



NON-FORMAL CAREER COUNSELLING TOOLKIT NO. 2

Self-Understanding for Career Development

EXPLORING SELF-IMAGE, VALUES, STRENGTHS, AND IDENTITY TO
SUPPORT MEANINGFUL CAREER DEVELOPMENT



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Self-understanding in youth career guidance is the ability to notice, name, and make sense of one's inner world—needs, values, strengths, interests, emotions, and identity—and to describe these patterns using real-life evidence. It is not an optional or supplementary element of guidance. Rather, it is the mechanism that makes all later steps usable, because young people are able to explain what fits them, what does not, and why

Within the project Open Yourself for Career Skills, a cross-national study was carried out by researchers in Lithuania, Latvia, Iceland, and Spain. This Study Report forms the empirical foundation of the chapter. Across countries, young people consistently identify self-awareness and self-knowledge as central needs in career counselling. At the same time, they express dissatisfaction with impersonal, information-heavy formats and with limited personalised feedback. Large-group settings are often experienced as unsafe spaces for personal questions, while individual and small-group consultations are perceived as more supportive, dialogical, and relevant.

The research also shows that developmental differences matter. For this reason, the chapter distinguishes between young people under the age of 16 and young people aged 16 and above. These distinctions are not deficit-based; they reflect developmental stages, educational transitions, and empirically observed counselling needs.

This chapter therefore focuses on building accurate, flexible, and evidence-based self-knowledge, with particular emphasis on emotionally safe one-to-one and small-group work (up to five participants) and on inclusive, non-formal learning conditions that reduce pressure, comparison, and labelling.

Key concepts and definitions

Several closely related concepts are used throughout this chapter and need to be clearly distinguished.

Self-awareness refers to the ability to notice feelings, thoughts, preferences, and bodily signals in the moment. It provides the raw material from which self-understanding can later be developed.

Self-understanding involves recognising patterns across situations—what tends to energise or drain a person, what conditions support learning, or what values guide behaviour—and being able to describe these patterns in words.

Self-concept refers to beliefs about “who I am” and “what fits me.” In adolescence, self-concept is still forming and is strongly shaped by feedback and context.

Self-concept clarity describes how coherent and stable these beliefs feel. Low clarity often appears as contradictory self-descriptions or strong dependence on others’ opinions and is developmentally typical during adolescence

Values, understood as decision criteria, describe what matters most when real trade-offs are involved. Values help young people move away from the idea of a single “right answer” and instead support youth-owned reasoning.

Career decision-making self-efficacy refers to the belief that “I can take steps to decide.” This belief links self-knowledge to reduced indecision and to readiness for making choices..

What research shows across age groups

Young people under 16

For younger adolescents, identity development is typically situational, fluid, and exploratory. At this stage, young people often describe themselves differently depending on context, role, or recent experiences. Such variability should be understood as developmentally appropriate rather than as a lack of insight or seriousness. In fact, trying out different self-descriptions is a key part of learning how internal experiences relate to external situations.

Before formal subject-choice stages, self-awareness and basic career-related information are particularly relevant. Young people benefit from learning how to notice their reactions to different learning environments, tasks, and social settings, and from connecting these observations to emerging interests and preferences. This early awareness helps create a foundation for later, more complex decisions without forcing premature conclusions.

Research also indicates that young people aged 14–15 more often prefer small-group consultations compared to older youth. In these settings, reflection is supported through peer-normalisation: hearing that others experience similar uncertainty reduces pressure and self-doubt. However, this benefit only emerges when psychological safety is actively protected. Clear boundaries, respectful facilitation, and the absence of ranking or evaluation are essential conditions.

Trust in assessment tools and tests among this age group is mixed. Young adolescents are often curious about tests but quickly disengage when results feel generic, overly simplistic, or easy to manipulate. When test outputs are not accompanied by personalised discussion and concrete examples, their credibility is weakened. In contrast, when results are framed as conversation starters rather than conclusions, they can effectively support early self-understanding.

Young people aged 16 and above

After approximately age 15, the perceived need for career counselling increases and remains high through ages 18–19. This period is marked by growing awareness of educational and labour-market expectations, as well as by increased external pressure from institutions, family, and peers. As a result, questions about the future become more urgent and emotionally charged.

At this stage, pressure to "decide correctly" and beliefs that choices are permanent can significantly narrow self-understanding. Young people may feel compelled to define themselves through a single role or label, even when their experiences suggest more complex or evolving patterns. This narrowing often reduces openness to exploration and increases anxiety around decision-making.

Decision strategies therefore become increasingly important. Research shows that self-knowledge becomes practically useful only when young people can translate insight into stepwise confidence in making decisions. This involves learning how to approach choices in manageable ways, such as comparing options, testing small steps, or revisiting decisions over time.

Career interventions are particularly effective when they strengthen career decision-making self-efficacy. This sense of being able to decide functions as a critical bridge between insight and action. When young people believe they can take meaningful steps despite uncertainty, they are better prepared to move forward, adapt, and engage with next steps in their educational and career pathways.

Core competencies developed

Young people under 16

For young people under the age of 16, this topic supports the gradual development of an emotion-and-body vocabulary for reflection. Young adolescents learn to notice and name internal signals, such as physical sensations, emotional reactions, and shifts in energy, and to ask what these signals might be communicating about their needs, boundaries, or learning conditions. This process helps transform vague or overwhelming experiences into information that can be reflected upon rather than avoided.

At this stage, the work also strengthens evidence-based strengths language. Instead of relying on broad or externally imposed labels (such as “good at school” or “not creative”), young people are guided to describe strengths through concrete situations and actions—what they did, what helped them succeed, and under which conditions the strength became visible. This approach reduces overgeneralisation and supports more realistic and flexible self-descriptions.

In addition, the topic develops safe peer-mirroring skills. Young people practice giving and receiving feedback that is specific, respectful, and non-comparative, without ranking or evaluating one another. Through structured peer reflection in small groups, they learn to see themselves through others’ observations while maintaining psychological safety.

Finally, young people under 16 are supported in developing a critical relationship with tests and tools. Rather than treating test results as definitive statements about identity, they learn to use them as starting points for reflection. Results are framed as prompts that invite further exploration and dialogue, helping young people maintain agency over their self-understanding.

Young people aged 16 and above

For young people aged 16 and above, the focus of competency development shifts toward integration and coherence. Self-knowledge is no longer limited to isolated contexts but is actively connected across school, work experiences, home environments, and online spaces. Young people are supported in recognising recurring patterns in how they engage, what motivates them, and where tensions or contradictions appear across these settings.

A central competency at this stage is values-based reasoning under constraints. Older adolescents learn to articulate what matters to them when real trade-offs are present, such as balancing personal interests with practical limitations or external expectations. This form of reasoning moves beyond idealised choices and supports grounded, realistic decision-making.

Another key area is the use of decision strategies to build confidence in one's ability to decide. Young people experiment with different approaches—such as comparing options, seeking informed second opinions, or intentionally creating distance before deciding—and reflect on which strategies reduce anxiety and increase clarity. Over time, this strengthens career decision-making self-efficacy and reduces avoidance or paralysis.

Finally, this topic supports the development of self-compassionate realism. Older youth learn to acknowledge limits, uncertainty, and incomplete information without harsh self-judgment. By reducing all-or-nothing thinking and perfectionism, self-compassion helps prevent distorted self-understanding and allows young people to engage more openly with feedback, mistakes, and ongoing learning.

Key challenges and typical barriers

Young people under 16

For young people under the age of 16, one of the most common barriers to self-understanding is a limited vocabulary for inner states. When young adolescents say “I don't know,” this often does not signal a lack of reflection or motivation, but rather an inability to name feelings, thoughts, or bodily sensations that are still unfamiliar or overwhelming. Without adequate language, internal experiences remain vague and difficult to examine.

Another significant barrier is the fear of exposure in large-group settings. Personal topics related to feelings, strengths, or uncertainty can feel unsafe when shared publicly, particularly in classroom environments where evaluation, peer judgment, or comparison are implicitly present. As a result, young people may withdraw, remain silent, or offer minimal responses, even when they are actively reflecting internally.

At this stage, family and peer norms exert a strong influence on how young people describe themselves. Adolescents may temporarily adopt or “borrow” self-descriptions from parents, teachers, or peers, especially when they lack alternative reference points. While this is a developmentally typical process, it can obscure emerging personal preferences and make it difficult for young people to distinguish between their own experiences and external expectations.

Young people aged 16 and above

Among older adolescents, challenges related to self-understanding become more closely tied to decision pressure and perceived consequences. Beliefs about permanence—such as the idea that one educational or career choice determines an entire future—can significantly increase anxiety and lead to rigid thinking. Under this pressure, self-understanding may narrow prematurely, with young people seeking a single definitive label instead of exploring patterns and conditions for fit.

Another barrier is mistrust toward generic tools and non-personalised feedback. Older youth are often highly sensitive to whether guidance feels relevant to their individual situation. When assessments, tests, or activities produce results that feel vague or interchangeable, engagement decreases and reflection becomes superficial.

Finally, discontinuous access to counselling poses a structural barrier to deeper self-understanding. When counsellors are responsible for multiple schools or locations, interactions with young people may be infrequent and fragmented. This undermines the repeated, iterative conversations that self-understanding requires, making it harder to build trust, track changes over time, and support the gradual integration of self-knowledge.

Inclusion and fewer opportunities

From an inclusion perspective, self-understanding is not equally accessible to all young people. Some youth have significantly fewer opportunities to collect what can be called "**strength evidence**" – concrete experiences that allow them to notice what they are good at, what they enjoy, or where they can persist despite difficulty. Limited access to extracurricular activities, travel, informal networks, volunteering roles, or safe responsibility-bearing situations reduces the range of experiences from which self-knowledge can emerge.

Language barriers, literacy differences, disability access issues, or neurodiversity-related differences can further complicate how young people perceive, process, and express self-knowledge. In such cases, difficulties in articulation may be misinterpreted as a lack of reflection, while in reality they reflect mismatches between internal experience and available expression channels.

Additionally, prior negative labelling – for example as "unmotivated," "problematic," or "not academic" – can make self-description feel risky. Young people who have repeatedly received deficit-oriented feedback may avoid reflection altogether, fearing that anything they say will confirm an existing label. In these contexts, self-understanding work must be particularly careful to separate behavioural evidence from identity judgments and to explicitly validate informal, everyday strengths such as care work, reliability, persistence, or practical problem-solving.

Implications for youth work practice related to this topic

In conversations, self-understanding should be framed as evidence-building and updateable, rather than as fixed labelling. Personalised, behaviour-based feedback is the core ingredient of effective support. An autonomy-supportive tone is essential, as choice and ownership increase honest reflection.

Helpful questions differ by age group. For younger adolescents, questions focus on safety, comfort, and concrete experiences. For older youth, questions focus on patterns across contexts, trade-offs, boundaries, and decision strategies.

Practitioners should avoid identity verdicts, generic tests without feedback, and forced public sharing, as these reduce safety and engagement.

One-to-one work is most appropriate for sensitive identity themes, shame, or low trust. Small-group work of up to five participants supports normalising uncertainty and enables structured peer feedback while maintaining safety.

Emotional safety requires keeping the work reflective rather than therapeutic, treating emotions as information, making choice explicit, and clearly communicating confidentiality boundaries.

Self-insight should be linked to real-life choices only through fit signals—such as preferred learning environments or boundaries—without moving into planning or implementation.

Practice-based illustrations

Practice-based illustrations help translate abstract concepts of self-understanding into concrete, recognisable situations drawn from youth work practice.

For young people under 16, a typical example is a quiet 15-year-old who appears disengaged or withdrawn during a whole-class session. In a large group, the young person may remain silent, avoid eye contact, or respond with minimal answers. However, when the same young person participates in a small group of four, they are able to describe clearly what helps them feel safe, what kind of interaction they prefer, and under which conditions they are willing to contribute. In this case, the observation does not indicate a “participation problem,” but rather provides valuable self-understanding data about environmental fit, emotional safety, and preferred learning conditions.

For young people aged 16 and above, a common scenario involves a 17-year-old asking for the “correct profession” or the “right choice.” This question often reflects underlying anxiety linked to permanence beliefs and fear of irreversible mistakes. Through guided reflection, the counsellor shifts the focus away from finding a single correct answer and toward identifying evidence from past experiences, values that matter under real constraints, and decision strategies that feel manageable. As pressure decreases, the young person gains clarity not by narrowing options prematurely, but by understanding how they make decisions and what kind of choices they are realistically ready to take.

These micro-cases illustrate how self-understanding emerges not from abstract questioning, but from observing patterns across situations and treating differences in behaviour as meaningful information rather than deficits.

How non-formal learning and small-group counselling support self-understanding

Non-formal learning environments play a critical role in supporting self-understanding because they generate experience-based evidence. Rather than asking young people to define themselves through abstract traits or labels, non-formal activities allow them to notice what they actually do: when they engage, when they withdraw, what they persist in, what frustrates them, and what gives them a sense of competence or meaning. These lived experiences provide a more reliable foundation for self-knowledge than hypothetical self-descriptions.

Young people consistently report that interactive and personalised consultations feel more relevant and safer than rigid classroom-based formats. Outside formal assessment settings, they are more willing to experiment, reflect honestly, and revise their self-descriptions without fear of being evaluated. Non-formal learning also allows for flexibility in pacing, expression, and participation, which is particularly important for youth who feel constrained by traditional educational expectations.

Small-group counselling, typically involving up to five participants, further strengthens self-understanding by enabling social mirroring without excessive exposure. In these settings, young people can recognise similarities and differences in experiences, normalise uncertainty, and receive feedback that is specific and respectful. The limited group size helps maintain emotional safety while still offering relational learning opportunities that are not available in one-to-one work alone.

To ensure accessibility, low-barrier inclusion adaptations are essential. These include offering multiple channels of expression (such as speaking, writing, drawing, or using symbols), focusing on behaviour-based prompts ("what did you do?" rather than "what kind of person are you?"), and starting with private reflection before optional sharing. Recognising informal strengths — such as caregiving responsibilities, reliability, or community involvement — as valid evidence broadens the scope of self-understanding. Short, contained reflection cycles and an explicit right to pass help maintain autonomy and psychological safety, particularly for young people with fewer prior opportunities or negative educational experiences.

Conclusion

Self-understanding is the practical skill of turning inner experience into usable self-knowledge—patterns, values, strengths, and motivational conditions. Research within the Open Yourself for Career Skills project shows high demand for self-awareness support alongside frustration with impersonal formats and weak feedback. Individual and small-group consultations are preferred because they offer safety, dialogue, and relevance.

For young people under 16, the focus lies on vocabulary development, safe reflection, and evidence-based strengths across contexts. For those aged 16 and above, it shifts toward integration, navigating values conflicts under constraints, and strengthening confidence in decision-making. Strengthening career decision-making self-efficacy emerges as a key bridge between insight, reduced indecision, and readiness for next steps.

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2. Practical activities

This section presents a set of practical, non-formal activities designed to strengthen young people's self-understanding as a foundation for later career exploration and decision-making. Rather than focusing on external opportunities, these methods guide participants to explore internal dimensions such as identity, values, emotions, strengths, energy patterns, and personal motivations. Through structured reflection, storytelling, peer dialogue, and experiential exercises, young people learn to recognise what influences their behaviour, how they respond to different environments, and what supports or limits their development. The activities emphasise safe, small-group processes that enable gradual self-disclosure, respectful listening, and the development of a shared language for talking about personal experiences.

The methods prioritise experiential and reflective learning over abstract discussion. Instead of asking participants to define themselves in fixed terms, the activities invite them to observe patterns, test insights, and connect personal experiences with everyday contexts such as school, relationships, and informal learning environments. By working with concrete examples—stories, situations, emotions, and actions—young people develop competencies such as self-awareness, self-efficacy, communication, and learning-to-learn. This approach supports a realistic and evolving understanding of identity, where uncertainty is normalised and growth is seen as a continuous process. As a result, participants build a stronger internal foundation that enables more informed, confident, and adaptable engagement with future career exploration.



ACTIVITY NO. 1

The Identity Iceberg

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Learning objectives

- To build vocabulary for identity beyond visible roles such as school, hobbies, or social labels.
- To recognise hidden internal drivers, including values, fears, needs, and motivations, that influence behaviour and choices.
- To develop skills of respectful self-disclosure and active listening in a safe group environment.

Competences developed

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Citizenship competence (respect for diversity and identity)
- Entrepreneurship competence (self-awareness, initiative)

Materials needed

- A4 paper or flipchart sheets
- Markers or coloured pencils
- Optional: stickers, magazines for collage

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the iceberg metaphor

The facilitator explains that identity has both visible and invisible parts. The visible part includes roles and labels that others can easily see, while the larger, hidden part includes values, motivations, needs, and personal experiences that influence behaviour.

02

Individual work

Participants draw an iceberg. In the visible (above water) section, they write roles, labels, or characteristics they usually show to others. In the hidden (below water) section, they include elements such as values, motivations, worries, needs, or "things that matter" to them.

03

Pair sharing

Participants work in pairs and share only what they feel comfortable sharing. The listening partner asks one open and curious question to better understand the other person's perspective.

04

Small-group circle

In small groups, volunteers share one insight from the "below the surface" part of their iceberg. Participation is optional and based on personal comfort.

05

Facilitated reflection

The facilitator leads a short group reflection using guiding questions to help participants process the experience and connect insights to their everyday behaviour.

Facilitator notes

Establish clear group agreements at the beginning, including confidentiality, no pressure to share, and the right to pass. For younger participants, use simple prompts such as "What makes you proud?" or "What annoys you?" to support reflection. For older participants (16+), introduce an additional layer by asking how their "iceberg" may change across different contexts such as school, home, or online environments.

Expected outcomes

- Participants identify at least two to three internal drivers such as values or needs that influence their behaviour.
- Participants develop greater empathy by recognising that others also have complex, less visible inner experiences.

Points of attention for youth with fewer opportunities

- Allow participants to express ideas using symbols or drawings instead of words if needed.
- Offer the option to reflect privately without sharing in the group.
- Be attentive to participants with trauma or anxiety and avoid encouraging deep or uncomfortable disclosure.
- Provide additional time and, where possible, individual support for participants with language barriers.

Reflection questions for participants

- What part of my iceberg is easiest to show, and what part do I usually protect?
- Which "below the surface" element influences my motivation the most?
- What would I like others to better understand about me?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants feel psychologically safe, and what signs indicated this?
- Which prompts were most effective for different age groups?
- Which participants needed additional support, and what adaptations were helpful?



ACTIVITY NO. 2

Strengths in Stories (Micro-Interview)

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 50–70 minutes

Learning objectives

- To help participants recognise their strengths through real-life examples rather than abstract descriptions.
- To develop the ability to give and receive strength-based, evidence-supported feedback.
- To reduce the perception of "I don't have skills" by making strengths visible through experience.

Competences developed

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Literacy competence (storytelling and reflection)
- Entrepreneurship competence (initiative, self-efficacy)

Materials needed

- Strengths prompt cards or a printed list (e.g., curiosity, kindness, persistence, creativity)
- Paper for notes
- Timer

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the concept of strengths

The facilitator explains that a strength is not a label but a pattern of behaviour—something a person does well that often feels natural or energising.

02

Pair interviews

Participants work in pairs. Partner A shares a short story about a situation where they handled something well (for example at school, home, in sports, or in an online activity). Partner B listens carefully and notes possible strengths demonstrated in the story.

03

Switch roles

After approximately 15 minutes, participants switch roles and repeat the process so both partners have the opportunity to share and listen.

04

Strengths identification

Each partner identifies two to three strengths they observed in the other person's story and provides evidence-based feedback (e.g., "I saw persistence because you continued even when it was difficult").

05

Group debrief

The facilitator leads a short group discussion on how strengths can appear in different contexts and how the same strength may be expressed in various ways.

Facilitator notes

Model clear, evidence-based feedback by focusing on observable behaviour rather than general praise. If participants struggle to identify examples, provide guiding questions such as "What was the challenge?", "What did you do?", and "What helped you succeed?". Maintain a supportive and non-competitive atmosphere throughout the activity.

Expected outcomes

- Participants identify and articulate personal strengths supported by real examples.
- Participants increase confidence in recognising and communicating their abilities.
- Participants strengthen peer connection through structured and positive interaction.

Points of attention for youth with fewer opportunities

- Allow alternative forms of storytelling, such as drawing or using photo prompts, for participants with lower literacy levels.
- For neurodiverse participants, provide clear structure and a predefined list of strengths to choose from.
- Ensure that feedback remains respectful and intervene immediately if teasing or negative behaviour occurs.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which strength surprised me the most?
- Where else could I use this strength?
- What kind of support helps my strengths appear or grow?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants provide specific and respectful feedback?
- Which participants struggled to identify strengths, and what were the reasons?
- How could this activity be adapted for individual (1:1) counselling contexts?



ACTIVITY NO. 3

My Energy Map: Drains and Gains

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 40–60 minutes

Learning objectives

- To increase awareness of what energises and what exhausts participants in their daily lives.
- To connect personal energy patterns to different learning and work environments.
- To introduce self-care as an essential component of sustainable personal and career development.

Competences developed

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Entrepreneurship competence (self-management)
- Digital competence (optional, if using tracking tools)

Materials needed

- Energy map worksheet (two columns: Drains / Gains)
- Sticky notes
- Optional: phones or devices for simple energy tracking notes

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the concept of energy

The facilitator explains that energy is a form of information, not a sign of laziness or failure. What gives or drains energy can help us better understand how we function in different situations.

03

Categorisation

Participants group their examples into categories such as people, tasks, environments, or time of day. This helps identify patterns in when and why energy changes.

05

Mini-design of a small change

Each participant identifies one small and realistic change they can test in the following week to improve their energy balance (for example, adjusting study conditions or introducing a short break routine).

02

Individual brainstorming

Participants individually list five to eight activities, situations, or conditions that give them energy ("gains") and five to eight that drain their energy ("drains") in their daily lives.

04

Small-group discussion

In small groups, participants share one "gain" and one "drain" and discuss possible patterns or similarities. The facilitator encourages participants to notice common experiences and differences.

Facilitator notes

Keep the activity practical and avoid framing behaviours as "good" or "bad." For participants aged 16+, include discussion about boundaries, workload, and time management. Remind participants that energy levels can change due to factors such as stress, sleep, or health, and that flexibility is normal.

Expected outcomes

- Participants identify personal conditions that support focus, motivation, and wellbeing.
- Participants define one realistic and manageable change to test in their daily routine.

Points of attention for youth with fewer opportunities

- Be sensitive to situations where energy drains may relate to family or environmental stress.
- Frame self-care as accessible and realistic, without requiring additional financial resources.
- Provide alternative approaches for participants with mobility or health limitations.

Reflection questions for participants

- What gives me energy that I would like to experience more often?
- Which energy drain is within my control to reduce, even slightly?
- What did I learn about the environment in which I function best?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants move from blaming external factors to identifying possible actions?
- Which energy patterns were most common across the group?
- How could insights from this activity support future career exploration or planning sessions?



ACTIVITY NO. 4

Emotions to Needs: The Signal Decoder

Target Group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 45–75 minutes

Learning objectives

- To improve emotional literacy and reduce shame or discomfort around expressing feelings.
- To understand the connection between emotions and underlying needs such as safety, belonging, autonomy, or competence.
- To develop basic self-advocacy language using simple and clear expressions such as "I need..."

Competences developed

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Citizenship competence (empathy, respectful communication)
- Literacy competence (expressing thoughts and feelings clearly)

Materials needed

- Emotion cards or emoji printouts
- Needs cards (e.g., belonging, rest, respect, choice, clarity, support)
- Scenario cards (e.g., school, friendships, family, online situations)

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce emotions as signals

The facilitator explains that emotions are not "good" or "bad," but signals that provide information about what is happening inside us and what we may need in a situation.

02

Work with scenarios

Participants work in small groups of three to four. Each group selects a scenario card and identifies an emotion that could realistically appear in that situation.

03

Connect emotions to needs

Groups discuss what need might be behind the chosen emotion using the structure: "If I feel..., I might need...". The facilitator supports participants in exploring more than one possible need for the same emotion.

04

Practice need statements

Participants create and briefly role-play a simple "need statement" (e.g., "When this happens, I feel..., and I need..."). This step helps translate internal experience into communication.

05

Group reflection

The facilitator leads a short debrief, focusing on what felt easy or difficult when identifying emotions and expressing needs. Participants are encouraged to reflect on how this skill could be useful in everyday situations.

Facilitator notes

Keep the activity structured and contained; it should not turn into a therapeutic process. Use hypothetical or neutral scenarios if needed. For younger participants, simplify choices and use clear, everyday language. For participants aged 16+, introduce additional complexity such as situations where values or needs may conflict. Ensure a respectful environment and immediately address any mocking or dismissive behaviour.

Expected outcomes

- Participants develop basic language for expressing emotions and underlying needs.
- Participants improve their ability to communicate respectfully in situations of tension or misunderstanding.
- Participants gain initial awareness of how emotions can guide behaviour and decision-making.

Points of attention for youth with fewer opportunities

- Provide non-verbal participation options such as pointing to cards or writing responses.
- Be aware of cultural differences in how emotions are expressed or discussed.
- Allow participants to pass their turn without pressure.
- Offer brief individual support if a participant becomes emotionally triggered.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which emotion is most difficult for me to recognise or name?
- What need do I often ignore or overlook?
- How could expressing my needs more clearly help me in school, relationships, or future work situations?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants distinguish between emotions and actions (e.g., "I feel angry" vs. "I want to hit")? How was this clarified?
- Which participants may need additional support due to higher stress or emotional load?
- How can this activity be connected to teamwork, communication, and workplace skills in future sessions?



ACTIVITY NO. 5

Values in Action: Scenario Choice Lab

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Learning objectives

- To help participants discover personal values through concrete choices rather than abstract ranking.
- To develop the ability to explain the reasoning behind decisions.
- To recognise situations where values may conflict and require trade-offs.

Competences developed

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Citizenship competence (respect for different perspectives)
- Entrepreneurship competence (decision-making, responsibility)

Materials needed

- Printed scenario cards with two to three options each
- Value word bank (printed)

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the concept of values

The facilitator explains that values are what matter to us when we make choices. They often guide decisions, even when we are not fully aware of them.

03

Individual decision-making

Each participant privately chooses one option from the scenario. This step ensures that choices are personal and not immediately influenced by others.

05

Identify underlying values

Using the value word bank, the group identifies one or two values that may explain each participant's choice (for example, security, freedom, helping others, achievement). Participants may notice that different choices reflect different but equally valid values.

07

Reflection

Participants reflect on what they discovered about their own values and how these values influence their choices in everyday life.

02

Work with scenarios

Participants work in small groups of up to five people. Each group selects a scenario card presenting a realistic situation (for example, choosing between time, money, helping others, or personal interests).

04

Share reasoning

Participants share their choices within the group and explain the reasoning behind them. The facilitator encourages participants to focus on "why" rather than on defending a "correct" answer.

06

Group discussion

The whole group reflects on how different values influence decisions and how multiple perspectives can coexist. The facilitator highlights that there is no single "right" value, but rather different priorities in different situations.

Facilitator notes

Avoid judging or ranking participants' choices; maintain a neutral and respectful tone. For participants aged 16+, introduce realistic constraints (such as limited time or resources) to reflect real-life decision-making conditions. Use guiding questions such as "What would make that choice feel right for you?" to deepen reflection.

Expected outcomes

- Participants identify and name three to five personal values based on real examples.
- Participants develop greater awareness of how values influence their decisions.
- Participants increase tolerance and understanding of different perspectives within the group.

Points of attention for youth with fewer opportunities

- Avoid scenarios that assume access to financial resources, travel, or specific family situations.
- Use culturally neutral or adaptable scenarios, and allow participants to create their own if needed.
- Support participants with lower confidence by allowing initial discussion in pairs before sharing in a group.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which value appears most often in my choices?
- When do my values come into conflict with each other?
- Which value do I want to protect or prioritise more in the future?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants feel safe to express their choices without judgement?
- Which scenarios generated the most meaningful reflection and discussion?
- How could this activity be adapted for individual (1:1) counselling contexts?



ACTIVITY NO. 6

Interest Radar: Curiosity Sprints

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 60–90 minutes

Learning objectives

- To expand awareness of interests beyond school subjects or familiar activities.
- To introduce curiosity as a skill that can be actively developed and practiced.
- To encourage low-risk exploration without pressure to make long-term or "final" decisions.

Competences developed

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Entrepreneurship competence (initiative, exploration)
- Digital competence (optional, when using online research tools)

Materials needed

- Interest categories poster (e.g., people, things, ideas, nature, art, technology)
- Sticky notes
- Optional: internet access

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the concept of curiosity

The facilitator explains that interests are not fixed and can develop through exposure, experimentation, and new experiences. Curiosity is presented as something that can be trained rather than something a person either has or does not have.

03

Categorise interests

Participants place their notes on the interest categories poster. Together, the group observes clusters and patterns that emerge across different types of interests.

05

Design a 7-day micro-exploration

Participants create a simple plan for a short "curiosity sprint," defining one small action per day for seven days (e.g., watching a video, trying a tutorial, talking to someone, or exploring a topic online or offline).

02

Individual brainstorming

Participants write as many statements as possible starting with "I'm curious about..." on sticky notes. The focus is on quantity and openness rather than correctness.

04

Select one focus area

Each participant chooses one cluster or theme that they would like to explore further.

06

Pair sharing and refinement

Participants share their plans in pairs and receive feedback to ensure that the steps are realistic, accessible, and manageable.

Facilitator notes

Keep exploration tasks small, practical, and accessible without requiring significant time or resources. For younger participants, support planning more actively or create a shared group plan. For participants aged 16+, encourage ownership and independent planning. Emphasise that the goal is to collect information and experiences, not to perform or achieve results.

Expected outcomes

- Participants develop a simple and realistic exploration plan.
- Participants strengthen a curiosity-based mindset toward learning and career development.
- Participants reduce fear of making the "wrong" choice by engaging in low-risk exploration.

Points of attention for youth with fewer opportunities

- Provide offline alternatives such as libraries, community spaces, or conversations with local people if internet access is limited.
- Offer accessible options for participants with disabilities (e.g., adapted materials or formats).
- Be mindful of rural contexts and possible limitations related to transport or available opportunities.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which interest cluster surprised me the most?
- What is one small step I can realistically take this week?
- What did I learn about how I explore and learn new things?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants create realistic and achievable micro-steps?
- Which participants needed more structure, and which benefited from more freedom?
- How can follow-up or continuation of these exploration plans be integrated into future sessions?



ACTIVITY NO. 7

The Johari Mini–Window: Safe Feedback Circle

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 50–80 minutes

Learning objectives

- To improve self-understanding through structured and supportive peer feedback.
- To develop the ability to give specific, kind, and evidence-based feedback.
- To increase awareness of "blind spots" and strengths that are visible to others but not always to oneself.

Competences developed

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Citizenship competence (respectful communication, empathy)
- Literacy competence (clear expression and interpretation of feedback)

Materials needed

- Adjective cards (positive and behaviour-based, e.g., reliable, creative, calm)
- Feedback rules poster
- Small envelopes or paper slips

Step-by-step instructions

01

Establish feedback rules

The facilitator introduces clear guidelines: feedback must be positive, specific, respectful, and voluntary. Participants always have the right to pass.

02

Self-description

Each participant selects three adjectives that they feel describe them and writes them down. These should reflect observable behaviours rather than abstract labels.

03

Peer feedback

Other participants anonymously select two adjectives for each person based on observed behaviour during the activity or previous interactions. For each adjective, they add one short example as evidence.

04

Compare perspectives

Participants receive their feedback and compare their self-selected adjectives with those provided by peers. They identify overlaps, differences, and any surprising elements.

05

Guided reflection

The facilitator leads a reflection on how these insights can be used in learning, collaboration, and everyday interactions. Participants are encouraged to see feedback as information rather than judgement.

Facilitator notes

Use only age-appropriate and culturally sensitive adjectives. If the group is not yet psychologically safe, conduct the activity after trust has been built or adapt it to pairs instead of a full group. For participants aged 16+, include an additional reflection question such as "What evidence supports this perception?" to deepen analysis. Monitor the process closely to ensure all feedback remains constructive.

Expected outcomes

- Participants receive supportive and structured feedback that broadens their self-perception.
- Participants develop skills in giving and receiving feedback respectfully.
- Group cohesion and mutual understanding are strengthened.

Points of attention for youth with fewer opportunities

- Allow participants to read feedback privately to reduce anxiety or pressure.
- Avoid comparisons between participants; focus on individual development.
- Be attentive to group dynamics and intervene if any participant is excluded or receives limited feedback.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which feedback felt most accurate or meaningful to me, and why?
- What surprised me, and how can I interpret it constructively?
- How can I use or strengthen this quality in future situations?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did the activity remain safe, respectful, and constructive throughout?
- Which participants needed additional support when receiving feedback?
- How could this activity be adapted for individual (1:1) counselling contexts?



ACTIVITY NO. 8

Role Model Remix: Borrowing Traits, Not Lives

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 45–70 minutes

Learning objectives

- To help participants identify qualities they admire and connect them to their own development.
- To distinguish between external image and underlying values or behaviours.
- To encourage realistic inspiration focused on actions rather than comparison with others.

Competences developed

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Cultural awareness and expression competence
- Entrepreneurship competence (initiative, self-development)

Materials needed

- Paper and markers
- Optional: magazines or internet images
- Role model prompt sheet

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the concept of role models

The facilitator explains that role models can be sources of inspiration, but the goal is not to copy a person's life. Instead, the focus is on identifying specific qualities, behaviours, or values that can be realistically developed.

02

Select role models

Participants choose one or two role models. These can be people from their personal environment, public figures, or fictional characters.

03

Identify admired qualities

Participants write "I admire them because..." and list specific qualities, behaviours, or values (for example persistence, creativity, courage, or helping others).

04

Create a "remix" plan

Participants select three qualities they would like to "borrow" and translate each into one small, realistic action they could practice within the next month. The focus is on achievable behaviour rather than long-term transformation.

05

Pair sharing and refinement

Participants share their ideas in pairs. The partner asks a guiding question such as "What would make this realistic for you?" to help refine actions into concrete and manageable steps.

06

Group reflection

The facilitator leads a discussion emphasising that role models function as mirrors for personal growth, not as standards for comparison.

Facilitator notes

Encourage participants to choose diverse role models, not only well-known or idealised figures. Be attentive to comparison dynamics and redirect focus toward qualities and actions rather than achievements or status. For participants aged 16+, include discussion about social media and how curated images can distort perceptions of success.

Expected outcomes

- Participants identify specific qualities they want to develop.
- Participants define realistic and actionable steps for personal growth.
- Participants reduce comparison with others and increase a sense of personal agency.

Points of attention for youth with fewer opportunities

- Ensure representation by including role models from different backgrounds, contexts, and abilities.
- Provide a "role model gallery" with local or relatable examples for participants with limited exposure.
- Allow the use of fictional characters to reduce social pressure and increase accessibility.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which quality do I want to strengthen, and why?
- What is one concrete action that would demonstrate this quality?
- How will I recognise that I am making progress?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants focus on realistic and achievable actions?
- Which participants found it difficult to identify role models, and what were the reasons?
- What cultural or contextual sensitivities emerged during the activity?



ACTIVITY NO. 9

Context Mirrors: Who Am I in Different Places?

Target group: ☒ Under 16

Duration: 45–75 minutes

Learning objectives

- To increase awareness of how identity shifts across different contexts such as home, school, friendships, and online environments.
- To normalise complexity by understanding that different "selves" can still be authentic.
- To support basic boundary-setting and the development of self-consistency across situations.

Competences developed

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Digital competence (understanding online identity)
- Citizenship competence (self-awareness in social contexts)

Materials needed

- Four-circle worksheet (Home / School / Friends / Online)
- Markers
- Optional: stickers

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the concept of context mirrors

The facilitator explains that people often show different parts of themselves depending on the situation. This is a normal and natural part of identity, not a sign of inconsistency.

02

Individual reflection

Participants complete the four-circle worksheet by filling each section with words or symbols that describe their behaviours, feelings, roles, and perceived expectations in each context.

03

Identify common elements

Participants reflect on what remains consistent across all four contexts. This helps highlight stable aspects of identity.

04

Identify tension or pressure points

Participants consider in which contexts they feel they have to "act," hide certain parts of themselves, or behave differently due to expectations or pressure.

05

Pair sharing and group discussion

Participants share selected insights in pairs and then engage in a short group discussion about boundaries, comfort, and what helps them feel more authentic in different environments.

Facilitator notes

Do not require participants to share personal details about family or online behaviour; allow general or symbolic responses. For younger participants, focus on simple elements such as roles and feelings. Use guiding questions such as "Where do you feel most yourself?" to support reflection. Be attentive to signs of discomfort and maintain a safe and non-judgemental environment.

Expected outcomes

- Participants gain awareness of how their identity shifts across contexts.
- Participants identify environments where they feel more or less comfortable being themselves.
- Participants develop initial understanding of boundaries and personal needs in different situations.

Points of attention for youth with fewer opportunities

- Be sensitive to participants who may experience unsafe or unstable home environments and offer a "private circle" option if needed.
- Acknowledge that some participants have limited control over their environments and focus on small, realistic choices they can make.
- Allow non-verbal expression through symbols, colours, or drawings instead of written responses.

Reflection questions for participants

- Where do I feel most comfortable being myself?
- Which context creates the most pressure for me, and what might help?
- What part of myself would I like to express more often?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did the activity reveal any safeguarding or wellbeing concerns?
- What types of support (peer, adult, or services) might benefit participants?
- How can insights from this activity inform future sessions on learning, work environments, or personal development?



ACTIVITY NO. 10

The Inner Committee Meeting (Decision Voices)

Target group: ☒ 16+

Duration: 60–90 minutes

Learning objectives

- To help participants identify different internal "voices" such as fear, curiosity, ambition, or responsibility that influence decisions.
- To develop self-compassion by recognising that mixed feelings are normal and meaningful.
- To support more balanced decision-making by separating useful signals from overwhelming or conflicting thoughts.

Competences developed

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Entrepreneurship competence (decision-making, self-management)
- Literacy competence (reflection and structured expression)

Materials needed

- Chair cards (e.g., Curiosity, Fear, Practicality, Values, Social Pressure)
- Paper and pens
- Optional: empty chairs for role-play

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the concept of internal voices

The facilitator explains that people often experience different internal perspectives at the same time, and that these "voices" can represent needs, concerns, or motivations rather than problems.

02

Define a dilemma

Participants choose a current situation or decision they are facing. This can be small and manageable to ensure the activity remains accessible and safe.

03

Write internal perspectives

Participants select three to four "voices" and write a short statement for each, describing what that part wants, what it is concerned about, and what it is trying to achieve or protect.

04

Optional role-play

Participants may sit in different chairs representing each voice and read their statements aloud. This helps externalise internal dialogue and make it easier to reflect on. Participation in role-play is optional.

05

Integration and decision-making

The facilitator supports participants in reflecting on their internal dialogue using guiding questions such as: "What is each voice trying to protect?" and "What could be a balanced next step that respects multiple perspectives?".

Facilitator notes

Encourage participants to choose appropriate and manageable dilemmas. Offer hypothetical examples if needed. Monitor emotional intensity and pause or ground the group if necessary (e.g., through short breathing exercises). This activity is particularly effective in small groups (two to five participants) or in individual (1:1) counselling settings.

Expected outcomes

- Participants gain greater clarity about their internal processes and mixed feelings.
- Participants develop increased self-compassion and understanding of internal conflicts.
- Participants identify one realistic and balanced next step without pressure to reach a final decision.

Points of attention for youth with fewer opportunities

- Offer a writing-only option for participants who do not feel comfortable with role-play.
- Support participants with anxiety by keeping the focus on small and manageable situations.
- Be cautious with participants who may have experienced trauma and avoid encouraging deep or intense personal disclosure.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which internal voice feels the strongest for me right now, and why?
- What might this voice need in order to feel safer or more balanced?
- What is one next step that respects both my values and my current situation?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did the activity help participants move toward clarity, or did it create overwhelm?
- Which questions or prompts supported effective integration of different perspectives?
- How could this activity be simplified or adapted for younger participants or different contexts?



ACTIVITY NO. 11

Skills Evidence Bank: "I Can" with Proof

Target group: ☒ 16+

Duration: 60–90 minutes

Learning objectives

- To transform general or vague self-descriptions into clear, evidence-based skill statements.
- To increase confidence for future CV or interview situations without focusing directly on job search.
- To help participants recognise transferable skills developed through everyday experiences.

Competences developed

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Literacy competence (structured reflection and expression)
- Entrepreneurship competence (self-efficacy, initiative)
- Digital competence (optional, when using portfolio tools)

Materials needed

- Evidence bank worksheet (Skill – Example – Result – What I learned)
- Pens
- Optional: laptops or phones for creating a simple digital folder or portfolio

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce transferable skills

The facilitator explains that many skills, such as communication, organisation, or problem-solving, can be developed in different contexts including school, home, volunteering, or daily responsibilities.

02

Identify personal skills

Participants list six to ten skills they believe they have. If needed, they can select from a predefined list to support recognition.

03

Add evidence to each skill

For each skill, participants provide a concrete example describing what they did, what the situation was, and what result or outcome followed. They also reflect on what they learned from the experience.

04

Pair coaching

Participants work in pairs and support each other by asking clarifying questions such as "What exactly did you do?" or "What changed because of your actions?". This helps strengthen the quality and specificity of examples.

05

Optional portfolio creation

Participants may collect simple evidence (e.g., photos, certificates, screenshots, or notes) in a personal folder to support their skill statements and create a basic portfolio for future use.

Facilitator notes

Encourage realistic and honest reflection without exaggerating achievements. This activity is particularly valuable for participants who feel they have little or no experience. Highlight that recognising evidence of skills can also support wellbeing and confidence, especially during periods of uncertainty.

Expected outcomes

- Participants produce six to ten evidence-based skill statements.
- Participants increase confidence in recognising and articulating their abilities.
- Participants develop a foundation for future career-related activities such as CV writing or interviews.

Points of attention for youth with fewer opportunities

- Validate informal experiences such as caring for family members, volunteering, or community involvement as meaningful sources of skills.
- Offer verbal support or dictation options for participants with lower literacy levels.
- Ensure privacy when using digital materials and provide offline alternatives where needed.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which skill do I have more evidence for than I expected?
- Where did I learn or develop this skill, and who or what supported me?
- Which skill would I like to strengthen next, and what experience could help me do that?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants recognise informal and non-formal learning as valid sources of skills?
- What barriers emerged (e.g., low confidence, difficulty naming skills, lack of language)?
- How can this evidence bank be revisited and expanded over time?



ACTIVITY NO. 12

Self-Confidence Ladder: From "Not Yet" to "I Can"

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 40–60 minutes

Learning objectives

- To build realistic confidence by breaking complex skills into small, achievable steps.
- To introduce "not yet" language and growth mindset practices.
- To reduce avoidance and perfectionism by focusing on gradual progress.

Competences developed

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Entrepreneurship competence (self-management, persistence)
- Literacy competence (goal formulation and reflection)

Materials needed

- Ladder worksheet (5–7 steps)
- Sticky notes
- Markers

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the idea of gradual progress

The facilitator explains that skills are developed step by step, and that "not yet" means something can be learned over time rather than being fixed.

02

Choose a skill area

Participants select one skill relevant to their daily life (e.g., presenting, teamwork, asking for help, or time management).

03

Define the goal

Participants write a clear and simple goal at the top of their "ladder," representing what they would like to be able to do.

04

Break into smaller steps

Participants divide the goal into five to seven smaller steps, moving from easier to more challenging actions. Each step should be specific and achievable.

05

Add support strategies

For each step, participants identify what could help them succeed (e.g., a person, a tool, a strategy, or a specific condition).

06

Pair sharing and feedback

Participants share their ladder with a partner, who provides feedback to ensure that the steps are realistic and manageable.

07

Commit to one step

Each participant selects one step they will practice before the next session, focusing on action rather than perfection.

Facilitator notes

Encourage participants to keep steps small, specific, and measurable. Focus on effort, strategies, and progress rather than talent or fixed ability. For participants aged 16+, include reflection on setbacks and discuss how to respond constructively when progress is not linear.

Expected outcomes

- Participants create a clear and realistic pathway for developing a chosen skill.
- Participants commit to one concrete and achievable action.
- Participants increase their sense of control, confidence, and self-efficacy.

Points of attention for youth with fewer opportunities

- Ensure selected skills can be practiced without requiring financial resources or special access.
- Provide individual (1:1) support for participants who may need additional guidance in structuring steps.
- Allow participants to keep their goals private if they prefer.

Reflection questions for participants

- What is the smallest next step I can take?
- What kind of support would make this step easier?
- How will I recognise that I have made progress?

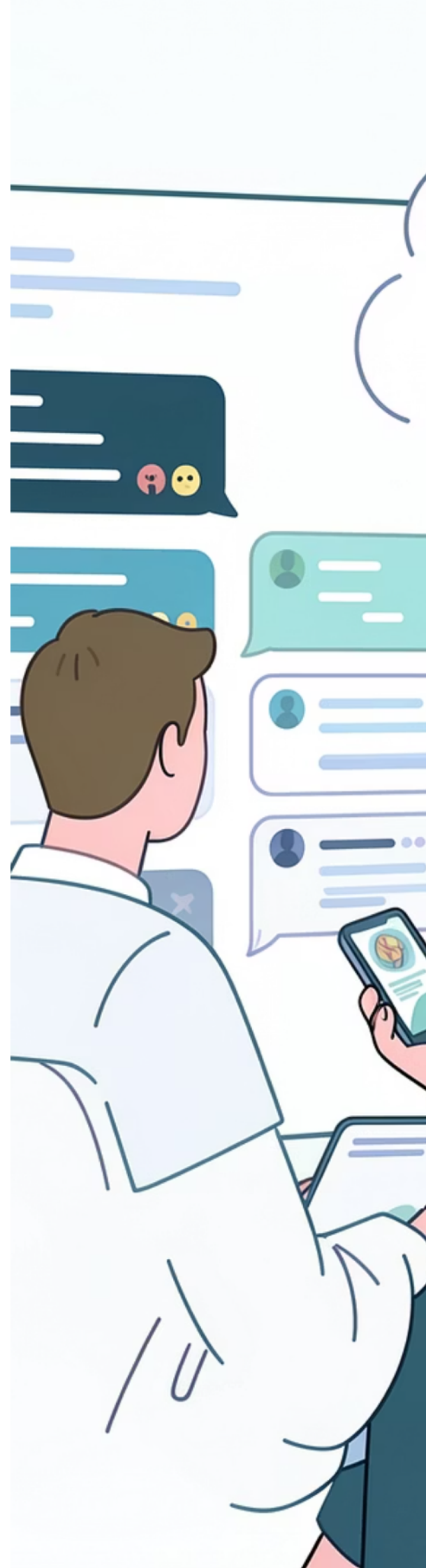
Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants choose goals that are meaningful and relevant to them?
- How did participants respond to the concept of "not yet" and to the idea of setbacks?
- What follow-up structure could support continued practice and development?

3. Digital tip

This section presents digital activities that use artificial intelligence as a supportive reflection tool to deepen self-understanding in a structured and accessible way. Rather than positioning AI as a source of answers or interpretations, the activities treat it as a mirror that helps young people notice patterns across their experiences, language, and behaviours. By working with personal examples, adapted questions, and realistic scenarios, participants are supported in identifying strengths, values, and conditions that influence how they learn, act, and feel. The focus remains on guided reflection, where meaning is constructed by the young person rather than generated by the tool.

Using AI in this way allows youth workers to make abstract self-understanding processes more concrete, especially for participants who struggle to describe themselves or engage with reflection tasks. AI supports the preparation of clearer questions, diverse examples, and structured prompts, while young people remain active decision-makers who critically evaluate and personalise insights. The activities prioritise autonomy, safety, and inclusion, encouraging participants to question suggestions, use their own language, and test insights through small real-life actions. In this way, digital tools enhance—rather than replace—the relational and reflective core of non-formal youth work.





DIGITAL ACTIVITY NO. 1

Pattern Finder: AI-Supported Self-Understanding Dialogue

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 30–45 minutes

This digital activity supports young people in identifying patterns in their experiences by combining individual reflection with AI-assisted analysis. Rather than asking participants to define themselves directly, the activity begins with concrete situations—moments of energy, difficulty, and success—and uses these as entry points for understanding strengths, values, and personal conditions. AI functions as a structured reflection aid, helping to surface possible patterns and generate clarifying questions that might otherwise remain unnoticed. Through guided interpretation and critical selection, participants actively decide what insights are meaningful and how to express them in their own words. The process emphasises autonomy and reflection, not accuracy or correctness. By treating AI as a mirror rather than an authority, the activity helps young people build confidence in describing themselves, recognising recurring patterns, and testing small insights in real-life situations.

Learning objectives

- To strengthen vocabulary for describing strengths, values, and energy patterns.
- To support pattern recognition across different experiences.
- To increase confidence in expressing self-knowledge.

Competences developed

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Entrepreneurship competence (self-awareness, initiative)
- Literacy competence (structured self-expression)

Materials needed

- Paper for initial reflection
- Device with internet access (optional)
- Prepared reflection prompt by facilitator

Step-by-Step Instructions

01

Introduce the reflection task

The facilitator explains that understanding oneself often begins with looking at real experiences rather than abstract labels. Participants are invited to explore patterns across different situations.

03

AI-supported pattern identification

Using a prepared prompt, the facilitator or participants input the descriptions into an AI tool. The AI suggests possible strengths, values, and patterns, and generates a few clarifying questions.

05

Transfer to action

Participants identify one small, low-risk action that could help them test or explore one of the identified patterns in real life.

02

Individual reflection (offline first)

Participants write short notes about three situations: one where they felt energised, one where they felt drained, and one where they handled something well.

04

Critical selection and rewriting

Participants review the AI output and decide what feels accurate and what does not. They rewrite selected insights in their own words, ensuring personal ownership of meaning.

06

Reflection

Participants reflect on how the process influenced their understanding of themselves and their confidence in expressing it.

AI prompt examples

Example 1: "Here are three short descriptions of situations where I felt energised or drained. Identify possible strengths, values, and conditions that seem important to me. Then ask me three reflection questions to clarify these patterns."

Example 2: "From this story, suggest three possible strengths and rewrite them as evidence-based statements starting with 'I can... because...'. Keep them realistic and specific."

Facilitator notes

Frame AI as a support tool, not an authority. Avoid interpreting results for participants; encourage their own meaning-making. Do not input sensitive or personal data into AI tools. Offer a no-technology alternative by asking similar reflective questions directly. Use this activity in small groups or one-to-one settings to ensure psychological safety.

Expected outcomes

- Participants identify two to three clearer personal patterns.
- Participants express at least one evidence-based strength or value in their own words.
- Participants gain confidence in describing themselves.
- Participants show reduced concern about giving "wrong" answers.

Points of attention for youth with fewer opportunities

- Make AI use optional and provide handwritten alternatives.
- Use simplified language where needed.
- Recognise informal strengths such as care work, family responsibilities, or community involvement.
- Avoid reinforcing stereotypes—review and adapt AI outputs if necessary.
- Protect privacy and avoid sharing personal AI outputs publicly.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which suggestion felt most accurate and why?
- What did I disagree with, and what does that tell me about myself?
- What small step could help me test this insight?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did AI support clarity or create confusion?
- Did participants remain critical and autonomous in their thinking?
- How did the activity support inclusion and psychological safety?
- What could be improved in prompts, pacing, or group size next time?



DIGITAL ACTIVITY NO. 2

Language Ladder: AI-Supported Question Adaptation for Self-Understanding

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 15–20 min prep + 30–40 min session

This digital activity supports youth workers in adapting reflection questions so that young people can engage more easily in self-understanding processes. Instead of changing the content of reflection, the activity focuses on adjusting language—making questions clearer, more concrete, and better aligned with participants' age, experience, and communication abilities. AI is used as a preparation tool to generate alternative versions of questions, helping transform abstract or complex wording into accessible and meaningful prompts. Through this approach, young people are more able to express strengths, preferences, and values using their own words and real-life examples. The activity reduces barriers related to language complexity and increases participation, especially for those who may struggle with abstract thinking or formal expression. It reinforces that effective self-understanding depends not only on what is asked, but on how questions are framed and understood.

Learning objectives

- To help young people express strengths, preferences, and values in accessible language.
- To support youth workers in adapting reflection questions to different age groups and communication levels.
- To increase participation by making reflection questions clearer and more engaging.

Competences developed

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Literacy competence
- Entrepreneurship competence

Materials needed

- Reflection theme or session aim
- Draft questions prepared by the youth worker
- Paper or worksheet
- Device with internet access (optional)

Step-by-step instructions

01

Select initial questions

The youth worker prepares three to five reflection questions related to strengths, values, interests, or energy patterns.

02

Adapt questions using AI

The questions are entered into an AI tool to generate simpler, clearer, and age-appropriate versions.

03

Review and select

The youth worker reviews the generated versions and selects those that best fit the group, removing any wording that is too abstract, leading, or intrusive.

04

Facilitate responses

Participants respond to the adapted questions using different formats such as speaking, writing, drawing, or sharing short examples from their experience.

05

Personal statement

The activity concludes with each participant expressing one sentence that feels true about themselves in their own words.

AI prompt examples



Example 1: "Rewrite these self-understanding questions for young people under 16. Make them shorter, concrete, and easy to answer with real-life examples."



Example 2: "Create three alternative versions of each question: one very simple, one discussion-friendly, and one suitable for written reflection. Keep them non-judgmental and age-appropriate."

Facilitator notes

Use AI to adapt language, not to interpret participants. Focus on clarity and accessibility rather than complexity. Ensure that selected questions are neutral, respectful, and relevant to the group. Use this method particularly when original questions feel too abstract or difficult.

Expected outcomes

- Participants understand reflection questions more easily.
- More participants are able to describe themselves using concrete examples.
- The youth worker develops a flexible set of adapted questions suitable for different groups.

Points of attention for youth with fewer opportunities

- Use simple and clear language.
- Offer multiple response formats (speaking, drawing, writing).
- Avoid assumptions about literacy level, financial resources, or life circumstances.
- Keep participation optional and respect the right to pass.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which question was easiest for me to answer?
- Which question helped me say something real about myself?
- What kind of question helps me reflect better?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Which wording supported the clearest responses?
- Did the adapted questions reduce confusion?
- What should be simplified or adjusted next time?



DIGITAL ACTIVITY NO. 3

Fit Signals: AI-Supported Scenario Cards for Self-Understanding

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 20 min prep + 35–45 min session

This digital activity supports young people in developing self-understanding by exploring how different situations, environments, and tasks affect their energy, comfort, and engagement. Instead of asking participants to describe themselves directly, the activity uses short, realistic scenarios as entry points for reflection. AI is used by the facilitator as a preparation tool to generate diverse and context-relevant examples that represent different ways of learning, working, and interacting. Through sorting, comparison, and discussion, participants identify which situations feel suitable, challenging, or unclear to them. The focus is not on labelling personality or making fixed conclusions, but on recognising patterns in experiences and preferences. This approach makes self-understanding more concrete and accessible, especially for participants who find abstract reflection difficult, and supports learning through observation and dialogue rather than self-definition.

Learning objectives

- To help young people notice which situations, tasks, and environments suit them better.
- To support youth workers in creating realistic and relatable self-understanding scenarios.
- To encourage self-knowledge through comparison, discussion, and reflection rather than labels.

Competences developed

- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Entrepreneurship competence
- Literacy competence

Materials needed

- Short description of the group
- Printed or handwritten scenario cards
- Paper for sorting and notes
- Device with internet access (optional)

Step-by-step instructions

01

Prepare scenarios using AI.

The facilitator uses an AI tool to generate short everyday scenarios that represent different conditions, such as teamwork, independent work, creativity, routine, helping others, or decision-making.

02

Adapt scenarios to context.

The facilitator reviews and adjusts the scenarios to ensure they are appropriate for the group's age, experience, and local context.

03

Introduce the activity.

Participants are informed that they will explore which situations feel more or less suitable for them, without needing to justify or explain themselves immediately.

04

Sort scenarios.

Participants individually or in small groups sort the scenario cards into three categories: "fits me", "maybe", and "not for me".

05

Explain choices.

Participants explain their decisions using signals such as energy, comfort, stress, interest, or motivation.

06

Identify patterns.

The facilitator supports participants in noticing patterns across their choices and helps them name one or two conditions that seem to support them best.

07

Reflection.

Participants reflect on what they learned about themselves through comparing different situations.

AI prompt examples



Example 1: "Create 8 short everyday scenarios for a self-understanding session with young people. Each scenario should show a different learning or working condition, such as teamwork, quiet focus, creativity, routine, helping others, or public speaking."



Example 2: "Rewrite these scenarios for young people aged 16+ so they feel realistic, neutral, and suitable for discussion about preferences, strengths, and fit."

Facilitator notes

- Use AI to generate varied and realistic examples, not to interpret participants.
- Avoid presenting scenarios as tests or assessments.
- Encourage participants to focus on their experience rather than finding “correct” answers.
- Use this method especially when participants find direct self-description difficult.

Expected outcomes

- Participants identify patterns in situations that support or challenge them.
- Participants develop more concrete and experience-based self-understanding.
- The youth worker gains a reusable and adaptable activity format.

Points of attention when working with youth with fewer opportunities

- Avoid scenarios that assume financial resources, travel, or strong academic backgrounds.
- Use simple and relatable examples grounded in everyday life.
- Allow pair or small-group discussion before sharing with the whole group.
- Provide simplified versions of scenarios if needed.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which scenario felt most like me?
- What kind of situation gives me energy or confidence?
- What usually makes participation more difficult for me?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Which scenarios created the most useful discussion?
- Did participants focus on experiences and conditions rather than labels?
- What should be adapted for this group in future sessions?

Disclaimer:

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or Agency of Youth Affairs in Lithuania. Neither the European Union nor Agency of Youth Affairs in Lithuania can be held responsible for them.

About the project „Open Yourself for Career Skills“

The project „Open Yourself for Career Skills“ aims to strengthen non-formal career counselling for young people by integrating digital tools and innovative non-formal education methods. It focuses on making career guidance more accessible, relevant, and tailored to the needs of youth. The project also seeks to improve digital literacy, equip youth workers with modern tools, and increase the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, thereby supporting young people's employability and active participation in society.

Objectives:

1. **Strengthen non-formal career counselling for youth.** Improve the quality and innovation of career services by applying non-formal methods adapted to the digital era and accessible to young people.
2. **Enhance digital inclusion.** Expand access to career counselling through a multilingual mobile application and online platform, increasing digital literacy and supporting inclusion and diversity.
3. **Promote innovation in youth work.** Introduce new career guidance approaches, including a methodological tool and training for youth workers, while strengthening the recognition of non-formal learning outcomes.
4. **Build youth worker capacity.** Deliver targeted training to improve competences in non-formal education and digital tools, enhancing the quality and recognition of youth work.
5. **Promote inclusion in career guidance.** Apply universal design principles to ensure accessibility of all project resources, supporting inclusion and diversity across learning contexts.
6. **Strengthen youth employability.** Improve understanding of skills and labour market dynamics, and develop soft skills through tailored career guidance, facilitating transition into employment.

Duration: 24 months (October 2024 – September 2026)

Partners and countries involved:

- Society and Enterprise Development Institute (Lithuania)
- Youth association “Time for Youth” (Latvia)
- Secondary school Haaleitisskoli, Reykjanesbaer (Iceland)
- Regional youth association “Amigos de Europa” (Spain)