste, H., Jung, N., Ljulko, E., Ots, E., Kaudne, L., Säre, E. (i.a.). “Exercises for Minutes of Silence. Extra Notebook for the Second Day of Basic Training. NGO Vaikuseminutid. Adaptation option created by Arja Kalistaja-Tikka.

40 Our differences and similarities

6 MIN

EMPATHY | SENSE OF COHESION

Yrs 5+

EFFECT

This exercise teaches tolerance.

PREPARATION

If so desired, suitable statements may be prepared for the group.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor reads out various statements and the participants gather on a designated imaginary or actual line. The answer at one end of the line is *Yes, definitely*, and at the other end of the line *No, not at all*, with intermediate answers in-between. At first, test questions are played through with the participants, to be sure that everyone understands the exercise. The first question could be e.g. "Are you all here at … (the place where the game is being played)?". The second question could be e.g. "Is it nighttime at the moment?". Now it should be clear to everyone how responding works.

The instructor starts reading out statements which should draw different answers from different participants, to illustrate how we are all different, while we also share similar traits.

Example statements:

- I like to draw.
- I like football.
- I like mashed potatoes.
- I like to dance.
- I have or have had a domestic animal.
- I have brown eyes.
- I like to put together puzzles.
- I like drinks with bubbles.

At the end of the exercise, it is recommended to discuss why it is good that we are all a little bit different. What would happen in the world if we were all exactly the same? The instructor may provide examples and then ask e.g. "What would happen if we all looked exactly the same?", "What would happen if we all liked to eat only mashed potatoes?".

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

- The players can be given a chance to propose statements.
- More age-appropriate statements can be prepared for students 10 to 15 years of age.

SOURCE: A commonly used method

41 Emotions in a balloon

5 MIN

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | SELF-AWARENESS | COMMUNICATION | CONCENTRATING | Yrs 5+

EFFECT

This exercise develops emotional skills and the courage to talk about one's emotions.

NECESSARY TOOLS

A balloon/balloons (as desired/possible, either for just the instructor or for every participant)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor discusses and describes how emotions work in our body. Emotions are like air in a balloon. The instructor shows the participants that a balloon grows bigger with every strong emotion.

- "I got mad because I couldn't watch cartoons" – the instructor blows air into the balloon.
- "I felt sad when I left my favourite cuddly toy at home" – the instructor blows air into the balloon.
- "I got hurt when I ran outside and fell" – the instructor blows air into the balloon.

What happens when you endlessly keep blowing air into the balloon? Correct – it will burst with a bang! When we keep emotions inside, the same thing may happen – in the end, we blow up. We ourselves will not break, but we may start saying bad things to someone, shouting, or breaking things. Strong emotions therefore need to be quietly released every now and then.

The instructor demonstrates how to cope with one's feelings, and lets some air out of the balloon.

- "I tell Mum/Dad that it makes me quite mad when I cannot watch cartoons" – the instructor lets some air out of the balloon.
- "I tell the teacher that I 'm sad because I don't have my cuddly toy" – the instructor lets some air out of the balloon.
- "I tell a grown-up that I've really got hurt, and will get help" – the instructor lets some air out of the balloon.
- "I ask Mum/Dad for a hug, because I'm in a bad mood and I need comforting" – the instructor lets some air out of the balloon.

If we had blown the balloon past its limits, it would have broken and we would no longer have a balloon. Luckily, we managed to keep the balloon, which is much better! If we calmly talk about our emotions and worries, we do not do or say bad things to others, and getting along with others is much more fun than quarrelling!

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

If so desired, a situation where the balloon breaks may be played through with school-aged children who are not afraid of a bang. For this, the instructor should ask for everyone's confirmation that it does not scare any of the participants (for some, a bang may be a reminder of a traumatic event). If no one objects, the instructor may ask them to cover their ears if they want. The instructor continues: "If we had blown the balloon too full, it would have broken – like this! It may even be fun for a moment, but now we no longer have a balloon. This is why we occasionally need to let air out

continues....

of the balloon. In the same way, we should also talk about our worries and sadness. When we calmly let others know of our emotions, we feel better and don't do or say bad things to others. Getting along with others is much more fun than quarrelling!"

Emotions can also be illustrated without blowing the balloon, but by playing with the height instead – the stronger the emotion, the higher we lift the balloon. In such case, the instructor at first holds the balloon and starts lifting it higher. It is recommended to provide a real-life example of a disturbing situation, so that the emotion is easier to understand: "For instance, we would like to watch telly, but someone keeps talking all the time. At first, it disturbs us a little, but then becomes very annoying, and in the end, we get very angry. We would like to say something really bad to them for disturbing us all the time. We'd even like to shout at them. Let us now take a look at this balloon – this is our emotion. At first, it was at an ordinary level, but the emotion rose ever higher. Let's throw the balloon in the air, just like our feeling of anger shot up high. What happens to the balloon? The balloon slowly drifts back down. It is the same with emotions – they always come back down, even if we don't do anything. At times we just need to wait a little and calm down for the emotion to subside. Therefore, we do not have to angrily shout at others in front of the TV to make the anger go away. Perhaps we should instead go to our room for a bit and wait until the emotion comes back down, and then go and politely and calmly ask whether it would be possible for the others to talk more quietly." The example situation can be chosen considering the age of the participants.

SOURCE: A commonly used method, adapted by Cätlin Tuuling.

If it was real...

EMPATHY | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | COMMUNICATION | Yrs 5+

EFFECT

Improves the participants' ability to understand the viewpoint of others, and develops empathy.

NECESSARY TOOLS

A museum exhibit or an item in the classroom, to which human characteristics can be assigned

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

During class, the instructor may stop at one or several exhibits and play the game "If it was real…" with the participants. Together, imagine that this item or exhibit is alive – that it has thoughts, emotions, and senses, just like people. The following topics can be discussed with the participants:

If it was real…

- …what could it see right now?
- …what could it hear right now?
- …what could it feel right now (e.g. cold, heat, pain, discomfort, joy, etc.)?
- …what could it be thinking?
- …what mood could it be in?
- …what could we do to cheer it up (even more)?

Finally, discuss together:

- Whether all the people always feel and think in the same way?
- Whether the same situation may cause different emotions in different people?
- What can bring joy to one person, may not necessarily have the same effect on someone else (e.g. a hug may be warm and nice for one person, but uncomfortable for another).

ADAPTATION OPTION

With school-aged children, this exercise may be done as an independent task by printing the questions and asking everyone to answer in writing on a piece of paper. End the exercise with a joint discussion.

SOURCE: Author Cätlin Tuuling

44 How would you feel, if... 10 MIN

EMPATHY | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | SENSE OF COHESION | Yrs 5+

EFFECT

This exercise develops empathy.

NECESSARY TOOLS

Emotion cards and quarrel situation notes

If desired, create quarrel situation notes (see the exercise “Ice-cream stick”)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The participants sit or stand in a circle. The instructor lists imaginary situations, starting the question with “How would you feel, if…?”. The following questions may also be used:

- …, if your friend doesn’t want to play with you?
- …, if someone is laughing at you?
- …, if your friend invites you to play?
- …, if someone says something bad to you?
- …, if someone helps you?

When a situation has been named, all the participants at once express their emotion using body language or facial expressions, for instance, pointing to a card for sadness, joy, surprise, anger, or fear. If desired, the participants can also say what the emotion was.

ADAPTATION OPTION

Esikoululaisten ja alkuopetusikäisten kanssa voidaan käyttää apuna tunnekuvia.

SOURCE: Author Eleri Saarik

45 A game of dice

10 MIN

EMPATHY | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | SELF-AWARENESS | Yrs 5+

EFFECT

In the course of this game, the participants practice naming and expressing different emotions, and learn to notice and understand how others express their emotions.

NECESSARY TOOLS AND PREPARATION

Two dice (preferably of different colour)

Animal pictures and emotion cards (optional)

On a sheet of paper or a blackboard/whiteboard, write down six animals and six emotions with the respective numbers of the dice of respective colour. For instance, you can draw a red dice in front of every animal, using a different number for each, and (for instance) a blue dice with a different number in front of every emotion. Another option is to mark the animals and emotions with numbers and to draw a dice of respective colour on top of the respective column. With kindergarten children and 7-year-old children, pictures depicting animals and emotions can be used instead of dice – each child takes one of each.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor has written the names of six animals and six emotions on a sheet of paper or a blackboard/whiteboard and added the respective dice numbers from one to six. Two dice are used in this game – one to determine the animal and the other to determine the emotion. Each participant throws both dice and thus gets results such as "sad bear" or "cheerful frog". They now decide which dice score to use for an emotion and which for an animal. The participant then plays that animal, using body language and facial expressions, so that the others can guess what emotion and animal he or she is expressing.

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

- One dice is used, the sides of which can be written on or have pockets for pieces of paper. Each side bears a different question, for instance: "What makes you cheerful?", "What makes you angry?", "What makes you sad?", "What are your three wishes?", "What helps you to calm down?". The participants throw the dice and answer the questions.
- In order to develop conflict-solving skills, an age-specific imaginary quarrel situation is written on each side of the dice. The players throw the dice, read out loud the situation they threw (the instructor can help those who cannot yet read) and explain how they would solve it. The exercise can also be conducted as group work by discussing together which solutions would be suitable.

SOURCE: A commonly used game

A game of dice



SURPRISED



HAPPY



DISGUSTED



SAD



ANGRY



SCARED



DOG



ELEPHANT



BEAR



CAT



RABBIT



FOX

 +  = SURPRISED ELEPHANT

47

Wave after wave

5 MIN

ANXIETY | CALMING DOWN

Yrs 5+

EFFECT

This exercise relieves anxiety and stress.

NECESSARY TOOLS

Rugs, mattresses, or sitting cushions (optional)

Choose a comfortable place where the participants can lie down.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

When the participants have lain down, the instructor starts the exercise: "Move your arms to your sides. Relax your legs. Breathe in deeply and then breathe out for five seconds. Let all the air out! Imagine that you are laying in a pool filled with warm water. Can you feel the water touch your skin? Breathe. Spread your arms, spread your legs. Let the gentle waves lull you to sleep. Breathe. Up. Down. Up. Down. Slow, even movement. Can you feel the waves move? Let all your worries sink into the waves. Breathe."

SOURCE: Chiara Piroddi (2021). "A First Book of Mindfulness for Kids"

48

Bubble catchers

3 MIN

ANXIETY | CALMING DOWN

Yrs 5+

EFFECT

This game uses movement and playful activities to relieve anxiety, tension, and stress.

NECESSARY TOOLS

A bubble-blower

Choose a suitable place in the museum environment, e.g. the front of the house, an inner courtyard, or, if possible, the foyer.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor blows bubbles and the participants catch these without using their hands. Bubbles may be caught using the head, the stomach, the shoulders, etc. The instructor explains that in order to ensure everyone's safety, the players have to keep an eye on the others, so that no one gets hurt while catching bubbles.

SOURCE: A commonly used exercise

49 A ball of emotions

7 MIN

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | SELF-AWARENESS | EMPATHY | COMMUNICATION | Yrs 5+

EFFECT

This game develops empathy and self-expression skills.

NECESSARY TOOLS AND PREPARATION

A ball

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor names an emotion, e.g. "joy", and throws the ball to one of the participants. The participant names something that brings him or her joy, and then names another emotion, e.g. "fear", and throws the ball to the next participant. The next participant tells the others what makes him or her feel fear, and the game continues in that rhythm – each participant shares one personal experience and chooses the next emotion.

When someone struggles with the answer, the instructor can support or guide him or her with answers.

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

The instructor opens a sentence, by saying, for instance: "When I am sad, I find support in…" and throws the ball to a participant. The participant names something that supports him or her when he or she is feeling sad, and then chooses a new emotion by saying, for instance: "When I am angry, I find support in…", and throws the ball to the next player.

Possible options which the instructor can ask the participants to complete:

- When I am cheerful, my body moves like…cream
- My anger is the colour of…
- When I am sad, my face looks like…

SOURCE: A commonly used exercise

50 Ice-cream stick

7 MIN

PROBLEM-SOLVING | EMPATHY | COMMUNICATION

Yrs 6 to 9

EFFECT

This method supports children's conflict-solving skills and helps develop empathy, problem-solving skills, and self-regulation.

NECESSARY TOOLS AND PREPARATION

A cup or a jar

Ice-cream sticks (or strips of paper – use the table on the next page) onto which conflict situations and/or ways to solve these have been written

Prepare age-specific scenarios and solutions.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor explains to the participants that if they should get into a quarrel, they can use ice-cream sticks onto which different situations and solutions have been written. The "situation sticks" describe typical quarrel situations or simply difficult situations which can be first discussed and then played through – for instance, "My friend does not share a toy".

The "solution sticks" offer possible ways for solving the situation – for instance, "Tell your friend how you feel". The instructor shows some sticks to the participants, so that they know how to use them. If desired, two separate jars can be established – situation sticks for role playing and discussions, and solution sticks for using when a difficult situation arises.

If there is a disagreement in the group, the instructor or a child can take a situation stick or a solution stick. Together, the participants discuss what they would do in that situation or try out a solution written on the stick.

ADAPTATION OPTION

If there is enough time, the sticks can be prepared together with the participants – they themselves can propose ideas about situations and possible solutions. This kind of engagement increases awareness, the sense of responsibility and the skill of peacefully finding solutions. The created set of sticks can later be given to the group.

SOURCE: Inspiration from littlelearningcorner.com, adapted and supplemented by Eleri Saarik.

SITUATIONS	SOLUTIONS
A SCHOOL TEAMWORK TASK WHERE ONE PERSON CONTRIBUTES LESS THAN OTHERS	I GIVE A HUG
I FEEL MY PARENTS DON'T UNDERSTAND ME	I CONSIDER WHETHER I WOULD WANT TO BE TREATED THAT WAY
A FRIEND LYING	I APOLOGIZE
EVERYONE SEES THAT SOMEONE IS TREATED BADLY, BUT NO ONE GOES TO HELP	I MAKE A PROMISE
SOMEONE SAYING OFFENSIVE THINGS	I EXPLAIN WHY I ACTED THAT WAY
A FRIEND NOT KEEPING HIS/HER PROMISE	I ASK WHAT I COULD HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY
A SIBLING TAKING THINGS WITHOUT PERMISSION	WE MAKE AN AGREEMENT
SOMEONE TELLING MY SECRET IN PUBLIC	I LISTEN TO THE PERSON WHO IS FEELING BAD

SITUATIONS

SOLUTIONS

53 Let it go

5 MIN

ANXIETY | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | SELF-AWARENESS | CALMING DOWN | Yrs 6 to 12

EFFECT

This exercise helps notice and localise anxiety in one's own body, and to relieve the anxiety. Develops self-regulation skills.

NECESSARY TOOLS

Calm music

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The activity starts with describing the feeling of anxiety – together, the participants discuss the possible different manifestations of anxiety in the body: whether it makes the heart beat faster or hands shake or makes you feel that you want to move around – or to hide. The instructor then asks the participants to move like they sense anxiety in their body. The participants may jump, shake their hands and legs, spin, make big facial expressions or rapid movements. Movements are free and playful – the aim is to let the anxiety grow crazy for a moment, so that it does not get stuck in the body. When the instructor gives the signal (e.g. by saying "Stop!"), everyone stops still. This is followed by a calming part where calm music may be used – together, the participants draw deep breaths, place their hands on their stomach and focus on slowly breathing in and out. If desired, the instructor may ask the participants to sit or lie down, close their eyes and imagine how anxiety disappears and their body calms down.

ADAPTATION OPTION

Instead of oral instructions (e.g. for foreign language speaking participants), an appropriate illustration of "Stop!" can be used, as well as a gesture to start moving.

SOURCE: Sirli Kivisaar, Estonian Academy of Game Therapy, a game therapist's qualification training

54 Interviews with museum items

6 MIN

COMMUNICATION EMPATHY

Yrs 6+

EFFECT

This exercise develops empathy, creativity, and communication skills.

NECESSARY TOOLS AND PREPARATION

Visual access to museum exhibits or other thematic items

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The participants are divided into pairs or groups of three. The instructor asks the participants to walk around in the room (or rooms) and choose an item that seems interesting. One of the participants impersonates that item. The instructor should make sure that there is someone in every pair who is willing to assume this creative impersonation role. (If necessary, a few groups of three may also be formed, with two interviewers.) Their partner conducts a mini-interview with them (as if for a newspaper or TV channel). One partner can ask questions and the other can answer them as they see fit, for instance:

- How old are you?
- What are you used for?
- What are your hobbies?
- What do you like to do?
- What is your favourite food?
- Where would you like to travel to?
- What makes you feel good?
- What cheers you up?

SOURCE: Author Elina Kivinukk

55 Change places, if... 8 MIN

COMMUNICATION | EMPATHY | SENSE OF COHESION | Yrs 6+

EFFECT

This game develops social and emotional skills, including listening skills. Through discovering similarities, it also creates a feeling of cohesion and supports the creation of friendships.

PREPARATION

Chairs, rugs, or sitting cushions

Place the chairs, rugs or sitting cushions so that the participants can form a circle when sitting down.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

All the participants stand or sit in a circle. The instructor starts by saying a sentence, for instance: “Change places, if you like to swim” or “Change places, if you have a pet at home”. Everyone who identifies with the statement stands up and finds a new place. The leading role then passes on to the next participant who says the next sentence. All the participants should get a chance to say something.

ADAPTATION OPTION

With children 9+ years of age, a rule can be added that the new place must not be right beside the old place.

SOURCE: Olga Luptova, Estonian Academy of Game Therapy training course ‘Teaching Social Skills’

56 Synchronised breathing

10 MIN

CALMING DOWN | CONCENTRATING | SENSE OF COHESION | EMPATHY | Yrs 6+

EFFECT

The exercise helps the participants to calm down, focus, and put themselves in someone else's shoes.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the beginning of the exercise, the instructor explains that the pair exercise will be done without talking. Everyone finds a partner and sits facing him or her (the exercise can also be done standing). The instructor asks the participants to silently greet their partner in their mind and then continues:

"Breathe calmly, but in an entirely normal way, without changing or emphasising anything. Do not emphasise the sound or movement of breathing, breathe completely naturally.

Now silently observe your partner's breathing. How can you tell the rhythm of their breathing?

Now try to find a common rhythm for your breathing, calmly and without talking or otherwise communicating, so that after a few moments you and your partner are breathing in and out at the same time.

Once you have found a common rhythm, calmly breathe in the same rhythm for a few more moments.

When you are ready, you can end the exercise, thank your partner and wait until the whole group is ready for a short discussion."

At the end of the exercise, the instructor can discuss with the participants:

- Was it easy or difficult to find a common breathing rhythm with your partner?
- How did you find your partner's rhythm?
- Was it easy or difficult to breathe in the same rhythm?
- How did you feel doing this exercise?

SOURCE: The exercise has been compiled by Arja Kalistaja-Tikka.

Heartfelt wishes

CALMING DOWN | CONCENTRATING | EMPATHY | SENSE OF COHESION | Yrs 6+

EFFECT

The exercise helps the participants to calm down and focus. It develops empathy and strengthens team spirit.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The exercise progresses in a manner similar to traditional loving-kindness meditation.

At the beginning of the exercise, the instructor leads the participants to a selected space and gently and calmly instructs:

"Find a comfortable position in which you can sit comfortably for a while, and close your eyes. Bring your attention to your own breathing and let your calm, deep breaths calm your mind.

Feel the movement of your breathing and feel how it strengthens your whole body.

As you breathe, silently wish yourself all the best in your mind. Wish yourself health and joy and that you could go to school in a good mood and safely.

Now think of one of your classmates and silently wish them all the best in your mind. Wish them health and joy and that they could go to school in a good mood and safely.

Now think of one of your classmates with whom you spend less time and silently wish them all the best in your mind. Wish them health and joy and that they could go to school in a good mood and safely.

Think of another classmate of yours who you think would benefit from these silent wishes. Wish them health and joy too and that they could go to school in a good mood and safely.

Now think about your entire class, all the students and the teacher. Silently wish your entire class all the best, so that you could all go to school together safely and in a good mood.

Finally, bring your thoughts back to yourself and your calm breathing.

Silently, in your mind, thank yourself for this exercise. When you are ready, open your eyes."

At the end of the exercise, the following questions can be discussed:

- How did the exercise make you feel?
- What did you notice?

SOURCE: The exercise has been adapted by Arja Kalistaja-Tikka on the basis of the Buddhist loving-kindness meditation.

58 Musical mediation

10–30 MIN

CALMING DOWN | CONCENTRATING | EMPATHY

Yrs 6+

EFFECT

The exercise helps the participants to calm down and focus, and strengthens their emotional skills and self-compassion.

NECESSARY TOOLS AND PREPARATION

Music

A flipchart (optional)

A marker pen or a felt-tip pen (optional)

In the adaptation, drawing or painting equipment and paper for each participant

Choose a suitable piece of music.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the beginning of the exercise, the instructor asks the participants to sit or lie down comfortably. The instructor then gently and calmly instructs:

"We are now going to listen to music for a few minutes. In addition to the music, your task is to observe your mood. How are you and what do you feel when you listen to this particular music? For instance, does it make you cheerful or sad, calm or restless?"

The participants listen to calm music for a few minutes, preferably with their eyes closed. After that, the instructor asks the participants what emotions the music evoked in them, and if desired, writes the emotions down on a flipchart.

"We are now going to listen to the same music again. Your task is to observe whether you notice an emotion evoked by the music somewhere in your body. Does the emotion the music evokes cause warmth, coolness, tension, relaxation, weight, lightness or perhaps a slight tingling? Where in your body do you feel it? It is also okay if you do not notice anything. That is also a feeling."

After a few minutes of listening, the participants can share what they noticed when they listened to the music.

ADAPTATION OPTION

The exercise can also be carried out in such a way that the participants can draw or paint with colours while listening to music. In this case, they listen to music a little longer and after listening, they can discuss what kind of feelings the different colours and shapes describe.

You can also discuss how music can:

- enhance emotions,
- awaken memories,
- help articulate, process and express emotions,
- evoke strong feelings of belonging (especially in young people).

SOURCE: The exercise has been compiled by Arja Kalistaja-Tikka.

A silence challenge

CALMING DOWN | CONCENTRATING | SELF-AWARENESS | Yrs 6+

EFFECT

The exercise supports calming down and concentrating and strengthens self-awareness.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the beginning of the exercise, the instructor leads the group to a quiet room and asks them to sit down. The instructor asks the participants what they think the phrase 'challenge yourself' or 'put yourself to test' means (for children up to 8 years of age, the instructor can explain that we shall together try to do something complicated and see how it works). The participants have a short discussion on the topic (this can also be done in pairs).

The instructor then asks the group: "How would it feel to take on the challenge of being silent together with your eyes closed for two minutes?" and starts the silence challenge. It can be agreed with the group beforehand that the instructor will comment on the remaining time by saying after the first minute: "Half of the time has passed." The instructor ends the exercise after two minutes.

At the end of the exercise, the instructor can discuss with the participants:

- Did two minutes of silence feel like a long or short time?
- Was it easy or hard to stay silent?
- Is being silent together somehow different than being silent alone?
- What could be the benefit of silence?

ADAPTATION OPTION

While carrying out this exercise, it is possible to set the focus on surrounding sounds. The instructor explains: "Focus on listening to the different sounds around you. You may even hear them in your own body. However, stay completely silent and record as many different sounds as possible in your mind."

At the end of the exercise, the instructor can help the participants to discuss how the exercise felt and what they heard.

SOURCE: The exercise has been compiled by Arja Kalistaja-Tikka.

Monitor your breathing

CALMING DOWN | CONCENTRATING

Yrs 6+

EFFECT

The exercise supports calming down and concentrating.

NECESSARY TOOLS

A singing bowl (optional)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor asks the participants to assume a good position, close their eyes and breathe in and out at their own pace that feels natural to them. With pre-school children, the instructor can first point out on his or her own body where the chest and the back muscles are.

The instructor then asks the participants to feel the sensations caused by breathing in their bodies, pausing between the sentences to give time for perception.

"Now, while breathing calmly, feel which sensations caused by your breathing you feel in your body.

You can feel in your nostrils that the air you breathe in is cooler than the air you exhale, which has been warmed by your body.

You can feel your chest expand as you breathe in and contract as you breathe out.

When you take a deep breath, you can feel your stomach rise and fall in rhythm with your breathing. You may also feel how the muscles on your back are involved in breathing.

Think about where in your body you feel most clearly that you are breathing.

Fortunately, our body knows how to breathe without us having to tell it to. We can just let it happen and calmly monitor it.

"Monitoring your breathing is a good way to calm down that is always with us."

Spend another moment monitoring your breathing. When you are ready (or when the sound of the singing bowl fades), open your eyes."

At the end of the exercise, the instructor may ask the participants questions, for instance:

- How did the exercise make you feel?
- What did you notice?

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

- In addition to or after focusing on the sensation of breathing, the participants can also think of breathing as an elf elevator (suitable for children of 4 to 12 years of age) or a slide (see section 2 below).

In the case of the elf elevator exercise, it is important to assume a comfortable position and keep the back straight.

"Take a deep, calm breath and imagine that air that you breathe is like an elevator moving inside you. Inhale to take the elevator to the top floor and exhale to take it down. You can imagine a little elf or some other character you like riding in the elevator. Watch how the character rides in the elevator."

At the end of the exercise, the instructor announces that the elf steps out of the elevator. The instructor asks the participants to open their eyes. The participants can share, whose elf ended up upstairs and whose downstairs.

Monitor your breathing

- The slide breathing exercise (suitable for all age groups) is best done standing, so that everyone has enough space around them to feel comfortable.

"Close your eyes and calmly breathe in and out. Imagine a wonderful, big slide. As you breathe in, climb up the steps of the slide. As you breathe out, go down the long slide in your mind."

After a few repetitions, the instructor can discuss with the participants:

- How did the exercise make you feel?
- What did you notice?

SOURCE: The exercise has been compiled by Arja Kalistaja-Tikka.

Colour breathing

CALMING DOWN | CONCENTRATING | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | SELF-AWARENESS | Yrs 6+

EFFECT

The exercise helps the participants to calm down, improves their concentration, and relieves stress.

NECESSARY TOOLS

A singing bowl (optional)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor starts the exercise by saying:

"Assume a good posture (preferably with your back straight but your shoulders relaxed, your hands relaxed in your lap) and monitor your breathing. Close your eyes so you can concentrate better. Where in your body do you feel yourself breathing? In your nostrils, chest, sides, stomach…?

Now bring your thoughts to your face. Let your face also relax. You can let your expression seemingly fall off your face. Your forehead is completely smooth, your cheeks relax, your chin relaxes. The small muscles around your eyes relax. Your lips relax and inside your mouth your tongue also rests completely relaxed.

Now aim your thoughts to your entire body and feel your body as a calm, breathing whole.

Think of a colour that you like that could do you good.

Once you have found your colour, imagine it surrounding you. That wonderful healing colour is everywhere around you.

Now, as you breathe peacefully at your own pace with your eyes closed, you notice how with each intake of breath this wonderful nurturing colour flows into you. You can feel how after each time you breathe in there is a little more of the nurturing colour inside you.

Feel what that colour brings. Maybe it brings joy, security, strength, respite, health, peace, enthusiasm, wisdom… You yourself know what you need the most today. Or maybe the colour you chose is just a colour that gently nurtures you.

Feel how with each inhalation, the nurturing colour flows into you, gradually filling your entire body, down to your fingers and toes.

Probe around with your mind to see if there is any part of your body where there is no colour yet.

Perhaps there is an area in your body that would particularly need a gentle caress with the colour? You can direct the colour you breathe in specifically to those areas.

Feel how your entire breathing body has now been filled with the beautiful colour that gently heals you. This colour can help you become stronger in exactly the way you need today.

Take another moment to feel the sensation of your body filling with colour. You can also decide to let the nurturing colour stay in your body and continue its healing work when you open your eyes."

The instructor ends the exercise by letting the participants listen to the singing bowl or asking the participants to wake up at their own pace. They can move their fingers and toes, open their eyes, and stretch a little.

Colour breathing

After the exercise, the instructor can discuss with the participants:

- Minkälaista väriä hengitit?
- Millainen olo sinulle tuli?
- Onko olo harjoituksen jälkeen jotenkin erilainen?

ADAPTATION OPTION

When doing the exercise, the participants can imagine instead that they inhale a good emotion and release difficult emotions when exhaling. This version is suitable for children and youngsters of all age groups. For pre-school and primary school children, age-appropriate emotions should be chosen.

The instructor guides the participants:

"Assume a good, upright position. Relax your shoulders and focus on breathing calmly in and out. Closing your eyes helps you focus.

With each intake of breath, focus on receiving calmness, peace, compassion, or joy.

Every time you breathe out, let go of any possible tension, stress, or worries."

The instructor can end the exercise by, for instance, playing a singing bowl and/or holding a discussion, using the questions above.

SOURCE: The exercise has been compiled by Arja Kalistaja-Tikka.

Body and mind

10 MIN

CALMING DOWN | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | EMPATHY | SELF-AWARENESS | Yrs 6+

EFFECT

The exercise supports calming down and strengthens emotional skills, self-awareness and self-compassion.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor asks the participants to assume a comfortable position (sitting or lying down) and close their eyes. The instructor then instructs:

"Calm down to monitor your own breathing.

Let your body breathe exactly as it wants, without changing anything. Just feel how breathing moves your body.

Now that you are breathing peacefully, ask yourself silently in your mind: How does my body feel today? Calm, heavy, light, restless, tired, refreshed...?

Memorise your answer and consider the mood you are in.

The answer to these two questions may be the same or completely different. The answer may be, for instance, that both the body and mind feel calm. It may also be that, for instance, the body feels tired, but the mind is fresh. How are your body and mind feeling right now?

Once you have found the answers to both questions, you can calmly open your eyes."

At the end of the exercise, the instructor can ask the participants who got two of the same answers and who got two different answers.

ADAPTATION OPTION

When doing the exercise, the participants can instead imagine that they breathe in a good feeling and release difficult feelings when breathing out. This option is suitable for children and youths of all age groups. For pre-school and primary school children, emotions appropriate for their age should be chosen.

The instructor guides the participants: "Assume a good straight position. Relax your shoulders and focus on calmly breathing in and out. Closing your eyes helps you to concentrate.

With every inhalation, focus and accept peace, sympathy, or joy.

With every exhalation, release possible tension/stress/worries."

The instructor can end the exercise by playing a singing bowl and/or discussing the questions provided above.

SOURCE: The exercise has been compiled by Arja Kalistaja-Tikka.

A chair of emotions

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | COMMUNICATION | EMPATHY | Yrs 6+

EFFECT

This game develops empathy and supports the courage and skill of self-expression.

NECESSARY TOOLS AND PREPARATION

Pictures depicting different emotions

Music

Chairs, rugs, or sitting cushions

Place the chairs, rugs or cushions in a circle on the floor of the room and place a picture depicting an emotion on each seat. There should be room left for the participants to move around the sitting places.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor explains the rules of the game to the participants. At first, the participants move around the sitting places, accompanied by music – just like in the classical game of chairs. When the music stops, each participant sits down on the nearest vacant sitting place. They then look at the picture on their sitting place and discuss it with the instructor. Examples that the instructor can give for the emotions being discussed:

- What makes you cheerful/sad?
- How do you express joy?
- What would you need when you are sad?
- How can you help someone who is afraid/sad/angry?
- What helps you to calm down when you are angry?
- What makes you afraid?
- Where is the fear in your body? What helps you to get the fear out of your body?
- When were you last surprised?
- What face did you make?

If a participant does not wish to discuss his or her emotion in front of the others, the instructor may use a hand puppet to whom the participant can whisper it. The hand puppet shares the participant's emotions with the others instead of the participant – if the participant agrees to it. If the participant does not wish to tell his or her emotion to the hand puppet either, he or she may draw a picture of it later and give it to the hand puppet or the instructor or decide for himself or herself what to do with the drawing.

ADAPTATION OPTION

With school-aged children, the emotional vocabulary can be expanded by adding more complex emotions, such as envy, shame, confusion, etc. Instead of pictures, written names of emotions can be used. In addition, descriptions of situations which may cause different emotions (e.g. "You lost your favourite thing" or "A friend invited you to his or her birthday") can be placed on the seats. The participants read the situation out loud and tell the others which emotion that made him or her feel.

SOURCE: Estonian Academy of Game Therapy, a game therapist's qualification training, adapted by Eleri Saarik.

66 Popcorn

5 MIN

CONCENTRATING | SENSE OF COHESION

Yrs 6+

EFFECT

This game teaches children to better notice each other and develops the management of impulses.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The participants stand in a circle. During the game, each participant jumps into the air while clapping hands. The jumps take place in a random sequence – there is no pre-defined sequence, everyone decides when it is their moment to jump. The rule is, however, that two or more participants must not jump at the same time.

Before starting the game, the participants may do a simple breathing exercise with the instructor to calm down and focus, e.g. by breathing in for 4 seconds, holding the breath or 2 seconds and breathing out for 6 seconds. The same exercise can also be repeated at the end of the game.

ADAPTATION OPTION

If jumping and clapping seems too noisy, is not suitable for the room being used, or there are those among the players who cannot jump, the game can be played by saying consecutive numbers or reading the alphabet, so that everyone gets to say a number or letter once.

SOURCE: Classroom games, Oh Happy Day teaching, 2025

67 A jar of cream

5 MIN

ANXIETY | CALMING DOWN | SELF-AWARENESS

Yrs 6+

EFFECT

This method supports emotional self-regulation. The exercise helps the participants to notice what calms them or cheers them up, and teaches body-awareness and the creation of a sense of security through movements and imagination. Relieves stress and anxiety.

NECESSARY TOOLS

Rugs or sitting cushions (optional)

Choose a comfortable place where the participants can sit.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The participants are invited to sit in a circle or in a comfortable position on the floor. The instructor introduces the exercise and says that they would make an imaginary "sense of peace" cream – a special cream which consists of emotions that help users calm down or cheer up.

Each participant imagines that they have little bit of invisible cream on their palm. They stir the cream slowly with the fingers of the other hand, just like real cream. One by one, the participants can tell the others what they are putting in their imaginary cream – these may be activities, people, or moments, which help them calm down or cheer up. If a participant does not wish to share his or her thoughts, he or she can mix his or her cream quietly. Everyone who wishes to do so, can say their ingredient out loud, for instance: hugging, listening to music, drawing, playing with a friend, etc. When the cream is ready, the participants can start applying it, moving across the entire body. Movements should be slow and intentional. The instructor instructs:

"Let's put some cream on the forehead – here we shall place peace and good thoughts.

Now on the cheeks – here we shall place smiles and joy.

Some cream goes on the shoulders – here we shall place hugs.

Now on hands and fingers – here we shall place kindness.

We can put some cream on the stomach and back – here we shall place love."

And finally on legs and toes – here we shall place courage."

If desired, calm music can be used as a background.

ADAPTATION OPTION

The instructions can be supported with emotion cards, which is also a good solution for foreign language groups and multilingual groups.

SOURCE: Monika Allert (2022). Peace of Mind and Concentration Exercises for Children. Supplemented by Eleri Saarik.

Anger to paper

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | SELF-AWARENESS

Yrs 6+

EFFECT

This game helps the participants to understand and express their negative feelings in a safe way. It also creates an opportunity to discuss how to cope with anger and how to let go of it.

NECESSARY TOOLS

A pencil and a piece of paper (for every participant)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor starts the game by explaining to the participants that all emotions – including anger – are natural, but it is important to learn to safely manage such emotions. The instructor then gives each participant a pencil and a piece of paper. The participants are given the task to write or draw something that has recently made them angry. It can be a situation, a word spoken, a deed done, or simply a feeling that has disturbed or irritated them. Every participant is free to express their anger on paper in the manner that suits them best – through words or pictures.

When everyone has poured their anger to paper, the instructor explains that now it is time to let go of the anger. The participants crumple their piece of paper up into a ball and hurl it at a wall. This movement provides a physical outlet for inner tension and gives a sense of relief. This activity helps the participants to understand that anger is a natural part of the human world of emotions, while emphasising the need to learn to express anger in a safe and appropriate manner.

The activity ends with a joint discussion:

- How did you feel before you threw the crumpled ball of paper?
- How do you feel now?
- Did writing your anger down and throwing it away help make you feel better?
- Which other safe ways are there to cope with anger?
  - Breathing exercises
  - Listening to calm music
  - Going for a walk
  - Doing sports

SOURCE: Sirli Kivisaar, Estonian Academy of Game Therapy, a game therapist's qualification training

69 Listen to the bells ring

5 MIN

CALMING DOWN | CONCENTRATING | Yrs 6+

EFFECT

This game helps the participants to calm down and develops listening skills and concentration ability.

NECESSARY TOOLS

A small bell or any other ringing item the sound of which slowly fades

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The participants could stand, sit or choose another comfortable position – as is possible in the room. The instructor then explains that he or she would ring a bell and the participants' task is to concentrate and listen to the sound of the bell until it fades completely. This helps focus attention in the current moment, calms the participants and develops listening skills. The instructor then rings the bell (or another ringing item). The participants quietly listen to how the ringing fades. When the sound has ended, the participants should calmly stay in their places. If any of the participants is unable to concentrate or disrupts the silence, the instructor can kindly and calmly guide them: "Let's try again – let's focus on listening to the sound." The exercise can be repeated several times.

The exercise is followed by a joint discussion where the instructor may, for instance, ask the following questions:

- How did you feel when you listened to the bell?
- Was listening easy or difficult?
- How do you feel now, after this listening game?

ADAPTATION OPTION

With pre-school children, it is important for the activity to be short, clear, and playful. The teacher or instructor may ring the bell only for a couple of seconds and then ask the players to listen for a moment, until the sound fades. In order to make the activity more engaging and playful, the instructor may also use visual support by, for instance, holding the bell visible in front of the players and asking them to look at the bell and carefully listen to how the sound slowly ends.

SOURCE: Programme Minutes of Silence

Listen to your heart

CALMING DOWN | CONCENTRATING | SELF-AWARENESS

Yrs 6+

EFFECT

This exercise teachers the participants to listen to their body, helps them to understand how physical movement and emotions influence the heartbeat, and how breathing helps calm strong emotions.

PREPARATION

Choose a place where the participants feel comfortable.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor explains that the participants are going to listen to the beats of their heart. All the participants sit comfortably, place their hands on their chest above their heart and quietly focus on how their heart beats and what its rhythm is like when it's calm. The participants then stand up and do 10 to 15 jumping jacks, which raises their pulse and accelerates their heartbeat. After the jumping jacks, they sit back down, again place their hands on their chest and try to discern whether their heartbeat has become faster. The instructor guides the participants to breathe calmly – slowly in and out – so that their heart can calm down. The breathing exercise is repeated 3 to 5 times. This simple but efficient activity helps the participants to more consciously sense their body, understand the links between movement, breathing and heartbeat, and practice self-regulation skills.

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

- When playing this game with children of 6 to 7 years of age, a cuddly toy or another small toy may be placed on everyone's belly. The children lie down or sit comfortably and calmly breathe in and out, watching how the cuddly toy gently moves up and down to their rhythm of breathing.

For instance, the instructor can explain the link between breathing and the toy like this: "Feel how your breathing rocks the cuddly toy (bear/kitten/puppy/…). This is good for both of you – for you and the toy or animal calmly rocking on your belly. Your breathing calms you both."

- Another option is to think of breathing as of sea waves. The instructor instructs as follows, leaving time between the sentences for children to feel the sensations: "Sit or stand comfortably and close your eyes. Breathe calmly at your own pace and notice where in your body you feel the movements of your breathing.

Now imagine that you are standing on a seashore. It is a beautiful summer day and the sand feels warm under your feet. The waves are rolling, but you are on dry land, admiring it.

When you look at the sea, you notice that every time you breathe in, the waves of the sea come towards the shore, and when you breathe out, the waves retreat towards the open sea. You are standing on warm, dry sand, but you enjoy sharing the rhythm of the waves.

With every breath in, a fresh wind brings waves towards the shore, and with every breath out, the waves retreat towards the open sea.

jatkuu....

Listen to your heart

While you breathe, you hear the sound of the waves and maybe the sounds of birds.

You might also smell the salty scent of seawater.

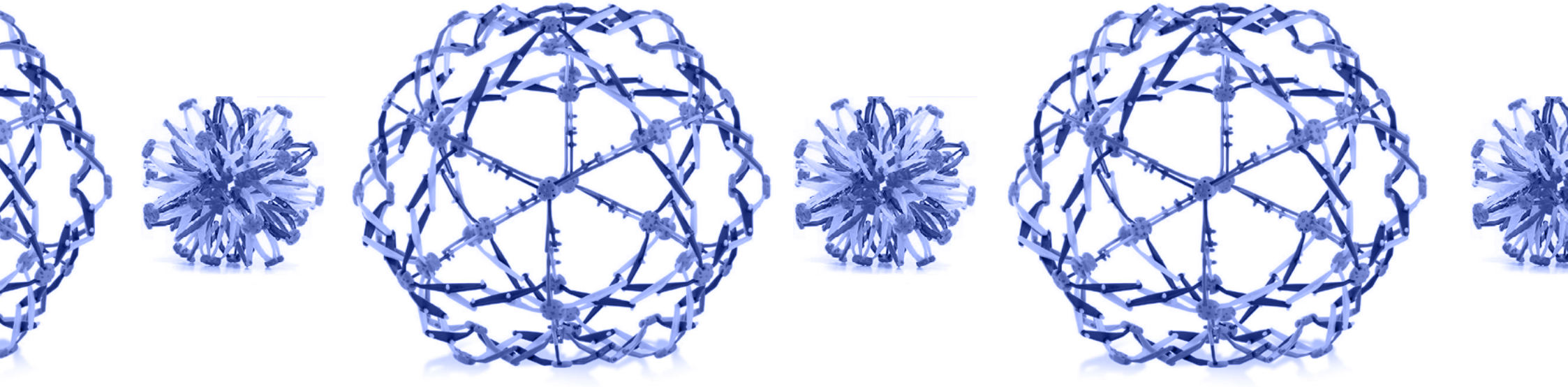
Enjoy all of this for a moment longer. Then bring your thoughts into your body and your breath into your movements. When you are ready, open your eyes."

After the exercise, the instructor can discuss with the participants:

- How did the exercise feel?
- What did you notice?

- Group breathing can also be instructed using a musical instrument (e.g. a triangle or a rain stick) or any other tool, such as an expandable breathing ball.

SOURCE: Alexandra Eidens. 5 Fun Mindfulness Activities for Kids. Adapted by Eleri Saarik and Arja Kalistaja-Tikka.



Mirror game

CONCENTRATING | COMMUNICATION | SENSE OF COHESION | SELF-AWARENESS | Yrs 6+

EFFECT

This game develops concentration ability, attention, and cooperation skills.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The participants form pairs and stand facing their partner. One of the partners is the mover and the other is the mirror. The mover slowly starts to make various movements, for instance, stretching their arms, tilting their head, flexing their knees, or slowly lifting their legs. The player who is in the role of the mirror tries to imitate all the movements exactly at the same time and in the same manner, as if he or she was the mirror image of the other player. It is important not to speak or use words during the entire activity – communication takes place only via glances, movements, and body language. After a few minutes, the players change their roles, so that each of them gets to experience both leading and imitating.

The exercise is followed by a joint discussion where the instructor may ask:

- What was it like to be the mover? What helped; what made it difficult?
- What was it like to be the mirror? What helped; what made it difficult?
- Was it easier to lead or to imitate?

ADAPTATION OPTION

It is also possible to mirror emotions: emotional self-expression, facial expressions.

SOURCE: Sirli Kivisaar, Estonian Academy of Game Therapy, a game therapist's qualification training

Peace-of-mind fairytale "A Balloon of Joy"

CALMING DOWN | CONCENTRATING | SELF-AWARENESS | Yrs 6+

EFFECT

This story journey develops concentration ability, imagination, and relaxation skills. The guided imagination exercise supports emotional balance and teaches calm breathing and body perception.

NECESSARY TOOLS AND PREPARATION

A peace-of-mind fairytale

Choose a comfortable place for listening.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The participants find a comfortable place where they can peacefully listen to the fairytale.

The instructor tells the peace-of-mind fairytale: "Close your eyes, be very still and imagine that you are standing in the middle of a field of green grass and many different flowers are growing in the grass. It is so peaceful and quiet. Pick a flower and smell it, breathing calmly in, and then out. Stroke the grass with your fingers – that tickles, yes? Move forward along the field, then stop and listen to the birds sing and the grasshoppers chirp. You notice a big red balloon with Joy written on it. Grab hold of the balloon and let it lift you up. Fly across the sky with the balloon and touch the soft tufty clouds with your fingertips. You are now above a sea where a soft warm breeze is blowing. Descend a little to touch the water with your toes. There is a beach nearby where you can land on the soft sand. Evening has arrived and the sun is about to set. Breathe deeply in and out and now, when you are ready, move your fingers and toes, stretch, and quietly open your eyes."

ADAPTATION OPTION

The instructor can make up a fairytale or adapt it according to the age group or a topic currently being discussed.

SOURCE: The author of the story is Eleri Saarik.

Stop, and I am still

CALMING DOWN | CONCENTRATING | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | Yrs 6+

EFFECT

This game helps the participants to calm down and develops concentration ability. The children control the movement of their body and learn how to playfully stop themselves and calm down in the case of strong emotions.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The participants move freely around in the room – they may dance, jump, walk on tiptoes, fly like birds, or glide like leaves on the wind. The movement is free and creative. The instructor watches the movement and at times says "Stop!" in a clear and calm voice. All the participants then have to instantly freeze on the spot – like stone statues. The instructor explains: "Close your eyes, breathe deeply in and out." The deep breathing may be repeated 2 to 3 times, in order to help the participants to calm down and consciously experience the moment. When everyone is calm and ready, the instructor guides the participants to resume moving around. The game continues in the same manner, alternating movement and stillness – lively expression and calm introspection.

ADAPTATION OPTION

- The game can be made funnier and more engaging for kindergarten and primary school children by adding the movements of animals. The instructor guides the children to move like different animals, by saying, for instance: *walk like a bear, sneak like a fox, hop like a hare, fly like a bird, slither like a snake*, etc.
- The participants may also be given a chance to run the game, so that they take turns giving instructions to the others.
- In the case of a foreign-language group or a group with several mother tongues, a STOP sign and a gesture to resume moving may accompany oral instructions, and pictures of animals, cars and other elements (e.g. a zigzag, etc.) may be shown as instructions for the players to move.

SOURCE: "Supporting the Development of Children 0 to 6 Years of Age", a training course by creative therapist Alissa Kiinvald

75 Be like a tortoise

5 MIN

CALMING DOWN | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | Yrs 6+

EFFECT

This exercise helps develop self-control by regulating emotions and managing and mitigating impulsive behaviour.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The participants stand and – if they so wish – close their eyes. The instructor asks them to imagine that they are tortoises who are about to go on a peaceful walk, and then guides them on this journey. The tortoises move slowly and silently, as if sensing every step and their surroundings. Suddenly, it starts to rain. The tortoises stop and squat down and safely retreat into their shell. In this position, they breathe slowly and deeply: calmly inhaling and calmly exhaling. The breathing is repeated for about ten seconds. This is a time during which the body rests. When the rain has passed and the sun comes out again, the tortoises slowly stretch their limbs out of their shell. They stretch their arms and legs, slowly straighten up and resume their peaceful walk. The exercise may be repeated several times. It is important to end it with slow and calm movement, so that the body and mind can calm down.

SOURCE: A commonly used method

Heart calendar

COMMUNICATION | EMPATHY | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Yrs 7+

EFFECT

The calendar encourages self-expression, makes the emotional vocabulary more diverse, and creates a supporting and unified atmosphere.

NECESSARY TOOLS

A heart calendar of one month prepared by the instructor

This can be done by using paper, a blackboard/whiteboard, or a digital board. The calendar may also be made of Post-it notes, or by using a regular calendar, or by cutting it out of paper, etc. The calendar month should have 31 squares or windows which reveal a question or a thought exercise when opened. It would be especially good, if the calendar could be used several times.

It is worth considering before the museum class how to guide the participants to respond – either orally in front of the entire group, or in pairs/small groups; in writing or by drawing.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

In each museum class, the next or a random square can be opened. One participant opens a square and reads the opened question or thought exercise. The participants respond and share their thoughts. It is important to hear out everyone who wants to respond.

ADAPTATION OPTION

Children of 5 to 7 years of age can be asked simpler questions, such as: *What cheers you up, What is your favourite game*, etc.

SOURCE: Inspiration from eveyou.com, adapted by Eleri Saarik



Heart calendar

Examples of questions to write in the calendar:

- What cheers you up?
- Name three things you are grateful for.
- What would you definitely like to do in life?
- Name three wishes.
- If you were a superhero, what would you change in the world?
- What do you like the most about yourself?
- What are you good at?
- What would you like to learn?
- Who are dearest to you?
- Where would you like to travel?
- What is your dream?
- What helps you calm down?
- What makes you laugh?
- What would you like to be?
- Describe your place of peace that helps you calm down.
- What good deed would you like to do?
- What would you say to yourself when you are sad?
- What are you proud of?
- When do you feel the happiest?
- What animal would you like to be? Why?
- What is your favourite song?
- What is your favourite word?
- If you could be invisible, what would you do?
- What do like to do on your days off?
- Whom can you talk to about everything?
- What would you say to your friend when he or she is sad?
- If you could be the teacher, what would you do differently?
- Name two things that you can do well.
- What kind of weather do you like? Why?
- If you could be a superhero, what powers would you have?
- How could others help you when you are sad?

A chain of kindness

EMPATHY | COMMUNICATION | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | Yrs 7+

EFFECT

This activity develops empathy and positive self-expression, and increases the sense of unity in the group/class. The children gain knowledge about kindness.

NECESSARY TOOLS

A pencil and a piece of paper (for each participant if the chain of kindness is done in writing or by drawing)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Before starting the exercise, the instructor may discuss kindness with the participants: what does it mean to be kind and which are kind and caring words. In the case of modest or anxious participants, the instructor may use a hand puppet in order to reduce tension and support self-expression. A child can whisper their kind message to the hand puppet who then conveys it to the whole group. This kind of mediated communication makes sharing safer and allows every participant to make their voice heard in a way suitable for them. The hand puppet helps create a playful and trusting environment.

The participants sit or stand in a circle or line. The instructor starts the chain of kindness by saying something kind and encouraging to the first participant, for instance: "I like it how you always smile." That participant then turns to their neighbour and says something kind, for instance: "You always have such cool ideas." The message of kindness thus passes from one participant to another, until each participant has heard something nice about themselves and said something kind to someone else. This simple activity helps strengthen positive relationships in the group, improves the mood of the participants, and teaches to notice and articulate good qualities in others.

ADAPTATION OPTION

The exercise can be adapted to older participants (12 to 16 years of age) by having everyone draw the name of a group mate from a jar and write messages of kindness on a piece of paper, which start, for instance, with: *What I admire about you is …, Thank you for …, It makes me laugh when you …*, etc. The pieces of paper are put in the jar and the instructor distributes them, e.g. at the end of the lesson. It is not the author who is important, but the message itself. Alternatively, the pieces of paper may be glued to the backs of the participants and the messages of kindness are written on their backs.

SOURCE: Estonian Academy of Game Therapy, a game therapist's qualification training. Adapted by Eleri Saarik.

Bunny-bunny

CONCENTRATING COMMUNICATION

Yrs 7+

EFFECT

This game helps improve attention and concentration ability and develops communication skills.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The players stand in a circle. One of them begins with a gesture that resembles doing quotation marks with two fingers, as well as a bunny's ears. At first, the player turns his or her fingers to himself or herself and moves them, saying, "Bunny-bunny!". The player then points the fingers towards another player and repeats the gesture while looking the other player in the eyes, saying, "Bunny-bunny!". The player to whom the Bunny-bunny was forwarded will in turn send it to another player.

If the players manage this well and the Bunny-bunnies are moving about smoothly, another level of difficulty can be added. The participants located at either side of the player currently saying "Bunny-bunny!" must act as if they are sowing carrots in the ground – by turning towards the player and pushing two open palms into the soil, fingers first, and saying, "Carrot-carrot-carrot-carrot!".

The exercise is followed by a discussion of what needed to be done to make sure the Bunny-bunny could successfully move about. The instructor guides the participants to the understanding that before passing on a message to another participant it is important to make sure that the other participant sees that someone wishes to pass on a message to him or her. All the players need to be attentive and ready to be addressed. Communication is therefore two-sided: one cannot talk without a listener and one cannot listen without a talker.

ADAPTATION OPTIONS

With less skilled groups, only the Bunny-bunny version is enough. With more skilled groups, the Carrot-carrot-carrot-carrot can be added. If so desired, the Bunny-bunny can be released from several participants at once – but only with a very skilled group for whom the previous versions are too easy.

SOURCE: Ruutu10 improvisation training and skaut.ee

Iceberg

EMPATHY | COMMUNICATION | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | SELF-AWARENESS | Yrs 7+

EFFECT

This exercise develops emotional skills.

NECESSARY TOOLS

Illustrative material (on the next page)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor may explain that sometimes anger is a "cover emotion": at first glance, we seem to be angry, but when we think about it a bit more, we may feel more emotions. Like an iceberg which may seem small above the water, but is actually very big under the water.

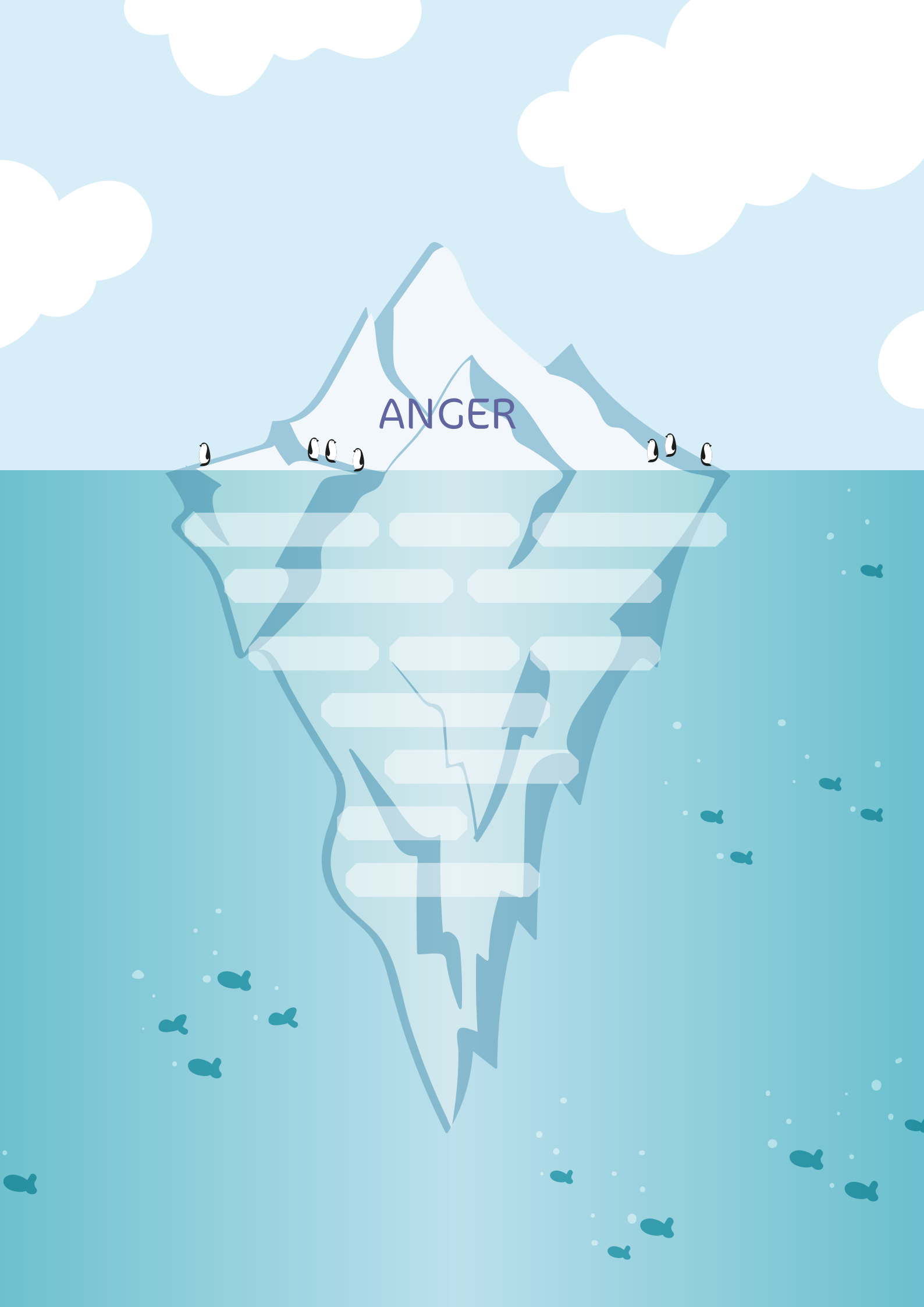
For instance, we are angry that the others did not include us in their game, but when we think about it, we realise that we also feel loneliness and exclusion. Every emotion is necessary and gives us information about what we need. When we feel loneliness, we need closeness or understanding.

Näide muuseumi eksponaadiga

The instructor explains that the museum exhibits are happy that they are stored at exactly the temperature they like, in cosy lighting and a suitably dry environment. "But let us play today that they are children/youngsters just as old as you. For instance – if this model house who thinks and feels like a 10-year-old child, has to sit still and wait here in the museum all day long, it might feel quite angry!"

Instead of specifying an emotion, the instructor can ask the participants how they would feel. When naming the emotion, the instructor points to the tip of the iceberg. "Or at least this is what it thinks at first glance…". The instructor draws the participants' attention to the bottom half of the iceberg, which symbolises hidden emotions. The instructor discusses with the participants: "What other emotions could this exhibit be feeling? What do you think makes it feel that way? What would this exhibit need?"

SOURCE: Created by Cätlin Tuuling and Elina Kivinukk on the basis of the iceberg theory


ANGER

I like this – how about you?

SELF-AWARENESS COMMUNICATION EMPATHY

Yrs 9 to 12

EFFECT

The exercise strengthens self-awareness and helps accept differences.

NECESSARY TOOLS AND PREPARATION

Three large sheets of paper

A writing instrument

Write 'Yes', 'Maybe', and 'No' on different sheets of paper. Place the papers on the floor on different sides of the room so that the 'Maybe' paper is in the middle of the other two sheets of paper.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the beginning of the exercise, the instructor presents statements based on opinions, such as "I like liver casserole", "I like skiing", "Dogs are great" or "Autumn is the best season". The statements do not describe knowledge or possession. After each statement, the participants move to the paper that best describes their opinion. The participants can also present statements.

At the end of the exercise, the participants discuss how easy it was to find your own opinion or how it felt when others chose differently.

SOURCE: A self-care programme for children with autism spectrum disorders. The exercise has been adapted by Marjukka Westerlund.

83 Seeds of hope

10 MIN

SELF-AWARENESS | EMPATHY | SENSE OF COHESION | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | Yrs 9 to 12

EFFECT

The exercise supports the development of hope, resilience and a positive attitude towards life, and strengthens the participants' belief in their own potential to influence. It encourages them to recognise small good things and dreams, and to see that small actions and thoughts matter in building a positive future.

NECESSARY TOOLS

Post-it notes and a pen (for each participant)

A large sheet of paper or wall space for a common 'planting plot'

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor begins the exercise by saying: "If the world were a garden, each of us would have our own little seed to plant. It could be a dream, a thought, an action, or a wish that will grow something good in the future. Today we will think about what seeds of hope we could have."

The instructor then asks the group to stand or sit in a selected space and begins a short breathing exercise by saying: "Close your eyes for a moment. Calmly breathe in and out a few times. Imagine that you have a small seed in your hand. This seed contains something good that you want to grow in the world."

The instructor then gives each participant a Post-it note and a pen and continues: "Write or draw a seed of hope. It can be a word, a sentence, a picture, a symbol, or a story. Imagine that you are planting these hopes into the future. Ideas for the seeds can include, for instance, your own courage to try something new, protecting nature, or bringing someone joy."

When the participants are ready, the instructor continues the exercise by saying: "Now imagine that the seed of hope you wrote or drew on your piece of paper is being sown into the world. You can gently press your hand on it and think: "This will grow into a good thing, even if I don't know yet how." If they wish, the participants can 'plant' their seeds, for instance by sticking them on a large piece of paper (the soil) or by drawing an imaginary planting plot together where the seeds will be sown, i.e. placed.

At the end, the instructor can guide the group to discuss the exercise using, for instance, the following questions:

- How does it feel to think that even small wishes and actions can have an impact?
- What can I do to make my seed start growing?

SOURCE: The exercise was compiled by Minna Lehmusjoki.

84 Pantomime

10–20 MIN

COMMUNICATION SELF-AWARENESS CONCENTRATING

Yrs 9 to 12

EFFECT

The exercise strengthens the participants' social and emotional skills.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the beginning of the exercise, the instructor divides the participants into groups of 5 to 10. Each participant takes turns pantomiming a short event or story that has recently happened to them and has stirred up emotions in them. The others try to guess what the event is. If a guess is correct, the performer confirms it by raising a thumbs up. The guessing continues until the entire event or story has been correctly guessed.

At the end, the instructor can ask the groups what was difficult in performing the pantomime and in guessing.

SOURCE: Kumpulainen et al (Ed.) (2010). *Lastenpsykiatria ja nuorisopsykiatria*, chapter 35, pp 536–543: *Dialektinen käyttäytymisterapia.* Duodecim. The exercise has been adapted by Marjukka Westerlund.

85 Return mail

15 MIN

SELF-AWARENESS EMPATHY

Yrs 9 to 12

EFFECT

The exercise strengthens empathy skills and self-awareness.

NECESSARY TOOLS

Post-it notes, as many as there are participants (for each participant)

A pencil (for each participant)

A4-sized sheets of paper (1 per each participant)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The exercise is especially suitable for groups where everyone knows each other.

The instructor places the A4 sheets of paper on the floor, each bearing the name of one group member (or each member now writes their name). Everyone writes one positive quality about each group member on a Post-it note, for example "You are polite". Once the notes are written, the participants stick them on the large sheets of paper. The instructor then gives each participant their sheet of paper for reading and keeping, first checking to make sure there are no insults.

At the end of the exercise, the group can briefly discuss how it felt to give and receive positive feedback.

ADAPTATION OPTION

If desired, more time can be spent on the exercise. For instance, the participants can read the notes they have received out loud. The writers of the notes can give reasons for their feedback.

SOURCE: Youth Academy, Database of Exercises, www.mahis.info. The exercise has been adapted by Marjukka Westerlund.

86 Human statues

10–20 MIN

COMMUNICATION | SENSE OF COHESION

Yrs 9 to 12

EFFECT

The exercise strengthens the participants' social skills.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor divides the participants into groups of about 6 people. In their groups, the participants form different 'statues' with their bodies according to the instructor's instructions. For instance, the instructor says: "Five feet and three hands may touch the ground" or "Three feet, two hands and one butt may touch the ground". When the statue is finished, the instructor checks and approves it before the statue is allowed to be dismantled.

At the end, the instructor helps the participants to discuss:

- What do you think of this exercise?
- Was the task easy?
- How did collaboration go?
- How could the task have been completed more quickly?

SOURCE: Youth Academy, Database of Exercises, www.mahis.info. The exercise has been adapted by Marjukka Westerlund.

87 Spotting hope

10 MIN

EMPATHY | SELF-AWARENESS | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | SENSE OF COHESION | COMMUNICATION | Yrs 9 to 14

EFFECT

The exercise strengthens the participants' ability to find perspectives of hope and growth in sombre or complicated stories. It develops the participants' empathy and the ability to recognise both their own and others' emotions, and helps them see things around them from the perspective of meaning and empowerment.

NECESSARY TOOLS

Visual access to museum exhibits

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor leads the participants into the museum and begins by asking: "What makes you feel hope or confidence when something is difficult?" Those who wish can briefly share their answers with the other participants.

The instructor then instructs the participants to choose one object or work of art from the museum's exhibition space that evokes some kind of emotional reaction in the participant, for instance sadness, disgust, longing, hope, wonder.

The instructor then divides the participants into small groups or pairs. The participants are tasked with building a short story about the object or artwork that includes some kind of an opportunity for hope or growth. The instructor may provide questions to help them build the story:

- What kind of difficulty, challenge, or sadness is associated with the object?
- How does that create a path to hope?
- What could be learned from the object/story?

A volunteer can share their own story of hope in a small group or to the whole group. At the end, the group can discuss the topic of the exercise:

- What can hope mean? Where can hope be found?
- Was it easy or difficult to find hope?
- Do you feel somewhat lighter after building the story?
- What did this exercise tell you about yourself and your thoughts/your way of looking at the world?

SOURCE: The exercise was compiled by Minna Lehmusjoki.

Silent footsteps

10 MIN

CALMING DOWN | CONCENTRATING

Yrs 9+

EFFECT

The exercise helps the participants to calm down and tune into the atmosphere of the museum environment. The exercise increases concentration, relieves stress, and strengthens awareness of one's own body sensations without being a mindfulness exercise.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor begins the exercise by guiding the participants as follows: "In the museum, we walk like silent researchers. Now we will experience what it feels like to move especially lightly and calmly. Each step is like a small silent footprint that remains in the air, and it does not disturb anything around it."

After this, the instructor first demonstrates how to take a step while the group waits in place. When the instructor gives the signal (e.g. says "Step!"), the participants take one slow and light step. The exercise progresses one step at a time and calmly, as if in a slow-motion film. When the slow and silent stepping works as instructed, the participants are allowed to move independently but calmly. If desired, the instructor ends the exercise with the following sentences: "In the museum, we are like light footsteps – thoughtful, calm and attentive. The more lightly we move, the more we can notice and experience."

ADAPTATION OPTION

- When working with a small group (less than 10 participants), the instructor may place a few pieces of paper on the floor with footprints or guiding signs depicted on them. The participants follow these paths without any performance pressure. During the exercise, the instructor asks the participants to stop for a moment and listen to their own bodies. At the end of the exercise, the instructor can ask questions such as:
  - How did the movement feel in your body?
  - Did the feeling change during quiet movement?
- This exercise can be made more playful for ages 4 to 10. The instructor explains that all the movements in this game are made in slow motion and demonstrates what that means by, for instance, running. The participants then do exercises or imaginary everyday activities together. For instance, the following activities may be used: walking or running in slow motion from one room to another, swimming in slow motion (arms moving slowly as if in water), climbing a hill in slow motion, picking big imaginary flowers and smelling them in slow motion, jumping in slow motion, laughing in slow motion (this is very good fun). The instructor may say, for instance: "Imagine that time has become very slow. Every step is like a very slow elephant's step. Even your breathing grows slow. Can you feel your body calming down?" Calm music or sounds of nature may be played in the background. At the end, the instructor asks the children to sit down in a circle or on a mat and take a few calm breaths. If desired, the instructor may ask how the participants feel after moving in slow motion or which activity they liked the most.

SOURCE: The exercise was compiled by Minna Lehmusjoki. The second adaptation option is a commonly used method.

89 A seed of goodness

5–10 MIN

CALMING DOWN | SELF-AWARENESS | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | Yrs 9+

EFFECT

The exercise helps the participants to calm down after an intense museum visit. It supports the ability to recognise one's own feelings and thoughts without rushing or judging. The exercise strengthens inner peace, awakens conscious presence and positively develops one's own thinking, attitudes or emotions.

NECESSARY TOOLS

A piece of paper (for each participant)

A pen (for each participant)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the beginning of the exercise, the instructor asks the participants to sit comfortably or lie down and close their eyes for a moment. Next, the instructor asks the participants to breathe in and out calmly, without forcing it. The instructor also asks the participants to think: "In this moment, all is well."

The instructor then guides the participants to sow a good seed. The instructor asks the participants to open their eyes, take a piece of paper and a pen and write down one good thing from the day. The thing can be small or big, such as a word, an action, or a feeling. The instructor then asks the participants to write down one thing that happened that day that the participants want to thank themselves for.

After that, the instructor asks them to reflect and write down one more wish for the next day, urging them to reflect, for instance: "What would you like to take home or to school with you from this museum experience?" The wish could be, for instance: "I hope that I am more sensitive to noticing the good." Or: "I hope that I have the courage to take time out when I need to."

At the end, the instructor asks the participants to fold the piece of paper and put it, for instance, between a notebook, in a pocket or under a pillow. The exercise can be concluded with the sentence: "Let the seed grow in your mind during the night. Tomorrow you may notice that the good you planted will begin to bear fruit."

SOURCE: The exercise was compiled by Minna Lehmusjoki.

My own space and protective bubble

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | SELF-AWARENESS | COMMUNICATION | Yrs 9+

EFFECT

The exercise strengthens the participants' cognition of their own space and autonomy in a safe environment, thereby developing socio-emotional skills, self-awareness, and the ability to draw safe boundaries. The exercise also teaches the participants to respect each other's space, thereby promoting wellbeing and learning.

NECESSARY TOOLS

A light, transparent fabric (e.g. gauze) or a piece of string (for each participant or for a pair to share)

A musical instrument and calm background music (optional)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the beginning of the exercise, the instructor briefly tells the participants: "We each have our own space – both physically and in our own minds. It is important to respect our own space, and it is equally important to respect the space of others. Today we will explore how it feels to perceive our boundaries and how to express them gently."

Each participant then is given a piece of gauze. They wrap it around themselves and spread it lightly around themselves as if it were a protective bubble. Alternatively, each participant forms a circle on the floor with a length of string to mark their space. After this, the participants sit or stand in their circle. The instructor can play quiet background music.

During the exercise, the participants can move carefully around in their bubble without entering the protective bubbles of others. If someone comes too close, the participant can say something gentle, such as, "Could you give me some space?" or "I need another moment of me-time."

At the end of the exercise, the instructor can encourage the participants to briefly reflect on some of the following questions together:

- Did it feel good when someone was close to you?
- What did it feel like when someone got too close?
- How did it feel to be in your own space?
- Did you feel safe?
- How did it feel to have your own space?
- How did it feel when someone respected your space?
- How did it feel to ask for more space?
- How could this experience be used, for instance, at school, at home, or with friends?

SOURCE: Edmondson (1999). Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Teams. 44: 250–282.

Ryan and Deci (2000). Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being. American Psychologist. 55 (1): 68–78.

The exercise has been adapted on the basis of the sources by Minna Lehmusjoki.

We are each other's mirrors

10 MIN

SENSE OF COHESION | EMPATHY | SELF-AWARENESS | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | COMMUNICATION | Yrs 9+

EFFECT

The exercise supports group spirit, empathy skills, and responsible teamwork. The exercise focuses on compassion, community, appreciation of others, and strengthening reciprocity.

NECESSARY TOOLS

A small mirror or other reflective object (for each participant)

A piece of paper (for each participant)

A pencil for each participant

One basket

A large poster-sized piece of paper for a common agreement (for the adaptation option)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor begins the exercise by introducing the participants to the topic: "In Africa, there is a way of thinking called *Ubuntu*. It means that none of us are alone. Our existence, goodness and joy come from being connected to other people. When we help others and treat them well, we also strengthen ourselves."

After the introduction, the instructor hands each participant a mirror or a reflective object and instructs: "Look at yourself for a moment in silence. Think that you are reflecting to others what you bring to the group. And others are reflecting their own energy back to you."

The instructor then distributes pieces of paper to the participants and instructs: "Write on a piece of paper a good trait that you have seen in someone else, or anyone in this group (but without using names). You can also write more generally about the group."

At the end, the instructor collects the pieces of paper into a common basket, from which they are read out in a random order. The traits read out loud become the common treasure of the entire group and each of its members.

If there is time, the instructor can guide the group to a final discussion using the following questions:

- How does it feel to think that we are reflections of each other?
- How can we reinforce each other's good sides in everyday life?
- How can a small act of kindness influence the atmosphere of the entire group?
- How does a smile or a gentle look towards someone influence the shared atmosphere?

ADAPTATION OPTION

The exercise can be continued or the group can be encouraged to continue the exercise later at school by writing a joint *Ubuntu* agreement on paper. In the agreement, the participants consider the following issues:

- How do we want to be with each other?
- What can we promise each other so that everyone can feel valued?

SOURCE: The exercise was compiled by Minna Lehmusjoki.

92 A little bit of good inside me

5–10 MIN

EMPATHY | SENSE OF COHESION | SELF-AWARENESS | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | Yrs 9+

EFFECT

The exercise helps the participants to notice and appreciate the good in themselves. It strengthens the participants' compassionate and accepting relationship with themselves. The exercise shows that small positive observations increase wellbeing and self-confidence.

NECESSARY TOOLS

A small piece of paper (for each participant)

A pencil (for each participant)

A basket, box or large piece of paper

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

This exercise that sums up the visit can be introduced as follows: "As we walk through the museum, we have the opportunity to notice not only the world around us, but also something good in ourselves. Today, we will stop for a moment to think about what good we found within ourselves during this museum experience."

After the introduction, the instructor hands each participant a piece of paper and a pen and instructs: "Think of something small in your mind that says something good about you today here at the museum. It could be, for instance, that you noticed something beautiful, that you were able to concentrate, that you were kind, that you dared to sense, or that you made someone else happy."

The instructor asks the participants to write or draw a small sign on a piece of paper that represents a good thing. When everyone is ready, the notes are collected into a common 'treasure chest of goodness' (e.g. basket, box, large piece of paper). In the exercise, the notes are not read aloud, but rather everyone's own goodness is appreciated in silence.

The instructor can end the exercise by thanking the participants: "Each of us has a little bit of good inside them that grows when it is noticed."

If there is time, the instructor can, to sum up, ask the participants what emotions the exercise evoked.

SOURCE: The exercise was compiled by Minna Lehmusjoki.

The outlines of my body

10 MIN

CALMING DOWN | SELF-AWARENESS | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | Yrs 9+

EFFECT

The exercise supports relaxation, self-regulation and understanding the boundaries of one's body.

NECESSARY TOOLS AND PREPARATION

A yoga mat (for each participant)

Lay the mats on the floor.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the beginning of the exercise, the participants lie on their backs on yoga mats and close their eyes. The instructor asks them to relax their arms and legs and to let their bodies sink freely against the yoga mat. The participants breathe calmly at a pace that suits them.

Next, the participants choose an imaginary tool with which they will draw or paint the boundaries of their body in their minds. The tool can be, for instance, a sharp or soft-tipped pencil, a piece of chalk, a marker pen or a paintbrush. In addition, the participants choose a colour or colours in their mind with which they will draw their boundaries in their imagination.

The instructor then asks the participants to start drawing or painting from the top of their head and to calmly and carefully circle their entire body with the imaginary tool, following the body's contours. The instructor reminds the participants to breathe calmly. If any point in the body's outline needs a finishing touch, the participant can redraw it.

The instructor concludes the exercise with a discussion, using, for instance, the following questions:

- How easy was it to choose a drawing tool and a colour?
- What did it feel like to draw or paint?
- Which part of the line was the hardest to draw? And which was the easiest?

SOURCE: Martin, Seppä, Lehtinen, Törö (2014). *Hengitys itsesäätelyn ja vuorovaikutuksen tukena*. Mediapinta Oy. The exercise has been adapted by Marjukka Westerlund.

Counting together

COMMUNICATION | SENSE OF COHESION | CONCENTRATING | EMPATHY | Yrs 9+

EFFECT

The exercise strengthens the participants' concentration skills and develops their observation and perception skills.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The participants stand in a circle and try to count the numbers from 1 to 20, with only one person saying a number at a time. If two participants say a number at the same time, the counting starts over. Each participant can say a number whenever they feel like it, there is no pre-arranged order.

In a concluding discussion, the instructor can use the following questions:

- What do you think of this exercise?
- Was the task easy?
- How did collaboration go?

SOURCE: Youth Academy, Database of Exercises, www.mahis.info. The exercise has been adapted by Marjukka Westerlund.

I am listening to you

COMMUNICATION EMPATHY CONCENTRATING

Yrs 9+

EFFECT

The exercise strengthens communication, listening and self-expression skills.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The participants choose a partner and stand opposite each other. The instructor gives the pairs a common topic, on which each partner gives a one-minute speech to the other. Topics for the speech can be, for instance: "What happened to me this morning?" or "What do I expect from this museum visit?" Before starting the speech, each participant is given a moment to think about what they want to say. One of the partners starts and the other focuses on actively listening. The speaker must not be interrupted, but they can be encouraged by nodding, for example. When the minute is up, the listener tells what they heard in their own words for up to half a minute. The first speaker must not interrupt or correct the story. After this, the instructor instructs them to switch roles. To conclude, the partners thank each other.

The instructor helps the participants to briefly discuss:

- How did it feel to tell a story?
- How did it feel to retell what you heard?
- Did the other person's summary of the story match the original story or did the message change?
- Were you good listeners?
- How could listening skills be improved?

SOURCE: Youth Academy, Database of Exercises, www.mahis.info. The exercise has been adapted by Marjukka Westerlund.

A butterfly hug

CALMING DOWN ANXIETY

Yrs 9+

EFFECT

The exercise helps the participants to relax and calm down. The butterfly hug was originally developed for EMDR therapy (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy), which supports the processing of traumatic memories. The butterfly hug uses bilateral stimulation, in which both sides of the body are stimulated alternately in a steady rhythm. This stimulation releases oxytocin in the body.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the beginning of the exercise, the instructor asks the participants to cross their thumbs, with their palms facing the chest so that the right hand forms the left 'butterfly wing' and the left the right. The participants place their palms against the chest so that the tips of the fingers touch the clavicle and alternately pat the chest with each palm in a steady rhythm. The instructor guides the participants to find a rhythm and intensity that suits them. The patting lasts for two minutes. At the same time, the participants breathe deeply and calmly.

After the exercise, the instructor may discuss with the participants how the butterfly hug felt.

SOURCE: Jarero and Artigas (2014). The Butterfly Hug Method for Bilateral Stimulation. EMDR Foundation. The exercise has been adapted by Marjukka Westerlund.

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Human knot

10 MIN

SELF-AWARENESS | COMMUNICATION | SENSE OF COHESION

Yrs 9+

EFFECT

The exercise can help strengthen the participants' social skills and sense of cohesion.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The exercise is especially suitable for groups of 8 to 10 participants.

At the beginning of the exercise, one participant leaves the room for a few moments. The others form a circle and hold each other's hands. They start forming a 'knot' by moving over or under each other's hands. The participants must not let go of each other's hands for the entire duration of the game. When the knot is complete, the participant who was outside the room is asked to come back in. He or she tries to untie the knot by giving those in the knot instructions on how to move – squat, step over a pair of hands, or crawl under a pair of hands.

At the end, the participants can briefly discuss what it felt like to be in a 'knot' or to be the one to resolve it and how the collaboration went.

SOURCE: Youth Academy, Database of Exercises, www.mahis.info. The exercise has been adapted by Marjukka Westerlund.

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A shared story of friendship

10–20 MIN

COMMUNICATION | SENSE OF COHESION | SELF-AWARENESS

Yrs 9+

EFFECT

The exercise strengthens social skills.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The length of the exercise can be adjusted according to the size of the group and the duration of their visit.

The instructor asks the participants to sit in a circle or any other desired formation. One participant starts a story on the topic of friendship, saying a few sentences about it. He or she can stop his or her part of the story at the end of a sentence or in the middle of a sentence. The next participant continues the story. Everyone always takes the story a little further so that it becomes as coherent as possible. The last storytellers make sure that the story has an ending. The very last storyteller's task is to tie the ending logically to the story.

The story becomes more fun and the task more difficult when the person speaking ends his or her part in a surprising way or inconsistently with the story.

At the end of the exercise, the participants can have a brief discussion led by the instructor:

- What do you think of this exercise?
- What did the finished story sound like?
- Was it easy to continue someone else's story?
- How did mutual collaboration go?

SOURCE: Youth Academy, Database of Exercises, www.mahis.info. The exercise has been adapted by Marjukka Westerlund.

The museum whispers

CONCENTRATING | CALMING DOWN | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | Yrs 9+

EFFECT

The exercise helps to calm down and strengthen the participants' concentration ability and presence skills in a museum environment. The exercise develops sensitivity to perceive and interpret the silent messages of art and cultural objects in an empathic way.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor begins the exercise by saying: "The museum is full of silent messages – objects and works of art that tell stories without words. Now we will pause for a moment to listen to these messages."

After this, the participants move freely but quietly around in the museum. The instructor continues the instructions by saying: "Find one object or work of art that seems to call to you. Let your eyes wander freely and stop at what feels important."

When all the participants have found their object, they stop near it. The instructor asks each participant to quietly contemplate in their minds:

- What would this object or work of art want to tell me if it could talk?
- What emotion does it evoke in me? (E.g. joy, sadness, curiosity, peace, longing)
- What do I hope this object or work of art will carry into the future?

At the end of the exercise, the participants can share their feelings with a partner (and, if desired, also with the entire group) in a whisper: "The silent message I found was...". During the exercise, the instructor should emphasise that sharing is voluntary and that one's own silent contemplation is just as valuable as sharing with others.

At the end of the exercise, the instructor can guide the participants into a joint discussion by asking questions such as:

- How did you like the exercise?
- What emotions did it evoke?

ADAPTATION OPTION

If the group consists of older participants (13 to 15 years old), the instructions can emphasise free observation and personal interpretation ("What can you find?"). In addition, the instructor can support the group with additional questions, such as: "What questions does this raise in you?".

SOURCE: The exercise was compiled by Minna Lehmusjoki.

Streams of disappointment and hope

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | EMPATHY | COMMUNICATION | SELF-AWARENESS | Yrs 9+

EFFECT

The exercise helps the participants to recognise the feeling of disappointment as a physical and emotional experience and strengthens the ability to safely face and release the feeling of disappointment. The exercise increases the understanding that disappointments are a normal part of life and can also be sources of growth.

NECESSARY TOOLS AND PREPARATION

- Pictures or symbols, some of which depict disappointment
- Slips of paper with situations that cause disappointment (one for each group)
- A strip of paper (for each participant)
- Two scarves or lengths of string, one for the 'Stream of Disappointment', the other for the 'Stream of Hope'
- A blackboard/whiteboard or another surface for fixing the pictures to

Select and print out pictures, icons, symbols and other such, which could be associated with the feeling of disappointment, e.g. a dark cloud, a broken tree, the colour grey, a puddle, a withered flower, etc. You can also include ones with a cheerful tone. Fix the pictures to the board/surface.

Create slips of paper with situations that cause disappointment (you can use situations from the exercise "Bridge builders").

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the beginning of the exercise, the instructor says, "Disappointments happen to all of us. They can be felt in the stomach, throat, or chest. Today, we will stop to notice what disappointments feel like and explore how to understand them and then let them go."

The instructor points to the pictures and asks the participants to point out the ones that they associate with the feeling of disappointment. Answering is voluntary and everyone's answer may be different and is right. During the exercise, the instructor should emphasise that all situations are important, both small and big. The participants can give their strip of paper to the instructor or put it in the 'Stream of Disappointment'.

After this, the instructor starts a new brief discussion:

"Now, think what you can learn from disappointment in that situation. Can disappointment sometimes lead to something good?"

For writing down thoughts, the instructor gives each participant a strip of paper on which they can write or draw something hopeful, such as "You can always try again" or "Not everything works out right away, and that's okay." The participants place the strips of hope in the 'Stream of Hope', from which they flow as a collective force to the group. The instructor joins the streams to demonstrate that the feeling of disappointment becomes lighter in the flow.

The instructor can now guide all the participants to discuss:

- How did it feel to talk about disappointment?
- Did you feel any different when you could let your disappointment go into the 'stream'?
- What did it feel like to feel hope instead of disappointment?
- What important thing did you understand about yourself during the exercise?

Finally, each participant can randomly pick one strip of hope as a reminder and support for themselves.

SOURCE: The exercise was compiled by Minna Lehmusjoki.

101 A group anchor

5 MIN

SENSE OF COHESION | COMMUNICATION | CONCENTRATING | Yrs 9+

EFFECT

The exercise helps the participants to increase presence and handle emotions safely. It strengthens the group's sense of belonging and security. The exercise increases both individual and collective concentration ability and helps the group move from a restless state towards openness and empathy. The exercise can be used, for instance, before the group moves to an exhibition room with a lot of stimuli or when the group is restless, tense or tired.

PREPARATION

Choose an affirmation or anchor phrase.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor asks the participants to sit or stand in a comfortable position and says: "Let's take a moment so that we can tune in together to experience the stories and vibes of the museum."

The instructor then says a pre-selected anchor phrase out loud. The instructor asks the group to calmly repeat the phrase and then two or three more times, each participant breathing at their own pace. As the participants repeat the phrase, they lightly press their feet against the ground or lightly touch their palms together. This increases body awareness and presence.

Next, the instructor says: "Let's have a quiet moment until we are ready for this journey together."

The instructor ends the exercise and directs the group to move to the exhibition, for instance by saying: "Now we can move forward together."

Examples of affirmations:

- I am here. I am ready to experience.
- I am present. I am ready to experience something new.
- I am receiving this moment in peace.
- I listen, look and experience with an open mind.
- This is my time to explore and wonder.
- I am safe in this moment and in this group.

At the end of the exercise, the instructor may ask the participants what emotions the exercise evoked.

SOURCE: The exercise was compiled by Minna Lehmusjoki.

102 Bridge builders

15 MIN

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | SENSE OF COHESION | EMPATHY | COMMUNICATION | Yrs 10+

EFFECT

The aim of the exercise is to practice interaction situations where conflicts or differences of opinion arise. The exercise develops the ability to express oneself calmly and listen respectfully to others. It helps the participants to understand that conflict is a natural part of human life. The exercise helps to build bridges between different experiences and views.

NECESSARY TOOLS

Scissors

A length of woollen or cotton yarn (for each participant, approx. 40 to 50 cm)

Slips of paper with conflict situations

Create slips of paper with conflict situations

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor asks the participants to think of one thing that makes talking to someone nice, for instance eye contact, a friendly voice, listening. Each participant can take turns sharing their answer with the others.

The instructor then distributes a length of yarn to each participant and forms pairs or groups of 3 to 4 people. The instructor gives each group one conflict situation to resolve. In the group, the participants consider how they could resolve the conflict constructively.

Conflict situations can, for instance, be the following:

- A school teamwork task where one person contributes less than others,
- A friend lying,
- Someone saying offensive things,
- A sibling taking things without permission,
- I feel my parents do not understand me,
- Everyone sees that someone is treated badly, but no one goes to help,
- A friend not keeping his/her promise,
- Someone telling a secret in public.

During the exercise, the instructor supports the groups in their discussion and guides the participants in finding workable solutions.

The groups go through the situation according to the following formula:

- What am I feeling in this situation? Name your emotion. Everyone's length of yarn symbolises their emotion.
- How could we build a bridge, i.e. find a solution? When proposing solutions to the situation, tie your lengths of yarn together with a knot.

At the end, each group ties their own thread to the others' threads, forming a joint 'Bridge Chain'.

After the exercise, the instructor can guide the participants to discuss:

- How did it feel to think about things from another person's perspective?
- Was it easier to express your own feelings or to listen to the feelings of others?

SOURCE: The exercise was compiled by Minna Lehmusjoki.

103 My voice

10 MIN

COMMUNICATION | SELF-AWARENESS | EMOTIONAL | EMPATHY | Yrs 10+

EFFECT

The exercise strengthens the participants' self-awareness, develops self-expression skills and appreciation of their own voice, as well as the skill to respect individuality and be empathic towards oneself. The exercise provides space to reflect on what using one's own voice means and encourages everyone to create a personal visual expression.

NECESSARY TOOLS

White paper (for each participant)

Coloured pencils, felt-tip pens or watercolours

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the beginning of the exercise, the instructor guides the participants into a short discussion by asking: "Is expressing your own voice easy or difficult? What makes it easier? What can sometimes make it difficult?" The participants can be guided to regard their voice as the courage of expressing their opinion or protecting their values.

The instructor then instructs the participants: "Take a moment to think about what expressing your own voice means to you? And when do you feel that your voice is being heard?"

After this, the instructor hands out paper and pencils or watercolours to each participant and instructs the participants: "Draw or colour something that reflects your voice or self-expression. It could be, for instance, a symbol, an animal, a colour, a landscape, a shape, or anything that describes your voice or how it feels."

At the end, the participants can present their picture, if they wish to do so, and tell the others what it represents in their voice. If there is time, the instructor can guide the discussion by asking questions such as:

- How did it feel to think about your own voice and expression in this visual way?
- Was it easy to find a way to describe yourself?
- What is important when we also want to listen to the voice of another?

SOURCE: The exercise was compiled by Minna Lehmusjoki.

Emotion detective

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | SELF-AWARENESS | COMMUNICATION | Yrs 12+

EFFECT

The exercise strengthens the recognition of emotions, as well as interaction skills, while also sometimes showing that relying on your own presumptions or emotions in understanding the emotions of others is not always correct.

NECESSARY TOOLS AND PREPARATION

A pencil (for each participant)

A form of emotions (for each participant)

Create a small form of emotions onto which each participant can briefly write (1) a situation, (2) the name of a fellow group member, and (3) the emotion which they thought that member felt.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the beginning of the museum tour, each participant is given a blank piece of paper, or a 'detective form', and a pencil. The instructor begins the exercise by briefly discussing with the group what kinds of emotions people usually experience and how these emotions may appear outwardly to others.

During the museum visit, the participants make observations about each other's emotional reactions based on their expressions and behaviour and write these down on paper.

At the end of the visit, the observations are briefly reviewed under the guidance of the instructor and the participants discuss whether the interpretations were correct.

SOURCE: Kumpulainen *et al* (Ed.) (2010). *Lastenpsykiatria ja nuorisopsykiatria*, chapter 35, pp 536–543: *Dialektinen käyttäytymisterapia.* Duodecim. The exercise has been adapted by Marjukka Westerlund.

105 On a desert island

10–20 MIN

COMMUNICATION | SENSE OF COHESION | PROBLEM-SOLVING

Yrs 12+

EFFECT

The exercise strengthens the participants' problem-solving abilities and social skills.

NECESSARY TOOLS

A pencil (for each participant)

10 pieces of paper, e.g. Post-it notes (for each group)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor divides the participants into groups of 3 to 5. Together, the participants write on pieces of paper ten items that they think they would need on a desert island. Each item is written on its own piece of paper. The participants then negotiate and justify in their groups which five items they would remove, because it is not possible to take everything to the island. They should also consider which items they would need the most and which the least.

At the end of the exercise, the instructor asks the groups how the negotiation process went, whether the cooperation went well, and how it felt to give up something important to them.

ADAPTATION OPTION

The length of the exercise can be adjusted by changing the number of items.

SOURCE: Kumpulainen *et al* (Ed.) (2010). *Lastenpsykiatria ja nuorisopsykiatria*, chapter 35, pp 536–543: *Dialektinen käyttäytymisterapia*, Duodecim. The exercise has been adapted by Marjukka Westerlund.

Humming

ANXIETY | CALMING DOWN | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | Yrs 12+

EFFECT

The exercise helps the participants to relax and calm down and develops their skill of listening to themselves and others.

NECESSARY TOOLS

A sitting cushion (for each participant)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The instructor asks the participants to sit on the floor or on cushions quite close to each other so that they are looking in different directions. The participants sit with their backs straight, their hands in their laps and their shoulders relaxed.

The instructor then asks them to close their eyes and breathe calmly through their noses. The instructor sits among the participants and begins to hum at a pitch comfortable for him or her and at the pace of his or her own breathing. The participants inhale deeply through their noses, join in with the instructor's humming and continue it at a breathing pace suitable for them. To give clearer meaning to the experience, the instructor can say: "Try to feel the vibration caused by the humming in your chest, throat and head. Imagine that the sound waves of the humming are washing away all the stress or tension from your body." The humming is continued for 2 to 3 minutes.

After the exercise, the instructor leads a discussion about whether it was difficult to dare to join in with the humming of others with one's own voice and how the body feels after the humming.

SOURCE: Psychotherapist Kati Hanioja. The humming exercise is based on the Bhramari Pranayama breathing exercise. The exercise has been adapted by Marjukka Westerlund.

107 Breathing through the soles of your feet

5–10 MIN

PRESENCE | ANXIETY | CALMING DOWN

Yrs 13+

EFFECT

The exercise supports relaxation and develops self-regulation and social skills.

NECESSARY TOOLS

A yoga mat (for each participant)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Before the exercise, the instructor places an even number of yoga mats on the floor, each pair across from each other.

At the beginning of the exercise, the instructor divides the participants into pairs and asks them to lie on their backs on the yoga mat so that the soles of their feet touch the soles of the feet of their partner. The instructor then instructs the participants to breathe calmly through their noses and to take notice of the floor underneath them for a moment. The participants can silently observe which parts of their body touch the floor and which do not.

Next, the instructor asks the participants to take a long, deep breath out and imagine that the breath moves through the soles of their feet to the soles of their partner's feet. When the participants breathe in, they imagine the breath returning through the soles of their feet back to their nostrils. They continue the breathing exercise for about ten breaths.

At the end, the partners thank each other and the instructor guides the participants to discuss how they feel after the exercise.

SOURCE: Author psychotherapist Kati Hanioja, adapted by Marjukka Westerlund.

108 Polite or impolite

10–20 MIN

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE | COMMUNICATION | SELF-AWARENESS | Yrs 13+

EFFECT

The exercise develops social skills and strengthens self-esteem.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The length of the exercise can be adjusted according to the duration of the group's visit.

The instructor divides the participants into small groups of three and emphasises that in the exercise, the participants will take turns speaking. Two members of the small group are given impolite roles for the duration of the task: one talks only about himself or herself and ignores the other's comments, and the other constantly criticises what the first one says. The third member of the group acts as an observer, who listens to the discussion without commenting. The topic can be, for instance, an object seen or something experienced on the museum tour. The discussion lasts a few minutes. There are three discussion sessions in total, meaning everyone tries out all the roles.

At the end of the exercise, each participant can, if they wish, share how their own and the others' roles felt in the situation. What was it like to behave impolitely? Everyone can discuss together what kind of interaction would encourage others to share their opinions and move a discussion forward constructively.

SOURCE: Author psychotherapist Pirkka Haanpää, adapted by Marjukka Westerlund.

Near and far

SELF-AWARENESS | COMMUNICATION | EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Yrs 13+

EFFECT

The exercise strengthens self-esteem and social skills, as well as the ability to recognise one's own boundaries.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The exercise is carried out in stages.

In the first stage of the exercise, the instructor divides the participants into pairs. The instructor asks one partner to stand still and observe his or her own breathing, thoughts and feelings. The instructor then asks the other partner to approach the standing partner from the front, walking slowly and silently.

In the second stage of the exercise, the approach can be repeated several times, changing the walking speed. The instructor instructs the partner standing still to make corrective movements, indicating closer or further away, depending on what feels comfortable to them.

In the third stage of the exercise, the instructor asks the partner standing still to extend their arms straight forward at shoulder height towards the approaching partner. The instructor explains that the standing partner can allow their arms to open towards the approaching partner and reduce their territory or protect their own space by pushing their palms towards the approaching partner as a STOP sign. In this case, the approaching partner will stop.

In the fourth stage of the exercise, the instructor instructs the partner standing still to be more effective in stopping the approaching partner by saying "Stop!" if they seem to be crossing his or her boundary. The instructor encourages them to experiment with different volume levels.

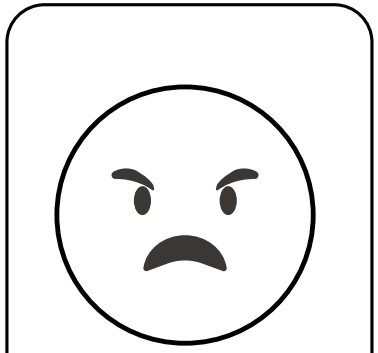
After that the partners can switch roles and repeat the exercise.

At the end of the exercise, the instructor can discuss with the participants what thoughts and feelings the different approaches evoked, using, for instance, the following questions:

- What changes occurred in breathing?
- How easy was it to stop the approaching person?

SOURCE: Martin, Seppä, Lehtinen, Törö (2014). *Hengitys itsesäätelyn ja vuorovaikutuksen tukena*. Mediapinta Oy. The exercise has been adapted by Marjukka Westerlund.

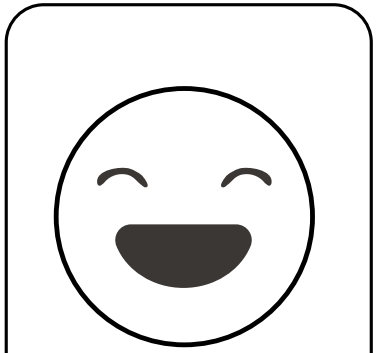
Emotion cards



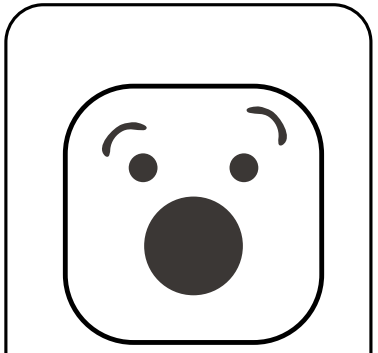
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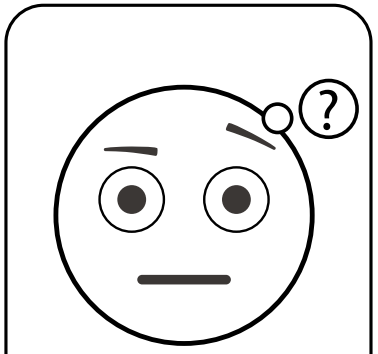
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CHEERFUL



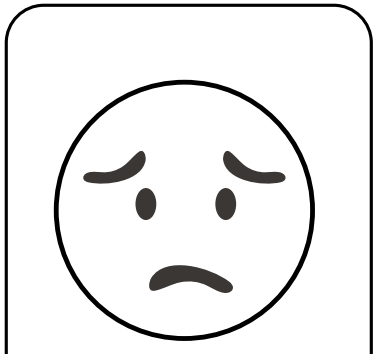
SURPRISED



CONFUSED



OFFENDED

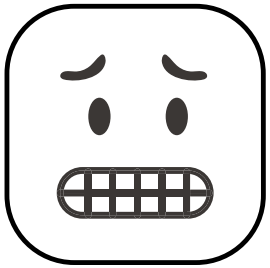


DISAPPOINTED

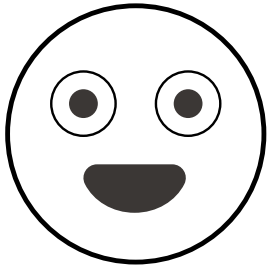


TIRED

Emotion cards



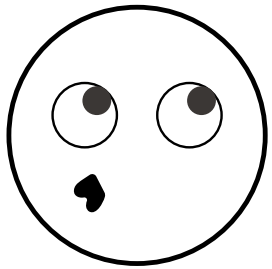
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CALM



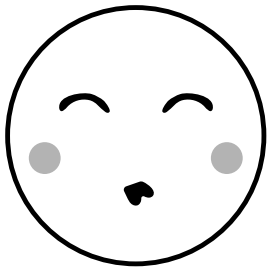
EXCITED



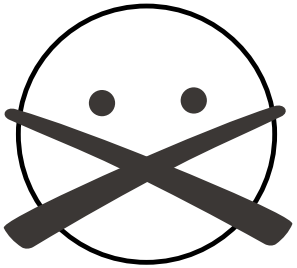
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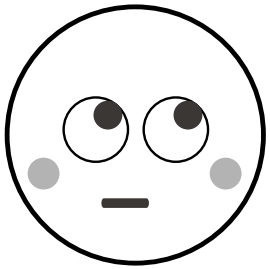
HAPPY



SHY

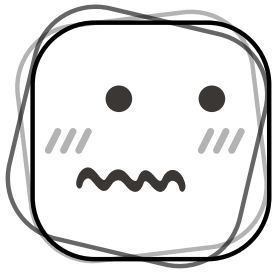


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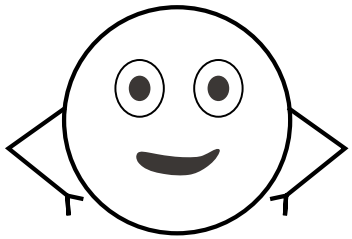


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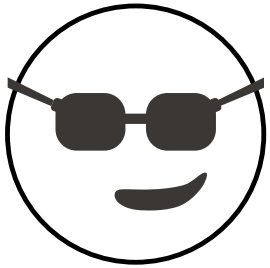
Emotion cards



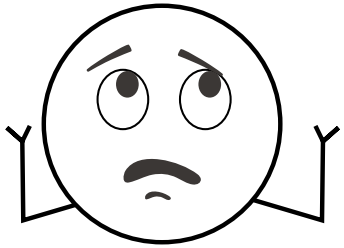
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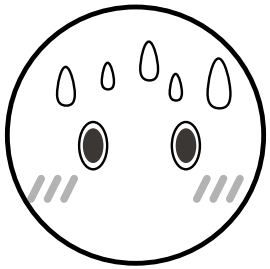
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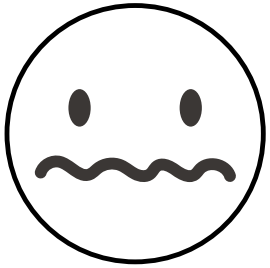
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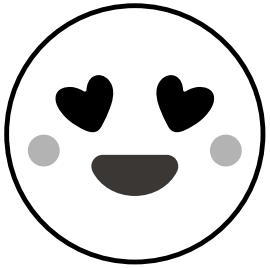
LONELY



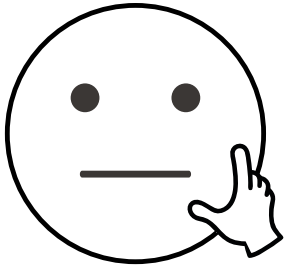
GUILTY



INCOMPETENT



GRATEFUL



THOUGHTFUL



ASHAMED

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