

# Quick Start

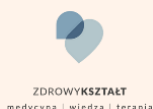
How to use this Toolkit when you have a session coming up

**Youth Workers Capacitation Toolkit**



## WHO THIS TOOLKIT IS FOR

This Toolkit is written for youth workers, trainers, educators and facilitators who work with young people in non-formal settings and who want to support their mental wellbeing. You do not need clinical training to use it. Nothing in this Toolkit asks you to diagnose, treat or replace a specialist. What it does ask is that you notice, listen, and know where to point someone who needs more help than you can give.



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# It will be useful to you

...if you recognise yourself in any of these:

- ☐ You run group sessions with young people and want structured activities on wellbeing that do not feel like a lecture.
- ☐ You have noticed something in a young person and are not sure what to say or where to turn.
- ☐ You are preparing a workshop and need a ready outline with timings, materials and debriefing questions.
- ☐ You train other youth workers and need material you can pass on without rewriting it first.
- ☐ You work in a school, a youth centre or a care institution and want to introduce the subject of wellbeing without turning it into a therapy session.

## WHAT THIS TOOLKIT IS NOT

It is not a diagnostic manual, not a therapy programme, and not a substitute for professional help. Where a young person needs specialist support, your task is to help them reach it — the Toolkit shows you how to recognise that moment.

## Two notes before you begin

### ON CHOOSING ACTIVITIES

Take less than you think you need. A single well-run activity with a proper closing does more than three activities squeezed into the same time. Every outline in this Toolkit can be shortened; none of them has to be delivered in full.

### ON YOUR OWN LIMITS

If a conversation goes beyond what you can hold, that is not a failure on your part — it is the moment the Toolkit was written for. Your task is to stay with the person and help them reach someone qualified. Page 62 tells you how. Look after yourself as well: this work is demanding, and a facilitator who is exhausted cannot support anyone.

# If your session is in two days

The Toolkit runs to 71 pages. You do not have to read it in order, and you do not have to read all of it before your first session. This is the shortest route to being ready.

1. Read the introduction (pages 5–7). Fifteen minutes. It explains why this subject belongs in youth work and what your role is — and is not.
2. Choose one assessment tool (pages 9–14). Start with the Weekly Mood Tracker if the group will meet again, or the Daily Stress Jar if this is a single session.
3. Pick the challenge that matches your group (pages 22–33). Six themes: anxiety, depression, loneliness, low self-esteem, digital overload, helplessness. Take one. Do not try to cover several in one session.
4. Add one good practice (pages 35–38). Art therapy, forest therapy or Jacobson's relaxation technique. Choose according to your space, not according to what looks best on paper.
5. Read the Facilitator Checklist (page 62). Ten minutes. It covers what to do before, during and after — including what to do if someone becomes upset.
6. Plan your closing (page 67, Youth Engagement). Never end a session on the difficult part. Leave time to close it properly.

## TOTAL PREPARATION TIME

About ninety minutes for a first session. Everything else in the Toolkit is there for when you come back to it.

# The Toolkit in one page

| SECTION                           | WHAT IS IN IT                                                                                                                                | WHEN TO USE             |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Introduction, pages 5–7           | What mental health and wellbeing mean, why they belong in youth work, and how stigma keeps young people from asking for help.                | Read first              |
| Assessment Tools, pages 8–14      | Three structured sheets a young person fills in themselves: weekly, daily and monthly. They support early recognition without any diagnosis. | Use with the group      |
| Wellbeing Challenges, pages 20–33 | Six themes, each with background and practical activities: anxiety, depression, loneliness, low self-esteem, digital overload, helplessness. | Choose one per session  |
| Good Practice, pages 35–38        | Three tested approaches: art therapy, forest therapy and Jacobson's relaxation technique.                                                    | Choose by your setting  |
| Facilitation Guide, pages 39–59   | A full four-day training outline with timings, materials and debriefing questions for each day.                                              | For a longer programme  |
| Implementation, pages 60–62       | Local implementation plan, pilot workshop outline and the facilitator checklist.                                                             | Before you run anything |
| Monitoring, pages 63–68           | Participant monitoring, feedback forms and guidance on engaging young people as partners.                                                    | After the session       |
| References, page 70               | Sources from the WHO, OECD, UNICEF, Eurofound and the Council of Europe.                                                                     | To go deeper            |

# Activities by type

The contents page lists the Toolkit in the order it was written. This index lists the same material in the order you are likely to need it: by what an activity does, rather than by where it sits in the book.

## SELF-OBSERVATION AND EARLY RECOGNITION

|                         |    |
|-------------------------|----|
| Weekly Mood Tracker     | 9  |
| Daily Stress Jar        | 11 |
| Monthly Self-Reflection | 13 |

## THEME SESSIONS

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Challenge 1: Fear / Anxiety          | 22 |
| Challenge 2: Depression              | 24 |
| Challenge 3: Loneliness              | 26 |
| Challenge 4: Low Self-Esteem         | 28 |
| Challenge 5: Digital Overload        | 30 |
| Challenge 6: Feeling of Helplessness | 32 |

## BODY, MOVEMENT AND CREATIVE WORK

|                                 |    |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Art Therapy                     | 35 |
| Forest Therapy                  | 37 |
| Jacobson's Relaxation Technique | 38 |

## STRUCTURED PROGRAMME

|                                                  |    |
|--------------------------------------------------|----|
| Training Outline                                 | 40 |
| Day 1 — Building Trust & Exploring Mental Health | 43 |
| Day 2 — Awareness & Self-Care Tools              | 47 |
| Day 3 — Skills for Supporting Youth              | 52 |
| Day 4 — Integration & Future Action              | 56 |

# Activities by type

## PLANNING AND PREPARATION

|                                            |    |
|--------------------------------------------|----|
| Local Implementation Plan for Young People | 60 |
| Pilot Workshop Outline                     | 61 |
| Facilitator Checklist                      | 62 |

## CLOSING, FEEDBACK AND PARTICIPATION

|                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| Participant Monitoring | 63 |
| Participant Feedback   | 65 |
| Youth Engagement       | 67 |

# Glossary

Terms used in the Toolkit that may not be familiar.

## Non-formal education

Organised learning outside the school curriculum — voluntary, based on the participant's own experience, without grades or exams.

## Emotional literacy

The ability to name what you feel, recognise it in others and talk about it. It is learnt, not innate, and it is what most of the activities in this Toolkit build.

## Resilience

The capacity to cope with difficulty and recover from it. Not the absence of hard feelings, but the ability to get through them.

## Mindfulness

Deliberate attention to the present moment, without judging it. In practice: short exercises in noticing the breath, the body or the surroundings.

## Grounding

A technique for returning attention to the here and now when someone is overwhelmed — usually through the senses or through contact with the ground.

## Safe space

A setting in which a participant can speak without fear of ridicule or of what is said being repeated. It is created by agreed rules, not by declaration.

## Debriefing

The conversation after an activity, in which participants say what happened for them. Skipping it is the most common mistake in this kind of work.

## Burnout

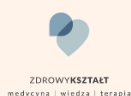
A state of exhaustion caused by prolonged strain, most often at work. It concerns facilitators as much as the young people they work with.

## SMART goal

A goal that is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. Used in the Toolkit for closing commitments.

## Dragon Dreaming

The participatory method underlying the RECOVER project: a group works through four phases — dreaming, planning, doing and celebrating.



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