



TOGETHER AGAIN
P R O J E C T

Innovative methods to improve psycho – social aspects in the school
enviroment in interactive and attractive ways

WP2 - A practical resource bank for teachers to relearn how to interact with students

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Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about rapid and profound changes in all areas of social life, particularly affecting the relationship between teachers and students. The period of isolation, remote learning and limited social contact has had a negative impact on the emotional development of young people and on the way adults communicate with teenagers. In response to these challenges, this handbook has been developed to support teachers in building healthy, empathetic and trusting relationships with students aged 12–16.

The handbook is the result of work carried out as part of one of the key stages of a project aimed at developing a bank of teaching resources focused on strengthening social and emotional competences. The materials offered are designed not only to help rebuild relationships after the pandemic, but also to equip teachers with tools for their daily educational and teaching work with young people, in a way that takes into account their emotional and social needs.

The structure of the handbook comprises seven thematic modules, each focusing on a different aspect of social and emotional relationships and competences, such as self-control, managing external stimuli, belief in one's own abilities, and others. Each module includes three practical exercises that can be carried out directly with students – individually, in pairs or in groups. These exercises are interactive, encourage reflection and joint action, and their diversity allows them to be flexibly adapted to the needs of a particular class or school environment.

The exercises, suggested activities and methodological guidelines included in the handbook are practical and based on current pedagogical and psychological knowledge. We encourage you to use them in a flexible manner, adapted to the specific nature of your class, school and cultural context. We believe that these materials will not only help you better understand the challenges facing students today, but also build a more supportive and open educational environment.

1. Self-control and managing difficult emotions



Objectives of the Module

- Defining self-control and emotion management
- Emphasizing the importance of learning self-control and emotion management skills for overall well-being
- Highlighting the potential negative impacts of poor self-control and emotion management
- Outlining the advantages associated with strong self-control and emotion management
- Offering specific techniques and approaches to develop self-control and emotion management skills



Content of the Module

Self-control and emotion management are important life skills learned and developed throughout childhood and adolescence right into adulthood. Lacking of these skills can perpetuate negative emotions, which may lead to severe health issues. It can also have social repercussions, such as damaging relationships with others. Although it is a complex process, learning to handle emotions properly and respond with appropriate behaviour is essential to every person's overall mental and physical well-being.

1 Self-control

Self-control, also referred to as self-regulation, is the ability of an individual to manage their own emotions, thoughts and behaviour in accordance with the demands of the situation. It may involve resisting highly emotional reactions, as well as modulating one's emotional responses. It can also be demonstrated via focusing on tasks and resisting distractions, or via choosing long-term rewards over immediate ones.

According to some researchers, self-control is partly determined by genetics but it is also a skill that can be strengthened with practice. Children start building it at a very young age and keep developing it into their 20s. Psychologists distinguish the following three primary types of self-control:

- 1) **Impulse control** – ability to manage urges and impulses. People who struggle with impulse control may act first without thinking about the consequences of their actions;
- 2) **Emotional control** – ability to regulate strong emotional responses and avoid overreacting. Individuals who struggle with emotional control may experience lasting bad moods, and get overwhelmed by the intensity of their feelings;
- 3) **Movement control** – ability to control how and when the body moves. Someone who has difficulty with movement control may experience restlessness and find it difficult to remain still. Lack of this self-control type at some children is also called hyperactivity.

Self-control plays a vital role in people's everyday life because it helps them to overcome impulses and make decisions that help to achieve their long-term goals. In the school environment, there are two key areas where it is extremely important to support building of self-control in students. First one is achieving academic success, as self-control helps students to avoid distractions and focus on the studies. The second area is socialization, as being in control of their actions and reactions helps students to fit in and make friends.

2 Managing difficult emotions

Difficult emotions are intense negative feelings that can be hard to navigate and regulate, often triggered by internal thoughts, external events, or social interactions.

The ability of emotional understanding and management, also known as emotional regulation, is a component of self-control and it evolves throughout childhood and adolescence. Initially, young children rely on parents or teachers to help them recognize and name their emotions, which is the first step towards overall self-control. As they mature, they acquire more independent strategies for managing their feelings.

We can distinguish the following most common difficult emotions that students struggle to cope with:

- sadness – can lead to withdrawal, loss of interest, decreased motivation, and in severe cases depression

- anger – may result in aggressive behaviour, conflicts with peers and adults, difficulty to concentrate and internalizing problems like self-harm
- fear/anxiety – can cause avoidance of social situations, academic difficulties, physical symptoms (e.g., headaches, stomach-aches), and the development of anxiety disorders
- shame/guilt – can lead to low self-esteem, social isolation, self-blame and reluctance to take risks or seek help
- frustration – may result in irritability, giving up easily on tasks
- disgust – can lead to social avoidance and judgmental behaviour
- jealousy/envy – can damage relationships and lead to negative social comparisons

Learning to understand and manage emotions is vital because while experiencing intense feelings is normal, a lack of healthy coping mechanisms can negatively impact behaviour and relationships. In the short term, this can lead to increased anxiety, social withdrawal, and difficulty with self-control. Long-term consequences may include relationship problems and an increased risk of mental health conditions. Therefore, developing these skills is crucial for both inner well-being and healthy interpersonal connections.

3 Benefits of self-control and emotion management

Although self-control and emotion management have largely been studied separately, they correlate closely with each other, as they both refer to essential skills of an individual to override automatic responses in favour of controlled ones. Self-control and emotion management are required to successfully navigate a whole range of situations in life, and mastering these abilities brings similar benefits to individual's personal development, as well as to their overall health and well-being.

Among the many advantages that continuous teaching of self-control and emotion management in children and teens has, these are the most important ones:

- it contributes to academic success by enabling the students to concentrate on studies, complete assignments and resist distractions in the classroom;
- it fosters healthy social relationships through improved communication, empathy and the ability to resolve conflicts constructively;
- it supports students' mental health by aiding in stress and impulse management, reducing anxiety and helping to control impulsive behaviours that can potentially contribute to mental health issues;
- it supports physical well-being through healthier choices (balanced diet, exercising, etc.);

- it protects students against risky behaviours by increasing their resistance to peer pressure related to substance abuse or other harmful activities;
- it lays the foundation for long-term well-being and overall flourishing, as children and teens with high level of self-control and emotion management tend to achieve greater success later in adulthood thanks to experiencing self-acceptance and feelings of competence.

4. Techniques to practice self-control and emotion management

There are various strategies that students can learn and apply in attempt to build their self-control and emotion management skills. The most effective ones include:

- recognizing and naming their feelings in order to understand and process them properly
- finding appropriate ways to express their emotions (e.g. via talking, writing or creative activities)
- building coping mechanisms (practicing relaxation techniques like breathing or mindfulness, questioning negative thoughts)
- engaging in healthy activities (regular exercise, sufficient sleep), maintaining a balanced lifestyle
- trying to see problems from different angles to reduce the intensity of negative feelings
- in challenging situations, practicing kindness and understanding towards themselves instead of self-criticism
- seeking support from trusted adults and peers

Teachers and teaching assistants play a major role when it comes to encouraging students to engage in these techniques and activities. They are responsible for the classroom culture and positive environment in school, and as such, they are expected to create a safe space where students are not afraid to talk about their feelings openly and show their emotions without fear of judgement. This can only be achieved by maintaining positive relationships, demonstrating healthy coping strategies, teaching emotional literacy, supporting students in stressful situations and providing opportunities for emotional expression.

Tool 1

Self-control and managing difficult emotions

Emotions Jenga



Name of the Tool

Emotions jenga

Objectives of the Tool

- Practicing of self-control techniques
- Increasing of emotional literacy via introducing various difficult emotions
- Finding and understanding the connection between discussed emotions and life situations in which they may arise
- Analyzing the consequences of the discussed emotions, what kind of behavior they cause

Introduction of the Tool

Emotions Jenga is a tool based on the classic Jenga – a very popular game that requires both self-control skills and precision.

The basic rules of classic Jenga lie in strategic placing of the blocks on the top of the tower, while making sure that the construction does not fall. Within the preparation stage of the game, a tower is stacked from the blocks by placing them in sets of three at right angles to each other. Stacking continues until all blocks are used. Afterwards, the game can begin. Players take turn removing one block at a time from any level of the tower, except the one below an incomplete top level. The removed block is then placed on the top of the tower. The game continues until the tower collapses.

Adapting of classic Jenga rules into our tool provides a valuable opportunity to practice self-control techniques, as the activities conducted within this famous game are designed to train students for the following key skills:

- impulse control – students need to take a moment and assess the situation before making their move, as any rush could potentially end the game;
- patience and perseverance – students have to wait for their turn in the game and take their time to carefully conduct each move;
- managing frustration and disappointment – students are required to cope with feelings of frustration and disappointment when the game is over, accept the outcome, and potentially strategize for the next game;
- strategic thinking and planning – students need to anticipate the outcomes of their actions and plan their moves accordingly.

At the same time, this tool aims to help students increase their emotional literacy, which is an essential part of emotion management skill. Each block of the Jenga tower will be marked with a certain difficult emotion, and students will not only be prompted to pull the block and place it on the top of the tower within their move, but also to answer the following 2 questions:

- *What usually makes me feel this way?*
- *How do I react when I feel this way?*

Such a twist will lead the students to think about reasons and behavioural consequences related to the specific emotion. The emotions will repeat on the blocks, therefore some of them can be analysed repeatedly within the game. Thanks to this, students will get the chance to understand the discussed emotion from several angles, compare them and reflect on which reaction to the difficult emotion might be the healthiest one.

Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

Preparation of the game:

1. Teacher will mark each block of the Jenga game with one of the following difficult emotions. For the purposes of this tool, it has been proposed to use 18 emotions per 1 Jenga set distributed evenly (each emotion will be written on 3 blocks).

CONFUSED	CONCERNED	NERVOUS
AFRAID	CRANKY	BORED
ANGRY	DISGUSTED	DISAPPOINTED
HURT	SAD	LONELY
MISUNDERSTOOD	UNSURE	TERRIFIED
JEALOUS	DISTRACTED	ANXIOUS

2. Teacher will build the tower from the blocks. The blocks are initially stacked in a sturdy tower, 18 stories high, with three blocks per layer placed horizontally, and each layer oriented perpendicular to the layer below.
3. Teacher will introduce the game to students and explain the rules.

Course of the game:

Each group member takes a turn pulling a Jenga block from the tower. Once a block is pulled out, the student will read the emotion written on it out loud and answer the following 2 questions:

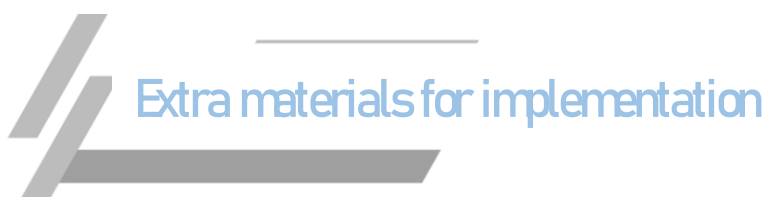
- *What usually makes me feel this way?*
- *How do I react when I feel this way?*

Only when these questions are answered, student can continue in their move and position the block on the top of the tower. Teachers can encourage students to participate in group discussion every time when the 2 above questions are answered by the student who pulled the block from the tower, or when the student finds it difficult to answer the questions.

Students must try to prevent the Jenga tower from falling, but if it does fall unexpectedly, it is recommended to quickly rebuild it and continue playing.



40 minutes



Jenga block game

Markers

Tool 2

Self-control and managing difficult emotions

The Coping Wheel



The coping wheel



- Enhancement of emotional literacy, enabling students to foster a richer emotional vocabulary
- Promotion of self-awareness via encouraging deeper introspection into student's emotional states, triggers and patterns of emotional responses
- Facilitating emotional regulation through range of coping strategies tailored to specific difficult emotions
- Reducing decision fatigue, minimizing feelings of being overwhelmed

- Guidance to develop personalized coping mechanisms
- Increase of resilience, strengthening the ability to bounce back from difficult experiences
- Encouraging proactive development of various coping strategies



Introduction of the Tool

Coping refers to the various ways individuals apply to manage difficult situations, address challenges and handle their emotions. Coping strategies may vary based on the situation. Common ways of coping include problem solving, emotion management, avoidance, seeking for social support. Healthy coping mechanisms, such as talking to someone, exercising, practicing mindfulness, journaling thoughts and emotions, or self-care promote well-being without causing harm. On the contrary, unhealthy coping mechanisms like avoidance, procrastination, over-/undereating, substance abuse, or aggression can create further problems. Development of good coping skills is crucial for resilience and overall well-being. Neglect of good coping skills can lead to accumulated stress and potential health issues or unhealthy habits. Learning to cope well is an important part of self-care.

The Coping Wheel is a valuable tool that helps to organize and boost one's coping skills by providing a visual way to see the options for dealing with various difficult emotions. Benefits of using the coping wheel when dealing with difficult emotions include increased emotional awareness, exploration of different coping mechanisms, reflection on healthy vs. unhealthy coping strategies, action planning, or reducing the feeling of being overwhelmed by intense emotions. In essence, the coping wheel offers a personalized set of diverse responses to various challenging emotions, which empowers the individual to navigate those emotions more constructively. Regular use of the coping wheel leads the individual to building healthy coping skills. When used by students, it can teach them effective ways to handle difficult emotions, as well as build their resilience during periods of academic pressure.

The use of a coping wheel

This practical visual tool comes in many variations, offering different levels of emotion exploration and self-awareness training. It is possible to come across pre-filled templates with suggested emotions and/or coping strategies, or to obtain an empty template which can be filled-in according to individual needs. One can even create their own unique template of the coping wheel. Some coping wheels are designed to develop coping strategies only for difficult emotions, some provide the option to reflect also on coping strategies related to positive emotions.

Regardless the design, use of any coping wheel includes the following phases:

1. Emotional identification and self-awareness

During this phase, it is important for the user to name the emotion they are experiencing. Physical sensations, thoughts and behavioural urges may be valuable hints. Once the primary (core) emotion is identified within the inner circle of the coping wheel, the user should focus on exploring the related secondary feelings that are presented by the middle layer of the coping wheel. Acknowledging of the secondary feelings can lead to better understanding of the emotional state.

2. Selection of the coping strategy

During the second phase, the user is required to select one or more coping strategies they think might be the most helpful to navigate through the specific emotion. It is recommended to avoid strategies that could provide temporary relief but might have negative consequences later (substance abuse, aggression). One should also consider their current environment and resources, and focus on strategies that are feasible for the current situation. Examples of healthy coping strategies may include deep breathing, exercise or walk, asking for help, writing a journal, listening to music, making a list of pros and cons, etc.

3. Implementation and evaluation

During this phase, the user should implement the chosen coping strategy and monitor their emotional state, focusing especially on changes related to the intensity of the emotion. The time necessary for the implementation of the coping strategy may differ based on the selected strategy, but it should be reasonable in relation to the current environment and resources. The next step of this phase includes evaluation of the effectiveness of the selected strategy. The main goal is to reach the sense of relief, calm down, feel better. If the initially chosen strategy did not work to reach any of this, it should be adjusted or replaced by another one.

Once the intensity of the emotion has eased, it is helpful to take a moment and analyze how it felt to apply the selected coping strategies, what were the consequences of the actions on the emotional state.

4. Ongoing practice and personalization

Regular use of the coping wheel helps the individual to become familiar with different types of coping mechanisms. They can observe the connection between emotional changes and various coping strategies, and learn what works best for them in order to handle especially the difficult emotions more easily.

The coping wheel can be personalized and adjusted anytime. It is possible to use a different template, change coping strategies, include more primary or secondary emotions. There are no limits to the updates of the coping wheel, as it should be the best possible version for a person to boost their mental health.

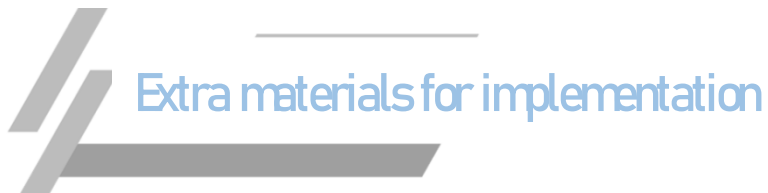
Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

The aim of this tool is to lead the students towards development of coping strategies that can be applied especially when navigating difficult emotions.

1. At the beginning, teacher will introduce the concept of the coping wheel to the class.
2. Each student will be given a printed template of the coping wheel along with the table of secondary feelings. Students will be asked to select one of the pre-filled primary emotions (fear, anger, shame, sadness, disgust, surprise) which they are struggling with the most at the moment.
3. Once each student identifies their primary emotion, they will be prompted to fill-in 4 related secondary feelings to the middle layer of the wheel. In order to do so as effectively as possible, each student should take their time and explore the feelings that arise in response to the primary emotion. Students can select the secondary feelings from the printed list, but they do not necessarily have to stick to it. They are free to fill-in any secondary feelings which describe their current emotional state the most accurately.
4. Afterwards, each student should brainstorm on a coping strategy they expect to help them deal with their difficult emotion. The teacher can suggest some examples, but as each student is a unique individual with their unique needs, they are free to come up with any other coping strategy outside of the provided examples. During this phase, the teacher will check-up on students and consult their selected coping methods. In case any student struggles to suggest a coping method, or suggests an unhealthy one, the teacher should navigate them towards a more constructive choice.
5. Students will be asked to take 10-15 minutes to implement the selected coping strategy and observe its effect on their emotional state. If the coping strategy does not help to reduce the intensity of the difficult emotion, it needs to be reconsidered, adjusted or replaced by a different one. The coping strategy that works well for the emotional well-being of the student, can be written on the outer layer of the coping wheel, so that it's quickly accessible whenever the student needs to manage that same difficult emotion and related intense feelings again.
6. In the end, students will be prompted to apply the same steps for each of the primary difficult emotions listed in the inner circle, and finish their coping wheel over time. The teacher may assist the students whenever they need to consult the selected coping strategies, and ensure that their coping wheel is filled with healthy coping mechanisms leading towards emotional well-being of the student.



40 – 50 minutes

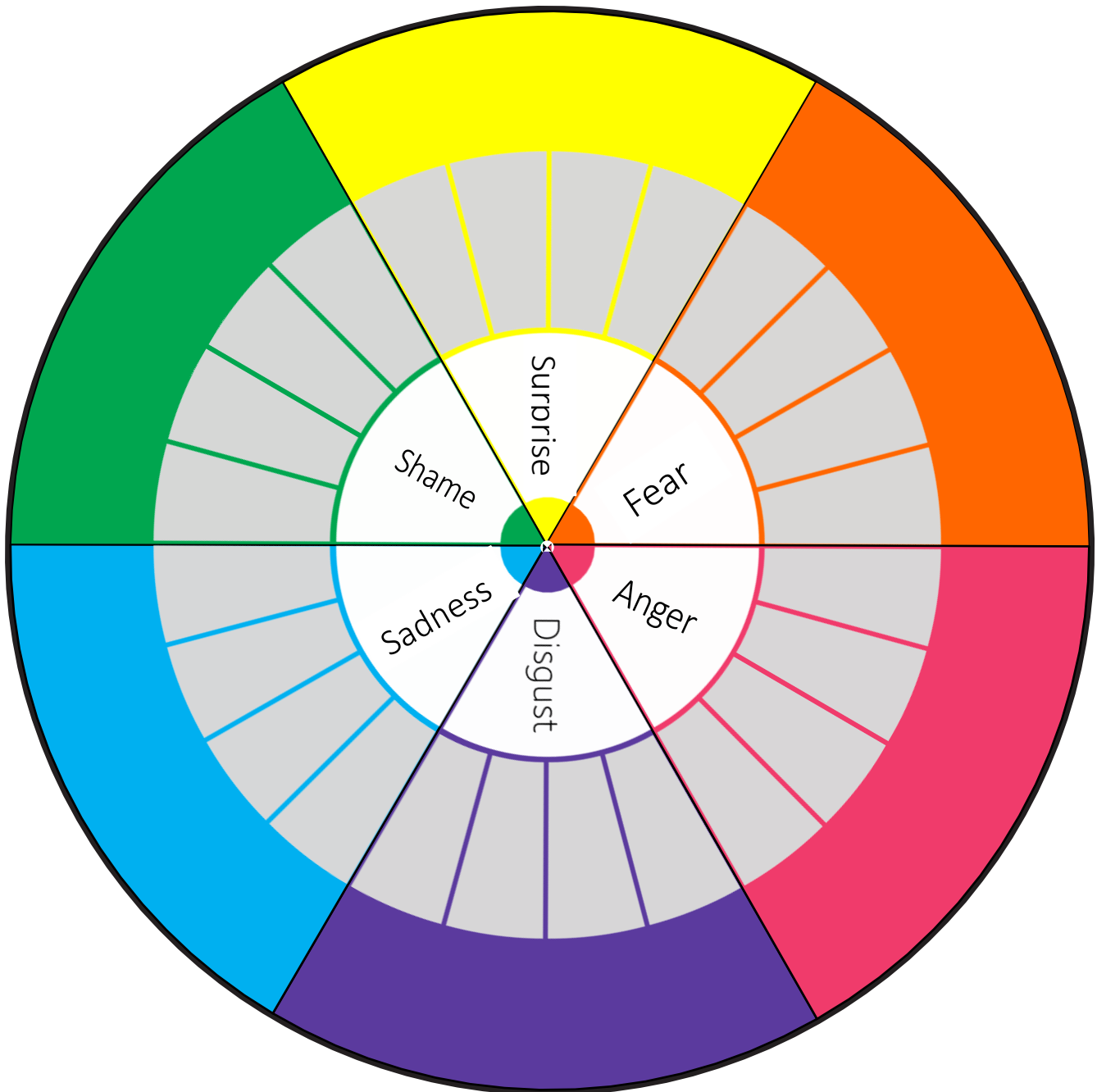


Coping wheel template (attachment 1)

Table of secondary feelings (attachment 2)

Crayons, pencils, pens (attachment 3)

Attachment 1: Coping wheel template



Attachment 2: Table of secondary feelings

❖ Scared	❖ Anxious	❖ Nervous	❖ Worried
❖ Stressed	❖ Afraid	❖ Insecure	❖ Terrified
❖ Threatened	❖ Frightened	❖ Panicky	❖ Paralyzed
❖ Shaky	❖ Cautious	❖ Intimidated	❖ Aggressive
❖ Frustrated	❖ Upset	❖ Annoyed	❖ Furious
❖ Hostile	❖ Sarcastic	❖ Storming	❖ Heated
❖ Vengeful	❖ Cranky	❖ Spiteful	❖ Mad
❖ Abrasive	❖ Grumpy	❖ Humiliated	❖ Ridiculed
❖ Weak	❖ Small	❖ Disrespected	❖ Ashamed
❖ Inferior	❖ Remorseful	❖ Sheepish	❖ Exposed
❖ Guilty	❖ Humble	❖ Embarrassed	❖ Blushing
❖ Judged	❖ Lonely	❖ Disappointed	❖ Hurt
❖ Hopeless	❖ Unhappy	❖ Gloomy	❖ Broken
❖ Excluded	❖ Abandoned	❖ Isolated	❖ Rejected
❖ Vulnerable	❖ Crushed	❖ Empty	❖ Moody
❖ Discouraged	❖ Repelled	❖ Skeptical	❖ Suspicious
❖ Dismissive	❖ Disturbed	❖ Sickened	❖ Critical
❖ Contemptuous	❖ Judgmental	❖ Rejecting	❖ Avoiding
❖ Hesitant	❖ Disapproving	❖ Confused	❖ Betrayed
❖ Distracted	❖ Shocked	❖ Startled	❖ Speechless
❖ Dizzy	❖ Frozen	❖ Uncomfortable	❖ Unsure

Attachment 3: Examples of healthy coping strategies

Talk to a friend.

Share your feelings.

Exercise.

Draw or paint.

Pause.

Take few deep breaths.

Count slowly to 10.

Write in a journal.

Do something fun.

Ask for a hug.

Listen to music.

Go outside.

Call someone.

Watch a funny video.

Forgive yourself.

Read some jokes.

Write a poem.

Focus on a happy memory.

Remind yourself some of your biggest accomplishments.

Make someone a gift.

Tool 3

Self-control and managing difficult emotions

Role-Playing Scenarios



Role-playing scenarios



The primary objectives of this tool aim to enable students to:

- develop self-awareness via recognizing and understanding their own emotions in challenging situations
- enhance self-regulation via practice of impulsive reactions management and behavior control during triggers

- improve emotion management skills via applying different strategies to effectively cope with difficult emotions such as anger, sadness, frustration or disappointment in healthy ways
- build empathy and perspective-taking
- develop problem-solving skills
- increase confidence in handling real-life social and emotional challenges
- bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge about self-control and difficult emotion management and the practical application of these skills in realistic contexts



Introduction of the Tool

Role-playing scenarios are vital and highly beneficial tools for teaching students how to tackle self-control techniques and navigate difficult emotions. Role-playing provides a safe and low-stakes environment for participants to explore different emotional responses and social interactions without real-world consequences. They can experiment with various behaviours and reactions, and observe the outcomes. By stepping into different roles, students can gain a deeper understanding of others' perspectives, feelings and motivations. This fosters empathy and improves their ability to connect with peers, family and others. Role-playing scenarios can be designed to highlight specific emotions. Participants learn to identify and label these emotions in themselves and others based on verbal cues, body language and situational context. This builds their emotional vocabulary and awareness. At the same time, scenarios may present challenging situations that trigger difficult emotions, providing the participants with opportunities to practice self-control techniques such as deep breathing, mindfulness, cognitive reframing or problem-solving in a supportive setting. Many role-playing scenarios involve social interactions, which allows students to practice communication skills, assertiveness, but also conflict resolution and cooperation in challenging situations. They can receive immediate feedback on their social behaviours and the way they respond to triggers. Observing their own reactions and the reactions of other participants during role-play allows students to gain valuable understanding and knowledge of their emotional state during triggers, coping mechanisms, as well as knowledge of their behavioural patterns. Navigating various challenging situations in a role-play setting may lead to increase of their confidence level when it comes to ability to handle similar situations in real life.

Creation of effective role-playing experience involves several key points:

- At the beginning, it is better to introduce simple scenarios. The complexity should be added gradually over time as the participants gain more experience and skills.

- It is important to ensure that everyone participates actively and feels comfortable while fully engaging in the role-play.
- It is crucial to create a supportive and non-judgmental space for learning, as well as to provide constructive feedback.
- It is recommended to encourage participants to apply the gained skills during their daily interactions to ensure ongoing development of their self-control and emotional regulation abilities.

Role-playing as an active and engaging learning method may cater for different learning styles, making the learning process more enjoyable and memorable in comparison to passive learning techniques. Using realistic role-play scenarios aims to equip students with the practical coping techniques, self-regulation skills and emotional intelligence. These are necessary to navigate the complexities of their social world with greater self-control, emotional resilience, and positive interpersonal relationships.



Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

This part of the tool aims to present general methodology for implementation of role-playing scenarios in class, focusing on maximization of the learning experience related to developing self-control and emotion management skills.

The methodology is followed by examples of specific scenario situations.

Methodology for implementation of role-play scenarios

1 Preparation phase

1.1 Introduction and setting of the stage

Teacher will explain students the purpose of the activity: to practice healthy ways of managing difficult emotions and responding to challenging social situations. Before each role-play, the teacher may initiate short discussion about the impact of various social challenges presented in the role-playing scenarios.

An essential part of this phase is to emphasize that students are going to practice in a safe environment where exploration is welcomed, and there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. Students should understand that the role-play is an opportunity to learn from different approaches.

1.2 Explaining the scenario and assigning roles

Teacher will present the role-play scenario clearly and concisely, either verbally or through a written handout/slide. It is important to ensure that all students understand the role-play situation. This phase includes highlighting of the biggest challenges for individual characters, as well as introducing the potential response options provided in the scenario. Teacher can also briefly explain the core emotions and motivations of each role.

Teacher will then proceed to assigning of roles. They may consider allowing students to volunteer or assign the roles based on learning needs and comfort levels.

2 Role-playing phase

Teacher encourages participating students to embody the core emotions and motivations connected to their roles and act naturally as if they were experiencing the situation in real life. At the same time, the teacher helps to facilitate the role-play by keeping the participating students focused on the scenario, introducing prompts or unexpected turns if needed to encourage the practice of specific skills, ensuring all participants have a chance to speak and act, and by managing time effectively. Teacher will observe the interactions between students and note instances of effective self-control, emotional reactivity and coping strategies used.

3 Cool-down and debriefing phase

This phase represents the core of learning. After the role-play, teacher will briefly acknowledge the effort of each participant and help them transition back to their "student" roles. Then the teacher will initiate a guided discussion through which the class will focus on the below key points:

- emotional identification (How did the participants feel in their roles? What were the physical sensations?)
- triggers (What specific events or interactions triggered those emotions?)
- reactions (What actions did the participants take? Were the actions helpful in managing the situation and difficult emotions?)
- self-control strategies (Where did participants demonstrate self-controls? What strategies did they use?)
- alternative responses (What other ways could the participants have responded? What self-control or difficult emotion management skills could have been employed?)
- learning points (What did the class learn about managing these particular emotions and similar situations?)
- personal relevance (How might this role-play scenario relate to students' own experiences?)

4 Reflection and application phase

This phase is valuable for personal reflection. Students are given time for individual assessment of their actions, and encouraged to reflect on the emotions they found the most difficult to handle, self-control strategies that resonated with them, or think about the ways how the learnings gained via role-play might be applied in real-life situations. This personal reflection may be conducted via journaling or completing reflection worksheets.

Role-playing scenarios

Scenario 1: The Social Media Storm

The Situation: Student A posts a photo of a group project on social media. Another student (Student B) leaves a negative and somewhat critical public comment under the post. Student A feels a surge of anger and embarrassment.

The Challenge: Student A needs to decide how to respond. They have several options:

- a) react impulsively with an angry and defensive comment
- b) ignore the comment and try to forget about it
- c) privately message Student B to understand their comment
- d) talk to a trusted friend or adult about how they're feeling

Roles: Student A, Student B (can be played by the teacher or another student), a supportive friend (optional).

Focus on: Managing anger and frustration, resisting impulsive reactions, considering different communication styles, seeking support.

Scenario 2: The Unfair Grade

The Situation: Student A receives a grade on an assignment that they believe is unfair. They feel disappointed, frustrated, and maybe even angry.

The Challenge: Student A needs to decide how to address this situation. They could:

- a) immediately storm into the teacher's office and demand a regrade
- b) complain loudly to their friends about the unfairness
- c) take some time to calm down and then schedule a meeting with the teacher to discuss
- d) their concerns respectfully and provide evidence
- e) give up and accept the grade without understanding the reasoning

Roles: Student A, the teacher (can be played by the teacher or another student).

Focus on: Managing disappointment and frustration, practicing respectful communication, advocating for oneself calmly, understanding different perspectives.

Scenario 3: The Pressure to Fit In

The Situation: A group of popular students is pressuring a new student to do something they are not comfortable with (e.g., skip class, make fun of another student, try vaping). The new student feels anxious and wants to be accepted but at the same time knows it's wrong. The Challenge: New student needs to navigate this peer pressure. They could:

- a) give in to the pressure to fit in
- b) become defensive and reject the group outright
- c) politely but firmly decline and offer an alternative
- d) seek support from a trusted adult or friend

Roles: The new student, the leader of the popular group, other members of the group (optional).

Focus on: Managing anxiety and the desire for acceptance, practicing assertive communication and saying "no", prioritizing personal values, seeking help when needed.

Scenario 4: The Lost Opportunity

The Situation: Student A is auditioned for the school play, which they were really excited about, but they didn't get a part. They feel intense disappointment and sadness. The Challenge: Student A needs to cope with this disappointment. They could:

- a) become withdrawn and stop participating in other activities
- b) blame the director or other students
- c) allow themselves to feel the sadness but then focus on other opportunities (e.g., joining the stage crew)
- d) talk to someone about their feelings and seek encouragement

Roles: Student A, a supportive friend or family member (optional)

Focus on: Managing disappointment and sadness, practicing self-compassion, reframing negative thoughts, identifying alternative positive outlets.

Scenario 5: The Heated Group Project

The Situation: A group of students (including Student A) is working on a project, and there's a disagreement about how to proceed. Voices are raised, and Student A feels frustrated and unheard.

The Challenge: Student A needs to manage their frustration and try to resolve the conflict constructively. They could:

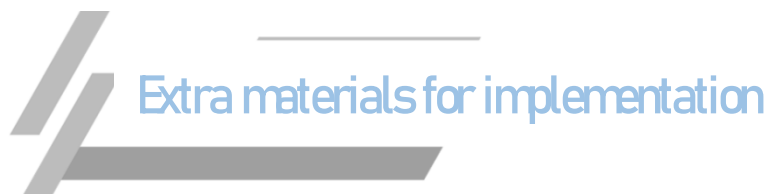
- a) get defensive and argue their point more forcefully
- b) shut down and stop contributing to the discussion
- c) take a moment to calm down and then actively listen to others' perspectives

d) suggest a compromise or a structured way to make a decision

Roles: Student A, other members of the group (at least 2 others).
Focus on: Managing frustration and anger in a group setting, practicing active listening and respectful communication, seeking collaborative solutions, demonstrating self-control in a tense situation.



5 minutes	preparation phase
10-15 minutes	role-playing phase
5-10 minutes	cool down and debriefing phase



None

2. Finding solutions in difficult situations



Objectives of the Module

- Introduce the concept of problem-solving as a key socio-emotional competence.
- Explain the psychological and emotional impact of difficult situations on adolescents and teachers.
- Present effective techniques and strategies to address and resolve interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts.
- Encourage inclusive and collaborative problem-solving approaches in the school setting.
- Promote resilience, empathy and constructive communication as pillars for finding solutions.



Content of the Module

Difficult situations are inevitable in life and especially common in school environments, where students and teachers interact daily in dynamic and emotionally charged contexts. These situations can range from misunderstandings between classmates to conflicts arising from academic pressure, bullying, isolation, or miscommunication. The ability to successfully handle

and solve such problems is essential for fostering healthy relationships and a positive learning environment.

1. Understanding difficult situations

Difficult situations often involve a perceived threat, loss, or challenge that exceeds one's immediate coping resources. For adolescents, these can be:

- Conflict with a peer or teacher
- Group exclusion or bullying
- Academic stress or failure
- Misunderstandings with adults or authority figures
- Personal problems affecting concentration or mood

These issues have been amplified by the social disconnection experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, as noted by UNICEF reports, which highlight the emotional toll of isolation, particularly among teenagers. Teachers, likewise, have faced stress and burnout, complicating their ability to respond supportively.

2. The role of socio-emotional skills in problem-solving

Problem-solving in difficult situations relies as much on our ability to manage emotions as on our capacity for logical analysis. Self-awareness is the first step: when students and teachers learn to recognise their own emotional triggers—such as frustration, fear or anger—they gain the power to step back and observe how these feelings influence their thoughts. Empathy then opens the door to understanding the perspectives of others, helping to bridge gaps in communication and reduce conflict. Once we know how we feel and how others feel, self-regulation enables a calm response rather than an impulsive one; this means learning to pause, breathe and choose a constructive reaction. Clear, respectful communication ensures that needs and concerns are expressed without blame, creating space for genuine dialogue. Finally, collaboration brings together diverse viewpoints and strengths, turning a single “problem” into a shared challenge that can be overcome through joint effort. Together, these socio-emotional competences transform obstacles into opportunities for growth.

3. A step-by-step method: The SODAS technique

One accessible framework for guiding students and teachers through problem-solving is the SODAS model:

- **S – Situation:** Clearly describe the problem, including who is involved, what happened, when and where.
- **O – Options:** Brainstorm as many possible ways to address the situation as you can, without judging their feasibility.
- **D – Disadvantages:** For each option, consider the potential risks or downsides.

- **A – Advantages:** For each option, identify the potential benefits or positive outcomes.
- **S – Solution:** Weigh the pros and cons and agree on the option that best balances advantages and disadvantages.

By combining emotional validation (“I feel hurt when...”) with logical analysis (“Option C gives us more time to prepare”), SODAS guides participants toward balanced, sustainable solutions.

4. Building a problem-solving classroom culture

Teachers set the tone for how problems are approached. Establishing a classroom culture of mutual respect and psychological safety means inviting frank conversations about conflicts and emotions. When an issue arises, a teacher might pause the lesson to hold a brief restorative circle, in which everyone can share their feelings and viewpoints. This ritual not only models active listening but also reinforces that emotional expression is valued. Through consistent encouragement of reflective pauses—“Let’s take two deep breaths before we decide what to do next”—students internalize the habit of self-regulation. As the year progresses, collaborative projects that challenge small teams to solve realistic scenarios (for example: planning an inclusive school event under tight time constraints) help consolidate problem-solving skills in context. Over time, these practices transform the classroom into a living laboratory where mistakes become learning moments and where every participant feels invested in collective success.

5. Inclusive strategies for diverse learners

An inclusive problem-solving approach recognises that students bring varied backgrounds, abilities and emotional needs to the table. For learners who struggle with abstract reasoning or who process information more slowly, visual organizers—such as flowcharts mapping out the SODAS steps—make the method concrete. Students with anxiety or trauma histories benefit from knowing they can “opt in” to smaller breakout discussions before sharing with the whole group. Pairing neurotypical peers with neurodiverse classmates in co-designed activities builds mutual understanding and reduces stigma. Teachers can also offer one-to-one coaching sessions for students who need extra time to verbalise their thoughts, using prompts like “What part of this feels most challenging?” rather than direct questioning. Above all, shifting from punitive responses to restorative choices—asking “How can we repair trust?” instead of “Who is to blame?”—ensures that every learner has the dignity and support needed to develop robust problem-solving skills.

Tool 1

Finding solutions in difficult situations SODAS Scenario Cards



Name of the Tool



SODAS Scenario Cards



Objectives of the Tool

- Practice each step of the SODAS problem-solving technique in realistic, relatable scenarios to reinforce mastery.
- Develop both emotional validation and logical analysis skills by guiding students to name their feelings and weigh practical outcomes simultaneously.
- Build confidence in choosing balanced solutions under pressure through repeated, low-stakes rehearsals.
- Foster collaborative leadership by rotating facilitation roles so every student leads and reflects on the process.

Introduction of the Tool

SODAS is a structured five-step problem-solving framework designed for adolescents (12–16 yrs). Each letter stands for:

- **S – Situation:** What exactly happened, who is involved, when and where?
- **O – Options:** List all possible ways to respond, without judging.
- **D – Disadvantages:** What could go wrong with each option?
- **A – Advantages:** What are the benefits of each option?
- **S – Solution:** Choose the best option and plan next steps.

Research in socio-emotional learning shows explicit rehearsal of problem-solving reduces peer conflicts and increases students' confidence in managing stress. By using Scenario Cards—short, relatable vignettes from school life—students can practise SODAS in a safe, guided setting.

Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

1. Preparation (5')

- **Print & cut** the 16 Scenario Cards (Appendix).
- Distribute one **SODAS Worksheet** per group (see template below).
- Provide each group with four colored pens.
- Explain roles:
 - **Reader** (reads the scenario aloud)
 - **Note-taker** (records each SODAS step)
 - **Timekeeper** (keeps each phase on track)
 - **Facilitator** (ensures full participation)

2. Demonstration (5')

- Teacher models one card with the whole class:

1. Writes a concise Situation
2. Brainstorms 3–4 Options aloud
3. Discusses Disadvantages vs Advantages
4. Chooses a Solution and outlines “Next Steps”

- Highlight emotional language (“I feel...”) and logical language (“this may require...”).

3. Small-Group Rounds (25' total; ~6' per card)

- **Draw & Define (1'):** Reader picks a card, reads it, group crafts a one-sentence Situation.
- **Options Brainstorm (2'):** Rapid list of all possible responses.
- **Disadvantages Analysis (1'):** Identify risks for each option.
- **Advantages Analysis (1'):** Identify benefits for each option.
- **Solution Selection (1'):** Weigh pros/cons, pick one, and fill in the “Solution & Next Steps” box.
- **Rotate roles** clockwise before the next card.

4. Whole-Class Debrief (10')

- Each group shares:
 - One creative Option they generated.
 - Their chosen Solution and why.
- Teacher prompts reflection:
 - “Which emotion was hardest to name?”
 - “Which SODAS step felt most valuable?”

Timing

- Total: 45 minutes
 - 5' Preparation & Setup
 - 5' Teacher demonstration
 - 25' Small-group rounds (4 cards)
 - 10' Whole class debriefs

Extra materials for implementation

- **SODAS Worksheet Template** (one per group; see Appendix I)
- **Scenario Cards** (16 cards; see Appendix II)
- **Colored pens/markers** (to distinguish emotion vs. logic notes)
- **Timer** (visible countdown)
- **Flip-chart or board** (to model SODAS demonstration)

Appendix I: SODAS Worksheet Template

SITUATION (Who? What? When? Where?)			
OPTIONS (List all possible responses)			
DISADVANTAGES (Risks or downsides for each option)			
ADVANTAGES (Benefits or positive outcomes for each option)			
SOLUTION (Chosen option + “I will...” / “We will...” statements)			

REFLECTION: “I learned that...” (“My feeling,” “My decision,” “What I’ll try next time”).

Appendix II: Scenario Cards (16 Dilemmas)

1. **Last-Seat Dispute**
You and a classmate both reach the last seat on the bus and argue who should sit.
2. **Blame for Late Work**
Your group assignment is late; the teacher blames you even though you finished on time.
3. **Group Chat Exclusion**
You discover classmates created a group chat and never invited you.
4. **Art Project Conflict**
Two students both want the same role in the class art project.
5. **Lab Partner Mess**
Your lab partner spills chemicals and you both lose points, but they blame you.
6. **Recess Game Argument**
You're accused of cheating during a recess game you didn't play.
7. **Homework Help Rejection**
You offer to help a friend with homework but they refuse and say you're showing off.
8. **Lost Permission Slip**
You lose your signed permission slip; the teacher says you can't go on the trip.
9. **Test Cheating Rumor**
Someone spreads a rumor you cheated on a test you didn't take.
10. **Club Leadership Vote**
You and a friend both run for club president and results are very close.
11. **Misheard Criticism**
You think a teacher called your work "lazy," but they didn't mean you.
12. **Lunch Table Rejection**
The usual lunch group says today they have no space for you.
13. **Late Arrival Consequence**
You arrive late to class every day; the teacher wants to penalize you.

14. Sports Team Cut

You tried out for the team, weren't chosen, and overhear classmates mocking you.

15. Peer Pressure Dare

Friends dare you to do something unsafe during break.

16. Project Presentation Timing

Your presentation starts earlier than announced and you feel unprepared.

Tool 2

Finding solutions in difficult situations

Problem-Solving Fishbowl



Problem-Solving Fishbowl



- Practice active listening and respectful dialogue by observing and participating in structured peer discussions.
- Develop empathy and perspective-taking skills through real-time role-play and feedback.
- Build confidence in voicing concerns and solutions within a safe, rotating inner-circle format.
- Foster restorative approaches by learning to repair trust and share responsibility for outcomes.

Introduction of the Tool

The Fishbowl method creates two concentric circles: an inner circle of 4–5 students works through a real or hypothetical school conflict out loud, while the outer circle observes specific socio-emotional behaviours. Observers use a simple checklist to note examples of active listening, “I-statements,” emotional validation and collaborative questioning. After 10–12 minutes, observers offer two strengths and one suggestion before roles rotate, ensuring everyone practices both speaking up and giving constructive feedback. This mirrors professional restorative circles and helps all learners internalize effective conflict-resolution habits.

Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

1. Setup & Role Briefing (5')

- Arrange chairs in two concentric circles. Hand each outer-circle student an **Observer Checklist** (see “Appendix I” below) listing key skills to watch for (e.g. paraphrasing, calm tone, open questions).
- Explain roles: inner-circle discussants and outer-circle observers.

2. Scenario Presentation (2')

- Teacher draws or a student volunteers one **Scenario Card** (see “Appendix II” below) and reads it aloud.

3. Inner-Circle Discussion (12')

- Participants in the fishbowl work through the conflict using SODAS or freeform dialogue, explicitly naming emotions, asking clarifying questions, brainstorming

solutions and agreeing on next steps. Observers remain silent, taking notes.

4. Observer Feedback (5')

- Outer-circle observers each share one concrete example of effective socio-emotional skill use and one suggestion for improvement.

5. Rotation & Second Round (15')

- Select new inner-circle participants and draw a fresh Scenario Card. Repeat steps 3–4.

6. Final Reflection (6')

- Whole class discusses: Which skill did you notice most? Which will you practise this week?



- Total: 45 minutes
 - 5' Setup & Role Briefing
 - 2' Scenario Presentation
 - 12' Inner-Circle Discussion
 - 5' Observer Feedback
 - 15' Rotation & Second Round
 - 6' Final Reflection



Extra materials for implementation

- Observer Checklists (one per outer-circle student, see Appendix I)
- Scenario Cards (see Appendix II)
- Stopwatch or visible timer

Appendix I: Observer Checklist Template

SKILL	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Paraphrases speaker's feelings	☐	☐	
Uses "I-statements" (e.g. "I feel...")	☐	☐	
Maintains calm, respectful tone	☐	☐	
Validates emotions (e.g. "I understand you feel...")	☐	☐	
Asks open-ended or clarifying questions	☐	☐	
Demonstrates active listening (eye contact, nods)	☐	☐	
Encourages equal participation	☐	☐	
Focuses on behaviours, not personalities	☐	☐	
Suggests collaborative or restorative solutions	☐	☐	
Notifies and responds to body language	☐	☐	
Summarizes decisions or agreed next steps	☐	☐	
Uses solution-focused language rather than blame	☐	☐	



Appendix II: Scenario Cards for Fishbowl

1. You and a friend both claim you saw the teacher hand back graded tests first to the other student.
2. You overhear classmates planning a surprise party and feel left out.
3. A group member takes credit for your idea during a project presentation.
4. You're blamed for a noisy hallway disturbance you didn't cause.
5. Your lab partner refuses to share data and slows down your experiment.
6. A peer teases you about your drawing in art class; you're not sure if they're joking.
7. You discover your class is voting on teams without letting you nominate yourself.
8. You're dared to skip the next lesson; friends pressure you to go along.
9. You overhear classmates criticizing your presentation behind your back and feel hurt.
10. A teammate takes your research notes without asking and uses them as their own.

Tool 3

Finding solutions in difficult situations

Solution Tree Mapping



Solution Tree Mapping



- Visualize complex problems by mapping a central issue onto a “trunk” and multiple solution paths as “branches.”
- Compare pros, cons and resource needs at a glance by annotating branches with color-coded “leaves.”
- Encourage iterative refinement as students revisit and adjust branches after real-world testing.
- Foster shared ownership of action plans through co-creation and public classroom display.

Introduction of the Tool

Solution Tree Mapping uses a large visual organizer to break down one core problem into multiple response options. The trunk bears the central issue statement; each branch represents a possible solution, and coloured sticky-note leaves detail advantages (**green**), disadvantages (**red**) and required resources or emotional signals (**blue**). A “fruit” above the chosen branch holds the agreed action plan. This dual use of creative drawing and analytical annotation engages diverse learners and builds systems thinking—a key 21st-century skill—while anchoring socio-emotional learning in a tangible framework.

Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

- **Define the Trunk (5')**

On flip-chart paper, draw a trunk and write a clear, neutral problem statement (e.g. “I feel excluded in group work”).

- **Brainstorm Branches (10')**

In small teams, generate 4–6 distinct solution ideas and draw each as a branch radiating from the trunk.

- **Annotate Leaves (10')**

Provide green, red and blue sticky notes. Teams list *Advantages* on **green**, *Disadvantages* on **red** and *Required Resources/Emotional Notes* on **blue**, then affix them to the corresponding branches.

- **Peer Review (10')**

Rotate teams so each group reviews another's tree, adding at least one new leaf per branch.

- **Select Fruit (5')**

Return to the original tree, weigh the leaves, choose one branch, and place a "fruit" with a concise action plan ("I will...", "We will...") above it.

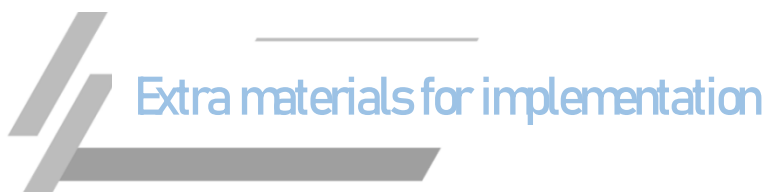
- **Follow-Up Check (ongoing)**

Post the tree in the classroom and reconvene one week later to assess progress and prune or graft as needed.



Timing

- Total: 40 minutes
 - 5' Define the Trunk
 - 10' Brainstorm Branches
 - 10' Annotate Leaves
 - 10' Peer Review
 - 5' Select Fruit

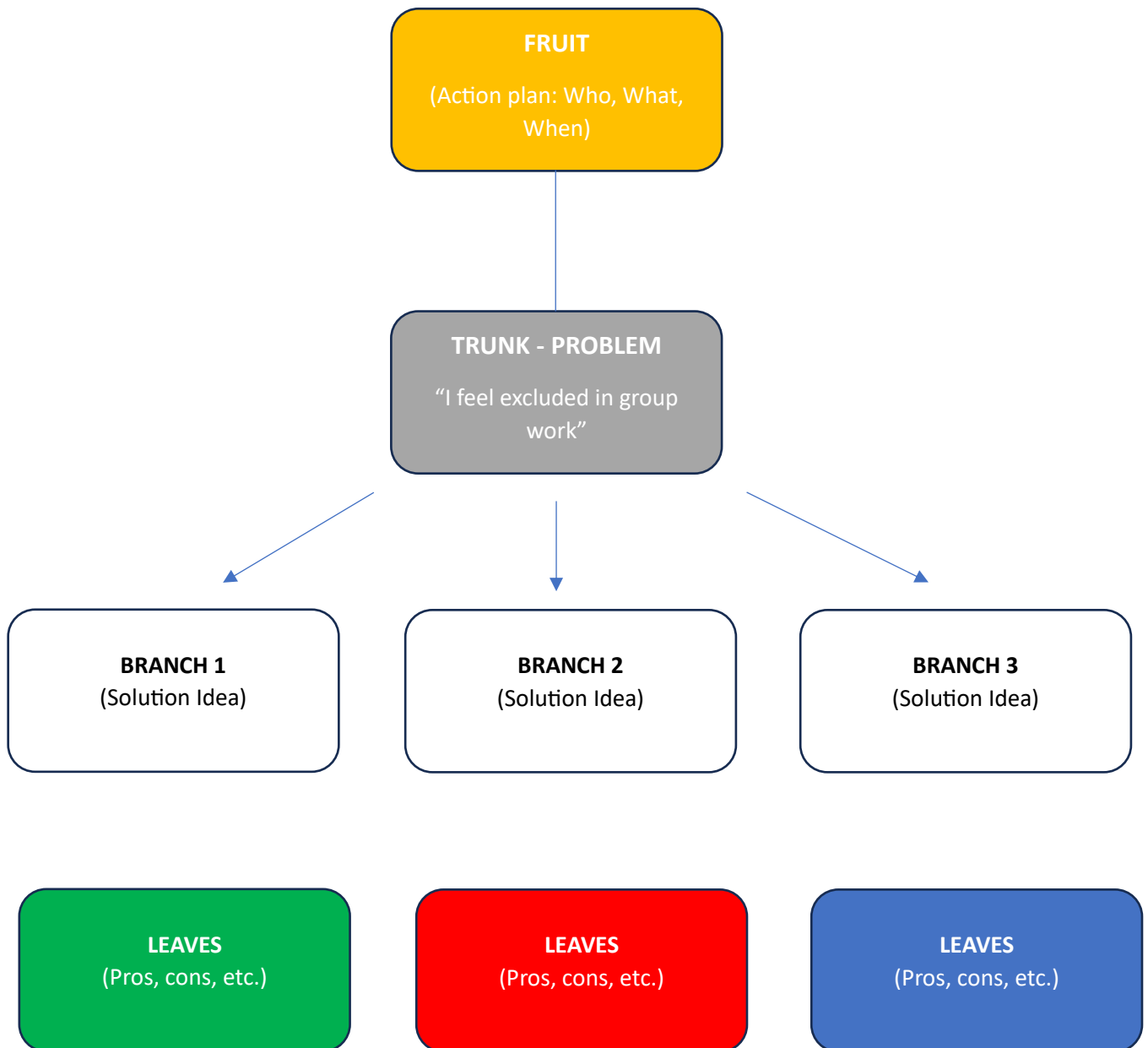


Extra materials for implementation

- Large flip-chart or butcher's paper
- Sticky notes in three colours
- Thick and thin markers

- Tape or Blu-Tack for display

Appendix I: Solution Tree Template



3. Managing External Stimuli

Objectives of the Module

Managing external stimuli in the school environment is a key aspect that affects the quality of education and the overall comfort of both students and teachers. External stimuli include factors outside the teaching content itself that influence the learning process. Effectively managing these stimuli is essential for creating an optimal learning environment. Statistics showing that the school environment can influence up to 25% of the differences in student performance are underlining the importance of this topic.

Content of the Module

Types of External Stimuli

1. Physical Environment

Noise, temperature, and lighting can directly impact students' concentration and performance. For example, studies show that excessive noise can reduce students' ability to concentrate and learn effectively. Classroom temperature also plays an important role; research suggests that the optimal temperature for learning is between 20–22°C.

2. Social Environment

This includes interactions between students, teachers, and school staff. Positive social interactions can encourage cooperation and teamwork, while negative relationships may lead to conflict and disrupt learning. It is important for schools to create a supportive and inclusive environment for all students.

3. Technological Environment

The use of technology is also a significant factor that can have a double-edged effect. While technology can enrich the learning process, improper use can lead to distraction and reduce students' ability to focus on lessons.

Impact of the Physical Environment on Learning

The physical environment in which education takes place has a crucial effect on students' ability to concentrate, learn and it can influence their overall academic performance. Key aspects include:

Lighting

Natural daylight has proven to be the most beneficial for students, as it promotes alertness and improves mood. Inadequate or artificial lighting may lead to eye strain and decreased concentration.

Noise

High levels of noise can interfere with students' ability to focus and understand lessons. A quiet environment or effective sound insulation can enhance concentration and overall well-being.

Temperature and Air Quality

Optimal temperature (usually between 20–22°C) and good air quality are important for comfort and attention. Extremes in temperature can cause discomfort and distraction.

Ergonomics and Classroom Layout

Comfortable and ergonomic seating, as well as a flexible classroom layout, can promote interaction and cooperation among students. The space should allow easy movement and access to learning materials.

Colour Schemes

Classroom colours can influence mood and energy. Soft and natural tones often have a calming effect, while bright colours may stimulate and encourage activity.

Technological Equipment

The availability and integration of technologies such as interactive whiteboards and

computers can improve access to information and support interactive learning. However, overuse or misuse can be distracting.

Impact of the Social Environment on Learning

Social stimuli in the school environment play an important role in student development, affecting both academic performance and emotional well-being. Key aspects include:

Peer Interaction

Positive relationships and cooperation among classmates foster a sense of belonging and increase motivation to learn. Group activities and project-based work can also develop social skills and teamwork.

Teacher Support

Teachers who provide support and create an encouraging atmosphere can positively influence student motivation and self-confidence. An individual approach and open communication are crucial for building trust and support.

Family Background

Support and interest from family members have a significant impact on academic success and emotional stability. Parents actively involved in their children's education can boost their motivation and school performance.

School Climate and Culture

A school atmosphere that promotes inclusion, respect, and diversity contributes to a positive social environment. On the other hand, an environment with bullying or discrimination can negatively affect students' mental health and performance.

Role Models

The presence of positive role models—whether teachers, older students, or community members—can inspire students and provide examples of success and appropriate behaviour.

Extracurricular Activities

Participation in extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, or arts supports the development of social skills and offers space for self-expression and growth of interests.

Impact of the Technological Environment on Learning

Technological stimuli in schools bring new opportunities and challenges for education. Their impact is multifaceted:

Access to Information

Technologies like the internet and digital databases give students quick access to a wide

range of information, supporting independent learning and the development of critical thinking by encouraging source evaluation.

Interactive Learning

Digital tools such as interactive whiteboards and educational apps increase student engagement in the learning process. Interactive elements can improve understanding and knowledge retention.

Personalized Learning

Technologies allow the customization of learning materials to individual student needs, improving learning efficiency. Adaptive systems can identify strengths and weaknesses and offer targeted activities.

Communication Skills

Using technology for communication—emails, online forums—develops students’ digital communication skills, which are vital in today’s connected world.

Challenges and Distractions

Excessive or improper use of technology can lead to distractions and lower productivity. Time-management strategies are needed to ensure technology supports educational goals.

Technological Literacy

Integrating technology into education prepares students for the future work environment, where tech skills are often essential. Developing tech literacy is key for success in many careers.

Strategies for Managing External Stimuli

One of the main strategies is adjusting the physical environment. Reducing noise through acoustic panels, optimizing lighting, and maintaining comfortable classroom temperatures are examples of actions that can improve learning. Schools should also invest in proper ventilation and air conditioning to ensure fresh air and comfort.

Fostering positive social dynamics through group work and communication skills development helps create a friendly and cooperative school environment. Programs focused on social and emotional skills can help students in integrating and collaborating effectively.

When integrating technology, it is important to use digital tools purposefully and in moderation. Schools should provide training for teachers on effective tech use and ensure students have access to necessary digital resources without being distracted.

Case Studies

Many schools have already successfully implemented strategies to manage external stimuli, with positive outcomes. For example, XYZ School in London implemented a program to reduce noise and improve lighting, resulting in a 15% increase in academic performance. Another school in Germany introduced a social skills development program, which improved the school atmosphere and reduced student conflicts.

These case studies show that improving the management of external stimuli can have long-term positive effects on both students and teachers. Implementing such programs requires not only financial resources but also the engagement of all involved, including students, teachers, parents, and school administrators. Successful programs often include regular evaluation and adjustments based on feedback and results.

Conclusion

In conclusion, managing external stimuli is an integral part of effective education. Improving the physical, social, and digital environment can significantly enhance academic performance, student well-being, and the overall quality of school life. While challenges exist, there is great potential for improvement, offering meaningful benefits for the future of education.

To achieve these goals, schools should adopt an integrated approach that includes all aspects of the school environment. Teachers, administrators, and educational policymakers should focus on creating environments that support both learning and the overall development of students. Research and innovation in managing external stimuli should be a priority to continually improve the quality of education for future generations.

Tool 1

Managing External Stimuli

Secret Observer of Good Deeds



Name of the Tool

Secret Observer of Good Deeds

Objectives of the Tool

- Strengthen students' external motivation for prosocial behaviour.
- Support a positive classroom atmosphere and healthy relationships.
- Develop the ability to notice and appreciate goodness.

Introduction of the Tool

- Target Group- students of all age groups (adaptable according to age).
- Can be repeated regularly — it builds a habit of noticing the good.
- Can be used for specific themes: helpfulness, politeness, cooperation, willingness, patience.
- It is important to praise sincere and specific behaviour, not just outcomes.

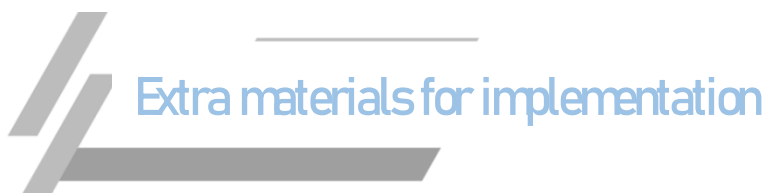
Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

1. Introduction
Teacher's prompt:
"There is a lot of good in each of us. But often, we don't even notice good deeds or we take them for granted. This week, one of you will be a secret observer who will pay attention to the nice things others do."
2. Selecting the Secret Observer
→ Chosen by the teacher or drawn by students.
→ The observer keeps their role secret for the whole week and notes down 3–5 good deeds that stood out.
3. Good Deeds Box
→ Students can anonymously drop compliments or recognition for classmates throughout the week.
4. Evaluation (End of the week)
 - The observer reveals their identity.
 - They read or share what they appreciated and noticed.
 - The teacher can draw and read compliments from the box.
5. Recognition
→ A symbolic reward can be given to the observer, but also praise to the whole class or those mentioned by the observer.
6. Reflection
 - How did it feel to hear a compliment?

- What was it like being the secret observer?
- What did you notice about yourself or others?



Short inputs throughout the week (2–5 minutes daily) + final 5 to 10-minute sharing and reflection at the end of the week.



- Small sheets of paper to record good deeds
- "Secret Observer" card
- Good Deeds Box (e.g., a decorated box)
- Small rewards (stickers, praise, certificates – optional)

Tool 2

Managing External Stimuli Everyday Heroes Bulletin Board



Name of the Tool

Everyday Heroes Bulletin Board

Objectives of the Tool

- Encourage students to notice and appreciate small acts of kindness, effort, willingness, and positive traits in classmates.
- Strengthen the motivation to be a positive example in the classroom.

Introduction of the Tool

- Target Group- students of all age groups (adaptable according to age).
- Daily encouragement of students to engage in positive self-assessment and positive assessment of their classmates.

Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

1. Introduction

Teacher explains:

"Not every hero wears a cape. Sometimes, a hero is someone who helps, encourages, waits, lends a pencil, or apologizes. Let's look for these quiet heroes in our classroom and school."

2. Filling the Board

Students can write anonymously or include names:

- Who was a hero and why
- What deed they noticed
- What they want to praise someone for

3. Sharing

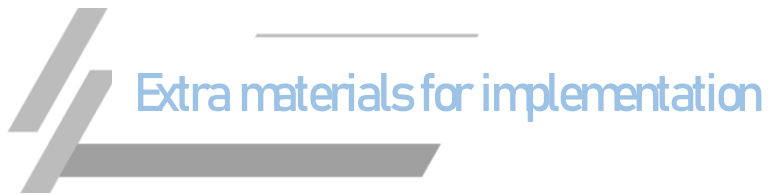
At the end of the week or month, the teacher reads the notes or selects a few to highlight and symbolically reward certain students (praise, certificate, applause, small reward).

Reflection

- How did it feel to be mentioned?
- What does it mean to you to be a hero?



Ongoing during the week or month



Resources and Materials:

- Poster or board titled: “Everyday Heroes”
- Sheets of paper for writing down good deeds or traits
- Tape or clips to pin up notes

Tool 3

Managing External Stimuli

Motivational Drawing Lot – Every Day is a Chance



Motivational Drawing Lot – Every Day is a Chance



- Encourage effort, politeness, responsibility, and respect.
- Boost motivation to behave well every day.



- Target Group- students of all age groups (adaptable according to age).

- To motivate students to build positive relationships with one another

Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

1. Rules – Each day students can earn a drawing lot for:
 - Polite behaviour
 - Helping others
 - Putting in effort
 - Following rules
 - Active participation→ Teacher (or student) writes the drawing lot and puts it in the box.
2. Weekly Draw:
A few drawing lots are drawn at the end of the week. The student(s) receive a small reward, praise, or symbolic privilege (e.g., sit next to a friend, be class assistant).

Reflection Questions:

- What kind of behaviour do you think the teacher appreciated?
- How did you feel when your name was drawn?
- What behaviour would you reward?

Timing

Ongoing daily + 5 minutes weekly for the draw



Extra materials for implementation

- Draw box
- Small sheets of paper with students' names
- Small rewards (praise, certificate, bonus points, small gifts)

4. Stress related to changes at school



What is Stress?

“Stress” is a term we use constantly in conversation but what does it really mean? Stress can be defined as our physical and mental responses to some external events. The event might be considered “good” like preparing to go to the prom, or bad, like feeling tense after an illness, an argument, especially among teenagers, with a friend or while preparing for an upcoming test.



Stress Related to Changes at School

Simply being a teenager can be hard. Your body is changing. You may be grappling with your sexuality or gender identity. Add to that the academic demands of high school and throw in the pressures of social media or parent’s expectations about lots of different areas such as perform well in academics as getting into a good college, peer pressure, interpersonal relationship or body image issues, realizing social competences and trying to cope with all of these issues.

The most common source of stress for high school students is school itself and some changes in it. Changes play major role in a human being life especially if you are between 15 and 18 ages. Because when the teenagers don’t feel safe and they face to some changes in school life, their brains go on high alert for signs of danger and abnormal activity. So when you’re on high alert particularly changes your life, it’s much harder for you to pay attention to their teacher, lectures,

complete coursework, study, academic purposes and adaptation to new school rules or school changes.

Here are some causes stress related to changes at school:

➤ **Effects of New Teacher**

Teenagers often form bonds with teachers they trust. Losing a familiar teacher can feel like losing a support system. Their memories, habits about lecture are lost and maybe facing a new voice, a new face, new techniques can be felt horrible by them. Not knowing how strict the new teacher will be creating anxiety. This is uncertainty in their teen brains. On the other side, it is hard to trust rebuilding against someone. Students may feel stressed about starting over with someone new. A new teacher might have a different way of explaining topics, different teaching style, which can be confusing or harder to adjust to. Moreover, if the new teacher has stricter rules or a different grading system than before one, students might fear a drop in their performances. Finally, from a social perspective, as peer comparisons, students might worry if their parents are adapting better to this changing.

➤ **Changing the Grading System**

Changing the grading system among teenagers can be major source of stress for high school students because it effects how they are evaluated, perceived and maybe how they plan for their future. For a unique instance is unfamiliarity. Students are used to one way of being graded (like percentage or letter grades) so switching to something like pass / fail, GPA weighting or standards – based grading can be confusing. They cannot understand how to succeed under the new system, leading to anxiety. Also it can create increased academic pressure on them like if the new system is stricter or puts more weight on tests or final projects, students may feel more pressure to perform perfectly. In other side, students perceive the new system as unfair or harder, they may become discouraged so maybe it affects their transcripts or collage applications.

➤ **Switching Class Related to Their Academic Success**

Changing class, even course levels, can cause significant stress for high school students, especially it relates to their academic scores. Students may fear that the change will negatively affect their grades which can impact scholarships or collage applications. When we think in an opposite side, switching class particularly getting higher level class can be motivating a student but it carries a new stressful side because when students join a new class late, they can be feel lost or behind on content already taught and the new class may cover different material or be taught at a faster pace which can disrupt learning as if in a different curriculum. Lots of experienced teacher knows exactly that every class has different rules, in their own class atmosphere, teaching styles or homework loads. If there is a decision about changing class in addition to low grades, it is often made by adults or by school counselors or parents, making students feel powerless over their own academic journey. In social aspect, someone is adapting quickly as a new student can be stressful,

being moved up or down in course grades in a new class can hurt self-confidence or create performance anxiety, even insecurity in a new environment can increase feeling of isolation, they may feel shy or unsure of how to participate confidently in a new class group.

In summary, managing high school students' stress related to changes at school such as new teachers, class shifts or grading system updates, requires both emotional support and practical strategies. Here's how it can be done:

- **Explain the reason for changes :** When students understand “why” a change is happening, they feel more in control.
- **Set expectations early:** whether it is a new grading system or teacher , outlining what to expect helps reduce their stress.
- **Create safe places to talk:** Counselors, teachers, or peer groups should be available for students to express their feelings.
- **Normalize stress:** let students know it's okay to feel overwhelmed and others are going through similar emotions.
- **Extra help:** tutoring or extra help sessions if they've changed classes or teachers.
- **Giving sample:** give access to guides, rubrics or sample work for new grading system or class structures.
- **Healthy habits:** teach students how to organize task, especially about new routines or encourage sleep, exercise and help students manage stress in nature way.
- **Feedback opportunities:** Allow students to give feedback on what's working or what's stressing them out.
- **Giving confidence:** As we teachers, we can easily turn something negative side into a positive side so helping students develop their life skills like flexibility, problem solving and confidence in uncertain situations.

Tool 1

Stress related to changes at school

VISUAL IMAGERY



Name of the Tool

Visual Imagery



Objectives of the Tool

Students learn the process of visual imagery as a technique to help themselves calm down



Introduction of the Tool

Teacher leads students through the process of visual imagery as a relaxation technique

Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

Instructions:

1. Students sit comfortably for this activity
2. Use a calm, low, slow voice and give sufficient time between each visual suggestion for students to “ease” into the vision and “see” each step
3. Create your own visual scenario appropriate to students’ age, experience and interest.

Example:

Close your eyes. “See” in your mind’s eye a beautiful beach. The sun is shining warmly, the breeze coming from the ocean is soft and warm, palm trees are overhead and a few seagulls circle about. Imagine walking barefoot in the warm sand, feel your feet sink in the sand with each step.

Walk toward the water’s edge and let the water roll over your feet. Jump in the water; it is warm, gentle and very refreshing. Come out of the water and walk to your big beach towel, lay down and relax. Rest for a while in all the peace and beauty surrounding you. Imagine how it looks, how it sounds, how it smells. Breathe in deeply the warm ocean air, stay as long as you like.

When you are ready to leave, go to the edge of the water and throw in anything that has been bothering you, anything you wish to be rid of in your life, anything you are feeling sad or angry about, anything you worry about (e.g. problems at home, violence in your neighborhood, bullies, death of a loved one, issues with friends). Picture it as a big rock, a chain, a heavy bag over your shoulders, or any image that helps you see it as undesirable.

Throw it in the ocean as far as you can. Watch it sink and get taken by the waves. When the “visit” is done, be thankful for the release of the burden, the problem, the worry; then walk peacefully back through the warm sand and take a rest on your beach towel.

4. Practice this imagery in class for 10-20 minutes, depending on grade level
5. Allow time for students to debrief and share about where they went in their visualization and what they felt about the experience/technique. This can be done in pairs, small groups or sharing with whole class. Sample guiding questions:

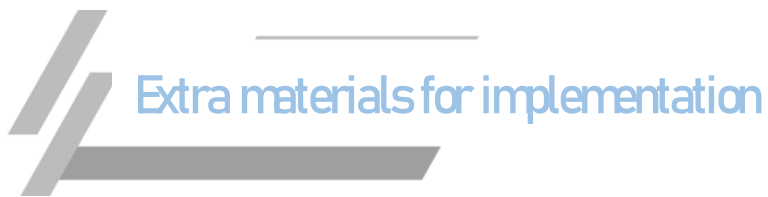
- Where did your visualization take you?
- Do you feel more calm/relaxed after going through this exercise?
- What did you see, hear, feel, smell during your visualization/did anything

in particular stand out?

- What was it like throwing your burdens into the water?
- How does it feel to be back in the classroom?
- Is this technique/exercise something you might do in the future to clam down, relax and reduce your stress?



40 minutes



Practice visualizations with the class several times until students achieve competence with the technique. Encourage students to practice this at home or at any time to relieve stress. The activity may be reinforced by having students write down how they felt after completing the activity. They could keep a journal of post-visualization feelings and thoughts. You may also provide students with time to create their own visualizations and take turns leading the class through visualization exercises periodically throughout the school year.

Tool 2

Stress related to changes at school

SIMPLE MEDITATION



Name of the Tool

Simple meditation

Objectives of the Tool

Introduce students to meditation as an effective, widely practiced activity that can reduce stress.

Introduction of the Tool

Glossary:

Meditate – to think calm thoughts in order to relax or have a spiritual activity.

Meditation – the word was adopted in late nineteenth century to refer to various spiritual practices from Hinduism, Buddhism, and other Eastern religions (may show students Asian continent on a map or globe to identify where Eastern religions/practices originated) and is usually defined as one of the following:

- A state that is experienced when the mind is free of all thoughts;
- when the mind is quiet
- Focusing the mind on a single object (such as one's breath or a mantra/chant)
- An "opening up" to the divine or to a "higher power"
- Focused thought on a topic (such as thinking about kindness)

Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

Introduce students to the activity by talking about the widespread practice of meditation throughout the world. Check in with students by show of hands how many have done meditation before (e.g. in martial arts practice, at a temple, in a church). Explain to students that through this activity they will calm their body, mind and spirit. OPTIONAL: Have students take their heart rate before the activity begins and then after the meditation exercise.

Instructions:

Warm up (Optional: take heart rate and note it)

1. Begin by sitting comfortably, balanced, and relaxed (if seated in a chair, feet on the ground). Breathe easy and from the abdomen/"belly breathing" (not chest breathing).
2. Practice a few deep breaths with the group.
3. Rotate the head in easy, slow circles; change direction and rotate in slow, easy circles.
4. Look up; tilt your head way back. Look down; put your chin on your chest.
5. Drop your arms and hands to the side and shake them gently and easily.
6. Raise your feet off the floor and gently and easily shake the knees.
7. Straighten your spine while meditating.

Practice (repeat two times)

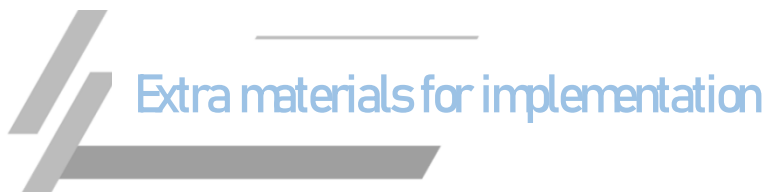
8. This is done SILENTLY.

9. When teacher says, "Close your eyes", close your eyes. [Once your eyes are closed, simply relax your mind and do not make an effort to think about anything; slowly your mind will clear and relax]

- When teacher says, “Open your eyes”, open your eyes.
10. Now, sit straight up, relaxed, and balanced.
 11. “Close your eyes” (two minutes elapse)
 12. “Open your eyes”
 13. Check in with students: how was that? (Students may give thumbs up or thumbs down.) Now everyone practice it again.
 14. Repeat exercise: “Close your eyes”...two minutes elapse...
“Open your eyes” (Optional: take heart rate and compare to heart rate before meditation)
 15. Check in with students



40 minutes



Teacher may follow-up by having students practice meditation at other times during class. Encourage students to practice meditation on their own to develop the habit of using meditation for stress reduction and overall health. Have students teach this method to a friend or family member

Tool 3

Stress related to changes at school

PAPER MOSAICS



Name of the Tool



Paper Mosaics



Objectives of the Tool

- Students learn to make paper mosaics as a creative stress reduction activity.



Introduction of the Tool

Mosaics – an ancient art form usually made by arranging small pieces of stone or glass to create a beautiful picture or pattern.

Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

Teacher introduces the concept of mosaics as a creative, calming and fun stress reduction strategy. Show students pictures of mosaics from books or from the internet. Ask students about their own experiences in making mosaics or seeing mosaics in their community/city. Point out very simple “mosaics” students can easily relate to, for example, bathroom ceramic tiles (this gives a clear picture of how “paper tiles” will be arranged on their drawings). Teacher reviews materials to be used and general rules applied to this type of activity in the classroom.

Instructions:

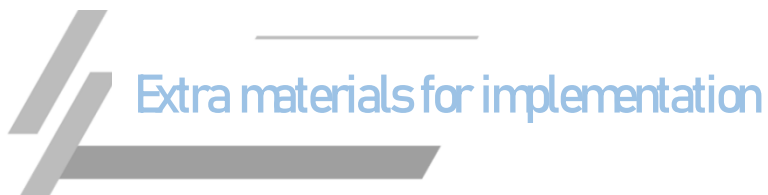
1. Students clear their desks of books, folders, etc.
2. Using a pencil, students draw the outline of an object, shape or scene on a 8.5”x11” or 9”x12” piece of paper (see examples attached of Butterfly, Elephant, Flowers, Cat’s Face).
3. Students then cut small colored square paper “tiles” from the scrap construction paper or the magazines (tear out pages you would like to use and then cut the pictures up into little square “tiles”). Modification: for K-1 prepare mosaic patterns and pre-cut paper tiles.
4. Explain to students that each outline should be filled with tiles of the same color.
5. Working with one shape/area/figure at a time, students apply glue to the inside of their outlined shapes, and then place the paper “tiles” in the shape/outline, leaving a small space between each paper “tile” (for some shapes, students may have to cut “customized tiles” to effectively fill in the shape).
6. Students repeat the glue and placement of “tiles” in each shape/outline of their drawings until the mosaic is complete.

Extension:

Follow-up by having students share their mosaics with the class and facilitating a discussion about what students liked and found challenging about the activity. Make connection between the activity and stress reduction and discuss the impact of the activity with students. If students enjoyed the activity, plan a follow-up lesson to give students a chance to improve their mosaic making skills.



40 +40 minutes



Materials:

- One 8.5"x11" or 9"x12" piece of colored construction paper
- Colored construction paper scraps or discarded magazines
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Glue
- Pictures of mosaics from books, internet and/or teacher's samples (see attached samples)
- Modification: for K-1 prepare mosaic patterns and pre-cut paper tiles

5. Belief in one's own abilities

Objectives of the Module

- **Belief in one's own abilities**—understood as a student's conviction that they possess sufficient competencies to achieve academic success—is one of the key factors determining the quality of the learning process. In an era of dynamic social and educational change, increasing attention is being paid not only to students' knowledge but also to their psychological well-being and intrinsic motivation.
- Modern schools face the challenge not only of imparting knowledge but also of fostering students' social and emotional competencies. Psychological and educational research clearly indicates that levels of self-esteem and the so-called sense of self-efficacy significantly influence motivation, perseverance, and overall academic performance.

Content of the Module

Belief in One's Own Abilities Among Students as a Key Factor in Educational Success, Personal Development, and Learning Motivation.

Belief in one's own abilities is a crucial factor influencing students' academic success, personal growth, and motivation to learn. Students who believe in themselves are more willing to take on challenges, demonstrate greater perseverance, and cope better with failure.

Below are several aspects that influence the development of self-belief:

1. Theoretical Perspective

1.1 Albert Bandura's Concept of Self-Efficacy

Albert Bandura defined self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their ability to organize and execute actions required to achieve specific goals. In the educational context, students with a high sense of self-efficacy are more likely to take on difficult tasks, better manage stress and setbacks, and demonstrate greater engagement in learning.

1.2 Positive Psychology and Strength-Based Approaches

Positive psychology emphasizes focusing on students' strengths rather than merely on their deficits. Self-belief flourishes in environments that support personal development, acknowledge progress, and reinforce a sense of agency.

1.3 The Role of the Teacher and School Environment

The teacher acts as a guide and mentor. Their attitude, communication style, assessment strategies, and approach to student errors significantly affect the development (or weakening) of students' belief in their abilities. Schools, as institutions, should create conditions that promote positive self-esteem and emotional safety.

2. Practical Perspective

2.1 Effective Teaching Practices

- **Formative assessment** – focusing on student progress rather than only on final outcomes.
- **Individualized instruction** – adapting content and methods to students' abilities and learning styles.
- **Reinforcing positive feedback** – using statements such as “I believe you can do it” or “I see you're making an effort.”
- **Teaching resilience** – treating mistakes as a natural part of the learning process.
- **Sense of agency** – allowing students to make decisions, participate in lesson planning, and solve problems independently.
- **Appreciating progress** – recognizing even small achievements to strengthen the belief that effort pays off.
- **Safe learning environment** – creating a school climate where students aren't afraid of making mistakes but see them as learning opportunities.
- **Working with students' beliefs** – using conversations, educational coaching, or exercises that strengthen positive self-esteem.

2.2 Supportive Tools

- **Coaching and mentoring exercises** for students.
- **Educational projects** involving teamwork that highlight students' strengths.
- **Tutoring systems** – one-on-one support from a teacher or older peer.
- **Formative assessment tools** – feedback based on facts and progress ("I noticed you tried a different method this time").
- **Highlighting strengths and growth areas** without comparing them to others.
- **Success journals** – students record daily/weekly small achievements they are proud of.
- **Self-assessment cards** – simple questionnaires where students reflect on their effort, engagement, and emotions related to learning.
- **Descriptive praise** – specific, reinforcing statements like "I appreciate that you didn't give up despite the difficulty," instead of general "Good job."
- **Mind maps and motivation boards** – visual tools to help students see their strengths, achievements, goals, and dreams.
- **Student-led projects and the project method** – allowing students to act independently, make decisions, and demonstrate their abilities in practice, which strengthens their sense of agency.
- **Student roles (e.g., expert of the day, group leader)** – assigning responsible roles builds a sense of trust and importance.
- **Mentoring and tutoring** – personalized relationships with adults or older students who support, inspire, and assist in development.
- **Coaching exercises and reflection questions** – e.g., "What are you most proud of today?" "What would you do differently if you had another chance?"
- **Positive thinking corners / success boards** – classroom spaces where students share positive reflections, motivational quotes, and personal achievements.

3. Conclusions

Belief in one's own abilities is a cornerstone of healthy adolescent development. Investing in the cultivation of this belief yields benefits not only during the formative years but also throughout adulthood, influencing professional success, personal fulfillment, and overall life satisfaction. It is essential that teachers and educators apply strategies that strengthen students' sense of self-efficacy, such as providing constructive feedback, promoting effort, and fostering an atmosphere of acceptance and support.

A student's belief in their own abilities is not an innate trait but a dynamic psychological construct that can be developed through appropriate teaching strategies, supportive social

relationships, and emotional reinforcement. A school that consciously creates an environment conducive to strengthening this belief not only enhances students' academic performance but also prepares them for the challenges of adult life. Therefore, the development of self-efficacy should be an integral part of educational policy and everyday teaching practice.

4. Bibliography:

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Tool 1

Belief in one's own abilities

My strengths



Belief in one's own abilities, also known as self-efficacy, is a key element in the development of young people. Psychological research and educational programs emphasize its fundamental importance for achieving success, coping with difficulties, and building a positive self-esteem. Adolescents who believe in their skills are more likely to take on challenges and not give up in the face of adversity. A high sense of self-efficacy fosters perseverance and a positive attitude towards learning and personal development.

Objectives of the Tool

The educational tool "My Strengths" aims to support children and adolescents in developing skills to cope with difficulties, building self-confidence, and recognizing, developing, and utilizing their potential.

Other goals of the tool include:

- Strengthening the student's sense of self-worth,
- Developing skills for self-presentation,
- Creating opportunities for students to become aware of their own strengths,

Encouraging positive thinking and speaking about oneself and others.

Introduction of the Tool

People with a strong sense of self-efficacy cope better with stress and failure. They are more resilient to pressure and are able to manage their emotions effectively, which is especially important during adolescence. Belief in oneself is closely linked to self-esteem. Young people who experience success and believe in their abilities develop a positive self-image, which influences their overall well-being and life satisfaction.

The teacher briefly outlines the goals of using the tools.

Self-esteem depends on the attitude we adopt toward ourselves. It is expressed through self-assessment, mainly by evaluating various aspects of our self-image, such as physical appearance, abilities, skills, and character traits. We form these evaluations by comparing ourselves to our ideal self, to the achievements of others, and by contrasting our own opinions with the judgments and opinions expressed about us by others.

Our self-esteem can be underestimated, overestimated, or adequate; positive or negative.

Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

Exercises aimed at building self-belief and self-efficacy are particularly important for school-aged youth, as this is the stage when their self-esteem and self-image are being formed. Below is an engaging activity that can be used during class meetings, workshops, or integration sessions:

“My Strengths”

Students sit in a circle with small pieces of paper and pens. One by one, they name something that helps them in life, such as eloquence, being well-read, playing sports, fluency in a foreign language, physical attractiveness, etc. Students who identify with a given trait write it down on their cards. At the end, everyone counts how many strengths they have listed.

Students with the shortest lists present them to the group, who then help them add more qualities.

Students can compare the number of internal strengths they possess with the number of sources of support they recognize in their environment and close relationships.

You can also use a **“Strengths Loop”** – students create a visual map of their strengths (e.g., a tree of talents, a flower of values).

Another activity is the game **“Who Could This Be?”** – the teacher reads an anonymous description of one student’s strengths, and the class guesses who it is.

The activity can conclude with a discussion emphasizing that everyone has different talents, and that diversity is valuable within a group.

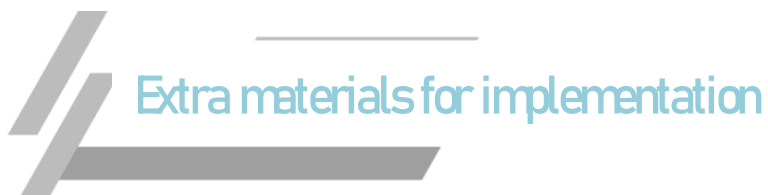
Conclusion:

After conducting such activities, we often feel we’ve helped students shift their perception of themselves. When used periodically in educational settings, these exercises support the recognition of students' strengths and teach them how to present these traits in a positive way. They reinforce belief in one’s own capabilities. They also provide positive feedback from peers, helping students reassess their self-judgments. Additionally, they encourage a habit of looking for the good and valuable in others, and they foster the ability to express approval and acceptance.



Timing

The time needed to use these tools during class is very flexible – ranging from just a few minutes to an entire lesson. It is also worth using them during school trips, integration activities, and other events.



Extra materials for implementation

It is worth watching this video about the power of speaking encouraging words to students:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxfAvkkUHfA>

Tool 2

Belief in one's own abilities I want you to know



Objectives of the Tool



The educational tool "I Want You to Know..." aims to build empathy, strengthen relationships within the classroom, and create a space for sincere, safe emotional communication between students, as well as between students and teachers.

Other goals of the tool include:

- Enabling the expression of important thoughts and emotions that are usually left unsaid.
- Strengthening bonds and trust in the classroom through authentic communication.
- Helping students express gratitude, support, and even difficult emotions in a safe and constructive manner.
- Developing social-emotional competencies: empathy, mindfulness, and openness to others.

Increasing self-awareness and a sense of agency – students have the opportunity to influence the atmosphere in the classroom.



Introduction of the Tool

The teacher briefly outlines the goals of using the tool.

Students stick pieces of paper on their backs. The other participants write positive traits and compliments about the person or express what they believe in that person (e.g., "I believe you can handle math – you're persistent"). At the end, everyone reads what has been written about them.

Examples:

- "I want you to know that your help in math means a lot to me."
- "I want you to know that I admire your courage."
- "I believe you can handle physics – you're persistent."

This tool:

- Strengthens peer relationships – students learn to openly express appreciation, gratitude, affection, and support. They build bridges of empathy and understanding between themselves.
- Builds trust and a sense of safety – students have the space to express what is usually left unsaid. They feel that their voice is important and noticed.
- Helps express emotions and needs – especially important for children and adolescents who struggle with talking about their emotions. It facilitates communication in sensitive matters.
- Develops social-emotional competencies – it exercises empathy, mindfulness, self-awareness, reflection, and the ability to name emotions.
- Strengthens self-esteem – receiving positive feedback helps build the student's belief in themselves. It shows them that they are important, needed, and inspiring to others.
- Helps the teacher understand the class better – thanks to anonymous (or open) messages, the teacher gains a better understanding of class dynamics, relationships, hidden needs, and tensions.
- Creates a positive classroom atmosphere – regular use of this tool influences the culture of mutual respect and kindness.



Timing

The time for using tools in lessons is very flexible – from a few minutes to an entire lesson.

It is worth using these tools on school trips, during integration activities, and other events.



Extra materials for implementation

It is worth watching a film about how important and powerful the kindness of others can be:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WN18kGdPHzk>

Tool 3

Belief in one's own abilities

Hand of power



The educational tool "**Hand of Power**" is designed to help students become aware of their internal resources, personal strengths, and the people who support them. This, in turn, directly contributes to strengthening their **self-belief**, **sense of security**, and **self-acceptance**.



Main Objectives of the "Hand of Power" Tool:

- Strengthening self-esteem

Students identify their successes, talents, and skills – even the small ones.

- Raising awareness of support networks

Students learn to recognize who supports them and who they can turn to in difficult situations.

- Developing self-awareness and reflection

Helps children and adolescents view themselves positively and see themselves as valuable individuals.

Creating a climate of acceptance and understanding

Can be used in individual, group, or classroom work – especially for integration, preventing exclusion, and building trust.



Introduction of the Tool

Teacher's Introduction to the Tool:

Each of us has unique qualities, skills, and experiences that make us strong – even if we sometimes forget that. Everyone also has people around them who offer support in everyday challenges. Sometimes, it only takes a moment of reflection to become aware of this.

Today, during our session, we will create the "**Hand of Power**" – a simple, yet very meaningful map of our strengths and inner resources. This will not only be an art activity but, more importantly, a chance to get to know ourselves better and appreciate what is already valuable within us.

Each finger of our hand will symbolize something different:

- our **skills**,
- the **people who support us**,
- our **successes**,
- things we are **grateful for**,
- and aspects we would like to **strengthen** in ourselves.

This exercise doesn't require you to be the best – just to be yourself.

Your *Hand of Power* is your personal story of strength, support, and growth.

You can choose to keep it to yourself or share it with others – it's entirely up to you.

Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

Activity Instructions – "Hand of Power":

Students trace the outline of their hand on a piece of paper. In each finger, they write their answers according to a specific guide. For example:

- Thumb (What am I good at?) – e.g., "I'm a good listener, I draw comics, I can do mental math quickly."
- Index finger (Who supports me?) – supportive people (parents, teacher, a friend).
- Middle finger (What have I already achieved?) – small and big successes.
- Ring finger (What am I grateful for?) – appreciating everyday things.
- Little finger (What do I want to strengthen in myself?) – areas for growth or development.

This activity encourages reflection on one's strengths and helps boost self-worth.

Applications:

Ideal for homeroom periods, integration workshops, social skills training (SST), pedagogical therapy.

It serves as a great starting point for conversations about emotions, personal resources, and goal setting.

The activity can be done individually or as a group – students can even create a shared classroom poster from their hand outlines.

Timing

The duration of the "Hand of Power" activity depends on the age of the students, the purpose of the session, and the work format, but the average time is approximately **30–45 minutes**.

Suggested Time Breakdown:



1. Introduction and Introduction Discussion (5–10 minutes):

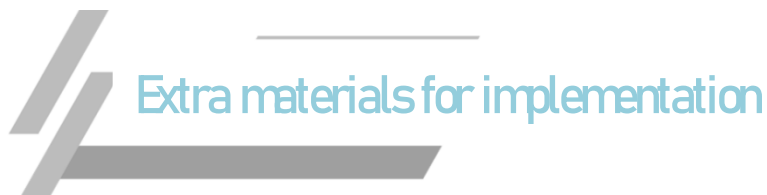
○ **Explanation of "Hand of Power"**: What it is, what the fingers represent, and why we are doing this exercise.

2. Students' Independent Work on Their Hands (20–25 minutes):

○ Drawing the hand, filling in the fields, decorating (creativity is encouraged).

3. Discussion/Work in Pairs or Groups (10–15 minutes):

○ Students who are willing can share their hands and explain what surprised them or what they found important during the exercise.



Worksheet: "Hand of Power"

Instructions:

1. **Draw your hand** on an A4 sheet of paper (you can trace around your hand with a pencil).
2. **Label each finger** according to the categories provided.
3. **Fill in each finger** with your thoughts, drawings, or a collage. Use any creative format you prefer to express your ideas.

Fingers and Categories:

● **Thumb:**

What am I good at?

Write or draw things you are skilled at or proud of.

- **Index Finger:**

Who supports me?

List the people who help, encourage, or support you (family, friends, teachers, etc.).

- **Middle Finger:**

What am I proud of?

Describe accomplishments, experiences, or qualities that make you proud.

- **Ring Finger:**

What am I grateful for?

Reflect on the things you are thankful for (big or small).

- **Little Finger:**

What do I want to develop in myself?

Write or draw things you would like to improve or grow in.

6. Persuading others to agree with their opinion

Objectives of the Module

- To understand the difficulties some students face when trying to persuade others to agree with their opinions, as well as some of the contributing factors.
- To create effective methods and develop techniques and tools to help students improve their persuasion efforts.

Content of the Module

Students often find themselves in situations where they want to persuade others (teachers, peers, family members, or society at large) to adopt their points of view on a range of topics, from academic projects to social issues. However, this persuasion process can be particularly challenging due to a number of interrelated factors, including:

Lack of experience and maturity

A lack of experience is a significant factor that hinders students' ability to persuade others to adopt their viewpoints. This inexperience manifests at various levels and affects both how students construct their arguments and how they are perceived by others. As a result, students may present arguments lacking the necessary depth, nuance, and robustness to be convincing. In addition, they may have fewer concrete examples or personal anecdotes to support their points, making their arguments less compelling.

We will develop techniques and strategies to help students mitigate the impact of their inexperience in their persuasion efforts.

Developing communication skills

While some students are excellent communicators, others are still refining their ability to express complex ideas clearly, concisely, and persuasively. Lack of experience can lead to less effective presentations. Developing communication skills is a major hurdle for students seeking to persuade others. Common difficulties may include limited specific vocabulary, unclear argument structure, trouble expressing nuance, a monotonous or hesitant tone of voice, mismatch between verbal and non-verbal language, inappropriate language, lack of empathy in communication, disorganised delivery, reading verbatim from notes, difficulty assessing the effectiveness of their communication, and more.

We will present tools to help students enhance their communication skills so they can more effectively persuade others to agree with their opinions.

Insecurity and lack of confidence

Awareness of their limited experience or status can cause insecurity when presenting their ideas, weakening the persuasiveness of their message. These issues significantly undermine students' ability to convince others. Such feelings may stem from their developmental stage, limited experience, or the social and academic dynamics in which they are immersed. They may fear being judged, criticised or ridiculed, avoid debating situations, weaken their message through a low voice, submissive body language, doubt their own ideas, or give in too easily, among other behaviours.

We will develop methods to help improve students' self-confidence and reduce their insecurity.

Strategies Students Can Use

Despite these challenges, students can employ strategies to enhance their ability to persuade others and gain agreement with their views:

- **Thorough research:** Basing their arguments on solid and well-researched evidence can boost their credibility.
- **Clear and concise communication:** Clearly and logically articulating ideas in an easily understandable way is essential.
- **Audience adaptation:** Tailoring language and arguments to the audience's perspective can make the message more impactful.
- **Relationship building:** Establishing trust and mutual respect can help others become more receptive to new ideas.
- **Seeking allies:** Finding others who share their views can strengthen their collective persuasive power.
- **Patience and persistence:** Changing minds takes time; perseverance and the repeated presentation of well-founded arguments can be effective.

Tool 1

Persuading others to agree with their opinion

“Get your challenge”



Name of the Tool

Recycling Challenge by Classes

Objectives of the Tool

- Develop strategies to improve their experience in their persuasion efforts.
- Encourage students' ability to persuade others with different points of view.

Introduction of the Tool

As part of our ongoing commitment to building a more environmentally aware and responsible educational community, we have identified a crucial challenge that directly affects our daily lives: low participation in recycling and the incorrect separation of waste in our school. This situation not only hinders the use of valuable resources but also projects an unfavourable image of our school.

With the firm belief that change begins with action and collaboration, the students have devised an innovative and highly practical proposal to address this problem at its root: the “Recycling Challenge by Classes”. This initiative seeks to transform waste management into a participatory, educational, and—why not—fun activity! Through the implementation of clearly labelled containers, the appointment of recycling coordinators among the students, weekly monitoring of classroom recycling, and a motivational reward system, we aim to generate a tangible positive impact in our school and on the planet.

To make this vision a reality, it is essential to present our school leadership with solid and convincing arguments that highlight the concrete benefits this challenge will bring to each member of our educational community and to the environment in general. The goal is clear: to persuade and obtain the necessary support for this initiative to become an inspiring example of environmental commitment and collaboration within our school.

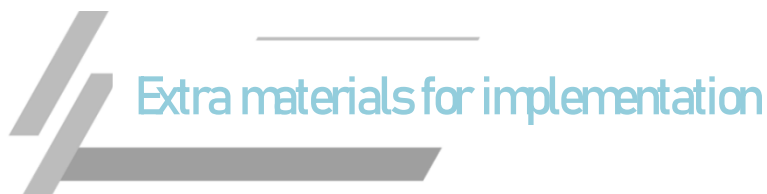
Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

- ✓ **Clear identification of the problem:** Students define the problem as low participation in recycling and the incorrect distribution of waste in the appropriate bins. This leads to poor resource use in the school and a negative image.
- ✓ **Specific and viable solution proposal:** They propose implementing a “Recycling Challenge by Classes”. This system would involve:
 - Placing clearly labelled containers by waste type in each classroom and in common areas.
 - Appointing one student per class as a “recycling coordinator” to encourage participation.
 - Keeping a weekly record of the weight of recycled waste by class.

- Awarding a small prize (e.g., extra points for an activity, additional free time, or a certificate) to the class that recycles the most at the end of the month.
- ✓ **Detailed argument of the benefits:** Students should prepare a detailed argument focusing on the benefits of this challenge to persuade school management.
- **For students:** Participating in the challenge will make recycling more fun and competitive. Earning extra points or free time is a direct incentive to get involved.
 - **For teachers:** This system facilitates waste management in the classroom and promotes environmental responsibility among students without requiring additional effort from them.
 - **For school management:** Increasing the recycling rate will improve the school's image as an institution committed to sustainability, promoting long-term waste reduction and compliance with environmental regulations.
 - **For the environment:** By recycling more and better, we will contribute to the conservation of natural resources and the reduction of pollution.



The tool will be implemented throughout the school year, with quarterly evaluations to assess the success of the most rewarded classes **and thus motivate continued student participation.**



- **Students may gather relevant evidence in advance,** given their lack of experience:
- **Examples from other schools:** They can research online or ask students from other schools if they know of similar initiatives and what their outcomes were.
- **Basic data on recycling:** They can include general information about the benefits of recycling.
- **Internal surveys:** They could conduct a brief survey among their classmates to measure interest in such an initiative and identify what types of prizes would be most appealing.
- **Estimated budget:** They can research the cost of containers and potential prizes to demonstrate the economic feasibility of their proposal.

Tool 2

Persuading others to agree with their opinion

The Bridge of Empathic Persuasion



Name of the Tool

The Bridge of Empathic Persuasion

Objectives of the Tool

- Develop strategies for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the management of disagreements: The aim is for students to acquire tools to identify the causes of conflicts, explore different solutions, and negotiate agreements constructively, avoiding escalation and promoting dialogue.

- Promote empathy and understanding of different social and cultural perspectives: The objective is to cultivate in students the ability to put themselves in someone else's shoes, understand their experiences, and value the diversity of opinions, beliefs, and backgrounds.
- Develop the ability to deeply understand another person's perspective: By the end of the practice, students should be able to identify and articulate the values, reasons, and possible objections of the person they are trying to persuade.
- Build solid and well-structured arguments: Students will be able to organise their ideas logically, presenting clear instructions, key points with evidence, acknowledgment of counterarguments, and convincing conclusions.
- Improve richness and precision of expression: Participants will demonstrate more specific and varied vocabulary, an appropriate tone of voice, and non-verbal language that is consistent with their message.
- Adapt persuasive communication to different audiences and contexts: Students will be able to adjust their message and style in response to others' reactions and the specificities of the situation.
- Encourage critical reflection on the effectiveness of persuasive communication: Students will be able to evaluate their own persuasion strategies, identifying strengths and areas for improvement.



Introduction of the Tool

This method or tool focuses on building a connection between the speaker and the listener, acknowledging their perspectives and guiding them towards a shared point of view. It consists of five pillars:

- **Active Empathy:** Before attempting to persuade, the student must thoroughly understand the other person's perspective. This involves active listening and asking open-ended questions to grasp their reasons, values, and possible objections.
- **Structural Clarity:** A well-structured argument is a strong bridge. Students must learn to organise their ideas logically:
 - **Introduction:** Clearly and concisely state the topic and the aim of persuasion.
 - **Key Points:** Present strong and relevant arguments that support their opinion. Each point should be backed up by evidence or reasoning.

- **Acknowledgement of Counterarguments:** Anticipating and addressing possible objections shows understanding and strengthens the argument. Instead of ignoring them, they can be briefly presented and then refuted with evidence or explained why one's own perspective is more valid in this context.
- **Conclusion:** Summarise the key points and reaffirm the opinion convincingly, aiming for common ground or agreement.
- **Expressive Richness:** How a message is communicated is just as important as its content. This addresses the lack of specific vocabulary, tone of voice, and non-verbal language:
 - **Precise Vocabulary:** Encourage the use of specific and varied terms to express nuance and avoid vagueness. Activities may include synonym exercises, role-based debates requiring specific vocabulary, or word games.
 - **Conscious Tone and Non-Verbal Language:** Work on voice modulation to convey conviction and enthusiasm (without being aggressive), maintain eye contact, use appropriate gestures, and adopt an open posture reflecting confidence and sincerity. Video recordings can be used so students can analyse their non-verbal communication and receive feedback.
 - **Verbal and Non-Verbal Coherence:** Ensure that words, tone, and body language all convey the same message. Incongruence generates mistrust.
 - **Empathic Adaptability:** Persuasive communication is not a monologue. Students must learn to adapt their message and style to the audience and the context. This involves being sensitive to others' reactions, adjusting pace and vocabulary if necessary, and showing genuine interest in the dialogue.
 - **Reflection and Evaluation:** After attempting to persuade, it is crucial for students to reflect on the effectiveness of their communication. Did they achieve their goal? What worked well? What could be improved? Self-assessment rubrics or peer feedback can help identify areas for improvement.

Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

Real-Life Example: Convincing a group of friends to choose a destination for a trip.

Problem: A group of friends cannot agree on where to go for their next trip. Some want the beach, others prefer the mountains, and some would like a city with cultural activities. One student wants to convince them to go to Granada.

Application of the Bridge of Empathic Persuasion by Ana:

- **Active Empathy:** Student 1 starts by asking each friend what they find most appealing about their options (sun and sea, hiking and landscapes, museums and nightlife). She

listens carefully to their reasons and tries to understand their priorities. For example, she finds out that student 2 gets very stressed by noise, so a crowded beach is unappealing, and that student 3 loves history.

- **Structural Clarity:** Student 1 prepares a short, structured "speech":

Introduction: "Guys, I know we have different ideas for the trip, but I'd like to suggest Granada as an option that I think could please everyone."

Key Points:

- "Granada has the Alhambra, an amazing place full of history and art that I know student 3 will love." (Connecting with student 3's interest.)
- "There are also beautiful hiking options in Sierra Nevada, not far away, for those who prefer nature." (Offering an alternative for nature lovers.)
- "And Granada's centre has a lively atmosphere, calm bars with tapas and an interesting cultural vibe." (Showing there are urban activities, but in a more relaxed setting than a big city.)

Acknowledging Counterarguments: "I know some of you wanted the beach, and Granada isn't on the coast, but we could spend a day at a nearby beach if you'd really like to." (Shows willingness to compromise.)

Conclusion: "I think Granada offers a mix of culture, nature, and a pleasant atmosphere that could make the trip enjoyable for all. What do you think?"

- **Expressive Richness:**

- **Precise Vocabulary:** Student 1 uses words like "amazing", "full of history and art", "hiking", "interesting cultural atmosphere" to create an attractive image of Granada.
- **Conscious Tone and Non-Verbal Language:** She speaks enthusiastically but calmly, maintains eye contact with each friend, and uses inclusive hand gestures. Her tone is friendly and confident.
- **Verbal and Non-Verbal Coherence:** Her smile and relaxed posture reinforce her message that Granada is an appealing option and that she is open to dialogue.
- **Empathic Adaptability:** During the conversation, student 1 listens to her friends' reactions. If student 2 mentions concerns about noise, she highlights the quieter areas of Granada. If someone raises budget concerns, she mentions affordable accommodation and activity options.
- **Reflection and Evaluation:** After the conversation (regardless of whether they reach an agreement), student 1 reflects on how she presented her argument. Which arguments were most convincing? What could she have said differently? If no agreement was reached, she analyses why and what obstacles she encountered.



3–4 sessions of 45–60 minutes each, plus time for the real-world application task:

Session 1: Introduction to the Method and Active Empathy (45–60 minutes)

- **(10–15 minutes) Introduction and Conceptualisation:**
 - Presentation of the “Bridge of Empathic Persuasion” method and its five pillars.
 - Discussion on the importance of connection and understanding in effective persuasion.
 - Analysis of Ana’s example in Granada, highlighting how she applied active empathy.
- **(20–25 minutes) Active Empathy Practice:**
 - **Exercise 1: “Put yourself in their shoes”** – Students are divided into pairs. They are given short scenarios with different viewpoints on a simple topic (e.g., which film to watch, what type of music to listen to). One student explains their preference while the other listens actively and paraphrases to show understanding.
 - **Exercise 2: “Exploratory Questions”** – In the same pairs or small groups, they are given a simple disagreement. Students practise formulating open questions to understand the reasons and values behind each position.
- **(10–15 minutes) Sharing and Initial Reflection:**
 - Sharing their experiences from the exercises. What challenges did they face in trying to understand the other’s perspective? What did they learn about the importance of questioning?
 - Introduction to the task for the next session: students are asked to choose a topic they have a strong opinion on and think of someone with an opposing view. They should try to understand that person’s perspective (not necessarily try to persuade them yet).

Session 2: Structural Clarity (45–60 minutes)

- **(10–15 minutes) Recap and Connection:**
 - Brief recap of the Active Empathy pillar and how it links to building a strong argument.

- Introduction to the Structural Clarity pillar, analysing how Ana organised her argument for Granada.
- **(25–30 minutes) Argument Structuring Practice:**
 - **Exercise 1: “Dissecting the bridge”** – Students are given unstructured arguments. In small groups, they must reorganise them into a logical structure (Introduction, Key Points with evidence, Counterarguments, Conclusion).
 - **Exercise 2: “Building my bridge”** – Students begin structuring their own arguments on the topic they chose, following the learned structure. They may work alone or in pairs to receive initial feedback.
- **(10–15 minutes) Sharing and Feedback:**
 - Sharing examples of argument structures. Discussing the importance of clarity and logic.
 - Task for the next session: students must develop their structured argument in writing, including key points, at least one counterargument, and a conclusion.

Session 3: Expressive Richness (45–60 minutes)

- **(10–15 minutes) Recap and Connection:**
 - Brief recap of Structural Clarity and its importance in persuasion.
 - Introduction to the Expressive Richness pillar, analysing vocabulary, tone, and non-verbal language in Ana’s presentation.
- **(25–30 minutes) Expressive Practice:**
 - **Exercise 1: “The power of words”** – Provide vague sentences and ask students to rewrite them using more precise and evocative vocabulary.
 - **Exercise 2: “The voice and body speak”** – Run short simulations where students must express different emotions (conviction, doubt, enthusiasm) using only tone of voice and body language. Then, try to convey a specific message with verbal and non-verbal coherence. (Short video recordings can be used for self-analysis.)
- **(10–15 minutes) Sharing and Reflection:**
 - Discuss how word choice, tone, and non-verbal language affect message reception.
 - Task for the next session: students should practise delivering their structured argument aloud, focusing on vocabulary, tone, and body language.

Session 4: Empathic Adaptability and Reflection (45–60 minutes)

- **(15–20 minutes) Recap and Connection:**
 - Brief recap of the previous three pillars.

- Introduction to the Empathic Adaptability pillar, analysing how Ana adjusted her message based on her friends' reactions.
- Introduction to the Reflection and Evaluation pillar.
- **(25–30 minutes) Simulation and Adaptation Practice:**
 - **Simulation Exercise** – Students work in small groups. Each presents their argument to the group (who will play the role of someone with a different opinion). “Listeners” respond with questions, objections, or doubts. The “speaker” must adapt their message and respond, demonstrating empathic adaptability.
- **(10–15 minutes) Final Reflection and Evaluation:**
 - Group discussion about the simulation experience. What adaptation strategies were most effective? How did they feel while trying to persuade?
 - Ask students to write a personal reflection on their persuasion process: what worked well, what could be improved, and how they will apply this method in the future. A self-assessment rubric can be used.



Extra materials for implementation

To help student 1 effectively apply this strategy, they could use various “materials”—understood as tools, resources, and approaches to support their communication and arguments.

Materials for Preparation and Presentation:

- **Appealing Visual Research:**
 - **Photos and Videos of Granada:** Show compelling images of the Alhambra, Sierra Nevada landscapes, charming neighbourhoods like the Albaicín, and the lively streets and tapas bars. Short videos can offer a more immersive experience.
 - **Simple Multimedia Presentation:** They could create a short presentation on their phone or tablet with images organised around the key points mentioned (history and art, nature, cultural atmosphere). It doesn't have to be formal but should be visually engaging.
- **Concise and Relevant Information:**
 - **Highlighted Key Points:** Keep a mental list or discreet notes on Granada's strong points for each type of interest (for Sofía: “The Alhambra is a UNESCO World

Heritage Site with a fascinating history”; for nature lovers: “Sierra Nevada has trails for all levels and spectacular views”; for those who want atmosphere: “The city centre has a vibrant but relaxed nightlife, perfect for tapas”).

- **Practical Data:** Basic information about accessibility (flights or trains), average accommodation and activity prices, to address possible concerns about logistics or budget.

Tool 3

Persuading others to agree with their opinion

**“Canteen On!
Recharge your batteries
in a healthy way”**



Name of the Tool



Canteen ON! Recharge your batteries in a healthy way. A student campaign to improve our school meals



Objectives of the Tool

- To develop assertive communication, argumentation, research and teamwork skills among Year 10 students (3rd year of compulsory secondary education in Spain) through the planning and implementation of a campaign to improve the school canteen.

Specific Objectives:

- Identify and normalise feelings of doubt and fear when expressing opinions in a school environment.
- Recognise individual and group strengths to address the situation constructively.
- Practise assertive communication to express needs and opinions clearly and respectfully.
- Improve body language to convey seriousness and commitment.
- Develop active listening and response skills in structured debates.
- Research the benefits of healthy eating and the costs of different menu options.
- Develop logical and emotional arguments based on data and experiences.
- Anticipate possible objections and prepare reasoned responses.
- Design and produce a detailed and well-founded proposal to improve the school canteen menu.
- Use communication and argumentation skills to present the proposal to the school board.
- Reflect individually and as a group on the campaign process, identifying achievements, challenges and lessons learned.



Introduction of the Tool

The secondary education stage is a crucial time in young people's development, where nutrition plays a key role in their academic performance, physical wellbeing and emotional health. At our school, a group of Year 10 students expressed concern about the quality and variety of the food offered in the school canteen. Initially, this shared feeling was held back by fear of potential consequences for voicing their opinions and doubts about whether their voices would be heard.

This activity is a response to that concern, turning initial frustration into an opportunity for active and meaningful learning. Through a guided process, students will overcome their fears, develop essential skills in assertive communication and argumentation, thoroughly investigate the issue and create a well-founded proposal to improve the school canteen. This project not only seeks a tangible change in the quality of their meals but also aims to empower students by encouraging civic engagement, teamwork and confidence to express their needs constructively.

Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

This activity will be implemented directly within the Year 10 classroom setting, integrated transversally across different curricular areas such as Form Tutor time, Spanish Language and Literature, Social Sciences, Biology and Geology, and Mathematics (for data and cost analysis).

The campaign will be developed in several phases, as described in the initial situation:

- **Awareness and Demystification:** Group tutor session.
- **Skills Development:** Specific workshops on assertive communication and safe mini-debates (possibly in collaboration with the Language department).
- **Argument Building and Handling Objections:** Independent and guided research, group work to develop arguments (with support from Science and Maths).
- **Application in Real Contexts and Reflection:** Development of the proposal, data collection (surveys), presentation to the school board and reflection journals (Tutor time and Language).

The activity will culminate in the formal presentation of the proposal to the school board, giving students real-life experience in participation and defending their ideas within an institutional setting. Final reflection will help consolidate learning and transfer it to other situations.

Timing

The estimated timeline for this activity is approximately 6–8 weeks, distributed as follows:

- **Week 1:** Tutor session for awareness and demystification. Start forming working groups.
- **Weeks 2–3:** Assertive communication workshops (2 one-hour sessions) and safe mini-debates (2 one-hour sessions).
- **Weeks 3–5:** Research on healthy eating, costs and menu analysis from other canteens. Group work on arguments and anticipating objections. Design of the student survey.
- **Week 5:** Conduct surveys among students and analyse the results.
- **Weeks 6–7:** Draft a detailed proposal for the school board. Prepare the oral presentation.
- **Week 8:** Presentation of the proposal to the school board. Individual reflection journal writing. Final session and evaluation of the activity.

This timeline is flexible and can be adjusted to the specific needs of the group and school.



Extra materials for implementation

The materials needed to carry out this activity include:

- Whiteboard or projector.
- Paper and pens for anonymous writing and for journal writing.
- Group dynamics materials (optional).
- Materials for the "Assertive Communication Workshop" (guides, examples, role-playing).
- Simple topics for the "Safe Mini-Debates".
- Suitable space for debates.
- Internet access and research resources (books, articles, websites on nutrition and costs).
- Templates for organising information and developing arguments.
- Example menus from other school canteens (if possible).
- Templates for drafting the proposal (structure, sections).
- Materials for creating and distributing surveys (paper or online tools).
- Software for analysing survey data (spreadsheets).
- Materials for the presentation (computer, digital board, digital slides).
- Templates for the reflection journal (guiding questions).

7. Setting priorities, designing their own action plan and realising their goals



Objectives of the Module

- Understand the concept of priorities
- Rebuild structure and focus post-pandemic
- Develop effective planning skills
- Gain motivation and direction through goal-setting
- Recognize and overcome common obstacles



Content of the Module

In today's fast-paced world, the ability to prioritise and manage time effectively is crucial for everyone, especially young people who navigate a complex and often overwhelming environment. This has become even more apparent following the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted routines, teaching structures and students' ability to focus and organise themselves.

Many are still adjusting to face-to-face learning, rediscovering their motivation and trying to understand what is most important to them.

This module aims to help students understand the importance of prioritising and setting goals, not as abstract concepts, but as practical tools for taking control of their lives, rebuilding structure, and moving forward with confidence. It provides a foundation for self-control, responsibility, and positive life planning.

Part 1: The importance of setting priorities

Setting priorities means determining what is most important at a given moment or in the long term. It is about making conscious decisions about how to use your energy, time and attention. Without clear priorities, it is easy to feel lost, distracted or constantly busy, but at the same time not make any progress.

For students, this may include balancing school responsibilities, hobbies, relationships, rest, and long-term dreams. When everything seems urgent or overwhelming, learning to prioritise and focus on what is truly important becomes essential.

Key benefits

- Provides clarity in chaotic or overwhelming situations
- Helps reduce anxiety and fatigue associated with decision-making
- Builds confidence in making independent decisions
- Supports better academic performance and well-being

In the wake of the pandemic, many young people are struggling with concentration and engagement. Teachers and caregivers play a crucial role in helping them relearn how to prioritise: not everything can happen at once, and not everything deserves the same level of energy.

Part 2: From intention to action — the role of planning

Once students understand their priorities, the next step is planning. A goal without a plan remains just a dream. Planning involves thinking about how to achieve something and breaking it down into smaller steps. For students who often feel trapped between their dreams and their daily routine, planning provides a bridge.

Plans provide structure, reduce procrastination and help track progress. Importantly, they reduce the emotional burden of ‘task overload’ by setting a clear path forward.

The role of routine and predictability: Students who don't have a set routine at home or have lost their sense of time during remote learning benefit from a predictable framework. Daily and weekly plans help them regain a sense of rhythm, which is essential for emotional regulation and cognitive functioning.

Features of a good plan:

- Clear, achievable goals

- Specific steps and resources
- A schedule with checkpoints
- Flexibility to adjust as needed

Part 3: The psychology of goals — why they matter

Goals give meaning to effort. They help students understand that their current actions have an impact on future outcomes. For people who feel lost or aimless after the pandemic, goals provide a sense of control and direction.

Goals also boost self-esteem. When a student works on something meaningful and sees even small results, their belief in their own abilities grows. This internal motivation can replace external pressure with a sense of personal purpose.

Short-term vs. long-term goals:

- **Short-term goals** (e.g., finishing homework, preparing for a test) provide immediate structure.
- **Long-term goals** (e.g., graduating from school, choosing a career path) provide a broader sense of identity and direction.

The ability to distinguish between these two types of goals and manage them is a key element of mature decision-making.

Section 4: Common obstacles and ways to overcome them

Many students encounter similar obstacles when setting priorities and pursuing their goals. It is important to recognise these challenges and help students develop resilience and adaptive strategies.

Common obstacles:

- **Lack of motivation:** Often associated with feeling overwhelmed or disconnected from the goal.
- **Disorganisation:** difficulty managing tasks or time.
- **Fear of failure:** avoiding action due to perfectionism or anxiety.
- **Low self-confidence:** lack of belief in one's ability to succeed.

Supportive teacher responses:

- Normalise failure and self-doubt.
- Teach that goals can evolve; flexibility is a strength, not a weakness.
- Focus on effort and progress, not just results.
- Offer regular progress checks and encourage action.

Section 5: The role of the teacher

Teachers are not just academic instructors — they are also mentors and guides. Especially in post-pandemic classrooms, students need teachers who can help them rebuild confidence in their abilities and see the value of planning for the future.

How teachers can help:

- Encourage students to reflect on what is important to them and what they care about.
- Provide students with space to share their goals and challenges.
- Teach time management and self-control techniques.
- Model prioritisation through lesson structure and expectations.

The process of setting priorities and goals can be emotional and deeply personal. It requires a safe space where students feel heard, not judged.

Conclusions

Rebuilding students' lives begins with helping them understand what is important to them. Teaching prioritisation and action planning is an important step towards emotional recovery, academic growth, and future readiness.

By guiding students through these reflective and practical processes, teachers empower them to chart their own path with clarity and confidence. These are not just academic skills — they are life skills that promote independence, determination, and well-being in the face of uncertainty.

Every student has a dream — sometimes hidden, sometimes forgotten. With the right guidance, they can learn to discover it, plan for it, and take the first step forward.

Tool 1

**Setting priorities, designing their own
action plan and realising their goals**

Goal Map – from dream to action



Name of the Tool



Goal Map – from dream to action



Objectives of the Tool

- Help students identify short- and long-term goals.
- Develop the ability to plan steps leading to the goal.
- Increase motivation and a sense of agency.

Introduction of the Tool

We often have dreams, but we don't know how to go about achieving them. This exercise helps students see that **every goal can be broken down into small, achievable steps** – and that the journey to achieving a goal begins with a single action.

Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

1. Divide students into pairs or groups; they can also work individually.
2. Students draw or write down one dream or goal (e.g. 'Pass the exam', 'Learn to play the guitar').
3. Divide the goal into 3 stages (e.g. preparation, action, obstacles and how to deal with them).
4. Ask students to write down specific steps for each stage.
5. Ask students to choose one step to start with and write it down on a separate piece of paper as a mini-goal.
6. Present your plans to the class and discuss what you would add or change.

Timing

30-40 minutes



Extra materials for implementation

Coloured sheets of paper or a 'goal map' template

Pens, crayons, markers

(Optional) Stickers or symbols to mark stages

Tool 2

Setting priorities, designing their own action plan and realising their goals

Priority Triangle



Name of the Tool



Priority Triangle



Objectives of the Tool

- Develop the ability to distinguish between what is important and what is urgent.
- Help students organise tasks in order of priority.
- Support time management and stress reduction.

Introduction of the Tool

Not everything that is urgent is the most important. This exercise teaches you how to set priorities when you have a lot of tasks to do – and how to make wise decisions about the order in which to do them.

Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

1. Give each student a list of 10 sample tasks (e.g., preparing for a test, reading a book, training, watching a TV series, helping at home, resting).
2. Each student draws a priority triangle with 3 levels:
 - Top: Very important
 - Middle: Important, but can wait
 - Base: Not very important or distractions
3. Students assign tasks to the appropriate zones.
4. Students create a mini action plan for the next day/week, choosing 2 things to do from the top of the triangle.
5. Group discussion

Timing

30 minutes (including 10 minutes for group discussion)





Extra materials for implementation

Cards with sample tasks (or students create their own)

A sheet of paper with a priority triangle drawn on it

Pens, markers

Tool 3

Setting priorities, designing their own action plan and realising their goals

Action: Aim! – Team game



Name of the Tool



Action: Aim! – Team game



Objectives of the Tool

- Teach cooperation in planning activities.
- Develop strategic and organisational thinking.
- Increase motivation to complete tasks.

Introduction of the Tool

Teams of students will plan and implement a mini-project, learning along the way how to set goals, prioritise and work effectively as a group.

Applying of the Tool: Clear steps

1. Divide students into teams of 3–4.
2. Each team draws a **mini-challenge** (e.g. Organise a class party, Create a poster encouraging learning, Plan a stress-free school day).
3. Each group:
 - Sets a **main goal**
 - Divides the project into **sub-tasks**
 - Decides **who will do what and by when**
 - Presents the action plan to the class
4. The class votes on which plan was the most realistic and specific.

Timing

45- 60 minutes



Extra materials for implementation

Challenge cards

Large sheets of paper for presenting the plan

Felt-tip pens, sticky notes