



CREW

Creativity, Resilience and
Empowerment for Work



TRAINING COURSE ON COMMUNICATION AND SELF- IMPROVEMENT



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INTRODUCTION

WHAT ARE SOFT SKILLS?



Soft or social skills (also called non-technical skills) refer to a combination of personal attributes, emotional skills, communication skills, and interpersonal skills that equip a person to fit into a social structure. They also include the set of personal values which determines a person's ability to work well with others.

Effective communication, leadership, problem-solving abilities, critical thinking, initiative, and motivation skills are amongst the most important soft skills.

Unlike hard skills, soft skills are harder to evaluate, define, and measure.

Even if we take out the workplace from the discussion, everybody spends a big part of their day interacting with people within your home, neighbourhood, or community. Most interactions with people will require some soft skills whether you're building friendships, looking for a potential partner, coaching your children's little league team or negotiating at the market. These are important¹ in both our professional and personal lives.

HOW TO DEVELOP SOFT SKILLS?



Everybody can enhance their personal set of soft skills by practising and gaining experience on the spot. As a matter of fact, gaining soft skills is a continuous and life-long learning process that cannot take place only theoretically, but it also requires training and exercise, so to say.

The development of soft skills has two parts. One part involves developing attitudes and attributes, and the other part involves fine-tuning communication skills to express attitudes, ideas, and thoughts. Perfect integration of ideas and attitudes with appropriate communication skills in oral, written, and non-verbal areas is necessary for successful work. Attitudes and skills are integral to soft skills. Each one influences and complements the other.²

Evidently, there is a big difference between learning about soft skills and acquiring them, and it is of great importance to first prioritize which skill to develop, ask for feedback, and then self-reflect. It is, of course, also possible to take online courses which offer useful and valuable training and resources.

Additionally, exercising communicational skills and critical-thinking competencies will significantly improve the decision-making processes in the everyday life.³

NEETS AND SOFT SKILLS

NEET generation is a phenomenon that has appeared during the last decades. The acronym means Not in Education Employment or Training.

A great number of NEETs are high school dropouts. Although the jobs they may choose may not demand formal qualifications they do not have the necessary social skills to be successful in their field. Young people not in employment, education or training are at higher risk of being socially and politically alienated. They have a lower level of interest and engagement in politics and lower levels of trust⁴.

For all these reasons, supporting NEETs in developing soft skills through training and valuable materials can help them get positive ideas about what to do in their personal and professional lives.



MODULE 1

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The aim of communication is to get our message across to others clearly and unambiguously. For this, we must understand what our message is, who the audience is and how it will be perceived. We must weigh in the circumstances surrounding our communications, such as the situational and cultural context.

Effective communication and soft skills not only improve relationships but also improve efficiency. Communicating effectively is characterised by such things as active listening, conflict management, positive body language, and asking the right questions⁵.

The ability to communicate effectively in speech and in writing is one of the most valuable personal and professional skills. Sending messages and information so they are understood as intended and produce the desired effect demands certain technical competencies and interpersonal capabilities.

Communicating effectively relies on credibility. Mistakes in grammar and spelling, incompleteness, and errors in logic can have a negative impact on the audience's perception of the sender's credibility. As a result, the communicator's ability to persuade or otherwise influence the recipient is diminished.





PRESENTATION SKILLS

A presentation is a form of communication. We are trying to communicate to the audience our knowledge, beliefs, estimations regarding a specific topic and/or present the results of data analysis or the results of research etc.

A presentation can be adjusted to several speaking situations, such as talking to a small group or to a large audience or addressing a meeting⁶.

The objectives and layout of a presentation may vary. For instance, we could make an oral presentation, or a multimedia one, where we can make use of visual or audio media, a PowerPoint presentation and training sessions or lectures⁷.

Therefore, presentation skills are those skills required to deliver efficiently and effectively a presentation to several types of audiences. These skills concern different aspects such as the format of the slides (if there are any), non-verbal signals, like body language, or the structure of the presentation⁸.

Watch this introductory video regarding presentation skills.



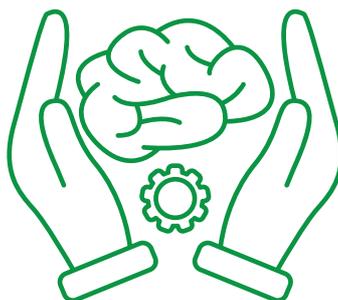
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJUblvGfW6w&ab_channel=SusanWeinschenk



Before you start practically developing the material of a presentation, you must contemplate some basic facts, which will help you organize the content effectively and find the most appropriate way to express yourself .⁹

- 1** **The objective:** the purpose of the presentation. For instance, you might want to teach, stimulate, or inform.
- 2** **The audience:** you must the size of the audience, the average age, gender, familiarity with the subject, etc.
- 3** **The place:** be informed about the venue, so that you can be aware of the available equipment, the lighting (in case you need to use visual aids) or the likelihood of outside distractions.
- 4** **The time:** choose the right time considering people's needs (food, breaks, interactive activities to stay focused, etc.).
- 5** **The duration of the presentation and the likelihood of having to deliver the final material in advance.**

Most people feel a little bit fearful or anxious when it comes to a presentation. Preparation and practice are two factors, which help reduce stress levels significantly.¹⁰





More tips to assist you to improve your presentation skills are listed below.¹¹

Practice **speaking** in front of others: make a presentation to small and familiar groups, such as your family or some friends.

Use less texts and more **visual aids**: Use images, charts, videos and create an attractive design.

Be **open to questions** during the presentation: That means that your audience is really paying attention and wants to participate.

Work on your **pauses**: Try to use pauses to emphasize some points and organize your ideas better.

Maintain **eye contact**: It shows you are engaging with your audience, and it is more likely they will pay attention to you too.

Use confident **body language**: Use confident body signals, such as powerful stance.

Attend **other presentations**: to notice the presenter's skills and observe the audience.

Arrive early: to give yourself the time needed to adjust to the environment.

Use **positive visualization**: Think about a positive scenario and avoid thinking of a failed presentation.

Keep in mind that most audiences are **sympathetic**: People want you to succeed, and they are not there to judge you.

Be **impassioned**: Show to your audience that you are excited to make the presentation.

Admit you don't have all the answers: If you are not aware of the answer, admit it. This will increase your credibility with the audience.

Drink water: It is likely to feel your mouth dry. Have a bottle of water close to you and stay hydrated.

Accept your fears: Worrying about whether the audience is going to notice your stress will increase your stress levels.

Follow the "**10-20-30**"*: a slideshow contain no more than 10 slides, last no more than 20 minutes and use font size no less than 30-size font.

*a tip from Guy Kawasaki of Apple





Being able to present your ideas in an appropriate manner is of vital importance in both professional and personal life. Public speaking skills are significant in many professional fields, such as sales and marketing, training, or lecturing.¹²



Moreover, managing effectively presentations gives you confidence and is helpful in self-development and in interpersonal relationships. Keep always in mind that the ability to present is a skill and as such, it can be acquired from anyone.

So, keep on practising!





CLARITY

Clarity is one of the essential components of effective communication and it refers to the structure of our thoughts in a logical sequence and choice of the right words.

When listeners struggle to understand you, they eventually ignore you (<https://voiceandspeech.com/clear-communication-skills/>).



To maintain clarity in communication, you'll need to:

- ensure what you are saying makes sense;
- ensure the other person understands what you're saying;
- ensure YOU understand what the other person is saying;
- use short, direct sentences;
- avoid jargon (e.g. "baked in", "corner case", etc.);
- avoid absolute language (e.g. "never", "always", etc.);
- avoid filler words (e.g. "uh", "um", etc.);
- be specific;
- be detail-oriented.

(<https://pumble.com/learn/communication/skills-of-effective-communicators/>).





CLARITY - ACTIVITY

Name of the activity

Back-to-back drawing

Aim of the activity

To improve verbal communication and listening skills when participants interpret instructions differently when they're supposedly talking about the same thing.

Skills that the activity develops

Clarity

How many people the activity is suitable for

6-16

Time requirement for the activity

Depends on the number of the items/concepts that will be explained by the speaker and how detailed he is.

How many instructors are needed?

1 who will be the host of the game

Other requirements (space, equipment...)

Open floor space

Description of the activity

Split your employees into teams of two and have them sit back-to-back. In this game, one person will be "the listener", while the other one will be "the speaker".

The team's speaker has a picture of any kind, while the listener has a piece of paper and a pencil. The speaker then describes to the other person what the picture looks like without using words that give away exactly what it is. The listener tries to draw that picture with the clues given.





PERSUASIVENESS

Persuasiveness is a soft skill that concerns the process of convincing a person to carry out an action or agree with a particular idea. In fact, persuasiveness is strictly connected with the concept of influence.¹³



This is the ability of a person to affect, to shape, to change the opinions, the behaviours, or the actions of other people without necessarily having a formal authority over them. In other words, influencing is a soft or a personal power, independent of one's positional power. Persuasion skills allow an individual to get a good job done and to achieve desired outcomes without coercion. This skill can be learnt, and it's a key part of the ability to influence others to achieve your goals and objectives. Persuasion involves several other common soft skills. To indicate a direction, you must design a path, align, and support your followers, creating a group commitment through interactions with others.¹⁴





PERSUASIVENESS - ACTIVITY

Name of the activity

Aim of the activity

Skills that the activity develops

How many people the activity is suitable for

Time requirement for the activity

How many instructors are needed?

Other requirements (space, equipment...)

Description of the activity



Why not?

Turning a “no” into a “yes”

Persuasiveness, interpersonal skills and communication

2 or more

1-2 minutes

-

Open floor space

Why not? Technique is useful for turning a “no” into a “yes”. You should propose something to a person, and he/she must not be convinced. Then you ask this simple question to force him/her to think and express concrete and logical objections. These objections are easier to manage instead of a straight answer; in this way, you can find arguments to counter them and, little by little, weaken them. The final step is the agreement between the parts.



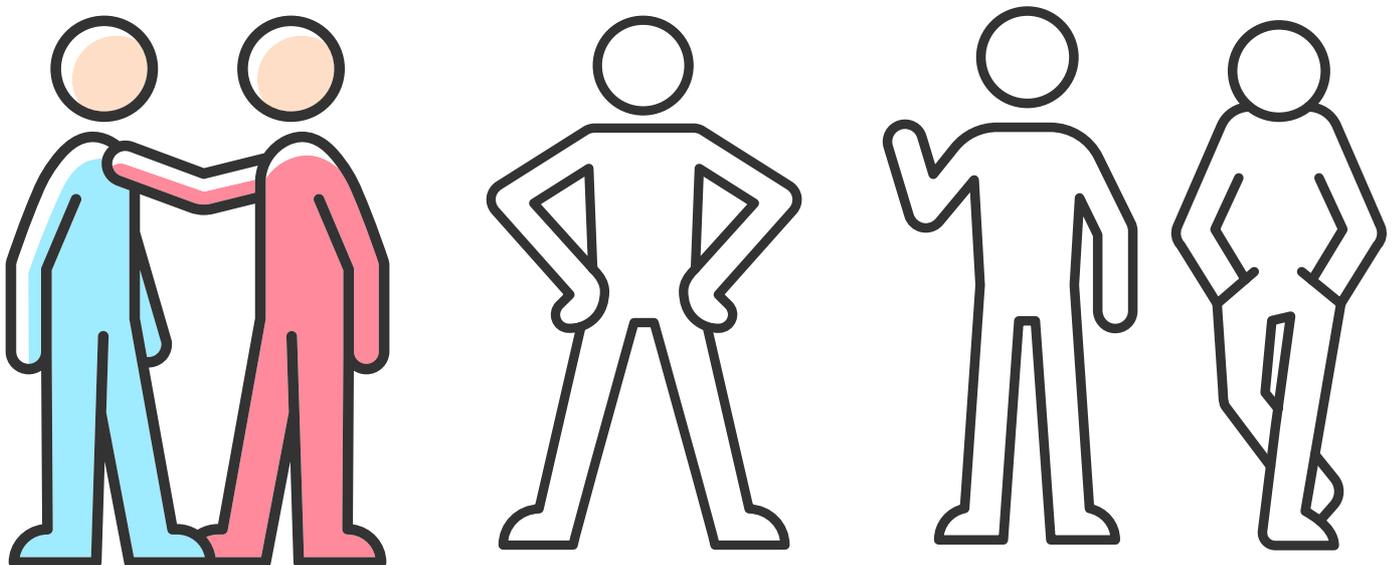


NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION AND READING BODY LANGUAGE

For 29 % of people, new information comes through vision (learning by seeing, or so-called visualics), 34% learn by listening (auditorics), and 37% by movement (kinesthetics).¹⁷ Whether knowingly of it or not, when a person interacts with others, he or she is continuously giving and receiving wordless signals. All the nonverbal behaviors—the gestures a person makes, his/her posture, tone of voice, how much eye contact he/she makes—send strong messages. They can put people at ease, build trust, and draw others towards an individual, or they can offend, confuse, and undermine what one is trying to convey. These messages don't stop when a person stops speaking either. Even when he or she remains silent, communication still goes nonverbally.



By improving one's understanding and use of nonverbal communication, one can express what he/she really means, connect better with others, and build stronger, more rewarding relationships. Developing abilities to manage stress and recognize emotions is a vital key to nonverbal communication consistency.





How to read body language

‘Wordless communication is the exchange of material, action information, gestures, facial expressions, mimicry, expression of feelings, etc. However, you need to be able to encrypt this information correctly in order for mistakes to be avoided’, a famous Lithuanian educology Leonas Jovaisa said.

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Here are some tips how to become better at reading the nonverbal signals sent by others :

- 1** **Pay attention to inconsistencies.** Nonverbal communication should reinforce what it is being said. Is the person saying one thing, but their body language conveying something else?
- 2** **Look at nonverbal communication signals as a group.** Consider all the nonverbal signals you are receiving. Taken together, are their nonverbal cues consistent—or inconsistent—with what their words are saying?
- 3** **Supportive signs.** Pay attention to include timing and pace, tone, inflection, and sounds that convey understanding.
- 4** **Trust your instincts.** Don’t dismiss your gut feelings. If you get the sense that someone isn’t being honest, you may be picking up on a mismatch between verbal and nonverbal cues.





NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION AND READING BODY LANGUAGE- ACTIVITY

**Name of the
activity**

Birthday line-up

Aim of the activity

Practices non-verbal communication skills and get people to communicate through body-language

**Skills that the
activity develops**

Non-verbal skills and body language reading

**How many people the
activity is suitable for**

Ideally 8-12 participants.

**Time requirement for
the activity**

10-15 minutes

**How many instructors
are needed?**

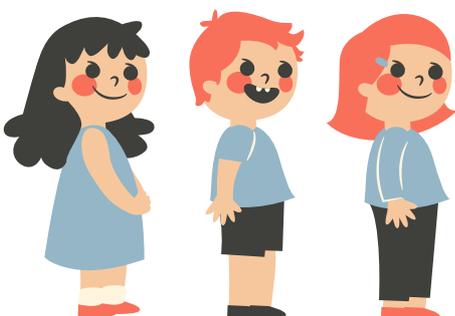
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**Other requirements
(space, equipment...)**

Open floor space

**Description of the
activity**

The group stands in a straight-line side by side. The goal is for the participants to organize themselves in order by their birthday (month and day) without any talking. If they do start to talk, they need to start from the beginning. If you want to add an extra challenge to this activity, try blindfolding a couple of participants.





ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is the process by which an individual secures information from another individual or group.¹⁹

The “active” element involves fully concentrating on what is being said, paying attention to the conversation, not interrupting, and taking the time to understand what the speaker is discussing. It involves listening with all senses and giving full attention to the speaker, it is important that the ‘active listener’ is also ‘seen’ to be listening.²⁰



Active listening means not engaging in bad listening habits such as the following:

- Being stuck in your own head;
- Not showing respect for the speaker;
- Only registering superficial meaning ;
- Interrupting;
- Not making eye contact;
- Rushing the speaker;
- Getting easily distracted;
- "Topping" the story (saying "that reminds me of the time...");
- Forgetting what was said in the past;
- Asking about unimportant details;
- Focusing too much on details and missing the bigger picture;
- Ignoring what you don't understand;
- Daydreaming;
- Only pretending to pay attention;
- In this way, active listening is the opposite of passive hearing.





Tips for Practicing Active Listening

- Make eye contact while the other person speaks. Avoid folding your arms as this signals that you are not listening.
- Don't interrupt while the other person is speaking.
- Paraphrase what has been said, for example "In other words, what you are saying is...".
- Shut down your internal dialogue while listening. Avoid daydreaming.
- Watch nonverbal behavior to pick up on hidden meaning, in addition to listening to what is said.
- Be open, neutral, and withhold judgment while listening.
- Show interest by asking questions to clarify what is said. Ask open-ended questions to encourage the speaker. Avoid closed yes-or-no questions.
- Be patient while you listen. We can listen much faster than others can speak.
- Learn to recognize active listening. Learn from the others' mistakes.

Examples of Active Listening responses

- Building trust and establishing rapport: "Tell me what I can do to help."
- Demonstrating concern: "I'm eager to help; I know you're going through some tough challenges."
- Paraphrasing: "So, you're saying that ..."
- Brief verbal affirmation: "I understand that you'd like more frequent feedback about your performance."
- Asking open-ended questions: "It's clear that the current situation is intolerable for you. What changes would you like to see?"



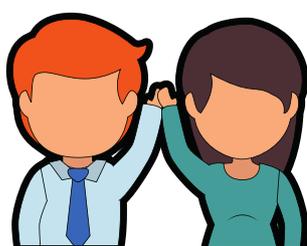


ACTIVE LISTENING- ACTIVITY

Name of the activity	Importance of active listening
Aim of the activity	For all participants to experience not being listened to and to develop understanding of which people in society are likely not to be listened to.
Skills that the activity develops	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Focus on what the speaker is saying2. Empathy and respect3. To gain confirmation and understand4. Development and incorporating active listening
How many people the activity is suitable for	Minimum a pair
Time requirement for the activity	30 minutes
How many instructors are needed?	-
Other requirements (space, equipment...)	None
Description of the activity	Ask people to work in pairs. One person is A, the other is B. Either bring all the As together and explain their role to them (where Bs can't hear), or give them written instructions. Do the same with all the Bs.

Partner A: Your role in this exercise is to talk to your partner and tell him/her all about what you did this weekend, or about your favorite music and why you like it.

Partner B: In this exercise your partner is going to start telling you about something. Your role is NOT to listen and make it clear that you are not listening and not interested, by using any non-verbal (non-spoken) ways you can think of (such as yawning, fidgeting, looking away, etc.).





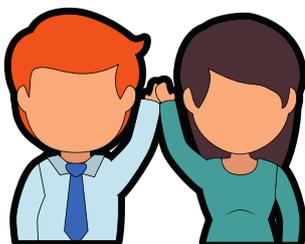
ACTIVE LISTENING- ACTIVITY

Description of the activity

Assessment

Bring the whole group back together. Facilitate a discussion, using the following questions to draw out learning points:

- What did it feel like to be partner B, not listening to A?
- How did the As react? (Some may have gotten angry; others were perhaps intimidated and stopped talking.)
- How did Bs feel about that reaction?
- What did it feel like to be A and not to be listened to?
- Are there some (groups of) people in our community who are often not listened to? Who? Why? What impact does that have on them? And on the rest of the community?
- What can we do to make sure that we listen to (and learn from) each other? Suggested answers:
 - Allow time for everyone to have their say; create several types of opportunity for people to contribute (through small-team work, work in pairs, drawings, role-plays, etc., not just whole-team or round-table discussions).
 - Say what you want to say but realize your responsibility to respect people's right to express themselves.
 - Hear what the other person is saying: concentrate, focus on the speaker, do not fidget, do not think only about what you're going to say in response.
 - Acknowledge what the speaker says, showing that you accept his or her viewpoint, or at least respect his /her right to hold it, if you disagree with it.
 - Use body language to show that you are listening.
 - Be aware that our ability to hear what is being said may be affected by our perceptions of the person who is talking, or the way they talk.





EMOTION CONTROL AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

Interpersonal skills are the behaviours and tactics a person uses to interact with others effectively, both individually and in groups. They include a wide range of skills, but particularly communication skills such as listening and effective speaking. They also include the ability to control and manage your emotions. You will find out how your emotional intelligence can affect you. How does it influence your actions? How can you develop and improve it?



According to Goleman, Emotional Intelligence consists of four components²¹:

1. **Self-management** – You're able to control impulsive feelings and behaviours, manage your emotions in healthy ways, take initiative, follow through on commitments, and adapt to changing circumstances.
2. **Self-awareness** – You recognize your own emotions, your strengths and weaknesses, and have self-confidence.
3. **Social awareness** – You have empathy. You can understand the emotions, needs, and concerns of other people.
4. **Relationship management** – You know how to develop good relationships, communicate clearly, inspire and influence others, work well in a team, and manage conflict.





As you develop your emotional intelligence and your capacity to better recognize and understand your own emotions, you'll find it easier to also manage your stress. While stress affects everyone differently, there are common signs and symptoms you can look out for, e.g. anxiety and worry, feeling of being overwhelmed,⁹ mood swings, depression, difficulty in concentrating or relaxing, change in eating and sleeping habits, aches and pains, low self-esteem, etc.²² Stress affects everyone. However, when it is affecting your life, health and wellbeing, it is important to block it as soon as possible. While stress affects everyone differently, there are common signs and symptoms you can look out for²³.

- Feelings of constant worry or anxiety
- Feelings of being overwhelmed
- Difficulty concentrating
- Mood swings or changes in mood
- Irritability or having a short temper
- Difficulty relaxing
- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Eating more or less than usual
- Changes in sleeping habits
- Using alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs to relax
- Aches and pains, particularly muscle tension
- Diarrhea and constipation
- Feelings of nausea or dizziness
- Loss of sex drive



Emotion Control and Stress Management

This is a common problem for many people: how we are supposed to manage our negative emotions that keep coming up when we are stressed or hurt? Should we stuff our anger and frustration away and pretend that it does not exist, so we can minimize the emotional fallout from these emotions? Or should we risk making things worse by saying or doing the wrong thing?

What Is Stress? Stress is the feeling of being overwhelmed or unable to cope with mental or emotional pressure.

Effective stress management helps you break the burdens that stress has on your life, so you can be happier, healthier, and more productive. The ultimate goal is a balanced life, with time to work, relationships, relaxation, and fun—and the resilience to hold up under pressure and meet challenges head on. But stress management is not one-size-fits-all. That is why it is important to experiment and find out what works best for you. The following stress management tips can help you do that.



Tips ²⁴

Tip 1: Identify the sources of stress in your life

Tip 2: Practice the 4 A's of stress management:

- Avoid unnecessary stress: It's not healthy to avoid a stressful situation that needs to be addressed, but you may be surprised by the number of stressors in your life that you can eliminate.
- Alter the situation: If you can't avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it.
- Adapt to the stressor: If you can't change the stressor, change yourself.
- Accept the things you can't change: Some sources of stress are unavoidable.

Tip 3: Get moving / Do physical activity

Tip 4: Connect to others

Tip 5: Make time for fun and relaxation

Tip 6: Manage your time better

Tip 7: Maintain balance with a healthy lifestyle

Tip 8: Learn to relieve stress in the moment





EMOTION CONTROL AND STRESS MANAGEMENT- ACTIVITY

Name of the activity

Stress for Success

Aim of the activity

For all participants to experience a stressful situation and how to manage it for a success result.

Skills that the activity develops

- Stress Management
- Be focused on a concrete activity
- Team-working

How many people the activity is suitable for

Minimum a group of 4

Time requirement for the activity

5-10 minutes

How many instructors are needed?

1

Other requirements (space, equipment...)

Stress balls

Description of the activity

IMPLEMENTATION: Ask participants to stand and form circles of about five to eight people. Give each group one stress ball to begin. Have the first person throw a ball to someone else and remember who they threw it to since they will be asked to remember and continue the same pattern. If there is only one group, you can be part of the group, but if there is more than one, make sure you are not in the mix, since you will need to move around between groups. Each person throws the ball to someone who has not yet had the ball. The last person sends it back to the original person who “keeps the ball rolling” a little faster than next time. (Do not have them throw to the same person twice until all members have gotten it first.)





EMOTION CONTROL AND STRESS MANAGEMENT- ACTIVITY

Description of the activity

Once they have the pattern down, introduce another ball—then another and then another. Balls drop, roll, etc., but urge them to pick them up and continue. With five or six balls going at a time, it becomes quite a circus with a lot of laughing!

PROCESSING: After about five minutes, have everyone sit down and identify what they can learn from the activity (besides it being hard to keep all the balls in the air!). What did they learn they had to do to be successful? How many thoughts of what they would eat for dinner, etc.?

This is a great lesson on mindfulness, as people are totally in the present, and thus would be an ideal activity for groups when addressing the subject of mindfulness. Point out that life is like the activity—we all juggle many things at one time, and if we are not focused, things get dropped! If we focus too much on the past or present, the stress balls will pound and bombard us if we are not alert.



MODULE 2

STRONGER LEADERSHIP SKILLS

If someone asked you to say what the basics of good leadership are, what would you tell them? Perhaps you'd use phrases like "having integrity," "inspiring people," "leading from the front," and a whole range of other phrases besides that. Good leadership involves many different attributes, but there are common factors that link many of them. The Four Factor Theory of Leadership is a classic model that defines four basic dimensions of effective leadership.

The four factors are:

1. Providing Personal Support – Helping people value themselves and their work, so that they can develop a sense of self-worth.
2. Encouraging Teamwork ("Interaction Facilitation") – Encouraging people to establish close, collaborative, successful working relationships with one another.
3. Focusing on Goals ("Goal Emphasis") – Inspiring people to feel enthusiastic about and committed to shared goals and motivating them to want to perform well.
4. Helping People Work Effectively ("Work Facilitation") – Helping people meet goals by supporting them, and by providing resources, materials, or knowledge.²⁵



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Leadership skills are the skills necessary to organize people around a common goal. This involves developing a plan, inspiring people to believe in that plan, and then seeing through its execution. They are essential for meeting individual, team, departmental, and organizational goals. You can learn to be a leader, just if you take time to learn fundamental leadership skills. However, your effectiveness depends on how you apply these skills.

5 key steps to good leadership

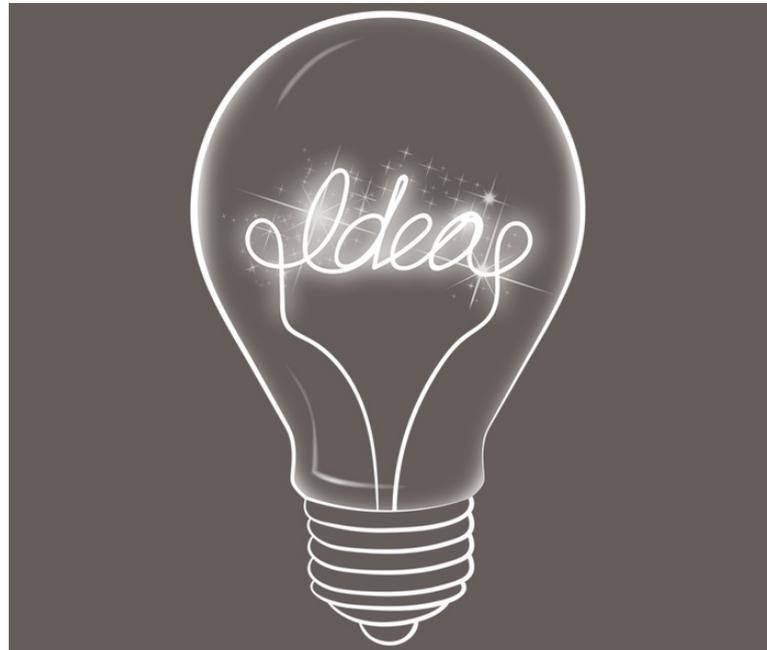
1. Challenge yourself to learn and use one new decision-making tool each week.
2. Think about the last key decision you made.
 - Did you use critical thinking as part of your process? How did that impact the result?
 - Did you feel pressure to make the 'right' decision? If so, how did that affect the timeliness of your decision?
1. What problems can you see right now that your company should address? How can you help influence a solution – and will you do so?
2. What opportunities can you see right now that your organization should pursue? Start creating a plan to evaluate your idea.
3. Describe your natural leadership style. Think of a time when you acted as a leader, but you weren't true to who you are – and perhaps used a style that didn't naturally fit your personality. How did you feel, and how did it impact the effectiveness of ²⁶your leadership?





CREATIVITY

Exercising your creative thinking skills is a critical part of life, no matter the field you work on. According to Alves et al, (2005), creativity can in a simple way be identified as the generation of ideas whereas innovation implies the transformation of these ideas into a new product or service for someone to buy or use.²⁷ Amabile (1998) on the other hand defines creativity through three components: expertise, creative-thinking skills, and motivation. The level of creativity in an individual is relative to the mixture of these three components.²⁸

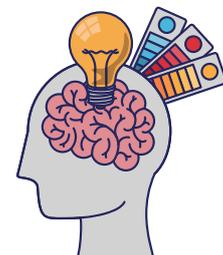


What are creativity skills?

There are several skills you'll need to develop to enjoy the advantages of the techniques.

- Experimentation (the process of trying things and to discover what effect they have)
- Opposing views
- Asking questions
- Communication
- Organization
- Curiosity
- Open-Mindedness (willing to consider different ideas or opinions).
- Imagination
- Problem solving (determining the cause of the problem)
- Willingness to take risks (favorably disposed or inclined to take risk)
- Strong interest in learning and new discoveries
- Flexibility and adaptability (the ability to change or be changed easily according to the situation)

You need to regularly expose yourself to situations in which a new idea is needed and surround yourself with like-minded people to achieve this goal.





Here are some of the best creative thinking techniques you can use:

Brainstorming

The main goal is to form a group of people and throw around ideas without interference where each participant shares their ideas as soon as they come to mind. The general idea of brainstorming is that, by having a variety of creative potential solutions, it gets easier to reach one with the highest level of quality.

Lateral thinking

Lateral thinking involves looking in less obvious areas and lines of reasoning. It can work well if you and your partners try to put yourselves under different perspectives or reverse the problem to look at it differently.

Mind mapping

A mind map is a chart where you put ideas and connect them. It can provide possible solutions to a problem, its immediate consequences, and be the best course of action to deal with them.





CREATIVITY- ACTIVITY

Name of the activity

Let's build together

Aim of the activity

The overall pedagogical aim is to manage a team-building activity in which groups must work together to build a structure out of Lego, but everyone has a secret "assignment" which makes the collaborative process more challenging.

Skills that the activity develops

Communication, leadership dynamics, conflict resolution, cooperation, patience and problem-solving strategy, empathy, creativity, flexibility, and adaptability.

How many people the activity is suitable for

Minimum a group of 4

Time requirement for the activity

60 – 120 minutes

How many instructors are needed?

1

Other requirements (space, equipment...)

Several Boxes of Lego, papers

Description of the activity

Stage 1: Form groups of 4 - 6. Each group sits around a table with a box of Lego. Participants cannot touch the Lego until the activity starts.

Stage 2: Facilitator will give the commands to the participants: "Your mission, as a group, is to build a construction with these Lego bricks. Now each of participants will get a piece of paper, in which you have your individual assignment written. You may not show or tell your assignment to the rest of the team." Participants will have 20 minutes to build their construction. Participants may not speak during the building process, until the time is up.





CREATIVITY-ACTIVITY

Description of the activity

Stage 3: Hand out the “commands,” one per participant (check the list). Remind participants that they must not show their assignment to anyone else.

Stage 4: Once everyone has an assignment, the time starts. If needed, the facilitator reminds participants that they are not allowed to speak during the construction process.

Stage 5: After 20 minutes, the facilitator tells participants to stop. Facilitator invites them to share their “assignments” with the other members of their group.

Stage 6: As a final step, debrief the activity by reflecting on how the groups worked together. Use reflection questions (check possible options below)

Reflection questions:

- Do people communicate openly with one another?
- Are team members focused on individual achievement or shared success?
- How did you feel?
- What would help you do a better job as a team?
- Could you get out of your comfort zone and do the activity creatively and using your imagination?





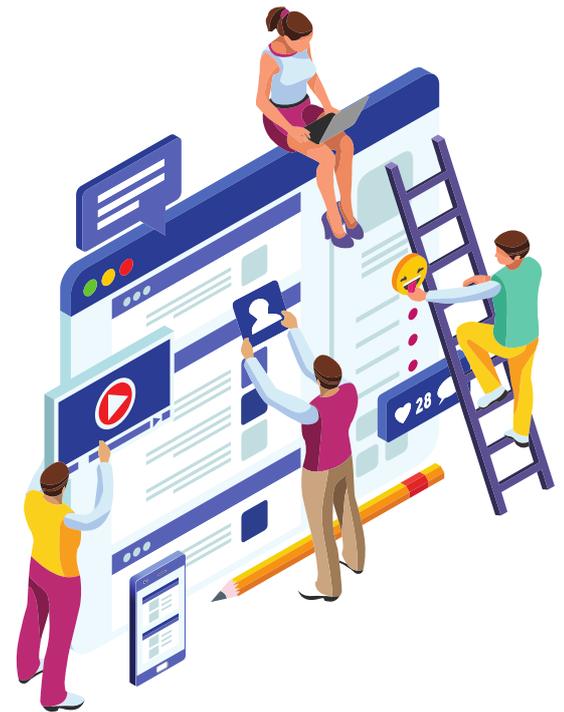
STRATEGIC PLANNING: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION, CREATING SOLUTIONS AND PROJECTING OUTCOMES

To what extent does a person's life, activities and decisions depend on himself? As much as he manages his own life properly, says dr. Janina Radvilė, PMP, Lithuanian coach and lector on management of individual's life.

Despite numerous descriptions, strategic planning of personal career can be described as a process of sequential steps, during which

- 1) goals are set,
- 2) an action plan is drawn up to achieve those goals,
- 3) potential risks are anticipated/evaluated.

Strategic planning also envisages opportunities for adaptation to the changes, including changes in individual's personal life, both national and worldwide economies, environmental or climate changes, etc.



Setting the right goals

According to the model developed by John Whitmore, the prominent leadership development and performance consultant, personal goals should be distinguished between final goals and performance goals.

For example, a final goal might be 'I want to find a job in a family-owned bakery'. A performance goal that helps to achieve this aim, for example, might be 'I will be practicing baking / reading literature on baking for 2 hours every day'.

NOTA BENE: If a goal is unattainable—there is no hope. If the goal is not challenging—it does not motivate.

When defining goals at work, in life, in family, you name it, reflection on the reasons behind those goals must be kept on a constant basis. Firstly, a question 'WHY I have this goal' should come, and other questions like 'WHAT I have to do for this goal' can only follow.

As soon as a person's goal is clear and he wants to achieve it, the brain subconsciously begins to organize the behavior so that the goal is achieved.





STRATEGIC PLANNING: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION, CREATING SOLUTIONS AND PROJECTING OUTCOMES- ACTIVITY

Name of the activity	Is the goal really yours?
Aim of the activity	To figure out if the goal a person has established correlates with the 14 requirements of the John Whitmore model below.
Skills that the activity develops	Self-analysis, creating solutions and projecting outcomes.
How many people the activity is suitable for	At least 1.
Time requirement for the activity	Up to 30 minutes.
How many instructors are needed?	None
Other requirements (space, equipment...)	Calm and positive atmosphere for better focusing on the task without any interferences.



STRATEGIC PLANNING: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION, CREATING SOLUTIONS AND PROJECTING OUTCOMES- ACTIVITY

Description of the activity

Is the goal really yours?

In order to be sure the goal is really Yours, answer the following questions:	
Does the goal inspire me and give me energy?	<i>Yes/no/sometimes, etc.</i>
What is really important to me?	<i>Family, work, money, freedom, etc...</i>
What do I think of when I am alone?	<i>Family relationship, financial issues, global problems, etc...</i>
What do I usually talk about?	<i>Children, foods, prices, politics, etc.</i>
What would I do if I didn't have to think about money?	
What would I do if no one's opinion mattered to me?	
What do I really care about?	

After establishing a goal, check on whether it correlates with these 14 requirements in the John Whitmore model below.

S	SPECIFIC	THE RIGHT GOAL		C	CHALLENGING
M	MEASURABLE	P	POSITIVELY STATED	L	LEGAL
A	ATTAINABLE	U	UNDERSTOOD	E	ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND
R	REALISTIC	R	RELEVANT	A	AGREED
T	TIME-PHASED	E	ETHICAL	R	RECORDED





STRATEGIC PLANNING: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION, CREATING SOLUTIONS AND PROJECTING OUTCOMES- ACTIVITY

Description of the activity

Is the goal really yours?

After completing those two tables, keep on thinking the following:

- Goals must be YOURS (not those of your parents, spouse, teachers, etc.);
- Goals must match your values, and values must meet goals. Think about what is most important in your life;
- If goal contradicts personal values, a person feels stress, dissatisfaction, bitterness;
- If there are additional conditions, name them, e. g. I will start my family bakery after completion of vocational training;
- The goal must be at the limit of possibilities, i. e. not too small—otherwise it doesn't motivate;
- Mention only the things you want to do yourself, i. e. I want to find a job instead of I don't want to run out of money;
- Use the present tense, i. e. I do instead of I shall do;
- Use only positive expressions, i. e. I want to have a job instead of I do not want to be unemployed.

If the 14 steps are too complicated, keep in mind the following ground rule when establishing Your goal:

KISS – Keep It Simple, Stupid!





STRATEGIC PLANNING: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION, CREATING SOLUTIONS AND PROJECTING OUTCOMES- ACTIVITY

Name of the activity	Drawing an action plan
Aim of the activity	Strategically planning of the professional/personal path; evaluation of personal motivation behind the goal; distinguishing the final goals and performance goals.
Skills that the activity develops	Self-analysis, strategical planning, creating solutions and projecting outcomes.
How many people the activity is suitable for	At least 1.
Time requirement for the activity	Up to 30 minutes.
How many instructors are needed?	None
Other requirements (space, equipment...)	Calm and positive atmosphere for better focusing on the task without any interferences.
Description of the activity	The activity may be conducted in two ways—short and long one. The short way is drawing up a short-term plan that helps in reaching personal goals.



STRATEGIC PLANNING: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION, CREATING SOLUTIONS AND PROJECTING OUTCOMES- ACTIVITY

A person is more likely to succeed if his/her plan answers the 4 simple questions:

What I am going to do?	How much I am going to do?
When I am going to do it?	How many days a week I am going to do it?

For some people, especially those who are so-called procrastinators or are unconfident about themselves, a long way, A Contract with Me Myself, can be a solution. Find the contract template below:

A Contract with Me Myself											
Done at <i>(place and date)</i>											
My goal is: <i>2-3 sentences, for example, 'To find a job in a bakery'</i>											
Reason this goal is important to me: <i>2-3 sentences, for example, 'Because I love baking, this activity allows me to bring good emotions to clients and besides I need money'</i>											
My action plan is:											
This week I will				This month I will				This year I will			
What	How much	When	How many	What	How much	When	How many	What	How much	When	How many
How confident I am that I can succeed with the plan?											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	A person is more likely to carry out his plan with a confidence of 7 or higher.
<i>Not at all confident</i>										<i>Totally confident</i>	
Things that could make it difficult to fulfil my action plan:											
I know I can face some challenges. There is my plan for overcoming these:											
Support and resources I will need to fulfil my action plan:											
My reward:											
Plan review date(s): <i>i. e. after 1 month, 2 months, 3 months</i>											
My signature:											

Literature:

1. Janina Radvilė. Niekada nevēlu gyventi. Svajok. Planuok. Išdrįsk. Tyto alba, 2017.
2. Mikael Krogerus and Roman Tschappeler. The Decision Book. Fifty models for strategic thinking. Kein et Aber AG Zurich-Berlin, 2017.



PERFORMING UNDER PRESSURE

The term “performing under pressure” is usually mentioned in professional life but we may also have to perform under pressure in our personal life. We might come across performance under pressure, when we lack the expertise or knowledge required to complete a task.³⁰ Performing under pressure requires effective emotional management, so that feelings, like anxiety and/or anger, won't inhibit the execution of our plans. It is of vital importance to learn how to manage pressure in a productive way.^{31 32}



Start predicting and planning: identify intense periods of work in the future and act in advance.

Review previous experience: If you have experienced **pressure** before, think about what helped you cope with it in a successful manner.

Expect the unexpected: Not everything is up to you. Be flexible and mentally ready to handle some unexpected difficulties.

Avoid procrastination: set a successful and fruitful routine and stick to it.

Prioritize your tasks: Start with all the important and urgent tasks and postpone the others.

Break down your tasks: Divide the project into smaller pieces and accomplish these smaller steps.

Use pressure as an opportunity to grow: The more you find yourself being pushed to the wall, the better you become at pushing back.

Always remember your “why”: Remember why this task or project needs to be finished. This will motivate you to try harder and not give up.

Look for the positive side: Try to see it as a challenge to learn more and hone your organizational skills.



PERFORMING UNDER PRESSURE



Get a good night sleep:

Trying to sleep well will help you be more productive, focused, and calm.

Get encouragement from a loved one:

Studies have shown that support from the loved ones improves their confidence and reduces stress levels.

Don't overthink it: Try to clear your mind, banish distractions, and trust yourself.

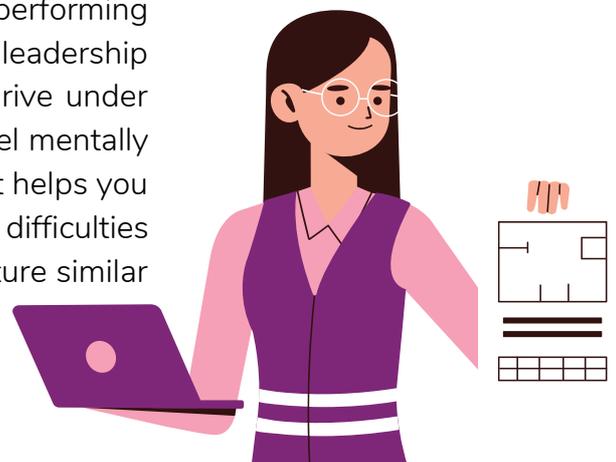
Remind yourself that sometimes it is okay to fail:

Failure is not really pleasant, however, through failures we learn our weaknesses and discover ways to surpass them.

Don't forget to spend time on self-care:

try to spend some time doing an activity that you love, such as exercising, listening to music or going for a walk. It will help you relax and will provide you with energy needed to move on.

Despite the difficulties this situation may include, performing under pressure has also some benefits. It increases leadership and organizational skills. Moreover, people who thrive under pressure, experience higher self-confidence, and feel mentally alert.³³ When pressure is perceived as a challenge, it helps you discover new ways to cope successfully with all the difficulties and acquire all the necessary knowledge to face future similar circumstances.





PERFORMING UNDER PRESSURE- ACTIVITY

Name of the activity

Practice in advance

Aim of the activity

The goal of the activity is to help the participants be better prepared for some unexpected difficulties concerning the pressure event. It will give them the chance to visualize some possible inconveniences that may occur and think about ways to surpass them in advance.

Skills that the activity develops

It hones organizational skills and the ability of planning and preparing effectively.

How many people the activity is suitable for

There is no specific limit. It can be carried out either individually or in a team given that they have faced a similar pressure event before.

Time requirement for the activity

It depends on the scenario of each participant.

How many instructors are needed?

0-1

Other requirements (space, equipment...)

There is no standard equipment required. It depends on the scenario of each participant.

Description of the activity

Each participant thinks about the situation that could potentially put pressure on him/her. It could be either a presentation in front of an audience, or an exam, or a deadline, or even a conversation of high importance. After you bring the stressful occasion to your mind, think about what could go wrong. Think about something that if it happened, it would have caused extra anxiety. For instance, regarding an exam, you might think that the worst would be to check the time during the exam and find out there are only 15 minutes left and you still haven't answered almost half of the questions.





PERFORMING UNDER PRESSURE- ACTIVITY

Description of the activity

Concerning a deadline, imagine that your employer suddenly asks you to hand in the task earlier. Thereafter, we proceed to the action plan. After having imagined a potential hitch, start acting to try to cope with it successfully. For example, regarding the exam, find a similar test and try to answer it in less time than you will have in the real exam. As for the deadline, start working as if you have indeed to finish the task earlier. Therefore, you can be better prepared for some barriers you may come across and thus it will be easier to deal with them. If you can't simulate a stressful situation, then think about a stressful scenario and write down ways, which will help you face it successfully.





GIVING CLEAR FEEDBACK

„Knowing what your strengths are is the most important thing an individual can know about himself or herself. “

Peter F. Drucker, management thinker



Feedback is probably one of the most difficult and sensitive processes in interpersonal communication. 'It is easy to hurt people with criticism, but false compliments are also unhelpful.

P. F. Drucker developed and explained feedback analysis this way: “Whenever you make a decision or take any action, write down what you expect that will happen. Then, 9-12 months later, compare the actual results with your expectations that you wrote down. It can help you to analyse your strengths and how to leverage your weaknesses.

Negative feedback

When it comes to what can be learned from negative feedback, it is better to ask ‘What can I do with this criticism?’. It is not only about working out what has not succeeded, but also about deciding whether and how to react. This model helps to categorize the feedback you receive in order to clearly establish a plan of action.

The first important question to ask yourself honestly is **which–success or failure–was just in fact due to luck? Do You really deserve this compliment or criticism?**

The second important question to ask yourself after the negative feedback received is what triggered you so much?





GIVING CLEAR FEEDBACK- ACTIVITY

**Name of the
activity**

Personal questionnaire

Aim of the activity

Deeper introspection to give a person a fairly good idea of where his/her strengths lie. It will show where someone is not competent and where he/she has no strengths and can't perform.

**Skills that the
activity develops**

feedback, introspection, analysis

**How many people the
activity is suitable for**

1 at the time

**Time requirement for
the activity**

It depends on the scenario of each participant.

**How many instructors
are needed?**

1

**Other requirements
(space, equipment...)**

There is no standard equipment required. It depends on the scenario of each participant. It can be done on a piece of paper or on the laptop, smartphone etc.

**Description of the
activity**

Take some time and think about the following questions. Then write your answers down.

What are your values?

1. What do you see as your most important responsibilities for living a worthy life?
2. Does your environmental ethics resonate with your values? If not, you're headed for a career of frustration and poor performance.





GIVING CLEAR FEEDBACK- ACTIVITY

Description of the activity

Where do you belong?

- Taking into consideration your strengths and your preferred work style, what kind of work environment would you fit into easily?

What can you contribute to your organization and/or environment?

- Given the answers to the above questions, decide how you can best contribute to your organization/family/community, etc.
- Once you've decided on how you're going to contribute, figure out a way to make that contribution. Think outside of the constraints of your immediate role. Get creative if you have to.

*If you practice these questions and answers sessions consistently, according to Drucker, you should have a fairly good idea of where your strengths lie in about 3 years. It will show you where you aren't competent and where you have no strengths and can't perform.





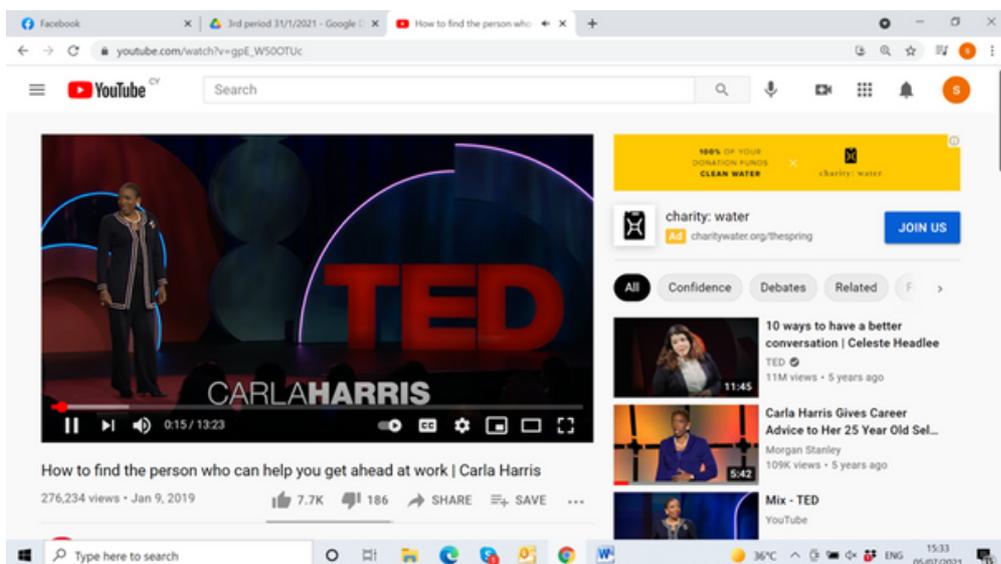
SUPERVISING AND MENTORING

Mentorship is described as a dedicated relationship whereby a senior or more experienced person provides advice, counselling, and development opportunities to shape the career experience of a junior person through both career and psychological support.³⁴



Mentoring can bring about a range of benefits for low qualified adults, such as improved relationships, increased communication skills and resilience.³⁵ Lastly, we must keep in mind that the establishment of a mentorship program requires a clear purpose, contextual knowledge and adaption to the profession, the organization and to individuals' needs.³⁶

Watch this introductory video regarding mentorship.



(How to find the person who can help you get ahead at work, Carla Harris – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpE_W500Tuc)



How to be a good mentor?

Before you start trying to be a good mentor, you should pay attention to the ideal potential mentor's characteristics and qualities. A good mentor is motivated and energized, cares about developing others and willing to commit their time.³⁷

Specifically, an ideal mentor should 1) possess professional skills, 2) share knowledge, 3) provide guidance, 4) build trust, 5) learn new skills, 6) share positive information and 7) provide "negative feedback" to point out what is ³⁸not working.

How to be a good mentee?

Literature indicates some tips on how you can achieve it by adopting the following guides: 1) Keep stable on the specific goals from the beginning, 2) Meet with your mentor consistently, 3) Set an agenda, 4) Be open to feedback: positive or constructive, 5) Take notes as you are meeting, 6) Decide on an end date, 7) Figure out that this is not a therapy session, 8) Consider establishing a board of mentors.³⁹





SUPERVISING AND MONITORING- ACTIVITY

Name of the activity

Role-playing – Provide guidance

Aim of the activity

Deeper introspection to give a person a fairly good idea of where his/her strengths lie, whilst sharing expertise, motivating mentees, sharing information, support in decision-making process, provide alternatives, provide feedback, provide negative feedback, etc.

Skills that the activity develops

Provide guidance, Active listening, Motivation, Provide feedback, Creativity

How many people the activity is suitable for

The activity requires 2 persons, a mentor and a mentee. The activity can run with as many couples as participants in each group of people.

Time requirement for the activity

Depends on the number of the participants and the topic they spend talking. Approximately 15-20 minutes.

How many instructors are needed?

1

Other requirements (space, equipment...)

Open floor space so that the participants can sit in pairs and a device calculating the time each pair should spend.

Description of the activity

The participants sit in pairs/couples of 2 people (in each group there can be as many pairs/couples as possible). One person is the mentor and the other the mentee. The mentee starts describing a certain issue/problem recently raised at work (3 minutes). After the 3 minutes, s/he must set a certain question/request to the mentor, who s/he is responsible to think, decide and provide feedback (5 minutes).





SUPERVISING AND MONITORING- ACTIVITY

Description of the activity

The rest of the time (7-12 minutes) will be spent on discussion between mentor and mentee on how the specific issue/problem could be solved. This activity will enable participants to learn how to 1) listen to others actively, 2) advance critical thinking, 3) provide positive feedback, and 4) offer alternatives to a given issue/problem. Role-playing is a great way to improve your listening skills, your critical thinking and providing feedback skills, which are essential elements of mentorship.





EMPOWERMENT AND MOTIVATION



Empowerment is suggested to encompass individual goals (e.g., ability, autonomy, control and self-efficacy) and acts as a process for personal development.⁴⁰ In addition, it is defined as a process through which people gain greater control over decisions and actions, set new goals and develop of methods and strategies to reach the goals as well as action for goal-fulfilment.⁴¹

There are several ways you can begin to focus on your personal empowerment and take ownership in your work: firstly, you must define your direction; secondly, you must find a mentor, who can help you to define and achieve your personal goals. Thirdly, you must ask for consistent feedback to improve your skills. Lastly, you should speak and communicate with your supervisor, who wants to see you improve and s/he can offer guidance on how to achieve your goal(s).

Moreover, you can empower others by building trust, asking for feedback, offering instructions, simplifying discovery, showing your appreciation, and recognizing limits.

How is “psychological empowerment” perceived

Psychological empowerment is a concept originating from industrial-organizational psychology.⁴² The psychologically empowered state was considered a cognitive state characterized by a sense of perceived control, perceptions of competence, and internalization of the goals and objectives of the organization; also, autonomy, choice, responsibility, and participation in decision making in organizations are additional elements of psychological empowerment. In addition, psychological empowerment refers to an “intrinsic task motivation reflecting a sense of self-control in relation to one’s work and an active engagement with one’s work role.”⁴³



TIPS TO EMPOWER YOURSELF AT WORK

Focusing on your own empowerment at work can lead to greater responsibilities and long-term success in your career. Below you can find several ways you can begin taking more ownership in your work.⁴⁴

<p>1. Gain clarity about what is expected of you</p>	<p>The first step to feeling more empowered is defining your direction. Make it a point to be clear about your company’s mission, vision, and annual goals.</p> <p>Working with your manager to understand how your team and individual goals for the year help to accomplish the wider organizational goals. Make your individual responsibilities for your current position and any positions you are working toward readily available and review them regularly.</p>
<p>2. Find a mentor</p>	<p>Working with a mentor can help you define and achieve personal career goals, including increased empowerment at work. Ideally, you should find a mentor who is either in your industry or who has a job you hope to earn one day. Ask them for honest feedback about your strengths and areas for improvement over time.</p>
<p>3. Ask for consistent feedback</p>	<p>The best way to improve your skills and professional growth is by seeking feedback from those who know your work. Seek out feedback from both supervisors and peers to get a holistic view of your performance. This can help you take control of your own personal growth at work by understanding exactly what you are good at and what you need to work on.</p>





<p>4. Communicate with your supervisor</p>	<p>Your most powerful advocate at work is likely your direct supervisor or manager. They are responsible for your performance at work and want to see you successful and satisfied in your role. Speak with them about your desire to feel more empowered at work and discuss ways you might be working towards that as a career goal.</p>
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TIPS TO EMPOWER OTHERS AT WORK

There are six ways to empower others at work: Build trust, ask for feedback, offer instructions, simplify discovery, show your appreciation and recognize limits. Below you can find several ways you can begin empowering others at work .⁴⁵

<p>1. Build trust</p>	<p>It is necessary that we trust others to complete certain tasks or own certain goals without much oversight. It is necessary to build empowerment, to allow people to learn from their mistakes and move forward with no trust lost. Let your reports know that it is acceptable and expect some mistakes to occur.</p>
<p>2. Ask for feedback</p>	<p>One of the best ways to empower others is to ask what they need. Whether they are not feeling empowered, opening these lines of communication will increase empowerment for everyone.</p>
<p>3. Offer instructions</p>	<p>It is often better and faster for everyone involved to create instructions or conduct training sessions to get every employee on the same page. Share knowledge among employees to create a self-sufficient environment.</p>
<p>4. Simplify discovery</p>	<p>The best way to educate the team on how to complete their own work is to publish the instructions in a shared space that everyone has access to. When you take the time to give employees/colleagues a simple, direct way to access the information they need and educate themselves, everyone is more productive.</p>





5. Show your appreciation	One of the most effective ways to empower others is to express appreciation for their efforts. Offering positive feedback for showing responsibility and taking ownership supports these behaviours. It also makes people feel valued and appreciated.
6. Recognise limitations:	Part of successful empowerment is identifying the limitations of others and ensuring they do not feel burned out or responsible for tasks that do not contribute to achieving the goals for their position.





EMPOWERMENT AND MOTIVATION- ACTIVITY

Name of the activity

Empowerment activity

Aim of the activity

The goal of the activity is to help the participants to think of how empowerment could be used at the workplace. It will give them the chance to realise how they could be motivated by others (employer, supervisor, colleagues) and how they could act in a way to empower others (mainly colleagues).

Skills that the activity develops

It enables participants to think, understand and realise how empowerment and motivation could advance their (working) daily life and consequently their productivity.

How many people the activity is suitable for

There should be at least 4 persons, forming two teams of two persons (minimum). Each team could be up to 5 persons (total 10 participants). More teams can be formed, if needed.

Time requirement for the activity

15-20 minutes.

How many instructors are needed?

1

Other requirements (space, equipment...)

There should be available one board and coloured pens for each team.

Description of the activity

Each team is given one of the following two roles: 1) one team will have the role of trying to empower the others and 2) the other team will have the role of considering how employees could be empowered at the workplace. Each team will work independently and will focus on the given scenario.





EMPOWERMENT AND MOTIVATION- ACTIVITY

Description of the activity



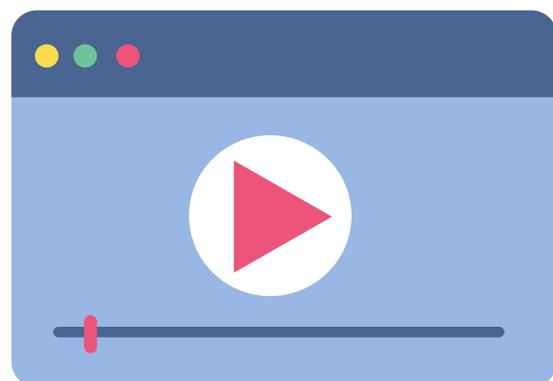
The first team will have to write down how everyone could empower other colleagues at work, which actions can be taken, and which will be the outcomes of such an approach.

The second team will have to write down their personal thoughts and ideas regarding the practices, policies and actions that could promote their empowerment at the workplace; the aim of this activity is to collect data regarding how they imagine the perfect workplace, in which attention is provided to all employees.

The teams will work their scenarios for about 10-12 minutes. Then, both teams come together and each of them makes a presentation to the whole group. Discussion will follow and afterwards common issues/policies/practices can be raised. The overall aim of the activity is to give participants the chance to realise how they could be motivated by others (employer, supervisor, colleagues) and how they could act in a way to empower others (mainly colleagues); finally, the advantages of empowerment for all involved parties will be identified.

“Empowerment and the future of work”, Dr Peter Bloom, Open University

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWxHXmNcpdl>



MODULE 3

CREATIVE AND CRITICAL THINKING

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Critical thinking versus Creative thinking

Critical and creative thinking skills are perhaps the most fundamental skills involved in making judgments and solving problems. The ability to think critically about a matter—to analyze a question, situation, or problem down to its most basic parts—is what helps us evaluate the accuracy and truthfulness of statements, claims, and information we read and hear. Creative thinking skills involve using strategies to clear the mind so that our thoughts and ideas can transcend the current limitations of a problem and allow us to see beyond barriers that prevent new solutions from being found. Brainstorming is the simplest example of intentional creative thinking that most people have tried at least once.⁴⁶

Critical Thinking

If you are a critical thinker, you examine the situation and facts and think in a linear and rational way. The critical thinker gathers information, analyzes it and evaluates it. If you think critically, you can separate fact from opinion. You like details and clear-cut information.

Creative Thinking

Creative thinkers tend to be imaginative and like to brainstorm. A creative thinker looks at things from various perspectives, coming up with ideas and making novel and uncharacteristic connections. The creative thinker often goes against standard views and is apt to take risks. A creative person is curious. He likes a challenge, seeks out problems to solve and is imaginative.⁴⁷





FLEXIBILITY



Flexible thinking is the ability to shift thinking or attention in response to a switch in rules, or to new or unexpected situations. Flexible thinking is also referred to as mental flexibility or cognitive flexibility.⁴⁸

We can say that flexible thinking is the ability to adapt our own behaviours in the moment depending on the situation and the people in it. It is opposed to stuck thinking which means being unable to change what we are doing or thinking based on what is happening around us. Moreover, you can empower others by building trust, asking for feedback, offering instructions, simplifying discovery, showing your appreciation, and recognizing limits.⁴⁹





FLEXIBILITY- ACTIVITY

Name of the activity	Egg drop
Aim of the activity	To boost teamwork, creativity during problem-solving, and time management.
Skills that the activity develops	Flexibility
How many people the activity is suitable for	6-50 players
Time requirement for the activity	At least 15 minutes for preparation, and then depending on the number of egg structures built.
How many instructors are needed?	1 who will be tossing the egg structure into the air
Other requirements (space, equipment...)	Open floor space with higher ceiling
Description of the activity	Assemble groups of three to five people and give each team various materials for building (paper straws, a roll of masking tape, one fresh egg, newspapers, etc.). In a set amount of time (15 minutes), each team has to complete building a structure, with the egg inside. When time expires, all structures are collected, and a judge tosses them from at least 10 feet in elevation. The structures are then inspected to see if the eggs survived. The winners are the groups that successfully protected the egg.



CRITICAL OBSERVATION

"Pay attention to the small things. They turn
into big things."
-Jocko Willink



Critical observation is the ability to notice subtle details or gain them through analysis that allows to maneuver situations more tactfully. Our observation skills inform us about objects, events, attitudes and phenomena using one or more senses, thus forming a basis for efficient and fruitful communication. Critical observation is a so-called soft skill but can bring hard results.

In the modern workplace, critical observation gives employees the ability to see a problem before it is even on the horizon, and to interpret research data in order to meet the evolving needs. This becomes increasingly important, as employees are being expected to deliver more interpretive solutions, not just doing assigned tasks copy-paste without improvising. The ability to catch subtle nuance in speech or situations deepens the strategic value one can bring to the hiring organization.

It sounds easy enough: paying attention to subtle details that might otherwise be missed, whether in others' behaviour and appearance or in the situation around us. But critical observation is a real skill and one that requires constant practice.

'Learn to pay attention to the small things. We often overlook the nuances of situations and then wonder why things unfolded the way they did. Pay attention. Little things matter; they matter less, but they matter', says Jocko Willink, a Navy SEAL for twenty years, rising through the ranks to become the commander of Task Unit Bruiser – the most decorated Special Operations Unit of the Iraq War.



	Useful tips to practice
<p>1. Be curious</p>	<p>Curiosity is the first key to observation of any sort. Take an interest in the person / phenomenon / situation you're interacting with, and it'll be easier to spot details that you might otherwise miss.</p> <p>Sherlock Holmes and his famous method of deduction could be seen as the typical example of critical observation. Holmes wasn't just analyzing what he was expecting to see, but was curious about tiny things that led him to something unexpected.</p> <p>Inspector: "Is there any point to which you would wish to draw my attention?" Holmes: "To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time." Inspector: "The dog did nothing in the night-time." Holmes: "That was a curious incident." (Conan Doyle. Silver Blaze)</p> <p>This simple deduction shows the extent of Holmes' attention to detail and his realization that sometimes the most important clues are the events that didn't happen. Holmes realizes that the perpetrator of the crime must have been someone familiar to the household, as the dog didn't bark when the perpetrator approached.</p>
<p>2. Be more like Juror #8</p>	<p>The role model for good critical observation is also a Juror #8, Davis (portrayed by the late Henry Fonda). He is the main protagonist in the teleplay and movie 12 Angry Men, the eighth of the twelve jury members.</p> <p>In 12 Angry Men, Fonda's character refuses to accept the view of the other 11 jurors that the accused teenager boy is obviously guilty. Juror #8 notes details about the murder case in question that others have missed. Slowly the rest of the jury is won around as their reservations are overcome and they become convinced that there are flaws in the evidence against the accused.</p>





	Useful tips to practice
Be more like Juror #8	<p>"Critical observation requires a skeptical outlook. It takes time and energy. Question what you are being told, dig deeper than surface-level impressions. Do not accept conventional wisdom or the myths and rumors which tend to circulate in businesses and organizations".</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Stefan Stern, visiting professor in management practice at London's Cass Business School</p> <p>Skepticism and critical observation rarely make a person nice and popular in the eyes of others. So, it needs to be rationed. However, such thinking can also help avoid a lot of unnecessary and damaging mistakes, both in personal relationships and professional fields.</p>

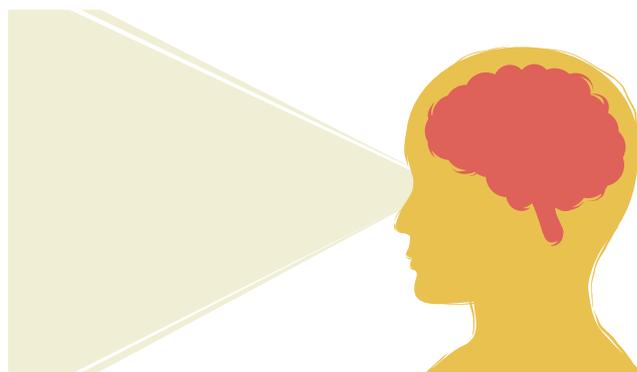




CRITICAL OBSERVATION- ACTIVITY 1

Name of the activity	Juror #8
Aim of the activity	practicing and analyzing personal observation skills.
Skills that the activity develops	critical observation.
How many people the activity is suitable for	individual work with group discussion afterwards.
Time requirement for the activity	114 minutes for movie watching, and up to 15 minutes for moderated discussion.
How many instructors are needed?	One for moderating discussion.
Other requirements (space, equipment...)	at home / auditorium / online session.
Description of the activity	While watching the movie, ask participants to observe how things are going on. Discuss what Juror #8 is doing that it becomes so influential and persuasive. For example, elaborate on the wording by Juror #8 after conducting an experiment to see if the old man could have reached his door in 15 seconds. Ask participants to count episodes they find crucial for revealing the truth, and arrange a mini-contest to find out who has counted more

	Useful tips to practice
<p>3. See the bigger picture</p>	<p>Learn to observe yourself critically, first. Imagine yourself in a fairly common situation, like an employee who is struggling to meet his/her deadlines. With sharp critical observation skills, you will be able to notice that you have trouble with deadlines that fall on the X week of the month. Break this week down in details. Is your spouse on shift work that week? Do you have child care / household running / transportation issues because of this?</p> <p>Knowing the answers, you can earlier start your monthly tasks or ask for a flexibility to work from home on the X week. Had this pattern not been observed, you would have assumed yourself (or be assumed by your boss) as an inefficient employee and poor time manager. So, it is important to understand how your daily tasks fit into the bigger monthly picture.</p> <p>Employees who are skilled at critical observation also know how to use the talent for self-growth. They tend to be more self-aware and self-confident, due to the fact that they have the ability to identify their strengths and weaknesses more effectively. Therefore, give yourself time to reflect after each activity, such as meeting, training session, event, etc. It will help you to absorb the information and analyze it better.</p>



CRITICAL OBSERVATION- ACTIVITY 2

Name of the activity	Which type of observer are you?
Aim of the activity	Practicing and analyzing personal observation skills.
Skills that the activity develops	Critical observation
How many people the activity is suitable for	individual work with group discussion afterwards.
Time requirement for the activity	5-10 minutes, and up to 15 minutes for moderated discussion.
How many instructors are needed?	One for moderating discussion.
Other requirements (space, equipment...)	at home / auditorium / online session.
Description of the activity	tick the boxes below and find out which type of critical observer you are.

CRITICAL OBSERVATION- ACTIVITY 2

Description of the activity

Tick for yes	Good critical observer of other people	Tick for yes	Good critical observer of processes
	I know how to listen actively.		I am good at catching mistakes, both my own and others'.
	I am considered to have good emotional intelligence.		I have a feel for what I don't know, therefore I ask questions frequently.
	I love analyzing how people perform in different situations.		I love discovering the root cause of a problem
	I love analyzing personality styles.		I have an ability to see problems differently.





No matter how many boxes you ticked—each of the skills listed can be brushed up through practicing. Find several useful tips below.

- **Active listening**- a skill of listening attentively to people and striving to understand them, requires your concentration on what is being said, indication that you are listening, and confirmation you understand what is being said. In other words, active listening means paying attention. Remember, while listening actively, you can't multitask, you can't avoid eye contact, you can't assume, and you can't formulate your response in your head.
- **Emotional intelligence** helps you to understand why a person behaves this way and how that matters, instead of concentrating on what the person did. This type of intelligence, also often replaced by term empathy, helps in understanding emotions, including those of colleagues and our own, better stress handling, conflict resolution, and ultimately better work production.
- **Unconscious bias** can sneak in and undermine our perceptions of people, no matter how open-minded and fair people we consider ourselves. Those who have trained up their critical observation skills are most aware of their potential unconscious biases and actively work to correct for them. Watch a 9:46 min long video on unconscious bias and discuss it in a group. Have you ever been in situations described in the workplace scenarios? (<https://www.ej4.com/preview-critical-observation?wvideo=kxw8ba1dia>)
- **Knowing What We Don't Know.** In andragogy, there is a concept that there are things that people know, and they know that they know them. There are also things that people don't know, and they are aware that they do not, in fact, know them. But each of us also has a long list of things we don't know, and don't know that we don't know. People who are critical observers are always on the lookout for what they don't know, so they can learn and improve. Remember that learning to spot what we don't yet know is a valuable skill in any organization.
- **Discovering the Root Cause of a Problem** is one of the strengths people who are keen observers of processes have. They can dig deep into the cause of a problem, even if that cause is not obvious to the casual observer. The better you get at critical observation, the better you are able to find answers to why?



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX



The expression “thinking outside the box” is a metaphor that generally means approaching problems in new, innovative ways, conceptualizing complicated situations differently and comprehending them by numerous points of view, in relation to several particular conditions.⁵¹

Thinking outside the box is complex, in particular due to the fact mankind is composed of beings full of habits and, obviously, most of them prefer the comfort of familiar routines. According to many people, thinking outside the box means questioning long-held beliefs. So, for promoting this kind of thoughts, there are 3 effective ways:⁵²

- **Breaking the habits.** When a person is facing a challenge, he/she often approaches it relying on past experiences and drawing upon tried and tested ideas that worked in the past. This approach is a strategic and risk calculated formula. On the other hand, so as to continue to innovate and produce some truly original solutions, it is important to step out of the comfort zones. Especially in a digital age, finding new solutions is fundamental for a company or a worker. The best way to do it and improve is by practising, breaking the daily habits and breaking away from usual methods and performances.
- **Trying a different perspective.** When a person is confronted with a problem or a question, he/she usually focuses the attention on coming up with a rapid solution. The adoption, for approaching this problem or challenge, of a different perspective is essential. For instance, you can focus on re-conceptualising the problem, even in front of different people, and analysing the question from various angles and perspectives, in order to gain a deeper comprehension of the issue. A practise for improving this feature could be if you imagine that you’re making the decision on behalf of someone else (named “put yourself in the other’s shoes”). What options do they have? What advice would you give them? How would you propose they solve the problem? What are the possible consequences from each choice?



- **Putting aside the fear of failure.** Thinking outside the box requires a great level of creativity and risk taking; this last feature increases the possibility of making many mistakes, so a person must rely on error management too. Failure is very frequent before a great success and is principally present in new and original products, concepts and design. Some of the greatest innovators learnt that failure is not grave but it can be a reflexive moment, leading to new solutions and points of view. A person unable to manage the mistakes will come to a standstill at the first complexity. On the other hand, a person able to think outside the box is basically prepared to take risks and make mistakes.. Instead of focusing only on all the things that could be right, it's common that some of the best discoveries and works derive from mistakes. When a person is struggling to come up with fresh ideas, these simple tricks help to remove yourself of your comfort zone and think in an innovative way.⁵³





THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX- ACTIVITY

Name of the activity	Thinking outside the box (with a real box)
Aim of the activity	Find the best solution to solve a problem
Skills that the activity develops	Lateral thinking
How many people the activity is suitable for	4 (not less)
Time requirement for the activity	Variable
How many instructors are needed?	-
Other requirements (space, equipment...)	Open floor space, a table with chairs, pens, notebook, a box, role cards (RECORDER, READER, TASK MANAGER, PRESENTER)
Description of the activity	Each person should pick one of the roles from the role cards. The roles are: the RECORDER, who writes down the info; the READER to read the directions step by step; the TASK MANAGER to make certain people stay on task; and the PRESENTER to explain your ideas to the group.





Description of the activity

Create and read a problem. Each person in the group must understand the problem and the task. It's time for brainstorming: using a paper sheet, work as a group to find as many solutions as possible for the problem. The RECORDER must write all of the ideas. This discussion must consider the advantages and disadvantages of the ideas.

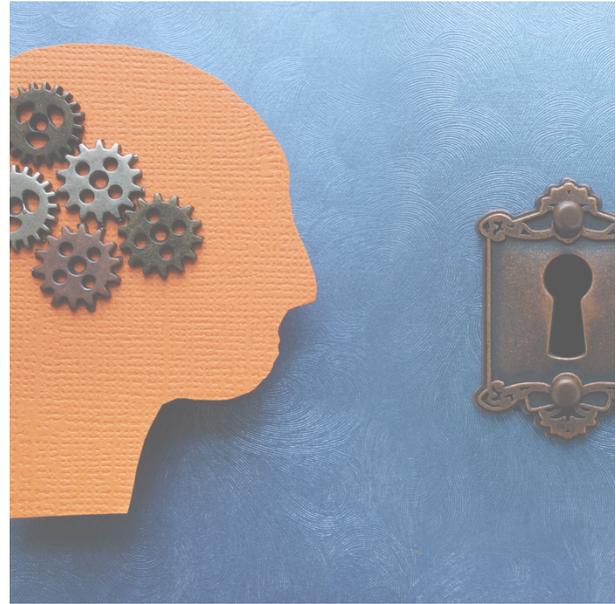
Then there's the discussion about the options and the choice of the best idea. The group should think if there's something that could go wrong with the chosen solution and eventually individuate a change.

The RECORDER must record the solution on chart paper and, finally, the group must present and explain the problem, the solution and the reasons.





CRITICAL THINKING



Critical Thinking is the ability to evaluate information to determine whether it is right or wrong. To think critically about an issue or a problem means to be open-minded and consider alternative ways of looking at solutions.⁵⁴

Nowadays, critical thinking is defined as the ability to think clearly and rationally, making reasoned judgments that are logical and well-thought out. Critical thinkers will identify, analyse, and solve problems following a procedure rather than by intuition or instinct.

This means to be an active learner rather than a passive recipient of information. Moreover, you don't simply accept all arguments and conclusions you are exposed to but rather have an attitude involving questioning such arguments and conclusions.

Here are five common and impactful critical thinking skills:

1. **Observation:** people who are observant can quickly sense and identify a new problem. Improve your observation skills by processing information in a slow way and paying attention to your surroundings.
2. **Analysis:** the ability to analyse and effectively evaluate a situation involves knowing what facts, data or information about the problem are important. This also often includes gathering unbiased research.
3. **Inference:** it involves drawing conclusions about the information you collect.
4. **Communication:** effective communication habits, such as active listening and respect, help you to understand other points of view and to be able to explain your ideas in a calm, rational manner.
5. **Problem-solving:** often requires critical thinking to implement the best solution and understand whether the solution is working as it relates to the goal.



Review this introductory video TED Ed (5 tips to improve your critical thinking) <https://youtu.be/dltUGF8GdTw>.

A well-educated critical thinker:

- Ask questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely.
- Communicates effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems.
- Gathers and assesses relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively, testing them against relevant criteria and standards.
- Thinks open-mindedly within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences.⁵⁵





CRITICAL THINKING- ACTIVITY

Name of the activity	Fact vs. Opinion
Aim of the activity	To distinguish between facts and opinions
Skills that the activity develops	Effective communication, multi-way thinking, reasoning, logical conclusions, discussion
How many people the activity is suitable for	Minimum 4
Time requirement for the activity	Between 30 – 45 minutes
How many instructors are needed?	1
Other requirements (space, equipment...)	List of facts or opinions
Description of the activity	Place statements on paper or on a whiteboard that are either fact or opinion. If it's a fact, learners mark the statement with an F and explain how it can be proven. If it's an opinion, they use an O and briefly explain why they feel it can't be proven. Have them work in groups and use the guiding questions below and come up with others.



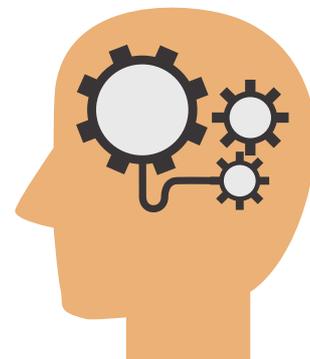


CRITICAL THINKING- ACTIVITY

Description of the activity

The next part is to have the participants explain why the statement can or cannot be proven to be a fact.

- How can this statement be proven beyond a doubt?
- Does the statement have a bias?
- Is the statement based on verified information or assumption? How can we tell?
- Does the statement make use of descriptive language to appeal to our emotions?
- Is there anything misleading about this statement?
- Are the facts reliable?
- Are the opinions based on facts?
- If we all agree on something, does that make it a fact?
- How else can we verify something?





RECEPTIVENESS TO OTHER'S IDEAS AND NEW INFORMATION



As stated in the dictionary, “to be receptive” means to be open to new ideas or change. If you’re responsive to other people’s suggestions and not set in your ways, then you’re not only receptive, but flexible.

Receptive individuals are more willing to physically expose themselves to the opposing views of others. In everyday life, this might mean not changing the television channel when a political candidate you oppose begins to speak or remaining in the room when your “ill-informed” uncle turns dinnertime discussion toward his views on immigration.⁵⁶



RECEPTIVENESS TO OTHER'S IDEAS AND NEW INFORMATION- ACTIVITY

Name of the activity

Escaperoom Quests

Aim of the activity

Teamwork and problem solving under pressure. By solving puzzles and riddles together, co-workers learn to listen and communicate their viewpoints.

Skills that the activity develops

Effective communication, multi-way thinking, reasoning, logical conclusions, discussion

How many people the activity is suitable for

Up to 10 people per game

Time requirement for the activity

At least 30 minutes

How many instructors are needed?

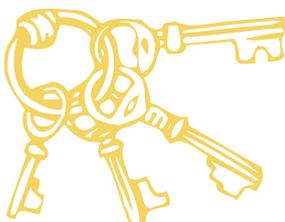
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Other requirements (space, equipment...)

Room

Description of the activity

Your team will be given a mission and placed into a themed room. In there, you must explore to find hints and clues to ultimately free yourself. This can be anything – from containers with passwords to locks needing a key. If your company is large in numbers, split up into several groups and have each team try a different quest.





AVAILABILITY FOR DISCUSSION AND COLLABORATION



‘Discussion’ refers to examining the topic thoroughly to reach a conclusion. Collectively, it is called Group discussion which means the exchange of ideas by participating candidates on a specific subject or topic. The whole concept is to bring collectively a unit of people on a common platform to share their ideas.⁵⁷

‘Collaboration’ is all about bringing people together from different departments, locations, and teams, then focusing their efforts on a common goal.⁵⁸

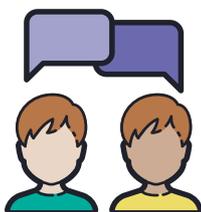
The availability for discussion and collaboration, therefore, means to be open to discuss and to collaborate with others to reach a common view on different topics and objectives, by being mentally flexible and open to other people’s opinions and considerations.





AVAILABILITY FOR DISCUSSION AND COLLABORATION-ACTIVITY

Name of the activity	Scavenger hunt
Aim of the activity	A team building activity outdoors that inspires collaboration, problem solving, teamwork, and it is fun.
Skills that the activity develops	Discussion and collaboration
How many people the activity is suitable for	Unlimited
Time requirement for the activity	60-90 minutes
How many instructors are needed?	1
Other requirements (space, equipment...)	Any type of space
Description of the activity	Create a list of activities and align them with the purpose of the hunt. If you want new employees to connect with senior employees, design team-focused activities that will force them to collaborate. Assign a point system for each activity, based on the difficulty level. Divide the group into equally sized teams. Once the time is up, evaluate which team completed the most activities and has the highest points. ⁵⁹



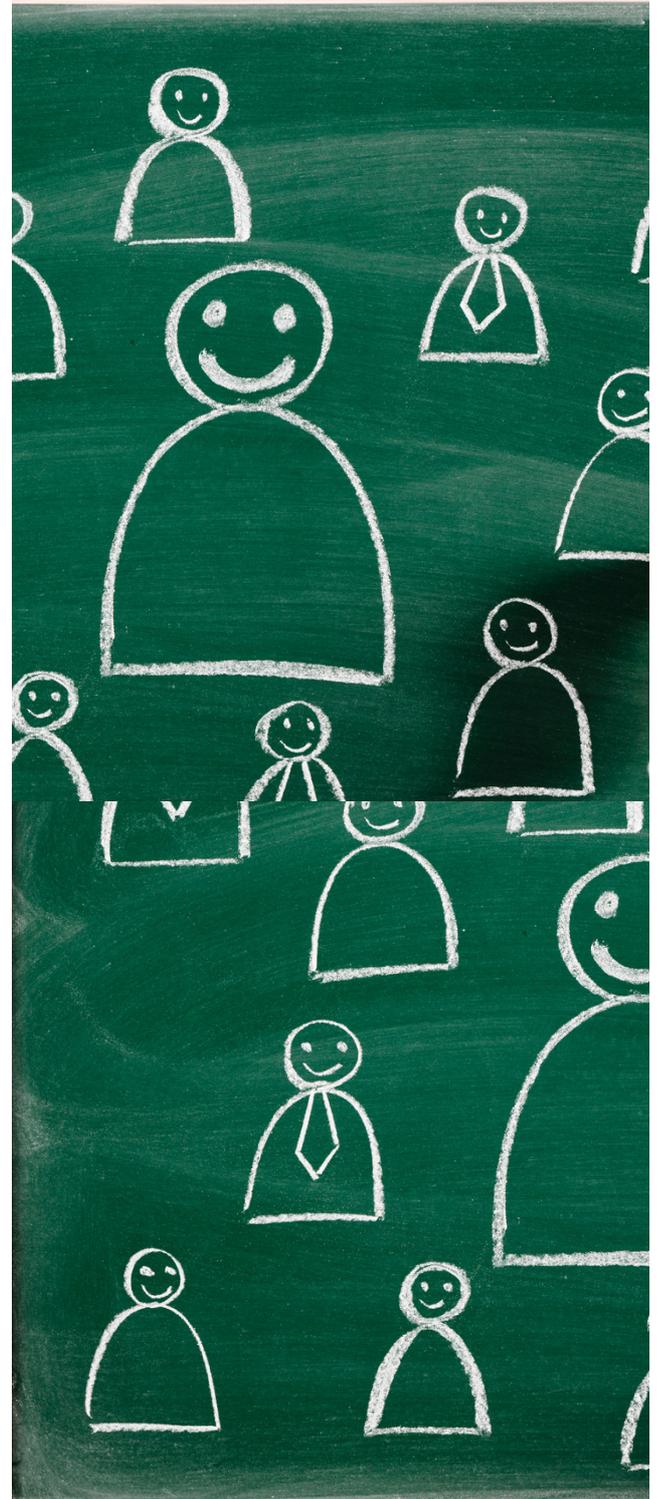
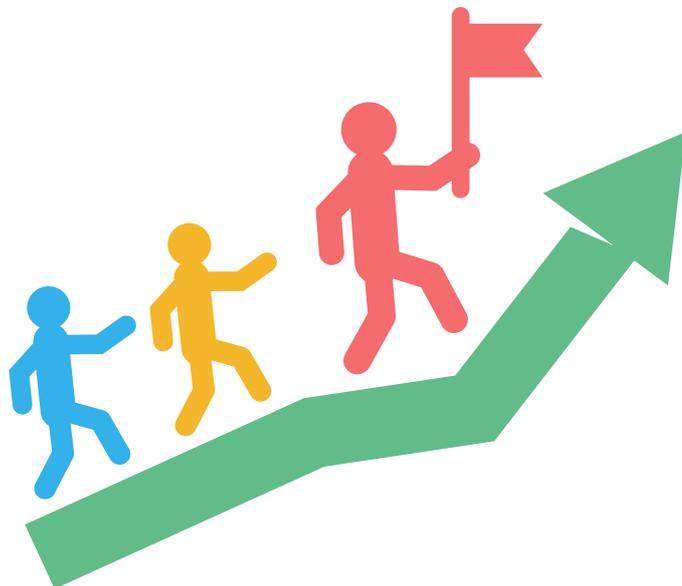
MODULE 4



BETTER TEAMWORK, EFFICIENCY AND

The ability to simultaneously perform as an individual and together with people in effective teamwork is key to attaining growth and success. That is why, the importance of teamwork is essential in today's multidisciplinary world.

Moreover, it is proven that teamwork improves the overall efficiency and productivity, because it allows the workload to be shared, reducing the pressure on individuals, and ensuring tasks are completed within a set time frame. It also allows goals to be more attainable, enhances the optimization of performance, improves satisfaction, and increases work pace. Ultimately, when a group of individuals works together, compared to one person working alone, they promote a more efficient work output and can complete tasks faster due to many minds intertwined on the same goals and objectives.⁶⁰





INTERNAL COMMUNICATION



Internal communication is the function responsible for effective communications among participants within an organization. The scope of the function varies by organization and practitioner, from producing and delivering messages and campaigns on behalf of management, to facilitating two-way dialogue and developing the communication skills of the organization's participants.⁶¹

Internal communication has been constantly recognized by management communication and public relations scholars and practitioners as a key area of public relations, growing in importance.^{62, 63}

7 reasons why internal communication is important:⁶⁴

1. Keeps people informed.
2. Gives people a more holistic view of the organisation.
3. Helps build out the organisation's culture.
4. Gets people engaged.
5. Helps keep people calm in time of crisis.
6. Creates another dimension at workplace.
7. Creates a channel for feedback, debate, and discussion.

Communication, as an essential organizational component, must be included in the parameters of effectiveness, for both external and internal context.⁶⁵

Moreover, to develop efficient internal communications the following skills are required: ability to say "no", ability to collaborate, consistency, audience focus, and listening skills.⁶⁶





Which are the main communication channels⁶⁷

Communication, as an essential organizational component, must be included in the parameters of effectiveness, for both external and internal context.⁶⁷

Modern companies and organizations use a whole range of channels to reach their internal audiences – from traditional, face-to-face communication to printed publications, electronic media and social networks.⁶⁸ Employees at all levels are required to be familiar with all (or most) of these different communication methods. In order to be able to advance your chances to enter the labour market, you should be able to develop your skills for the most common communication channels used by modern companies nowadays, such as:

- 1) face-to-face communication skills,
- 2) use video conferencing,
- 3) use properly/professionally phone calls,
- 4) use emails,
- 5) use text messages,
- 6) use online messaging platforms,
- 7) use social media.⁶⁹





Which are the advantages of each communication channel?

Each communication channel has its advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of each communication channel are presented and discussed in this section.⁷⁰

- 1. Face-to-face communication:** Face-to-face is still the preferred communication channel if clarity of message is a primary factor. Communication in person allows you to interact with the listener in a back-and-forth discussion. It also allows you to utilize nonverbal gestures, facial expressions and personal charisma to enhance the message.
- 2. Videoconferencing:** Video calls enable quick screen sharing and reduce travel time, retains your ability to read facial expressions while increasing flexibility and allows for complex or lengthy conversations.
- 3. Phone calls:** Phone calls are a great alternative when you need to communicate a sense of urgency and get answers quickly. Calls are a real-time, two-way communication channel that still let you hear tone of voice.
- 4. Emails:** E-mail allows for more flexible response times. You can send a message one day and receive a response in a few hours or the next day. It allows for conversation that isn't time-pressured, but can serve for fast turnaround times.
- 5. Text messages:** SMS text messaging is an active communication channel that offers flexibility when it comes to send essential messages or information quickly.
- 6. Social media:** Provide clear social media policies and employee training; empower employee social advocates; involve leadership and secure endorsement; social media listening; sharable, relevant, and practical content strategies; and, authenticity and consistency.





INTERNAL COMMUNICATION- ACTIVITY

Name of the activity	Emergency Event
Aim of the activity	to help participants put themselves in an employer's shoes and decide the communication channel(s) to be used in a given scenario.
Skills that the activity develops	Critical thinking, active listening, discussion and argumentation
How many people the activity is suitable for	Min. 2
Time requirement for the activity	15-20 minutes.
How many instructors are needed?	1
Other requirements (space, equipment...)	According to the number of participants there should be enough space, so that they can all look one another, in order to develop a fruitful debate/dialogue.
Description of the activity	All the participants sit in a way (maybe in a circle), so that they can look one another and have a clear view. The instructor asks the participants to listen to the scenario described/attached below. Then, the team has to decide which communication channels could be used in order to transfer the message internally in the organization; also, the importance of internal communication for an organization has to be considered and discussed.





INTERNAL COMMUNICATION- ACTIVITY

Description of the activity

Scenario:

“The company revenues are decreasing, and the Board of Directors decided to proceed with a) salary cut for all staff by 15%, and b) workforce reduction by 10%. This is a final decision, which has to be communicated by HR to all staff, immediately”.





INDEPENDENCE

What is autonomy in the workplace?

Autonomy has long been established as a critical component of professional work.⁷¹

Traditionally, autonomy has been examined as the extent to which an individual or a professional group controls the decisions and knowledge used in their work. Job autonomy is the freedom given to employees to make decisions in the job and scheduling the work; with autonomy in job, individuals willingly make endeavors to pursue tasks that otherwise deem beyond the scope of the organization.^{72, 73}



In recent decades, the regulation of work has been increasingly handed over to the individual worker, who is given greater autonomy in performing his/her job. Employees can decide not only how (methods autonomy) but also when (worktime autonomy) and where they perform their work (workplace autonomy).⁷⁴





Tips to gain higher level of independence at the workplace:

- You should have your own schedule(s): Having control over your time and being able to decide when you work is one of the best – and easiest – ways to build greater autonomy at work. So when you have the chance to get greater flexibility to design your own weekly schedules, this is a great place to start.
- You should have the appropriate tools to master your performance: One way to improve your autonomy is to encourage greater self-management – to help figure out where and how you can improve by yourself. Giving people the means to better understand how they work communicates that an organization trusts them, that they ultimately are the master of their own space.
- You should be able to work where you want: You should be able to create your own schedule(s), but this type of autonomy also extends to deciding where to work. If you need to stay in the office, consider whether the organisation provides a good range of environments to support your work – both collaborative and quiet options. If you don't, consider remote opportunities so you can work where you feel most focused and engaged – whether that's from home or from your favorite local coffee shop. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that almost every non-client facing company can adapt to remote work, and as companies start to reopen their offices, more employees will be looking to secure long-term remote opportunities.
- Grant your ownership: Ownership occurs when what I am doing is mine, not just yours. Effective autonomy can empower you to tap into the meaning that underlies your work.





- You should be offered creative autonomy: Beyond allowing people to decide when, where and how they work, autonomy is also about granting people creative freedom. It's about letting you own your own ideas, developing your own objectives and having the confidence – or security – to try new approaches. By giving you a company/business space and encouragement to explore new ideas allows you to tap into the personal values that inspire your work, and from a creative perspective you'll feel empowered.
- Be able to create choice within boundaries: The freedom of choice is a key element to autonomy, but too much choice can be detrimental. That's why those who think autonomy means there are no boundaries are in error. In fact, firm boundaries -- and a system to hold people accountable for results -- are essential for autonomy to flourish.





INDEPENDENCE- ACTIVITY

**Name of the
activity**

Role-playing – Autonomy

Aim of the activity

The goal of the activity is to get the participants familiarized with autonomy in the workplace, through the roles of employer-employee. It gives them the chance to argue regarding the benefits of providing autonomy to employees and the positive outcomes for the organization; also, another goal is to build trust among them.

**Skills that the
activity develops**

Reliability, trust, argumentation, communication skills

**How many people the
activity is suitable for**

The activity requires 2 persons, an employer and an employee. The activity can run with as many couples as participants in a given group of people.

**Time requirement for
the activity**

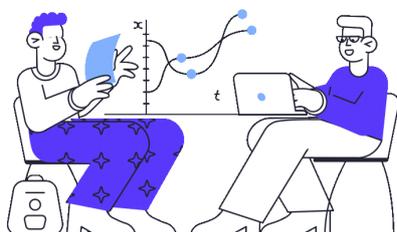
Approximately 15-20 minutes.

**How many instructors
are needed?**

1

**Other requirements
(space, equipment...)**

Open floor space so that the participants can sit in pairs and a device calculating the time each pair should spend.





INDEPENDENCE- ACTIVITY

Description of the activity

The participants sit in pairs/couples of 2 people (in a given group there can be as many pairs/couple possible). One person is the employer and the other the employee. The employee starts arguing regarding the benefits could be gained for all involved parties (organization, employer, employee) if there was a greater autonomy in the workplace (4 minutes). After the 4 minutes, s/he has to propose certain proposals on how this could be achieved (4 minutes).

The rest of the time (12 minutes) will be spent on discussion between employer and employee on how the proposals discussed could be promoted and implemented.

This activity will enable participants to learn how to 1) listen to others actively, 2) advance critical thinking, and 3) offer alternatives and new proposals towards autonomy. Role-playing is a great way to improve your listening skills, your critical thinking





RESPECT TOWARDS EACH OTHER

We are going through an era when it is now easier than ever for everyone to express his/her opinions, especially owing to the wide use of social media. However, the question is, has this opportunity of expressing our ideas freely made us more tolerant and helped us show respect to opinions that might be totally opposite to the ones we are in favour of?⁷⁵



The word respect originally comes from “respectus” which means “attention”, consideration, or regard. It can be defined as “regard for or of a feeling of the value or greatness of an individual, an individual’s quality or capacity, or something considered as an appearance of an individual quality or capacity”. Respect is a fundamental component of successful human relationships. It is the idea of not judging or discriminating against people based on their beliefs or choices, just because we don’t agree with them.⁷⁶

Additionally, respect should be the norm in all working environments. Regardless of the type of work each employee executes, all staff members should be treated equally whether we like their personalities or not. There are two sorts of respect employees care about.⁷⁷

The first one is respect for a person, to be treated equally as all team members and be part of a team, where all members are valuable. The second type of respect is the one concerning professional achievements, which relies on the recognition and confirmation that each employee has unique strengths.





To show respect in the workplace and cultivate a respectful working environment but also in every-day life, follow these tips:⁷⁸

1. Begin with an open mind.
2. Communicate in a kind and friendly manner.
3. Allow employees/people to share their beliefs and ideas.
4. Avoid interrupting others when they are talking.
5. Avoid rebuking your team members/others in front of everyone.
6. Avoid criticism.
7. Praise and greet people.
8. Avoid showing your preferences.
9. Be empathetic and compassionate.
10. Practice active listening.
11. Keep your temper.





RESPECT TOWARDS EACH OTHER- ACTIVITY

Name of the activity

Empathy

Aim of the activity

The goal of the activity is to help participants put themselves in someone else's shoes and build respect among them. Its objective is for participants to acquire a different point of view and thus cultivate respect for others.

Skills that the activity develops

Active listening, understanding and empathy

How many people the activity is suitable for

Minimum 2- no maximum

Time requirement for the activity

Depends on the duration of the discussion.

How many instructors are needed?

1

Other requirements (space, equipment...)

According to the number of participants there should be enough space, so that they can all look one another.





RESPECT TOWARDS EACH OTHER- ACTIVITY

Description of the activity

All the participants sit in a way (e.g., in a circle), so that they can look one another and have a clear view. The instructor asks the participants to think about times when they felt discriminated against or had been treated unfairly. If they haven't experienced anything similar, they can think of an example where someone they know had been discriminated against. Then, each participant shares his/her experience. The other members are carefully listening to the story and, at the end of it, the instructor asks them how they think the participant had felt. Each participant shares a story.

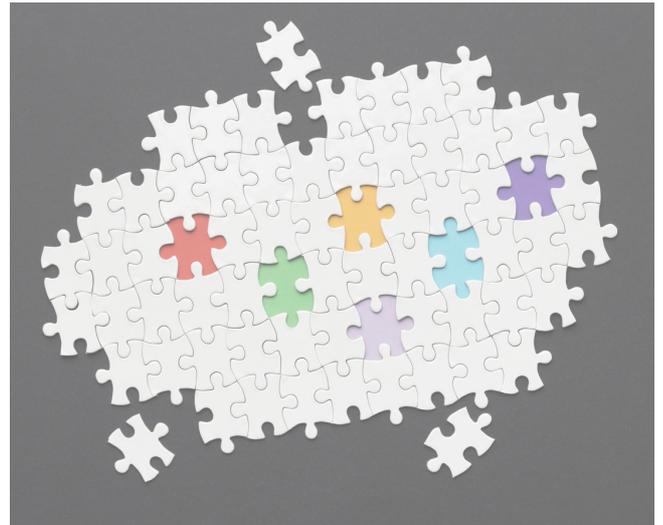
After all members have finished, a discussion over how the lack of respect leads to negative consequences takes place. Through this activity people can understand that there are different and insignificant reasons why someone can be treated unfairly and can recognize the negative effects disrespect entails in both personal and professional life. Therefore, the participants will be careful on the way they behave to their colleagues.





DIVERSITY AWARENESS

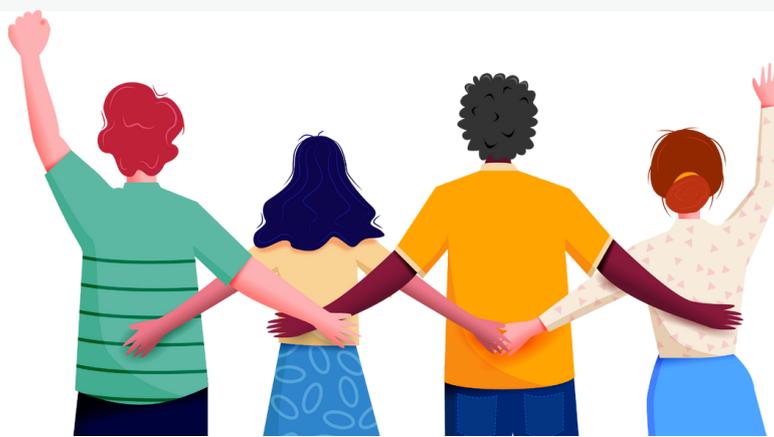
In recent years, due to the increasing level of immigration, cultural exchange and cosmopolitanism, diversity has become a popular topic. The concept “diversity” could be shortly expressed with a single word: differences. Human diversity refers to the differences between people; each of us lives in a rich and infinite variety of mankind.



So, diversity awareness is a new-born skill, essential for living and working in a world like ours. It can be described as the ability to embrace the uniqueness of all individuals along several dimensions, such as race, ethnicity, religious or political beliefs, age, gender, physical abilities, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, language, occupation, education, income.⁷⁹

Especially in the business field, a person with these skills can strongly contribute to fostering a harmonious environment, where mutual respect and equity are central, defending the workforce diversity that is deemed necessary by any organization that intends to compete in the global market.

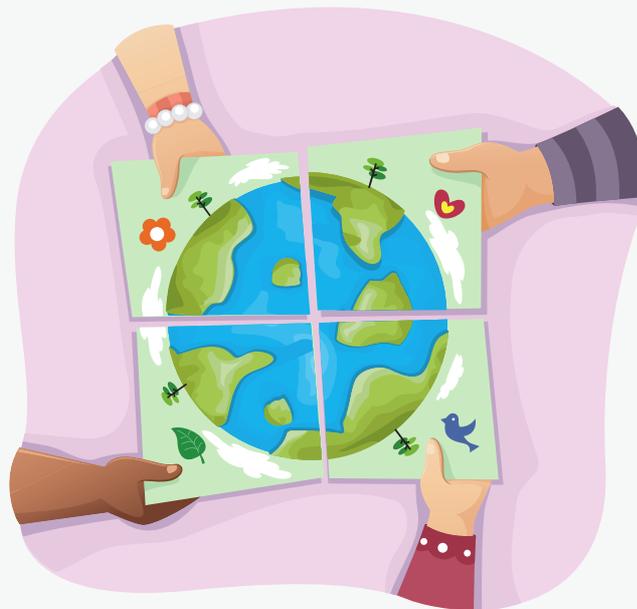
Diversity awareness is used to enhance people’s understanding of and sensitivity to cultural and other differences. By building awareness and understanding, a person can drastically and positively change his/her behaviour.





The following are helpful tips for diversity awareness skills:

- Active and frequent communication. Communication is the fastest way for obtaining the level of transparency and open-mindedness necessary for diversity awareness. This can increase the level of empathy, understanding and sociality.
- Avoid the clusters of people with similar backgrounds. The meetings between people with dissimilar backgrounds, sharing the same space, are another way to promote awareness. If you are looking to improve your own diversity skills, endeavour to willingly pair up with individuals belonging to various backgrounds.
- Lead by example. Sharing your own experiences and stories with your peers to demonstrate the importance of being open about others' unique backgrounds. This can encourage your listeners to accept the uniqueness of individuals, while maintaining their own cultural identity.



DIVERSITY AWARENESS- ACTIVITY

Name of the activity

Bring bias to the forefront

Aim of the activity

Confrontation between different background people for reducing the respective bias

Skills that the activity develops

Communication, diversity awareness

How many people the activity is suitable for

4 or more

Time requirement for the activity

30 minutes

How many instructors are needed?

1

Other requirements (space, equipment...)

Open floor space, a couple of my coins, a jar





DIVERSITY AWARENESS- ACTIVITY

Description of the activity

This is an activity to confront bias and decrease the use of non-inclusive language by calling it out and encouraging the other people to do the same.

You must choose 4 or more people to build a team; it's essential that everyone has various and dissimilar backgrounds.

Every member of the team must call out their bias and speak with a non-inclusive language (for instance, someone can use a gendered language about a specific job). Whoever is called out must insert a dollar in the jar.

Finally, start a rapid discussion about the bias with the team so that it resonates.

This activity help everyone to weaken their bias everyday by bringing it to the forefront. At the end of the year, use the money to do something fun all together.





RELIABILITY/ HONESTY

The term “reliability” refers not only to the state, when someone does what he/she was committed to do, but also to the ability to look around and realize the tasks needed to be carried out, and then perform them. Although it might sound simple, reliability requires itself a variety of other personal skills, such as organizational skills, self – regulation and self – management skills.⁸⁰



What is reliability in the workplace?

Reliability in the workplace is one of the major aspects for reaching success. Being reliable as an employee does not only mean being able to deliver the tasks you have undertaken on time. It is mainly the ability to manage your workload effectively and recognize when it is necessary to ask for help.⁸¹ A reliable employee tries to come up with solutions when a problem arises without turning constantly to his/her supervisor. Last but not least, to be reliable means to say you will get something done and your colleagues know that you will actually carry it out.⁸²



Tips to help you become more reliable: ^{83, 84}

<p>Show commitment:</p> <p>Keep working to reach the common goal you and your team have and carry out the activities you are in charge of.</p>	<p>Meet deadlines:</p> <p>Finishing your tasks on time is of vital importance, not only for the success of your work but also to help others proceed with their assignments.</p>	<p>Keep your word:</p> <p>This might sometimes be inconvenient. Thus, doing so means you let your actions rise above your excuses.</p>
<p>Value your values:</p> <p>To be a reliable person does not only mean to do what you said you would, but also to do what you consider is right and fair. For example, you might be busy with a task, which needs to be delivered; however, if a colleague of yours feels overwhelmed, you have to spend time helping them out.</p>	<p>Work on your communication skills:</p> <p>Unreliability usually derives from miscommunication. Therefore, try to be clear on the instructions you give and make sure you have understood the instructions you are given.</p>	<p>Take responsibility for your actions:</p> <p>Mistakes are unavoidable. If you realize that something went wrong and you were supposed to be in charge of it, admit it and try to fix it. It shows that you are honest and brave enough to deal with your failures.</p>
<p>Be flexible when needed:</p> <p>Be eager to adapt and take on new challenges. Reliable employees are willing to step out of their comfort zone and try their best to meet new needs that may arise in the workplace</p>	<p>Be on time:</p> <p>Being punctual regarding your working hours and your appointments is crucial. It shows that you respect both yours and others' time. You may use a calendar.</p>	<p>Be consistent:</p> <p>Everybody has his/her ups-and-downs. But trying to do your best every single day shows that you care about the team and for the achievement of common goals.</p>



Beside the aforementioned tips of becoming more reliable, it is of high importance to demonstrate reliability in your curriculum vitae. Since a resume gives the first impression of the job applicant, it should include details concerning reliability. Therefore, there are some tips that might help you indicate reliability qualities.⁸⁵

- Highlight relevant to reliability skills, when describing previous working experience: Mention the tasks you were in charge of and describe in detail prior working responsibilities you had undertaken, indicating you were a reliable employee.
- Refer to reliability-related skills: In the section where you mention your soft skills, you ought to mention skills such as time management, communication and collaboration skills, adaptability and determination.
- Mention previous leadership experiences (if any): A successful leader has to handle difficulties and cope with many responsibilities. If you have managed to do so in a previous working position, then you have to mention it in your resume because it will be an advantage.

What is honesty in the workplace?

Except for being reliable, an employee should also be honest. Being honest in the workplace means being transparent, in other words making your intentions clear and being consistent. Hence you give your colleagues and superiors the chance to get to know the real you and form their own opinion about you.



Tips to help you become more honest and demonstrate it in the workplace: ⁸⁶

<p>Think about what you want to say:</p> <p>Honest employees who show integrity avoid gossiping and pay attention to what they say. Try your words not to be offensive but include constructive criticism. Thus, you will make stronger relationships with your colleagues.</p>	<p>Admit your mistakes:</p> <p>Acknowledging your mistakes takes courage, honesty and bravery. Doing so shows you are a trustworthy employee who does not attempt to hide his/her mistakes and does not try to blame others for his/her wrongdoings. Admit them and be eager to correct them.</p>	<p>Set a good example:</p> <p>Regardless of the working position each employee has, everybody should try to set a good example concerning their behavior towards each other. If you believe that everyone should be honest and show respect, then you have to be the first one to do so.</p>
<p>Put aside your personal feelings:</p> <p>You might have to collaborate with an employee who you are not fond of outside the workplace. However, you have to segregate his/her quality as a personality from his/her quality as a professional.</p>	<p>Don't compromise your morals:</p> <p>It might be difficult sometimes to stay loyal to your morals and beliefs and simultaneously be favorable. However, you should not be afraid to stand for what you think is right, thus proving that your actions are consistent with your words.</p>	<p>Be yourself:</p> <p>Probably the most important thing regarding honesty is being you. Don't alter your personality just to fit others tastes. Showing the real you will let your colleagues get to know you better and in depth, hence leading to stronger bonds in the workplace.</p>



RELIABILITY- ACTIVITY

Name of the activity

Minefield

Aim of the activity

The goal of the activity is to get participants familiarized with the idea of relying on their colleagues and build trust among them.

Skills that the activity develops

Reliability, trust, giving and following clear instructions, communication skills

How many people the activity is suitable for

There is no maximum but there is a minimum of two.

Time requirement for the activity

Five minutes per person.

How many instructors are needed?

0-1

Other requirements (space, equipment...)

Objects to use as obstacles, blindfold





RELIABILITY- ACTIVITY

Description of the activity

Go to an open space and lay out a number of obstacles on the ground (e.g., cones and chairs). Pair the employees together, and make one of them wear a blindfold. The purpose here is to have the employee, who can see, verbally direct the blindfolded peer across the minefield to the other side without running into anything. The blindfolded employee can't talk, so he/she has to rely on close listening and coworker trust only. Through this activity the participants learn to rely on their colleagues and trust one another. Moreover, the participants should give clear instructions, therefore communication skills are honed, too.





NETWORKING

Generally, networking is explained as the exchange of information and ideas among people with a common profession or special interest, usually in an informal social setting. Networking often begins with a single point of common ground. But what is networking about, indeed? There are 3 main concepts of networking among public members:

1. Networking is a practice of compiling a huge database of names, usually by collecting business cards;
2. Networking is an opportunity to meet people and personally prospect for business;

3. Networking as nothing more than schmoozing and boozing, with no specific intention except to be seen and socialize. There are several skills you'll need to develop to enjoy the advantages of the techniques.





5 Ways how to network more efficiently

The same principles can be used for good self-presentation in the job market and successful networking as well. It is important to be able to present yourself and your idea in a way that is not only heard by others, but also trusted. Especially, if you are new in the room and there is nobody who can introduce you.

1. **Be selective.** Quality of your contacts is the first and the main reason behind your success. The process of effective networking begins by being very selective with who you bring into your circle of relationship. Look for people who are good at what they do and have a positive, supportive attitude. It is important to build meaningful relationships over an extended period of time.

2. **Understand the purpose of your introductory message and trust it.** No matter what the topic of your talk is – a brief presentation of yourself in person, in front of the audience or in a job interview – it is important to understand what your purpose as a speaker is. Answer the question for yourself, what do you mean by your message - to convince, to inform or just to entertain?

With your introduction, you should achieve a very clear goal (to get an employment contract, an important appointment, to introduce yourself to a decision-making person, etc.) in a specific span of time, e. g. 1-2 minutes. And to make it easier to do that, you have to know the topic and to trust it.

An excellent knowledge of the topic gives the speaker self-confidence and helps to connect with his audience. By being honest with the listener, clearly showing what and why is important to you, and not hiding enthusiasm, you can expect his response in the same vibe.

3. **Focus on the needs of your listener(s).** Always keep in mind what your listener needs and what he wants to know, not what you can tell him.

When presenting yourself or your idea, you also need to focus on and respond to the listener's reaction. Smile and make eye contact. This sounds very simple, but surprisingly many people can't do this. If you smile and make eye contact, you make the connection. It also helps you feel less nervous because you are talking to an individual rather than a stranger.





4. Use not only your voice but also your body language. The spoken word is not the most effective means of communication, as it focuses on only one of the five senses of the audience.

However, using your voice effectively can help improve the spoken word. By changing the speed of speech and emphasizing changes in pitch and tone, your voice will become more interesting and grab the listener's attention.

Another important thing that the studies show is that more than 3/4 of the communication takes place in a non-verbal way. This means that not only the tone of voice but also the language of the body is very important to convey the message. Avoid putting hands behind your back or in your pockets. Use gestures that reveal your openness and self-confidence, move naturally.

5. Tell a story. Communication is specific to every human culture, and storytelling helps us build an emotional connection. If you can build empathy in your listener, you are on your way to a successful relationship.

Stories help not only to draw and retain the attention of the listeners, but also to memorize important things. You can start your message with a story, or better yet, make your message work as a story.

To tell a story effectively, use at least one of two main storytelling mechanisms in your presentation. First, it focuses on the actors - the people (you, your family member, neighbour, boss, etc.) - not the objects, the data, and the objects. The second is the dynamism of history, the changes taking place in it.



Social Media



NETWORKING - ACTIVITY

**Name of the
activity**

Let's do networking!

Aim of the activity

It helps to maintain a clear structure of the meeting and allows dozens of participants to get to know each other better in a short period of time

**Skills that the
activity develops**

networking, communication, team spirit

**How many people the
activity is suitable for**

-

**Time requirement for
the activity**

60 minutes

**How many instructors
are needed?**

One "watchguard" – a person who checks the time of each presentation and stops a presenter after his/her time is exceeded.

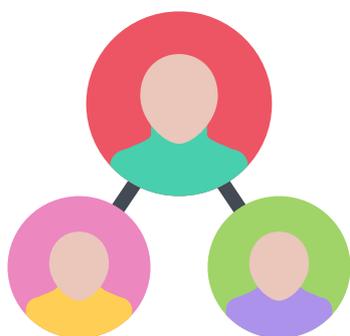
**Other requirements
(space, equipment...)**

-

**Description of the
activity**

Prepare a brief and clear introductory message up to 1 minute long about yourself and needs you have, e.g., imagine yourself looking for a job placement. The message has to include:

- Your name and surname
 - Educational and professional background
 - What you are good at
 - What do you expect from the meetings, especially if there are people that you don't know from before?
 - What feedback do you expect (e.g., smiles, questions, invitation to have a private meeting etc.)?
- Try to make your message look like a story.





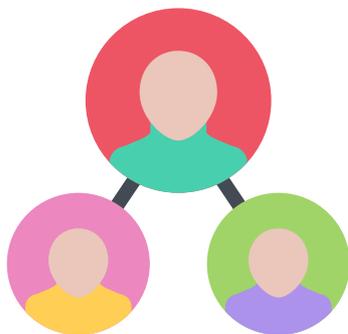
NETWORKING- ACTIVITY

Description of the activity

Read your message aloud to yourself. Can you easily pronounce all the words? How much of your body language do you need to convey the message to the audience in a clear and understandable way?

Give a clear message to your audience. Watch their reaction. Are they interested and engaged?

If a “watchguard” stops before you end your introduction, rethink your introductory message. Did it take too much time to explain some certain situations? How do you feel interrupted by a “watchguard”?



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