



BODYWISE wise bodies Manual

Activities for deep listening to the current moment and for becoming more empathic.
Try it out – sense, feel and listen to your body sensations!



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**“EMBODIMENT MEANS
WE NO LONGER SAY, I
HAD THIS EXPERIENCE;
WE SAY, I AM THIS
EXPERIENCE.”**

Sue Monk Kidd

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The project partners include

- Innowise from Estonia (lead partner)
- Activating Leadership Potential from Austria
- Progetto Crescere Società Cooperativa Sociale from Italy



1. Introduction to the project

'Bodywise-wise bodies' is an Erasmus+ project that involves a collaborative initiative with three partners from Estonia, Italy, and Austria. This project is dedicated to exploring diverse art and theatrical methods aimed at enhancing body awareness in trainers to better empower marginalised groups.

Trainers addressing marginalised communities play a pivotal role in bridging cultural gaps and fostering understanding. Recognizing that words constitute only 20% of communication, the remaining 80% relies on non-verbal cues. Trainers of marginalised groups must possess effective sensing skills to comprehend the unspoken needs and experiences of their participants, creating a safe and trusting learning environment crucial for development.

In the current challenging times, profound listening to the body is preventive against burnout, promoting mental and physical health. The project, involving three partners, aimed to facilitate cross-border exchanges, develop new methods, and provide tools for trainers to enhance personal well-being.

The objectives of the project:

1. Body Awareness: Focusing on improving skills and competences related to body awareness.
2. Connecting with Marginalised and Discriminated People: Building meaningful connections with individuals from marginalised communities.
3. Release Mental Stress: Addressing the release of mental stress through innovative methods.

**“WE MUST ALL DO
THEATRE – TO FIND OUT
WHO WE ARE, AND TO
DISCOVER WHO WE
COULD BECOME.”**

Augusto Boal

The project anticipated achieving significant outcomes, including enhanced body awareness skills among trainers, strengthened connections with marginalised communities, and the effective alleviation of mental stress. Through Bodywise workshops (online and offline) and the Wise Body manual, the project equipped trainers to better serve both their personal growth and vulnerable groups.

This manual is the outcome of the project and is based on one of the project's main activities: Bodywise-Laboratory. Partners engaged in sharing their knowledge and experiences, both onsite and online, regarding body-sensing methods. The methods were tested by the educators while working with their vulnerable groups, contributing to a collaborative and experiential learning process.

Join us on this transformative journey as we delve into the "Bodywise-wise Body" project, fostering awareness, connection, and well-being through innovative and inclusive practices.

1.1 The project partners



Innowise Training and Consultancy (OÜ Innowise) is a private adult education and training company situated in Tallinn, Estonia. We conduct both open and on-demand training, along with consultations on human development, the development of training systems, competence models, and quality systems in educational institutions. Additionally, we provide instructional design services in the field of adult education and create e-learning courses and materials. Our clients and learners include private individuals, unemployment offices, public and private organisations, NGOs, and educational institutions. We serve approximately 300 adult learners per year. Innowise is an active member of the Estonian Adult Educators Association Andras, the Estonian Training Companies Union, and is an official cooperation partner of the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund and Tallinn University.



ALP is a network of professionals who are passionate about leadership development and learning. ALP's members combine academics and practitioners with backgrounds and experiences in the field of education, personal and organisational development from all over Europe. ALP has been formally set up in 2011 in Austria as a non-profit organisation, with members in UK, Denmark, Malta and Italy and a wide European network with organisations and individuals active in the field of diversity and leadership. The organisation provides services for individuals, groups and organisations to support people in their development. ALP members have a proven record of experiences in the field of supporting adults in discovering their inner potential and leadership. They are offering since the beginning 3 - 5-day long training courses, where participants can develop further and where they are accompanied by professional trainers and coaches. ALP members work in international contexts, sharing new research in the latest leadership models and theories building on the individual strengths and supporting relationship based approaches.



Progetto Crescere is a social cooperative (non-profit organization) located in Reggio Emilia, Italy, with the aims of disseminating knowledge about learning disabilities and providing training services to professionals, teachers and other educational organizations. Progetto Crescere provides clinical and social pedagogical services to citizens and to educational organizations. Our approach is multifunctional, based on a team of 60 experts with different backgrounds: services managers, administrative assistances and other professionals (Doctors in Neuropsychiatry, Psychologists, Psychotherapists, speech therapists, Educators, Psychomotricists, Pedagogist and Trainers).

Thanks to cooperative methods and approaches, Progetto Crescere provides many services, not only to students and children, but also to adults:

- Counseling and Psychological services: working with care professionals to help them cope with the emotional burden and other issues of their daily work.
- Lifelong learning and vocational training for professionals with the aims of enhancing relational skills, support a high awareness of the role and professional responsibility, support the management of emotions related to the professional role and burnout prevention.
- Team supervision for improved communication and relationship in the work team: supporting cohesion and communication about points of view and emotions related to the job, analyzing and managing of interpersonal dynamics and fostering mutual support, positive climate and prevent burnout.
- Care Team Coordinator support: supporting coordinators work on teamwork, staff coordination, leadership, conflict management and decision making
- Support in staff recruitment: supporting managers in staff recruitment that requires specific social-relational skills

The use of informal and expressive methods to work with adults is typical of our approach: we propose activities based on theatre, dance therapy, art therapy and movement to individuals and groups, aiming to a personal and professional development.

In the projects "Bodywise-Wise Body" partnership we present Theatre, Drama and Theatre of Oppressed related activities.

2. *Body awareness*

In recent years, the construct of “body awareness” has emerged as a subject of scientific research across a wide range of health, behavioural, anthropological and even philosophical fields. This construct can be defined as an attentional focus and awareness of body sensations. (Mehling et al., 2009).

Embodiment is defined as the felt sense of being localised within one’s physical body and perceiving the immediate experience of one’s body (Arzy et al., 2006; Roher, 2007; Edelman, 2004). It has led the path for overcoming the Cartesian dualism (one thing is the mind and another one the body) to conceptualise, as the neurobiologist Edelman states, that “consciousness is embodied” (Edelman, 2004). These studies recognise the importance our body plays in shaping our thinking and culture. Going beyond Descartes “Cogito ergo sum” (= I think, therefore I am) different traditions, methods and techniques targeted and still target body awareness and “embodied presence” as a way to reduce stress and promote wellbeing (Mehling et al., 2009).

There is currently no agreement on what skills are involved in building good body awareness. However, mindfulness skills (like sustained attention, concentration, non-reactivity, non judging of experience) are expected to play a major role in creating a controlled and monitored meta-cognitive state of sustained present-moment attention to events within and around the body (Mehling et al., 2009). The scientific literature concerning the effect of promoting body awareness on the reduction of stress and promotion of wellbeing is growing. Further preliminary results on benefits on health and wellbeing can be found.

In a study by Berkovich-Ohana and colleagues, they discussed how focusing on being present in the moment, being aware of our bodies, and moving away from overthinking can help teachers regulate their emotions better. This shift can also help teachers recognize stress signs, reduce self-criticism, and ultimately improve their overall well-being and social emotional skills. These factors are crucial for teachers to create and sustain a positive learning environment. (Berkovich-Ohana et al., 2018).

**THERE IS DEEP WISDOM
WITHIN OUR VERY FLESH, IF
WE CAN ONLY COME TO OUR
SENSES AND FEEL IT.**

Elizabeth A. Behnke

Our Erasmus+ project target group were trainers, educators, social workers, coaches, who would like to train to empathise (more) with their target group. In our project, we tested the activities with trainers working with marginalised groups of people, e.g. language teachers working with migrants or unemployed people. At the same time we saw these methods are useful for all types of pedagogues, trainers, facilitators, coaches, social workers and all people, who work with human beings in order to become more sensitive to the emotions and sensations of the people they are working with.

In our training in Estonia, we learned and explored different types of body-sensing activities including breathing, walking, dancing, meditations, mime, mirroring and acting. All activities were taken from different methods and schools: mindfulness, theatre games inspired by classical theatre didactics and the work of Augusto Boal, Social Presencing Theatre (SPT) of Arawana Hayashi, and dance therapy. The activities were chosen carefully to promote body awareness and include in different degrees a creative and artistic slant: this choice was based on the document by the World Health Organisation titled “What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review” (Fancourt & Finn for WHO, 2019) that conceptually links the engagement in art and expressive activities to health outcomes. The feedback of the participants in Estonia also reflected this through a range of positive emotions, openness to exploration, mindfulness, gratitude, and a heightened awareness of one’s body and well-being. Participants valued the experience and expressed a desire for personal growth and self-care.

3. The methods

In this part, the trainer can find four different types of methodologies:

- Mindfulness methods and mind journeys
- Theatre methods
- Dance methods
- Social Presencing Theater

Each one includes a brief introduction and some activities that the trainer can propose to the group.

Each activity, after a short presentation, includes a table in which some characteristics to consider for preparation can be found:

- target: individual or group
- duration: average minutes of the activity
- Mood/energy: calm, medium or energetic
- Space: where to carry out the activity
- Equipment: materials, music or anything else necessary for the activity

The proposed activities include different levels of duration and mood, in order to create a prototype of a balanced session.

This will then be followed by a brief description of the activity, how to carry out the process in detail and, finally, the conclusion.

We advise you not to read these proposals rigidly: always consider that each group is different. Each trainer's proposal can vary in time, methods and energy: sometimes it is interesting to propose training by mixing activities together, other times the time of a proposal is shortened, rather than proposing two activities instead of four for a longer period of time. The mediator's task will be to observe and understand which ones are most suitable for the group you are working with, and how to best guide them through the experience.



Table of characteristics



Target

These icons tell you whether this is a method for individuals or groups of people



Individual



Pair(s)



Group



Duration

You will find the duration of the exercise next to this icon



Mood/Energy

These icons describe the mood that some exercises bring about, the energy they create:



Calm



Medium



Energetic



Equipment

If any materials, equipment or music are needed for this exercise, you'll find them listed here.



Space

This category describes the space needed in order to do the activity: size of space, indoor, outdoor

3.1 Mindfulness Methods

Mindfulness is a practice that aims to raise awareness of the present moment. By consciously observing thoughts, feelings and physical sensations without judgement or interpretation, people can improve their attention and concentration. It is usually developed through meditation and originates from the Buddhist and Hindu traditions.

Jon Kabat-Zinn is seen as the father of modern mindfulness training and brought it to the western world. He developed various techniques for practising mindfulness, including breathing exercises, meditations and conscious eating.

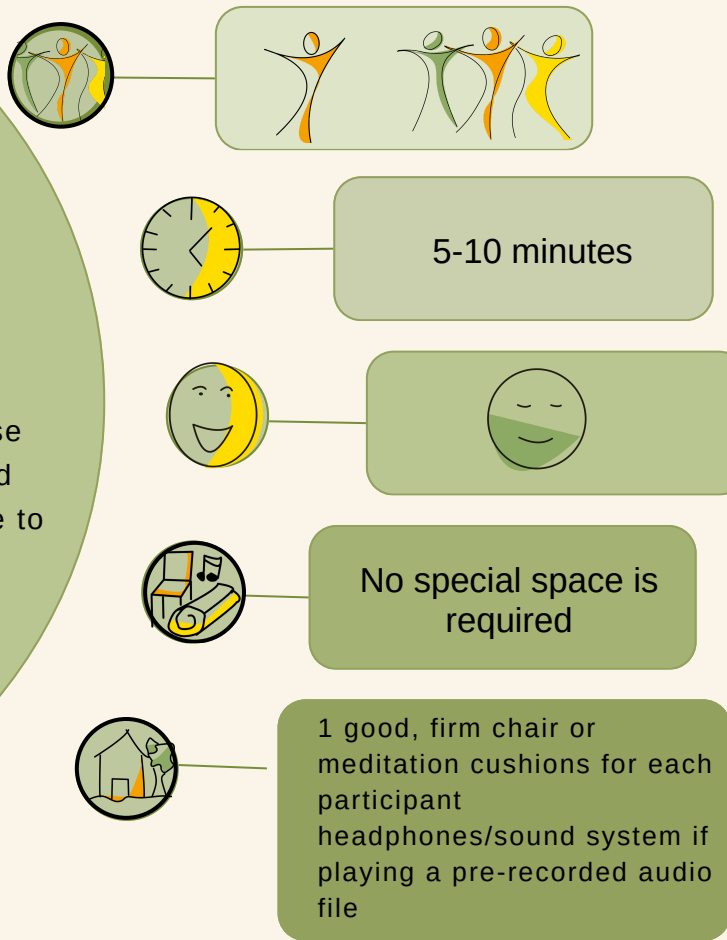
The benefits of mindfulness are manifold. Studies have shown that regular mindfulness exercises can reduce stress, improve emotional stability and increase general well-being. In addition, mindfulness can also promote cognitive function and creativity.

For our project, we explored some mindfulness activities and found them very useful to become aware of our body and our body sensations. To benefit from the advantages of mindfulness, it is important to practise regularly. We have chosen some activities here for you to explore mindfulness. You can find many apps and online resources that offer more guided mindfulness exercises.



Breathing meditation

A short breathwork exercise which can serve as a good regular mindfulness practice to start with.



Description of the method:

The breathing meditation is one of the first, basic mindfulness exercises that beginners learn. You need no special equipment or physical ability to be able to do it, all you need is a calm place and some time.

Sit comfortably and upright. You can choose to listen to the audiofile we created for the project.

On the next page, you will find an example script for a sitting meditation, in case you want to use it to guide a group. This was also used to create our audio file.

To keep in mind:

Remind participants - and yourself! - that it is normal for your mind to start to wander and think while you are doing this exercise. When you notice this happening, you can choose to celebrate this moment of awareness of what is happening in your mind. Then gently, kindly bring your awareness back to your breath.

Sources & Resources:

Scan the QR code for a guided version of this meditation



Our conclusion from testing:

We tested this exercise in Tallinn and also repeated it in some of our online meetings. As Rita says, "It was hard to let go of my thoughts and just focus on my breathing", the exercise can be a challenge for some practitioners, who are just starting, or on days when the mind is very full.

It can be helpful to remind them that it's not required to make all thoughts go away, only to become aware of the fact that they exist, and to let them go, for the time being.

Script for a simple breathing mediation

Before we start, I invite you to find a comfortable position.

Ground your feet and sit forward in your chair. Tilt your hipbone forward a little bit to allow your spine to strive upwards naturally, without effort. It should feel like the vertebrae of your spine stack one on top of the other. Take a moment to find this comfortable position.

[Pause for a breath]

Begin by taking a few deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. As you breathe in, feel your lungs expanding, and as you breathe out, feel any tension leaving your body.

[Pause for a breath]

Now, let go of this control of your breath. Let your body take over and your breathing return to its natural rhythm. Pay attention to the sensation of your breath as it enters and leaves your body.

[Pause for a breath]

Anchor your attention at your breath. Notice the coolness of the air as you inhale through your nose, and the warmth of the air as you exhale. Notice the rise and fall of your chest and abdomen with each breath. Feel the the movement in your body as it makes way for the air.

[Pause for a breath]

When your mind starts to wander, gently bring your focus back to your breath. It's natural for your mind to wander, and when you notice it, just gently bring your attention back to your anchor: your breath.

[Pause for a breath]

Count your breaths if it helps you stay focused. Inhale, and silently count "one," then exhale. Inhale again, and count "two," then exhale. Continue counting up to ten breaths, and then start over from one. If you lose count, simply begin again at one.

[Pause for a breath]

As you breathe, also notice any sensations in your body, any sounds in your environment, and any thoughts or emotions that come and go. Simply observe them without getting caught up in them. Let them come and go, like clouds in a summer sky.

[Pause for a breath]

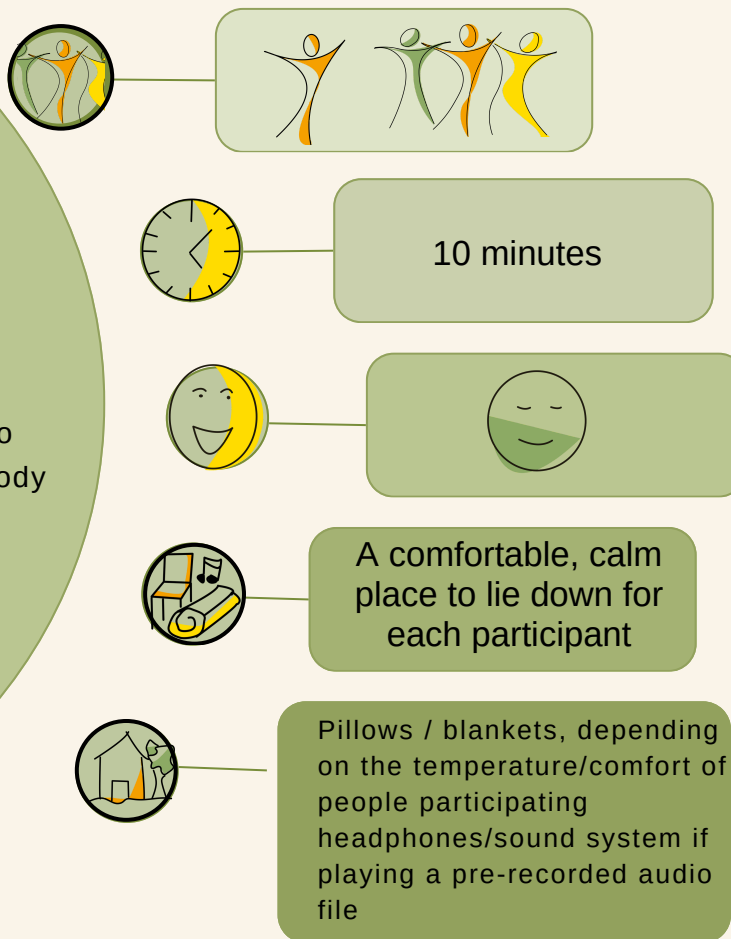
As we reach the end of our session, take a few deep breaths, filling your body with positive vibes with each inhale, and letting go of anything that's weighing you down with each exhale. When you're ready, slowly open your eyes, expanding your focus to what is surrounding you right now.

Breathing meditation



Body scan

A ten-minute activity to become aware of your body and relax



Description of the method:

The body scan is one of the first, basic mindfulness exercises that beginners learn. You need no special equipment or physical ability to be able to do it, all you need is a calm place and some time.

This exercise is best done lying down – preferably not in bed, but in a comfortable place. If you choose to do it sitting, make sure to sit comfortably and upright.

You can choose to listen to the audiofile we created for the project.

On the next page, you will find an example script for a body scan session, in case you want to use it to guide a group. This was also used to create our audio file.

To keep in mind:

Remind participants - and yourself! - that it is normal for your mind to start to wander and think while you are doing this exercise. When you notice this happening, you can choose to celebrate this moment of awareness of what is happening in your mind. Then gently, kindly bring your awareness back to your practice.

Our conclusion from testing:

Like most methods presented here, we tested this in our meeting in Tallinn. We found that it's a method that needs time and space, but that many people find it very relaxing. The more you practise, the more it becomes intuitive to focus on some parts of your body throughout the day and consciously relax them.

Sources & Resources:

Scan the QR code for a guided version of this meditation



Script for a body scan session

Before we start, I invite you to find a comfortable position. You can be sitting or lying down, just make sure you're in a calm place. Close your eyes gently and take a deep breath in... and exhale slowly, releasing any stress or tension.

If you are sitting up, it may be helpful to ground your feet, and sit forward in your chair. Tilt your hip bone forward a little bit to allow your spine to strive upwards naturally, without effort. It should feel like the vertebrae stack one on top of the other. Take a moment to find this comfortable position.

As we begin, I invite you to tune into your feet. Feel the soles of your feet and the place where your feet connect to the ground.

Feel the sensations in your toes – any tingling, warmth, or coolness. Breathe into your feet, imagining your breath flowing down to your feet, calming them.

Now, moving up through your ankles, shift your focus up to your calves and shins. Notice any tightness or soreness, any heaviness you may be feeling here. Take a moment to stretch them out mentally, like giving them a little internal massage.

Move your attention further up, to your knees and thighs. How do they feel? Relaxed or a bit tense? What sensation can you feel here? Breathe into any tight spots, visualising them softening up with each exhale.

Let's keep it going. Your buttocks, hips and lower back are next. Feel the contact between your body and the surface beneath you. If there's any tension in this area, just let it go as you breathe out.

Bring your awareness forward and up, to your belly and chest. Feel the rhythm of your breath – the rise and fall of your abdomen. Take a moment to appreciate this – the way your body knows exactly how and when to breathe, without any need to control it.

Move your focus on your back. This is a good moment to check your posture, see if you are relaxed, and your head still strives up towards the sky. Notice how the muscles of your back feel at the moment. Release any tension, any heaviness you may be carrying here with the next few breaths.

Now, let's move to your hands and arms. Notice any sensations in your upper and lower arms, let them hang and rest.

“IT WAS BEAUTIFUL AND STRANGE AT THE SAME TIME: THERE ARE PARTS OF THE BODY THAT I HAD NEVER PAID ATTENTION TO.”

R.C.

What do you feel in your fingers, palms, and wrists? Imagine a warm, soothing light travelling down your arms, melting away any tension.

Time to show some love to your shoulders and neck. These muscles work hard, so give 'em a small break. Roll your shoulders gently if that feels good. Let go of any stiffness, allowing your neck to relax.

Moving up to your head, release the little muscles of your scalp, around your ears, soften your forehead. Release any clenching in your jaw, let your tongue rest, let your eyes sink into their sockets. Notice what that feels like.

Okay, now let's do a quick full-body scan. From head to toe, notice how each part feels. If you find any lingering tension, send your breath to that area, letting it dissolve away.

As we reach the end of our session, take a few deep breaths, filling your body with positive vibes with each inhale, and letting go of anything that's weighing you down with each exhale.

When you're ready, slowly open your eyes, expanding your focus to what is surrounding you right now.

Body scan

Visualisation: a trip to the beach

A ten-minute visualisation –
an imaginary voyage to a calm
and peaceful environment



10 minutes



No special space is
required



Pillows / blankets, depending
on the temperature/comfort of
people participating
headphones/sound system if
playing a pre-recorded audio
file

Our conclusion from testing:

Some participants may not be comfortable with imagery of the sea or the beach. In that case, we suggest using a different, safe place, such as continuing the path into the forest until you may reach a small river.

You can also exchange the visualisation for something like the mountain meditation by Jon Kabbat-Zinn.

Sources & Resources:

A script for an alternative: [the mountain meditation](#). Scan the QR code.



Scan the QR code for a
guided version of this
meditation



Description of the method:

This visualisation of a trip to the beach is a relaxation exercise to take you on a small 'holiday' to recharge. You need no special equipment or physical ability to be able to do it, all you need is a calm place and some time.

This exercise is best done lying down – preferably not in bed, but in a comfortable place. If you choose to do it sitting, make sure to sit comfortably and upright.

On the next page, you will find an example script for a beach visualisation, in case you want to use it to guide a group.

To keep in mind:

Remind participants - and yourself! - that it is normal for your mind to start to wander and think while you are doing this exercise. When you notice this happening, you can choose to celebrate this moment of awareness of what is happening in your mind. Then gently, kindly bring your awareness back to your breath.



Script for a beach visualisation

Before we start, I invite you to find a comfortable position. You can be sitting or lying down, just make sure you're in a calm place.

If you are sitting up, it may be helpful to ground your feet, and sit forward in your chair. Tilt your hip bone forward a little bit to allow your spine to strive upwards naturally, without effort. It should feel like the vertebrae stack one on top of the other. Take a moment to find this comfortable position.

Close your eyes gently and take a deep breath in... and exhale slowly, releasing any stress or tension.

Let's embark on a journey to the shores of a beautiful beach. Allow yourself to fully immerse in the experience.

Imagine you are standing at the edge of a lush green forest on a warm, sunny evening. Feel the soft ground beneath your feet. The air is filled with the scent of pine and saltwater. There is a path going into that forest. When you are ready, start walking along the path, through the forest.

Notice the trees, the play of light on the ground, the scent of the forest. As you walk, the trees gradually give way to a path leading you towards the beach.

The sound of the waves grows louder, drawing you closer to the shore. Picture the path opening up to reveal a vast expanse of sand. Feel the warmth of the sun on your skin as you step onto the beach.

Look around and notice the colours of the sky - as the sun begins to set. The air is filled with a gentle breeze, carrying the rhythm of the waves. Take a moment to breathe in deeply, inhaling the crisp sea air.

Now, start walking along the water's edge. Feel the sand beneath your feet and the gentle touch of the water as it washes ashore. Each step you take brings a sense of relaxation and calmness.

As you stroll along the shore, notice the seagulls soaring gracefully overhead. Notice their movements, the sounds their wings make as they fly, their cries.

“I LIKE THIS IMAGINARY TRIP TO THE BEACH VERY MUCH. IT IS A GOOD EXERCISE FOR THE END OF MY DAY, TO WIND DOWN AND PREPARE TO GO TO BED.”

J.B.

I invite you to find a comfortable spot on the beach and settle down. Close your eyes and let the sounds of nature envelop you. Picture the waves rolling in and out, forming a harmonious dance with the shore.

Take a few deep breaths here, relaxing in the moment.

Now, imagine the warm sun casting a gentle glow on your face. Feel its rays penetrating your skin, bringing a sense of warmth and peace. Allow any tension in your body to melt away with each breath.

As you take comfort in the serenity of the beach, visualise a radiant ball of energy above you. Picture this energy descending towards you, enveloping you in a cocoon of positivity and relaxation. Feel the warmth and healing energy surrounding you.

Take a few more deep breaths, absorbing the peaceful energy around you. When you're ready, start walking back towards the path. Notice the calm of the woods after sunset, the cool air and smells of the forest. Keep walking until you reach the forest's edge, where you started. Take a moment to enjoy the relaxation in your body.

When you are ready, slowly bring your awareness back to the present moment. Wiggle your fingers and toes, and gently open your eyes.

Visualisation: a trip to the beach

5-finger-breathing for relaxation

A quick breathing exercise that you can do anywhere



3 minutes or as long as you want



No special space is required



No equipment

To keep in mind:

If you use / offer this exercise to groups, pace the exercise for them the first few times, then let each person do it at their own speed.

Our conclusion from testing:

We like this tool because it is truly something you can take along with you – all you need is your hands! It helps in all sorts of situations and is easy to learn – even children and young people can use it effectively to self-regulate!

Sources & Resources:

There are numerous videos, articles and sites on this technique – here's one from Cleveland Clinic: scan the QR code.



For more information on the use of the techniques for children, scan the QR code on the right.



Description of the method:

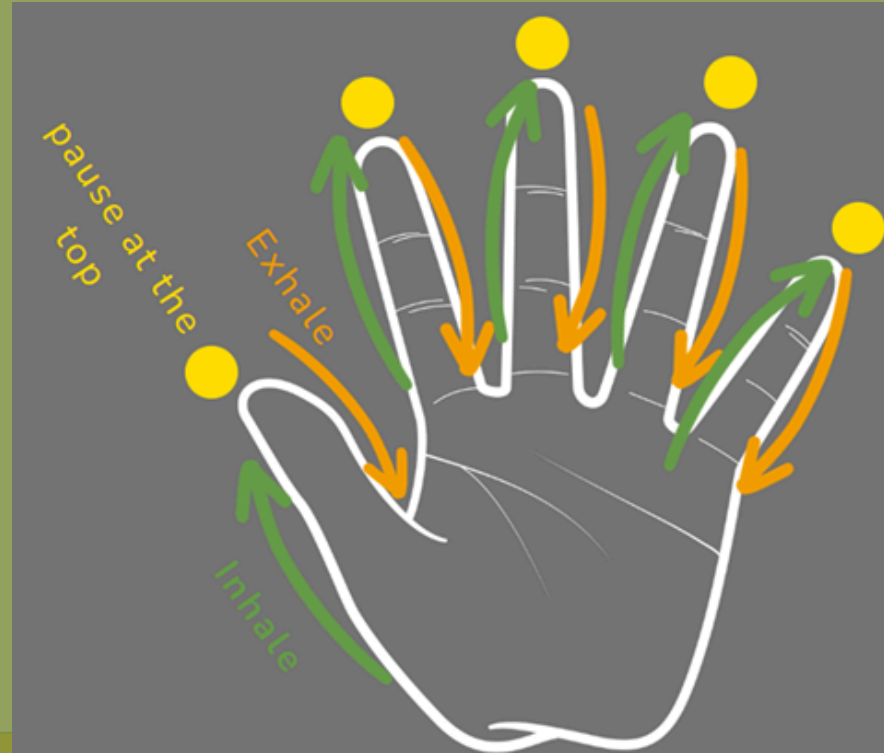
5-finger-breathing is a coping and relaxation tool that is easy to learn and quite handy for many people – as the only tool you need is your hands.

How to do it:

Standing up or sitting comfortably, relax your shoulders and straighten your spine to make room for breathing.

Extend the fingers of one hand in front of you as shown on the picture. With the pointer finger of the other hand, trace along the fingers, starting at the base of the thumb.

As you trace up your thumb, inhale. Take a brief pause at the top of your finger. Trace down and exhale. Repeat this for all your fingers, until you have traced your whole hand, then start again.



3.2 Dance Methods

Dance, serving as a mode of self-expression, communication, and celebration of life and community, has been integral to human existence and culture since the dawn of our earliest ancestors.

Among the art and theatrical methods designed to heighten body awareness are dance-based methods, which are inspired by Dance Movement Therapy (DMT). DMT is part of Creative Arts Therapies, and is a dynamic and holistic approach that harnesses the power of movement and expression to promote self-awareness, emotional integration, and holistic well-being. Rooted in the belief that the mind and body are interconnected, DMT offers a unique avenue for individuals to explore and understand their thoughts, feelings, and experiences through embodied practices.

Dance-based methods can provide valuable tools for self-care, stress management, and emotional resilience. Furthermore, they encourage creativity, collaboration, and self-expression, fostering a sense of community and connection among participants.

In the context of education, dance-based methods serve as a valuable tool for promoting mindfulness and fostering a deeper connection between mind and body. By engaging in movement-based activities, individuals are invited to tune into their physical sensations, emotions, and thoughts in the present moment. Through guided movement explorations, relaxation techniques, and reflective exercises, participants can cultivate greater body awareness, emotional regulation, and stress reduction.

Dance-based methods emphasise the importance of creating a safe and supportive environment where individuals feel free to express themselves authentically and without judgement. Within the educational setting, these techniques can be integrated into various contexts, such as classroom activities, professional development workshops, and personal growth seminars. Dance-based methods can be used individually and in group activities.



The descriptions of dance-based methods are based on the handbook "MoveOn," from the Nordplus Adult Collaboration Project "MoveOn NPAD-2021/10031." The project description and results are available here:



Warm up Energy ball

Get the body ready. This exercise increases energy level, and movement range. It also awakens our imagination



up to 10 minutes



Safe space with a place to move freely



No special equipment needed

Description of the method:

Imagine you have a ball of energy inside your pelvis. Visualise its size and colour.

Set this ball in motion and allow it to affect your movement:

Follow the energy ball anywhere it travels inside your pelvis: around the circles, holes, and arches of your pelvic bones, or moving you through space.

Move the energy ball up and through your rib cage, bouncing off the inner ribs. Let it moves around your heart and lungs.

Explore moving it inside your shoulders and out your elbows, wrists, and hands. Activate inside your fingers, and feel the ball moving—but don't get stuck in your hands.

Bring it back, through your arms and up your neck, and inside your head. Bounce from head to tail and back again. Let it spiral down inside each leg and foot, moving you around the space. Pause, and notice all you've shaken up by motivating your movement through an inner energy ball.

Now toss the ball out of your body and bring it back in. Explore inner and outer, and the transitions between.

You can expand this activity and interact with other group members by sharing your imaginary energy ball with them.

After the activity, you can reflect if you wish:

- What is different now? You can think about your current physical sensations, feelings, and thoughts.
- How would you describe the movement of your ball?
- What movement did you enjoy the most?
- How is your energy level right now?
- How can you bring the sense of this exercise to your daily life?



To keep in mind:

Keep in mind to encourage participants to explore at their own pace, emphasising adaptability and self-care. After the activity, create a supportive environment for reflection and sharing experiences, promoting integration of insights into daily life.

Our conclusion from testing:

This exercise has proven effective in enhancing energy levels and promoting a sense of focus and concentration. It could serve as an excellent warm-up activity for workshops or activities that demand heightened attentiveness and energy.

Sources & Resources:

Online Handbook “Move on”. Scan the QR code.



“I USED THIS METHOD DURING MY TRAINING SESSIONS WITH ADULT LEARNERS AND IT HAS BEEN QUITE REWARDING. IT SERVES AS A GOOD TOOL FOR ENERGISING TIRED INDIVIDUALS, HELPING THEM REGAIN FOCUS AND CONCENTRATION AFTERWARD.”

S.A.

Energy ball

Spine dance

Promotes mindfulness and body awareness



up to 2 minutes



Safe and quiet space with a place to lay down or a chair to sit on in a comfortable position



A mat or a chair to sit on in a comfortable position. Music: you can choose the music you like

“I USED THIS EXERCISE OVER A LONGER PERIOD AND CONCLUDED THAT SPINE DANCE IS A GOOD EXERCISE FOR RELIEVING TENSION, TAKING TIME OFF, AS WELL AS ENERGISING AND GEARING UP FOR MORE DEMANDING ENDEAVOURS.”

A.L.

Description of the method:

Please take a comfortable position – sitting, standing or lying down. Feel your breath. Pay attention to your spine – neck, chest, lumbar spine, sacrum, and tailbone.

Let your spine move for one minute. Allow a small range of motion to pass through the spine from the neck to the tailbone and back.

Movement does not have to be sequential. The only conditions are comfortable movement and letting your breath support you.

The exercise can be performed over a longer period of time, accompanied by calm, pleasant music. It can be tried in different positions standing, sitting and lying down.

After the exercise you can reflect:

- What did you observe?
- Did you notice any sensations, thoughts, or feelings?
- What did you notice in different parts of your spine, in your spine as a whole?
- How do you feel right now?

Our conclusion from testing:

We found that participants reported feeling more relaxed and centred after completing the exercise, regardless of their initial position (sitting, standing, or lying down). Extended practice of the activity, especially when accompanied by calm music, resulted in increased feelings of relaxation and enhanced body awareness among participants. The flexibility of the exercise, allowing for variations in movement and position, makes it accessible and adaptable to the diverse needs and preferences of learners.

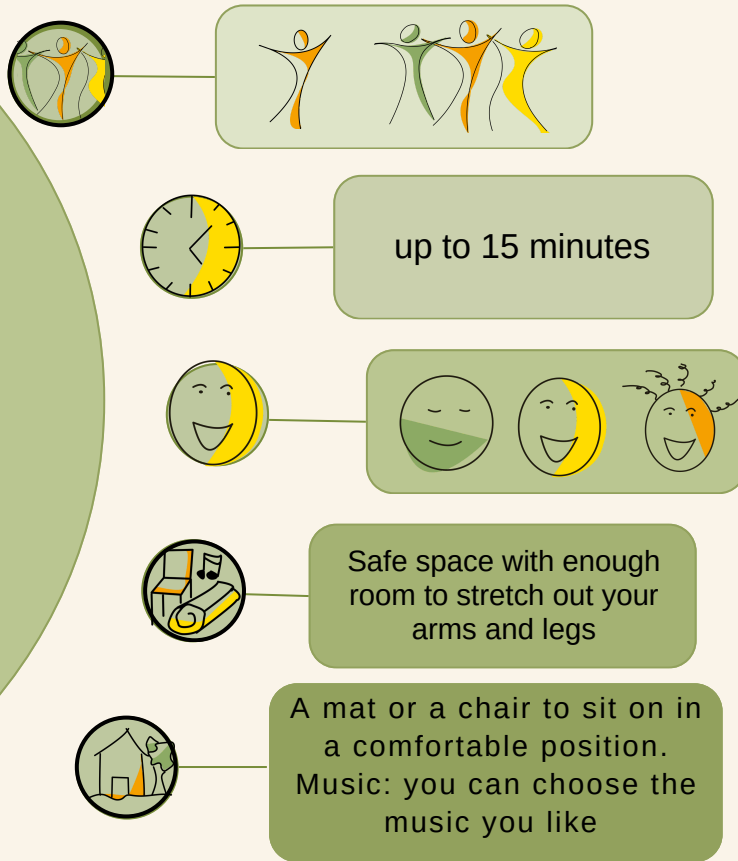
Sources & Resources:

Online Handbook “Move on”. Scan the QR code.



Bubble dance

Promotes self-awareness, imagination, playfulness, recuperation, and increases energy level.



Description of the method:

When you are ready, stand in the centre of the free space with your feet shoulder-width apart. Take a deep breath in and out.

Imagine a space around you extends, as far as you can reach out. This space forms a shape of bubble around you. Its surface can be transparent, flexible, constantly changing or instead a solid and safe cocoon that hides you from the world. Whatever suits your current needs.

Stretch out your hands and start moving them along the imaginary surfaces of this space, feeling its width, length, and depth. You can include your legs...your spine and core...your head. Try out how high you can reach...how wide it can be...how far you can reach in front of you...and behind you...

Stretch the space as big as you can without leaving the starting position.

Now reduce the space to an elbow distance from your body and move in that slightly smaller space...

What is different?

If you want, you can further reduce the space by using the space close to your body.

What is now different?

Experiment with the spaces in different sizes, play with stretching and reducing the bubble with your whole body.

Find what size is the best for you today and start moving in that space.

Now imagine that your fingers and, if you wish, your toes are covered with the colour(s) you like. As you move along the surface of your bubble, paint it with the colour(s) you have chosen.

How would you like to paint it – slowly...with energy...with small or big movements...sharply or smoothly... You can repaint the bubble several times. You can create patterns. Take as much time as you like for that.

In a group, you can move around the room with your bubble and encounter bubbles from other group members. You have the option to bump into bubbles, create a shared bubble if you wish, and then continue moving with your own bubble.

When you feel ready, stand in the middle of your bubble and breathe in this wonderful environment and feel your personal space around you.

This bubble comes with you in your everyday life, supporting and protecting you when necessary.

Would you like to try some variations?

- If you wish, you can move in the space where you are, still keeping focussing on your personal space bubble around you.
- You can shorten the experience by using only one part of the movement experience: just sensing the surface or just painting the surface.
- You can imagine that the inside of your bubble is covered with sounds. When you touch them, the sounds are released and fill the bubble with wonderful music. Move and create your own sound environment.

- Reflection after the activity:
 - What is different now? You can think about your current physical sensations, feelings, and thoughts.
 - What was meaningful for you?
 - What did you enjoy the most?
 - What about your bubble was important for you?
 - How can this experience support you?

To keep in mind:

Encourage participants to explore their personal space bubble at their own pace, adapting the exercise to suit their comfort level and needs.

Emphasise the importance of self-expression and creativity, encouraging participants to paint their bubble with colours and movements that resonate with them, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment over their personal space.

Our conclusion from testing:

Participants felt more energy and perceived spatial boundaries and self-protection more clearly after doing the exercise. The exercise allowed them to withdraw from the group and be in their calm inner world, but it was also very activating and energising if they wanted to interact with other group members.

Sources & Resources:

Online Handbook "Move on". Scan de QR code.



Scan the QR code for a video explanation of this exercise



Bubble dance

Hello, friend!

Showing an 'object friend' around the room promotes mindfulness and body awareness



up to 15 minutes



Safe space that allows movement



No special equipment is needed, participants just need to find one object to which to "show the space".

Description of the method:

This method involves using an object as a focal point for movement and expression. Participants select an object, which could be anything from a simple household item to a symbolic prop with personal significance. They then interact with this object through movement, treating it as if it were a person.

During the session, participants may move around the room with the object, express emotions or thoughts to it, or engage in dialogue or gestures directed towards it. The object serves as a mirror or a sounding board, allowing participants to externalise their internal world and explore their feelings, memories, and relationships through movement and creative expression. As a group activity, you have the opportunity to encounter objects of other participants and engage with them.

This method can be used to facilitate self-awareness, emotional expression, and personal insight. By engaging with the object and observing their responses to it, participants can gain new perspectives on their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, as well as explore different aspects of their identity and relationships. Additionally, the method can foster a sense of connection and empathy within a group setting, as participants share and respond to each other's movements and expressions.

Overall, the method offers a unique and creative approach to dance related methods, allowing individuals to explore and process their experiences through movement, symbolism, and interaction with objects.

Reflection after the activity:

- What did you observe?
- Why did you choose this object? What does it mean to you?
- Did you notice any sensations, thoughts, or feelings?
- How do you feel right now?



To keep in mind:

Encourage participants to select objects that resonate with them personally, and consider why they chose that particular object. Remind participants to stay open to the experience and allow themselves to express emotions, thoughts, and memories freely through movement and interaction with the object. After the activity, create a supportive environment for reflection and sharing, encouraging participants to observe their observations, explore their sensations and feelings, and consider how the experience has impacted them in the moment.

Our conclusion from testing:

The method fostered a sense of connection and empathy within the group, as participants shared and responded to each other's movements and expressions, highlighting its potential for promoting interpersonal understanding and support. The method provided a creative and engaging approach to self-exploration and expression, offering participants a valuable tool for enhancing self-awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal connection.

Sources & Resources:

Online Handbook "Move on". Scan the QR code.



Hello, friend!

3.3 Theatre Methods

Recent researches and documents by the World Health Organization demonstrate a correlation between arts and health (Fancourt & Finn (2019)), with clear results from a psychological (increase of self-efficacy, coping mechanisms and emotional regulation), physiological (reduction of stress hormone levels, increase of immune response, improve of cardiovascular reactivity), social (reduction of isolation and loneliness, increase of social support and improve of social behaviour) and behavioural (increase of exercise, adoption of healthier behaviours, development of different skills) point of view.

Therefore, expressive arts have a value for the well-being of man, in the different phases of his life. Theater is one of them: it has ancient origins and has accompanied humans for centuries with a cultural, social but also health-related importance.

For this reason we considered the contribution of theatre to this training to be fundamental.

Theater gives the opportunity of knowing oneself and others through relationships and the use of the body: it is one of the cornerstones of theatrical activity and allows those who experience it to become familiar with themselves and their corporeity.

We have selected some of the exercises that are the basis of theatre laboratory activities to become aware of space, of the body in space and in relation to others.



The methods presented have different origins but take inspiration from Augusto Boal's theatre of the oppressed and the classical preparatory exercises that are performed by people that first approach acting. We decided to not include real "acting" exercises but we selected activities meant to deepen the perception of body, space and relationships with others.

These activities are a "starting point" and inspiration for working with adults: it is important that the trainer chooses the activities to propose considering the features of the group members. Theatrical activities have the great characteristic of being very "malleable" and adaptable to different contexts, spaces, times and recipients. We invite you to read our proposal carefully: they can be a seed in your mind and generate new and specific changes and suggestions for your group.

Warm up

Get the body ready. The body warming exercises prevent any kind of injury (as in the following exercises the participants are required to use the body, the muscles need to be warm) and create the appropriate intrapersonal and interpersonal setting.



5-10 minutes



for each person, a space that permits to open both arms



Music: you can choose the music you like but it's important that the energy progressively raise during the exercises

Description of the method:

These exercises are typically used in the beginning of the session. The participants are standing in a circle, facing the centre. The guide explains what they are going to do and why it's important to warm up the body before starting body-related activities (to prevent any injuries, to take care of yourself, to feel good). The participants are, then, asked to follow the sequence of movement the guide is modelling.

The group clap their hands three times at the same time and, right after that, they warm up their hands rubbing them together really fast. They are told to push down their shoulders "as far away as possible from their ears" to prevent the shoulder muscles from contracting too much. After a few seconds, they start to massage their neck (with warm hands). The same sequence is repeated three times massaging the neck, the left shoulder, the right shoulder.

The group rub their hands for the last time and they proceed to massage their faces: first the forehead from the centre to outside, then the cheeks (from centre to outside) and then the rest of the face, being particularly careful near the eyes. The massage needs to follow the face expression lines and it always starts to the centre of the face to the outside.

The participants are asked to relax the face, doing "the sleepy face", and then to contract the muscles, doing the "really smiley face". This is repeated 3 times.

They are asked to "count" their teeth with the tip of their tongue (pressing with it on each tooth).



The participants are standing up in a circle. They are asked to walk freely in the space and to come back in the circle at the clap of hand. They will now be in different positions.

They start to move one foot doing rounds: the foot touches the ground first with the point, then with the right side then with the heel and the other side. After some rounds, they change direction and perform some more rounds.

These movements are then reproduced with the other foot.

After this they lift their foot and produce circular movement with their ankle. Then, the circular movement is produced with the knee and, if possible, with the hip. All of these movements need to be performed first with one leg and then with the other.

Then the upper body becomes the centre of attention and their fingers and hands start to move: closing and opening of the hands, moving their fingers, etc.

They start to move the wrists circularly, in both directions. After a few minutes, they are asked to move the elbows too in a circular way.

At the end, they produce circles with the shoulders moving all the arms. First to the front and then to the back.

At this point, some movement needs to be performed to warm up the back muscles.

The participants stand in a neutral position (arms near the body, straight legs as wide as the distance between the shoulders). They start to turn slowly left and right with their back, as they have to look behind them. They are told to try to not involve the hips in their movement. The movement becomes progressively bigger and, in a few minutes, everyone reaches the maximum possible turn. After reaching the biggest movement possible, they start to reduce it until they go back to neutral position.

To keep in mind:

Remind to:

Listen to your body needs, pain, and rigidity

Only perform the movements you can do, considering your body characteristics. Remind the group to always listen to their own body, respect their physical limits and avoid movements that can injure them.

Our conclusion from testing:

In our opinion, based on experience in using it, this method can be useful for:

Warm up the body at the beginning of the session in order to avoid accidents

“Warm up” the relational climate of the group, especially when working with people that are not used to work together

To use also individually

The possibility to create variation for specific circumstances: for example, movements that can be done sitting at the desk, when in the office or other places without the possibility to really move in the space

“THIS EXERCISE HELPED ME TO FEEL READY. I DO IT WHENEVER I START FACILITATING A WORKSHOP. IT REALLY MAKES A DIFFERENCE!”

J.B.

Warm up

The Group - an opening

Get the group ready to work together. This series of exercises can be used as an ice-breaker at the beginning of a group session, especially when the group is made of people that don't know each other.



15-20 minutes



a space as empty as possible, a room where you can walk and move



Music: The music must be selected to create a happy, relaxed but yet energetic mood

Description of the method:

These exercises are typically developed after an initial warm-up phase and need a facilitator, one person that leads the series of exercises and gives signals.

The participants are in a circle: the facilitator explains briefly what type of exercises they are going to do. They are then asked to start walking freely in the room, keeping in mind that:

- It's "like they are on a raft or small boat": if they all stand on one side of the room the boat is going to sink.
- They have to try to avoid walking in circles in the room, but pay attention in varying the path they walk

They have to pay attention to walking in the most "neutral" way: relaxed shoulders, arms and hands (the facilitator can say "push your shoulders as far away as possible from your ears").

After some minutes, the facilitator asks them to speed up a little bit to increase their energy. If possible, some other direction can be added:

- The participants try to walk only in straight lines: they can change direction only when they meet an obstacle and, also in this case, they need to perform a sudden change of direction (make an "angle").
- The participants try to walk only in circles, avoiding any straight lines: they can perform big or small circles.

The participants are then asked to go back to walk freely in the room and they are given a minute to relax and regain energy.

At this point, the facilitator tells them they are back again on the raft and this time the speed they are walking now will have a name: it will be called "5".

- When the facilitator says aloud a higher number, the walking speed should be higher (without running)
- When the facilitator says aloud a lower number, the walking speed should be lower (without stopping)
- When the facilitator says "0" they have to freeze "like statues".

The facilitator proceeds to alternate walks speed "10" and "0" (Freeze).



The speed is then settled at “5”. The participants are then asked to go back to walk freely in the room and they are given a minute to relax and regain energy. They are asked not to pay particular attention to others when they meet them while they walk. In the next steps

- They are asked to sense the presence of other people and, later, to briefly look at them as they meet them while walking.
- The participants keep walking and, now, when they meet each other they exchange a greeting nod.
- After some moments, the facilitator asks them to add a greeting gesture (like waving), and after to add voice (like saying hello, goodmorning, hi, etc.).
- Now the facilitator asks the participants to greet others (when they meet them while they’re walking) like it’s someone they just met (they will probably shake hands, say hi, present themselves).
- After, the facilitator asks the participants to greet others like they are their best friends and, after, like friends from primary school or kindergartens that they haven’t met for years.

The facilitator can vary the request on the basis of what mood/energy he/she wants to explore and what he/she sense from the group.

To close this small series, the facilitator ask the participant to walk in the room again, but at this point, when they meet each other:

- They first say: “I’m the most wonderful person in the world!” and the other one will reply: “No, no, no, I’m the most wonderful person in the world”
- After some encounters the sentence will be changed to: “YOU are the most wonderful person in the world!” “No, no, no YOU are the most wonderful person in the world!”

To keep in mind:

- Listen to your body needs, pain, and rigidity
- Only perform the movements you can do, considering your body characteristics. Remind the group to always listen to their own body, respect their physical limits and avoid movements that can injure it.
- Remind the group to be careful and respect the body of others and their limits. The main goal is always to care about others and make them feel good and safe.

Our conclusion from testing:

In our opinion, based on experience in using it, this method can be useful when we are working with newly formed groups and we need to make further exercises more accessible: this “social” warm up can lighten the mood and break the ice. It can be difficult for some people to access directly to this version of the exercises because they require eye contact and physical touching. The trainer needs to keep in mind the characteristics of the group and plan a gradual exposition to these exercises.

**“CHALLENGING EXERCISE
FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT
USED TO GETTING IN TOUCH
WITH FOREIGNERS OR WHO
HAVE TROUBLES WITH EYE
CONTACT.”**

J.W.

The Group - an opening

Walk the space

A series of exercises in which the level of trust in others is growing and participants use an increasingly diverse set of senses.



20 minutes



a space as empty as possible, a room where you can walk and move



Music: the energy of the music must be more energetic in the first part and calm in the second one

Description of the method:

In our daily life, sight is the sense with greater importance: we use it to understand the world and to be reassured of what is around us. When we meet or we are in relation with others, we use our sight to understand, “judge” and check the other person. Other senses become, indeed, dormant and this doesn’t allow us to perceive (as we don’t put attention in them) a lot of really important information. This series of exercises has the goal to use other senses and find new ways to experience the world around us, to know others and to trust them.

These exercises are typically developed after an initial warm-up phase and need a facilitator, one person that leads the series of exercises and gives signals.

The participants are in a circle: the facilitator explains briefly what type of exercises they are going to do. They are then asked to start walking freely in the room, paying attention to how they put their feet on the ground and to the sensations this touch gives them.

After some minutes, the facilitator asks them to imagine that something is happening in the room. The participants follow and notice what happens to their bodies:

- Some water is starting to enter the room: “the room is starting to have some water on the floor!”. The water is rising a little bit so they have to be really careful not to slip.
- After some minutes, the water is becoming higher and higher: now it’s at the level of their ankles, then at the knee, then at the waist.
- After a while, the water is at the level of their shoulders and then on their chin (at this point, a lot of participants will start to walk on tiptoes). At this moment, the facilitator asks them to “taste the water” and she says: “Oh!! It’s salty!! Then we are probably walking in the sea!”
- The facilitator leads the participants, who are still walking in the room, to head towards the shore. The participants are then asked to explore the sensation of the sand under their feet: the sand can be fresh, warm or really hot depending on the time of the day.

This walk through imaginary scenarios can be repeated using different stimuli: grass, snow, mountains are some examples.

“TRUST EXERCISE. IT’S NICE TO LET GO AND LET SOMEONE ELSE GUIDE YOU.”

R.C.

At this point, the facilitator asks the participant to form a circle and to share their experiences. Lead questions can be:

- Was it difficult for you to imagine these scenarios?
- How did the scenarios change your way of walking? How did your body react?

The participants split into pairs and take place in the room: in each pair, one will be the “magician” and one will be the “follower”. The guide tells them to imagine that the magician can create a wire that can attach to parts of the body of the follower. With these wires he/she can pull and make the other body move. They can keep just one wire at a time but they can change the point where this wire attaches to the other’s body as much as they want. The magician touches a body part of the follower with the tip of his/her fingers and the wire is created. They exercise in pulling and moving the body of the follower. They need to be reminded that the magician has the responsibility to keep the follower safe and comfortable. They switch roles and the exercise is performed again. The exercise is repeated with different partners.

The last part of the exercises is then introduced to the participant: the follower puts his/her hand on the shoulder of the guide and closes his eyes. The guide will lead him/her across the room being particularly careful not to make him/her bump into obstacles. After some minutes, when the follower is more confident and trustful, the guide can introduce changes in speed, height and movement.

The roles then switch and the game starts again.

To keep in mind:

- Listen to your body needs, pain, and rigidity
- Only perform the movements you can do, considering your body characteristics. Remind the group to always listen to their own body, respect their physical limits and avoid movements that can injure it.
- Remind the group to be careful and respect the body of others and their limits. The main goal is always to care about others and make them feel good and safe.

Our conclusion from testing:

In our experience, these exercises can lead to several reflections of both the person on her/himself and of the entire group (for example, do I like more to lead or to follow? What is the level of trust of the group?). It is important, in our opinion, to allow participants to explore both roles everytime the exercises are performed. As it can be difficult for some people to engage in this practice, the trainer should always consider the characteristics of the group and keep an eye on possible signs of discomfort. The exercises can be presented in different sessions and with graduality.

“ESPECIALLY CHALLENGING FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT USED TO HAVE PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH OTHERS, IT MIGHT BE EMOTIONALLY OVERWHELMING TO BE LEAD BY ANOTHER PERSON.”

J.W.



Walk the space

Sources & Resources:

Scan the QR code for a video of this activity.

The mirror



“We seek ourselves in others, who seek themselves in us”. In our everyday lives we constantly look, interpret and make predictions about other’s behaviour. Our body plays an important role in this process: we even possess neurons, the mirror neurons, that are activated both when we perform an action and when we see someone else perform it. In this series of mirroring exercises, the participants are placed often in front of each other and create a mirroring dialogue with a partner.



30 minutes



a space as empty as possible, a room where you can walk and move



Music: the energy of the music must help activate the energy of the group

Description of the method:

These exercises are typically developed after an initial warm-up phase and need a facilitator, one person that leads the series of exercises and gives signals.

The group is split in two and two lines are created facing each other. Every participant has another one in front, facing him. The facilitator controls that everyone has a partner and “draws” an imaginary line in the middle. Then:

- The facilitator asks the couples to start to walk toward each other and when they reach the line to turn and walk back to where they started. The participants go on waking for a while to become familiar with the space they have to walk in (how many steps, how much time, etc).
- When the participants look confident in the space, the facilitator asks them to look at their partner and try to walk at the same speed and synchronised. They have to try to always keep the same distance from the imaginary line. The facilitator waits for the synchronisation of the couples.
- When the couples are sufficiently synchronised and confident, the facilitator asks them to walk a little bit faster.
- If the couples feel comfortable, the facilitator asks them to walk backwards as they walk away from the centre line. The couples are facing each other and they can see when the other reaches the wall: given that, if one sees the wall approach on the other, she/he can stop walking backwards to indicate the need to stop to the other.

The participants reach the middle for the last time and touch hands, palm to palm, to each other to say goodbye. Then they go back to the original line and they move one position to the left (the last one from the line has to move to the opposite side). The exercise can be repeated with different partners.



The facilitator then explains briefly that the group is going to play “the mirror game” and ask the participants to stand in two lines in front of another one, face to face. In these pairs, facing each other, one participant will be the “image” and the other will be the “subject”. The centre line will be a “big mirror” between them.

- The subject starts to move and the image follows trying to copy the movement as simultaneously as possible. If the participants feel comfortable they can also be asked to follow facial expressions.
- After some minutes, a signal will be given (like a clap of hands) and the roles will switch. This role changing can be repeated a few times.

The facilitator walks on the centerline, explaining that the big mirror has broken. The pairs can repeat the same mirroring exercise, facing each other and exchanging the role every now and then, but this time they are free to move in the space as they want.

At this point:

- It is important to remind them to explore space in every direction: walking or moving from one side of the room to another but also using, when possible, different heights (laying on the ground, sitting, standing...).
- When participants are confident with the mirror game, it is important to remind them to pay attention to details: the copy should be as precise as possible so they should pay attention to small movements too, such as the movement of the fingers, the facial expressions, the position of the feet...

To close the series of exercises, the group split in two. One group faces the wall and the other prepares a “sculpture” in silence: they take a position in the space, possibly in relationship with the other components of the group (see an example in the photo below). The more complex the group sculpture the better, since the goal is to make it difficult for the other team to recreate it exactly. The other group turns and has 30 seconds to recreate the same sculpture with their bodies. The facilitator then assigns a point if the copy is good. After that, the group switches roles and the game is repeated.

Another possible way to end the series of exercises is “the happy mirror”.

- The group is still divided in groups and the facilitator asks them to use their eyes to quickly find a partner in the other group.
- When everyone has a partner, the facilitator asks to start to move, mirroring each other (remaining in the group) using happy faces or happy movement: “You really like what you see in the mirror, you are really happy about what you see and you are happy to be like this”.

After the closing part, the energy can be lowered asking participant to sit in a circle and giving them some reflection questions like:

- How did you feel in the two roles? What changes did you notice? Was there a role in which you felt more comfortable?
- How did you feel in the relationship with different partners? Did you notice changes?
- How did your body feel in taking others' positions and movements?

**“I REALISED THAT
SOMETIMES I LIKE TO LEAD
AND SOMETIMES I AM JUST
HAPPY TO FOLLOW AND
LEAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY
TO SOMEONE ELSE”**

I.R.

The mirror

To keep in mind:

In these series of exercises, it's important to explore movements, different positions, different parts of the space, different heights. It's, then, particularly important that the participants are reminded to:

- Listen to your body needs, pain, and rigidity
- Only perform the movements they can do, considering their body characteristics. Remind the group to always listen to their own body, respect their physical limits and avoid movements that can injure it.

Remember that, these exercises should be performed after a body warming.

It's also important to notice that these kinds of activities can be more challenging since they require a major interaction with others: it is possible that groups, especially newly formed ones, need some repetition before being able to really explore space and relationship with these exercises.

Our conclusion from testing:

In our experience, these exercises can lead to several reflections of both the person on her/himself and of the entire group (for example, do I like more to lead or to follow? How do I feel about moving as my partner? How is my body reacting?).

It is important, in our opinion, to allow participants to explore both roles everytime the exercises are performed. A certain level of shyness can emerge the first time these exercises are performed, also if the group isn't newly formed but it should decrease in time, with repetition of the same exercises, leaving participants more free to experiment.

As it can be difficult for some people to engage in this practice, the trainer should always consider the characteristics of the group and keep an eye on possible signs of discomfort. The exercises can be presented in different sessions and with graduality.

Sources & Resources:

[Scan the QR code for a video of this activity:](#)



An example of group sculpture

The mirror

Soundscapes

Imagination is the key. In this exercise, the group is led to imagine and create auditory scenarios together.



20-25 minutes



an empty room



Pillows and blankets for better comfort

Description of the method:

Participants are invited to lie on the ground in a supine position and close their eyes. The trainer allows a few minutes to pass, trying to guide them into a state of relaxation of mind and body, using brief phrases like "close your eyes and let your body relax completely. Try as much as possible to empty your mind of thoughts, but keep it ready for action. In a few minutes, our journey begins. Try to imagine the situation I will lead you to with your imagination, trying to reproduce sounds, noises, and sensations using voice and body, without moving from the supine position you are in. For example, you can clap your hands or feet on the floor, blow intensely, imitate the sounds of nature or what is happening around us. Always pay attention to the suggestions of others, respect them, and join them, trying to create a unified setting around you."

When it is perceived that the goal has been achieved, the trainer, in the role of narrator, begins the story. It is not necessary to follow a predetermined text; the narrator can improvise, paying attention to what emerges within the group.

The idea is to propose to the group a journey that starts at dawn and ends at the same time the next day: the story will have a very slow rhythm, roughly waiting a few seconds after each sentence to allow the group to imitate what is happening around them. It is important to maintain a neutral and welcoming tone of voice.

You can find an example of a text on the next page.

To keep in mind:

Sometimes the narrator can support the group in producing sounds and noises, especially in moments of greater difficulty or at the beginning and end of the exercise.

Our conclusion from testing:

This exercise, in our experience, can help to create a good environment in the group, making each member feel involved. Closed eyes can help those who struggle to engage and emerge.



Text for an auditive imaginary trip to the beach

"We are on a beach at dawn.
There are no people around us.
We are alone lying on the sand.
Around us, the waves of the sea crash on the shore.
Some animals wake up.
Here are the first inhabitants of the beach.
The sun is slowly rising.
Someone is running along the shore.

It's about 7:30 in the morning now.
The kiosks are opening.
Here comes someone.
Birds fly high in the sky.

It's 8:30.
The beach begins to live with those who like to come early to get a spot.
There are many activities on the beach...
...and in the water.
The sun is high and scorching.
The beach is crowded with people.
It's hard to pass without stepping on someone else's towel.

It's lunchtime.
What a smell of food!
The sky is blue and there's not a cloud.
Someone leaves the beach.
The music from the bar lowers.

It's 2:30 in the afternoon.
There are fewer people.
The sun beats down on our skin.
Seagulls fly in the sky.

At 4:30 in the afternoon, someone returns for the last hours.
And again, the space decreases.

At 6:30, someone goes home.
Someone chooses to stay until sunset.

Here's the golden hour.
Everything is quieter.
The kiosks close.

It's evening now.
There's a light breeze.
Some animals return, and others leave their nests.
There is a fresh wind.

It's dark.
And here are the stars.
The moon reflecting on the sea.
There's an intense light.
The sky turns violet.
The sun timidly rises from the sea and greets the moon."

"This type of mind journeys allow me to enter into a creative world, where my inner self brings up the pictures, which are important in this moment. Most of the time they have a calming effect on me, because I allowed my inner voices to be heard."

I.R.

3.4 Social Presencing Theater

In this publication we share some of the activities from the Social Presencing Theatre (SPT), which we explored during the Laboratory meeting in Tallinn (Estonia).

SPT was developed by Arawana Hayashi and Otto Scharmer to support transformational changes. We live in time of disruption and changes through “Climate change. Hunger. Poverty. Terrorism. Violence. Destruction of communities, nature, life”, which Otto Scharmer sees as the foundations of our social, economic, ecological, and spiritual well being. In “Theory U” he developed a process for transformation, which comes from within.

“In order to create real change in the world we need to shift the inner place from where we operate, not just as individuals, but also in our collective actions, as groups, as organisations, and as larger systems.” (Otto Scharmer, Author of “Theory U: Leading from the Future As it Emerges”)

Arawana, from her original profession as a Japanese dancer, contributed to the Theory U the Social Presencing theatre, a method to become aware of the own body, in order to understand better the changes needed in personal life, but also in our society. With the methods we explore not only the own awareness of our body, but also become more aware of the “social body” of groups and communities. (e.g. family, friends, colleagues).

Hayashi's intention with this work is to offer movement practices that support people in recognizing their own and others' embodied wisdom, compassion, and courage to act. In the face of today's enormous environmental, social, and spiritual challenges, we can become disconnected from the fundamental human goodness that lives in our presence. Social Presencing Theater invites us to make the true moves that are ours to create a society of brilliance, warmth, and strength. If you want to know more about the back ground of SPT we recommend to read here:



For this project, we have chosen practices that help to become more aware of your body and your body sensations in a first step and then notice the social field you are living in. The embodiment practices support you in getting closer to yourself and to the others and deepens reflection. In her book Hayashi describes *“Each practice has a view, a purpose, and a definite form – how to begin, what the parameters are, when to end. The practices are forms. They are containers for experiences. Each practice is followed by a group reflection. There is no right or wrong experience – only learning.” (page 8)*

Warm-up

We usually start our SPT Session with some of the mindfulness activities in order to support participants to be in the here and now and to be able to fully connect to the SPT-activities.

You can find these activities in Chapter 3.1. Mindfulness methods and mind journeys.

20-minute dance



20 minutes + time for reflection



Empty floor, where you can lie down



empty space, gong (or alarm) to start and finish the practice

The 20-minute dance is a practice in which we pay attention to the feeling of the body, without thinking about it or judging it.

Description of the method:

20 Minute Dance is a body practice, where the invitation is to become more present and grounded in your bodies. Times are very busy and often we are lost in thoughts not able to concentrate on what we want or need to do. We do not take the time to listen, what is calling us. With this activity we invite you to become still, listen to your body and learn to understand the language of your body better.

For the activity you need a space, where you can move and where you are not disturbed for 20 – 30 minutes. Ideal is a wooden or carpeted floor, where you can lie down. The 20-minute Dance is a practice in which we pay attention to the feeling of the body, without thinking about it or judging it.

Process:

Begin by resting on the floor with the eyes closed. Feel the body and bring some attention to abdominal breathing. Experience your body, simply, without judgement or goal.

- Let a movement begin. Do whatever the body feels like doing without planning anything. For example, the body might feel like stretching, rolling over, or wiggling its fingers. Keep the movement close to the ground. Any movement is good. Pay attention to the sensations, the feeling of the body, as it is moving.
- Then, pause and feel the body as it is resting in a shape or a posture.
- Then begin to move again, paying attention to the feeling of the body moving.
- Continue in this way, alternating resting and moving, paying attention to the feeling of the body. As we move or rest, our attention can be on part of the body (we feel our lower back or knee or shoulder) or on a sense of the whole body.
- When you notice that you are thinking, labelling, or judging the experience, let those thoughts go. Simply rest your attention on the feeling of the body

Sitting

- After several minutes, let the body rise to a sitting position. Continue alternating stillness and movement, allowing the eyes to remain closed.



Standing

- Again, later in the practice time, come to a standing position. Continue to alternate moving and stillness. You might include bending or twisting, maintaining a sense of standing on one spot.

Moving through space

- Open your eyes and begin to move around the room. Keep your eyes downcast with a soft gaze so that your attention remains in your body and is not drawn outward into what others are doing.

Finding an ending

- At the end of the 20 (or 10) minutes, stop and hold a still shape. Wait in the still shape until the others have found their ending shape and place in the room. Feel the back of the body. Feel the full three-dimensional shape of the body. Then become aware of the space above and below and around the body

Take some time for reflection. If you are alone, take a journal and note down what you observed. If you are in a group – take turns to share what you experienced.

Our conclusion from testing:

In the testing phase some practised SPT regularly. One of the participants shared her experience: “When we tried out the ‘20 minutes of dance’ exercise in Tallinn, I immediately realised that it was very good for me. The exercise is very simple, you only need a blanket or a mat and a time frame and yet it opens up a space that I personally associate with freedom, openness, listening to your own body and relaxation. My routine was that I lied down on my yoga mat in the morning, set the timer for 10 minutes (I have adapted the exercise for myself so that it is more practical) and listened to myself. Then I started to do the movements that my body was telling me. Often exercises that I have learned in yoga, but also in physiotherapy, came to my mind. Sometimes I just felt like breathing.

During the test phase, I tried to "dance" in this way for 10 minutes before work, if I managed to somehow organise it. I didn't necessarily expect it, but on days when I start the day with my "dance", I faced challenges or problems much more calmly and relaxed. I want to keep this routine for myself, as it enriches me personally.”
(A.S., project coordinator in an NGO from Austria)

Sources & Resources:

For more background and details of the activity we recommend to go to the website of u-school and watch the [video of Arawana Hayashi](#).



**“ON DAYS WHEN I START
THE DAY WITH MY "DANCE",
I FACED CHALLENGES OR
PROBLEMS MUCH MORE
CALMLY AND RELAXED”**

A.S.

20-minute dance

An everyday life practice

A small practice to become aware of the moment by watching the world passing by



5 minutes + time for reflection



Empty floor, where you can lie down



nothing specific

Description of the method:

This is very small exercise to learn to become aware of the present moment. The practice was described in the book of Arawana Hayashi.

Process:

Go to the window or sit still somewhere in a park for 5 minutes to look at the world around you. Do not do anything. Don't even try. Just sit or look out without any special effort. Thought will come and go. Just let them.

After five minutes, take up a journal or piece of paper. Write down one short phrase or sentence describing something you saw or heard while looking out the window. Just describe it without interpretation.

Second, write a short phrase that describes a feeling you had as you looked out the window.

Finally, write a short phrase that combines your perception with your feelings. Write down your first thought without labouring over it.

Then read the three lines back to yourself and notice how you feel.

Conclusion:

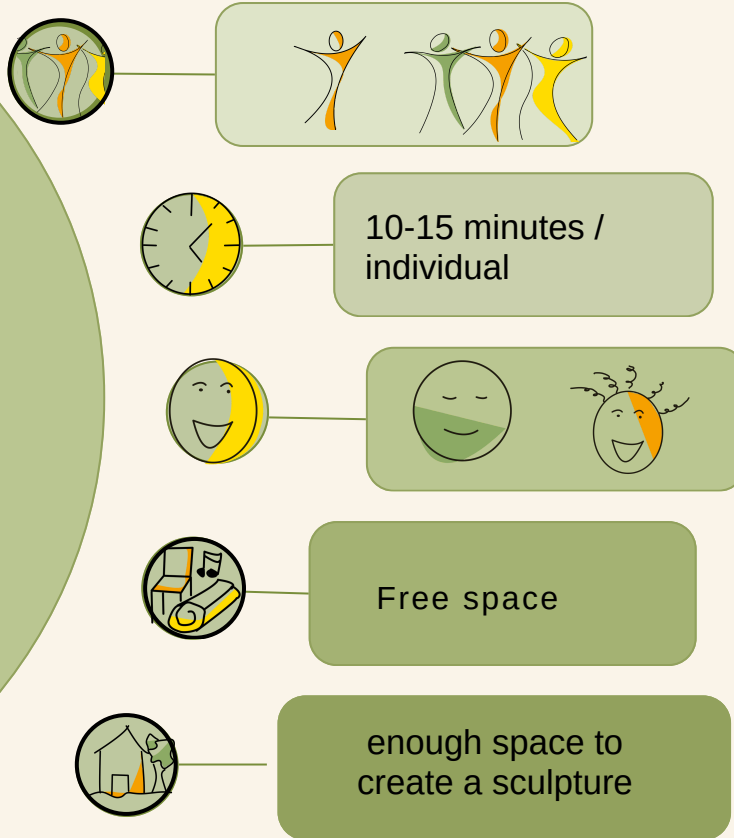
It is a very small activity, which helps you to connect to the present moment and it can be easily introduced in the day. It is especially recommended for beginners.



Stuck

exercise

It is a process where the participant is moving from sculpture 1 (current reality / stuck) to sculpture 2 (emerging future). We do not know what the movements will be or where they will stop, but we can follow the movement and then reflect on our experience. Surprising insights may arise.



Description of the method:

Stuck is the main technique of **Social Presencing Theater**. It is a process where the participant is moving from sculpture 1 (current reality / stuck) to sculpture 2 (emerging future). We do not know what the movements will be or where they will stop, but we can follow the movement and then reflect on our experience.

Surprising insights can arise.

The purpose is to feel deeply into the situation, suspending our problem-solving habit. By paying attention to our “body-knowing” and to the social field, we discover new directions or fresh insights that were not accessible just by thinking.

Principles

- Let the body be the guide. Do not plan, act, mime, pretend, manipulate or represent. Simply BE and DO.
- Lean into the “stuck” situation. The wisdom is there already. Notice what is emerging – what in Theory U language is sometimes called the “crack”.
- Trust the moment-to-moment experience



Process

The activity is especially powerful, when experienced in small groups, as you reflect not only by yourself, but get the impressions of the others. At the same time it is also very interesting to do it individually and reflect about it. We describe here the individual process. You can find all details of the group activities [here](#).

- Reflect on a place where you feel stuck, where there is a breakdown or an area of life or work that feels stuck.
- Let that feeling of being stuck in this particular situation come into your body as a shape or a gesture.
- Embody your feeling of being stuck. Make it concrete and visible in the space.
- Then move from Sculpture 1 to Sculpture 2 and allow that shape to move. When the movement comes to an end, stop (sculpture 2).
- Memorise the feelings and emotions of the first and second sculpture
- Take 1 - 2 minutes to sit and feel into the movement you just experienced
- Reflect: What is the difference between the stuck shape and sculpture 2? How are they different? What was the movement from sculpture 1 to sculpture 2? What insights or questions arose?

Our conclusion from testing:

In the workshop in Tallinn we explored the stuck exercise together. It is a powerful tool to get important insights into a challenge or problem. It is advisable, if you do it for the first time, to be guided by an experienced trainer. The feedback from one of the participants was, that “it was interesting to see how, by changing position, people read our body in different ways (R.C, Psychologist, Italy)

Sources & Resources:

For more background and details of the activity, we recommend to watch the videos, especially the ones, where Arawana explains the [practice](#).



“IT WAS INTERESTING TO SEE HOW, BY CHANGING POSITION, PEOPLE READ OUR BODY IN DIFFERENT WAYS “

R.C.

Stuck exercise

4. Final conclusions

These materials are intended to be an inspirational source for individuals who want to work on their personal ability to listen to the current moment and develop more empathy towards others. Furthermore, they are also for trainers, teachers, coaches and social workers working with groups who want to encourage more empathy in communication.

Conclusion from the Bodywise Laboratory

The evaluation at the end of the Bodywise Laboratory in Estonia showed that the participants felt calm, centred, relaxed and noticed an improvement of physical well-being. Furthermore, they reported feeling more aware of their bodies and of the body's need to be taken care of and listened to. The participants also reported to be grateful for the experience and that they were filled with new ideas and impressions. They felt more open and curious to explore new possibilities and were willing to go deeper in the use of methods and their potential.

Comparison of the responses before and after

We asked participants at the beginning and at the end of the Bodywise Laboratory how they felt at this current moment. The initial set of responses reflected a mix of excitement, curiosity, anxiety, and a bit of tiredness or stress. In contrast, the latest set of responses showed a more positive and confident tone, with mentions of being open to exploration, feeling calm, happy, and inspired. The latest set of responses also included a notable raise on body awareness and self-care, indicating a deeper understanding and appreciation for the discussed methods.

Within the Erasmus+ project, all the partners valued the experience and expressed that they learned new methods and added that they wanted to establish a regular routine with body-awareness activities in their lives.

Find a summary of our key learnings on the next page!



Key learnings

- **Create a routine:** The basis for becoming more aware of your body is that you do the activities regularly. Ideally, you reserve a few minutes for one or two body exercises every day. This can be 10 minutes of mindful meditation, some minutes of dancing to a song you like or 10 - 20 minutes of SPT-20 minute dance.
- **Learning comes through reflection:** The second step is taking the time to think about your experiences, e.g. with the question: How did I feel today? It plays an important role in becoming aware of our body sensations. We recommend having a small notebook and writing down your learning every day. Once a month take time to review what you have written.
- **Find your crowd:** One of our learning was that it was hard to keep the routine, if you do it on your own.
 - One tip is to organise it always at the same time, e.g. first thing in the morning or when you come home after work.
 - Another idea was that you find some colleagues or friends, with whom you exercise together, e.g. during the lunch-break or in a coffee-break
 - Community helps: in our project, we organised online meetings, where we exchanged our experiences and also exchanged new activities. This reminded us of our good intentions.

We hope you are inspired by the different activities and invite you to try out some of the methods either yourself or with your audience you are working with. We wish you an exciting exploration in becoming more aware of your body.

- **Feedback from our exploration** with different target groups:
 - One of our participants works with different theatre and body activities in a **pre-adolescent school** (11 - 14 years). What surprised her, was that the 5-finger breathing exercise really helped to calm the pupils down at the end of the session. It is a very easy tool and suitable for children who often need a concrete reference.
 - Another experience to calm down **students** was to use the bubble dance in reverse. Instead of starting small (as described in the exercise) you start with big bubbles and let them become smaller and smaller until there is almost no movement anymore. Then they sat down and concentrated on their breathing before they went off to their next lectures.
 - **Personal reflection:** During the test phase, one person tried to "dance" for 10 minutes before work, if she managed to organise it. *"I didn't necessarily expect it, but on days when I start the day with my "dance", I face challenges or problems much more calmly and relaxed. I want to keep this routine for myself, as it enriches me personally"*. (A.S., project coordinator in an NGO from Austria)
 - In working with **adults** we found that they are much more open than we sometimes think. The feedback from the external trainers at the laboratory in Estonia was very positive and participants were surprised how small movements can bring powerful insights into topics.

**TRY IT OUT – SENSE, FEEL
AND LISTEN TO YOUR
BODY'S SENSATIONS!**

The Bodywise Team

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