



**21ST
CENTURY**

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21ST CENTURY COMPETENCES AND COACHING

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Moreover, huge thanks to our excellent partnership, those who embarked this project with us, to train, supervise, mentor and support 20 and professional youth coaches, that is The Globe (CZ), EduEra (SK), Strauss APS (ITA), COOBRA (AT), ResCogita (EE) and PRAXIS (HL), for the constructive collaboration, and for the 20 participants and future impactful youth coaches who joined on a 24 month journey to enhance the European pool of youth coaches, delivering a powerful and long lasting local impact in their realities.

FOREWORD

"21st CENTURY - Coaching Europe's Navigation Towards Understanding and Reactivating Youth" is an EU project, Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project on innovative methods of Youth Work, supported and financed by the Czech National Agency DZS. .

Why coaching? Youth Organisations provided excellent support measures to youth, especially in fostering ownership to a young person's desired future, by providing experiential learning opportunities, mobilities, training, mentoring, and some organisations are even well equipped with counselling services and psychological support. We believe, that, in addition to those support figures, one is missing, a coach, that is a professional who is competent and equipped with bringing out the true potential out of a young person, expand both horizons and opportunities by tailoring empowerment and self-learning processes around the individual, or group, to uncover their goals, shedding light on their virtues and potentials, and thus, fully live their values through this wholeness foster their accomplishments.

We submitted this project to the Czech Erasmus+ National Agency DZS, declaring our intention to deliver a long term training for 20 youth workers from Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Italy and Slovakia to become coaches, coaching tools trainers and coaching supervisors, to integrate this professional practice into youth work programs services, specifically focused to address marginalisation and working with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We provided youth workers and youth based civil society organisations with coaching competencies, at the highest international quality standards, enabling them to apply these skills in their inclusion work. By doing so, we seek to empower and support marginalised groups in their pathway towards inclusion and therefore, active participation in society, particularly in the areas of goalsetting and self-realisation.

CREDITS AND DISCLAIMER

This handbook is the result of the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 Innovation in the field of youth work “21st Century - Coaching Europe’s Navigation Towards Understanding and Reactivating Youth.”, supported by the the EU funded programme Erasmus+ Programme’s Czech National Agency, Dům zahraničních služeb and implemented by the Czech civil society organisation The Globe in partnership as lead partner, in consortium with the EduEra (SK), ResCogita (EE), Strauss APS (ITA), COOBRA (AT) and Praxis (HL) . This handbook was produced with the financial assistance of the European Commission. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Globe and its consortium partners, and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Petra Papierníková, has a diverse background in youth work, education, and psychotherapy. As a trainer, facilitator, university lecturer, and psychotherapist in training, she has consistently focused on supporting young people, meeting their needs, and developing innovative methodologies for youth workers, teachers, psychologists, and social workers. For over a decade, Petra has been deeply involved in fostering cross-sector collaboration. Through EduEra, the organisation she founded and leads, Petra engages in both international and local youth work. As a certified coach, she is committed to empowering young people, using graphic facilitation to address their needs and enhance motivation, always integrating the latest trends into her work.

ABOUT THE GLOBE

The Globe/ Zeměkoule is a civil society organisation founded by young people for young people in 2008, focused on deepening civic awareness and active citizenship by means of non-formal education for children, teenagers and young adults, as well as fellow civil society organisations interested volunteerism, youth work, personal growth and development, as well as the opportunities offered by the Erasmus + program. One of its primary aims is to provide opportunities for youth and youth workers, educators and support staff. The mission of The Globe is to support youth autonomy, independence, responsibility and active approach to problem-solving situations with the long-term goal to engage young people in civic life as active and responsible citizens. We provide young people with opportunities to self-fulfilment, to grow and to engage in civic life, as well as identifying potential and gratifying career paths. The Globe has over 17 years of experience in the youth field. Ranging from working with talented youth from universities to young with fewer opportunities from marginalised backgrounds.

PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

This handbook was written for present and future youth workers and youth coaches as a compass to develop, or improve their competences, so that in turn they can help young people to look after their mental wellbeing to thrive and live happily in this complex 21st Century world. Including the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values our youth workers need to develop to be supportive, and professional coaches. As this is the ground upon which our whole learning programme, and coaching practice is built and developed.

This manual is structured to provide a balanced combination of theory and practical tools, designed specifically for youth coaching in mental health and wellbeing field of interest. Each chapter begins with a foundational understanding of key concepts. Practical tools and strategies are introduced, allowing you to immediately apply the theory to real-world scenarios. This approach ensures that the knowledge you gain is deeply rooted in the practice of youth work, equipping you with the skills to effectively support the mental well-being of the youth you mentor.

In the “Self-Reflection Corner” section of this manual, which we included, we provide a series of introspective questions designed to help our readers integrate the book’s content with their everyday practices. These questions encourage people to reflect on how the concepts and strategies discussed apply to their own experiences and interactions with youth. By engaging with these prompts, you’ll gain deeper insights into your personal and professional growth. You can use this reflection to enhance your practice, fostering a more impactful and empathetic approach in your work.

Even if this manual places a strong emphasis on mental health, it is designed for a broader audience, recognizing that the skills and strategies discussed are valuable across various fields. Mental health is a critical component of overall well-being, and effective coaching in this area enhances a wide range of competences needed in 21st century. By focusing on mental health, we aim to equip you with tools that not only support individual well-being but also strengthen other essential competences which are crucial for holistic personal and professional development.

FOR WHOM IS THIS FOR:

- Participants who attended our coaching training modules.
- Youth workers who are committed to understand what coaching is and how this can be applied to their work.
- For fellow coaches who wish to explore and access our approach and innovative tools, as well as rationale into their practice; or wishing to expand their services towards youth, and tackle social inclusion.

FOR WHOM IS THIS IS NOT:

- Self coaching, at least not without first having attended the training first.
- To appoint oneself with a professional title.
- To claim to be a “coach” or start coaching after just reading this manual.
- For therapy or replacing professional medical or mental health practices.
- For those who wish to use the tools and chapters of this manual without quoting the source.

1.

**WHAT DOES IT
MEAN TO BE
YOUNG?**

1.1 Understanding Youth and Young Adulthood

What will you discover in this chapter?

- An understanding of important physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes that are typical for this developmental stage in life;
- an understanding what happens within the brains and minds of young people;
- an understanding of the impact of societal expectations from youth and young adults and its consequences on lives of young people;
- an understanding of practical strategies to effectively support young people.

As we all experienced, youth and young adulthood represent critical developmental stages in our lives. They are characterised by important physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes typical for this time of our lives.

Definition of „Youth“

Youth generally refers to the period enclosed between childhood and adulthood, approximately from 12 to 24 years. This stage is marked by the transition from dependence to independence and the exploration of identity, roles, and responsibilities.

Definition of „Young Adult“

Young Adult typically refers to individuals between 18 and 30 years old. This period involves further exploration of personal and professional identities, establishing long-term relationships, and achieving economic and social independence.

Today's youth and young adults primarily belong to three generational cohorts: **Generation Z (Gen Z)**, the youngest members of the **Millennial generation** and **Gen Alpha**, each with distinct characteristics and lifestyles shaped by their unique cultural, historical, social contexts and backgrounds. Understanding these differences is crucial to effectively engage and support them in personal, educational, professional, and social settings.

Warning: The chapter below may contain what can appear as generalisations or even stereotypes, yet are useful indicators and considerations to gain the wider picture and understanding of the generational context (extracted from its obvious social, economic, cultural and personal backgrounds of each individual).

Gen Alpha

- **Born between 2010 and 2025**, represents the first generation to be born entirely in the 21st century. They are the children of Millennials (in some cases, younger Gen Xers).
- **Digital Natives from Birth** - Generation Alpha has been exposed to digital technology from birth.

- **Online Communities and Social Media:** Generation Alpha will likely form social connections both online and offline, with social media continuing to be a significant part of their social lives. However, their use of social media might be more visual and interactive, with platforms that emphasize short-form video, augmented reality, and real-time engagement. Despite their strong digital presence, Generation Alpha may also value meaningful in-person connections.
- Accustomed to instant access to information, entertainment, and communication, making them incredibly tech-savvy and comfortable with a variety of digital platforms.
- **Education and learning:** blended formats through interactive and multimedia formats. They are more likely to learn through educational apps, online videos, and gamified learning experiences.
- **Work and career:** they will enter a workforce that is increasingly automated and globalized. As a result, they are expected to value flexibility, remote work options, and technology-driven careers. Entrepreneurship and digital nomadism might appeal to this generation, as they seek more control over their professional lives.
- **Social Values and Global Awareness:** Growing up in a more diverse and interconnected world, Generation Alpha is likely to value inclusivity and equality highly. They are exposed to a wide range of cultures, ideas, and lifestyles from an early age, fostering a natural acceptance of diversity. Environmental issues are likely to be important to Generation Alpha, as they grow up in a time of heightened awareness about climate change and sustainability.
- **Lifestyle:** Generation Alpha will expect products and services to be highly personalized. From entertainment choices to education, they will be accustomed to algorithms that tailor experiences to their individual preferences.
- **Mental Health Awareness:** Growing up in a fast-paced digital world, Generation Alpha may face unique challenges related to mental health, such as digital fatigue, online pressure, and anxiety. However, increased awareness and resources for mental health could also empower them to prioritize well-being and seek support when needed.

Gen Z

- Born approximately between 1997 and 2012.
- **Current Age:** As of 2024, Gen Z members are between 12 and 27 years old.
- **Digital Natives:** Gen Z were born into the internet era, familiar with smartphones, and social media. They are highly proficient with technology and rely on digital platforms for communication, entertainment, and learning.
- **Social Media Savvy:** Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and YouTube are integral to their lives and socialisation. They use these platforms for self-expression, staying informed, and connecting with peers.
- **Education and Learning:** Gen Z values education but prefers interactive and technology-integrated learning environments. They are inclined towards online courses, educational

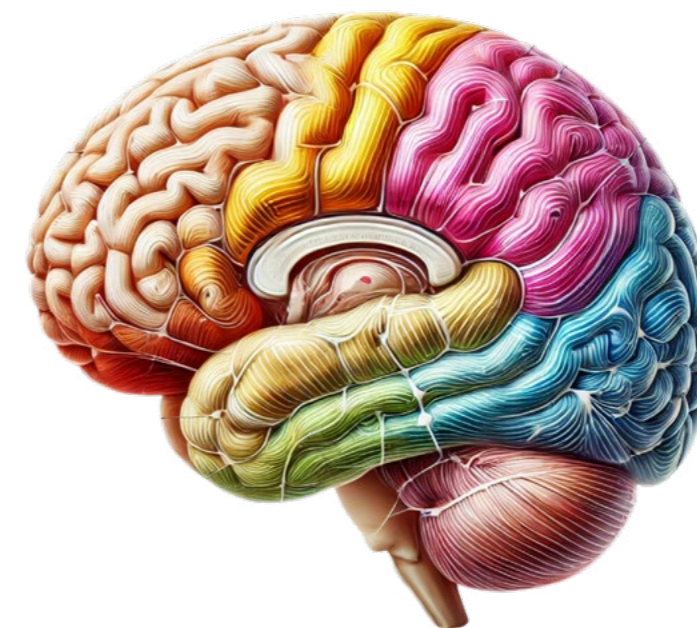
apps, and digital resources.

- **Work and Career:** They prioritise job stability and work-life balance but are also entrepreneurial, often pursuing side initiatives or freelance opportunities. Gen Z is drawn to companies with strong values and social responsibility.
- **Social Consciousness:** This generation is highly aware of social issues such as the climate crisis, social justice, human rights and gender equality. They are more likely to engage in activism to help movements and campaigns, as well as support brands that align with their values.
- **Mental Health Awareness:** Gen Z considers mental health very important, and does not consider this a taboo, as they openly discuss about it, and don't shy off from seeking support for mental health issues. This is demonstrated by their workplace and educational preferences that provide mental health support resources.
- **Consumption Patterns:** They prefer experiences over material goods, value authenticity, and are more likely to support sustainable and ethical brands.

Millennials: Really adulting today!

- **Age Range:** Born approximately between 1981 and 1996.
- **Current Age:** As of 2024, Millennials are between 28 and 43 years old.
- **Tech-Savvy:** Millennials witnessed the rise of the internet and digital technology during their formative years. They are comfortable using technology but are not as seamlessly integrated into it as Gen Z.
- While they use platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, their engagement is generally more moderate compared to Gen Z. They value online networking for professional development.
- **Education and Careers:** Millennials have a strong focus on higher education and career advancement. They value professional growth, continuous learning, and tend to seek jobs that offer opportunities for development and work-life balance.
- **Work Preferences:** They are known for valuing meaningful work and are more inclined towards companies that offer flexibility, such as remote work options. They tend to switch jobs more frequently than previous generations in pursuit of career satisfaction.
- **Social Awareness:** Millennials are socially conscious and value diversity, inclusivity, and corporate social responsibility. They support social causes and expect the same from the organisations they work for and the brands they purchase from.
- **Health and Wellness:** This generation places a strong emphasis on health and wellness, with a focus on fitness, healthy eating, and mental health. They are proactive in seeking wellness resources and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

1.2 What do we know about the brains of young people?



Brain Development

The brain undergoes significant growth and reorganisation during adolescence.

Key areas of development include:

- **Prefrontal Cortex:** Responsible for executive functions such as decisionmaking, planning, impulse control, and reasoning. This area continues to mature well into the mid-20s.
- **Limbic System:** Involved in emotion regulation, reward processing, and social interactions. The limbic system matures earlier than the prefrontal cortex, leading to heightened emotional responses and risk-taking behaviour during adolescence.

Neuroplasticity

The brain's ability to reorganise itself by forming new neural connections is called neuroplasticity. This period of high neuroplasticity allows for rapid learning and adaptation but also makes adolescents more vulnerable to negative influences and stress.

Hormonal Changes and Fluctuations

Adolescence is marked by hormonal changes that influence mood, behaviour, and physical development. Increased levels of hormones such as testosterone and oestrogen contribute to sexual maturation and can impact emotional regulation.

Understanding the neurodevelopmental characteristics of young people is important and helpful for youth workers. These characteristics significantly influence behaviour, learning, and social interactions. What can be expected from young people and their behaviour?

Behavioural and Emotional Challenges

- **Impulsivity and Risk-Taking:** These behaviours are often driven by the underdeveloped prefrontal cortex and the active limbic system.
- **Emotional Volatility:** Adolescents and young adults can experience intense emotional swings, requiring sensitive and responsive approaches from the adults who work with them.

Learning and Cognitive Development

- **Abstract Thinking:** As young people develop the ability to think abstractly¹, they benefit from educational strategies that challenge their cognitive abilities and encourage critical thinking.
- **Motivation and Engagement:** The developing brain is highly motivated by rewards and novelty.

Social Interactions and Peer Influence

- **Peer Pressure:** The influence of peers is particularly strong during this period, affecting decision-making and behaviour. Positive peer interactions can be harnessed to promote healthy behaviours and attitudes.
- **Social Learning:** Social interactions play a critical role in learning and development.

The neurodevelopmental characteristics of young people present both challenges and opportunities for youth workers. By understanding these aspects and implementing targeted strategies, adults can effectively support the cognitive, emotional, and social development of young people. This approach not only enhances their educational outcomes but also promotes overall well-being and resilience. What examples of effective strategies exist out there?

Creation of a Supportive Environment!

- **Establish Trust:** Building trusting relationships with young people is essential. This involves being approachable, empathetic, and consistent.
- **Provide Structure:** Clear expectations and consistent routines help manage impulsivity and provide a sense of security².

Promote Emotional Regulation!

- **Provide (or train) Coping Strategies:** Youth workers can teach techniques such as mindfulness, deep breathing, and journaling to help young people manage their emotions.

¹ As teenagers grow, they start to think in more advanced ways. They begin to understand abstract ideas, think logically, and organize their thoughts better. This means they can consider “what if” scenarios, solve problems by thinking through different possibilities, and see things from different points of view.

² A consistent routine promotes security by creating a predictable environment where individuals, especially youth, know what to expect. This sense of stability reduces anxiety and fosters trust, as they feel secure in the structure provided. The consistent routines help manage impulsivity by setting clear expectations and boundaries. When youth are aware of the schedule and what is required of them at different times, it becomes easier for them to regulate their behavior, anticipate consequences, and develop self-discipline.

- **Model Emotional Regulation:** Demonstrating calm and controlled responses to stressful situations serves as a model and a good example to follow for young people.

Encourage Positive Risk-Taking!

- **Safe Opportunities for Exploration:** Provide opportunities for young people to take positive risks in a controlled environment, through sports, arts, etc.
- **Guided Reflection:** Encourage reflection on decisions and behaviours to help young people learn from their experiences.

Enhancing Learning and Motivation!

- **Interactive and Experiential Learning:** Use hands-on activities, non-formal education, real-world applications, and technology to make learning engaging and relevant.
- **Feedback and Rewards:** Provide immediate and specific feedback, and use rewards to reinforce positive behaviours and achievements.

Address Mental Health and Well-Being!

- **Mental Health Resources:** Ensure access to mental health resources and support services, including counselling and/or peer support groups.
- **Stress Management Education:** Provide (or train) stress management techniques and offer tools, in order to promote a balanced lifestyle that includes physical activity, healthy lifestyles, and sufficient rest.

1.3 Evolutionary Perspectives on what it means to be young

Evolutionary psychology suggests that many behaviours exhibited during youth and young adulthood are adaptive and are shaped by evolutionary pressures. These include risk-taking, exploration, and the creation of social bonds. What are the evolutionary pressures?

- **Social Bonds:** Forming social connections and establishing social hierarchies are critical during adolescence and young adulthood. These behaviours enhance survival and reproductive success³.
- **Mate Selection:** Mate selection during young adulthood is a significant phase, often influenced by evolutionary factors related to reproduction and the survival of future generations. This period typically involves individuals seeking partners who they believe will provide the best combination of traits for raising healthy offspring and ensuring their well-being.

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Useful approaches to development in the teenage years:

Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory

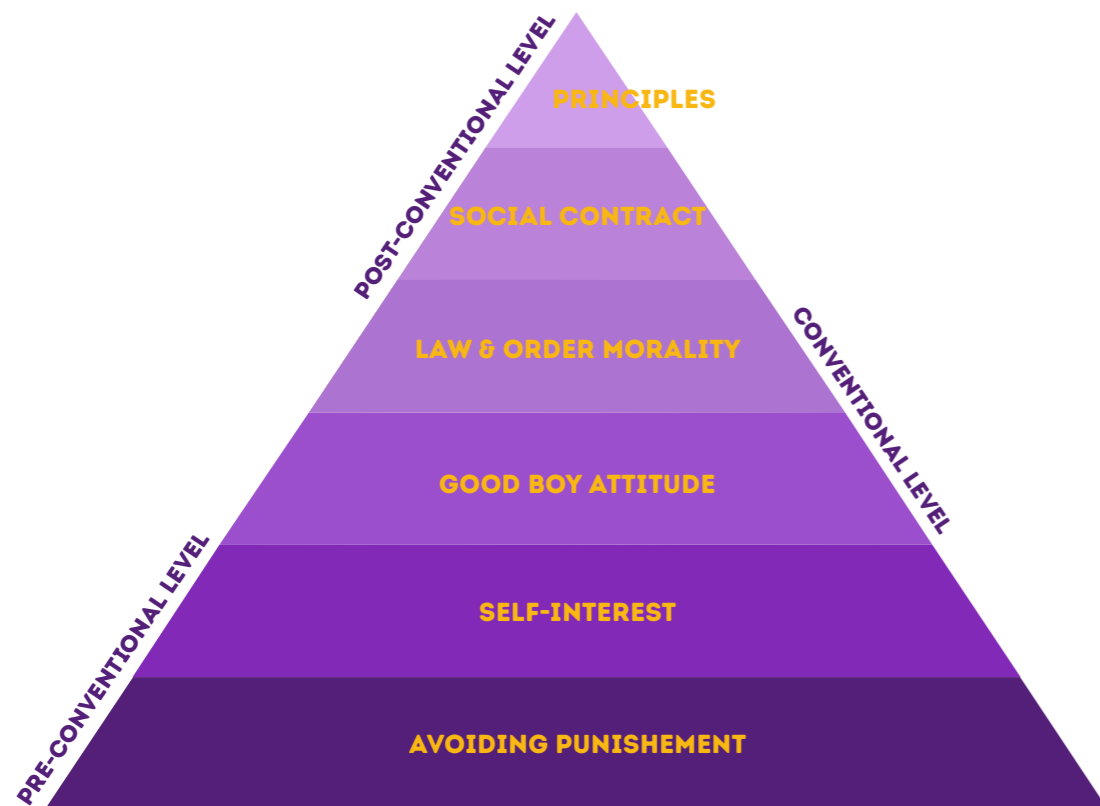
Formal Operational Stage (12+ years): teenagers enter the formal operational stage. They start to think in more advanced ways. They can understand complex ideas, think logically about problems, and come up with solutions by considering different possibilities. They also begin to see things from other people's points of view and can think about "what if" situations.

Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory

Identity vs. Role Confusion (12-18 years old): Teenagers work on developing a sense of identity and personal values. Success leads to a strong sense of self, while failure results in role confusion and uncertainty.

Intimacy vs. Isolation (18-40 years old): Young adults seek to form intimate, loving relationships with others. Successful navigation of this stage results in strong relationships, while failure can lead to loneliness and isolation.

Lawrence Kohlberg's Moral Development Theory



- **Conventional Level (Adolescence):** Individuals begin to internalise society's norms and values. They focus on maintaining social order and gaining approval from others.
- **Post-Conventional Level (Adulthood):** Some young adults progress to this level, where they base their moral decisions on universal ethical principles and the concept of justice, beyond social norms.

Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

This theory offers valuable insights into the developmental needs of young people and the role of social interaction in learning. By understanding and applying Vygotsky's concepts such as the ZPD, scaffolding (see below), and the importance of social and language interactions, youth workers can create supportive and effective learning environments.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): Vygotsky emphasised the importance of social interaction and cultural context in learning. The ZPD represents the range of tasks that an individual can perform with guidance, highlighting the role of mentors and peers in cognitive development.

Self reflection „corner“

Can you recall a significant event from your youth that shaped your values or beliefs? What happened, and how did it impact you?

Who are/were the most influential figures during your childhood/teenage years/youth? How do/did they shape your development and who you have become today?

What challenges did you face during your childhood/teenage/youth years, and how did overcoming them impact your resilience and problem-solving skills?

2.

**WHAT DOES
IT TAKE TO BE
YOUNG IN THE
21ST CENTURY**

2.1 Consequences of Social and Technical Changes on Young People

What you will discover in this chapter?

- Understanding of key major social and technological changes that are shaping today's world
- Understanding of the impact of major social and technical (?) changes in the 21st century on young people and their lifestyle

The 21st century is so far a period of fast and transformative changes, impacting every aspect of our societies and lives. These changes are driven mostly by technological and scientific innovations, globalisation, and transforming our societal norms. Understanding these shifts is crucial for youth to successfully navigate in this increasingly complex world.

Technological Innovation

The 21st century is witnessing unprecedented technological growth, constantly reshaping and rethinking how we live, work, and interact.

Digital Revolution

- **Internet and Connectivity:** The internet has become ubiquitous, facilitating instant communication and access to information. Social media platforms have transformed social interactions and information dissemination, up to the UN including internet connectivity, a fundamental human right.
- **Mobile Technology:** Smartphones have revolutionised daily life, providing tools for communication, navigation, daily life management, and entertainment.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** AI is increasingly integrated into various industries, from healthcare to finance, enhancing efficiency and creating new opportunities, as well as making older ways of doing things obsolete.
- **Big Data and Analytics:** The ability to analyse vast amounts of data has led to more informed decision-making and personalised services, as well as posing challenges and concerns regarding today's level of privacy, and also regarding democracy.

Employment and Skills

- **Automation:** Routine jobs are being automated, requiring workers to reskill and upskill in order to adapt to a fast-paced changing labour market.
- **Remote Work:** Innovation in communication technology has made remote work more feasible, changing traditional workplace dynamics.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Continuous learning and upskilling are essential as technological

advancements create new job roles and demand new competencies.

Societal Changes

Changing Family Dynamics

- **Parental Pressure:** Increased performative pressure in the academic and career fields from parents can contribute to stress and anxiety among young people.
- **Single-Parent Families:** The rise in single-parent families and non-traditional family structures can impact the emotional support available to young people, regarding the preparedness of mental health professionals as well as other support professions such as youth workers.

Economic Uncertainty and Employment Challenges

- **Job Insecurity:** Economic fluctuations and changes in the job market, which result in future uncertainties, can create uncertainty and stress about future employment prospects.
- **Gig Economy:** The rise of gig and freelance work can offer flexibility but also contribute to financial instability, overwork, burnout and stress.

Globalisation and Cultural Exchange

- **Increased Mobility:** Easier travel and digital connectivity have facilitated cultural exchange and a more global perspective and identities beyond the nation-state.
- **Diverse Workplaces:** Globalisation has led to more diverse workplaces, requiring intercultural competencies, teamwork and soft skills.

Social Movements and Changing Norms

- **Equality and Inclusion:** Movements advocating for gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, and racial justice have gained momentum, reshaping social values and policies.
- **Environmental Awareness:** Growing awareness of environmental issues has led to a shift towards sustainable attitudes, practices and policies.

Mental Health Awareness

- **Reducing Stigma:** Increased awareness and openness about mental health and potential challenges have led to better support and resources for those in need.
- **Well-being Focus:** There is a growing emphasis on well-being and work-life balance, reflecting changes in societal priorities.

The fast technological and social changes in the 21st century have deep implications for the mental health and well-being of young people. While these changes offer numerous opportunities, they also present challenges that can impact mental health.

Positive Consequences

Enhanced Access to Information and Resources

- **Mental Health Awareness:** Increased access to information has led to greater awareness and understanding of the importance of mental wellbeing, and of mental health issues, reducing the stigma and encouraging support-seeking behaviour.
- **Online Support Networks:** Social media and online communities provide platforms for young people to share experiences and access peer support, fostering a sense of belonging and reducing feelings of isolation.

Technological Tools for Mental Health

- **Mental Health Apps:** Numerous apps offer tools for meditation, stress management, and cognitive behavioural therapy, making mental health resources more popular and accessible.
- **Telehealth Services:** The availability of online counselling and therapy has made mental health services more accessible, especially for those in remote or underserved areas.

Opportunities for Social Connection

- **Global Connectivity:** Social media and digital communication tools allow young people to maintain connections with friends and family, regardless of geographical distance.
- **Virtual Communities:** Online platforms enable the formation of interest-based communities, where young people can find like-minded peers and support networks.

Negative Consequences

Increased Screen Time and Digital Overload

- **Screen Addiction:** Excessive use of digital devices can lead to screen addiction, impacting sleep, physical health, and social interactions.
- **Information Overload:** Constant exposure to information and digital content can lead to stress and anxiety, as young people struggle to process and keep up with the influx of data.

Cyberbullying and Online Harassment

- **Cyberbullying:** The anonymity of the internet can facilitate bullying and harassment, leading to emotional distress, trauma and long-term psychological effects.
- **Online Harassment:** Negative interactions and harassment on social media can erode self-esteem and contribute to mental distress, including anxiety and depression.

Social Comparison and Pressure

- **Social Media Pressure:** Many online Platforms often present idealised versions of reality, leading to unrealistic expectations and negative self-comparisons.

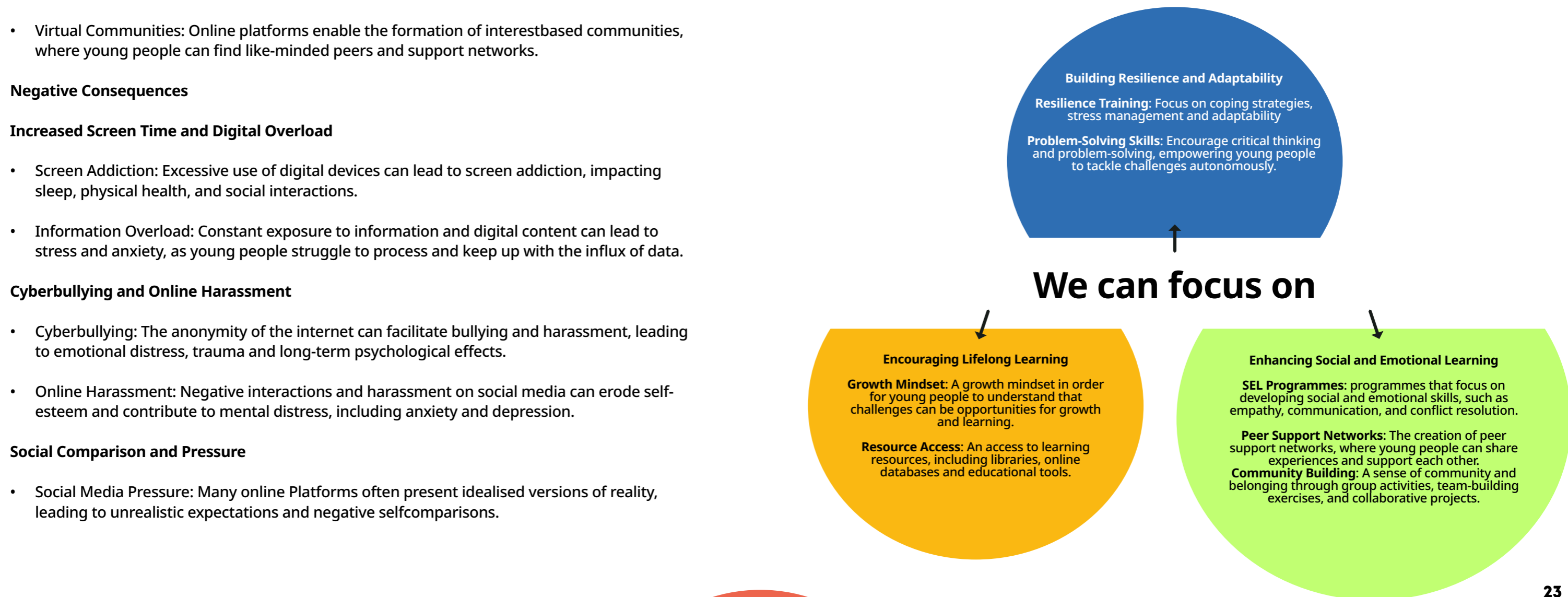
- **Fear of Missing Out (FOMO):** Constant exposure to others' activities and achievements can create a sense of inadequacy and anxiety about missing out on experiences.

Isolation and Loneliness

- **Reduced Face-to-Face Interaction:** Increased reliance on digital communication can reduce opportunities for in-person social interactions, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- **Virtual Relationships:** While online connections can be supportive, they may lack the depth and emotional resonance of face-to-face relationships.
- **Environmental Anxiety:** Growing awareness of the climate crisis and environmental issues can lead to anxiety and a sense of helplessness about the future (eco-anxiety).

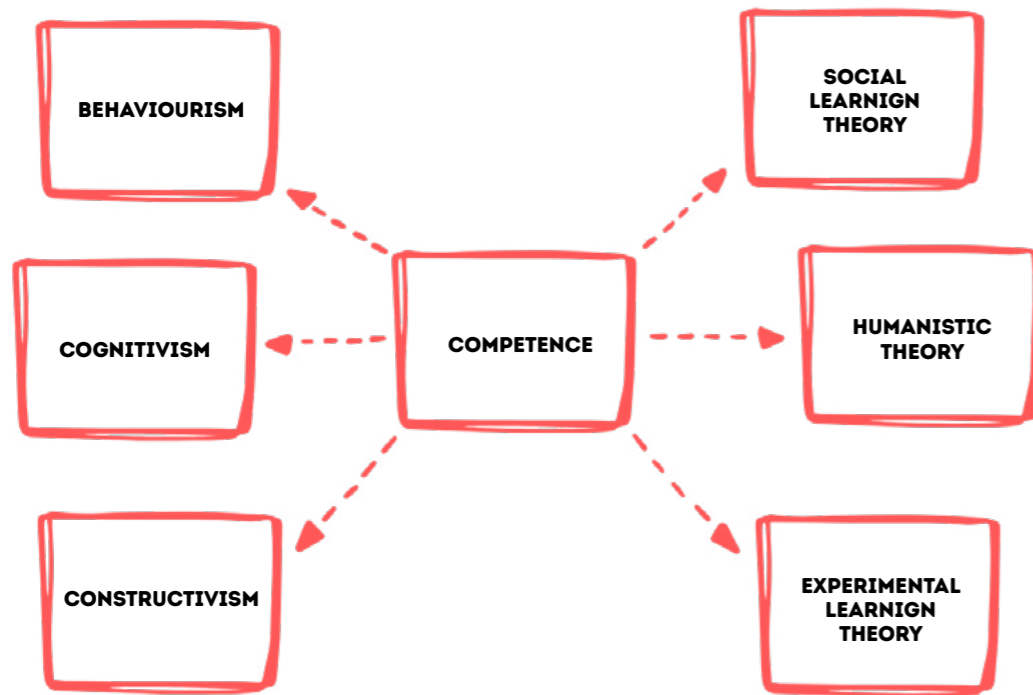
2.2 Practical Strategies for Youth Workers: addressing the challenges of this complex world

Youth work in the 21st century must adapt to the rapid social and technological changes to effectively support and guide young people. By promoting inclusivity, environmental stewardship, mental health, and digital literacy, youth workers can help young people navigate our complex world. Leveraging technology for engagement, preparing for future employment, and building resilience and adaptability are crucial strategies for empowering youth to thrive in a dynamic and interconnected world.



3.

**UNDERSTANDING
AND BUILDING
COMPETENCES IN
21ST CENTURY**



Behaviourism

Behaviourism focuses on observable behaviours and the influence of external stimuli on learning, with an emphasis on reinforcement and repetition to shape desired behaviours.

Cognitivism

Emphasises mental processes and how they influence learning. The understanding of “Competence” involves the acquisition and organisation of knowledge, as well as the development of cognitive skills.

Constructivism

Suggests that learners construct their own understanding and knowledge through experiences and reflection. Competence is seen as the ability to apply knowledge in a variety of contexts.

Social Learning Theory

Proposes that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and social interactions. Competence is developed through modelling behaviours and collaborative learning.

Humanistic Theory

Highlights the importance of personal growth, self-actualization, and motivation. Competence involves achieving one's potential and holistic development.

Experiential Learning Theory

Emphasises learning through direct experience and reflection. It outlines a cyclical process of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting.

3.2 Building competences to thrive in 21st century

As the 21st century has brought about significant changes in technology, society, and the global economy, this requires a major shift in the competences required for success. The competences needed in the 21st century are multifaceted and diverse, reflecting the complex and dynamic nature of modern life. Different perspectives – educational, professional, global, technological, social and emotional, environmental, and economic – highlight the variety and growing demands placed on individuals. By integrating these perspectives, educators, policymakers, and practitioners can develop comprehensive strategies to equip individuals with the competences needed to thrive in the 21st century. This holistic approach ensures that people are prepared to navigate the challenges and seize the opportunities of an increasingly interconnected and rapidly changing world.

Educational Perspective

The educational perspective emphasises the importance of developing skills that enable lifelong learning and adaptability in this constantly changing world. Key competences include:

- **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:** The ability to analyse complex problems, evaluate information, and develop innovative solutions.
- **Creativity and Innovation:** Encouraging out-of-the-box thinking and the ability to generate new ideas and solutions.
- **Collaboration and Communication:** Working effectively in diverse teams and communicating clearly and effectively.

Professional Perspective

From a professional point of view, competences are geared towards enhancing employability and career advancement. Important competencies include:

- **Digital Literacy:** Proficiency in using digital tools and technologies, and understanding their impact on the labour market and society at large.
- **Adaptability and Flexibility:** The ability to quickly adjust to new roles, technologies, and working environments.
- **Leadership and Initiative:** Leading projects, taking initiative, and driving change within organisations.

Global Perspective

A global perspective focuses on the competences needed to operate effectively in an interconnected world. These competences include:

- **Cultural Competence:** Understanding and appreciating cultural diversity and interacting respectfully with people from different backgrounds.
- **Global Awareness:** Knowledge of global issues, such as the climate crisis, economic interdependence, and geopolitical dynamics.
- **Intercultural Communication:** Communicating effectively across cultures and languages.

Case Study - Hyphen8: Connecting dots to infinity Strauss APS - Italy

TARGET GROUP

8+ years old, with a deeper focus for young people from 13 to 30 (local and international people)

ORGANIZERS/PARTNERS

Organized by Strauss APS, a non-profit organization focused on education, community awareness and youth empowerment. Partners include local community, municipality and Entropia, a Calabrian organization.

THE PURPOSE

Hyphen 8 had a clear and multi-faceted mission. The project aimed first and foremost to raise awareness about mental health in Sicilian and Calabrian communities, which often face stigma around these topics. By highlighting the importance of mental and physical health, Hyphen 8 promoted a holistic view of well-being. Additionally, Strauss saw an opportunity not just to impact local youth but also to empower international volunteers and local young people as advocates for mental health. By equipping participants with practical skills and tools, the project fostered a sustainable impact, creating a ripple effect of advocacy and support within the community and beyond.

THE METHODS

Inclusive and Community-Driven Approach. The project focused on inclusivity and accessibility, combining non-formal education with interactive activities to boost mental health awareness and self-awareness. Core activities were:

- **Physical Wellness:** Yoga and hiking to link movement with mental well-being.
- **Mindfulness:** Breathing and focus sessions for stress management.
- **Creative Workshops:** Art, music, and writing for emotional expression.
- **Coaching:** Goal-setting to encourage self-improvement.
- **Community Events:** Tailored campaigns to deepen local engagement.

THE OUTCOMES

Hyphen 8 made a lasting impact by raising mental health awareness in Sicilian and Calabrian communities. Many participants, initially unfamiliar with mental health topics, developed a deeper understanding of well-being, while volunteers gained insights into local challenges and strengthened their advocacy skills. The project equipped participants with practical tools to manage stress and anxiety, providing a lifeline in areas with limited mental health resources. This sense of empowerment inspired both volunteers and youth to champion mental health in their daily lives, creating a ripple effect of advocacy. Hyphen 8 also fostered thriving peer support networks, encouraging open dialogue and mutual support. Inspired by its success, local youth are now initiating their own mental health projects, ensuring the mission to support and uplift their communities continues.

the OECD Learning Compass 2030

One prominent global platform focused on developing competences is the OECD Learning Compass 2030. This initiative by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) aims to prepare students around the world for the complexities of future work and life. The Learning Compass 2030 is a framework that outlines the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values students need to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

The framework emphasizes a broad set of competences that go beyond traditional academic skills, incorporating:

1. **Cognitive and Metacognitive Skills:** Critical thinking, problem-solving, and creative thinking.
2. **Social and Emotional Skills:** Empathy, collaboration, and conflict resolution.
3. **Practical and Physical Skills:** Applying knowledge in real-world settings, managing tasks, and using technology effectively.

Example Projects:

Global Competence Framework: The OECD's Global Competence Framework, part of the Learning Compass 2030, encourages students to examine local, global, and intercultural issues, understand and appreciate different perspectives, engage in open and effective interactions, and take responsible action toward collective well-being.

PISA Global Competence Assessment: The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), run by the OECD, includes a global competence assessment to measure how well students can apply their knowledge and skills to real-world situations involving global and intercultural issues. This assessment encourages educational systems worldwide to prioritize competences that prepare students for global citizenship.

Education 2030 Project: This broader project under the Learning Compass 2030 initiative collaborates with countries and stakeholders globally to co-create future-oriented curricula that foster these competences. It involves research, policy recommendations, and practical tools for educators to implement in classrooms worldwide.

Technological Perspective

With rapid technological advancements, there is a strong emphasis on competences related to digital and technological literacy. Key competences include:

- **Information Literacy:** The ability to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively.
- **Technical Skills:** Competences in areas such as coding, data analysis, and cybersecurity.
- **Ethical Use of Technology:** Understanding the ethical implications of technology and using it responsibly.

Case Study - EduEra Youth Goal Setting

TARGET GROUP

Targeted at young people, specifically high school students aged 15-18 years old.

ORGANIZERS/PARTNERS

Organized by EduEra, a non-profit organization focused on education and youth empowerment. Partners include local schools, educational institutions in Slovakia

THE PURPOSE

The primary purpose of the workshop is to enhance mental health and wellbeing among young people by helping them build essential life skills and competencies. It aims to empower students to reflect on their current life situations, identify areas for improvement, and set realistic and achievable goals for their personal and academic development.

THE METHODS

The workshop utilizes coaching methodology, with a focus on the Wheel of Life exercise. During this exercise, students assess various aspects of their lives, such as education, health, relationships, and hobbies. The Wheel of Life allows participants to visualize their satisfaction in these areas, reflect on their priorities, and set specific goals they wish to achieve by the end of the school year. The workshop is conducted in a classroom setting, engaging the whole class in reflective discussions, group activities, and individual goal-setting sessions.

THE OUTCOMES

The expected outcomes include improved self-awareness among students, enhanced goal-setting and time management skills, and increased motivation to achieve personal and academic objectives. By the end of the school year, students are encouraged to review their progress and make adjustments to their goals if necessary. This process fosters a sense of accomplishment and resilience, contributing positively to their overall mental well-being and academic success. The workshop demonstrates how structured reflection and goal-setting exercises can empower students to take control of their personal development and thrive in both academic and personal life.

From a technological perspective, a notable global platform focused on developing competences is the DigComp Framework (the European Digital Competence Framework). This framework is designed to enhance digital literacy and skills across various contexts, aligning with the demands of a technology-driven world.

The DigComp Framework provides a structured approach to digital competence, encompassing a range of skills needed to effectively use technology in personal, educational, and professional settings. It is divided into five key areas:

1. **Information and Data Literacy:** Skills related to searching, evaluating, and managing information and data effectively.
2. **Communication and Collaboration:** Using digital tools for communication, collaboration, and sharing content.
3. **Digital Content Creation:** Skills for creating, editing, and managing digital content.
4. **Safety:** Understanding and managing the risks associated with digital environments, including data protection and cybersecurity.
5. **Problem-Solving:** Ability to identify and solve problems using digital technologies, including troubleshooting and adapting digital tools.

Example Projects

European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DigComp 2.1): This updated version of the framework provides detailed descriptions of competences required in the digital age, including practical examples and resources for educators and trainers. It aims to improve digital literacy among citizens across Europe and beyond.

Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition: Initiated by the European Commission, this coalition brings together stakeholders to promote digital skills across Europe. It supports training programs, research, and the development of digital competences to ensure that individuals and businesses can effectively leverage digital technologies.

Global Digital Skills Initiative: Organizations like Google and Microsoft, in collaboration with various educational and governmental bodies, offer programs such as Google's "Digital Garage" and Microsoft's "Microsoft Learn" that provide free training and resources to build digital skills. These platforms align with the DigComp framework to enhance global digital literacy.

Coursera and edX Technology Courses: Online learning platforms like Coursera and edX offer a wide range of courses in digital skills, from basic coding to advanced data science. These courses often integrate with frameworks like DigComp to provide learners with the skills needed to excel in technology-driven fields.

Social and Emotional Perspective

The social and emotional perspective highlights the importance of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills for personal well-being and effective interaction with others. Essential competencies include:

- **Emotional Intelligence:** Recognizing and managing one's own emotions and understanding others' emotions.
- **Empathy and Compassion:** Understanding and sharing the feelings of others and showing concern for their well-being.
- **Resilience and Stress Management:** The ability to cope with stress, overcome adversity, and maintain mental health.

Case Study - Mentoring for Children with an idea

TARGET GROUP

Targeted at young people, specifically elementary and high school students aged 12-18 years old.

ORGANIZERS/PARTNERS

Divadlo na cucky is a professional independent theater in the center of Olomouc, with contemporary dramaturgy focusing on civic engagement and current social issues. The spaces of Divadlo na cucky serve as an open platform for people to meet and participate in regular programming, which, alongside its own repertoire, includes workshops, art education courses, debates, the operation of Gallery XY, and a community oasis that is newly part of the space.

THE PURPOSE

To work with the talent and ideas of young people and develop their abilities through a special mentoring program, providing selected pupils and students with an extraordinary opportunity to pursue their ideas and develop their skills through teamwork, with the help of mentors and consultants who are top experts in their fields. Young people thus have the opportunity to learn how to turn ideas into projects and successfully implement them.

THE METHODS

The methods employed encompass a comprehensive approach to personal and project development. Through individual coaching sessions, participants receive personalized guidance tailored to their specific needs and goals, while group coaching facilitates peer learning and collaborative problem-solving. Mind mapping techniques are utilized to help visualize ideas, establish connections, and structure thoughts in a creative and systematic way. The process is further enhanced by field experts who provide mentoring, sharing their practical experience and industry insights, thus bridging the gap between theory and real-world application.

THE OUTCOMES

The program has yielded impressive results through diverse locally impactful projects. These range from awareness-raising initiatives like a fashion show addressing domestic violence to engaging community dialogues on educational reform, and from practical innovations such as 3D-printed educational tools for schools and computer game development. Through these hands-on experiences, participants develop a comprehensive set of essential competencies. They enhance their creative thinking abilities, learn to work effectively in teams, and sharpen their problem-solving capabilities. The projects provide practical experience in project management, while participants build valuable networking skills by connecting with various stakeholders. Additionally, they cultivate entrepreneurial mindsets and gain specialized knowledge in their chosen fields. These developed competencies not only contribute to the success of their immediate projects but also prepare them for future professional challenges.

A notable global platform focused on social and emotional competence is the **SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) Framework** developed by **CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning)**. CASEL is a leading organization dedicated to advancing the practice of social and emotional learning in education systems worldwide.

Overview of CASEL's SEL Framework:

The CASEL SEL Framework emphasizes the development of key social and emotional skills essential for students' success in both academic and personal contexts. The framework is structured around five core competencies:

1. **Self-Awareness:** Understanding one's own emotions, strengths, and weaknesses, and recognizing how they influence behavior.
2. **Self-Management:** Managing emotions, stress, and impulses effectively, and setting and working towards personal and academic goals.
3. **Social Awareness:** Understanding and empathizing with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
4. **Relationship Skills:** Building and maintaining healthy and supportive relationships through effective communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution.
5. **Responsible Decision-Making:** Making ethical and constructive choices about personal and social behavior, based on consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.

Example Projects

SEL School Programs: Many schools worldwide, such as those involved in the **SEL4US** network, implement CASEL's SEL framework to integrate social and emotional learning into their curricula. These programs focus on teaching students SEL skills through structured lessons, activities, and school-wide practices.

Global SEL Initiatives: Organizations like **The Global Partnership for Education (GPE)** and **UNICEF** incorporate SEL into their educational programs to support emotional well-being and resilience in children and youth in various countries. These initiatives often provide training for educators and resources to embed SEL into classroom practices.

Digital Platforms for SEL: Platforms such as The Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence's **RULER** Program offer online resources and tools for teaching SEL. The RULER framework helps educators and students develop skills in recognizing, understanding, labelling, expressing, and regulating emotions.

Community and Youth Programs: **The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR)** promotes SEL through mentoring programs that focus on building positive relationships and providing guidance and support to young people. These programs are designed to enhance social and emotional skills alongside academic and career development.

Environmental Perspective

Given the growing focus on sustainability, environmental competences are becoming increasingly important. Key competences include:

- **Environmental Literacy:** Understanding ecological principles and the impact of human activity on the environment.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Implementing practices that promote environmental sustainability in personal and professional contexts.
- **Systems Thinking:** Recognising the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental systems.

Case Study - Estonia

TARGET GROUP

Young adults on the neurodivergent spectrum, primarily those diagnosed with ADHD and Asperger's Syndrome, who are navigating the challenges of independent living and major life transitions. These individuals are often emerging from highly structured family environments into autonomous living situations, requiring support in developing independent life skills.

ORGANIZERS/PARTNERS

The program is led by Markus Jarve in collaboration with local NGOs that specialize in neurodivergent youth advocacy and support. These organizations provide professional oversight and facilitate client referrals based on careful assessment of individual needs and program suitability. This partnership ensures appropriate matching between client needs and coaching services.

THE PURPOSE

The primary aim is to empower these young individuals to discover and trust their inherent capabilities while experiencing genuine self-actualization. This is particularly crucial as many clients come from backgrounds of intensive family management, which can lead to either continued co-dependency patterns or extreme reactions resulting in risky behaviors when living independently, including potential substance abuse issues. The program addresses this critical transition period to establish healthy independence.

THE METHODS

The cornerstone of the approach is non-judgmental active listening, particularly vital for this specific client group. The focus is on identifying and implementing minimal resistance pathways toward goals. A key breakthrough occurs when clients begin to challenge their existing limiting beliefs through small, manageable steps, building confidence through accumulated successes. This incremental approach allows for sustainable progress while maintaining client engagement and motivation.

THE OUTCOMES

The program has fostered numerous lasting relationships with former clients, evolving into meaningful peer connections. The combination of unwavering support and belief in client capabilities, coupled with empowerment-focused guidance, has proven highly effective. Clients show marked improvement in practical areas such as academic performance, particularly in exam preparation, time management, and strategic planning. The emphasis on self-directed goal setting and visualization, broken down into manageable steps, has been especially powerful in maintaining academic progress. The client's ownership of their planning process significantly reduces regression in their studies and personal development.

The EU GreenComp

In the European context, we want to introduce The EU GreenComp (the European Green Competence Framework), is an initiative by the European Union designed to promote and enhance environmental sustainability skills across Europe. It provides a structured set of competences aimed at empowering individuals and organizations to make environmentally responsible decisions and take action towards sustainability. The framework outlines key knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for addressing environmental challenges, encouraging green thinking, and fostering sustainable behaviors in both personal and professional contexts. GreenComp is part of the EU's broader efforts to achieve its climate and sustainability goals by integrating green competences into education, training, and lifelong learning.

The EU GreenComp framework is structured around four interconnected areas, each focusing on different aspects of sustainability competence:

1. **Embodying Sustainability Values:** This area emphasizes the importance of adopting and promoting values that support environmental sustainability. It includes competencies related to caring for the environment, understanding ecological interdependence, and fostering a sense of responsibility for the planet.
2. **Sustainable Living:** This area focuses on the skills needed to live in an environmentally sustainable way. It covers competencies like making informed choices about consumption, managing resources efficiently, and reducing personal environmental impact.
3. **Sustainable Agency:** This area is about taking action to promote sustainability. It includes competencies related to problem-solving, innovation, and collaboration to address environmental challenges at both local and global levels.
4. **Critical Thinking and Reflection:** This area encourages a critical approach to environmental issues, promoting skills in analyzing and reflecting on the sustainability of practices, policies, and technologies. It also involves questioning and evaluating information, as well as understanding the broader implications of decisions on the environment.

Economic Perspective

The economic perspective emphasizes competences that drive economic growth and innovation. These competences include:

- **Entrepreneurship:** The ability to identify opportunities, take risks, take the initiative, and innovate.
- **Financial Literacy:** The understanding financial concepts and managing personal and business finances effectively.
- **Market Awareness:** The knowledge of market dynamics, of labour market needs and trends, and the ability to adapt to economic changes.

Case Study - Greece

TARGET GROUP

Young people 16-19 years old (students) who are facing difficulties to deal with everyday tasks and set goals for the (near) future.

ORGANIZERS/PARTNERS

Organized by Praxis, a non-governmental and cultural organisation in Serres Greece which provides assistance and opportunities to young people and implements educational projects/activities at schools.

THE PURPOSE

The goal of the workshop and the coaching sessions is to help these youngsters develop essential life skills that would enhance their confidence and improve their time management and punctuality. Also, the aim is to help them deal with issues including low self-esteem and a lack of focus in both their personal and academic life and clarify their goals for the future.

THE METHODS

SWOT analysis: Using the SWOT analysis to identify internal and external factors that can impact the development of youth competences that influence the individuals.

GROW Model: Using the GROW model to analyze specific challenges and develop solutions. It is used to guide youngsters through goal-setting and decision-making, focusing on improving their academic performance and career planning.

SMART goals: Use of the "SMART" tool to organize and prioritize their goals. Once students have clarity on what they want to achieve, the coach helps them break down their broad goals into SMART goals to create a focused plan for improvement..

THE OUTCOMES

Students would be able to successfully define their advantages and disadvantages in order to be able to start to work on their weaknesses by using their strengths. Their grades would be improved, particularly in math, as they became more focused on highpriority tasks. By their participation in the classroom they would improve their relationships with peers and teachers. Until the end of the school year, they could achieve their goal of raising their grades, thanks to the structured approach of setting SMART goals and following a consistent study routine. After all, they would develop a stronger sense of self-awareness and agency, equipping them with tools to continue growing in both their personal and academic life.

EntreComp Framework

The EntreComp Framework (European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework) is an initiative by the European Commission that focuses on fostering entrepreneurial skills and competences across Europe. Like GreenComp, EntreComp provides a structured framework, but it is specifically designed to develop entrepreneurial mindsets and capabilities, essential for economic growth and innovation.

The EntreComp framework is structured around three main areas, each containing specific competences that support entrepreneurship:

1. **Ideas and Opportunities:** This area focuses on recognizing and creating value from ideas. Competences here include creativity, spotting opportunities, and vision. It's about understanding economic contexts and turning ideas into viable business models or social enterprises.
2. **Resources:** This area emphasizes the effective use and management of resources. Competences include financial and economic literacy, mobilizing resources, and self-awareness. This helps individuals and organizations manage economic activities sustainably and efficiently.
3. **Into Action:** This area is about turning ideas and plans into action, managing risk, and navigating the entrepreneurial journey. It includes competences such as taking initiative, planning and management, coping with uncertainty, and working with others to bring ideas to life.

3.3 Building (youth) competences in practice

Building competence involves more than just acquiring knowledge, attitudes and skills; it requires a comprehensive approach that integrates various learning theories, as we already explored. Different learning theories contribute to the development of competence, offering practical strategies for applying these theories to effectively build and enhance competences.

We previously touched the topic useful learning theories. In this section, we will delve deeper into these concepts within a new context, exploring how the learning theories can be applied to practice of youth work and competence building.

BEHAVIOURISTIC PERSPECTIVE

KEY CONCEPTS

Reinforcement

Using positive reinforcement (rewards) or negative reinforcement (removal of unpleasant stimuli) to encourage desired behaviors.

Practice and Repetition

Repeated practice of tasks to reinforce learning and improve skill proficiency

Clear Objectives:

Setting clear, specific learning objectives and outcomes.

APPLICATION FOR BUILDING COMPETENCE

Structured Training Programs

Develop training programmes with clear goals and regular assessments to reinforce learning.

Skill Drills

Implement repetitive practice exercises to build and consolidate technical skills.

Feedback Mechanisms

Provide immediate and specific feedback to guide learners towards desired behaviours.



COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE

KEY CONCEPTS

Schema Theory

Organizing knowledge into mental structures (schemas) that help in understanding and recalling information.

Information Processing

Understanding how information is encoded, stored, and retrieved.

Metacognition

Developing awareness and control over one's own learning processes - understanding your own learning process and figuring out how to improve it.

APPLICATION FOR BUILDING COMPETENCE

Conceptual Learning

Design learning experiences that help learners build and organize knowledge into meaningful structures.

Problem-Solving Activities

Incorporate activities that challenge learners to apply their knowledge in various contexts.

Self-Regulation

Support learners's strategies for self-monitoring and adjusting their approaches to learning.



CONSTRUCTIVIST PERSPECTIVE

KEY CONCEPTS

Active Learning

Learners engage in activities that require them to actively construct and apply knowledge.

Scaffolding

Providing temporary support that is gradually removed as learners gain competence.

Social Interaction

Learning through collaboration and discussion with others.

APPLICATION FOR BUILDING COMPETENCE

Project-Based Learning

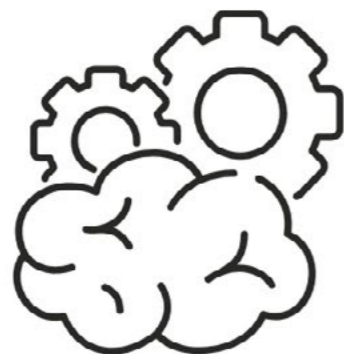
Engage learners in real-world projects that require them to apply and refine their skills.

Collaborative Learning

Use group work and peer learning to allow learners to share knowledge and insights.

Reflective Practice

Encourage learners to reflect on their experiences, identify areas for improvement, and adjust their learning strategies accordingly.



SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY PERSPECTIVE

KEY CONCEPTS

Modelling

Observing and imitating the behaviours of others.

Vicarious Reinforcement

Learning through the observed consequences of others' behaviours.

Social Interaction

Engaging in discussions and collaborative activities to reinforce learning.

APPLICATION FOR BUILDING COMPETENCE

Mentorship Programs

Pair learners with mentors who model desired behaviours and who can provide guidance.

Role-Playing

Use role-playing activities to allow learners to practise and observe behaviours in simulated scenarios.

Group Learning

Facilitate group discussions and collaborative projects to enhance learning through social interaction.



HUMANISTIC PERSPECTIVE

KEY CONCEPTS

Self-Directed Learning

Encouraging learners to take responsibility for their own learning and set personal goals.

Intrinsic Motivation

Fostering a learning environment that supports learners' intrinsic interests and personal growth.

Holistic Development

Addressing emotional, social, and cognitive aspects of learning.

APPLICATION FOR BUILDING COMPETENCE

Personalized Learning Paths

Design learning experiences that align with learners' interests and goals.

Empowerment Strategies

Offer learners opportunities to set their own goals, make choices, and take responsibility for their learning.

Supportive Environment

Create a supportive and nurturing environment that fosters self-efficacy and personal growth.



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THEORY

KEY CONCEPTS

Experiential Cycle

The cycle consists of Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation.

Learning by Doing

Engaging in activities that provide direct experiences to build and apply competences.

Reflection and Adaptation

Reflecting on experiences to draw insights and adapt future actions.

APPLICATION FOR BUILDING COMPETENCE

Real-World Projects

Use practical projects and simulations to provide learners with hands-on experiences.

Reflection Sessions

Incorporate regular reflection activities to help learners analyze their experiences and learn from them.

Iterative Learning

Allow learners to experiment and make adjustments based on their reflections and outcomes.



Integrating various approaches to create effective learning experiences can help us to effectively help young people to build their needed competences. Each theory – whether behaviourist, cognitive, constructivist, social, humanistic, or experiential – offers unique insights and strategies for developing attitudes, skills and knowledge. By applying these theories, educators, support professionals and trainers can design comprehensive and adaptable programs that support learners in acquiring and enhancing competences. Understanding and leveraging these perspectives enables the creation of robust learning environments that foster continuous growth and development, preparing individuals to meet the demands of the 21st century.

3.4 The Role of Non-Formal Education in Building Competence of young people

Non-formal education (NFE) refers to structured learning that often takes place outside of the formal school system, although it is increasingly integrated in formal curricula. It is a flexible, learner-centred approach that plays a crucial role in developing competences in youth work.

Non-formal education encompasses a wide range of educational activities, such as workshops, training sessions, community programmes, and experiential learning opportunities. It is characterised by its voluntary nature, relevance to the learners' needs, and emphasis on active participation and practical application.

How Non-Formal Education helps Building Competences

- **Flexibility and Accessibility**

NFE programs can be tailored to meet the specific needs and schedules of young people, making it easier for them to participate while balancing other commitments. As well, provides opportunities for continuous learning and professional development outside formal education systems.

- **Practical and Experiential Learning**

NFE emphasises hands-on learning experiences that allow youth to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts. Activities such as simulations, role-playing, and direct experiences help build practical skills and confidence.

- **Learner-Centred Approach**

NFE is designed around the learners' interests and needs, promoting engagement and motivation. It encourages ownership of learning, autonomy, self-directed learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

- **Community and Peer Learning**

NFE often involves group activities and collaborative projects, fostering a sense of community and peer learning. Sharing experiences and learning from peers which enhances understanding of the topic at hand and broadens perspectives.

- **Focus on Personal Development**

NFE programs often include components of personal development, such as leadership training, communication skills, and emotional intelligence. These programs help youth develop the soft skills necessary to apply in practice.

Non-Formal Education Strategies for Building Competence

- **Workshops and Training Sessions**

Skills-Based Workshops: Focus on developing specific skills, for example; conflict transformation, programme planning, and facilitation.

Thematic Training: Address specific topics relevant to youth work, for example; mental health, diversity, and inclusion.

- **Mentorship and Coaching:** Establish mentorship programs where experienced youth workers provide guidance, support, and feedback. **Coaching sessions** can help identify areas for improvement and set personal and/or professional development goals.
- **Community Service and Volunteering:** Encourage participation in community service projects and volunteer opportunities to gain practical experience, and opportunities for values-based learning.
- **Peer Learning Groups:** Form peer learning groups where youth can share experiences, discuss challenges, and collaborate on solutions. Peer support networks foster a collaborative learning environment.
- **Reflective Practice and Supervision:** Incorporate regular reflective practice sessions where young people can analyse their experiences and identify learning points. Supervision by experienced practitioners provides ongoing support and professional guidance.
- **Experiential Learning Programs:** Implement experiential learning opportunities, for example; outdoor education, work-based-learning schemes, and project-based learning. These programmes provide immersive experiences that enhance practical skills and personal growth.
- **E-Learning and Online Resources:** Use online courses, webinars, and digital resources to provide accessible learning opportunities. E-learning platforms can offer flexible, self-paced options for professional development.

Self reflection corner

What social expectations did you feel pressured by as a teenager? How did these shape your identity and choices?

What social issues or events were prominent during your teenage years? How did they impact your worldview and personal development?

How did meeting any form of discrimination or marginalisation shape your perspective?

How did economic factors impact your opportunities and outlook concerning the future during your teenage years?

4.
EUROPEAN
YOUTH
STRATEGY:
CORE COMPETENCE TO
NAVIGATE 21ST CENTURY



What will you discover in this chapter?

- Understanding mental health and wellbeing of the youth as the core of competence development to thrive in 21st century
- Reflecting why and how mental health impacts the competence development

The European Youth Strategy is a key policy framework developed by the European Union to enhance the quality of life for young people across Europe. It aims to support the personal and professional development of youth, ensure their active participation in society, and address various challenges they face. The strategy focuses on several priority areas, including education, employment, social inclusion, and health and well-being.

The European Youth Strategy partly focuses on mental health and aligns with a holistic approach to competence development, recognising that emotional and psychological well-being is integral to overall growth and success.

4.1 Mental Health and Well-Being in the European Youth Strategy

The European Youth Strategy places significant emphasis on mental health and well-being, recognising them as vital parts of the overall youth development.

This focus aims to address the growing concerns around mental health issues among young people and to promote environments that support mental wellness. The strategy advocates for policies and programs that promote positive mental health and well-being among youth. This includes increasing awareness, reducing stigma, and improving access to mental health services.

"As part of our work, it's really important that we focus on your mental health and well-being. The European Youth Strategy highlights how crucial this is for your overall development. We're here not just to support your education or career goals, but also to make sure you're feeling mentally strong and well-supported. We're working to create spaces where you can openly talk about mental health without fear of stigma and to ensure that you know where to turn if you ever need help. Remember, it's okay to seek support, and we're here to guide you through whatever challenges you might face." Dana, youth worker

The European Youth Strategy emphasises the need for comprehensive support systems that provide psychological support, counselling, and support interventions for young people facing mental health challenges. The strategy encourages the integration of mental health education into school curricula as well as specific youth programmes to prevent mental health issues and build resilience among young people.



The primary purpose of integrating mental health into the European Youth Strategy is to enhance Youth Well-Being: Improve the overall well-being and quality of life of young people.

4.2 First thing first: Mental Health matters!

Mental health and well-being are fundamental to the development of the competences this 21st Century of ours requires.

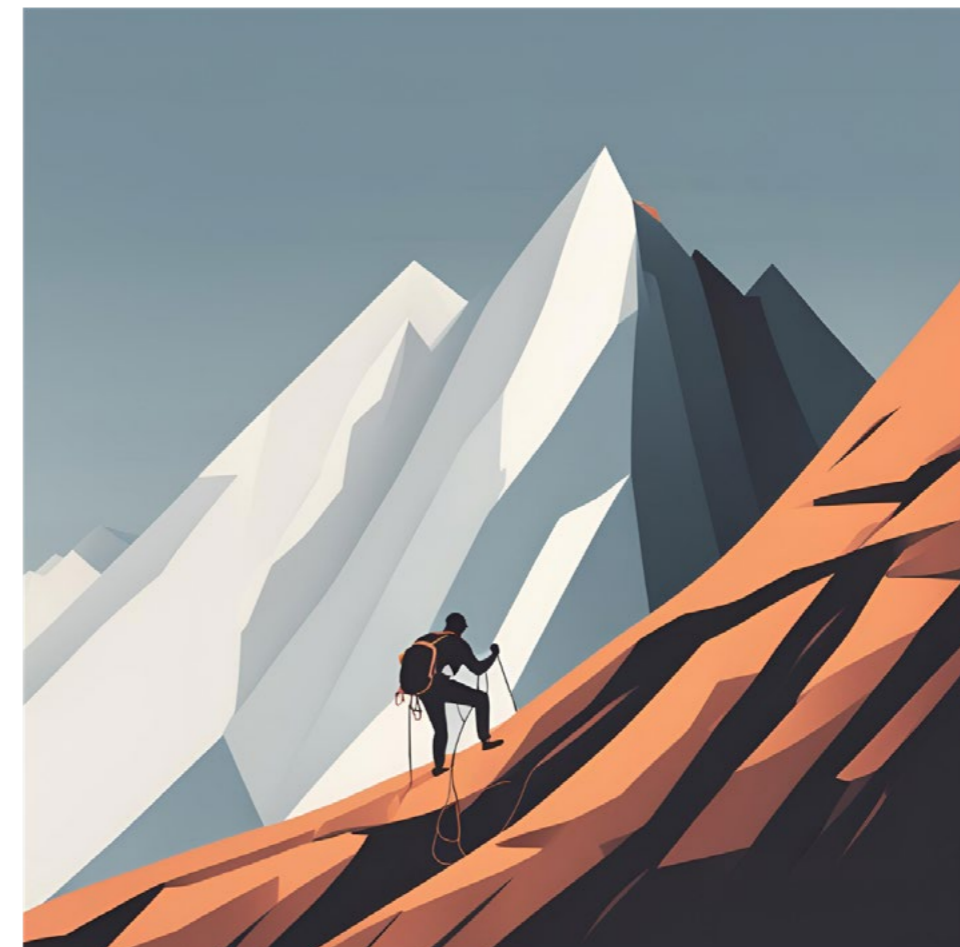
Good mental health supports cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, and social interaction, all of which are crucial for building and applying 21st century competences.

Cognitive Competences: Mental health impacts cognitive processes such as attention, memory, and problem-solving. Positive mental health supports effective learning and information processing.

Emotional Competences: Emotional well-being is essential for developing emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness, self-management, and empathy. These are key components of competences like resilience and interpersonal skills.

Social Competences: Mental health influences social interactions and relationships. Good mental health promotes effective communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution, which are vital for working in diverse teams.

Resilience and Adaptability Competences: The ability to cope with challenges and bounce back from adversity is closely linked to mental health. Resilience is a critical competence for navigating



the uncertainties of the 21st century.

Adaptability: Mental well-being supports adaptability and openness to change, which are important for responding to rapid changes in society, technology and the job market.

Self-Management and Motivation: Effective self-management, including time management and goal setting, is supported by good mental health. It helps individuals stay focused and motivated.

Intrinsic Motivation: Positive mental health fosters intrinsic motivation and engagement in learning and personal development, essential for lifelong learning and skill acquisition.

The EU Youth Strategy centers on three key areas of action: Engage, Connect, and Empower, with a focus on coordinated implementation across sectors. The strategy established 11 European Youth Goals, which highlight cross-sectoral issues impacting young people's lives and identify key challenges. Designed to help achieve this vision, the EU Youth Strategy prioritizes mental health and well-being as vital components of youth development and competence building.

By emphasizing mental health, the strategy aims to create supportive environments where young people can thrive socially, personally, and professionally..

Mental health is closely connected to the skills needed in the 21st century because it supports the thinking, emotional, and social abilities essential for success in today's fast-changing world. By combining mental health support with strategies to build these skills, we help young people develop the resilience, flexibility, and overall well-being they need to handle the challenges of modern life.

5.

**MENTAL HEALT
IS A SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA**

What will you discover in this chapter?

- Understanding the complex concept of mental health and wellbeing
- Understanding importance of mental health and wellbeing and its impact on lives of young people

Mental health encompasses our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. This means it affects every aspect of our lives.

5.1 What is Mental health?

Mental health is closely connected to the skills needed in the 21st century because it supports the thinking, emotional, and social abilities essential for success in today's fast-changing world.

Emotionally, it governs how we understand and manage our feelings, how we express joy, sadness, anger, and love.

Psychologically, it influences our thoughts, and our ability to think clearly, reason, and make sense of the world around us.

Socially, it determines how we interact with others, form relationships, and navigate social environments. When our mental health is strong, we are better equipped to handle stress, a common aspect of life.



Our mental health allows us to stay calm under pressure, adapt to changes, and overcome challenges. It supports our ability to build and maintain healthy relationships by improving how we communicate, empathise, and connect with others. Additionally, it plays a vital role in our decision-making, helping us make thoughtful, informed choices. Mental health is also key to our overall well-being.

It enables us to lead a fulfilling and productive life, enjoy daily activities, pursue our goals, and find meaning in what we do. It influences our self-esteem and confidence, encouraging us to embrace new opportunities and grow. In essence, mental health is the foundation for thriving both personally and within our communities.

"Mental health is like the foundation of a house—it's what keeps everything else stable and strong. When we're mentally well, we can stay calm even when things get tough, and we're better at handling changes or challenges that come our way. It also helps us build and keep strong relationships, because it improves how we communicate and understand each other." **Peter, social worker**

Mental health, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), is "**a state of well-being in which an individual realises their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community.**" This comprehensive definition highlights the multifaceted nature of mental health, emphasising its impact on our daily functioning and social participation.

Mental health can be divided into several key pillars, each representing a crucial aspect of our overall well-being. Understanding these pillars helps us recognise the different areas that contribute to a healthy and balanced life:

1. Emotional Wellbeing

Emotional well-being refers to our ability to understand and manage our emotions. It involves recognising our feelings, whether they are positive or negative, and responding to them in a healthy way. Emotional well-being allows us to express our emotions appropriately, seek help when needed, and maintain a positive outlook on life.

2. Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being encompasses our cognitive and mental functioning. It includes our capacity to think clearly, learn, and remember information. This pillar involves having a sense of purpose, self-acceptance, personal growth, and autonomy. It also covers resilience, which is the ability to bounce back from adversity and continue to grow despite challenges.

3. Social Well-Being

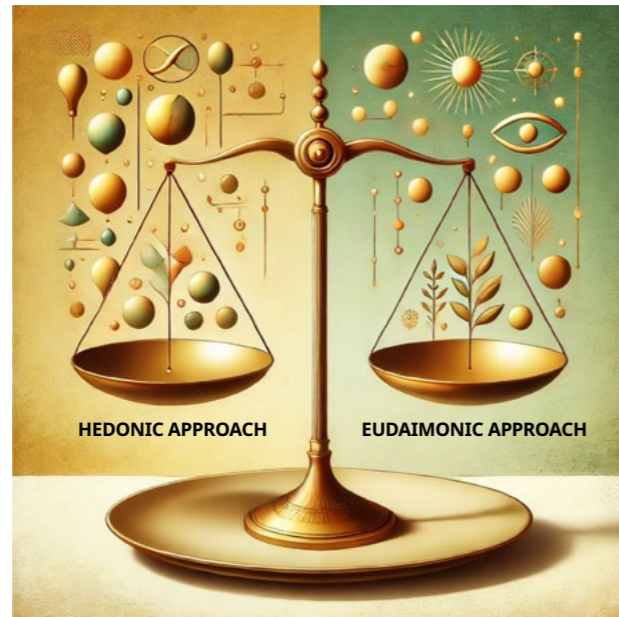
Social well-being is about our interactions and relationships with others. It involves building and maintaining healthy, supportive relationships and having a sense of belonging and community. Social well-being is crucial for feeling connected, supported, and valued in our social circles.

4. Physical Well-Being

Although often considered separately, physical well-being is intrinsically linked to mental health. Regular physical activity, a balanced diet, and adequate sleep all contribute to better mental health. Physical well-being ensures that our body functions optimally, which supports our mental and emotional health. By understanding and nurturing these pillars, we can create a balanced and fulfilling life. Supporting young people's mental health is essential for helping individuals realise their full potential, cope with life's challenges, and contribute positively to their communities.

5.2 Approaches to Well-Being

Contemporary research on well-being derives from two general perspectives: the **hedonic approach** and the **eudaimonic approach** generating different focuses and results, sometimes divergent and in other ways complementary.



They build on distinct views of human nature and different opinions on what makes a good human society. The hedonic approach to well-being emphasises the pursuit of pleasure and happiness. It focuses on maximising positive emotions and minimising negative ones. According to this perspective, a good life is characterised by high levels of subjective well-being, where individuals feel happy, content, and satisfied with their lives.

This approach is rooted in the idea that personal happiness is the primary goal of human existence. And also opens the discussion about what “good” emotions or “negative” emotions actually mean.

In contrast, the eudaimonic approach to well-being emphasises living in harmony with the true self and fulfilling one's potential. It focuses on personal growth, self-acceptance, and the pursuit of meaningful goals. According to this perspective, a good life involves realising one's abilities, finding purpose, and engaging in rewarding activities. This approach is grounded in the belief that well-being comes from leading a life of virtue and contributing to the greater good.

While these two approaches differ, they are not mutually exclusive. Both perspectives recognise the importance of how individuals understand and interpret their experiences. This view aligns with the ancient philosophers Democritus and Epictetus, who argued that it is not what happens to us that determines our satisfaction, but rather how we interpret what happens. This means that both pleasure and meaningful engagement play roles in our overall sense of well-being.

In coaching, different approaches are combined to support clients' personal and professional growth. For example, some aspects of coaching focus on enhancing positive emotions and managing stress, which are known as hedonic elements. Meanwhile, other aspects, called eudaimonic elements, emphasise identifying personal values, setting meaningful goals, and

encouraging overall personal development. Effective coaching blends these two approaches to create a balanced and personalised strategy that not only boosts immediate happiness but also promotes long-term fulfilment. By helping clients rethink how they view their experiences and align their actions with their core values, coaching contributes to a deeper, more satisfying sense of well-being.



Building on these ideas, this manual emphasises the crucial role that coaching plays in the growth and development of young people. As the challenges and complexities of modern life continue to evolve, the presence of a youth coach becomes increasingly important. Coaching provides young people with the tools to build resilience, adaptability, and overall well-being, enabling them to navigate their world more effectively. By guiding them in understanding and responding to their experiences, coaching helps young people achieve both immediate satisfaction and long-term meaning in their lives.

Martin Seligman, a psychologist, explored the concept of well-being extensively in his work. In 2011, he developed one of the most comprehensive theories related to personal well-being, known as the PERMA model. This model outlines five key components that contribute to an individual's overall life satisfaction.

These components are:

1. **Positive Emotion (P):** Positive emotions are the cornerstone of well-being. They include feelings of happiness, joy, contentment, and gratitude. Experiencing positive emotions regularly can enhance our overall mood, increase our resilience to stress, and improve our physical health. Positive emotions are not just about fleeting happiness but also about building a foundation of positivity that influences our outlook on life and our interactions with others.
2. **Engagement (E):** Engagement refers to being deeply involved in activities that fully absorb your attention, often leading to a state of “flow.” This state is characterized by losing track of

time and feeling completely immersed in what you are doing, which contributes to a fulfilling life.

3. **Relationships (R):** Positive relationships with others are crucial for wellbeing. Strong social connections provide support, love, and a sense of belonging, which are essential for emotional and psychological health.
4. **Meaning (M):** Meaning involves having a sense of purpose and direction in life. It is about feeling that what we do matters and that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. Finding meaning can come from various sources such as relationships, work, volunteering, or personal beliefs. When we find meaning, we are more motivated, resilient, and committed to our goals. It gives us a reason to get up in the morning and helps us navigate through challenges with a sense of hope and determination.
5. **Accomplishment (A):** Accomplishment or achievement refers to pursuing and attaining goals, whether big or small. Experiencing a sense of accomplishment builds self-esteem and motivates individuals to keep striving for success, contributing to a sense of well-being.

Incorporating Seligman's components of well-being into youth work can significantly enhance the mental health and overall well-being of young people. To achieve this, it's important to create an environment where young individuals feel safe, appreciated, and supported. This involves encouraging activities, such as engaging in games, creative arts, and social events. Additionally, helping young people learn about the importance of gratitude and positive thinking helps them appreciate the good aspects of their lives, contributing to a more optimistic and therefore constructive outlook.

Promoting engagement is another crucial aspect. Helping young people discover their interests and passions is essential for their development. By providing opportunities that catch their attention and challenge their abilities, young people can foster a sense of involvement and accomplishment. Supporting them in setting and achieving personal goals, while recognising their efforts, reinforces their engagement and motivation. This approach not only helps them find fulfilment but also builds their confidence and sense of competence. Cultivating meaning in their lives plays a significant role in their overall well-being. Encouraging young people to explore what is meaningful to them can greatly impact their sense of purpose. Facilitate discussions and activities that help them connect with their values, aspirations, and the impact they wish to have on the world. Support their efforts to contribute to their communities and pursue paths that align with their sense of purpose. This process helps them find direction and satisfaction in their lives, contributing to a deeper sense of fulfilment. By integrating Seligman's theory of well-being, which focuses on positive emotions, engagement, and meaning, into youth work, professionals can help young people build a strong foundation for a fulfilling and productive life. This holistic approach supports their emotional, psychological, and social well-being, leading not only to improved individual lives but also to a healthier and more vibrant community. Coaching plays a pivotal role in this implementation. Through personalised guidance, coaching helps young people explore their values, set meaningful goals, and navigate challenges with resilience. By connecting these elements of well-being with the structured support of a coach, young people can more effectively harness their strengths, stay motivated, and achieve a balanced, purposeful life. This combination of theory and coaching ensures that the journey toward fulfilment is not only guided but also deeply empowering for the individual.

Treating mental health as a competence is closely connected to Seligman's theory of well-being, which emphasises the importance of positive emotions, engagement, and meaning. Seligman's framework provides a structured approach to understanding and enhancing mental health, aligning seamlessly with the competencies required to support individuals effectively. Treating mental health as a competence is essential for ensuring that professionals are fully equipped to support individuals effectively. By integrating mental health into the essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes of their practice, professionals can offer comprehensive, empathetic, and informed support. This approach not only enhances the quality of care but also contributes to the overall well-being of those they serve. Emphasising mental health as a competence enhances the effectiveness, supportiveness, and inclusivity of environments, leading to improved outcomes for both individuals and communities. Treating mental health as a competence means recognizing it as a set of knowledge, attitudes, and skills that can be developed and strengthened over time. For youth workers, this approach involves focusing on building these competencies among young people by equipping them with the necessary information about mental health, fostering positive attitudes towards well-being, and teaching practical skills for managing emotions, stress, and interpersonal relationships. By prioritising mental health as a competence, youth workers can better support young people in developing the resilience and adaptability needed to thrive, creating a more supportive and empowering environment for all.

5.3 Mental health and community

In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of individuals confronting mental health issues. This trend, highlighted by the World Health Organization (WHO), reflects not only the growing prevalence of mental health challenges but also significant advancements in the accessibility and acceptance of psychological and psychiatric care. Unlike in the past, seeking help for mental health concerns has become more approachable and is now less burdened by social stigma. This shift marks an important change in community attitudes towards mental health, encouraging more people to openly address their struggles and seek the support they need.

According to a study by the American Psychological Association, the demand for mental health care has significantly increased over the past few decades. Various factors, including economic stress, the global pandemic, population growth, and the climate crisis, have contributed to the rise in mental health challenges and disorders, often manifesting as anxiety and depression. Additionally, heightened public awareness about mental health issues and easier access to helpful resources may also be driving the increased demand for professional assistance.

While it is justified to say that the prevalence of mental health disorders is rising, measuring this phenomenon is complex due to two primary trends. First, society is now more open and willing to discuss mental health issues, reducing the stigma and encouraging more individuals to seek help. Second, we have more diagnostic labels for mental health disorders today than ever before, enabling more precise identification and treatment of various conditions.

As the understanding and acceptance of mental health continue to evolve, it becomes increasingly clear that fostering a supportive community environment is essential for addressing these challenges effectively. This is where the role of coaching within youth work can make a significant impact. By integrating coaching practices into community efforts, we can further

enhance support for mental health and well-being. Coaching provides a structured approach to helping individuals navigate their mental health journey by focusing on personal growth, resilience, and goal-setting. In the context of community support, coaching can play a pivotal role in empowering young people to manage their mental health proactively. Coaches work with individuals to build self-awareness, develop coping strategies, and set meaningful goals, which are all critical components of maintaining mental well-being. Coaching in youth work encourages the development of a positive and supportive community culture. Coaches can help create spaces where young people feel safe to discuss their mental health struggles and seek guidance without fear of judgement. This supportive environment is crucial for reducing stigma and encouraging more individuals to reach out for help.

By embedding coaching practices within community initiatives, we can enhance the overall approach to mental health. Coaching helps individuals develop the skills and resilience needed to navigate life's challenges, while also fostering a community atmosphere that supports open dialogue and mutual support. This dual approach not only addresses the immediate needs of individuals but also contributes to the creation of a healthier, more inclusive community. Integrating coaching into community efforts can significantly enhance the support available for mental health.

"Integrating coaching into our community programs can make a huge difference in how we approach mental health. Coaching isn't just about helping individuals tackle their personal challenges; it's also about creating a supportive environment where everyone feels comfortable talking about their struggles." Erik, youth worker

5.4 Mental health and resilience

In today's fast-paced and often challenging world, the concepts of mental wellbeing and resilience have become integral to the healthy development of young people. Focusing on resilience as a core aspect of mental well-being is crucial in youth work, as it equips individuals with the skills to navigate life's ups and downs effectively. Resilience is the ability to adapt and recover from adversity, stress, and challenging situations. It is a critical component of mental wellbeing, as it helps individuals bounce back from setbacks and maintain a positive outlook despite difficulties. For young people, developing resilience means gaining the tools to handle stress, overcome obstacles, and emerge stronger from life's challenges.

Key Aspects of Resilience in Youth

1. **Adaptability:** The world is constantly changing, and young people need to adapt to new situations. Resilient young people can adjust to new situations and changes in their environment. This adaptability allows them to remain functional and optimistic even when facing disruptions, such as changes in family dynamics, academic pressures, or social challenges.
2. **Emotional Regulation:** Resilience involves managing emotions effectively. Young people who are resilient can experience and express a range of emotions without becoming

overwhelmed. They are able to use coping strategies to deal with stress and maintain emotional balance.

3. **Problem-Solving Skills:** The ability to approach problems with a solution-oriented mindset is a hallmark of resilience. Young people who can identify problems, think critically, and generate effective solutions are better equipped to handle challenges and setbacks.
4. **Self-Efficacy:** Resilient individuals believe in their ability to influence their own outcomes. This sense of self-efficacy empowers young people to take proactive steps towards their goals and persevere through difficulties.
5. **Support Systems:** Resilience is often strengthened through supportive relationships. Having a network of friends, family, mentors, and community members provides emotional support, practical help, and a sense of belonging.
6. **Believing in Themselves:** Resilience helps young people believe in their ability to overcome obstacles. This confidence, known as self-efficacy, makes them more likely to take on challenges and work towards their goals despite difficulties.

Why Focus on Resilience in Youth Work?

Resilience is not simply about enduring difficulties; it involves cultivating a set of competencies that enable young people to respond positively to adversity, adapt to change, and recover from setbacks. Youth work is uniquely positioned to support this development by creating environments that foster growth, offering practical experiences that build problem-solving abilities, and providing guidance that enhances self-efficacy and emotional regulation.

Through targeted programmes and activities, youth workers can guide young people in developing critical skills such as stress management, positive thinking, and effective coping strategies. These skills help them not only to face immediate challenges but also to build a robust foundation for future resilience. By focusing on resilience, youth workers contribute significantly to the mental well-being of young people, preparing them to face the complexities of life with strength and resilience.

- **Enhancing Coping Mechanisms:** By focusing on resilience, youth work helps young people develop effective coping mechanisms for dealing with stress and adversity. This preparation is essential for managing future challenges and maintaining mental well-being.
- **Building Confidence:** Resilient young people are more likely to believe in their own abilities and take on new challenges with confidence. This self-belief supports personal growth and fosters a positive outlook on life.
- **Reducing Risk of Mental Health Issues:** Developing resilience can lower the risk of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Resilient individuals are better equipped to handle stressors and are less likely to be overwhelmed by them.
- **Promoting Positive Development:** Resilience is linked to various positive outcomes, including better academic performance, healthier relationships, and greater overall life satisfaction. By nurturing resilience, youth work promotes holistic development and well-being.

- **Preparing for Future Challenges:** The skills and mindset gained through resilience training prepare young people for the future. They are better equipped to face challenges in their personal and professional lives with a proactive and adaptable approach.

Strategies for Fostering Resilience in Youth Work

1. **Providing Supportive Relationships:** Create environments where young people feel supported and valued. Encourage strong, positive relationships with peers, mentors, and adults who can offer guidance and encouragement.
2. **Teaching Coping Strategies:** Equip young people with practical tools for managing stress, such as mindfulness techniques, relaxation exercises, and problem-solving skills. Teaching these strategies helps them handle difficult situations more effectively.
3. **Encouraging Goal Setting:** Help young people set realistic and achievable goals. This process builds a sense of purpose and motivates them to work towards their objectives, even in the face of challenges.
4. **Promoting Self-Reflection:** Encourage young people to reflect on their experiences, both positive and negative. Self-reflection helps them understand their responses to challenges and learn from their experiences.
5. **Modelling Resilience:** Adults and mentors can model resilient behaviour by demonstrating how they handle stress and setbacks. Sharing personal stories of overcoming adversity can inspire young people and provide practical examples of resilience in action.
6. **Building a Growth Mindset:** Foster a growth mindset by encouraging young people to view challenges as opportunities for learning and growth. Emphasise the importance of effort and persistence in achieving success.

Self reflection „corner“

What practices or habits do you engage in to maintain your mental health?

How do you typically respond when you feel stressed or overwhelmed?

Reflect on a period in your life when you struggled with your mental wellbeing. What helped you navigate through that time?

What lessons have you learned from your own mental wellbeing challenges that you apply in your work with youth?

What does resilience mean to you? How do you typically bounce back from setbacks or failures?

Can you share an example of a challenging situation you faced and how you demonstrated resilience?

6.

COACHING

What will you discover in this chapter?

- Understanding what coaching is (and what it is not)
- Reflecting on the benefits of coaching and its impact on the mental wellbeing of youth

There comes a point when the challenges we face in life start to dominate our thoughts, disrupt our daily routines, and induce excessive stress. This is a clear signal that it might be time to seek professional support. Here are some factors to watch out for:

1. **Overwhelming Emotions:** If you feel that your emotions are "too much"—whether it's excessive anger, sadness, or hyperactivity—and you lack the tools to manage them, it's helpful to seek support.
2. **Significant Changes in Daily Life:** When activities that used to bring you joy no longer do, when your internal experiences turn negative, or when your academic or work life becomes complicated, these are signs that professional support might be needed.
3. **Persistent Worry:** If thoughts about your difficulties and how to handle them occupy at least an hour of your day, and lead to feelings of shame or the tendency to avoid others, it's a sign that you could consider reaching out for support.
4. **Isolation:** When you start to isolate yourself and notice a decline in the quality of your relationships, marked by secrecy, lies, or the feeling that you are a burden to others, seeking support can be very important.
5. **Feeling Overwhelmed:** If you feel overwhelmed, leading to fatigue, resignation, hopelessness, and find it increasingly difficult to perform daily tasks, even getting out of bed, it's time to look for professional support.
6. **Changes in Sleep and Diet:** Noticeable changes in your sleep patterns, diet, and overall lifestyle, along with physical discomforts such as stomach aches or headaches, are signs that something is amiss.
7. **Loss of Self-Understanding:** If for an extended period, you feel disconnected from yourself, questioning why you behave in certain ways, who you really are, and feeling like you don't understand yourself anymore, seeking professional support can be very beneficial.

When it becomes evident that you need support to navigate through life's challenges, there are various options available, each with its unique approach and benefits. Understanding these options can help you make an informed decision about the best type of support for your specific needs.

Mentors

A mentor is typically an experienced individual who offers guidance, support, and advice, usually in a professional or academic setting. Mentors can provide valuable insights based on their own experiences and help you develop skills and strategies to achieve your goals. While mentors are excellent for career development and personal growth, they might not have the specialised training required to address complex mental health issues.

Psychologists

Psychologists are trained mental health professionals who specialise in diagnosing and treating mental health disorders and issues. They use evidencebased therapies such as cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), psychodynamic therapy, and other therapeutic modalities to help individuals understand and manage their emotions, behaviours, and thoughts. Psychologists can provide deep, long-term support for a wide range of mental health issues, from anxiety and depression to more severe psychiatric conditions.

Coaches

Coaching is a collaborative process that helps individuals achieve their personal and professional goals through structured support and guidance. Unlike therapy, which often focuses on understanding past issues, coaching is typically future-oriented, emphasising actionable steps and strategies for improvement. Here's a more detailed look at the role of a coach and the benefits they offer:

1. **Goal Setting:** Coaches help you identify clear, achievable goals and create a roadmap to reach them. This process involves breaking down large, intimidating goals into manageable steps, making progress more attainable.
2. **Accountability:** A coach provides accountability, ensuring that you stay on track and remain committed to your goals. Regular check-ins and progress reviews help maintain momentum and address any obstacles that arise.
3. **Skill Development:** Coaching often focuses on developing specific skills, such as time management, communication, leadership, and problem-solving. These skills are essential for personal and professional growth and can lead to significant improvements in various areas of your life.
4. **Personal Growth:** Coaches support personal growth by helping you gain a deeper understanding of yourself, your strengths, and your areas for improvement. This self-awareness can lead to increased confidence and better decision-making.
5. **Actionable Feedback:** Coaches provide constructive, actionable feedback that is essential for continuous improvement. This feedback is tailored to your unique situation, making it highly relevant.
6. **Motivation and Encouragement:** One of the key roles of a coach is to keep you motivated and encouraged, especially during challenging times. This support can be crucial for maintaining a positive mindset and staying resilient in the face of setbacks.

6.1 Focusing on Coaching

Coaching stands out as a highly versatile and effective form of support for individuals looking to enhance their personal and professional lives. It is particularly beneficial for those who are seeking to make specific changes, achieve new goals, or overcome particular challenges. Here are some scenarios where coaching can be especially effective:

- **Career Advancement:** If you are looking to advance in your career, a coach can help you develop the necessary skills, improve your performance, and navigate workplace dynamics.
- **Life Transitions:** During significant life transitions, such as changing careers, moving to a new city, or starting a new phase of life, a coach can provide the support and guidance needed to adjust and thrive.
- **Performance Improvement:** For those seeking to improve performance in specific areas, whether in sports, academics, or business, coaching offers targeted strategies and techniques to achieve excellence.
- **Work-Life Balance:** Coaches can assist in creating a better balance between work and personal life, helping you manage stress and prioritise effectively.

While mentors, psychologists, and coaches all offer valuable support, the choice depends on your specific needs and goals. Coaching, with its goal-oriented and future-focused approach, can be particularly beneficial for those looking to make tangible improvements in their personal and professional lives.

Coaching for youth has become increasingly recognised as a powerful tool for fostering personal development, resilience, and success. The unique challenges faced by young people today—ranging from academic pressures to social dynamics and the rapid pace of technological change—make coaching an invaluable resource.

Navigating the complexities of life's direction can be challenging, and it's not always easy to figure out how to manage this journey on our own. This becomes even more complicated for young people, who are often faced with a plethora of opportunities and decisions, while having their entire future ahead of them. When a young person aspires not just to drift through life but to chart a course that is meaningful and aligned with their true potential, a coach can play a pivotal role in their development and direction.

6.2 Supporting Youth Through Coaching Challenges Faced by Young People

- **Abundance of Choices:** Young people today are presented with a wide array of opportunities and choices, from academic paths to career options and extracurricular activities. This abundance can be overwhelming and make it difficult to decide which direction to take.
- **Pressure and Expectations:** There is often significant pressure from parents, teachers, and society to succeed and make the right choices. This pressure can lead to stress, anxiety, and a fear of failure.
- **Lack of Experience:** With limited life experience, young people may struggle to understand their strengths and weaknesses, identify their true interests, and make informed decisions about their future.

How can coaching help?

- **Personal Development:** Coaching helps young people develop a strong sense of self-awareness and self-confidence. By working with a coach, they can identify their strengths, weaknesses, and interests, which is crucial for personal growth and development.
- **Academic Achievement:** Coaches can assist students in setting academic goals, developing effective study habits, and managing their time efficiently. This support can lead to improved academic performance and a more positive attitude towards learning.
- **Emotional Resilience:** Young people can face many emotional challenges, including peer pressure, bullying, and the stress of future uncertainties. Coaching provides a safe space for them to express their feelings and learn coping strategies, building their emotional resilience.
- **Career Planning:** Early career coaching helps youth explore different career paths, understand the skills required for various professions, and set realistic career goals. This guidance is crucial for making informed decisions about their desired future.
- **Life Skills:** Coaches support discovery and awareness of essential life skills such as effective communication, problem-solving, leadership, and teamwork. These skills are vital for success in both personal and professional spheres.

6.3 Why is Coaching helpful for young people?

- **Navigating Complex Environments:** Today's young people are navigating a complex world with rapidly changing social, academic, and technological landscapes. Coaching helps them manage these changes and transitions more effectively.
- **Building Confidence and Self-Esteem:** Adolescence and young adulthood are critical periods for developing self-esteem. Coaches can provide positive reinforcement, help youth overcome self-doubt, and encourage them to believe in their abilities.
- **Setting and Achieving Goals:** Young people often struggle with setting realistic goals and creating plans to achieve them. Coaching helps them clarify their aspirations and develop step-by-step strategies to reach their objectives.
- **Overcoming Obstacles:** Whether dealing with academic struggles, social issues, or personal challenges, coaches equip youth with the tools and mindset to overcome obstacles and stay focused on their goals.
- **Healthy Decision-Making:** Coaches guide youth in making healthy and informed decisions, whether related to their academic paths, career choices, or personal lives. This guidance is crucial during a time when they are prone to experimentation and risk-taking.

Benefits of Coaching for Youth

- **Improved Academic Performance:** Studies have shown that students who receive coaching tend to perform better academically. They develop better study habits, become more organised, and are more motivated to succeed.

- **Enhanced Emotional Well-being:** Coaching helps youth manage stress, anxiety, and other emotional issues. This support contributes to improved mental health and a more positive outlook on life.
- **Better Social Skills:** Through coaching, young people learn how to communicate effectively, transform conflicts, and build healthy relationships. These social skills are essential for personal and professional success.
- **Greater Career Readiness:** Coaching provides youth with insights into various career options and the skills needed for different professions. This preparation helps them make informed decisions about their future careers and increases their readiness for the workforce.
- **Life-long Benefits:** The skills and habits developed through coaching have long-term benefits. Youth who receive coaching are more likely to continue setting and achieving goals, maintaining healthy relationships, and pursuing personal growth throughout their lives.

In today's constantly transforming world, the role of adults in the lives of young people is evolving. Instead of being strict authority figures who tell young people what to do, adults are now becoming more like supportive guides. This idea—that adults should help young people find their own paths rather than dictating their choices—is becoming more popular. This approach is important for helping young people become independent, confident, and responsible.

The Limitations of a Prescriptive Approach

A prescriptive approach giving specific advice, instructions, or solutions to the client. In this approach, the guide takes a more directive role, guiding the client on what actions to take or how to solve a particular problem. This method contrasts with non-directive coaching, where the coach helps the client explore their own thoughts and find their own solutions. The prescriptive approach can be useful when the client needs clear guidance, expert knowledge, or specific strategies to address a challenge.

Stifling Independence: When adults dictate what young people should do, it can stifle their ability to think independently and make their own decisions. This can lead to a reliance on external guidance rather than fostering self-reliance and critical thinking skills.

Lack of Personal Fulfilment: A path chosen by someone else may not align with a young person's true interests and passions. This misalignment can lead to dissatisfaction, lack of motivation, and a sense of unfulfillment in both personal and professional spheres.

Resistance and Rebellion: Young people naturally seek autonomy and the freedom to explore. When their choices are constrained by authoritative dictates, it can lead to resistance, rebellion, and strained relationships with the adults involved.

The Benefits of a Supportive Approach

Encouraging Exploration: Allowing young people to explore different options helps them discover their true interests and strengths. This exploration is crucial for personal growth and finding a path that truly resonates with them.

Building Confidence: When young people make their own decisions and succeed, it boosts their confidence and self-esteem. They learn to trust their judgement and become more resilient in the face of challenges.

Fostering Responsibility: Making their own choices teaches young people to take responsibility for their actions. This sense of ownership is important for developing accountability and maturity.

6.4 Strategies for Adults to Support Youth

Active Listening: One of the most effective ways to support young people is through active listening. This involves giving them the space to express their thoughts, feelings, and aspirations without judgement or interruption. By truly listening, adults can understand their perspective and provide relevant guidance.

Asking Open-Ended Questions: Instead of providing direct advice, adults can ask open-ended questions that encourage young people to think deeply and consider various possibilities. Questions like "What are you passionate about?" or "What do you see yourself doing in the future?" can stimulate introspection and self-discovery.

Providing Resources and Opportunities: Adults can support young people by providing access to resources and opportunities that facilitate exploration and growth. This could include connecting them with mentors, arranging workbased- learning opportunities, or encouraging participation in diverse activities.

Offering Non-Judgmental Support: It's important for adults to offer support without imposing their own biases or expectations. This non-judgmental approach creates a safe environment where young people feel comfortable taking risks and making mistakes.

Sharing Experiences: Adults can share their own experiences and lessons learned, not as directives but as stories that offer insights. This can help young people learn from the experiences of others while still making their own decisions.

Encouraging Reflection: Helping young people develop the habit of reflection can be invaluable. Encouraging them to regularly reflect on their experiences, decisions, and feelings can enhance their self-awareness and decision-making skills.

Understanding young people involves more than simply accepting their opinions without question. It involves a deeper exploration into the roots of their thoughts and feelings. This means appreciating the context and circumstances that shape their perspectives, even if those perspectives are different from your own. For many young people, articulating their thoughts and emotions can be challenging. They might struggle to fully explain why they feel a certain way or where their beliefs come from. As a guide, it is your role to be patient and empathetic, helping them navigate and clarify their feelings. By being open to their experiences and striving to understand the underlying reasons behind their viewpoints, you can build stronger connections and offer more effective support.

Self reflection „corner“

What do you think is your greatest strength as a coach?

How would you define “success” in your coaching sessions?

How do you stay up-to date with new coaching methods and strategies?

What techniques do you use to encourage self-reflection and self-awareness in your clients?

How do you balance providing guidance with empowering clients to find their own solutions?

What impact do you hope to have on the young people you coach?

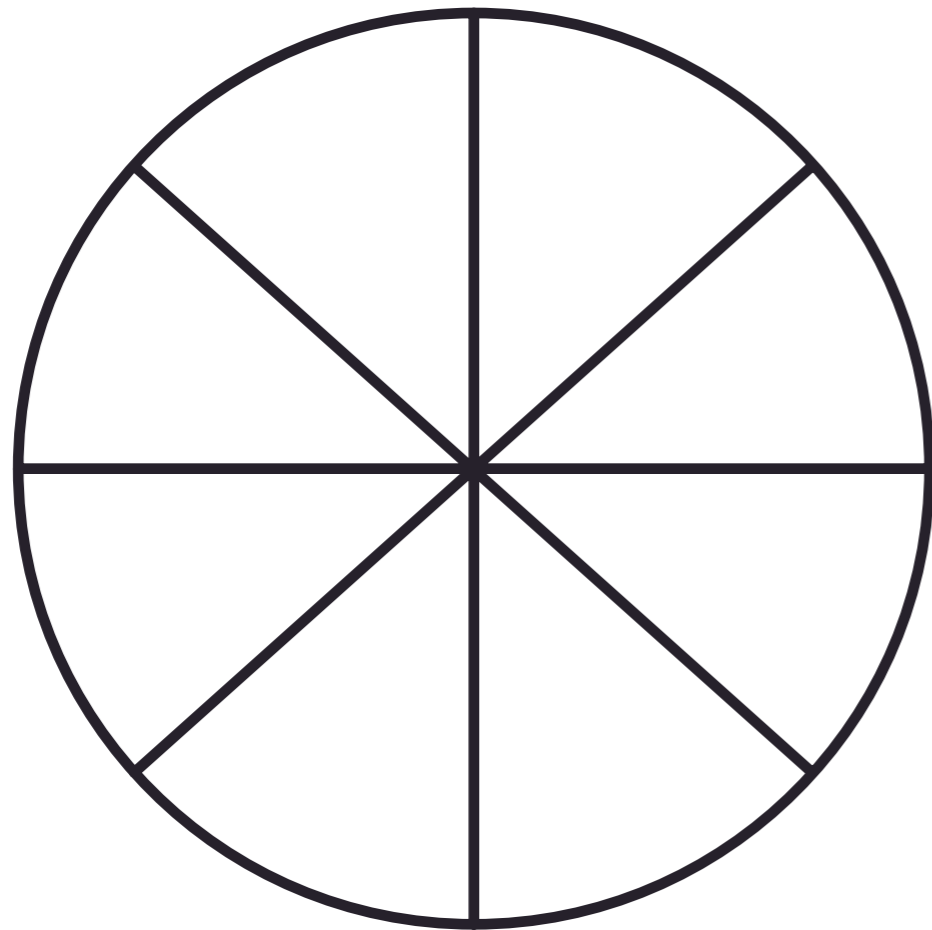
7.

**COACHING TOOLS
TO ADDRESS YOUTH
MENTAL HEALTH AND
WELLBEING**

In today's fast-paced world, maintaining mental well-being is crucial for navigating the complexities of life. The following activities rooted in coaching approach are designed to help you cultivate essential skills like self-care, goal setting, and mindfulness. By incorporating these practices into your routine, you can build resilience, enhance your emotional well-being, and create a more balanced and fulfilling life.

Remember that these practices are not just one-time activities but habits that, when nurtured regularly, can lead to lasting positive change. Continue exploring these techniques and reflect on your progress, as each small step brings you closer to a healthier, more resilient mindset.

Wheel of Life



Purpose: To help young people gain a balanced perspective on different aspects of their lives, such as school, relationships, health, hobbies, and self-care.

How It Works: The Wheel of Life is a visual tool where youth rate their satisfaction in various life areas on a scale from 1 to 10, creating a wheel or spider chart. This helps them identify areas that need more attention or improvement.

Outcome: The tool promotes self-awareness and helps youth set goals to achieve greater balance and well-being.

Reflective questions:

- Which area of my life am I most satisfied with, and why?
- Which area do I feel needs the most improvement, and what challenges have I faced in this area?
- What specific actions can I take to enhance the areas that are currently lacking?
- How has my perception of life balance changed over time, and what factors contributed to these changes?
- What would a perfect score in each area look like for me, and what steps can I take to achieve that?
- How do my current scores align with my personal values and long-term goals?
- What resources or support do I need to improve the areas that are least balanced?
- How does my current life balance affect my relationships with others?
- What small changes can I make now to start improving my overall life satisfaction?



Gratitude Journal



Purpose: To cultivate a positive mindset and improve mental health by focusing on what is going well in their lives.

How It Works: Encourage youth to write down three things they are grateful for each day. This simple practice shifts focus from negative thoughts to positive ones and helps build resilience.

Outcome: Over time, keeping a gratitude journal can increase feelings of happiness, reduce stress, and improve mental well-being.

Reflective Questions:

- How did focusing on gratitude each day affect your mood and mindset?
- Did you notice any changes in how you approached challenges or setbacks after starting this practice?
- What patterns do you see in the things you are grateful for? How do these patterns reflect your values or priorities?
- How has practicing gratitude influenced your relationships with others?

Thought/Mood Tracking Diary

Purpose: To help young people identify and challenge negative thought patterns that may be affecting their mental health.

How It Works: Youth are encouraged to record significant thoughts and moods, the situations that triggered them, the emotions felt, and any evidence for and against these thoughts. This process helps them reframe negative thinking.

Outcome: By recognizing and challenging irrational thoughts, youth can develop healthier, more balanced thinking patterns and reduce anxiety or depressive symptoms.

Reflective questions:

- What thoughts or situations triggered my mood today?
- How did I physically feel when I experienced this mood?
- What was the intensity of this mood on a scale from 1 to 10?
- How did I respond to these thoughts and feelings? Was my response helpful or unhelpful?
- Did this mood affect my interactions with others? If so, how?
- What alternative thoughts could I have had in response to the situation?
- What positive aspects or lessons can I take away from this experience?
- Are there patterns in my thoughts or moods that I notice over time?
- What coping strategies have I used, and how effective were they?
- How can I use what I've learned from this diary to better manage my moods in the future?

Mind Mapping for Self-Exploration

Purpose: To help youth explore and organize their thoughts, feelings, and goals in a visual and creative way.

How It Works: Ask the youth to create a mind map starting with a central concept, such as "My Well-Being" or "What Makes Me Happy." They then branch out with related thoughts, emotions, goals, or challenges, adding more branches as they explore different aspects of the topic.

Outcome: Mind mapping helps youth clarify their thoughts, identify key areas of focus for their mental well-being, and develop a deeper understanding of their inner world.

Reflective questions:

- What central theme or question am I exploring with this mind map? Why is it important to me?

- What connections can I see between the different ideas or branches on my mind map?
- Which surprising or unexpected links that emerged during this exercise? What do they reveal about my thoughts or feelings?
- Which areas of the mind map feel most complete, and which need further exploration?
- How do the ideas on my mind map align with my core values and beliefs?
- What emotions or thoughts surfaced as I created this mind map? How do they influence the way I view the central theme?
- What recurring themes or patterns can I identify across different branches of the map?
- How can I use the insights from this mind map to set goals or make decisions in my life?
- What actions can I take to explore or develop the ideas I've mapped out?
- How has this mind mapping exercise changed or clarified my understanding of myself or the issue I'm exploring?

Role-Playing Scenarios

Purpose: To build confidence and practice coping strategies for real-life situations that may impact their mental well-being.

How It Works: Create role-playing scenarios based on challenges the youth might face, such as managing peer pressure, handling conflict, or dealing with anxiety-inducing situations. Encourage them to act out these scenarios, experimenting with different responses and strategies.

Outcome: Role-playing allows youth to rehearse and refine their responses to challenging situations in a safe environment, helping them feel more prepared and resilient in real life.

Values Clarification Exercise

Purpose: To help youth identify and align their actions with their core values, promoting a sense of purpose and well-being.

How It Works: Guide the youth through an exercise where they list values that are important to them (e.g., honesty, kindness, creativity). Ask them to reflect on how their current behaviors and choices align with these values. They can then set intentions or

goals that bring their daily actions closer to their core values.

Outcome: Clarifying values helps youth make more intentional decisions, feel more aligned with their true selves, and experience greater satisfaction and fulfillment in their lives.

Reflective questions:

- What values did I identify as most important to me? Why do these values resonate with me?
- How do these values influence my daily decisions and actions?
- Are there any discrepancies between the values I hold and how I currently live my life? If so, why?
- Which of my values have been consistent throughout my life, and which have evolved over time?
- How do my values align with my personal goals and aspirations?
- In what situations do I find it challenging to uphold my values? What can I do to address these challenges?
- How do my values impact my relationships with others, both personally and professionally?
- What values do I want to focus on or strengthen in the future?
- How do my values guide me in times of difficulty or uncertainty?
- What steps can I take to ensure that my actions are more aligned with my core values?

Strengths Discovery Exercise

Purpose: To help youth identify and leverage their personal strengths, boosting their confidence and resilience.

How It Works: Guide the youth through an exercise where they list their strengths, skills, and positive qualities. This can be done through reflective questions, peer feedback, or using tools like a strengths inventory. Discuss how they can use these strengths to overcome challenges and achieve their goals.

Outcome: Recognizing and using their strengths helps youth build self-esteem, approach challenges with greater confidence, and develop a positive self-image.

Reflective questions:

- What strengths did I identify during this exercise, and how do they make me feel about myself?

- How have these strengths helped me achieve success or overcome challenges in the past?
- Are there any strengths that surprised me? Why hadn't I recognized them before?
- Which of my strengths do I use most frequently in my daily life, and in what situations?
- How do my strengths align with my personal and professional goals?
- Are there any strengths that I'm not fully utilizing? How can I develop or apply them more?
- How do my strengths contribute to my relationships with others?
- What feedback have I received from others about my strengths, and how does it compare to my own perceptions?
- In what new areas or challenges could I apply my strengths to grow further?
- What actions can I take to build on my strengths and integrate them more into my life?

Visualization of Success

Purpose: To increase motivation and reduce anxiety by visualizing positive outcomes in challenging situations.

How It Works: Ask the youth to close their eyes and vividly imagine themselves successfully navigating a difficult situation or achieving a personal goal. Encourage them to focus on the details, such as what they see, hear, feel, and think during this success. This can be combined with positive affirmations to reinforce the visualization.

Outcome: Visualization of success helps youth build a positive mindset, reduce performance anxiety, and increase their belief in their ability to achieve their goals.

Reflective questions:

- What specific success did I visualize, and how important is it to me?
- How did I feel during the visualization? What emotions surfaced as I imagined achieving this success?
- What details stood out most vividly in my visualization, and what do they reveal about my priorities?
- How does this vision of success align with my core values and long-term goals?
- What challenges or obstacles did I foresee in my visualization, and how did I overcome them?
- What strengths and resources did I rely on in my visualization to achieve success?

- How did I interact with others in my vision of success, and what does this suggest about the role of relationships in my goals?
- What changes in my life would occur as a result of achieving this success, both positive and negative?
- What steps can I take now to move closer to this vision of success?
- How can I use this visualization as a motivation or guide in my everyday actions?

Mindful Self-Care Practice

Purpose: To enhance mental well-being through regular self-care.

How it works:

Step 1: Set aside 10-15 minutes daily for a self-care ritual. This can include activities like deep breathing, journaling, or taking a walk in nature.

Step 2: During this time, focus entirely on the present moment. If journaling, write about how you're feeling, what you're grateful for, or any thoughts that come to mind.

Step 3: Reflect on how this practice makes you feel and any changes in your mood or stress levels. Over time, notice how regular self-care improves your overall mental well-being.

Outcome: By setting aside daily time for self-care, focusing on the present moment, and reflecting on your feelings and experiences, you can reduce stress, enhance your mood, and develop a greater sense of gratitude and mindfulness.

Reflective Questions:

- How did you feel before and after engaging in your self-care activity?
- What thoughts or emotions surfaced during your practice?
- Over time, have you noticed any changes in your mood or stress levels due to this regular self-care routine?
- Are there any self-care activities you'd like to explore further?

SMART Goal Setting for Mental Well-Being

Purpose: To create clear and achievable goals that support mental health.

How it works:

Step 1: Choose a specific goal related to your mental well-being (e.g., reducing stress, improving sleep, or increasing physical activity).

Step 2: Use the SMART framework to refine your goal:

- **Specific:** What exactly do you want to achieve?
- **Measurable:** How will you track your progress?

- **Achievable:** Is this goal realistic for you?
- **Relevant:** How does this goal align with your overall well-being?
- **Time-bound:** When do you aim to achieve this goal?

Step 3: Break down the goal into smaller, manageable steps, and set regular check-ins to monitor your progress.

Reflective Questions:

- How does this goal align with your overall well-being and values?
- What challenges do you anticipate in achieving this goal, and how can you overcome them?
- How do you feel about your progress toward this goal? Are there any adjustments you need to make?
- How does working toward this goal impact your mental well-being on a daily basis?

Digital Detox

Purpose: To manage the impact of technology on mental health.

How it works:

Step 1: Choose one day each week to reduce your screen time, particularly on social media and news apps.

Step 2: Replace screen time with activities that promote well-being, such as reading, exercising, or spending time with loved ones.

Step 3: At the end of the day, reflect on how the digital detox affected your mood, stress levels, and overall mental clarity. Consider incorporating this practice regularly to maintain a healthy balance with technology.

Outcome: An improvement in mental clarity, reduced stress levels, and enhanced overall well-being. By regularly reducing screen time and replacing it with activities that promote well-being, individuals may experience a better balance with technology, leading to greater emotional and mental health.

Reflective Questions:

- How did reducing your screen time affect your mood and mental clarity?
- What activities did you engage in instead of using technology, and how did they make you feel?
- Did you find it difficult to disconnect from digital devices? Why or why not?
- How might you incorporate more regular digital detoxes into your routine, and what benefits do you expect from doing so?

CONCLUSIONS

The mental health of young people is something that critically impacts their overall well-being and development during the complex period of adolescence. Adolescence is a time of fast physical, emotional, and social changes, making young people particularly vulnerable to mental health challenges. These challenges can hinder their ability to learn, form healthy relationships, and navigate the pressures of becoming an adult. Addressing mental health during this formative stage is essential for fostering resilience, self-esteem, and emotional regulation, all of which are foundational for personal growth and development. By prioritising mental health, we can equip young people with the necessary support and resources to thrive both now and in the future.

The importance of mental health is strongly linked to the competences needed for the 21st century. Skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration are all deeply rooted in a foundation of good mental health. Adolescents who are mentally healthy are better positioned to develop these competences, as they are more likely to engage fully in educational and social activities, think clearly under pressure, and work effectively with others. Additionally, competences like adaptability and resilience are directly connected to mental health, as they involve coping with change and overcoming challenges. By fostering mental health in young people, we not only support their immediate well-being but also prepare them to be capable, competent, and resilient individuals ready to face the demands of the 21st century.

When adults act as supportive guides instead of strict authority figures, the positive impact on young people can be significant and lasting. These young individuals grow into confident, self-reliant adults who can navigate life's challenges effectively. They learn to set and achieve their own goals, make informed decisions, and take responsibility for their actions. This supportive approach also fosters positive and trusting relationships between adults and young people, built on mutual respect and understanding. That is why we believe that coaching can be an efficient tool for supporting the mental health of young people and developing 21st-century competences by providing a personalised, supportive, and goal-oriented approach. Through coaching, young individuals receive tailored guidance that helps them navigate the challenges of adolescence, build resilience, and enhance their self-awareness. And ultimately, coaching empowers young people to unlock their potential and thrive in an increasingly complex world.

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