



EMERGE YOUTH

Unlocking Potential, One Breath at a Time

Empowering the Next Generation of Entrepreneurs through Stress Management Education in Youth

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Stress Management EduPack

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0 Executive Summary

The EMERGE Youth project aims to raise awareness about stress among young people and develop their stress management skills through targeted educational resources. Good mental health and well-being are essential for young people's personal and professional development, shaping their future opportunities and broader societal contributions. However, today's youth face increasing stressors, including eco-anxiety, academic pressures, career uncertainties, financial instability, and socioeconomic disparities. These challenges can be detrimental, marginalising and hindering future productivity (European Commission, 2022; World Health Organisation, 2016).

Project Overview

Aims:

1. To provide personalised solutions for developing stress management techniques for young people.
2. To provide necessary tools as Open Educational Resources (OER) and include vulnerable groups in the training process, thereby improving critical stress management skills for their professional career development and mental health.

To achieve these aims, the project will develop an accessible WebApp to enhance educational opportunities, particularly for young people with limited support and access to training. Additionally, the initiative will engage a wider audience by providing tailored support and resources for practical stress management activities.

As part of Work Package 2, a training Methodology and Educational Pack have been developed to address the needs of youth across Europe. These resources include theoretical materials for educators and interactive group activities that can be transformed into individual practice, designed to equip young people with practical tools and strategies for managing stress effectively.

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0 Introduction

The goal of the EMERGE Educational Pack is to equip young people with the tools to manage stress effectively. Designed to be used by educators, it offers strategies and resources to support young people's mental health and well-being through a theoretical understanding of the topic and stress management practical exercises and activities linked to employability and entrepreneurial skills.

The materials and activities will be hosted in the WebApp platform created during the last phase of the project.

0.1 Scope

To lay the groundwork for developing educational materials, project partners:

- conducted anonymous youth surveys to assess the impact of stress on young people,
- designed a collection of stress management practices to gather relevant information and experiences,
- developed a methodology informed by the findings.

All the materials developed have 2 main objectives:

1. Equip educators with the tools to understand and incorporate effective stress management strategies into their teaching practices.
2. Empower young people to better manage stress, improving their overall well-being and enhancing their career resilience.

0.2 Target Group

The WP2 education material is designed to support the following main target groups:

- Youth educators,
- Youth counsellors,
- Youth workers focused on young people's development,
- Youth mentors,
- Youth organisations.

The project aims to deliver personalised solutions tailored to the needs of these groups. By equipping educators and mentors with effective stress management strategies, it supports their efforts in helping young people develop resilience and manage stress effectively.

0.3 Content

The following educational content includes 5 training modules:

1. Module 1 - Foundations of Stress and Its Impacts
2. Module 2 - Practical Coping Strategies and Methods
3. Module 3 - Stress Management for Career Resilience
4. Module 4 - Emergency Support and Long-Term Resilience
5. Module 5 - Workshop Facilitation, Community Engagement and Use of Digital Tools for Stress Management

Each is divided into 2 parts:

1. **Theoretical knowledge** for youth educators or workers, providing qualitative training around stress management as a career resilience skill.
2. **Practical activities and materials** to be used by educators with youth in groups or individually for a stress-free life.

This content will be hosted as Open Educational Resources (OER) in a Web App (WP3) in the next phase of the project.

Extra materials and entrepreneurial case studies of people who have overcome stress and succeeded in various entrepreneurial sectors can be found in the Annex.

0.4 Stress Management Education for Youth Educators

Objectives: By the end of this course, participants will be able to:

1. Develop knowledge of the nature and the effects of stress on European youth, including its psychological and physiological impacts.
2. Identify common stressors and explore coping strategies, focusing on techniques effective for youth populations.
3. Support youth in their understanding and management of stress in professional contexts.
4. Equip youth with the skills to manage stress, build resilience, and achieve personal and professional success.
5. Facilitate interactive stress management workshops, leveraging community resources and digital tools.

0.5 How to use this EduPack

The following recommendations and resources have been developed through the EMERGE Youth collaborative project. They are intended as guidance and may be adapted to suit different contexts and requirements.

0.5.1 The theory

The start of each module presents the theory behind the presented concepts based on scientific research. This can be presented and explained to young people before, during, or after diving into the practical activities, depending on what the educator thinks is most relevant and effective.

0.5.2 The practical activities

Following each theory section, we have outlined suitable practical activities to implement within a group (5-10 persons). These are aimed at guiding educators to implement the activity in group practice.

For each activity, you will find:

- **Goal:** The main goal of the activity described
- **Instructions:** Directed at educators for them to do the activity with a group of young people
- **Individual practice:** How to do the same activity for one single person (individual)
- **Tips:** Some extra ideas
- **Ideas for reflection:** 1-2 questions that educators can ask at the end of the activity to have young people reflect on the activity they have just done

Readers can pick any activity depending on the time and possibilities they have at hand, but we recommend **starting by including some theory, guided mindfulness, and a few introductory/self-reflection questions**. Then, activities can be mixed and adapted to the needs of the participants – whether for a group of young people or for individual practice.

0.5.3 The assessment

The assessment is used to ensure young people have retained important aspects of each module. They consist of 5 multiple-choice questions.

0.5.4 Duration

Theory: 30 min to 1h, depending on how much young people want to exchange.

Activities: 30 min for introductory activities such as guided mindfulness and self-reflection + 45 min to 1h of 2-3 other activities.

1 Module 1: Foundations of Stress and Its Impacts

Objective	Appraise the nature of stress and its effects on youth.
Learning Outcome	By the end of this module, young people will be able to identify common stress triggers and distinguish between productive and harmful stress.

1.1 Theoretical knowledge

1.1.1 What is stress?

Stress is a term that we are all familiar with, yet its nuances are often overlooked in everyday life.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2023), stress is described as **a state of worry or mental tension that arises in response to difficult situations**. This common experience is a natural human response that has evolved to help us deal with challenges and threats in our environment.

From an evolutionary standpoint, stress was designed to **enhance survival by preparing the body to react quickly in the face of danger**, often referred to as the “*fight or flight*” response. As a result, humans are biologically hardwired to **experience stress in varying degrees**.

However, the way we respond to stress plays a crucial role in determining its impact on our overall well-being. **While stress itself is not inherently harmful, how we perceive and manage stress can significantly affect our health, relationships, and daily functioning**.

Before delving into the different symptoms of stress and mechanisms, particularly from a European perspective, it is essential to understand the two distinct types of stress: **positive (productive) stress and negative (harmful) stress**. Understanding these distinctions is critical in determining whether stress will have a beneficial or detrimental effect on our lives.

1.1.2 Positive Stress

Positive stress, often referred to as **eustress**, is a type of stress that motivates and energises individuals. Rather than feeling overwhelmed or burdened, **eustress enhances performance, drives personal growth, and fosters resilience**.

In this form, stress serves as a motivating tool that encourages individuals to tackle challenges, meet deadlines, or push their limits in a healthy and productive way. As described by MentalHealth.com (2024), **eustress** is an experience that focuses energy, is short-term, and is

perceived as being within one's coping abilities. It is exciting, performance-enhancing, and often leads to a sense of accomplishment and fulfilment.

For instance, receiving a promotion at work, starting a new job, getting married, having a child, moving to a new home, or embarking on a new educational journey are all examples of experiences that might generate *eustress*. These situations can bring about **a sense of excitement and achievement**, even though they may be **demanding or challenging**.

However, distinguishing between *eustress* and negative stress can sometimes be difficult, as stress responses can vary from person to person and situation to situation. What may be seen as a **challenge** for one individual may be perceived as an **overwhelming pressure** for someone else. It is essential to recognise that *eustress* plays a pivotal role in personal development, pushing individuals to face challenges head-on while also fostering a sense of **growth and resilience**.

1.1.3 Negative Stress

On the other hand, negative stress, often referred to as ***distress***, can have detrimental effects on mental and physical health. Unlike *eustress*, *distress* is **anxiety-inducing, overwhelming, and beyond our coping abilities**. It can be either short-term or chronic, and it can lead to a decrease in performance, emotional exhaustion, and a range of health problems.

Distress is often associated with feelings of **helplessness, frustration, and a loss of control**. It can arise from situations such as the breakdown of relationships, financial struggles, job loss, personal health issues, or the death of a loved one.

Additionally, *distress* can result from prolonged periods of high expectations or pressure, causing individuals to feel overwhelmed and unable to manage their daily responsibilities. This form of stress tends to be unpleasant and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical symptoms, such as anxiety, depression, and even physical ailments like headaches or stomach issues.

1.1.4 Symptoms of Stress

Stress manifests itself in a variety of ways, both physically and psychologically. Individuals may experience symptoms that are **both short-term and long-term**, depending on the severity and duration of the stress. Some people may notice immediate physical symptoms such as sweating, an increased heart rate, or muscle tension, while others may experience mental health issues like irritability, anxiety, or depression. These symptoms serve as **signals** that stress is affecting the body and mind, and they can **vary** from person to person.

In the short term, stress can lead to psychological symptoms such as irritability, fatigue, sadness, or difficulty concentrating. Individuals may also experience emotional exhaustion, a sense of being overwhelmed, or a feeling of losing control over their circumstances. According to the Red Cross (2020), other psychological symptoms include aggression, sleep disturbances, and

memory problems. These issues are often **manageable in the short term** with appropriate coping mechanisms, but if left unaddressed, they can **escalate and result in more severe long-term consequences**, such as depression, anxiety, and burnout.

In addition to psychological symptoms, stress can also manifest as physical symptoms that affect the body's overall health. These may include headaches, stomach ulcers, back and neck pain, high blood pressure, and even gastrointestinal issues like diarrhoea or constipation. Chronic stress has also been linked to more **serious conditions** such as heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Over time, prolonged exposure to high levels of stress can **weaken the immune system**, making individuals more susceptible to illness and injury.

Furthermore, stress can also influence an individual's behaviour, leading to unhealthy coping mechanisms. For some, stress may result in overeating, substance abuse, or withdrawing from social activities. Others may engage in risky behaviours such as excessive drinking or smoking to cope with the overwhelming emotions that come with stress. These behaviours not only **exacerbate the negative impact of stress on physical health** but also **prevent individuals from seeking healthier, more effective coping strategies**.

In the European context, the Emerge Youth Surveys (2024) revealed a range of coping mechanisms that young people often rely on to deal with stress. These include both positive strategies such as exercise, meditation, and talking to friends, as well as negative strategies like avoidance, substance use, and unhealthy eating patterns. These findings highlight the importance of encouraging young people to adopt healthier, more adaptive coping mechanisms that promote well-being and long-term resilience.

Stress is an unavoidable part of life that can have both positive and negative effects depending on how we experience and manage it. While stress can be a powerful motivator that helps us face challenges and grow, it can also have detrimental effects on our mental and physical health if left unchecked.

Recognising the signs and symptoms of stress, understanding the difference between **eustress and distress**, and developing effective coping strategies are all crucial steps in managing stress and maintaining overall well-being.

1.1.5 Coping Mechanisms for Stress

Stress management strategies can be broadly categorised into **positive (adaptive) coping mechanisms**, which promote long-term resilience and well-being, and **negative (maladaptive) coping mechanisms**, which may provide temporary relief but often worsen stress over time. These strategies can also be divided into problem-focused and emotion-focused approaches (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

More about this in Module 2.

1.1.6 Findings from our Survey

In the **Emerge Youth Survey (2024)**, over 370 young people were surveyed across France, Greece, Hungary, Cyprus, Ireland and the Czech Republic to ascertain what tended to be the major stressors and what were the most common negative and positive coping mechanisms used by youth.

Analysis of the survey found finances and work to be both very high common sources of stress amongst youth, trailed slightly by Studies, Personal Affairs, Mental Affairs and generically 'the future'. Financial woes were the biggest trigger amongst Cypriot and Greek youth. Interesting, and perhaps surprisingly 'climate' was a relatively low stress trigger, suggesting that the 'future' issues pertain to something else. World conflict was also notably high, especially amongst the Cypriot youth.

Coping mechanisms across Europe also varied depending on country. Regarding the positive coping mechanisms, socialising and talking about your problems were the highest reported coping mechanism used by youth. Further, the second most used positive coping mechanism was exercise. However, very few young people engage in therapy or self-coaching, even if a significant percentage do engage in creative pursuits.

The French participants were the most likely to choose exercise, and along with Cypriots, were quite likely to try meditation. The French, Cypriot and Irish participants were very likely to choose socialising as a coping mechanism. The Cypriots had a very high rate of going to therapy, at just under two thirds of participants, while the rest of the countries had very low rates, usually under 10%. The Hungarians and Greeks were the least likely to engage in therapy.

Interesting patterns were seen for the negative coping mechanisms across Europe. Procrastination was the most engaged in of all, closely followed by staying in and becoming reclusive. These were followed up by eating (either less or more) and addictive behaviours. Reassuringly, relatively few participants engaged in self-medicating, though this was most popular amongst Greek youth. Staying in was most popular amongst Cypriots. Changing eating habits was also very common across Cypriots and the French. Addictive behaviours and staying in were particularly high amongst Irish youth.

Perhaps the most interesting finding of all, is that regardless of whether the strategy was negative or positive, around 15% of participants **didn't find their techniques to be effective at all**, while still engaging with them, with just under half only finding them to be 'somewhat' effective. This speaks to a need not only to educate youth on positive training strategies, but to more actively encourage them.

The survey also asked the youths to self-report on the impact of stress on their work and studies, but also on other aspects of their day-to-day lives. It was found that the most common effect was anxiety which was extremely high amongst Cypriots and the French, though very low for Greeks and Hungarians, who more acutely faced issues in decision making. The next most common were

effects on sleep, and concentration, which were an issue across all nations. Social life, eating, and appetite were across the board relatively less impacted compared to the above-mentioned areas.

1.1.7 The importance of rest

The survey has shown that a huge source of stress for many is work, and what cannot be overstated is the **need for rest**.

Numerous studies emphasise the critical role of rest in **enhancing productivity and overall well-being**. Research by Pang (2016) and Csikszentmihalyi (1996) highlights that deliberate rest, such as walking and disengagement from work, fosters creativity and efficiency. Trougakos et al. (2008) further show that **taking regular breaks** improves emotional well-being and focus.

Despite the common misconception that more work equals greater output, studies like Pencavel (2015) demonstrate that working beyond 40 hours per week leads to diminishing returns, while overworking can cause stress-related health issues (Spurgeon et al., 1997). Furthermore, Kivimäki et al. (2015) **link long work hours to serious health risks** like heart disease and stroke, reinforcing the necessity of structured downtime.

The modern “hustle culture” mindset, which equates success with relentless work, is increasingly being challenged. Newport (2016) argues that **deep, focused work** is far more effective than constant activity, while Berg et al. (2010) suggest that **excessive work without balance can lead to burnout rather than sustainable success**.

Thus, prioritising rest and work-life balance not only enhances individual efficiency but also contributes to long-term career and health sustainability.

1.1.8 How is every upcoming module useful to stress management?

The theoretical knowledge above connects with the upcoming modules:

M2: Practical Coping Strategies and Methods – This module will build upon the knowledge of positive (adaptive) and negative (maladaptive) coping mechanisms we’ve explored above, offering hands-on techniques for stress reduction, rather than just a familiarisation.

M3: Stress management for career resilience – This module will explore the impacts of stress in professional contexts, whether it is as employee or entrepreneur. We will also define a few key skills that are useful to master to effectively manage stress for an appeased career growth.

M4: Emergency Support and Long-Term Resilience – Our research on rest, burnout prevention, and long-term well-being strategies is of particular relevance to this module. It will also cover crisis intervention techniques, identifying signs of distress, and structuring long-term support networks. Insights from our survey on how youth perceive stress management

effectiveness will be integrated with this module, as will exploration of the additional support needed.

M5: Workshop Facilitation, Community Engagement and Use of Digital Tools for Stress Management – Based on our survey findings, peer support and socialising are key coping mechanisms for youth. This module will focus on how to create engaging, interactive workshops that encouraging group discussions, storytelling, and collaborative problem-solving. Additional digital tools will be explored to complete the WebApp that will be designed in the project.

1.2 Practical examples and activities

1.2.1 Understanding Our Stress Levels

Goal: To help young people visualise the levels of stress they carry, both positive and negative and consider how coping strategies can help manage excess stress.

Instructions:

Explain the **jug metaphor**: just like a jug can only hold so much water before it spills over, we all have a limit to how much stress we can contain. The goal is to recognise when our jug is getting full and find **release valves** before it overflows.

1. Provide participants with a **blank jug outline** (drawn by hand or using the attached printable template).
2. Ask them to write down **current stressors** inside the jug both:
 - **Distress** (e.g., conflict, fear, deadlines)
 - **Eustress** (e.g., exciting challenges, goals, responsibilities they've chosen)
3. As they fill the jug, they'll begin to see how much is going on at once.
4. Introduce the concept of a **release valve**: Draw a spout or a green arrow exiting the jug. Participants then list **healthy coping strategies** that help them release pressure (e.g., talking to a friend, going for a walk, taking a break).
5. Also then introduce the concept of negative coping mechanisms which can block the valve such that they can list which of these they often employ.
6. Facilitate a short group discussion about:
 - What filled their jug the most?
 - What strategies help them release stress?

Individual Practice: Individuals can repeat this activity at home weekly to monitor how their jug changes over time. They may want to colour-code or track specific stressors that frequently reappear, as well as coping tools that consistently help.

Ideas for Reflection: What fills up your jug the fastest? What's one new coping strategy you could try when you feel yourself reaching the "overflow" point?

1.2.2 Identification of Triggers

Goal: To support young people in recognising their personal stress triggers, both internal and external, through structured reflection and feedback.

Instructions:

Introduce the idea that stress doesn't just come from outside pressure (like deadlines), it can also stem from **internal thought patterns**, such as fear of failure or self-criticism. Identifying these triggers is the **first step** toward managing them.

1. Provide participants with a **simple journaling template** or blank paper. Ask them to reflect on and write about:
 - A recent moment they felt stressed
 - What they were doing, thinking, or who they were with
 - How their body and emotions reacted
2. Guide them to complete 2–3 short journal entries over the session, or over the course of a week if time allows.
3. Then, introduce the idea of **feedback from others**: Ask participants to speak (in pairs or small groups) with someone they trust about how they behave when stressed. Encourage gentle, constructive insights (e.g., "You get quiet," or "You seem overwhelmed by group settings").
4. Finally, facilitate a discussion or private reflection on the **patterns** they noticed. Did certain situations or emotions keep showing up? Were there surprises?

Individual Practice: Encourage individuals to begin a "**stress pattern tracker**" journal where they note their mood, physical state, and surroundings when they feel tense. Every few days, they can look back to detect recurring triggers. They can also ask someone close to them: "What do you notice about me when I'm stressed?"

Ideas for Reflection: Were any of your stress triggers surprising to you? How could knowing your triggers help you intervene earlier and reduce future stress?

1.2.3 Journaling Test Exercise

Goal: To help young people analyse real-life stress situations and practice identifying both triggers and appropriate coping strategies.

Instructions:

Explain that this activity is about developing **empathy and problem-solving** by examining how stress shows up in other people's lives and thinking through what might help them cope.

1. Use the **brief written case studies** included at the end of this task as example journal entries.
2. Divide participants into small groups and assign one scenario to each group. Ask them to:
 - Identify the **main source(s) of stress**
 - Discuss how the stress might be impacting the person's thoughts, emotions, or behaviours
 - Suggest at least two **adaptive coping strategies** that could help (e.g., exercise, reframing, journaling, social support)
3. After 10–15 minutes, each group should rotate and swap their scenario and thus build up more ideas of what's consistent in each scenario. Once all three have been seen by all three groups, they can then share their analysis and proposed solutions with the wider group. Discuss similarities and differences in their approaches.

Optional: Provide a checklist or reference sheet of coping strategies to support their analysis.

Individual Practice: Give individuals a short scenario to read and reflect on privately. Ask them to answer three prompts:

1. What's the main stressor here?
2. How do I think this person is feeling/behaving?
3. What are two ways they could manage the situation positively?

They can also be encouraged to relate the scenario to their own life if comfortable.

Ideas for Reflection: Did you see any of your own stress responses in the scenario? What would you want someone to suggest to you if you were in that situation?

Journal Entry 1 – Monday Night

I don't know why today drained me so much. It wasn't even that eventful. Just another long meeting where people talk over each other, and I sit there trying to find the right moment to speak. I had something important to say "I really did" but by the time I worked up the nerve, the conversation had moved on. I hate how my voice feels small in rooms like that. At the end, they asked if anyone had final thoughts, and I could've spoken up, but the moment felt too big. Like I'd be drawing attention to myself in the wrong way. So, I said nothing. Again. I left work feeling so tense. My shoulders ache. I don't even know why I care so much.

Journal Entry 2 – Wednesday Evening

I ran into someone from college today. I almost didn't recognise them at first, but they spotted me right away and waved. They seemed genuinely happy to see me, which should've been nice, but instead, my stomach twisted into knots. We talked for a few minutes well, they talked. I mostly nodded and smiled, hoping they wouldn't ask too much about my life. At one point, they laughed and said, "You always were the quiet one, huh?" I know they didn't mean anything by it, but the comment stuck with me for hours. I kept replaying the conversation, analysing what I said, what I should've said. Why does a simple interaction like that feel so exhausting?

Journal Entry 3 – Saturday Afternoon

The café was crowded, but I needed to get some work done, so I found a corner table and put in my headphones. It was fine at first, but then the barista called out my name for my order. My name: loud, clear, in front of everyone. I felt my whole body tense as I stood up, suddenly hyper-aware of how I looked, how I moved. I grabbed my coffee as fast as possible and sat back down, heart pounding like I'd just done something embarrassing. Except... I hadn't. No one was even looking at me.

I hate that feeling the rush of heat in my face, the tightness in my chest over something so small. I know it's irrational. But knowing that doesn't make it go away.

SPOILER:

(The underlying theme is social situations – in this case)

1.2.4 Stress Mapping Exercise

Goal: To help young people visually identify and connect their main sources of stress and understand how different life areas are affected and interlinked.

Instructions: Explain that stress doesn't occur in isolation, for example academic pressure can affect sleep, or relationship issues can impact focus. This activity helps participants uncover these connections and reflect on their stress landscape.

1. Provide participants with a large sheet of paper and coloured markers.
2. Ask them to draw a central circle labelled "Me", then build out branches to different areas of life:
 - Personal
 - Academic
 - Social
 - Environmental (e.g. home, world events, finances)
3. Within each category, they should list specific stressors or triggers they experience.

4. Introduce colour coding for clarity:
 - **Red** = distress (overwhelming/negative stress)
 - **Green** = eustress (motivating/positive stress)
 - **Blue** = manageable stress (neutral, tolerable)
5. Next, have them draw arrows showing how one stressor may influence another life area (e.g., “academic deadlines” can lead to “less time with friends” can lead to “feeling isolated”).
6. Close the activity with a discussion or journaling about what patterns they noticed and how they might respond to interconnected stress more effectively.

Individual Practice: An individual can complete this activity solo as a journaling and visual reflection task. Suggest keeping the map and revisiting it monthly to see how their stress patterns evolve and what coping tools are helping.

Ideas for Reflection: Which stressors felt most connected to other areas of your life? What small change in one area might positively impact another?

1.2.5 Stress and Coping Role-Playing

Goal: To help young people practice identifying stressors and applying adaptive coping strategies through real-life role-play scenarios.

Instructions:

Explain to participants that stress often catches us off guard in real life during arguments, deadlines, or unexpected challenges. This activity gives them a safe space to rehearse how they might respond more positively.

1. Prepare a few realistic stress scenarios in advance. Examples include:
 - Feeling unprepared the night before an important exam
 - Getting negative feedback from a teacher or supervisor
 - Conflict with a close friend or family member
 - Feeling overwhelmed by multiple responsibilities
2. Divide participants into pairs or small groups. Assign one person to play the stressed individual and the other(s) to act as a supportive friend, peer, or coach.
3. Give them 5–7 minutes to act out the scenario. After each round, debrief as a group:
 - What signs of stress were visible?
 - What coping strategies were used?
 - Were they helpful or unhelpful?

- What other responses could have improved the outcome?
4. Encourage rotating roles and revisiting the same scenario with different coping approaches (e.g., avoidance vs. journaling, isolation vs. asking for support).

Individual Practice: An individual can adapt this as a self-dialogue or journaling exercise. Ask them to write a short script about a past or imagined stressful moment, then rewrite it with an adaptive coping strategy included. They can even record themselves responding to the scenario in a calmer or more constructive way.

Ideas for Reflection: What made some coping responses feel more effective than others? How can practicing these strategies now help you feel more confident in real-world stress situations?

1.2.6 Stress Impact Wheel

Goal: To help young people visualise how a single stressful event can affect them across physical, emotional, and behavioural dimensions, and increase awareness of patterns in their stress responses.

Instructions:

Begin by introducing the idea that stress doesn't only affect our thoughts it shows up in our bodies, emotions, and behaviours. Explain that recognising these signs is the first step toward managing them more effectively.

1. Provide each participant with a blank "Stress Impact Wheel" divided into three equal sections:
 - Physical (e.g. headaches, fatigue, muscle tension)
 - Emotional (e.g. sadness, anxiety, irritability)
 - Behavioural (e.g. procrastination, withdrawal, overeating)
2. Ask them to reflect silently on a recent stressful event. Then, in each section of the wheel, they write or draw how the stress affected them in that domain.
3. After 10–15 minutes of individual completion, facilitate a small group or whole class discussion. Ask:
 - Which areas of the wheel filled up the most?
 - Did any symptoms surprise you?
 - What coping strategies might relieve one or more of these impacts?

Individual Practice: An individual can complete the wheel privately as a journaling activity. Encourage them to repeat the wheel for different events to notice recurring stress patterns, and how these might change when better coping tools are used.

Ideas for Reflection: Which of these stress impacts are easiest for you to notice, and which are harder to spot? What signs could act as an “early warning system” to let you know you’re becoming overwhelmed?

1.2.7 Future Focus: Discovering Resilience Strategies for Career Success

Goal: To guide young people in identifying practical, stress-related behaviours that support long-term career success and employability, using structured discussion and real examples.

Instructions:

Begin with a short, interactive presentation or facilitator talk outlining three key ideas:

1. Eustress is the kind of positive pressure that prepares us for challenges – such as job interviews, deadlines, or new responsibilities – and often leads to growth.
2. Distress, if unmanaged, can derail career plans by leading to burnout, poor decision-making, or withdrawal.
3. Research (e.g. Kivimäki et al., 2015; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Pencavel, 2015) shows that resilience in work and life is built by using balance, focus, and restorative practices – not just “pushing through” stress.

Then divide participants into small groups. Give each group a set of scenario cards (or describe them aloud) that include common career-related stress situations, for example:

- You are asked to present your project idea to a panel.
- You just received vague feedback on an internship application.
- You are managing school and part-time work and feel overwhelmed.
- You’re unsure whether to apply for a job that feels “above your level”.

Each group’s task is to:

1. Identify the kind of stress involved (eustress or distress).
2. Match the situation with a recommended positive response or resilience habit, such as:
 - Scheduling focused time and recovery breaks
 - Practicing micro-preparation (e.g. pitch rehearsal)
 - Seeking social support or peer feedback
 - Reframing negative self-talk
 - Using exercise or mindfulness to manage nerves

You can prepare a short handout or visual aid with these “resilience habits” to help them match solutions to scenarios. After group discussions, each team presents one scenario and the solution they found most helpful.

Individual Practice: Provide participants with a worksheet listing 3–4 real-life stress scenarios they might encounter in work or education. Ask them to check off which positive habits they’ve already tried and circle one they will apply this week.

Ideas for Reflection: Which solutions felt realistic and helpful for your own life? How might using eustress intentionally change how you approach challenges at work or in school?

1.2.8 Stress-Free Toolbox

Goal: To help young people identify and organise a set of personalised coping strategies they can rely on when experiencing stress.

Instructions:

Introduce the activity by explaining that just like we carry tools to fix everyday problems (e.g. a phone charger, keys, or medication), we also need mental and emotional tools for dealing with stress.

1. Ask participants to reflect on moments when they felt overwhelmed or under pressure and how they managed it – positively or negatively.
2. Invite them to brainstorm at least five strategies they’ve used or want to try, from any of the following categories:
 - Physical (e.g., walking, stretching, proper sleep)
 - Emotional (e.g., talking to a friend, crying, drawing)
 - Cognitive (e.g., positive self-talk, mindfulness, goal setting)
3. Once they’ve written down their strategies, they create a “Stress-Free Toolbox”, either:
 - A decorated physical card or page with their tools
 - A digital note or voice memo they can refer to during tough moments

Encourage creativity: they can use colours, symbols, or quotes to personalise it.

Individual Practice: An individual can do the same steps as a journaling or art activity at home. Suggest setting a reminder on their phone or posting their toolbox somewhere visible as a personal commitment.

Ideas for Reflection: Which strategy in your toolbox do you use most often, and why? Is there one tool you’d like to try more often that could help you in a new or different way?

1.2.9 Resource-Exercise

Goals: To better understand what resources you can rely on in your social sphere i.e. your family, friends, etc. Who are people, things or objects from which you can draw strength?

Instructions:

This exercise can be done alone, in pairs, or even threes. It requires one person to draw (the artist), one person to ask questions (the interviewer) and one person to answer questions (the interviewee). One person can do all three roles or just one. You will require a large piece of paper and coloured pens, such that the artist can draw images of the mentioned resources in the interviewee's life while the interviewer digs deeper and asks questions.

Some question prompts include:

1. What achievement in your life gives you a lot of pride in who you've become?
2. Who do you speak to when you need to talk to someone about something?
3. Do your parents or guardians make you feel strong? Do they make you feel anxious?
4. Do your friends act as sources of support?
5. What values do you have? How have they helped you? Are you a source of empowerment for yourself?
6. Do you think you're a source of empowerment for others?
7. Was there something really hard that you had to go through, but you still got through it?
8. Is there a skill or knowledge area that you feel very advanced in?
9. How do you feel when you help other people?
10. What life experiences are those you attribute meaning to? Is there a moment when the current version of you started?
11. Are you religious, and if yes, does it help you feel strong? If you're spiritual, does it help? Do you feel connected to anything bigger than you, or than life? Even if you are not religious or spiritual?

After 15 minutes of questioning and drawing, the roles can swap and new paper can be used such that everyone has a turn in every role, and after 45 minutes all three can present their mind maps to any other individuals present and keep them as a resource to refer to at home.

Individual Practice: As stated above, the same activity can be done with one person asking themselves the above prompts and drawing/writing. In which case there is no presentation.

Ideas for reflection: Who are you most likely to go to for a source of strength? Are your sources of strength physical objects, or more abstract concepts?

Instructions for Educators: For you to facilitate this session, you should present a completed version of these to the class, it can be about yourself or about something more fictional (yourself is always better as students are always motivated by the personal life of their educators, though this is of course not a must if you don't feel comfortable with it). You must explain the different roles to them of course as well as how to use the tools.

1.2.10 The “Yes Ladder”: Building Confidence Through Small Wins

Goal: To help young people identify and build up tolerance for eustress by stacking progressively challenging actions that boost confidence and career readiness.

Instructions:

Introduce the concept of the “**Yes Ladder**” , a behavioural strategy often used in sales and negotiation, where saying "yes" to small things makes bigger commitments easier. In this activity, young people build a personal “ladder” of stress-positive actions related to their career path.

1. Have participants draw a ladder with 5 rungs on a blank sheet.
2. On the **bottom rung**, they write a small, manageable task they've already done (e.g. emailed a teacher, posted on LinkedIn).
3. Each **rung above** should be a slightly more challenging task that causes some pressure but is doable (e.g. asking a mentor for help, doing a mock interview, applying for a part-time job, presenting a new idea to others).
4. The **top rung** is a bold but realistic action that would significantly grow their confidence or visibility.

Facilitate a group sharing session where participants describe a rung they're currently working toward and discuss supportive strategies.

Individual Practice: Ask individuals to journal their own “Yes Ladder” and pick **one rung** to act on that week. They should document their emotional state before and after completing the action.

Ideas for Reflection: What helped you move up a rung on your ladder? How can this strategy help you tackle future professional challenges with more confidence?

1.2.11 Eustress in Action: Mapping Moments of Growth

Goal: Help young people recognise past situations where eustress contributed to personal development, success, or learning relevant to their career/employability.

Instructions:

Ask participants to reflect on a moment in the past year where they experienced a challenge that initially caused pressure, but led to growth or success. Distribute paper and markers and have them create a timeline or “stress-to-success” path showing:

1. The challenge/stressful situation
2. Their emotional response
3. The actions they took
4. The outcome
5. What they learned or gained (skills, confidence, recognition)

Invite volunteers to share their stories. As a facilitator, emphasise the transformation of stress into capability, this is the essence of eustress.

Individual Practice: Ask individuals to write a reflective journal entry with the same five-step structure. Optionally, they can convert it into a visual mind map or sketch to reinforce personal meaning.

Ideas for Reflection: How did stress help you grow in that situation? Can you think of a career path or job setting where that same skill could be useful?

1.2.12 The Eustress Elevator Pitch

Goal: Help young people practice reframing high-pressure moments (like interviews, networking, or public speaking) as opportunities to harness eustress for employability.

Instructions:

Explain the concept of an elevator pitch (a brief summary of who you are and what you do). Then, explain that many people fear pitching themselves due to stress, yet this is a form of eustress that can help them shine.

In pairs or small groups, ask participants to:

1. Write a short 30-second pitch introducing themselves and one strength or goal
2. Rehearse it using controlled breathing and grounding techniques
3. Reflect on how their body felt before and after the pitch
4. Optionally, try again, applying positive reframing techniques (“This is exciting” vs. “This is scary”)

Individual Practice: Ask the individual to write and record a short elevator pitch using their phone or mirror practice. Encourage doing it once “cold,” then again using a eustress-enhancing mindset.

Ideas for Reflection: How did your mindset affect your performance? In what types of future scenarios might this skill give you a professional advantage?

1.3 Self-assessment

1. What is the primary trigger of stress for youth across Europe, according to the Emerge Youth Survey (2024)?

- A) Relationship conflicts
- B) Lack of sleep
- C) Climate change
- D) Financial issues and work

2. Which of the following is an example of positive (productive) stress, also known as 'eustress'?

- A) Losing a loved one
- B) Receiving a promotion at work
- C) Suffering from a serious illness
- D) Conflict in relationships

3. What is the difference between productive (eustress) and harmful (distress) stress?

- A) Eustress is unpleasant, while distress is motivating
- B) Eustress is motivating and manageable, while distress is anxiety-inducing and beyond coping abilities
- C) Eustress occurs only in children, while distress affects adults
- D) Eustress has physical symptoms, while distress has mental symptoms only

4. Which of the following is a common negative (harmful) coping mechanism for stress, as identified in the Emerge Youth Survey?

- A) Exercise
- B) Meditation
- C) Procrastination
- D) Socialising

5. What is one of the main reasons it can be difficult to identify personal stress triggers?

- A) Stress triggers can be internal, such as unrealistic expectations or low self-esteem
- B) They can be caused only by external factors
- C) They are always related to physical symptoms
- D) Stress triggers only appear during major life events

Answers: 1-D, 2-B, 3-B, 4-C, 5-A

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2 Module 2: Practical Coping Strategies and Methods

Objective	Explore effective stress management techniques and holistic practices to support youth in managing stress.
Learning Outcome	By the end of this module, young people will be able to identify and integrate practical, sustainable coping and self-coaching strategies into their daily routines, through group practice or individually.

2.1 Theoretical knowledge

2.1.1 Introduction

Stress is a natural response to challenges, but if not managed properly, it can negatively impact well-being. Coping refers to the strategies we use to handle stress, whether in the moment or in the long term. Effective coping allows us to regain control and reduce the harmful effects of stress. Understanding different coping strategies helps us respond to stress in a way that promotes resilience and emotional balance.

2.1.2 Identifying What is Really Stressing You

Before choosing a coping strategy, it is essential to understand the root cause of stress. Often, stress can feel overwhelming simply because it is not clearly defined. Identifying the exact source of your stress allows you to take more effective action.

One powerful approach to this is **self-coaching**, which involves asking yourself structured questions to gain clarity and take control of your responses. Coaching is a structured approach that helps individuals reflect, find solutions, and take action. When applied to oneself, it becomes self-coaching a valuable tool for navigating difficult situations and making better decisions.

Ask yourself:

- What specific situation or thought is making me feel stressed? Naming the stressor helps reduce its power over you.
- **Is this something I can change, or do I need to adjust my response?** Not all stressors can be eliminated, but understanding your level of control helps determine the best coping approach.
- **What aspects of this situation are within my control?** Shifting focus to what can be managed reduces feelings of helplessness.
- What emotions am I experiencing, and what might be triggering them? Acknowledging emotions can provide clarity on deeper concerns.
- **How have I successfully handled similar situations in the past?** Recognising past successes builds confidence in dealing with current stressors.

- **What is the best possible outcome in this situation?** Focusing on solutions rather than problems can shift your perspective.
- **What small step can I take right now to improve the situation?** Taking action, even in small ways, can reduce stress and create momentum.

By answering these questions, you can gain clarity and take a more proactive approach to managing stress. This self-coaching technique can be applied anytime you face a stressful or challenging situation, helping you build emotional resilience over time.

2.1.3 The 4 Coping Styles (Brief COPE)

The **Brief COPE model**, developed by Charles S. Carver in 1997, is a widely used framework for understanding coping strategies. This model is useful because it helps individuals recognise their typical coping patterns and adjust improve their resilience. Understanding these coping styles enables a more strategic approach to managing stress effectively.

The Brief COPE model categorises coping methods into four main coping styles:

Coping Style	Description	Examples
Problem-Focused Coping	Actively addressing the root cause of stress to resolve it.	Making a plan, seeking advice, taking direct action.
Emotion-Focused Coping	Managing emotional reactions to stress rather than changing the stressor itself.	Practicing mindfulness, reframing negative thoughts, relaxation techniques.
Avoidance Coping	Ignoring or avoiding the stressor, which may provide temporary relief but often worsens the situation in the long term.	Procrastination, denial, excessive distractions.
Social Support Coping	Seeking emotional or practical support from others.	Talking to a friend, joining a support group, seeking professional advice.

2.1.4 The 4 A's of Stress Management

The **4 A's** have been developed as a practical framework for stress management. They provide a structured approach to responding to stress, ensuring that individuals have practical options depending on the nature of the stressor. In most situations, these A's are complementary, thus it is possible to combine them!

The 4 A's offer four key approaches to handling stress in different situations:

Strategy	Description	Example
Avoid	Reduce exposure to unnecessary stressors.	Setting boundaries, saying no to excessive commitments.
Alter	Modify the situation to reduce its stressful impact.	Improving communication, adjusting expectations.
Adapt	Change your perception of the stressor to make it more manageable.	Reframing challenges as opportunities, using positive self-talk.
Accept	When a stressor cannot be changed, learning to accept it reduces frustration.	Practicing gratitude, letting go of perfectionism.

2.1.5 Unhealthy Coping Methods to Avoid

Some coping mechanisms may provide temporary relief but ultimately worsen stress and well-being in the long term (Calm Blog, (no date specified)). These include:

- **Substance use** (alcohol, drugs) to escape stress, which can lead to dependency and health issues.
- **Overeating or undereating**, which disrupts physical health and emotional balance.
- **Excessive social withdrawal**, leading to isolation and increased distress.
- **Avoidance and procrastination**, which delay solutions and increase anxiety.
- **Self-criticism and negative self-talk**, which damage self-esteem and worsen emotional health.

These methods should be avoided because they do not resolve the root causes of stress and can lead to more significant physical and mental health issues over time. While they may provide short-term relief, they often contribute to a cycle of increased stress and reduced well-being.

Engaging in unhealthy coping behaviours can also affect professional and personal relationships. For instance, withdrawing from others or responding with irritability can damage trust and communication in teams or families. Over time, these methods may reduce our resilience and make it harder to cope with future stressors. Recognising these patterns early and replacing them with healthier options is key to long-term well-being.

Unhealthy strategies also send misleading signals to our brains – suggesting that avoidance or suppression is effective – when in reality, these strategies prevent emotional processing. Emotional avoidance can build up unresolved stress, leading to burnout, anxiety, or even depression.

2.1.6 Positive and Healthy Coping Methods

Effective coping involves strategies that help manage stress both in the moment and over the long term.

Immediate Coping Strategies:

- **Deep breathing exercises** to quickly reduce stress responses.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation** to release physical tension.
- **Short walks or stretching** to clear the mind and improve circulation.
- **Grounding techniques** (e.g., 5-4-3-2-1 method: naming five things you see, four things you feel, etc.) to refocus attention.

Mid- to Long-Term Coping Strategies:

- **Maintaining regular physical activity** (e.g., yoga, walking, sports) to improve overall resilience and reduce baseline stress levels.
- **Practicing mindfulness and meditation** to increase awareness and reduce reactivity to stress.
- **Practicing gratitude or journaling** to shift focus from stressors to positive experiences.
- **Developing problem-solving skills** to handle future stressors proactively.
- **Building strong social connections** for emotional and practical support.
- **Setting clear boundaries** between work and personal life to preserve energy.
- **Engaging in hobbies and creative activities** that bring joy and meaning.

Healthy coping methods not only address immediate stress but also contribute to long-term emotional strength, making individuals more capable of handling future challenges.

Additionally, using positive coping methods enhances emotional resilience. They allow us to face challenges constructively and help reduce the intensity or duration of stress. Unlike unhealthy methods, these tools improve our mental health and increase our capacity to adapt. They foster self-confidence, self-regulation, and a greater sense of control over our emotions and actions.

Building a "coping toolkit", a set of go-to healthy habits, makes it easier to respond to future stress with confidence. Practicing these methods regularly increases their effectiveness, even in unexpected or high-stress scenarios.

In the practice section below, you will find a few examples of activities that you can try and include in your daily life, if that is helpful.

2.1.7 Other Stress Management Techniques

Beyond coping strategies, additional techniques can help manage stress effectively:

- **Time management** to prioritise tasks and set realistic goals, thus reducing the feeling of being overwhelmed.
- **Journaling** to process emotions and identify stress patterns.
- **Visualisation** to imagine peaceful scenes or successful outcomes to reduce anxiety and build confidence.
- **Better sleep hygiene** to maintain a consistent sleep schedule and improve physical and emotional regulation.
- **Engaging in hobbies** to relax and recharge.
- **Practicing gratitude** to shift focus toward positive aspects of life.
- **Digital detox** to take breaks from screens and notifications to help calm the mind and reduce overstimulation.
- **Seeking professional help** by speaking with a counsellor or therapist who will offer personalised guidance for managing complex stressors, whenever one feels the need for it.

This structured approach provides a foundation for stress management by helping individuals identify stressors, choose appropriate coping strategies, and develop long-term resilience (topic more explored in Module 4). Over time, these techniques strengthen well-being, improve concentration, and help maintain balance even when faced with significant challenges.

Exploring different techniques helps individuals discover what works best for them and encourages a proactive approach to self-care.

Some of these techniques will be explored further in the next section through practical exercises, providing hands-on ways to implement effective stress management.

2.2 Practical examples and activities

2.2.1 Starting Activity - Guided Mindfulness Practice

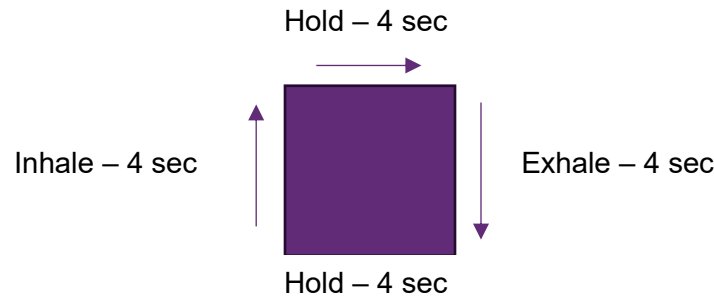
Goal: Experience the benefits of “mindfulness” techniques, great for relaxation & focus.

Instructions: There are many types of possible practices. Here we give the example of one, called the “Box Breathing”.

After explaining what this exercise is about to participants, ask them to sit together, either in a circle, on the floor, outside on the grass... The following is what you can tell them:

- Close your eyes and concentrate on your breath.
- Imagine tracing a square in your mind.
- Inhale deeply for 4 seconds as you move up one side of the box.
- Hold your breath for 4 seconds as you trace across the top.
- Exhale for 4 seconds as you move down the other side.

- Hold your breath for 4 seconds as you trace across the bottom.
- Repeat for about 4–5 rounds.



Once it's done, ask them to open their eyes when they are ready. Then allow a few seconds or minutes for the participants to get back to their environment, before starting the next activity.

Individual practice: Do the exact same thing at any moment that feels comfortable for you. There are some apps where you can set a timing and a counter to help with this practice.

Ideas for reflection: How do you feel now? Is there any difference between now and before starting the exercise?

2.2.2 Reflecting on the Current Situation

Goal: Help participants identify stressful events, the coping strategies they used and their effectiveness.

Instructions: The idea here is to allow participants to think about a recent emotionally or physiologically impactful event that they perceived to be threatening or negative. Willing participants tell everyone about an event they have lived recently and can answer the following questions.

- How did you identify that the event was having a negative impact on you?
- Did you apply any strategy from the COPE (Problem-Focused Coping, Emotion-Focused Coping, Avoidance Coping, Social Support Coping) or 4 A's (Avoid, Alter, Adapt, Accept) styles?
- Do you believe your strategy was successful? Why yes or why not?
- When you think of some major life events you have experienced, can you identify how you appraised them? Did you cope with them in the same way or were there differences?

After that, you can ask others if they have other ideas to cope with that specific situation: if they have lived it themselves; what are the similar and different things they did to deal with it, etc. If the situation is still ongoing, what they would recommend that person to do, etc.

This exercise is great for group empowerment and support, and to open new perspectives and solutions to a situation when that is possible.

Tips:

1/ It is crucial that participants feel safe to share. Before you start, set some rules such as telling everyone that there should be no judgment, no mockery, no denying of others' feelings that could make someone regret sharing. Explain that everyone has their own way to cope with something, and we all do as best as we can.

2/ Remind participants that they only answer the questions if they want to, and if they feel uncomfortable at any moment, they are free to say so and to stop the discussion.

Individual practice: Take your time to answer the questions by yourself. We recommend writing your answers or use a voice recorder for example, as it will be more effective than just thinking about them in your head!

Ideas for reflection: When you look back on the stressful event you thought about at the beginning, would you apply the same strategy now after the activity?

2.2.3 Emotions Identifier

Goal: Identify one's emotions and expand the related vocabulary.

Instructions: Here is a short game/exercise you can use to help young people identify emotions and expand their emotional vocabulary.

- Prepare emotion cards by writing different emotions on small slips of paper: excited, frustrated, proud, overwhelmed, curious, embarrassed, relieved, anxious, ...
- Include some basic emotions (happy, sad, angry) and some nuanced ones (hopeful, disappointed, uncertain).
- Divide the group into small teams or pairs.
- One person draws an emotion card and acts it out without speaking.
- The others guess the emotion and you can discuss it with the group.
- You can then ask them when they have felt this emotion? Or how does it show up in their body (tense shoulders, smiling, fidgeting)? Or what words or phrases describe this feeling?

Tips:

1/ If acting is too intimidating, participants can describe situations where someone might feel that emotion instead of acting it out.

2/ Already made card games exist, have a look in the Collection of Stress Management Practices, or check if you can find one in your language!

Individual practice: Find a list of emotions online or that you know and write them on small papers. Pick one and try to remember a moment when you felt like this: where were you, with whom, what happened that made you feel like this and how did you react? For the positive emotions, we recommend writing them down on a paper, so you can come back to them whenever you need to feel good.

Ideas for reflection: Which card do you think you were at the beginning of the activity, and which one are you now?

2.2.4 The 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise

Goal: Relieve the body and mind from stress anywhere and anytime

When people start feeling stress at a high level during a situation that triggers them, they might start panicking or becoming anxious. Following is a good exercise to practice outside of stressful situations, so that it comes quickly to mind whenever there IS a stressful situation, to help calm down.

Instructions: Ask the participants to close their eyes or soften their gaze. They should take a deep breath in through their nose and slowly exhale.

Then, ask them to open their eyes and identify:

- 5 things they can see (e.g., "I see a chair, a window...").
- 4 things they can touch (e.g., "I feel my feet on the ground...").
- 3 things they can hear (e.g., "I hear distant chatter...").
- 2 things they can smell (or think of a favourite smell).
- 1 thing they can taste (or imagine a favourite flavour).

As it is an exercise, ask them to write down all those things silently.

When they have finished, they take another deep breath and notice how present and aware they feel. After everyone is done, ask them to share the things they wrote down (optional). Maybe they will notice similarities or realise things they haven't considered, and it will help the next time they do it.

Individual practice: You can do the very same exercise on your own. If that helps, especially the first few times you try it, keep the list of things you should notice in front of you. Little by little try to just concentrate on your senses.

Ideas for reflection: Is there any time recently when you could have used this technique? Can you think about one way to remember it next time you feel stressed?

2.2.5 From Negative to Positive Writing

Goal: Recognise and experience the power of writing.

Instructions:

Have the group write down on pieces of paper, post-its or cards the negative thoughts that often come to them when they feel stressed.

Option 1: Then, have them pick a piece of paper written by someone else, and they transform the idea into a positive one.

For example, when written "I have too much to do, I will never get it done", this sentence can be changed to "I will take it step by step and focus on what I can do".

Have participants discuss their ideas in the group and maybe add new sentences on the papers. At the end, if they want to, the participants can collect their initial papers and keep them.

Option 2: Then, they can write at the back the thought turned into a positive one and exchange the card with someone else. The next person can write another positive sentence below, that is different but still related to the negative thought. At the end, the negative thought will be counter-balanced with more positive ones.

At the end, if they want to, the participants can collect their initial papers and keep them.

Tip – from “brake words” to “engine words”: Below we give some extra ideas to replace words that slow down (“brake”) with words that push forward (“engine”).

why?	for what purpose? / what makes it that...?
failure	opportunity
but	and
against	with
I will try	I will do
either	both
problem	Objective / opportunity
distinguish	connect
divide	associate
or	and
exclude	include
boundaries	bridges
discussion	dialogue
because	so that
don't be worried	it is going to work
limits of the situation	opportunities of the situation

Individual practice: Write the negative thoughts and see how could transform the sentence into a positive one. Write it just below. If needed, you don't have to find the positive thought right away, you can keep the papers and come back to them later. You can keep them close to you, so that every time you have the negative thought, you can connect to the positive sentence instead.

Ideas for reflection: Choose 2 words will you stop using, what will you replace them with?

2.2.6 Happy Without Money

Goal: Exercise creativity to find happy activities to do, without using money.

Instructions:

Ask the group to split into smaller groups to think about activities they can do in their everyday life, that does not require spending money.

For example, it cannot be buying an item that they have been wanting to buy. It should be a more active activity. You can make exceptions for "cooking" for example: they would need to buy ingredients, but cooking is an active and fun activity.

For activities like "meeting friends and/or family", ask them what they could do without having to go to a restaurant, the cinema, shopping, etc.

When they are done, the groups can share their ideas. Ask them to write down the ones they prefer or inspire them the most, and to write them in a place that is easily accessible (on their phone, in an agenda, a notebook, etc.).

Tip: Ask them to be creative and think of ideas for each season during a year.

Individual practice: Make your own list! And keep it in a place where it is visible or accessible easily.

Ideas for reflection: Choose one of the activities discussed – when will you do it, how and with whom?

2.2.7 Musical Coping

Goal: Explore the emotional impact of music. .

Instructions:

Ask the group to think about songs or music that they like, and how they make them feel.

If some songs make them feel empowered -> Have them combine those ones in one playlist.

If some songs make them feel at ease and relaxed -> Have them combine those ones in one playlist.

Each time they are under stress they can then return to the playlist they want to listen to the most in that particular circumstance.

Tips:

1/ Investigate if this activity should be an individual task as music tastes can be very personal. If you feel your group wants to collaborate, then they could create a shared playlist on the streaming platform of their choice.

2/ If in the future they have difficulties getting to a task, tell them to try listening to one of the playlists they prepared – choosing one they think is most relevant for the task at hand. They should try smelling a specific smell at the same time. It can be a fruit, perfume, essential oils, or anything that they find pleasant. When implementing this kind of routine, the brain associates listening to the music playlist and smelling the specific odour with improved mood/confidence!

Individual practice: Make your own playlists and find a smell that you like!

Ideas for reflection: Is there another playlist they would you like to create? Do you already know when you will use it next?

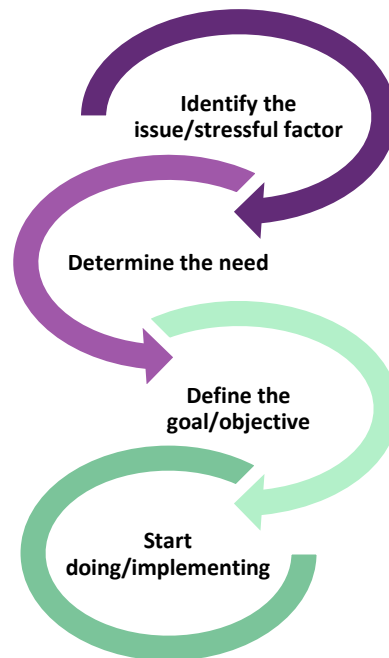
2.2.8 Self-Coaching Exercise

Goal: Use some coaching techniques and apply them to oneself to support us in certain situations.

These examples are based on some real professional coaching techniques.

(Reminder) Even though it is a nice introduction to coaching and in some cases, it might suffice to help deal with a situation, it doesn't replace work with a professional.

With self-coaching, your group can answer a series of structured questions to move within 4 dimensions to identify stressors and create a personal stress management plan.



The identification of the issue or stressful factor has been explored in “2.2.2 Reflecting on the current situation”.

Instructions:

Following you can find a few questions to explore to move forward and suggest to your group of young people:

From Issue to Need

- What are the negative consequences of the situation according to you?
- If the situation goes on, what will this mean for you?
- On a scale from 0 to 10, how much do you want the situation to change?

From Need to Goal

- What would you like instead?

- How would you describe the desired situation?
- Decide 3 objectives which only depend on yourself, and which can really help the situation to change*.

**Below are some extra questions to explore to define a goal:*

- ✓ *What do I really want?*
- ✓ *Does the result only depend on me?*
- ✓ *In which context and environment does my objective fit?*
- ✓ *Is that objective beneficial for me and/or my loved ones?*
- ✓ *What deadlines do I give myself to achieve this objective?*
- ✓ *How do I know my goal is achieved?*
- ✓ *What do I need to put into place to achieve my objective?*
- ✓ *Who are my allies to reach this objective?*
- ✓ *Are there obstacles for me to reach this objective? What are they?*
- ✓ *If I don't reach my goal, what plan do I put into place to keep moving forward?*
- ✓ *If I reach my goal, what plan do I put into place to keep moving forward?*
- ✓ *What resources do I need?*
- ✓ *What are the steps?*
- ✓ *With what do I start?*

From Goal to Implementation

- On a scale from 0 to 10, how much are you motivated by this objective?
- If this objective is achieved, what would it change in your life?
- What do you have to win and to lose to achieve this objective?

Individual practice: Answer those questions by yourself, and either write the answers or record them as that you will be more effective than just thinking about them in your head!

Ideas for reflection: In which kind of situation can you use this practice?

2.2.9 1-week Challenge: Try it out

Goal: Experiment different stress management practice within a fixed timeframe to include it in a daily routine.

Depending on your group, share a digital agenda with them or distribute a paper 1-week agenda (we provide a template below).

Instructions:

Ask the group to write down on paper one activity they will do each day for one week.

1/ Each person will make their personal agenda – they can share ideas, but they need to all have a different agenda.

2/ Every day should have a different activity.

3/ Ask them to write:

- ✓ what activity they will do and at what moment in the day,
- ✓ what they need to do it (an app, a video, a friend, ...).

Tell them to put a reminder/alarm on their phone if needed.

4/ On the agenda itself, ask them to write every day how they felt before and after.

5/ A week later, gather them and ask them:

- ✓ which activity they preferred and why.
- ✓ which activity didn't seem to have an impact and why.
- ✓ which activity surprised them – one they liked better than they would have thought and why.

Activities can include: breathing exercises, writing in a journal, disconnecting from screens for an hour, walking for 15 minutes, doing a yoga video, do some volunteering, playing a sport or games with friends, listen to birds singing for 5 minutes, ...

Individual practice: Prepare your own agenda! You can do it just for yourself, or share it with friends, family members or anyone you want so that you can motivate each other.

Ideas for reflection: Among the activities you tried, which one would you recommend to the rest of the group? Which one will you do again next week?

/!\ Remember that these activities do not replace professional help. Encourage participants to consult professionals when you/they think it can be helpful.

2.3 Self-assessment

To assess your understanding of the stress management strategies discussed, answer the following questions. These questions cover key concepts related to coping strategies, unhealthy coping mechanisms, and effective stress management approaches. Choose the best answer for each question.

1. Why is it important to identify the real cause of your stress?

- A) So you can complain about it more effectively.
- B) Because understanding the root cause helps you choose the right coping strategy.
- C) Because stress is always caused by external factors beyond your control.
- D) To avoid taking any action and hope the stress disappears on its own.

2. What are the four coping styles in the Brief COPE model?

- A) Avoidance, Resistance, Emotional Release, and Problem Solving
- B) Denial, Distraction, Social Withdrawal, and Rationalisation
- C) Adaptation, Alteration, Avoidance, and Acceptance
- D) Problem-Focused Coping, Emotion-Focused Coping, Avoidance Coping, and Social Support Coping

3. What is an example of an unhealthy coping mechanism?

- A) Practicing deep breathing when feeling anxious
- B) Seeking social support from friends and family
- C) Procrastinating and avoiding responsibilities when feeling overwhelmed
- D) Using a time management strategy to reduce stress

4. What is the main purpose of the 4 A's of stress management?

- A) To provide a structured way to manage different types of stressors effectively
- B) To help people identify whether they are strong enough to handle stress on their own
- C) To convince people that stress cannot be avoided
- D) To ensure that stress is eliminated from life

5. Which of the following is an example of a long-term positive coping strategy?

- A) Ignoring stressful situations until they go away
- B) Regular physical activity to improve overall resilience
- C) Watching TV for hours to distract yourself from problems
- D) Eating junk food to feel better when stressed

Answers: 1-B, 2-D, 3-C, 4-A, 5-B

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3 Module 3: Stress Management for Career Resilience

Objective	To help young people understand stress management as a crucial soft skill for employability, identify the skills involved, and develop strategies to manage stress effectively in the workplace.
Learning Outcome	By the end of this module, young people will know more about how stress can affect their work, life in the workplace or entrepreneurial activities. They will have developed the ability to respond effectively in various contexts and situations, with the capacity to apply stress management strategies as needed.

3.1 Theoretical knowledge

3.1.1 Understanding Stress in the Modern Workplace

The modern workplace has undergone significant changes in recent decades, bringing both new opportunities and new sources of stress. For young people entering the job market, whether as employees, freelancers, or entrepreneurs, the transition can be especially challenging. Understanding the specific nature of stress in the workplace is essential to developing effective coping strategies.

Workplace Stress: A Growing Concern

Stress in the workplace refers to the emotional and physical strain caused by job-related pressures. These pressures may stem from deadlines, performance expectations, difficult work environments, or uncertainty about the future. While some stress is a natural part of any job, chronic or unmanaged stress can severely impact motivation, mental health, and productivity.

Today's workplace is shaped by rapid technological change, a culture of constant connectivity, and evolving job expectations. Digital tools and remote work can create flexibility, but they can also blur the lines between personal and professional life, making it difficult to fully disconnect. This is particularly true for young professionals who may feel pressure to always be available or to "prove themselves" early in their careers.

Common Sources of Workplace Stress for Young People

Young workers often face a unique mix of stressors, including:

- **Job insecurity:** Many early-career roles are temporary, part-time, or freelance-based, offering little long-term security. This creates constant pressure to perform and look for the next opportunity.
- **High expectations and limited experience:** Young people are often expected to be adaptable, creative, and tech-savvy, but may lack real-world experience or confidence.

- Lack of work-life balance: Especially for digital freelancers or those working in startups, long hours and unclear boundaries can lead to burnout.
- Poor management or support: Young workers may struggle with limited guidance, unclear feedback, or poor leadership – factors that can increase stress.
- Toxic workplace culture: A lack of diversity, inclusion, or psychological safety can make it difficult for young professionals to thrive.

Stress among entrepreneurs and freelancers

This will be more detailed in another section below, but entrepreneurs and self-employed youth face additional forms of stress that differ from those of salaried employees. Starting or managing a business requires wearing many hats – handling strategy, finance, communication, and operations – often without support. Financial instability, fear of failure, and social isolation are common challenges.

Freelancers, meanwhile, may enjoy autonomy but lack the structure, routine, or benefits of a traditional job. They often juggle multiple clients, uncertain income, and self-promotion, which can be emotionally exhausting. These workers also report difficulty accessing mental health resources, since they are not part of formal employee support systems.

The role of hustle culture and social pressure

The rise of hustle culture promoting constant work, self-sacrifice, and glorifying busyness – also contributes to work-related stress. Young professionals, especially in competitive or creative fields, may feel that rest equals weakness and that success is measured by productivity. This mindset can lead to burnout and a long-term negative relationship with work.

Similarly, social media often amplifies unrealistic expectations of career success. Seeing peers achieving professional milestones can lead to feelings of inadequacy or impostor syndrome, even when one's own progress is perfectly normal.

Understanding workplace stress means recognising that it doesn't come from "being weak" or "not managing time well." Instead, it is often the result of systemic issues, cultural norms, and the evolving nature of modern work. Young people - whether employed, self-employed, or starting their own ventures face unique pressures that deserve recognition and support. The first step in building healthier work habits is knowing where the stress comes from.

3.1.2 The Link Between Stress Management and Job Performance

Stress management is a critical factor in determining how individuals perform in professional environments. When employees are equipped with the right tools and strategies to manage stress, they tend to approach their tasks with greater clarity, composure, and confidence. This ability to stay calm under pressure not only reduces the risk of making mistakes but also

contributes to more consistent productivity, better team collaboration, higher work quality and improved work-life balance.

Conversely, when stress is left unmanaged, it becomes a barrier to optimal performance and quality of life. Individuals may find it harder to focus, experience fatigue more quickly, and struggle with motivation. Over time, this can result in absenteeism, reduced engagement, and even conflicts with coworkers or supervisors. Emotional strain often clouds judgment, leading to poor decision-making and increased tension in team dynamics.

Moreover, the ability to manage stress is closely tied to adaptability and emotional intelligence two soft skills highly valued in the job market. A worker who can navigate tight deadlines, unexpected changes, or difficult feedback without becoming overwhelmed is perceived as more professional and reliable. In high-performance environments, such as start-ups or international companies, these qualities are essential not only to survive but to thrive.

For entrepreneurs, the connection between stress and performance is even more direct. Since they often work without the safety net of a larger team or structure, their mental clarity and resilience are vital to making sound business decisions, maintaining relationships with clients and partners, and sustaining long-term innovation.

3.1.3 Handling Stress as an Entrepreneur

Entrepreneurial life is both exciting and demanding. Entrepreneurs typically wear many hats at once: they are visionaries, managers, marketers, financial planners, and problem-solvers. This multiplicity of roles means they are constantly exposed to stress from various angles, financial uncertainty, pressure to innovate, fear of failure, and the relentless need to perform without pause.

One of the main challenges for entrepreneurs is the emotional toll of risk. Starting and sustaining a business involves significant uncertainty, and outcomes are never guaranteed. Unlike employees who may have a fixed income and defined responsibilities, entrepreneurs must deal with fluctuating workloads, unstable income streams, and the weight of making decisions that affect others – such as staff or collaborators. This persistent pressure can create chronic stress, especially when combined with isolation or self-doubt.

Another common source of stress is the lack of boundaries between work and personal life. Entrepreneurs often work beyond traditional office hours, blending weekends, holidays, and evenings into the rhythm of the business. Without proper time management and self-care, this constant engagement leads to burning out, which is more common than we think.

To combat this, successful entrepreneurs often adopt specific coping mechanisms. Time management tools, such as prioritising tasks using frameworks like the Eisenhower Matrix, help reduce overwhelm. Delegating responsibilities – even partially – to a trusted team or freelancer network prevents overload. Seeking support through coaching, mentoring, or peer networks also

helps to normalise the ups and downs of entrepreneurship and fosters a sense of shared experience.

Self-care is not a luxury but a necessity. Regular exercise, mindfulness techniques like meditation, and creative outlets can help regulate stress and recharge mental energy. Additionally, setting clear work-life boundaries, such as fixed “offline” hours or tech-free zones, helps maintain personal well-being and professional focus.

Entrepreneurs who actively manage their stress not only perform better but also model healthy leadership, which can inspire and positively influence their teams and collaborators.

3.1.4 Soft Skills for Career Development

Stress management is deeply intertwined with several key soft skills that are crucial for career development.

Emotional intelligence

It is the capacity to recognise, understand, and manage one’s own emotions while responding appropriately to the emotions of others. This skill enables professionals to remain calm in difficult situations, de-escalate conflicts, and build positive working relationships.

➤ How to acquire this skill?

Emotional intelligence has five key components (Goleman, 1995):

Developing Self-awareness: Understanding your emotions is the first step to managing them.

How to improve it:

- Daily check-ins: Ask yourself, “What am I feeling right now?” and “Why?”
- Journaling: Write down emotions after stressful events to spot patterns.
- Mindfulness: Practice being present in the moment through breathing or meditation.

Why it matters for stress: Self-awareness helps you catch stress early and respond instead of reacting impulsively.

Building Self-regulation: This is the ability to manage your emotional responses and stay calm under pressure.

How to improve it:

- Use coping tools: Deep breathing, walking, or stepping away before reacting.
- Pause before you speak: Especially in heated moments this builds emotional control.
- Practice delayed gratification: Strengthens discipline and emotional control.

Why it matters for stress: Helps you handle frustration, pressure, or criticism without becoming overwhelmed or reactive.

Strengthening Motivation: This refers to your internal drive to achieve goals and maintain a positive outlook, even during setbacks.

How to improve it:

- Set small goals: Achieve quick wins to build confidence.
- Visualise success: Picture how overcoming stress will benefit you.
- Reward yourself: Recognise effort, not just outcomes.

Why it matters for stress: Motivation gives you purpose and resilience in tough times.

Practicing Empathy: Understanding others' feelings can ease tension, prevent conflict, and build trust.

How to improve it:

- Listen actively: Focus on understanding, not just replying.
- Put yourself in their shoes: Ask, "How would I feel if I were them?"
- Volunteer or help peers: Increases emotional connection and perspective.

Why it matters for stress: Empathy reduces social tension, often a major source of workplace stress.

Sharpening Social Skills: These include communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, and relationship-building.

How to improve it:

- Practice assertive communication: Say what you need clearly and respectfully.
- Join clubs, team projects, or youth leadership groups: Gain real-world people skills.
- Ask for feedback: Learn how your behavior affects others.

Why it matters for stress: Strong relationships and clear communication prevent isolation and misunderstanding.

Adaptability

It is the ability to adjust to changing circumstances, learn quickly, and remain effective in unfamiliar situations. In dynamic work environments, where challenges and change are constant, adaptable individuals are better able to maintain their composure and avoid being overwhelmed. They see stress not as a threat, but as a sign that it's time to grow or shift direction.

- How to acquire this skill?

Step Outside Your Comfort Zone: Doing unfamiliar things helps you get used to uncertainty and change.

How to improve it:

- Join a new club or volunteer in a different setting.
- Try learning a new tool or app on your own.
- Switch roles in group work to practice flexibility.

Why it helps: Facing small changes regularly trains your brain to handle bigger ones with less stress.

Develop a Growth Mindset: Believe that challenges help you grow, not define you.

How to do this:

- Replace "I can't" with "I can't yet."
- Reflect on what each failure or setback taught you.
- Celebrate learning over perfection.

Why it helps: A growth mindset makes you more open to change, which reduces fear-based stress.

Learn to Manage Uncertainty: Uncertainty can be scary but it's also a constant part of life and work.

How to practice:

- Practice decision-making with limited information.
- Role-play unexpected scenarios (e.g., "Your team leader is out, now what?").

- Use grounding techniques (like deep breathing) when plans change.

Why it helps: When you're emotionally calm, uncertainty becomes a challenge, not a threat.

Build Resilience Through Reflection: Resilience supports adaptability, it's your ability to recover after stress or failure.

How to build it:

- Reflect: What helped me bounce back before?
- Journal your progress and how you handled change.
- Talk to others about how they've overcome challenges.

Why it helps: The more you bounce back, the less stress future changes will cause.

Communication

This skill also plays a central role in managing stress and maintaining productivity. Being able to express oneself clearly, listen actively, and ask for help when needed reduces misunderstandings and facilitates teamwork. For instance, a stressed employee who can communicate their workload issues constructively is more likely to receive support and resolve the situation before it escalates.

- How to acquire this skill?

Active Listening: Listening attentively without interrupting shows respect and allows you to fully understand the situation.

How to improve it:

- Focus on the speaker, avoid distractions (phone, daydreaming).
- Nod and make eye contact to show you're engaged.
- After someone speaks, summarise what you heard to confirm understanding.

Why it helps: When you listen actively, you avoid miscommunications that lead to frustration and stress.

Assertive Communication: Assertiveness means expressing your thoughts, feelings, and needs clearly and respectfully, without being passive or aggressive.

How to practice:

- Use "I" statements to express your feelings (e.g., "I feel stressed when the project deadline is unclear.").
- Practice saying no politely when you're overloaded.
- Respect others' views while standing firmly on your own beliefs.

Why it helps: Assertive communication prevents frustration from building up, reducing the chances of stress-related outbursts.

Nonverbal Communication: Your body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice often speak louder than words.

How to improve it:

- Maintain open body language (avoid crossing arms).
- Pay attention to your tone, use a calm and friendly voice.
- Be mindful of your facial expressions, don't let stress show through your body language.

Why it helps: Nonverbal communication can defuse misunderstandings and make conversations feel more comfortable, reducing stress in interactions.

Emotional Regulation in Communication: Learning how to manage your emotional state before speaking helps ensure that your message is received well.

How to practice:

- Pause and take deep breaths before responding in a stressful situation.
- If you're feeling emotional, say, "I need a moment to gather my thoughts."
- Try not to speak when you're angry, give yourself time to cool down.

Why it helps: This keeps your interactions calm and rational, avoiding the escalation of stressful situations.

Conflict Resolution: Disagreements and conflicts at work are natural, but how you handle them can prevent them from becoming stressful. Effective conflict resolution skills help you manage tension and reach mutually beneficial outcomes.

How to improve it:

- Stay calm and listen to the other person's perspective.
- Focus on finding common ground, not on "winning" the argument.
- Work together on a solution that works for everyone.

Why it helps: When you can handle conflicts constructively, you prevent workplace stress from growing into bigger problems

Problem-solving

It is another critical area where stress management and employability intersect. The ability to calmly analyse a problem, explore options, and take decisive action - even under pressure - can make the difference between failure and success in both personal and entrepreneurial settings. Training oneself to step back, breathe, and approach problems with curiosity instead of panic builds resilience over time.

- How to acquire this skill?

Define the Problem Clearly: By defining the problem clearly, we pinpoint exactly what needs to be addressed, which makes the challenge more manageable.

How to improve it:

- Take a step back and write down the problem.
- Ask yourself questions like: "What exactly is the issue?" and "What's causing the stress here?"
- Make sure you identify the root cause of the stress, not just symptoms.

Why it helps: Defining the problem helps you gain clarity, which reduces stress and increases focus on finding a solution.

Brainstorm Multiple Solutions: Stress often arises when people feel there is only one way to handle something. Brainstorming multiple solutions opens up possibilities and helps you remain flexible.

How to improve it:

- Write down at least 3 possible solutions to the problem.
- Don't judge or critique ideas immediately, just get everything on paper.
- Consider short-term and long-term solutions.

Why it helps: By creating multiple solutions, you reduce the feeling of being "stuck" or "out of options," which helps manage stress.

Evaluate the Solutions: Not all solutions will be ideal, so it's important to evaluate the feasibility and potential impact of each option.

How to improve it:

- Consider the pros and cons of each option.
- Think about potential outcomes – what are the risks and benefits?
- Ask yourself: “Which solution makes the most sense given the resources I have?”

Why it helps: Evaluating solutions helps you feel more confident in your decision-making, reducing anxiety about possible outcomes.

Make a Decision and Take Action: Sometimes, stress builds up because we procrastinate or are afraid to make the wrong decision.

How to improve it:

- Once you’ve evaluated your options, choose the best one and take small steps toward implementing it.
- If the problem is large, break it down into smaller, more manageable tasks.
- Don’t fear mistakes – they’re part of learning and adapting.

Why it helps: Taking action helps you regain control over the situation, which reduces feelings of helplessness and stress.

Monitor and Adjust the Plan: Stress can often arise when we think we have to get everything perfect on the first try.

How to improve it:

- Once you implement your solution, check your progress regularly.
- If something isn’t working, don’t hesitate to adjust the plan.
- Keep a flexible mindset, be willing to learn from any setbacks.

Why it helps: This helps prevent perfectionism and gives you confidence that you can manage problems even if things don’t go exactly as planned.

Setting Boundaries

Setting boundaries means defining what is acceptable and unacceptable for you in terms of behavior, workload, personal space, time, and emotional involvement. Boundaries act like an internal guideline; they help you understand your limits and communicate them to others in a healthy, respectful way.

Boundaries are not about building walls – they’re about creating balance, respect, and emotional safety.

In the workplace, unclear or non-existent boundaries can lead to burnout, overwhelm, and stress, especially for young employees who may feel pressure to please everyone. On the other hand, healthy boundaries contribute to better focus, improved communication, and greater job satisfaction.

- How to acquire this skill?

Understand Your Limits: Before you can set boundaries, you must recognise your own physical, mental, and emotional capacity.

How to practice:

- Reflect on situations that made you feel drained, frustrated, or overwhelmed, those are often signs of boundary violations.
- Ask yourself: What do I need more of? What do I need less of?

Why it helps: Self-awareness is the first step toward creating limits that protect your energy and reduce stress.

Communicate Boundaries Clearly and Respectfully: Setting a boundary is not about saying “no” harshly it’s about communicating your needs in a way that others can understand and respect.

How to practice:

- Use clear, assertive “I” statements (e.g., “I won’t be available for calls after 6 PM,” or “I need at least a day’s notice for new assignments.”).
- Be polite but firm, avoid over-apologising.

Why it helps: Clear communication prevents misunderstandings and gives others the chance to support your limits.

Be Consistent: Once you set a boundary, it’s important to uphold it.

How to practice:

- Stick to your boundaries even if it feels uncomfortable at first.
- Remind others kindly if your boundary is crossed.
- Don’t agree to things “just to avoid conflict” that creates long-term stress.

Why it helps: Consistency builds self-respect and teaches others to respect your time and limits too.

Learn to Say No Without Guilt: Many young people feel pressured to say “yes” to everything to prove themselves. But overcommitment is a major source of stress and burnout.

How to practice:

- Practice polite ways to decline: “Thanks for thinking of me, but I can’t take this on right now.”
- Use assertiveness training or role-playing to get comfortable saying no.

Why it helps: Saying no gives you space to focus on what really matters, helping you manage stress and stay mentally healthy.

Protect Your Time and Mental Space: Boundary-setting isn’t only about saying no it’s also about designing your life in ways that protect your energy.

How to practice:

- Set clear working hours or study times and stick to them.
- Turn off notifications outside of work hours if possible.
- Avoid overcommitting to social or volunteer activities.

Why it helps: Creating structure helps reduce overwhelm and promotes a healthy work–life balance.

To support the development of these soft skills, individuals can engage in activities that also serve as stress-reduction tools. For example, practicing mindfulness meditation can enhance emotional regulation and self-awareness. Physical exercise, such as yoga, walking, or team sports, improves concentration and mood. Creative activities, from painting and journaling to playing music, provide an emotional outlet and a sense of accomplishment outside work. These practices are not only relaxing but also contribute to building focus, patience, and confidence.

In addition, using tools like self-assessment questionnaires or reflective journals can help individuals track their stress levels and emotional patterns over time. Participating in peer

discussion groups or workshops allows for the exchange of experiences and techniques, reducing the sense of isolation that often accompanies stress.

Ultimately, managing stress effectively means recognising that soft skills are not fixed traits, but competencies that can be learned and refined through intention, practice, and self-compassion.

3.1.5 Building a Culture of Stress Awareness

Raising awareness about stress and promoting healthy coping mechanisms is not just a personal responsibility; it is a **collective effort** that requires the involvement of individuals, communities, and institutions. A culture of stress awareness begins with **education**. When young people and youth workers understand what stress is, how it manifests, and how it can be managed, they are more likely to **respond with empathy and resilience** rather than stigma or denial.

At the individual level, recognising the signs of stress, whether physical, emotional, cognitive, or behavioral, is a **crucial first step**. Youth can learn to monitor their own well-being by checking in regularly with themselves: How am I feeling? Am I sleeping well? Am I more irritable than usual? Encouraging young people to explore healthy routines, such as regular exercise, quality sleep, journaling, and creative expression, can empower them to take control of their stress responses. Training in **emotional literacy, time management, and setting realistic goals can further support this self-awareness**.

Peer support also plays a powerful role. Creating open, non-judgmental environments where young people can share their challenges helps break the taboo around stress and mental health. Youth organisations, schools, and community centers can facilitate this by incorporating regular group discussions, mental health workshops, or creative activities where emotional expression is encouraged and normalised.

To embed stress awareness into educational or youth work structures, leaders and facilitators can set the tone by **openly acknowledging the realities of stress and leading by example**. Youth workers should receive training in basic mental health literacy, be equipped with tools to recognise signs of burnout in themselves and others, and foster a **compassionate, safe environment**. **Integrating short mindfulness breaks, flexible scheduling, and regular feedback sessions are practical ways to create space for well-being within programmes**.

Importantly, employers and institutions also have a responsibility to build stress-aware environments. While individuals can learn coping strategies, systemic support is essential. Employers can contribute by **promoting work-life balance, offering mental health days, ensuring reasonable workloads, and providing access to confidential counseling services**. Managers should be trained to recognise signs of stress and burnout in their teams and encouraged to have regular check-ins. More broadly, organisations should embed well-being into their culture, not as an optional benefit, but as a core value that enhances productivity, retention, and innovation. This is especially critical in **youth-centered workplaces or internship**

programmes, where early experiences can shape long-term attitudes toward work and mental health.

Building a culture of stress awareness is a **layered effort**: it starts with self-awareness and grows through peer support, structured guidance, and institutional accountability. It sends a clear message that stress is not a weakness, but a signal, and that healthy responses can be learned, practiced, and supported by everyone, at every level.

3.2 Practical examples and activities

3.2.1 Interview: emotions & skills

Goal: Prepare for work interviews in an alternative way.

Instructions:

Ask participants to work in pairs, they should practice as if they were having or giving an interview.

- One asks questions from the below list, the other replies. After a few questions, the interviewer mentions the detected professional skills that the respondent probably has.
- Both may switch roles after asking a few questions.

Below are a list of relevant questions and a list with examples of professional skills.

List of questions:

- Can you tell me about a situation where you had to deal with stress or pressure?
- How do you usually prepare yourself before an important event or task?
- What helps you stay calm when you feel overwhelmed?
- Can you describe a challenge you have overcome?
- How do you manage your time when you have multiple tasks to do?
- Tell me about a time you worked in a team, what was your role?
- How do you handle feedback or criticism?
- What motivates you to keep going when things are difficult?
- What do you do when you don't know how to solve a problem?
- Can you give an example of when you had to be creative or find a new solution?
- How do you organise your tasks or priorities?
- What do you usually do to manage conflicts or disagreements with others?
- How do you take care of your well-being during busy periods?
- Tell me about a situation where you had to learn something new quickly.

- What do you think is your biggest strength when facing a stressful situation?

List of professional skills:

- Stress management
- Emotional regulation
- Communication skills
- Active listening
- Problem-solving
- Adaptability / Flexibility
- Creativity
- Teamwork
- Empathy
- Time management
- Organisation skills
- Self-awareness
- Resilience
- Conflict resolution
- Initiative / Proactivity
- ...

Individual practice: Answer the list of questions first – write your answers so it's easier to remember them. Afterwards, check the list of skills and try to identify those which seem to correspond to you.

Ideas for reflection: What skill did you discover about yourself today?

3.2.2 “At work” Role-playing

Goal: Recognise and manage specific stressful situations in the workplace

Instructions:

Ask participants to work in pairs. They draw a card that indicates an individual stressful situation at work from the examples below (for example, too much workload, conflict within the team, etc.). Then, the participants brainstorm together to identify what is stressful in this situation and establish strategies to manage this stress.

After a few minutes, they introduce their card and strategies to other pairs, and everyone discuss to try and find even more options.

List of possible stressful situations at work

- You receive several urgent tasks at the same time and don't know which to prioritise.

- You made a mistake at work and have to explain it to your manager.
- You have a conflict or disagreement with a colleague.
- You are asked to give a presentation in front of your team or clients.
- You have to work with someone who doesn't respect deadlines.
- You feel isolated or excluded from the rest of the team.
- Your supervisor gives you unclear instructions and expects quick results.
- You receive negative feedback and feel discouraged.
- You are working in a noisy, distracting environment.
- You have a very short deadline for a big task.
- You are asked to do something outside of your skills or comfort zone.
- There is a misunderstanding in communication with a client or colleague.
- You feel tired or close to burnout because of repetitive tasks.
- You are asked to cover for a sick colleague while managing your own tasks.
- You have to deal with an angry or rude customer.

Some examples of coping strategies:

- Take a few deep breaths, stretch, or pause for a short break to clear your mind.
- Make a to-do list, set priorities, break tasks into smaller steps.
- Clarify expectations, ask for feedback, express how you feel respectfully.
- Look at the situation from a different perspective. Ask: What can I learn from this?
- Identify what you can control, list possible solutions, and take small action steps.
- Learn to say no when necessary, manage your workload realistically.
- Exercise, listen to music, go for a walk, practice hobbies.

Individual practice: Pick one of the possible stressful situations at work and write your coping strategies. Then, try to find at least 2 other strategies that are less obvious to you. It will help you get creative and find more ideas!

Ideas for reflection: Which coping strategy seem the hardest for you to do? Which one is the simplest?

3.2.3 Teamwork

Goal: Recognise and manage stressful team situations in the workplace

Instructions:

Ask participants to work in small teams (3-5 people). Give each group a card describing a fictional but realistic unexpected teamwork problem that could happen in a professional environment (for example: a technical problem, a last-minute change, a difficult client...).

Their mission is the following:

- Discuss together how they would manage the situation.
- Identify possible stressors.
- Decide who does what in the team (distribution of roles).
- Present their action plan briefly to the other groups when they are done.

In the final discussion, they should reflect on the professional skills they used and how they managed the stress.

List of possible 'unexpected challenge' situations:

- Your team prepared a presentation, but just before the meeting, the projector doesn't work.
- A customer/client is very upset with your team and complains loudly in front of others.
- Your manager asks your team to complete a task that you've never done before and expects it quickly.
- One of your team members didn't show up, and you need to reorganise the work.
- There is a misunderstanding in the team because of poor communication.
- You realise your team misunderstood an important instruction and have already started the task the wrong way.
- A technical problem (computer crash, Wi-Fi issue) blocks your team's progress on an urgent project.
- Your team is asked to present something without any preparation.
- There is a conflict between two colleagues, and it is affecting the team atmosphere.
- The deadline for a project is suddenly shortened, and your team needs to reorganise everything.

Individual practice: Pick one of the possible unexpected work problems and do the exercise. Try to identify who would need to do what in a team.

Ideas for reflection: Which role do you think you could have in your team in case of such a challenge?

3.3 Self-assessment

1. What is one of the main causes of stress in the modern workplace?

- A. Lack of access to personal fitness equipment
- B. Excessive leisure time
- C. Flexible working hours
- D. High workload and unrealistic deadlines

2. Which of the following best describes 'presenteeism'?

- A. Employees staying home when they are sick
- B. Being mentally engaged while working remotely
- C. Being physically present at work but unproductive due to stress or illness
- D. Attending every meeting during work hours

3. How do soft skills help in managing workplace stress?

- A. They enhance adaptability, communication, and emotional regulation
- B. They allow employees to avoid responsibility
- C. They reduce the amount of physical work
- D. They are mostly useful for technical roles

4. Why is stress management a shared responsibility between individuals and employers?

- A. Because stress only affects team productivity
- B. Because employers can create healthy environments while individuals manage personal coping
- C. Because only employers benefit from employee well-being
- D. Because employees cannot take any action themselves

5. According to the module, what is one effective organisational measure to reduce stress?

- A. Mandating longer hours to increase output
- B. Ignoring stress complaints to encourage resilience
- C. Promoting open communication and employee support programmes
- D. Hiring only experienced staff

Answers: 1-D, 2-C, 3-A, 4-B, 5-C

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4 Module 4: Emergency Support and Long-term Resilience

Objective	Equip educators with the skills to effectively manage acute stress situations safely and foster the development of long-term resilience in youths.
Learning Outcome	By the end of this module, educators will be able to respond to crises with appropriate support and guide youths toward sustainable stress management practices.

4.1 Theoretical knowledge

4.1.1 Recognising signs of acute stress and identifying mental health crises in youths

Recognising acute stress and mental health crises in young people is crucial for early intervention and support. Symptoms can manifest in various ways, including **heightened anxiety, irritability, difficulty concentrating, withdrawal from social activities, and changes in sleeping or eating patterns.**

Physical symptoms such as frequent headaches, stomach aches, or fatigue can also be warning signs of prolonged stress. More severe indicators of a crisis may include self-harm tendencies, panic attacks, extreme emotional distress, sudden behavioural changes, or expressions of hopelessness and suicidal thoughts.

While some stress is a natural response to challenges, it is essential to distinguish between temporary stress reactions and persistent distress that requires immediate professional intervention.

4.1.2 The Role of educators and caregivers

Educators, mentors, and caregivers **should be trained to recognise these signs and respond with empathy and appropriate support.** A key aspect of intervention is creating **safe, non-judgmental spaces** where young people feel comfortable expressing their feelings without fear of stigma or punishment.

Encouraging **open conversations** about mental health in schools, youth organisations, and workplaces helps normalise seeking help and reinforces the idea that support is available. Active listening skills, non-verbal cues, and validation of emotions are essential in helping young individuals feel heard and understood. Additionally, teaching young people self-awareness techniques – such as journaling or mindfulness – can empower them to recognise their own stress triggers and seek help when needed.

4.1.3 Institutional strategies

Beyond individual awareness, broader institutional efforts are necessary to ensure early identification and intervention. Schools and organisations should implement **mental health awareness programmes, peer support networks, and staff training** to equip educators and youth workers with the tools to respond effectively.

Collaborations with mental health professionals can provide additional resources, such as on-site counsellors or access to mental health hotlines. Digital resources, including mental health apps and crisis support platforms, can also complement face-to-face interventions. By **fostering a culture of awareness, proactive support, and early intervention**, communities can play a crucial role in protecting the mental well-being of young people and reducing long-term negative outcomes.

4.1.4 Understanding and utilising emergency support resources, including making appropriate referrals

When a young person faces a mental health crisis, knowing how to access emergency support resources can **be lifesaving**. Crises can escalate quickly, and having a well-structured response system in place ensures that young individuals receive the right help at the right time. Crisis hotlines, mental health professionals, school counsellors, peer support groups, and online support platforms all serve as vital intervention tools.

However, young people and caregivers often struggle to navigate these resources, making it crucial to provide clear guidance on when and how to seek support. Educators, youth workers, and families must **be well-informed** about available services in their region, including emergency helplines, drop-in mental health clinics, online chat support, and immediate crisis intervention teams.

4.1.5 The need for clear referral pathways

To maximise the effectiveness of support systems, referral pathways should be **clear, accessible, and efficient**. When a young person exhibits signs of acute distress, such as severe anxiety, panic attacks, self-harm, or suicidal ideation, there must be a structured approach to guide them toward the most appropriate intervention. Educators and youth workers should be trained to assess the urgency of a situation and make tiered referrals: low-risk cases may benefit from school counselling or peer support, while high-risk situations may require immediate psychiatric care or emergency services. **Confidentiality, informed consent, and cultural sensitivity** must also be considered when making referrals to ensure that young people feel safe and respected throughout the process.

4.1.6 Promoting resource literacy

Beyond responding to immediate crises, proactive education on mental health resources should be a priority. Schools and youth organisations should integrate **mental health literacy** into their programmes, teaching young people how to recognise early warning signs in themselves and their peers.

Encouraging youth to familiarise themselves with crisis helplines, digital mental health tools, and local support groups empowers them **to act when needed**. Additionally, institutions should build partnerships with mental health professionals and organisations to **streamline referral processes** and ensure that no young person falls through the cracks. By strengthening emergency response systems, training stakeholders, and promoting resource awareness, communities can create a safety net that effectively supports young people during their most vulnerable moments.

4.1.7 Connecting stress management techniques to long-term resilience

Stress management is not just about alleviating immediate anxiety; it plays a **vital role in long-term personal growth, emotional intelligence, and resilience**. Young people face constant pressures from academics, social expectations, and future career decisions, making it essential to equip them with tools that turn stress into a constructive force rather than a debilitating burden.

Teaching youth how to **recognise, regulate, and reframe stress** helps them build self-awareness and develop a sense of control over their emotions. By incorporating evidence-based coping mechanisms such as mindfulness, deep breathing exercises, structured problem-solving, and self-reflection, they can learn to **navigate stress effectively** while maintaining a sense of purpose and confidence.

4.1.8 Goal setting for resilience

One of the most impactful ways to enhance resilience is by integrating stress management techniques into **goal-setting practices**. Stress can be overwhelming when individuals lack direction, but by breaking down goals into manageable steps, young people can develop a proactive mindset. **SMART goal setting** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) helps them create a structured approach to overcoming challenges while learning to adapt when faced with setbacks.

Additionally, **practicing self-compassion and celebrating small achievements** reinforces positive behaviour and prevents burnout. Developing these skills early not only strengthens mental health but also fosters a growth mindset, allowing young people to view obstacles as learning opportunities rather than roadblocks.

4.1.9 Building support networks

Furthermore, fostering **peer accountability and mentorship programmes** can enhance resilience and provide support networks that help youth stay motivated. Encouraging young people to share their coping strategies and personal goals with peers or mentors creates a sense of community, reducing feelings of isolation and self-doubt.

Educational institutions, workplaces, and youth organisations should prioritise **stress management workshops, resilience training, and structured personal development plans** to ensure that young people have the tools they need to thrive in all aspects of life. By embedding stress management into personal and professional growth strategies, we can empower youth to develop lifelong habits that enhance mental well-being, academic success, and career fulfilment.

4.1.10 GDPR compliance: Understanding privacy applications in data collection and sharing.

With the increasing digitalisation of mental health support, education, and online communication, ensuring GDPR compliance in data collection and sharing is more crucial than ever. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) establishes strict guidelines on how personal data, including sensitive mental health information, is gathered, stored, processed, and shared. Organisations that work with young people, such as schools, youth organisations, mental health service providers, and online platforms, must be particularly mindful of **consent, data security, and confidentiality, as young individuals represent a vulnerable demographic that requires enhanced protection**. Ensuring that data collection aligns with GDPR principles helps prevent unauthorised access, identity breaches, and the misuse of sensitive personal information.

4.1.11 National and EU practices related to stress management and data handling

Across Europe, stress management and mental health support strategies vary significantly, shaped by **cultural perspectives, policy priorities, and available resources**.

Some countries have embedded mental health education into school curriculums, ensuring that young people develop coping skills from an early age. Others emphasise workplace well-being programmes, offering stress reduction initiatives, flexible work arrangements, and employer-supported mental health services.

In addition, public awareness campaigns are widely used to destigmatise mental health issues, encouraging **open discussions and early intervention**. Community-based initiatives, such as peer support groups, youth counselling centres, and digital mental health platforms, further enhance accessibility to mental health resources.

4.1.12 Coordination and regulation

At the EU level, numerous initiatives aim to **harmonise mental health policies, encourage cross-border collaboration, and promote best practices in stress management**. Programmes such as the **European Pact for Mental Health and Well-Being** support the development of innovative mental health solutions while ensuring that best practices are shared across member states.

Additionally, EU regulations such as the GDPR establish strict data handling and privacy protections, ensuring that mental health information is processed ethically and securely. By fostering collaboration among policymakers, healthcare providers, and digital platforms, the EU aims to create an integrated, rights-based approach to mental health care, making stress management tools and resources widely **available, inclusive, and secure across Europe**.

4.2 Practical examples and activities

4.2.1 Role-Play: Responding to Acute Stress

Goal: Develop crisis intervention skills through realistic scenarios to build empathy, active listening, and effective support responses.

Instructions: Divide participants into pairs or small groups. Assign one person to act as a young person experiencing acute stress (choose from scenarios such as exam pressure, conflict with peers, or emotional burnout), while the other plays a supportive role (mentor, teacher, peer).

Provide each group with detailed scripts or prompts. After 5–7 minutes, switch roles. Encourage supporters to respond using non-judgmental language, calm body language, and active listening techniques. Facilitators can introduce curveballs mid-scenario (e.g., withdrawal, anger, refusal of help) to test adaptability.

Individual practice: Act out both roles alone, using a mirror or recording device. Focus on tone, language, and the ability to stay calm. Afterwards, reflect on how it felt to be in both positions.

Ideas for reflection: What helped the “youth” feel safe and supported? How did you manage your own emotions as the helper?

4.2.2 Stress Trigger Mapping

Goal: Help participants recognise their individual stress triggers and create strategies to reduce or manage those stressors effectively.

Instructions: Give participants a worksheet or digital template with prompts such as: "*What situations make you feel overwhelmed?*", "*When do you feel most anxious?*", and "*What thoughts accompany your stress?*".

After listing triggers, guide participants to look for patterns (e.g., does stress rise before deadlines or in social settings?).

Then introduce coping strategies tailored to each trigger, like time management for academic stress or mindfulness for emotional triggers.

Encourage the creation of a "Stress Resilience Plan" with proactive steps and support contacts.

Individual practice: Complete the worksheet privately, adding color coding or symbols to identify patterns. Design your own plan and keep it in a visible spot at home.

Ideas for reflection: Which stressors are most common for you? What coping strategy are you most excited to try?

4.2.3 Resilience Narrative

Goal: Promote self-awareness and growth by writing about past experiences of overcoming adversity.

Instructions: Invite participants to write a short personal story or letter to themselves about a time they faced a challenge and overcame.

Provide prompts: "*What was the challenge?*", "*How did it make you feel?*", "*What actions did you take?*", "*Who supported you?*", and "*What did you learn?*".

Allow time for sharing in pairs or journaling privately.

Emphasise that the focus is on growth and personal strength, not perfection.

Individual practice: Write in a journal or voice-record your resilience narrative. Revisit it during future challenges to remind yourself of your strength.

Ideas for reflection: What strengths did you uncover in your story? How might your past experience guide your future?

4.2.4 Emergency Resource Scavenger Hunt

Goal: Generate awareness of the mental health support resources available both locally and online.

Instructions: Create a list of support types (e.g., helplines, school counselors, youth centers, crisis chat services). In teams or individually, participants must “hunt” for these resources online or in their community.

Provide a form to record contact info, opening hours, and specialisations. Discuss the differences between urgent care and ongoing support.

Make it into a game with prizes or challenges for discovering lesser-known resources.

Individual practice: Research and compile a list of at least five relevant support services. Organise them by urgency (e.g., crisis vs. ongoing therapy) and note when you might use each one.

Ideas for reflection: Which resources were new to you? How confident do you feel using or recommending them?

4.2.5 Coping Skills Toolbox

Goal: Enable young people to create a personalised set of coping tools for managing stress and emotions.

Instructions: Ask participants to collect or create items for a coping “toolbox.” This could be a physical box with sensory objects, fidget tools, inspirational quotes, playlists, breathing technique cards, or stress balls.

Digital versions might include apps, calming music, or self-care reminders.

Have each person explain one tool and how it helps them.

Emphasise that everyone’s toolbox will be different and evolve over time.

Individual practice: Gather physical or digital items that bring comfort. Try out one item each day and journal the results.

Ideas for reflection: Which tool did you find most effective? How did using the toolbox shift your stress response?

4.2.6 Mapping a Support System

Goal: Encourage recognition and intentional use of personal support networks.

Instructions: Provide large paper and markers. Have participants draw themselves in the center and add circles around them representing friends, family, teachers, mentors, or professionals. Write down how each person helps (listens, gives advice, distracts, etc.) and include their contact info if applicable.

Discuss boundaries and when it's appropriate to reach out.

Individual practice: Create a private support map and add to it as new relationships develop. Consider how often you communicate with each person.

Ideas for reflection: Who surprised you by being part of your support circle? How can you strengthen connections within your map?

4.2.7 The Stress Thermometer

Goal: Develop emotional literacy by learning to rate and track levels of stress.

Instructions: Introduce a visual scale from 1 (calm) to 10 (panic).

Have participants describe how they feel and behave at different points on the scale.

Use colored thermometers or emotion charts to help younger participants.

Ask them to record their levels across one week, noting what caused the stress and how they responded.

Individual practice: Keep a daily log of your stress levels, along with coping responses and outcomes.

Ideas for reflection: At what point on the scale do you tend to act/react impulsively? What helps bring you down the scale?

4.2.8 Decision-Making Under Stress

Goal: Strengthen rational thinking and decision-making during high-stress moments.

Instructions: Present scenarios where participants must make a difficult decision under time pressure (e.g., witnessing bullying, being asked to keep a secret that feels wrong, managing peer pressure).

Discuss the consequences of each option and use tools like pros/cons lists or STOP (Stop, Take a breath, Observe, Proceed) techniques.

Facilitate group problem-solving for each scenario.

Individual practice: Choose a stressful decision from your past and analyse it using a decision-making framework. Reflect on what worked and what didn't.

Ideas for reflection: How does stress affect your choices? What helps you think clearly under pressure?

4.2.9 Visualisation for Resilience

Goal: Use mental imagery to reinforce calmness and build confidence in dealing with adversity.

Instructions: Lead a guided visualisation session where participants close their eyes and imagine themselves managing a challenging situation successfully (e.g., speaking in public, navigating conflict, or handling rejection).

Use soft music and sensory prompts to enhance the experience.

Encourage them to anchor a positive phrase or image from the exercise.

Individual practice: Record or listen to a guided script. Practice once daily for a week, focusing on one stress-related scenario.

Ideas for reflection: How did you feel after the exercise? Could you see yourself using this in real life?

4.2.10 Calm-Down Corners

Goal: Create designated safe spaces that allow young people to manage emotional overwhelm.

Instructions: Collaborate with participants to design a "Calm Corner" in a classroom or youth space.

Include soothing elements: soft textures, posters with calming tips, journals, quiet games, or a mindfulness station.

Discuss how and when to use the space and create a sign-up or permission system if needed.

Individual practice:

Set up a small area at home with a similar purpose. Personalise it with items that help you feel secure and calm.

Ideas for reflection: What makes a space feel emotionally safe? Did using the calm space change your mood?

4.2.11 Red Flags and Green Lights

Goal: Increase awareness of mental health warning signs and positive habits.

Instructions: Give participants cards of behaviors and emotions. Ask them to categorise each as a “Red Flag” (e.g., withdrawal, panic, insomnia) or “Green Light” (e.g., talking to a friend, feeling energised, regular sleep). Discuss how early red flags can be addressed before becoming crises.

Individual practice: Create two columns in a journal: one for red flags, one for green lights. Monitor your emotional state for a week.

Ideas for reflection: What red flags do you tend to ignore? What green lights signal you’re doing well?

4.2.12 Your Crisis Action Plan

Goal: Help participants design a clear, practical plan for managing mental health crises.

Instructions: Guide youth through creating a one-page “Crisis Action Plan” that includes: who to contact in an emergency (with phone numbers), personal grounding techniques, warning signs that signal a crisis, and steps to take immediately.

Emphasise accessibility, make copies, laminate, or add to a phone lock screen.

Individual practice: Fill out your own plan and store it in a visible or easily accessible place. Share with a trusted person if comfortable.

Ideas for reflection: How does it feel to have a plan in place? Who in your life can help you put this into action?

4.3 Self-assessment

1. How can you tell the difference between everyday stress and a mental health crisis?

- A) Stress always leads to a crisis
- B) A crisis is fun and exciting
- C) A crisis feels overwhelming and might require urgent help
- D) Stress means you're weak

2. If someone is panicking, what's a helpful first step?

- A) Leave them alone so they don't feel watched
- B) Tell them to calm down
- C) Ask them what caused it
- D) Guide them to take slow, deep breaths and stay grounded

3. Which of these is a good emergency support option?

- A) Social media advice
- B) A youth helpline or local crisis center
- C) Ignoring the issue
- D) Asking a stranger online

4. What's the first step in creating a personal stress plan?

- A) Copy what your friends are doing
- B) Identify your personal stress triggers
- C) Try every tip at once
- D) Wait until you feel overwhelmed

5. What's a smart way to improve your own stress management?

- A) Try new tools and ask for help when needed
- B) Copy a celebrity's morning routine
- C) Ignore stress until it fades
- D) Watch stressful movies to build tolerance

Answers: 1-C, 2-D, 3-B, 4-B, 5-A

4.4 References

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5 Module 5: Workshop Facilitation, Community Engagement and Use of Digital Tools for Stress Management

<p>Objective</p>	<p>Equip educators with knowledge and skills to deliver workshops that foster a collaborative, community-driven learning environment.</p> <p>Equip educators to incorporate digital tools and proven stress management practices into stress management education, enhancing engagement, accessibility, and effectiveness.</p>
<p>Learning Outcome</p>	<p>By the end of this module, educators will be able to design and facilitate engaging stress management workshops using peer and community resources. They will also be able to utilise online resources in stress management sessions alongside digital tools to deliver personalised and impactful support for youths.</p>

5.5. Theoretical knowledge

5.5.1. Strategies for designing and delivering interactive workshops.

What makes a good interactive workshop? Let's first look at the **external factors** (Bechtelar, 2024). Whatever the topic of the workshop, good collaboration is possible if there are **3-12 group members**. The larger the group, the more likely it is that some members will be marginalised or deliberately stay away from active participation. Create optimal size groups.

The environment has a strong influence on mood. Make sure that the venue is **well heated, bright, and that the open space is neither too narrow nor too spacious**. Furniture should be movable so as not to hinder different activities.

Now let's move on to the **internal factors**. There is no workshop without **participants**. First step is to define the target group. A successful workshop is based on the **real needs and interests** of the target group. Once the target group has been defined, contact should be made with the target audience to carry out some preliminary needs analysis (Asana, 2025). This can be done using online forms (for example Google Forms), a poll, through a social media post/story and comments, or by directly interviewing members of the target group. Contact the target group through a medium they frequently use, like a webpage, a Newsletter's follower group, a social media site, direct visit to a club, etc.

After defining the target group and the needs, next step is to prepare the **workshop material** (Innovation Training, 2023). Here are some general rules on how to increase motivation and engagement of participants by designing a workshop:

- the material is based on real problems and problem solving;
- the ideal length of one session is 1.5 hours;
- the main objective of the workshop is to develop certain competencies;

- the elements of the workshop are all selected to help achieve the main objective;
- the tasks are interactive (e.g. pair and group work, poll, collaboration, group discussion, learning from experience, peer learning);
- there is an activity plan, containing the steps, duration, methods, equipment needed (e.g. wi-fi connection, projector, audio equipment, flipchart, material for posters, etc), and the budget;
- the workshop facilitator has appropriate qualifications and practical experience.

Generate a list of possible methods and types of tasks in advance, so that you can then select from this database. If the participants do not know each other, **start with an introductory game** (Chief, 2021) that will help to get to know the names and facilitate the first contact.

Alternate between individual and group work. Reorganise groups from time to time so that the status of the individual within the group does not become permanent. When introducing group tasks, make sure that each group member is given individual responsibility and a voice in the presentation.

Take care to identify the personal sensitivities within the group (physical - e.g. aversion to touch, needing a lot of personal space) (psychological - e.g. grieving or in a bad state of mind due to other reasons) and avoid conflicts arising from these. To do this, be flexible to bridge the gaps that arise.

For group cohesion, make the group create something at the end of the activity that can be kept, exhibited, posted on the internet, etc.

Once the workshop script is developed, publish the event and **invite participants**. Share your invitation in a medium that the target group is likely to use, e.g. a webpage, landing page, a Newsletter's follower group, a social media site (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok), by creating a Facebook event. Recruitment should be initiated a minimum of 2 weeks before the planned workshop. Provide information on how to apply, the number of participants, the venue and the time of the event.

After participant registration, send a confirmation email within 1-2 days, with cancellation conditions included. (Meanwhile you must obtain the necessary equipment, according to the number of applicants.) Send a reminder (Carletti, 2025) and further information shortly before the workshop. This information should include:

- the exact address, house number, doorbell if there is one, what to look for, etc.;
- how to get to the location: public transport, car parking;
- what time to arrive, reminder to arrive on time;
- if there will be coffee, snacks on site;
- if there are any coffee breaks;
- if there will be a meal facility.

Right **before the workshop** prepare the location (e.g. wi-fi connection, projector, audio equipment checked, furniture arranged in a proper way, further equipment prepared on desks, lights, heating turned on if needed etc.).

Welcome incoming participants. Inform them about the cloakroom, toilets, possible coffee/snack facilities, whether there is a seating plan, etc. If there are breaks in the programme, display a timetable.

The success of **the workshop** depends on the skills of the facilitator (Stewart, 2024). Information on this can be found in section 3. It is a general truth that the workshop should be conducted firmly, with a good tone of voice, taking into account the emotional and intellectual state of the participants. The steps of the workshop should be connected in the facilitator's instructions so that the participants understand what they are going to do and why. The instructions should be clear, short, effective. Positive feedback from the facilitator and humour are good for motivating participants. Be sure to ask for and give some feedback at the end of the workshop.

5.5.2. Building community engagement through social media groups, forums, and meetups.

If you want to create a strong community through social media groups, first you must define your target group, their media preferences, and then pick the right platform for your target group (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok). Research proves that you do not need a large audience to be successful.

For example, in 2021 the median engagement rate was 0.08 % for Facebook and 0.98 % for Instagram (Jaxx, 2021). The impact of these social media sites was a lot greater, though.

What you really need is a strong community. To achieve this goal, some **self-regulatory practices** are needed. (Forbes, 2021) These are the most important things to remember:

- Be responsive. Post engaging content and communicate with the commenters in the form of comments or likes.
- Don't try to be everything for everyone. Don't jump on the latest trends. Be true to what helps.
- Engage with your followers' content. Listen to and engage with what THEY post.
- Share inspiring third-party quotes, art, stories.
- Turn followers into active participants – share their stories, videos, interview them, invite them for co-creation.
- Be relatable so that followers can learn from you and apply what you post in their own life.
- Create a trustworthy and safe online space – refine threat detection through AI.
- Be timely, relevant to today.
- Use visuals, hashtags, storytelling techniques.
- Emphasise that normal people can do incredible things.
- Use authentic edutainment.

- Ask the right questions and listen to the answers you get to help yourself in content creation.
- Engage with fun.
- Integrate social media links across all your communication channels.
- Gain insight into what works and what not through analytics.
- Stay the course, remain persistent.
- Craft clear, concise Calls to Action (CTAs).
- Enhance offline actions (spread the word about upcoming events).
- Respect privacy. Verify facts before posting.
- Leverage social proof (people like to do what others do).
- Post diverse content – for example, videos, articles, infographics, polls, humorous, controversial, personal stories etc. (Clor, 2024)

Finally, have a plan in place to deal with criticisms or negative reviews on social media. Your own mental health is just as important as that of your social media group. (Melnick, 2024)

5.5.3. Encouraging peer-to-peer learning and collaboration.

These days there is no interactive work without **peer-to-peer learning** and collaboration. As a very old Latin proverb says, we learn by teaching (docendo discimus). It is proven that what you teach you can remember better afterwards. Moreover, it is more fun when learning from each other.

If the job is done well and positive feedback are collected from your peers, it will surely boost self-confidence. While working together with others, communication skills will also improve, and the group cohesion will also improve, as one must rely on one another.

These are the main reasons for peer-to peer learning and collaboration being so important. To sum up, these are the benefits of Peer-to-peer learning: (Learning LAB LMS for Retail Training, 2023) as a form of social learning, it is interactive, one takes ownership of their education, it is based on experimentation, discussion, empiricism, dialogue, videos, workshops, forums, chats.

It improves critical thinking skills, increases motivation, enhances the learning experience.

Of course, even if you use peer-to-peer learning, you cannot do without a good facilitator. (Luu, 2025) The group needs a facilitator who can set the objectives, provide professional and technical support, and bring the process together. (Self)-reflection is essential, and the facilitator is the best person to lead it. If a crisis arises, it is the facilitator's responsibility to maintain order and to seek outside professional help.

75 % of mental health issues start before age 24, and the workplace might be responsible for it. (changeishere.co, 2024) A great number of young people are ashamed to ask for help, or it is

difficult for them to find support. That is why peer-to-peer support has extra importance in this age group.

How to start it online? First, you as a facilitator need an **online collaborative platform** that both peer supporters and those in need of support can have access to. If you have a social media site, you can create your collaborative platform there. The aim of the collaborative platform is twofold.

On the one hand, it provides learning materials to help people in need solve their problems. On the other hand, there is a discussion forum where participants can communicate with each other.

You can upload entire **courses** to the collaborative platform (here, it will be done through the WebApp). Readings and scheduled assignments can be provided there. Develop a system of evaluation in advance. Participants can score each other's work, but it is important that they also give each other written feedback. The facilitator should also supervise the work tactfully, both from a professional and a mental point of view. Peer collaboration ensures openness, flexibility and a diversity of perspectives.

The collaborative platform is also a good way for participants to share their concerns and experiences with each other in the **discussion forum**, even anonymously. The facilitator must also be present in the discussion forum in some way. People in crisis should be recognised, and both peer helpers and the facilitator should try to provide genuinely helpful support by suggesting appropriate contacts and resources. As a last resort, they might have to call the emergency number.

This work can be very demanding. Both peer supporters and the facilitator have to take care of their own mental well-being to avoid burnout. It is recommended that supporters are also aware of techniques for re-energisation, e.g. value time spent with friends, listening to music, meditation, etc.

The development of a collaborative online platform is also a technical task, but this is not addressed in this chapter. The facilitator may seek the assistance of an IT specialist in this area.

5.5.4. Features of effective stress management apps, such as personalised plans, progress tracking, and self-improvement tools

Introduce the Importance of Digital Tools for Stress Management

Here "apps" refer to digital tools, including mobile applications and web-based platforms, designed to help individuals manage stress and improve mental well-being. These tools typically offer features such as guided exercises, mindfulness practices, stress tracking, and personalised recommendations.

Primary Benefits of Using a Stress Management App:

Accessibility - Offers support anytime, anywhere, making it convenient for users

Personalisation - Adapts to individual needs, providing tailored strategies

Interactivity - Engages users with dynamic features for a more immersive experience

Digital tools, such as stress management apps, offer educators innovative ways to teach and support students in managing stress. By leveraging these app features, educators can enhance their teaching and students' learning outcomes.

Does this Align with Youth Preferences?

The EMERGE Youth Report (2024) highlights that young people prioritise digital, user-friendly, and accessible tools. When used effectively, stress management apps enhance student engagement and connectivity, aligning with these preferences and making them practical for teaching stress management.

List of Apps and Their Features




For each app featured in the EMERGE Youth “Collection of Stress Management Practices” booklet (e.g., Calm, Headspace, Nepanikar), below is a breakdown of their key features that support stress management and how they can assist you in your teaching.

The key features include:

-
- **Personalised Plans** – Tailored content helps users build stress management routines.
Example: *Calm* and *Headspace* offer meditations based on stress levels and sleep patterns. *Nepanikar* provides resources for anxiety and crisis management.
 - **Progress Tracking** - Users can monitor well-being and track habits over time.
Example: *Headspace* logs meditation sessions, and *Nepanikar* includes a mood tracker.
 - **Gamification** - Points, streaks, and challenges enhance motivation and consistency.
Example: *Calm* and *Headspace* use badges to encourage mindfulness practice.
 - **Offline Use** - Apps work without internet, ensuring accessibility anytime.
Example: *Nepanikar* functions fully offline, while *Calm* offers downloadable meditations.
-


Featured in the “Collection of Stress Management Practices” booklet: This section highlights the features of selected stress management apps and their relevance to educators and learners. For further details, refer to the **EMERGE Youth “Collection of Stress Management Practices”** booklet (pg. 11–16).


I. Well-being Apps

App	Key App Features	
Nepanikar  [LINK to App]	Personalised Plans	✔ – Offers tailored mindfulness, journaling, and relaxation recommendations.
	Progress Tracking	✔ – Tracks mood, habits, and achievements with visual summaries.
	Offline Use	✔ – Accessible without the internet for mindfulness exercises and journaling tools.
	Gamification	✘ – No gamification. Provides tailored mindfulness, journaling, and relaxation recommendations.
Etude-mentalo  [Link to App]	Personalised Plans	✔ – Customised relaxation and self-reflection exercises for stress and emotional needs.
	Progress Tracking	✔ – Milestones and emotional tracking through user logs and self-assessments.
	Offline Use	✔ – Preloaded exercises that are accessible offline.
	Gamification	✘ – Minimal visual motivators, e.g., streak calendars.
MyMind  [Link to App]	Personalised Plans	✘ – No in-app plans provided. <i>MyMind</i> focuses on connecting users to professional therapy services.
	Progress Tracking	✘ – Not in-app tracking. ✔ – In-person therapist feedback.
	Offline Use	✘ – The Internet is needed to book therapy sessions and access resources.
	Gamification	✘ – There are no gamification features; the <i>MyMind</i> app prioritises therapy access.

* **Note:** *Nepanikar* and *Etude-mentalo* focus on personalisation and offline use, while *MyMind* connects users to therapy services in Ireland without gamification.



II. International Meditation Apps

App	Key App Features	
Headspace  [LINK to App]	Personalised Plans	✔ – Offers meditation plans like "Stress Relief" or "Better Sleep" based on user preferences.
	Progress Tracking	✔ – Tracks streaks, total meditation time, and mood check-ins.
	Offline Use	✔ – Offers some meditation sessions without the internet.
	Gamification	✔ – Unlockable badges for milestones and fun animations to boost engagement.

 [Link to App]	Personalised Plans	✓ – Curated programmes such as “7 Days of Managing Stress” are adaptable to user needs.
	Progress Tracking	✓ – Mindfulness tracker monitors sessions and total meditation time.
	Offline Use	✓ – Downloaded sessions, sleep stories, and music tracks are accessible without the internet.
	Gamification	✓ – Rewards like soothing soundscapes and animations for completing goals.

*** Note:** *Headspace* and *Calm* are valuable tools for educators and students in stress management education. Subscription options, including student plans, are detailed below.

III. European Meditation Apps

App	Key App Features	
 [Link to app]	Personalised Plans	✓ – Adaptable plans based on stress levels and sleep patterns.
	Progress Tracking	✓ – Includes mood check-ins and activity completion rates.
	Offline Use	✗ – detail unknown.
	Gamification	✓ – Streaks and badges for milestones to sustain motivation.
 [Link to App]	Personalised Plans	✓ – Guided mindfulness journeys tailored to user goals, e.g., reducing anxiety.
	Progress Tracking	✓ – Calendar view showing completed meditation sessions.
	Offline Use	✓ – Access sessions and content offline after download.
	Gamification	✓ – Unlockable programmes, such as a tree growing to symbolise progress.

*** Note:** *Calmio* and *Petit Bambou* offer valuable features that educators can incorporate into student stress management education.

5.5.5. Strategies for Using Digital Tools in Online and Offline Educational Sessions

In this section, educators explore actionable strategies for effectively integrating digital tools for online and in-person teaching practices. These tools will help enhance lesson delivery, making stress management exercises more engaging, accessible, and relevant for students.

Online Education

Digital tools are invaluable in virtual classrooms, as they help make stress management resources more accessible during remote learning. Educators can leverage apps, videos, and platforms to guide students through exercises that foster emotional well-being.

Strategies for Online Sessions

Digital tools are highly effective in online teaching environments, offering interactive and flexible learning opportunities.

Example of strategies:

Assign mindfulness exercises as a weekly "mental health homework" task.

Use video conferencing tools to lead group meditation sessions with the EMERGE *WebApp*, where the educator can share their screen to guide the process.

Here are strategies to implement them:

- A| Interactive Lessons - App-Based Activities**
Consider using the EMERGE *WebApp* to enhance mindfulness exercises, track moods, or practise relaxation techniques during online sessions.
 - **Example:** *Share your screen to guide students through an in-app meditation.*
- B| Use of Multimedia – Videos and Tutorials**
Play pre-recorded mindfulness or stress-relief videos from platforms like YouTube or app libraries to keep sessions engaging.
- C| Real-Time Tracking and Feedback – Progress Monitoring**
Use apps that allow students to track their moods or habits during sessions and have follow-up discussions on how these tools help identify and manage stressors.
 - **Example:** *Use mood tracking data to highlight trends and coping strategies tailored to emotions.*
- D| Encourage Breaks – Guided Relaxation Sessions**
Integrate short, guided breathing exercises or relaxation breaks through apps to help students stay focused and refreshed.
 - **Example:** *Play a 5-minute guided breathing exercise from a stress management app to reset energy levels.*

In-Person Education

Digital tools can complement in-person education, enhancing classroom activities without internet access. Apps with offline features and pre-download resources can be integrated into face-to-face teaching.

Strategies for Offline Sessions

Digital tools keep lessons interactive and accessible, even when the internet is limited.

Example of strategies:

- Use app offline features for a group stress journaling activity, allowing students to reflect on their emotions.
- Play pre-downloaded meditation videos from Headspace during a stress management workshop to create a calming atmosphere

Here are strategies to implement them:

A| Preloaded Resources - Downloadable Content

Use apps with downloadable exercises like mindfulness sessions, relaxation techniques, or journaling prompts for offline use.

- **Example:** *Preload a meditation and play it for a group exercise during class.*

B| Blended Approaches - Combine Digital and Physical Activities

Pair app-based tools with hands-on activities like physical stress-relief exercises or art therapy.

- **Example:** *Have students complete an app-based mindfulness exercise, then reflect through creative journaling or group discussion.*

C| Collaborative Exercises - Group Engagement

Use gamified elements in apps to foster teamwork and motivation.

- **Example:** *Create a class task to complete 50 relaxation exercises as a group.*

D| Offline Journaling - Reflection and Habit Formation

Encourage students to use apps with offline journaling features to document their feelings during class activities.

- **Example:** *Use Etude-mentalo's offline journaling tool to record stress triggers and coping mechanisms.*

Incorporating digital tools into both online and offline sessions allows educators to create dynamic, engaging lessons that equip students with essential stress management skills. These strategies ensure technology enhances learning, fosters independence, and builds student resilience.

5.5.6. Exploring Gamification and Video Resources to Boost Engagement.





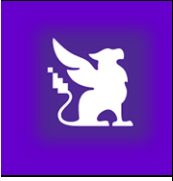

Gamification

Game-like elements in digital tools motivate students to participate and stay engaged actively. Features such as rewards, progress badges, and interactive activities turn stress management

tasks into engaging, interactive challenges. In virtual classrooms, gamification increases engagement and helps students track progress, fostering motivation and consistency. Educators can transform mindfulness exercises, journaling, and relaxation techniques into habit-forming, enjoyable activities by incorporating gamified elements.

Next, we explore tools that integrate gamification, making mental health education more engaging, interactive, and accessible.

Below are additional apps with some useful features that can enhance your classroom and strategies.

	A Kahoot → Interactive quizzes and group activities.	
	How It Helps: Create quizzes and polls to teach mental health concepts fun and competitively, encouraging student input and comfort in discussing mental health.	Example Use: Create a quiz on stress management techniques, emotional regulation, or coping mechanisms.
	B MirrorTalk AI → Emotional expression and social support AI.	
	How It Helps: An AI platform that helps students share thoughts and feelings via video, promoting self-reflection, emotional intelligence, and peer connection.	Example Use: Run a “Check-in Challenge” where students share coping strategies, affirmations, or well-being tips, fostering peer support.
	C Calm (Gamified Challenges) → Mindfulness and meditation.	
	How It Helps: Gamified features like streaks, challenges, and progress tracking motivate consistent mindfulness practice.	Example Use: Set challenges, such as completing a one-week meditation streak.
	D Headspace (Gamified Challenges) → Mindfulness and meditation.	
	How It Helps: Gamified features like streaks and progress tracking motivate consistent practice of short meditations, reduce anxiety, and improve focus.	Example Use: Challenge students to complete a one-week guided meditation streak or practice breathing exercises before class.
	E Habitica → Building healthy habits and stress management.	
	How It Helps: Turns self-care, mindfulness, and stress management activities into a game with rewards and achievements.	Example Use: Encourage students to track daily relaxation exercises or journaling to support their mental health journey.
	F SuperBetter → Building resilience and mental well-being.	
	How It Helps: It uses quests, challenges, and power-ups to help students manage stress, resilience, and coping strategies.	Example Use: Help students set goals like reducing exam stress, boosting confidence, and completing quests.

Video Resources

Videos provide an engaging and dynamic way to teach stress management strategies. From guided yoga sessions to animated explanations of mindfulness, videos make complex concepts accessible and practical for students to implement.

YouTube Tutorials [breathing techniques, gentle movement].

Example 1: A step-by-step video on “Box Breathing Technique” for reducing anxiety.

- **LINK:** <https://youtu.be/a7uQXDkxEtM?si=1ixlx8iS838q8-Ry>

Example 2: Guided yoga sessions, like “Yoga with Adriene – Stress Relief Yoga.”

- **LINK:** https://youtu.be/hJbRpHZr_d0?si=sQnuRCarBPVYT2yb

Example 3: Progressive muscle relaxation video - 10-Minute Stress Relief with PMR.

- **LINK:** https://youtu.be/HpGqacz9Bhs?si=4L302zokLx_vDnWj

Motivational TED Talks: Share motivational TED Talks on mental resilience to inspire students and provide real-world perspectives.

Example 1: Kelly McGonigal's “How to Make Stress Your Friend” – reframing stress as a positive force.

- **LINK:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcGyVTAoXEU>

Example 2: Susan David’s “The Gift and Power of Emotional Courage” – navigating emotions and mental health.

- **Link:**

https://www.ted.com/talks/susan_david_the_gift_and_power_of_emotional_courage

Incorporating **gamified tools** and video resources enhances student engagement and learning in stress management education. Platforms like Kahoot make learning interactive and fun, while video resources, such as tutorials and TED Talks, simplify complex stress management concepts. These tools improve retention and emotional resilience and provide practical techniques students can apply daily. Together, they foster active participation, independence, and resilience, ensuring technology enhances learning without becoming a barrier.

5.6. Practical examples and activities

5.6.1. Workshop Blueprint: A detailed plan for a stress management workshop tailored to youths.

Goal: The workshop participants identify stressors, interactively practice physical and communicative stress relief methods (including the use of a social media site), and reflect on the experience.

Instructions:

1. Ice breaking exercise
2. Brainstorming what can act as stress factors at work
3. Creating a word cloud – what stress relief methods do participants know
4. Physical methods practice – breathing exercise with feedback
5. Role-play to reveal the importance of assertive communication in stress management
6. Search for stress relief social media groups to gain experience
7. Planning the social media site of the group
8. Feedback

The workshop participants learn in practice what can be done about stress – both physically and mentally (e.g. in communication).

Example output: workshop plan with annex

Duration	Interaction	Objective	Description	Equipment
5-8 min.	Group activity: soft ball game	Get introduced to each other	The participants stand in a circle. The facilitator explains the game. One participant tells his/her name (<i>I am Martha</i>) and throws the soft ball to someone else. After catching the ball, he/she tells his/her name (<i>I am Jason</i>), then throws the ball to someone else. It continues until everybody has had the opportunity to tell their names and to throw. Then the game continues backwards. Who has the ball, tells the name of the person he/she got it from (<i>You are John</i>), and throws	Soft ball

			back the ball to him/her. The person who catches it, tells the name of the one who he/she got the ball from in the first round (<i>You are Jenny</i>), and throws it back to him/her. The game continues until the ball gets back to the original starting point. If needed, another round might be played, until the names are remembered. With a talented group, the facilitator might use 2 balls simultaneously in the second round, so that the participants need to be more focused.	
5-10 min	Group activity: brainstorming	Raise awareness of what life situations are typically stressful and how stress impacts the individual	The participants sit in a circle and give one example each of typically stressful events, and the various symptoms of being stressed. The facilitator takes notes on a flipchart/board	Flipchart/classroom board
10 min	Collaboration: creating a word cloud group activity: discussion on the word cloud	Collaborate on what stress relief techniques can be used	The facilitator shares the link to a word cloud creator page, participants can add as many words as they can think of for what to use as stress relief. The group discusses the word cloud created together. The facilitator will build the next phase of the workshop partly on the information gained from the word cloud.	Internet connection, projector, prepared word cloud template
3-5 min	Individual activity: breathing exercise	Observe the physiological effects of conscious breathing	The facilitator instructs the participants to do a breathing exercise. Any type might do, depending on the facilitator's choice. The participants	-----

	group activity: feedback on the breathing exercise		report on the physiological changes they notice after the exercise.	
30 min	Pair work activity: role playing stressful situations group work: after each scene the group participants share ideas on what could have been done to avoid a fight	Participants observe which behaviours contribute to the deepening of stress, and share ideas on what to do to resolve conflicts in similar stressful situations	The facilitator helps the group create pairs and one by one, hands out role play cards to each pair. Each scene is written to create a strong debate between the two parties. After the scene is played, the group reflects on the lessons learned. The aim is to reveal the importance of assertive communication in stress situations. Then another scene is acted out, until all pairs have had a performance. See annex: role cards for stressful scenes	Prepared role cards for every participant
30 min	Pair work activity: collecting weblinks group activity: sharing	Pairs collect links to websites that they know and can use, to show how to and how not to run a social media site for people under stress	The facilitator helps the group create new pairs. The task is to collect weblinks to pages / social media sites designed for stressed people, to get unstressed. At the end of the activity, each pair shares their findings, and their opinion whether the webpage is useful or not, if yes, why, if not, why.	Internet connection, projector
5-10 min	Group activity	Create a group social media site	to help participants join a social media group, to have access to educational material provided by the facilitator, to get information about future activities, to be able to share ideas and to get help with problems	Internet connection, projector

5-10 min	Group activity	Giving feedback	any method might do that the facilitator prefers, Google form, polling, offline questionnaire etc.	
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Annex: Role cards for stressful scenes

Do some preliminary research on the stress problems of the group and display personalised life situations on the role cards. If this is not possible, use typical situations, as on the cards below. Encourage the participants to act creatively, using their imagination to create lifelike situations.

There are 12 role cards for 6 pairs, everyone in the group can take a role. The scenes are these:

- student and teacher
- boss and employee
- grandparent and grandchild
- two parents in a family
- a locksmith and the customer
- assistant in a café and a customer

The main objective is to make the participants aware of the importance of assertive communication in stressful situations. Which means, they should be able to detect communication failures, and give advice on how to avoid these, while listening to one another's scenes performed. That is why after each scene, you should have a group discussion, and you should record the lessons learned on a flipchart/board.

You are a teacher who has corrected the tests of a group. One test is unmarked, the candidate has written nothing. You ask the student for an interview and get more and more frustrated as the student does not answer your questions, actually, the student does not say a word. You get all worked up in a rage.

You are a student with a family history of conflicts, difficult financial situation, difficult learning. Before the latest test, there was violence in the family, you ran away from home, you could not study for the test. Now the teacher wants to know why not. What can you say? These are private things. You prefer to keep quiet, but the situation is getting worse, the teacher is getting more and more irritated. You wish you were not present.

You are an office manager who is irritated by one of the employees. This person is always late in the morning, often checks his/her mobile, is sometimes unfocused. You want to talk to him/her to find out what is causing the problem and to warn him/her that he/she will lose his job if his/her work discipline doesn't improve. There is a hostile attitude in his/her speech, you refuse it.

You are an office worker whose life is very complicated. You are a single parent with a small child. You have to take your little one to nursery school in the morning, but he hates it, you always have to fight with him, and you end up being late for work. Your ex-partner is demanding a lot of money in the divorce, which you can't raise. And you really hate your boss because he investigates your personal life. You are hostile to him.

You are a very old grandparent who feels weak and lonely. You are hard of hearing. Your sight is impaired. You live with your grandchild, and you think he/she does not care about you at all. It hurts. You gave him/her all your love, your life, and now he/she does not have a moment to listen to you. You are frustrated, hurt. Now you would like him to take you to the doctor for a check-up, and to stay with you during the visit.

You live with your old grandparent in his/her flat. On the one hand, your grandparent is very slow, on the other hand, he is very impatient with you. You hate listening to his never-ending stories and constant criticism of your lifestyle. As he is hard of hearing, you speak to him very loudly. You try to speak with him as little as it possible.

You are a caring mother/father, and you have your first baby. You are very tired as the baby wakes you every night and gives you a lot of work. Your partner is the breadwinner in the family and so he/she is always busy. You feel you are left alone with the baby, and it frustrates you. You want a day off. You need recreation. Your partner does not understand. The situation is horrible.

You and your partner are having your first baby. You are the breadwinner who has to work a lot. Your partner has no respect for the fact that you have to do your job properly and makes all sorts of excuses for why you should take time off. You're preparing an important report, and you have to finish it by the deadline. You tell your partner that it is impossible to have a day off right now.

You are a locksmith who works in shifts and is fixing a lock in a flat right now. Your shift is 12 hours long, this is the 10th hour today. The lock is not standard, you have to go to the hardware store to buy a part. The flat owner is terribly impatient and says you are just wasting time instead of working properly. You lose your patience. Either he lets you get the job done or you will leave without fixing the lock.

You are the owner of a flat. Your key has been broken into the lock right before you left for a very important job meeting. Your locksmith does not take his job seriously. He wants to leave you even though you are in a hurry. You say no but he keeps on arguing. This is intolerable, the job is expensive, there is no result, and the man even shouts. You firmly refuse this.

You are in a café, and you have a complaint. You ordered your coffee with almond milk, but the assistant served it with cow milk. You suffer from milk allergy so need another coffee and more attention, but the assistant is rude, does not accept your complaint, it is a scandal! You want to speak to the manager.

You work in a café and today there are a million customers. You are in such a hurry that you do not have a split second for yourself. A customer starts complaining that you served him/her with cow milk in the coffee though he/she asked for almond milk. You are sure there was nothing said about almond milk. You need the job, and a complaint would make you lose the manager's support. You are frustrated.

5.6.2. Role-Playing Session: Practice facilitating group activities in a simulated environment.

Objective: The workshop participants role-play group activities led by different facilitators. After each scenario the conclusion is drawn, what should be modified in the behavior of the participants to be able to co-operate more successfully.

Instructions:

- The educator creates role-play groups (min 4 max 6 people per group)
- The educator announces the game rules
- The scenarios are acted out improvising, one by one, with a reflection discussion after each one
- Summary of the learning outcomes in the end
- Feedback

The workshop participants learn in practice how important soft skills are in the management of workplace stress.

Example output: workshop plan with annex

The facilitator is a key figure of any group activity. The facilitator's impact on motivation, understanding, engagement is decisive. The following role play situations are designed in a way that they can be used with smaller and larger size groups too. They make participants aware of the dangers of facilitating improperly. The topic of the scenes is deliberately far from stress management, to enhance free open talk. Alter the role cards according to your own conditions (number of actors, types of personality etc.) The closer the role cards are to the reality of the participants the better.

Description of the role-playing session:

The mediator decides what size groups they have and what scenes to act out. The group is divided into smaller groups according to the requirements of the role-playing scenarios. The session begins with watching the first scene. Only the actors of the first scene get role cards, others wait. Their job will be to observe and give advice in the end.

First, the actors of the scene read their role cards and prepare for their own performance (cca 1 min). There is no rehearsal or preliminary agreement, everybody is asked to improvise on their own. Then the performance begins. It is always the facilitator in the scene who starts speaking. The group members join spontaneously. The audience observes and enjoys the performance. After each scene, there should be a group discussion.

Recommended points to discuss:

- What is the problem with the facilitator's attitude? How should it be modified?

- What are the possible solutions for the facilitator in dealing with the behavioural problems of the group members?
- What advice can be given to the facilitator/to the group members to help them create group cohesion and motivating activities?

During the discussion the mediator takes notes on a flipchart/board to summarise the lessons learned.

At the end of the session, participants summarise what they have learned from the role plays. This will help them cope with workplace stress situation.

Annex: Role cards for simulated group activities

Restrictive facilitator scenario

<p>You are giving a 5-minute lecture on how to nurse pot plants at home. You do not let students ask questions, or speak at all, or listen to anything else but you. Discipline is the key to success! Give clear instructions and make students follow them! Rule the class!</p>
<p>You are a brilliant student whose main interest is nursing pot plants at home. Show everybody that you know a lot and love the topic. Don't be shy, ask, communicate, help!</p>
<p>You are a student whose main interest is NOT biology, especially NOT plants at home. It is a biology lesson now, you are bored and try to help yourself with listening to music on your mobile. You hide one ear with the plug in it.</p>
<p>You have just received a message from your love on your phone. It is vital to send an answer, but the battery is too low, you need a charger too. Secretly communicate to get a charger quickly, find a socket, recharge your phone, then send a message.</p>
<p>You had a terrible night. You went out with some friends, got drunk, and got lost walking home, and someone stole your money. When morning came, you somehow got home, fetched your things and crawled into school but now you are useless. You try staying awake by talking to others, but if there is no answer, you fall asleep.</p>

Your main interest in this world is your stomach. You simply love eating and always have something to chew on. It is unstoppable, you must eat. You can eat from under the desk, from your pocket, from your bag. One thing you cannot do is speaking while eating.

You are the slow one in this classroom, who wants to be good but simply does not understand. As you want to cope, you must ask questions. Even the classmates hate you for this, but if you do not ask, you cannot follow. Be brave, ask often!

Restrictive facilitator scenario

You are giving a 5-minute lecture on how to save money during shopping for food. You are not particularly interested. The school rules make it necessary to speak about it. You are not particularly interested in your students either. All you want is to be over with it. You do not interfere with whatever happens.

You are a troublemaker in class. You enjoy annoying both your classmates and your teacher. Enjoy yourself, use tricks, words, noise, move, throw, whatever comes to your mind. Make fun of shopping for food. Let it be chaos!

You are the shy one in class. Your parents always tell you to behave, not to be aggressive, to stay silent. But this class is unbearable, boring teacher, nasty classmates. Try to behave, if nothing helps, cry bitter tears. If it is still not enough, escape from the room.
Silently.

You will have a maths test in the next lesson. It is vital to write a good test. Now is the last moment to revise. Read all your maths notes, ask the people around you, if you do not understand something. If there is a really difficult problem, send letters around checking who knows the answer, comparing your version to those of the others.

You are a music fan. As the lesson is boring, find nice video clips on your mobile, watch them. If you feel so, share the experience with your mates. If you do not have earbuds, never mind, try listening to the music without them.

You are a video gamer. Invite a partner for a game, shouting “Gaming time!” into the lecture. Someone will answer “I’m in!”. Use your mobile, play online with your partner, and contest! If the teacher does not care, sit together, talk to each other meanwhile, have fun!

You are a video gamer. Someone will invite you for a game, shouting “Gaming time!” into the lecture. Answer saying “I’m in!” Use your mobile, play online with your partner, and contest! If the teacher does not care, sit together, talk to each other meanwhile, have fun!

Hopeless facilitator scenario

You are giving a 5-minute lecture on environmental protection in general. These brute children do not obey, however nicely you ask them. Anyway, try asking them not to talk, not to misbehave. Be nice to them and don't give up! Teaching is important, even if they do not see it now. Never shout, be mild, avoid conflict, and keep on working. Even if it is hopeless.

You are bored in this class, so you need action. Invent things that surprise or frighten your classmates and enjoy their reactions. Don't give them a moment of peace! Be creative! You may use objects, noises, tricks, whatever.

You are late for this class. Very late. Enter much later than the others. Compensate it with loud apologies. Explain why you are late. Find a place for yourself in a noisy way, moving aside objects, apologising to the classmates while stepping over their legs and bags.

You are the joker in this class. Your pranks always entertain the others. Be creative! For example, tell the teacher that the class is overtime as the bell does not work. Or that you heard the fire alarm. Whatever! Be creative!

You are sleepy. Fight it for some time, but finally give it up, put down your head somewhere and have a nice nap.

You hate the teacher. You are irritated by whatever they say or do. This feeling is so strong that you cannot keep it to yourself, you have to hurt the teacher. Make comments, make fun of them, be provocative, do not be nice.

Aggressive facilitator scenario

You are giving a 5-minute lecture on how to manage extracurricular afternoon activities.

You are in the persuasion that the students have no idea about good time management and environment protection. Moreover, they are uneducated, antisocial, liar rascals. You do NOT like them at all. You think they need a strong hand and fear to be able to follow what is told to them. So, you humiliate, scare, shout, bang your fist on the desk, ask intimidatingly, whatever to dominate.

You are new in class, and you do not speak the language well, so it is difficult for you to communicate. But you need to leave as your dad is taking you to an official check-up at the police station. Try to ask the teacher for a permission to leave.

You are a shy student who cannot speak up. Moreover, if you are scared, you start s... s...stammering. If the teacher asks you, it always begins again. Today a classmate will ask the teacher for leave. You sympathise with this new classmate, who does not know the language well. Try to help.

You are a person whose emotions fluctuate often, especially if someone shouts or scares you. When you are feeling emotionally unstable, you start speaking loudly and impolitely, you get irritated so much that sometimes you even start crying or jump up and scream. When the teacher is nasty, it immediately begins.

You had a school accident in the previous lesson. While playing basketball, your ankle was sprained. Now it hurts very much, so you need to support it. That is why you try to move a chair closer to put up your foot.

You suffer from diabetes. You need a regular blood test and if the blood sugar level indicates a problem, you need to eat some. Discretely take the test, prick your fingertip and check the monitor. This is the moment when you should eat. You know it might cause a problem with the teacher, so try eating a bite in secret.

You do not like the teacher. You take notes of what is said in class, you even try to shoot mini videos so that you can complain at the headmaster. It is dangerous, of course, so you work discretely and with caution.

5.7. Self-assessment

This final step helps educators reflect on their learning experience and create actionable plans to implement workshops for stress management education.

1. Reflect on Learning

Educators will consider the digital tools they explored during the module and reflect on:

- **Which ice-breaker activities** they found most appealing and why (e.g., ease of use, relevance to student needs etc.)
- **How they envision** using different types of interaction in their workshops (e.g., pair-work, group work, debate, individual research and presentation etc.)
- **Potential challenges** they might encounter, such as students do not accept the importance of communication and emotional intelligence in conflict management and fight against workplace stress.

Activity

Provide a reflection worksheet with prompts like:

- What is one technique of workshop management you'd like to explore further?
- How could you adapt this tool for your specific teaching environment?
- What support or training might you need to overcome potential challenges?

2. Action Plan 1

Encourage educators to draft clear, actionable plans for implementing stress management workshops.

The plan should include:

- **Ice-breaker activity:** Identify one or two tools they will use (e.g., *Petit Bambou* for mindfulness or *Calm* for guided breathing).
- **Implementation Strategy:** Detail the steps of the workshop, including different activities, the roleplay cards they will use, any necessary equipment, the social media platform they plan to create or to use.
- **Timeline:** Set a date or session where they will test their chosen tools with students.

Activity:

Use a simple action plan template with sections like:

- Duration:
- Interaction:
- Objective:
- Equipment:
- Description:
- Date of implementation:

3. **Action Plan 2**

Encourage educators to draft clear, actionable plans for incorporating digital tools into teaching.

The plan should include:

- **Tool Selection:** Identify one or two tools they will use (e.g., *Petit Bambou* for mindfulness or *Calm* for guided breathing).
- **Implementation Strategy:** Detail how they will incorporate the tool(s) into their lesson (e.g., as a 5-minute activity at the start of each class).
- **Timeline:** Set a date or session where they will test their chosen tools with students.

Activity:

- Use a simple action plan template with sections like:
- Tool(s) to use:
- Activity or lesson to integrate tool(s):
- Date of first use:

4. **Multiple Choice Quiz [MCQ] Content – [for the educator to test knowledge]**

To help assess knowledge and reinforce key learning points, include the following MCQ:

1. What is the correct order of the steps of designing a workshop?

- a. needs analysis, registration, material collection, confirmation
- b. material collection, needs analysis, registration, conformation
- c. registration, confirmation, needs analysis, material collection
- d. needs analysis, material collection, registration, confirmation

2. Which statement is NOT correct?

- a. The ideal length of a workshop is 1.5 hours
- b. The workshop should be interactive
- c. The main objective of the workshop is to guarantee participant satisfaction
- d. The workshop should be based on a real problem and problem solving

3. Is it true? The engagement rate of a social media site is of crucial importance.

TRUE / FALSE

4. Which one is NOT valid for building community engagement through social media?

- a. Do not engage with your followers' content.
- b. Engage with fun.
- c. Have a plan to deal with criticism.
- d. Enhance offline actions.

5. Is it true? A facilitator is needed in peer-to-peer learning, too.

TRUE / FALSE

6. What is NOT part of a workshop plan?

- a. duration
- b. cost
- c. objective
- d. equipment needed

7. What is a key feature of effective stress management apps?

- a. Ads for other apps
- b. Personalised plans
- c. Inflexible routines
- d. Limited user access

8. Which of the following tools is an example of a gamified learning app for stress management?

- a. Calm
- b. Headspace
- c. Etude-mentalo
- d. All the above

9. What is the benefit of using video resources in stress management education?

- a. They offer live feedback
- b. They require no internet connection
- c. They demonstrate stress management techniques visually
- d. They replace the need for teachers

10. Which option below will be a key consideration when incorporating digital tools into an offline lesson?

- a. Backup activities if internet access is unavailable
- b. The tools must be fully automated
- c. Using only gamified tools
- d. Avoiding any student interaction

Answers: 1-D, 2-C, 3-False, 4-A, 5-True, 6-B, 7-B, 8-D, 9-C, 10-A

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6 Additional materials

6.1 Exercises and tips for stress management, handling and self-improvement

Exercises and Tips:	
Guided Mindfulness Practice:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exercise: Practice mindfulness techniques such as deep breathing and body scans. - Tip: Encourage youth to integrate 5-10 minutes of mindfulness practice into their daily routine.
Time-Blocking:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exercise: Create a time-blocked schedule for the day, prioritising important tasks. - Tip: Use digital tools (apps) to help manage and track tasks. Provide examples for balancing school, work, and leisure.
Reflective Journaling:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exercise: Write daily reflections on stressors, emotions, and progress. - Tip: Journal prompts could include "What stressed me today?" and "How did I handle it?" to identify patterns and improve responses.
Role-Playing Scenarios:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exercise: Role-play workplace stress situations and practice handling them with calm and effective communication. - Tip: Provide feedback to peers during role-playing to improve skills.

6.2 Activities for engaging learning and practice

Web App Activities:	
Self-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activity: Interactive quizzes and surveys to help users identify their personal stressors and coping styles and reflect. - Outcome: Users will gain insights into their stress triggers and how they respond to them.
Gamified Progress Tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activity: An interactive dashboard to track user progress in completing stress management activities. - Outcome: Users will gain insights into their stress triggers and how they respond to them.
Daily Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activity: Daily tasks such as gratitude exercises, physical activity goals, and mindfulness reminders. - Outcome: Users build positive habits by completing small, manageable tasks daily.
Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activity: Forums and social groups where youth can interact, share experiences, ask for advice, and offer support and accountability to one another. - Outcome: Foster a sense of community, collaboration, and peer.