

EMBRACE - Emotional Mastery:  
Balanced Regulation and Coping Effectiveness  
tool kit



## Table of Contents

<b><i>Program</i></b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b><i>Introduction</i></b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b><i>Icebreakers</i></b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b><i>Agreements</i></b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b><i>Treasure hunt</i></b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b><i>Emotional mosaic</i></b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b><i>Dialogue Dive</i></b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b><i>Emotional sorting</i></b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b><i>Emotion detectives</i></b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b><i>Harmonizing emotions</i></b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b><i>Dramatic emotions</i></b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b><i>Creating protected haven</i></b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b><i>Natural talks</i></b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b><i>Artistic expression</i></b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b><i>Healthy world cafe</i></b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b><i>Emotional live library</i></b> .....	<b>33</b>
<b><i>Activities created by participants</i></b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b><i>What if you were me?</i></b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b><i>The superpower of emotions</i></b> .....	<b>37</b>



***Midnight train*.....38**  
***Future letter* .....40**  
***Conclusion*.....41**



# Program

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
BREAKFAST					
Getting to know each other	Treasure hunt	Emotional sorting	Artistic expression	Dramatic emotions	Manual by participants
Icebreakers		Emotion detectives	Live library	Healthy World cafe	Open Space Dissemination plan
LUNCH					
Team building	Emotional mosaic	Harmonizing emotions	Natural talks	Manual by participants	Future project ideas Evaluation Youthpass Ceremony Closure
Agreements Team building	Dialogue dive		Creating protected haven		
DINNER					
Intercultural night No 1	Free night	Intercultural night No 2	Free night	Family dinner	Farewell party



# Introduction

Welcome to the EMBRACE Toolkit. This toolkit was developed during the EMBRACE - Emotional Mastery: Balanced Regulation and Coping Effectiveness training course, held in Šabac, Serbia in 2024. The course brought together professionals from diverse backgrounds to equip young people with the emotional skills necessary to navigate the complexities of modern life.

In today's fast-paced world, young people face many challenges that can impact their emotional well-being. From academic pressures and social media influences to personal relationships and future uncertainties, the ability to effectively manage emotions has never been more crucial. Emotional mastery involves understanding and regulating one's emotions while coping effectiveness focuses on the strategies used to handle stress and adversity. Together, these skills form the foundation for resilience, mental health, and overall well-being.

The EMBRACE Toolkit is structured to provide professionals with a variety of activities that can be easily adapted to different settings and groups. While the primary focus is on youth, the versatility of these activities makes them suitable for a wide range of participants, including adults and children. Group sizes are suggested but can be modified based on the number of participants and available space. Many activities benefit from being conducted in an open, spacious environment, whether indoors or outdoors. Each activity is designed to be engaging, interactive, and reflective, ensuring that participants not only learn but also internalize the skills being taught.

We recognize that every group and context is unique, and we encourage facilitators to adapt the activities to suit their specific needs. Whether it's modifying the content, adjusting the duration, or incorporating cultural elements, feel free to tailor the activities to create the most meaningful and relevant experience for your participants.

This tool kit consists of the programme which is our suggestion for the planning of the activities, however, the duration of the programme can be longer even though we don't suggest shorter. The first day is dedicated to icebreakers which can vary depending on the needs of the program, and the last day or two are dedicated to the participants' creation as well as dissemination plan.

By integrating these activities into your practice, you are contributing to the development of emotionally intelligent, resilient individuals who are better equipped to face life's challenges. Together, we can make a profound difference in the fulfillment of the lives of those around us.



# Icebreakers and Team Building

*This activity combines many different icebreakers which are always the starting part of the program created to support a relaxed and inclusive atmosphere, facilitate connections between participants, and set a fun tone for the rest of the days.*

**Estimated time:** 3 hours in total, with a break 30 min in between

**Group size:** 10 - 40

**Themes:**

- Getting to know each other
- Group dynamics (building)

**Preparation:**

For the majority of these icebreakers no special preparation is needed except for materials.

**Materials necessary:**

- Papers
- Pens
- Balloons
- Small papers/ sticky notes
- Sticky papers or different
- Nametags

**Overview:**

We suggest different activities.

**Instructions:**



1. **Circle, name and gesture** : All participants stand in a circle. The facilitator goes first by saying their name and showing a gesture. The person on their left has to repeat the name of the gesture of the previous and add their own name and their gesture. The circle continues until the end, with each person having to repeat more and more names and gestures. At the end the facilitator tries to make a full circle by repeating each name and accompanying gesture.
2. **Two truths and a lie** : Participants are given sticky papers or something similar which can be stuck on their clothes. They are instructed to write 2 truths and a lie about them. Then they put that information on their clothes, walk around the space and engage in discussion with other participants.
3. **Nametags** : Each participant is given a name tag and they are provided with different colors of pens and stickers. They are instructed to write their name, pronouns and emoticon or feeling best describes them. They sit around in a circle and share the story behind their name and why they chose the emoticon/feeling.
4. **Drawing a portrait** : Participants are handed white papers where they are instructed to write their name. Then music plays and participants dance with the paper. They are instructed to pass the paper to any person in their hand. Music stops and participants are instructed to draw a shape of a head of the participant whose name is written on the paper. Then music continues, participants dance and this time they have to pass the paper to somebody while jumping. Now they draw eyes on the paper they received. Then they pass the paper through their legs and then draw their mouth and nose. Then they pass facing back to back and then draw the hair. All portraits are out around the working space.
5. **Balloons** : Each participant is given a small piece of paper and a pen and they are instructed to write an interesting question. Afterwards, each participant is given a balloon. They should put the paper inside the balloon, blow up the balloon and throw it in the air. The music is played, participants dance and when music stops they should take a balloon. They sit in a circle and pop the balloon. In the circle each participant answers the question they have.
6. **Speed Dating** : Each participant gets a paper and a pen. They should draw an analog clock with all numbers inside. They go around and schedule meetings with different participants, one for each clock, but the time has to match between two participants, as if they were



about to meet at a certain hour. Pay attention that it can be only one person per hour, so you have to be quick so you are not alone at some hour. When this is done, the facilitator announces a certain time and asks an intriguing question (Examples: What dead person you would like to talk to, what superpower you want to have, what is your dream destination). Participants should find a person with whom they scheduled a meeting at that time and discuss. After 5,6 questions the activity can stop, depending on the motivation of the participants you can finish all 12.

7. **No talking:** This activity has two smaller activities inside. A line is drawn on the floor with crepe tape. Participants are instructed to stand on it. Throughout this activity at least one foot has to be touching the line, this is crucial. Then they are instructed to make a line from the tallest to the shortest person. The second activity is that they have to make a line from the youngest (including day and month) to the oldest person but without speaking.
8. **Atoms and molecules:** Facilitator instructs participants to create different groups together depending on hair color, eye color, number of siblings etc. Topics of similarities and differences depend on the structure of your group.
9. **Museum of emotions :** Participants are instructed to walk around the room in a neutral manner. We give them the cue that when we clap and say “freeze,” they need to stand still like statues in whatever position they are in. When we say “unfreeze”, they can resume moving normally. We repeat this process several times. Then, we inform them that the next time they “unfreeze” they are to embody a specific emotion (e.g., anger) and continue walking as someone experiencing that emotion. After exploring how they move and express themselves with that emotion, we instruct them to freeze in whatever position they are in. Some participants will be asked to remain frozen while the rest unfreeze. This creates a “Museum of Anger” with statues representing different expressions of that emotion. Participants will observe and discuss the various expressions of anger they see. This exercise can be repeated with different emotions to explore their bodily manifestations and behavioral cues. Reflection questions include examining where and how the emotion is felt in the body, associated behaviors and thoughts, differences in expression among statues, and challenges in re-enacting certain emotions. The activity aims to introduce the topic of emotions, explore their physical and behavioral cues, and reflect on personal emotional expression.





10. **Balance the marker** : Participants work in pairs, and each pair has an object (marker) they have to balance in the pair using one point of contact at each partner. Different points of contact can be palms, fingers, foreheads and shoulders (for the last two, participants in the pair should be of similar height). The experimentation can go further with moving around space, trying to go to different levels (low, medium, high).

11. **1,2,3 game** : Participants will get in pairs. Facilitator should have a helper to show the moves. First round they will count together from 1 to 3, non-stop. For example: Partner A: One | Partner B: Two | Partner A: Three | Partner B: One... Second round they will substitute the number 1 for a movement. For example: Partner A: (shakes hands up) | Partner B: Two | Partner A: Three | Partner B (shakes hands up) | Partner A: Two ... Third round they will also substitute the number 2 for a sound. Partner A: (shakes hands up) | Partner B: (bird sound) | Partner A: Three | Partner B (shakes hands up) | Partner A: (bird sound) ... Fourth round they will also substitute the number 3 for a word. Partner A: (shakes hands up) | Partner B: (bird sound) | Partner A: Apple | Partner B (shakes hands up) | Partner A: (bird sound) ... Fifth round they will have to do the same as fourth round, but now every time they will have to make up a different movement, sound and word.

#### **Debrief and evaluation:**

For these activities, since they are going fast and they are short, this is not needed.

#### **Tips for facilitators:**

1. Create a welcoming atmosphere: Set a positive tone by greeting participants warmly and creating a sense of inclusivity.
2. Keep it light and engaging: Choose icebreakers that are fun, interactive, and relevant to the group to help participants feel comfortable and connected.
3. Encourage participation: Facilitate icebreakers that encourage everyone to participate and get to know each other, fostering a sense of camaraderie from the start.



# Agreements

*This activity is crucial in order to establish the training as a safe space, to introduce common values which the groups agree to and to embody these values through different processes.*

**Estimated time:** 30 min

**Group size:** 10 - 40

**Themes:**

- Group Work
- Group dynamics
- Compromise

**Preparation:**

Check if you agree with our agreements, and add or change something depending on the interest and group.

**Materials necessary:**

- Flipchart with paper
- Pens

**Overview:**

The facilitator suggests agreements for the program while discussing with participants. After they agree it is written on the flip chart paper and out somewhere in the working space where it is always visible.

**Instructions:**

The facilitator should lead a discussion with a more active role, allowing participants to take part as well. The core elements we chose to focus on are:

Tenderness: We prioritize gentleness towards oneself and others, symbolized through a tactile exercise where participants embody the delicate balance of giving and receiving tenderness.



Consent: Respect for personal boundaries is central, explored through the parent-child game, fostering an understanding of mutual respect and affirmative consent.

Engagement: Active participation is encouraged, while individual comfort levels are honored. Participants discover the balance between involvement and observation, cultivating awareness of boundaries and openness to others.

Confidentiality: Trust and respect for confidentiality are essential. Participants commit to maintaining confidentiality, creating a safe space for shared experiences and authentic expression.

Through experiential exercises, these agreements become integral to our interactions, fostering empathy, respect, and mutual support on our journey toward emotional well-being.

**Debrief and evaluation:**

This is a constant part of this activity.

**Tips for facilitators:**

Be sure that everybody agrees, if not discuss until they do.

## Treasure hunt

*This activity has 2 major goals to create deeper connections between participants in smaller groups and to get acquainted with the place where the activity is taking place.*

**Estimated time:** 2 - 2:30h

**Group size:** 10 - 40

**Themes:**

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- Team building
- Get to know the place where the activity is taking place
- Team working skills

**Preparation:**

This activity needs thorough preparation of tasks for the treasure hunt. The list of activities should have a good variety - physical activities, city sights worth visiting, cultural content, riddles, etc.

**Materials necessary:**

- Sheets with tasks for each group
- Approximately 10 tasks should be there
- Internet for online maps

**Overview:**

The participants are split into groups, each has a list of tasks, they leave the working space and work in each group by themselves, the last task is to come back to the working space.

**Instructions:**

Participants are split into groups with a minimum of 3 persons per group, max 6. They receive an identical list of tasks. They are told to perform all. They do not have to follow the order of the tasks, but all need to be done. Each group works alone. Some tasks have a competition component. There should be a variety of tasks regarding knowledge about the place, the sights to be visited there, physical activities challenges for example human piramide, mental arithmetics such as puzzles, riddles, cultural dances of the country, etc.

**Debrief and evaluation:**

After all the groups come back to the working space it is recommended to ask them for feedback on how the activity was for each group. Focus on team communication and feelings they experienced in different steps of the activity.

**Tips for facilitators:**

It is recommended that each group has a participant who is from the local country to assist with language barriers in communication with locals. Some facilitators should be reachable via phone just in case.

## Emotional mosaic

*This activity has the objective of raising intercultural awareness in cultural norms regarding emotions and emotional expression while fostering experience sharing and conversation between participants.*

**Estimated time:** 1:30 - 2h

**Group size:** 8-30

**Themes:**

- To explore how different cultures express emotions
- To explore how different cultures interpret emotions
- To foster understanding between participants
- To foster empathy for diverse emotional expressions

**Preparation:**

Get acquainted with the different cultures of your group of participants, in order to be prepared and able to facilitate the conversation properly

**Materials necessary:**

- Papers for participants
- Pens
- Flipchart or whiteboard for writing questions (optional)
- Cultural reference materials (optional)
- Large space so groups can spread out

**Overview:**

Firstly, the icebreaker is introduced to open the subject of emotional expression. Secondly, the participants are divided into smaller groups. Afterward, the groups share their findings with the rest. Finally, they create a 2-minute sketch illustrating this topic. A discussion finishes this activity.



**Instructions:**

Icebreaker: Begin the workshop with an icebreaker activity where participants share an emotion they are currently feeling and express it through a gesture or facial expression.

Split participants into groups with each group composed from at least 4 participants of different cultural backgrounds if possible.

Cultural Mapping: Ask them to individually, on the piece of paper, write down emotions that are common in their culture, environment and/or community. Afterward, ask them to add expressions related to each emotion (e.g., through body language, and tone of voice). Afterward, ask them to discuss their written observations in small groups. Finally have each group share their findings with the larger group.

Facilitate a discussion on how emotions are perceived and expressed differently across cultures. You can add and use examples from different cultures to illustrate these differences. Encourage participants to reflect on their own cultural lens and how it influences their interpretation of emotions.

Sketch: (45 min) - each group chooses a scene to illustrate the interculturality in emotional expression

**Debrief and evaluation:**

Depending on the size of the group this step may vary. Given the fact that this topic stirs emotions and reaction, it is important to leave enough time for this step to be finalized on a positive note.

**Tips for facilitators:**

Pay attention to the conversations in small groups given that the differences between cultures may stir emotions and cause different reactions. Depending on the differences between cultures additional questions may be useful to ask. Be sure to discuss the differences as well as similarities in emotional expression. Let them talk freely with each other, not just with you as the facilitator. Estimated time depends on the size of the groups and number of participants.



# Dialogue Dive

*This activity has the objective of getting to know each other, fosters respectful discussion and explores self awareness and understanding of others.*

**Estimated time:** 1 - 1:30h

**Group size:** 10 - 40

**Themes:**

- Encourages thoughtful discussion
- Explores different perspectives
- Practices active listening and respectful dialogue
- Self-awareness

**Preparation:**

Statements need to be prepared, depending on the topics you decide. We suggest broader statements, which open discussions.

**Materials necessary:**

- Statements or pictures printed out, one per paper
- Put them on the wall where they can be seen by everyone
- You need enough space for people to spread out
- On the floor create a line so participants can stand on it, with paper or crepe tape

**Overview:**

Someone reads a statement, then participants stand on the line where they define themselves regarding the question. Some will be asked why and to argue it. The discussion is held from one extreme point person to another one. They can change their position when others argue their stance. If they change their opinion, ask them to argue what made them change their position. Facilitate the discussion. A possible alternative to this activity is an additional creation of an inner circle where 2 participants of opposite opinions are invited to participate in a debate on one. Others are invited to listen and not actively participate. Afterward, they are invited to vote on who argued better and claim the winner. Then they return to other participants and the rest of the statements are read.



**Instructions:**

Explain there is a line on the floor and based on where you stand you agree, not agree, or are unsure about the statement. One reads the question, and the others move through and stand where they want. Explain that they can change their position at any moment.

**Debrief and evaluation:**

Feedback is crucial in this activity. Try to focus on what happened, how they felt, and what they realized about themselves, other participants and the topics.

**Tips for facilitators:**

- Ensure all participants understand the rules and objectives
- Encourage respectful and inclusive dialogue
- Use open-ended questions to guide the discussion
- Be prepared to manage time and keep the discussion on track
- Foster an environment where all voices are valued and heard

## Emotional sorting

*This activity opens up a conversation regarding the duality of human experience regarding mind and soul in a manner of discussing the difference between emotions, thoughts, and feelings.*

**Estimated time:** 30 min - 1h

**Group size:** 6 - 30

**Themes:**

- Understanding Emotions

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- Differentiating Feelings
- Identifying Thoughts
- Reflecting on Personal Experiences

### Preparation:

Prepare statements to be discussed. The number of statements depends on the size of the group and available time. We suggest approximately 15 statements. Here is an example of our list:

1. I feel like you don't love me. - Feeling (It's a conscious experience of feeling unloved)
2. I am sad because you are leaving. - Feeling (Sadness is a conscious experience due to a reason)
3. I am afraid when you say that. - Feeling (Fear is a conscious experience triggered by a statement)
4. I feel bad when you don't greet me. - Feeling (Feeling bad is a conscious emotional reaction)
5. I am happy because you can come to the dinner. - Feeling (Happiness is a conscious experience due to a reason)
6. You are disgusting. - Thought (It's a judgment or evaluation about a person)
7. I feel like I want to hit you. - Feeling (It's a conscious experience of wanting to act aggressively)
8. I feel misunderstood. - Feeling (Feeling misunderstood is a conscious emotional reaction)
9. I feel good because of what you did for me. - Feeling (Feeling good is a conscious emotional reaction)
10. I am worthless. - Thought (It's a belief or judgment about oneself)
11. You could at least call me and let me know that plans have changed. You are really lame. - Thought (It's a judgment and expectation about someone else's behavior)
12. I feel like I don't want to be there. - Feeling (It's a conscious experience of not wanting to be in a place)
13. I don't like it when you say it in front of everyone, I am ashamed. - Feeling (Feeling ashamed is a conscious emotional reaction)
14. I am really uncertain about it. - Feeling (Uncertainty is a conscious experience)
15. I am impatient and excited. I wish my birthday was today and not tomorrow. - Feeling (Impatience and excitement are conscious experiences)



**Materials necessary:**

- Pens for all participants
- Printed statements for all participants

**Overview:**

This activity aims to help participants distinguish between emotions, feelings, and thoughts. By individually categorizing sentences into these three categories, participants will enhance their emotional literacy and self-awareness. The activity concludes with a group discussion to explore the nuances of each category and learn from each other's perspectives.

**Instructions:**

Distribute the printed papers and pens to the participants. Explain that the table contains a mix of sentences representing emotions, feelings, and thoughts. Instruct participants to read each sentence and decide whether it represents an emotion, a feeling, or a thought, and mark their choices accordingly. The next phase of the activity is for participants to engage in the discussion as a group. Once everyone has finished, reconvene as a group. Go through each sentence one by one, inviting participants to share their categorizations and reasoning. Facilitate a discussion on the differences between emotions, feelings, and thoughts.

**Debrief and evaluation:**

It would be useful to engage in this type of evaluation as you go through statements, however, you can do it at the end as well. Focus on statements where participants did not agree, and question the challenging statements. It is important to address how understanding these differences could benefit our emotional well-being.

**Tips for facilitators:**

- Familiarize yourself with the key differences between emotions, feelings, and thoughts. Be ready to provide clear explanations and examples.
- Encourage all participants to share their thoughts during the discussion. Create a supportive environment where everyone feels comfortable expressing their views.



- Be prepared to offer additional clarification and examples for sentences that may be ambiguous or challenging.
- Keep the discussion dynamic and engaging by asking follow-up questions and prompting participants to elaborate on their reasoning.
- Ensure that the activity stays within the 45-minute timeframe by monitoring the pace of the discussion and keeping it focused.

## Emotion detectives

*This activity explores different emotional expressions as well as peoples' perspectives regarding emotional expression.*

**Estimated time:** 1 - 1:30h

**Group size:** 8 - 30

**Themes:**

- Emotional expression
- Self-awareness
- Emotional intelligence
- Increase people's ability to accurately perceive and understand
- Exploration and critical thinking regarding emotional expression

**Preparation:**

The necessary preparation requires materials for each role and explanation to be done. In the appendix A and B find our proposed explanation.

**Materials necessary:**

- Printed materials for each participant
- Enough space for groups to spread out

**Overview:**

Participants will have a conversation in groups of 4 people where each will be assigned a role and a preparation paper. Afterwards the discussion will be held.

**Instructions:**



Introduce the activity by explaining how the experience of an emotion is reflected by changes in speech, body, and face. An overview of the aspects of our speech, body, and face that are commonly influenced by our emotions is provided in Appendix A. Create groups of four. In this exercise, you are going to practice “reading” other people’s emotions. Reading others’ emotions involves analyzing their facial expressions, as well as the way in which they are talking and moving. (See appendix A for an overview of these three characteristics of emotional expression.) Inform your participants that they will each be assigned a role. There are four different roles per group: the speaker, the face decoder, the body decoder, and the speech decoder. Hand out the role descriptions shown in Appendix B to each participant. (Note that every group member will receive all four role descriptions because the role descriptions include scoring forms). Ask each group of four to read the role descriptions, and then organize who will play each role amongst themselves. The three decoders use the form in the role description to write down their observations. The four roles are as described:

- **The speaker.** The speaker selects one emotion (see the list of emotions described in the speaker role description in Appendix A) and talks about a time when he or she experienced this emotion quite strongly. The speaker should not mention the emotion he or she has chosen, as the job of the observers is to guess the selected emotion.
- **The face decoder.** The face decoder carefully observes the speaker’s facial expressions to decipher the emotion being spoken about. For instance, are the speaker’s eyes opened wide in surprise, or drooped down in sadness?
- **The body decoder.** The body decoder carefully observes the speaker’s bodily movements to decipher the emotion being spoken about. For instance, how is the speaker using his hands to gesture while speaking, and what is his posture like?
- **The speech decoder.** The speech decoder carefully observes how the speaker is talking in order to decipher the emotion being spoken about. The speech decoder focuses on both verbal and non-verbal characteristics of speech. For instance, what kind of words is the speaker using (i.e., strong, bold, positive, negative) and how is the emotion reflected in the pitch, loudness, and speed of the speaker’s way of talking?

In the next step, all groups will start the conversation. Announce to all that the speaker has two- three minutes to share his or her emotional story. Note that the decoders should be advised to limit their interaction with the speaker as much as possible, as this may interfere with their observation. So, decoders should simply observe without responding to the speaker, and write down their observations in the space provided in appendix A.

After three minutes, when the speaker is finished, the decoders take turns to share their observations with their group. Take up to 10 minutes for this step. The following questions may be used to guide this step:

- What were the observations of the face decoder?
- What were the observations of the body decoder?



- What were the observations of the speech decoder?
- What did each of the decoders think was the emotion that was chosen by the speaker?
- What was the actual emotion that was chosen by the speaker?

#### **Debrief and evaluation:**

Evaluate the exercise with all participants. The following questions may serve as a guide:

- How was it to do this exercise?
- Which aspects were challenging?
- What did you learn?
- What is your take-home message?

#### **Tips for facilitators:**

Optionally you can also add another part where the roles will be reversed. Be careful to keep track of time. Allow enough space and time for all groups to finish. Facilitate a discussion where participants will be allowed to share challenging moments. Be sure to pay attention to the group dynamic and work in all groups, reflect on that as well.

## **Harmonizing emotions**

This activity has the objective of exploring the connection of music and emotion as well as developing ways on understanding and expressing emotions.

**Estimated time:** 1 - 1:30h

**Group size:** 10 - 30

#### **Themes:**

- Explore emotions through music
- Engage participants to deepen their emotional intelligence and sense of self awareness
- Develop skills for recognising, processing, and expressing feelings through the use of music in a group setting

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- Gain insights into ways music influences emotions

**Preparation:**

- Choose a comfortable space with seating in a circle
- Prepare a playlist of music tracks
- Arrange materials for the activity

**Materials necessary:**

- Loud speaker
- Flipchart paper
- Pens
- Markers
- Paints

**Overview:**

This workshop uses music and creative activities to explore emotions and encourage group discussion. Participants will engage in activities designed to warm up their creative senses, map their emotional responses to music, and reflect on their experiences.

**Instructions:**

Welcome participants with soft beats in the background. Let them settle in and observe their reactions to the music. Encourage them to share how they feel and what the music reminds them of, allowing them to express their thoughts freely. This sets the tone for the workshop and helps everyone feel comfortable.

Start with a music texture warmup by going around the circle and having each participant say their name. Then, have them pick a syllable or sound from their name and make it unique—sing it, yell it, or add a funny accent—while saying the rest of the name normally. Repeat the unique sounds around the circle. Next, assign numbers between 1 and 8 to participants and practice clapping on their assigned number to a 4/4 beat. Finally, replace the claps with their unique name sounds, creating a rhythmic and engaging warm-up.



For the emotional mapping gallery wall, split participants into smaller groups of 4-5 by having the first few people name famous musicians. Distribute large sheets of paper and various art supplies (markers, magazines, paints, scissors, tape) to each group. As music tracks play, instruct participants to focus on their emotional responses and express them on paper through drawings, words, or symbols. Emphasize embracing imperfection and vulnerability in their creative expressions. Encourage them to sing or move if they feel inspired by the music. Allow time for each group to reflect and add to their emotion maps with multiple tracks playing.

Once all groups have completed their emotion maps, display them on a gallery wall and conduct a gallery walk for everyone to observe and discuss the creations. Facilitate a discussion with questions about how the music influenced their emotions, any unexpected feelings, and the impact of group dynamics on their creative process. Explore similarities and differences among the emotion maps and discuss how different music genres affect emotional responses.

For the closing activity, transition to a circle while playing some relaxing music. Facilitate a brief guided reflection. Use gentle prompts and allow for quiet contemplation between questions, fostering a sense of closure and appreciation for the shared experience.

#### **Debrief and evaluation:**

The evaluation session can be focused on questions about the most resonant moments or insights from the workshop, current emotions, gratitude, and applying the workshop's learnings to daily life. Encourage participants to share their reflections with the group if they feel comfortable or to reflect silently.

#### **Tips for facilitators:**

- Ensure participants understand the rules and objectives.
- Foster an inclusive and respectful environment.
- Use open-ended questions to guide discussions.
- Manage time effectively and keep activities on track.
- Support participants in embracing their emotions and creativity.



# Dramatic emotions

*This activity has the objective of enhancing emotional expression and role-play through group work.*

**Estimated time:** 2 - 2:30h

**Group size:** 10 - 40

**Themes:**

- To enhance emotional expression and understanding through role-playing
- Fostering a deeper connection and collaboration among participants

**Preparation:**

1. Prepare small pieces of paper:
  - For Group 1, write numbers from 1-12 on one side and two different emotions on the other side.
  - For Group 2, write numbers from 1-12 on one side and one situation on the other side.
2. Ensure there are enough pens or pencils for all participants.
3. Arrange the space to have enough room for groups to work separately and for the pairs to perform their scenes in front of the rest of the participants.

**Materials necessary:**

- Small pieces of paper with numbers and emotions/situations written on them
- Pens/pencils
- Enough space

**Overview:**

Participants will be divided into two groups, each receiving different instructions related to emotions and situations. They will then work in pairs to act out a short scene while others guess the emotions portrayed.

**Instructions:**

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1. Divide Participants:

Use a simple method to split participants into two groups of 12 people each. Distribute small pieces of paper. (5 minutes)

2. Distribute Paper Slips:

- Group 1 will receive slips of paper with numbers from 1-12 on one side and two emotions on the other side.
- Group 2 will receive slips of paper with numbers from 1-12 on one side and one situation on the other side. (5 minutes)

3. Form Pairs: Participants with matching numbers from both groups will pair up. (5 minutes)

4. Prepare Scenes: Each pair will have 15 minutes to prepare a scene of a maximum of 2 minutes based on the situation from Group 2's slip, acting it out with the emotions assigned to Group 1's slip. Emotions must be kept secret! (15 minutes)

5. Perform and Guess: Each pair will perform their scene while the rest of the participants try to guess the emotions being portrayed. (40 minutes)

**Debrief and evaluation:**

Discuss the experience with the participants:

- How did it feel to act out the emotions?
- How accurately do they think they were able to convey and guess the emotions?
- What did they learn about themselves and their peers through this activity?

**Tips for facilitators:**

- Encourage participants to fully engage with their assigned emotions to make the activity more immersive and effective.
- Remind participants to keep their emotions a secret to ensure the guessing part is challenging and fun.
- Be supportive and offer guidance during the preparation phase if participants seem unsure about how to proceed.



## Creating protected haven

*This activity has 2 major objectives to create deeper connections between participants in smaller groups and to get acquainted with the place where the activity is taking place.*

**Estimated time:** 30 min - 1h

**Group size:** 5 - 30

**Themes:**

- Understand the concept of safe space and its significance
- Reflect on how it relates to one's self-image and well-being
- Expression through drawing
- Self-expression and self-connection

**Preparation:**

Prepare soothing music and a space where participants can feel comfortable.

**Materials necessary:**

- Pens
- Markers
- Paper for each participant
- Place where they can sit comfortably and draw

**Overview:**

Participants draw their imaginary safe spaces individually. Afterwards, they share if they want.

**Instructions:**

Inform participants this is an individual activity. Provide each of them with a paper and pen. Tell them to find a place where they are comfortable and where they can write on paper. Important is that they can hear you. Instruct them to close their eyes and guide them through the imagination process. For example: "Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Imagine a stressful situation, then visualize stepping away from it,



towards a safe and serene environment. Notice the colors, scents, and sounds around you. Feel the ground beneath your feet and the soothing atmosphere. Explore your safe space, appreciating its tranquility and support. Express gratitude for this sanctuary. Slowly return to the present moment, carrying the feelings of relaxation and security with you.”

The next step is to draw your safe space. Instruct participants not to focus on the quality of the work.

The next phase is focused on certain questions which you will ask the participants and they are instructed to answer by writing on the back of the drawing. The questions can be similar to these:

- What does your safe space mean to you?
- How does it make you feel?
- What would you like to say to your safe space? Write it down somewhere on your paper.
- Are there any questions you would like to ask about your safe space? Write it down somewhere on your paper.
- Express gratitude to your safe space. Write down a sentence or two saying thank you to the safe space.

The next phase is where we aim to create that safe space within us. Ask the participants to imagine now, that instead of speaking to their safe space, they are speaking to themselves. Read the sentences you wrote to your safe space, and say them to yourself. Express that same kindness and gratitude towards yourself now.

#### **Debrief and evaluation:**

Invite participants to share their drawings and reflections with the group (optional). Facilitate a discussion on the experience:

- How did it feel to visualize and reflect on your safe space?
- What insights did you gain about yourself?
- How can you incorporate the concept of a safe space into your daily life?
- What aspects of your safe space did you find most comforting or meaningful?
- How did imagining yourself as your safe space influence your perception of self-care and self-compassion?

#### **Tips for facilitators:**



Pay attention to organizing this activity when participants are rested and ready to focus and use their imagination for this activity. Pay attention to this activity should be individual.

## Natural talks

*This activity has a goal to explore participants' views and get them to know each other.*

**Estimated time:** 2 - 2:30h

**Group size:** 10 - 40

**Themes:**

- Exploration of views
- Getting to know each other

**Preparation:**

Find interesting topics to discuss regarding a variety of topics and put these questions around the space. Example of our topics:

- What do you think about time travel, and when and where would you go?
- What superpower would you like and why?
- What do you think about the simulation theory - MATRIX theory?
- What fictional world would you like to live in and why?
- How can you improve communication about emotions in your relationship?
- How can you set healthy boundaries to protect your emotional well-being?
- How does your cultural background influence your understanding and expression of emotions?
- Is it a sign of weakness to show vulnerability?
- If you could invent an emotion, what would it be and why?
- If you had one extra hour a day, what would you do with it?
- If this is your last day alive, how would you spend it?

**Materials necessary:**

- Print out questions
- Big space for groups to spread out



**Overview:**

Participants are divided into smaller groups. They move through stations where different questions and topics are printed on paper. They discuss and move to another. When they finish all stations the groups discuss and provide feedback.

**Instructions:**

Split the group into smaller groups, approximately 5 participants in the group. Instruct them to move through stations with statements and discuss. Instruct them not to go to the same one at the same time since there should be one group per participants

**Debrief and evaluation:**

Ask participants how the activity was and if some questions were more difficult than the rest. Facilitate a discussion.

**Tips for facilitators:**

It would be interesting to do this activity in nature since there will be more space for participants to spread out and discuss in peace. Provide enough time for all statements to be discussed. Provide enough space for groups not to be at the same time at the same statement\question.

## Artistic expression

*The participants are exploring different ways of expression their emotions focusing on the artistic visual arts.*

**Estimated time:** 2 - 2:30h

**Group size:** 10 - 30

**Themes:**

- Emotional expression

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- Artistic expression
- Prejudice regarding emotions
- Self-awareness

**Preparation:**

Prepare material for participants to work with. Decide on what emotions you want to work with; we suggest four: anger, fear, sadness, and joy. Each flipchart has a different method of expression - one clay, other graphite pencils, pens and pencils, and watercolor and acrylic. Some of these can be exchanged for collage or another feeling can be added, it is up to you.

**Materials necessary:**

- 4 flipchart papers serving as a canvas where there are written words; one for each paper; anger, sadness, fear, joy (or whatever emotions you have picked)
- clay
- graphite pencils
- pens, pencils
- acrylic paint
- watercolor paint
- collage materials- newspapers, stickers, collage paper, cotton rounds, thread, scissors, glue(optional)
- add or change material depending on the budget, size of the group and preferences

**Overview:**

Participants will share their feelings regarding each of the four emotions on the flipchart. This expression of feelings will be realized through art expression. When they are done with all 4 the group will unite. All participants and facilitators will discuss each flipchart in a group setting.

**Instructions:**

Firstly, instruct participants to create a circle. Each should share one word describing how they are feeling and show a movement that follows this feeling. Secondly, they will do a compliment circle. This activity entails that each participant looks to the participant on the right from them

and gives them an honest compliment. When the circle finishes checking how participants felt, this is the beginning of the activity therefore it is crucial.

The second phase of the activity is where participants start with artistic expression. On 4 different parts of the room, they will find one flipchart. They are instructed to draw and express themselves and their attitude regarding that emotion, for all 4. When they are finished they are instructed to stand on the paper with the emotion they feel the most. The discussion is held, if participants want to share something. Debrief and evaluation are performed. Afterward, the participants are invited to tear up the papers except for the joy paper. When this is done, they are all invited to stand in the joy paper, close their eyes and remember any small thing which makes them joyful.

### **Debrief and evaluation:**

Focus on individual feelings as well as feelings regarding working as a group.

- How do you feel now?
- How was it to do this exercise? What was the most challenging?
- How do you feel now, when you look at the art you created?
- Did this influence your opinion regarding artistic expression?
- How was your group work?

### **Tips for facilitators:**

The facilitator needs to keep a close eye on the participants' emotional well-being throughout this exercise. This activity can be very powerful and strong and participants can get overwhelmed. Be flexible and supportive of each participant. Allow them to leave the activity if they want. At the end of the activity add physical activity, hugging or dancing in case you feel the group needs to finalize this activity more firmly.

## Healthy world cafe

**Estimated time:** 30 - 1h

**Group size:** 9 - 30

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**Themes:**

- Coping mechanisms
- Online tools
- Useful tools and information sharing
- 3 facilitators

**Preparation:**

Prepare 3 flip chart papers. One will have the topic of healthy coping mechanisms, the second one unhealthy coping mechanisms, and the third one online tools for emotional regulation. These topics were picked given the topic of our training, however, the same method can be used for other topics as well. Get acquainted with the topic of the paper since participants might need more assistance.

**Materials necessary:**

- 3 flip chart papers
- Pens, markers
- Space for 3 flip chart papers where participants can write on

**Overview:**

Participants will be divided into 3 groups, at least 3 in a group, they have 3 stations with flip chart paper. Each group takes one station per round. The first round lasts 10 min, second 3 min, third 3 min. They move through each station adding more information to the paper. Each paper has a facilitator there to assist if necessary. When they are finished they come back to their first paper and read everything written. All groups share, and group discussion is finalized.

**Instructions:**

Divide participants into 3 groups. Each group starts with one paper. They discuss and write down what they agree on. Afterward when 10 minutes are finished, each group switches to another paper, and the facilitator stays with one paper. Finally, they visit the 3rd paper and add there as well.

**Debrief and evaluation:**



Facilitate a discussion based on their experiences in this activity. Ask them about group work in their group. Let them discuss their opinions and potential disagreements regarding information from the flip chart papers.

**Tips for facilitators:**

Be careful to use your role as a facilitator in a moderate manner, not to lead the whole discussion. Allow time and space for each group to contribute.

## Emotional live library

**Estimated time:** 1 - 1:30h

**Group size:** 15 - 40

**Themes:**

- Personal experiences
- Experience sharing
- Emotional intelligence

**Preparation:**

Before the activity, discuss with the people who will play “live books” potential interesting topics and questions. Prepare them to discuss topics with participants while maintaining healthy boundaries with themselves. In our activity, live books were: a person who goes to therapy, a person with a trauma experience in the past, a therapist under supervision, and a licensed therapist. All were open to sharing their personal and professional experiences, topics were focused on emotional regulation since that was the topic of the training.

**Materials necessary:**

- Flipchart where you will write the rules of the activity
- Big space so groups can spread out
- Facilitator and/or guests who can be “live books”

**Overview:**



Participants go in groups to different stations where they are met with a person who plays the role of a live book on a certain topic

**Instructions:**

Participants are divided into groups. They visit each station where one “live book” is and they are free to ask questions. Each participant is allowed to ask one question. If an individual does not have a question, they are not required to ask. The “live books” are allowed not to answer the question. Each station lasts 10 min.

**Debrief and evaluation:**

It is important to address the emotions of participants as well as “live books” facilitators since some topics might be harder to discuss. Share in a big group with all participants how they were feeling and other feedback questions.

**Tips for facilitators:**

Try to take care of group discussions in all groups.

## Activities created by participants

Our good paper friend

**Estimated time:** 30-45 mins

**Group size:** 20-25 people (+18)

**Themes:**

- Exploration and self-awareness of personal strengths
- Group support

**Preparation:**

Participants should know each other for this activity.

**Materials necessary:**

- Paper for each

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- Pen for each
- Speaker for music

**Overview:**

Participants write each other's positive attributes on paper and then they reflect on what they read.

**Instructions:**

Participants form a circle and sit while relaxing, positive music plays in the background. Each receives a sheet of paper and colored pens and writes their name at the top. They then pass the paper to the right, writing something positive about the person whose name is on the paper. After one minute, papers are passed again, continuing until each participant receives their own paperback, now filled with positive comments from their peers.

Participants read the comments and reflect silently for two minutes. They then choose to either draw a picture or write a letter to themselves, based on the positive feedback they received. The goal is to accept and expand on the compliments, adding more positive thoughts and identifying new strengths.

**Debrief and evaluation:**

If somebody wants to share they are invited to, if not, that is alright, in this activity it is not necessary.

**Tips for facilitators:**

The facilitator ensures a calm, supportive environment, encourages sincerity in comments, and provides support during the reflective and creative exercise.

## What if you were me?

**Estimated time:** 1:30 - 2h



**Group size:** 25 - 30 (+15)

**Themes:**

- Embracing and accepting different emotions through performance and art
- Theatre of the Oppressed
- Emotional intelligence
- Emotional awareness
- Groups support and understand, cultural differences

**Preparation:**

Prepare different situations with multiple actors where negative emotions are expressed. Print materials for participants. Depending on the topic the setting of the situation can change.

**Materials necessary:**

- Situations printed for all participants

**Overview:**

Participants will prepare the acting in groups and perform for all. The discussion will focus on the understanding of negativity and negative emotions, and the experience of the activity.

**Instructions:**

Form groups of 4,5 participants. Give them a situation, and ask them to play in a "negative" way. The preparation lasts for 30 minutes. Each group shares with the rest their play. After each play we will ask the other participants (audience) to come forward and if they want to change anything they join in and play.

**Debrief and evaluation:**



After all the groups, there will be a debriefing. Facilitate a discussion regarding the understanding of negativity and negative emotion. What are possible solutions? How did participants feel? The questions will be for the people who stepped in, how was it for you to adapt to this situation? For the person who got out, do you think it would work? Do you agree with how the other person acted? What does it change for you?

**Tips for facilitators:**

Take care of the emotional state of participants.

## The superpower of emotions

**Estimated time:** 1 - 1:30h

**Group size:** 20 children, aged 5-10 (adaptable for older participants as well)

**Themes:**

- show creativity (by creating theater scenes )
- increase children's emotional intelligence
- increase empathy

**Preparation:**

Prepare papers with different emotions written, depending on the size of the group. Prepare the definition of an emotion that will be understandable for the participants, given their age group.

**Materials necessary:**

- Pens
- Paper
- Makeup
- Mirror



- Costumes (optional)

**Overview:**

Participants are divided into groups and asked to create scenes with specific emotions.

**Instructions:**

1. Make a circle
2. Explain what is an emotion
3. Divide children into groups
4. In a box we have papers with several emotions
5. Give 10 min for each group to discuss and create a scene with no more than 1 min
6. Present the results to the rest of the group
7. Present a personal story about that particular emotion that the group worked on (if they want and if they feel comfortable to share)

**Debrief and evaluation:**

Sharing and talking about all the scenes, sharing challenges and disagreements.

**Tips for facilitators:**

Be careful with the age group, since they might need more facilitators and more support.

## Midnight train

**Estimated time:** 45 min

**Group size:** 8 - no limit

**Themes:**

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- Prejudice awareness
- Group problem solving
- Critical thinking about societal norms

**Preparation:**

Find interesting-looking, different people's pictures and project them. Interesting would be interesting to find pictures of famous criminals etc, so as to challenge the prejudice of people.

**Materials necessary:**

- Projector
- Papers
- Pen
- Photo collage

**Overview:**

First, participants work individually, then in a groups of 2, then 4, then 8 participants, depending on the size of the group. In all steps they receive the same instruction: choose 5 people to be their companions for the midnight train.

**Instructions:**

All participants receive the same instructions. Take care of the time, for all participants to have enough time.

**Debrief and evaluation:**

In case you chose famous nonmoral people the revealing of the characters' real personalities, history, and current emotional situation could be interesting for debriefing. Nonetheless, if you choose nonfamous people facilitate a discussion regarding stereotypes regarding physical appearance, gender roles, etc. Be sure to include a discussion about group dynamics and decision-making as well as the different emotions they experience in this activity.

**Tips for facilitators:**

Be sure to allow an adequate amount of time and expression of all participants.

## Future letter

**Estimated time:** 30 min

**Group size:** 3 - 30

**Themes:**

- Self-exploration
- Self-expression
- Self-regulation

**Preparation:**

Be sure to prepare enough space for all participants to be comfortable.

**Materials necessary:**

- Paper for each
- Pen for each

**Overview:**

Participants go through guided visualization and then write a letter.

**Instructions:**

Instruct participants to find somewhere comfortable and sit. Guided visualization can take different forms, this is our suggestion. Please close your eyes. Please release all your muscles, relax, and focus on your breathing and body. Maintain silence until the end of the exercise. Imagine you are 15 years old, or if you are close to that age, imagine being 12. Recall a significant moment from that time that played a major role in your life.





Visualize yourself at that age and give this younger version of yourself a different name. Observe your surroundings and pay close attention to this person's appearance, characteristics, and emotions. Analyze their feelings and thoughts. What do they want to say to you? Look at them closely for 30 seconds, and then keep this image in your mind as you slowly open your eyes.

Next, you will write a letter to this person. Although you share a past, treat them as a separate individual with their own rights and opinions. Remember, they haven't experienced as much as you have. Approach them with empathy and understanding.

Take a paper and pencil. Don't worry about what to write—the pencil will guide you. There are no right or wrong answers. Write whatever you want to say to this person, but be kind. You don't need to complete the letter fully. Listen to your heart and let it speak to this person.

#### **Debrief and evaluation:**

This activity is individual therefore this step is not necessary. You can ask the participants for feedback and if they want to share something. If not, that is valid. Suggest they take letters with them.

#### **Tips for facilitators:**

Be careful to create an adequate setting and time in the programme for this exercise. Be sure that the atmosphere is calm and quiet.

## Conclusion

This tool kit was created during the training course EMBRACE - Emotional Mastery: Balanced Regulation and Coping Effectiveness held in Šabac, Serbia in 2024. Therefore, the activities were created for professionals working with youth. However, all these activities are easily adaptable to different settings, concepts, and groups. The group sizes are only suggested, they can vary. Debrief and evaluation setting is a phase we suggest to be performed at the end of each activity because it consolidates the experience and memory of it. However, if there are constraints with time



this phase can be short. The majority of activities require enough space because a big group is divided into smaller groups, but that also depends on the size of the whole group. Another alternative is to have working space outside, in the nature or park, which we highly support since this environment is a good choice for informal education activities. Moreover, we consider slight changes always useful for the activity. The activity needs to be adapted to the context in which it is being used, feel free to do so.

Additionally, this toolkit is designed with flexibility in mind, encouraging facilitators to be creative and responsive to the needs of their specific groups. While the core structure and objectives of the activities remain consistent, the way they are implemented can vary widely. This adaptability ensures that the toolkit remains relevant and effective across different cultural contexts and varying group dynamics.

By engaging in these activities, participants are not only gaining skills in emotional mastery and coping effectiveness but are also contributing to a broader culture of emotional intelligence and resilience. This toolkit is more than a collection of activities; it is a framework for fostering personal growth and community well-being.

We believe all activities stand on the basis of self-awareness, self-expression, and no discrimination which is why we believe it can be used widely and differently. The majority of activities have an artistic component in them since we find art as a powerful tool to express and regulate our emotions where words can't always respond adequately. Finally, this training was focused on the topic of emotions. However, many activities can be changed to respond to different topic focus.

We hope that this toolkit serves as a valuable resource, inspiring you to cultivate positive emotional and social outcomes in your professional practice.

### Disclaimer

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