



Finnish Red Cross

EU4Health project

Guide to Psychosocial Activities for Professionals Working
with People Fleeing Conflict and Persecution



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Welcome to the Guide to Psychosocial Activities for Professionals Working with People Fleeing Conflict and Persecution!

“Benevolence is not naivety, but it requires alertness. It can lead us to take risks. It leaves no room for looking down on others. It makes us be attentive towards the most vulnerable among us and towards the sorrow of the people around us. It helps us show, through look and tone of voice, that every person is equally valuable and important.”

(Brother Roger, 2000)

International political conflicts, war, famine and climate change have made life in many parts of the world unsafe and humanly intolerable. In the era of globalization, the mass movement of people in a vulnerable position has become an increasingly complex issue. In the last three decades, the number of refugees globally has been estimated to have risen to approximately 22.5 million. Above all, social instability in the Middle East, North Africa and most South and Central American countries, in addition to the war in Ukraine that broke out in 2022, have forced a large share of the population in these regions to leave their homes, causing both internal displacement and external refugee flows. These events can also be seen in Finland, which has received increasing numbers of asylum seekers since the beginning of the 2000s.

The hardships faced by the refugee population and the groups of people who have fled conflict do not end the moment when they arrive to the country that offers them asylum. Adapting to an unfamiliar country of residence brings new challenges. The ability of individuals and families to cope with the difficult events they have experienced in their home country and during their refugee journey and with the stress of the integration process depends, above all, on how they

1. succeed in establishing and maintaining social ties in the new environment,
2. understand the cultural norms and rules of the new country, and
3. see their role and capabilities in relation to the society around them.

Successful integration therefore requires active and interactive cooperation between the people arriving in the country and the people receiving them, where both parties try to adjust to a changing operating environment. This requires multiprofessional and multi-institutional cooperation that takes into account not only the arrivals' need for support in different areas of life, but also the importance of educating the native population. In order to promote the overall well-being of people arriving in the country, one of the essential things is that their mental well-being is supported in a culturally sensitive way, i.e., while considering and valuing their cultural background. Mental well-being is conducive to learning a new language and building social networks, and vice versa. Due to this, supporting mental well-being should always be a top priority, together with other forms of operation that facilitate integration. This guide aims to address these observations from the perspective of both the people arriving in the country and the people receiving them.

Difficult experiences in refugee situations

Refugee situations involve many potentially difficult events. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that the refugee population is one of the most heterogeneous population groups in the world. The experiences of every individual and family and their ability to cope with various experiences are unique. The purpose of the table below is not to position people with a refugee background as incapable victims, but to support the understanding of the people working with them about phenomena that may be associated with refugee situations. People with a refugee background are so much more than the hardships they have faced.

In the home country before fleeing	During the refugee journey	Resettling in the receiving country
• Persecution • Physical and mental violence • Interruption of children's schooling • Challenging living conditions	• Long-term stay on refugee camps • Dependence on aid organizations and foreign authorities • Poverty • Experiences of death and missing friends and relatives	• Unfulfilled expectations • Challenges in the recognition of prior learning • Feelings of powerlessness and worthlessness • Challenges related to adaptation • Social isolation • New responsibilities

Experiences related to all three phases

- Uncertainty about the future
- Changes in the social and professional roles of the individual and family
- Separation from family
- Discrimination
- Unsafe environment and relationships
- Changes in the relationships within the family



Supporting mental well-being through group activities

The aim of this guide is to provide professionals working with the refugee population and others who have fled conflict tools for supporting mental well-being while considering the factors mentioned above. **It is important to acknowledge that these forms of support are by no means therapeutic, nor do they replace professional help, and their purpose is not to process difficult experiences.** The idea behind the activities presented in this guide is to supplement the activities that are already conducted with vulnerable population groups by applying an approach where the focus is on the potential and strengths of individuals and families, not so much on their symptoms. The activities conducted in groups aim to strengthen individual and community resilience, or mental agility, and to reduce factors that pose a risk to mental well-being. Some of the activities are based on exercises that rely on play and non-verbal communication, taking cultural diversity into account. This kind of support for mental well-being has been found to play a major role when predicting the success of adaptation. The circumstances following immigration to a new country have the single biggest impact on the long-term well-being of the new arrivals in relation to their experiences before and during their time as a refugee. Post-immigration experiences can therefore either provide essential support or reduce the immigrants' opportunities for integration. It is important that the support provided by the receiving countries would, above all:

- be culturally sensitive,
- be preventative and resource-oriented, and
- consider the unique life of the individual and the family.

Culturally sensitive interaction takes into account the various underlying sociocultural, educational and linguistic features that affect the dialogue between people and the individual's internal world of experience. Sociocultural factors include various roles assigned to individuals and the beliefs and values that determine their view of life, whereas educational factors include teaching methods, and linguistic factors include the meaning of concepts and communication strategies.

The starting point for resource-oriented and preventative work is that health is much more than the absence of illness. Promoting individual and social resources can ideally lead to thriving humans, communities and society. Supporting well-being in a resource-oriented manner should therefore not *“be about fixing only what is damaged, but also promoting what is best in us”*. Research shows that various individual-based and community-based characteristics, such as relationship skills, good self-esteem, hope and resilience, act as buffers against mental health problems. Identifying and developing personal skills and abilities and the skills and abilities of the community is important especially in difficult situations in life.

Consequently, in order to enable overall well-being, it is important to, for example, facilitate the identification of the strengths of an individual, family and community, support the establishment of meaningful relationships, identify interaction methods that also work in challenging situations and normalize different emotional experiences. In terms of preventing mental health issues and supporting acculturation, it is crucial that we restore the individual's sense of being someone who both needs things and is capable, who both needs and receives help. Social relationships and connections with other people, a sense of meaning in life and discovering one's identity beyond the refugee status are also important factors for ensuring human well-being. This guide aims to promote these protective factors for mental health through four themed sections:

1. community empowerment and communality,
2. resources and supporting resilience,
3. emotions and promoting emotional skills, and
4. communication and constructive interaction.

Operating environment of group activities

The activities can be organized to a large extent as part of the existing group activities of the Finnish Red Cross. Target environments for utilizing the activity bank include, for example, dialogue-based group meetings; art, cooking and exercise groups; communal food aid events; language cafés, recreational events and other group meetings. The idea is that both the activity leaders and the participants could take on the role of a giver and a receiver as mutually as possible in the event. The activities can be performed by adults, young people and children.

Things to consider when organizing the activities

It is important to consider the following factors when organizing psychosocial activities:

- **Reciprocity** || When organizing each activity, you should try to ensure that the interaction is as reciprocal as possible. This means that a) the people leading the activities also take part in them, whenever possible, b) the discussion during the activities should be steered so that everyone can both give and receive, learn and teach something new.
- **Trust** || Trust is like oxygen without which the activities lose their meaning. It is important that the activity leaders build trust both among the participants and between themselves and the participants.
- **Safety** || In all the activities, the activity leaders must make sure that the space and the activities are organized in an emotionally and physically safe atmosphere.
- **Engagement** || It is important to take small children into account when organizing the activities. Children can complete the activities either together with their parents or with help from their parents. There is no need for the youngest children to take part in all the activities presented in this guide. If there are small children present, the activity leaders should plan a separate programme for them, including child care, so that the older children and the adults can fully participate in the activities.
- **Environment** || If the event is held outdoors or there is a large number of participants, you should consider factors such as noise, the audibility of people's voices and the smooth flow of the activities. We recommend that groups of over 40 people are always divided into two.
- **Sensitivity and responsibility** || The people participating in the activities may carry heavy experiences on their shoulders. Sensitivity towards the participants' needs is important. If they are not sure or feel concerned about a situation, the activity leaders should advise the participant, based on their knowledge, to seek professional help from social and health care providers. The purpose of this guide is only to support preventative and community-led activities, as mentioned in the sections "supporting mental well-being through group activities" and "the operating environment of group activities". The activities are not therapeutic, nor do they replace professional help. Their purpose is not to process difficult issues, but to strengthen the resilience of individuals through resource-oriented work.
- **Instructing the participants to seek other help** || If the activity leaders are not sure or feel concerned about a situation, they should advise the participant to contact the social and health services of their municipality and make sure that the participant knows how to reach these services / where they can be found / what number they should call. The activity leaders can also inform the participant of the Crisis Helpline of Mental Health Finland, which provides support in Ukrainian (+358 9 2525 0114) and in Russian (+358 9 2525 0115) on weekdays, Mon/Thu 12 noon – 4 pm, Tue/Fri 9 am – 1 pm and Wed 5 – 9 pm. The activity leaders should check the website of Mental Health Finland, under "Tukea Ukrainan kriisin käsittelyyn", to make sure that the information is up to date.

More information and clarifications::

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Community empowerment and communality

Community empowerment refers to a process whereby individuals and communities can gain more control over their life. Communities are groups of people that may or may not have a regional connection with each other, but that do have common concerns, identities, hopes or needs. The joint activities of a community can ideally create a safe space that facilitates the sharing of difficult experiences, interaction and the formation of new social networks. The formation of new networks empowers and facilitates the ability of individuals belonging to the community to control their own actions and influence their situation. Community empowerment creates a solid foundation for cooperation that facilitates creativity. As the community draws from the collective knowledge and life experiences of its members, it can discover new solutions and approaches to difficult situations that an individual person could not have through of on their own.

When speaking of communality, it is also important to keep in mind that the refugee population typically not only needs support from health care professionals, but also – and often instead of the former – informal friendships. Due to this, it is extremely important to create low-threshold meeting places that facilitate friendships between individuals and families, in addition to the help provided by institutional forms of support. Interactions that increase a sense of belonging and facilitate integration into the community also strengthen resilience, a sense of meaning and control as well as happiness. When faced with a risk of losing the identity that is independent of the refugee or immigrant status, supporting the sense of belonging and community empowerment are factors that protect mental well-being.

Objectives of the activities:

- Create an empathetic relationship with and between the participants
- Foster a sense of belonging between families
- Strengthen experiences of solidarity and peer support



Activities:

Group activity: “Importance of cooperation”

The purpose of this activity is to help each participant recognize that in some situations it is useful to be able to ask, receive and provide help. The objective is to demonstrate how cooperation can help find solutions to everyday situations that can be more challenging to address on your own. Cooperation and reciprocity support the growth of communal resources, problem-solving abilities, trust and the emergence of new perspectives. Relationships based on reciprocity – both between family members and within a community – are an important part of overall well-being.

Participants are asked to take turns keeping an increasing number of filled balloons up in the air so that the number of balloons in the air grows from one balloon all the way up to ten. This task can be completed successfully only if the participants realize that they need to ask others for help and work together as a group. However, you should not mention this when providing the instructions, but the idea is that the participants themselves will understand, through trial and error, the crucial importance of cooperation for successfully completing the task.

Sometimes the instructions for the task can lead the participants to suspect that the task is impossible to do alone. The activity leaders need to give room for this discussion, but also ask the participants to first try completing the task by taking turns one at a time.

“I will be giving you more and more balloons to keep up in the air. The idea is that each of you tries to keep as many balloons in the air as you can for one minute. You will complete the task successfully if you can keep all 10 balloons in the air at the same time. You can use your hands, legs, head, whatever part of your body, but the important thing is that the balloons cannot touch the ground. If more than two balloons touch the ground, we will move on to the next person and let them have a try.”

If none of the participants ask for help after everyone has tried to complete the task independently, the leaders can ask: “How could we solve this problem?” “Could we ask the other participants to help us complete the task?” The participants are invited to do the task again; first in pairs and then as a group.

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- “Do you think there are situations in which we need help from others?”
- “How did/does it feel to ask for help? (The activity leader can try to encourage the participants to talk about the difficulty of asking for help sometimes and the feelings associated with asking for help.)”
- “Why do you think it’s hard for some people to ask for help?”
- “In what ways does or would asking for help and working together support you in your daily life?”

Required materials:

- 10 balloons

Group activity: “The story of our group”

Stories help us understand our place in the world. They create connections with others. Stories and story-telling allow us to share different experiences, feelings and thoughts and to learn new things and expand our perspectives. Stories bring people together and reinforce the feeling that we are gathered here as a group looking in the same direction, and we are united even with our diversity.

The activity leaders ask the participants to stand or sit down on chairs in the middle of the room so that the group forms one unbroken circle. The activity is based on telling a story together called “the story of our group”. The activity leaders can start telling the story by saying something about what the group is doing at the moment, a trip they have made together or some other, positive everyday event concerning the group members. Each participant may speak for two minutes. To ensure that the activity runs as smoothly as possible, it is important to keep up the pace of the story so that none of the participants spend too much time thinking about what they want to say.

“Please form a circle so that we can all see each other. The name of this game is “our story” and the aim is to say something about the time we have spent together and the pleasant, fun experiences that we have been able to share with each other. We can all add our own contribution to the story by speaking for two minutes on our turn. The idea is that we each continue the story from where the previous participant left off. Do you have any questions? Shall we give it a try? My colleague Maria and I can start by giving you an example of how we can tell our story between us.”

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- “How did our group feel about creating a story together?”
- “What was difficult, what was easy?”
- “What is the best thing about our group based on the story we told?”

Required materials:

- –

Group activity: “Our group is like a ball of yarn”

Sometimes it is not easy to see how our actions affect others or how other people’s actions affect us. This activity tries to demonstrate the many ways in which human communities can affect each other through actions, words and non-verbal interaction. The purpose of the activity is to strengthen the role of empathy and peer support among the participants.

The activity leaders ask the participants to stand in a circle in the middle of the room and leave some space between the participants. The activity leaders explain that the person holding the ball of yarn on their turn should state their name, an activity they enjoy in their free time, something that usually makes them happy and a wish they have relating to the group’s activities. The activity leaders can go first. The ball of yarn will unwind as it gets thrown to the next randomly selected person standing in the circle, and a star-shaped web of colours and connections will gradually form between the participants and the activity leaders.

Once everyone standing in the circle has held the ball of yarn, all the people in the circle will be holding one point of the star created by the yarn in their hand, a piece of the ball of yarn. The activity leaders then ask the participants to hold on tightly to their pieces of yarn as the leaders take a step back from the circle. This movement will create tension in the yarn web, which will also force the other participants to move from their places. The wave motion caused by the move is meant to demonstrate to the participants how each of their lives is in one way or another linked to other human beings and to the community that surrounds them geographically, but also mentally.

“Please stand in a circle without holding hands and leave some space between you and the people on either side of you. As you can see, I have a ball of yarn with me. The purpose of this activity is to get to know each other. The person holding the ball of yarn should state their name, one thing that they enjoy doing in their free time, one thing that makes them happy in their life, and one wish concerning our meeting today. After this, the person holding the ball of yarn tosses the ball to some other person in the circle, while still holding on to their section of the ball of yarn. As we continue doing this, the ball of yarn will gradually unwind between us. Do you have any questions about the instructions? I can start and give you an example.”

Once everyone has introduced themselves and the activity leaders have taken a step back with their pieces of yarn, they can say:

“Did you see the effect of our movement? It looked like we were all connected to each another (one of the activity leaders can tighten the yarn again to demonstrate the domino effect caused by the motion). Can anyone tell me why you moved with me? How do you think our movements affected us as a group? (...) This activity demonstrates how every one of us affects the lives of others in some way, either directly or indirectly. My colleague and I hope that today we can continue with the next activities in the same way, together and united, like this star that we created with our ball of yarn.”

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- “In what ways do you notice that the actions of others or your surroundings affects you?”
- “In what ways do you notice your actions affecting other people around you?”
- “How could we support one another with our everyday actions?”
- “In what ways could communality support your well-being and your ability to cope with everyday life?”

Required materials:

- Ball of yarn, preferably multi-coloured

Group activity: “What do we have in common?”

The purpose of this activity is to facilitate experiences of empathy and trust between the participants. The activity tries to question any prejudices and strengthen the sense of belonging. During the activity, the participants may notice that they share many experiences despite their differences. Sometimes participants find it difficult to talk about themselves verbally in front of others, but the “what do we have in common” activity gives them a chance to talk – a lot – without saying a word.

Step 1: The activity leaders divide the room into two sections with a tape stuck on the floor or a line drawn on the ground.

Step 2: It is important that the activity leaders explain the basic rules of the activity, which the participants are required to follow during the activity. A) During the activity, you are not allowed to speak, laugh or make jokes. B) If the participants’ answer to the question asked by the activity leaders is “yes”, they need to move forward and step onto the line. Before the next question is asked, the participants need to return to their places behind the line. C) If the answer to the question is “no”, the participants need to stay where they are behind the line.

Step 3: The activity leaders divide the participants into two groups, for example by asking everyone to take turns saying “one” and “two”. The activity leaders divide the “ones” and the “twos” so that there are two groups, one on each side of the line. The participants of each group stand side by side, facing the members of the other group and the line in the middle.

Step 4: The activity leaders ask a series of questions, with topics ranging from hobbies to likes and dreams. The activity leaders should start the activity by asking simple, light-hearted questions. Depending on the group dynamic, the leaders’ professional skills and how close the participants are to each other and to the leaders, the leaders can also ask more personal questions later on during the activity. Making the space and the event safe is very important.

Step 5: After the questions, it is important for the activity leaders to allow room for free discussion. The goal is that everyone who to share their feelings and thoughts about the activity can do so.

Questions that help you lead the activity in step 4:

More light-hearted questions:

- *Exercise brings me joy*
- *Music is important to me*
- *I’m more of a morning person than a night person*
- *I like animals*
- *I love my family*
- *I like savoury foods more than sweet ones*
- *I’d like to start or I already do a sport, art or a cultural activity as a hobby*
- *Nature gives me energy*
- *I miss the foods and celebrations of my home country*
- *I’m more of a summer than a winter person*
- *Learning Finnish is hard*
- *One of the small great joys in my life is food and eating together with people who are important to me*
- *I dream of being able to study a profession / I’m already studying something*
- *I’d like to learn more about the Finnish culture*

More personal questions:

- *I miss my family*
- *Sometimes I find it difficult to ask for help*
- *I'm not always sure if I made the right decision in coming to Finland*
- *I'm tired*
- *I wish I could find more friends in Finland*
- *Sometimes adapting to a new culture feels hard*
- *It would be nice to be able to share my everyday life more with other people*
- *I miss the profession I had in my home country*
- *I feel worried about the uncertainty of the future*
- *Sometimes I feel guilty for not being as strong as I think I should be*

Questions that help you lead the activity in step 5:

- *"What thoughts and feelings did the activity trigger?"*
- *"Why is a sense of belonging so important?"*
- *"In what ways can assumptions affect our interaction with people?"*
- *"In what ways could we facilitate openness in our daily interactions?"*

Required materials:

- Roll of tape



Group activity: “The power of trust”

The objective of this activity is to both facilitate trust between the participants and to demonstrate the importance of trust as an enabler of peer support. The courage to change and to take risks, to see mistakes as opportunities and to give up control, are all resources we need for effective cooperation. Without trust in other people, building a foundation for peer support, cooperation and human change is challenging.

The activity leaders ask the participants to form pairs. Each pair is given a gauze for covering the eyes of one member of the pair. After this, the member with their eyes covered has to complete the task in the space blindfolded while their partner gives them verbal directions. You will need a fairly large, empty space for this exercise. The activity leaders build an obstacle course in the space using obstacles that are as soft/safe as possible. The course runs across the space from one end to the other, and the blindfolded participants need to navigate through the course. The course should not be built until after the participants have been blindfolded. In this task, the blindfolded participants need to navigate through the area without bumping into obstacles with the help of their partners' directions. The activity has been completed successfully when all the partners have made it across the finish line.

If needed, you can also organize the activity as a group: the activity leaders can divide the group into two teams instead of pairs, and group A instructs the members of group B through the obstacle course.

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- *“How did it feel to be completely dependent on someone else’s directions?”*
- *“What made you the most nervous in this activity?”*
- *“How did it feel to be trusted by someone?”*
- *“Why is it sometimes hard for us to share responsibility with other people?”*
- *“In what situations are sharing responsibility and trust important abilities?”*

Required materials:

- A space that is empty and big enough for building an obstacle course
- Obstacles, such as pillows and armchairs, without any sharp edges so that the participants will not hurt themselves if they bump into them

Resources and supporting resilience

Sudden changes that shake the entire world of refugees and people fleeing conflict can place them in a vulnerable position in society also after being granted asylum. The transformation of the sociocultural and economic reality often also transforms family relations and roles and the self-image of the individual. The individual's and the family's identity are both in constant interaction with their environment, which means that various stereotypes associated with refugees can negatively affect the self-image of both the individual and the family. Experiences of helplessness and incapacity can become more powerful. Seeing the individual beyond the refugee status is therefore crucial for the development of self-esteem and a positive self-image and for the prevention of mental health issues.

Identifying personal strengths and, through this, supporting individual and communal resilience is an essential part of supporting individuals and families through difficult situations in life. Focusing on the strengths instead of the weaknesses creates a more solid basis for work based on reciprocity. Naming individual abilities, competencies and skills in both oneself and others facilitates well-being and prevents mental health problems. Identifying strengths helps people, especially those in various kinds of vulnerable positions, to have more faith in themselves and to form new perceptions of what they are capable of, alone and together, when faced with adversity. Facilitating a sense of control over one's own life is connected to a higher self-esteem and a sense of security, which are connected to better mental, physical and social well-being.

Objectives of the activities:

- Acknowledge the unique value of every family member and person
- Identify personal and family members' strengths, abilities and skills
- Name various ways in which personal resources support both the individual and the family as they cope with stressful situations
- Strengthen identity building that shifts away from the "refugee status"



Activities

Group activity: “What does well-being mean to me?”

The purpose of this activity is to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of what well-being is and what it can mean to different people. Well-being can be understood as a broad phenomenon category that consists of emotional reactions, areas of satisfaction and experiences of happiness in different areas of life. Well-being is influenced by many factors, such as the emotional, intellectual, professional, physical, social and spiritual areas of life. Due to the complexity of the concept of well-being, it is sometimes hard for people to verbalize what “well-being” means specifically for them. This can lead to a situation where the individual struggles to identify things that improve their personal well-being in a concrete way. It is therefore essential to discuss the meaning of well-being together when supporting the resources and resilience of individuals and communities.

The main role of the activity leaders during this activity is to encourage the participants to consider well-being from different perspectives, what it means to them and what supports their well-being in their everyday life. The activity leaders can make this easier by going first and talking about their own experiences. After this, it is important that they show curiosity towards the participants’ experiences and culture while emphasizing that there is no one right way of understanding well-being. The activity leaders can ask the participants, for example, to describe the meanings they give to well-being and how they usually express it through behaviour and verbal language in their own culture.

At the end of the discussion, the participants are asked to write down their answers on sheets of paper handed out at the start of the activity. They can also look at the printed pictures provided by the activity leaders, choose the ones that portray the things in their life that make them feel good and glue them next to the text on their sheet of paper.

“The concept of well-being and the things that make us feel good in our everyday lives are different for each of us. I would like to know what well-being means to each of you and what you do to make yourself feel good. I’d like to ask everyone to use the sheets of paper we handed out to write down or draw what well-being means to you and what makes you feel good. If you want, you can also look at these pictures and choose the ones that represent things that make you feel good or that portray well-being.”

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- “What does well-being mean to me and to our family?”
- “What does my well-being consist of?”
- “What things in my life right now support my well-being?”
- “What could I do differently to feel better? / “What could we do differently to feel better as a family?”

Required materials:

- Pencils or pens
- Illustrative, colour-printed pictures
- Sheets of paper

Group activity: “Beautiful me, beautiful you”

A strengths-based approach supports the self-confidence of individuals and families and their ability to cope even with more difficult situations. Naming and verbalizing strengths with your family members and other important people in your life is known to increase happiness, common spirit and intimacy. This can, at best, empower the community and create a solid foundation for discovering new ways to approach challenging situations.

In this activity, each participant is given a pen or a pencil and one post-it note. Each participant also gets as many post-it notes as there are members in their family attached to their back. Other important people in the participant’s life, such as friends, can also be included. The idea is that each participant first writes three attributes (abilities, strengths, skills) about themselves on a post-it note and then three attributes on other post-it notes about each of their family members / friends. If necessary, the participants can also look through the list of strengths that is handed out for everyone to see at the start of the activity. There is only one rule in this activity: the participants may only talk and write about strengths, never weaknesses.

“I will give each of you a pencil and a post-it note, and I would like to ask you to write down three of your strengths. After this, I ask you all to stand up and move freely around the room. I will attach the same number of post-it notes to your back as there are members in your family or important friends in your life. The idea of the activity is to write down, on one of the post-it notes, three attributes about that family member / friend that you consider to be their strengths. We ask parents to help out the children who don’t know how to write yet. For example, if you think that Samuel is very funny or has a great sense of humour, you should write this attribute on one of the post-it notes on his back without telling him about the strengths you are writing about. Try to make sure that the attributes describe each of your family members individually; don’t write the same attributes for everyone. If the task feels difficult at first, here’s a list of strengths that can provide some inspiration.”

When the activity is over, the activity leaders ask the participants to remove the post-it notes from each other’s backs. After this, the participants are asked to read, with their family members, the attributes that they themselves and others have identified as strengths both in themselves and in each other. Finally, the participants are asked to share the attributes they identified as resources among their family members with the rest of the group in their own words. The idea is to discuss how they felt during the activity.

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- “How did it feel to come up with good things about your family members / friends?”
- “And how did it feel to come up with good things about yourself?”
- “How did it feel to be given this kind of attention from your family members / friends?”
- “If we’d be listing faults instead of attributes, would the task be easier in your opinion?”

Required materials:

- Coloured post-it notes
- Pencils or pens
- List of strengths

Group activity: “Resources in our family”

! Works well right after the above activity “Beautiful me, beautiful you”

In the first step of this activity, children are asked to draw a picture of their family / important people in their life on an A5 piece of paper/paperboard handed out by the activity leaders. Once the drawings are done, the activity leaders ask the families to sit down in a circle with the family drawing in the middle of the circle. The activity leaders ask each participant to write down three attributes next to their picture in the drawing that they consider to be their strengths. After this, each participant is asked to turn to each of their family members / friends in turn and praise them one by one based on at least three strengths/skills/abilities associated with that family member. At the same time, one of the family members writes down the attributes mentioned during the dialogue on the drawing made by the child. The objective is that after the families have given praise to each family member / friend, there will be at least three strengths next to each of them on the drawing.

“For the next activity, we ask you to draw a picture of your family/friends on sheets of paper that we hand out. (...) Has everyone finished their drawing? Great! We would now ask each family to sit down in a circle with your family members and friends so that the picture of your family is in the middle of the circle. Here’s what we’d like to you do: we ask each of you to first write down three attributes next to your picture in the drawing that you identify as your strengths. After this, we ask you to turn to your family members / friends and tell them, one by one, at least three attributes that you consider as their strengths. Someone should also write down each attribute next to the drawing. The purpose of this activity is that, by the end of your discussion, you will have a beautiful drawing of your family and an understanding of the different strengths and resources you have as a family. Do you have any questions about the instructions?”

After the activity, the activity leaders try to encourage discussion about how important it is to identify your own and other people’s strengths and how the identification of strengths can in many ways support the family’s resources in everyday life. The idea is that the participants become more aware of how they can promote their personal well-being and the well-being of their loved ones in their daily lives through their strengths.

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- “How do you use these attributes in your daily life?”
- “How could each of you use these attributes in your daily life as a family?”
- “How could you improve the resources of your family through your strengths?”
- “What is the best thing about your family?”

Required materials:

- A5 paper/paperboard
- Colouring pencils and pencils

Group activity: “Moments of gratitude”

Happiness and well-being are not determined only by a combination of genetic attributes and the existing circumstances, but also by the way in which the individual approaches the events that concern them. Fostering gratitude can help identify the people, interactions and events that have had a positive effect on the life of an individual. This does not eliminate or try to exclude difficult things or feelings from the person’s sphere of life, but the role of such thinking can carry individuals and families through challenging situations.

Letters of gratitude enrich the life of both the giver and the receiver, and sometimes writing about life experiences can help structure those experiences better. The person receiving the letter can feel seen and heard in a particularly beautiful way, and the person writing the letter can experience happiness when they realize how important the people around them truly are. The letters can potentially empower both parties.

In this activity, the activity leaders hand out cards and envelopes to the participants. The idea is that each participant will write a card to their family members or their chosen friends, describing a moment when the other person has felt important to them, helped them or been there for them. Children can write letters with the help of adults or, instead of writing, they can draw pictures representing their thoughts on the cards. It is important for the activity leaders to emphasize that the letters will not be read out loud during the group meeting, but they are meant to be read only by their recipients. The activity leaders ask the participants to put the cards in envelopes and, if possible, give them to their family members or friends at home or the next time they see them during a calm moment that feels right for them.

“Life involves both happy and sad events that trigger various feelings and thoughts in us. That’s perfectly normal. But sometimes sadness can make everything in our sphere of life appear grey. When this happens, remembering beautiful things can help us. The purpose of noticing the good around us is not to remove sadness entirely, but to help us cope with everyday life despite our sadness. Because of this, I’d like to suggest that today we remember the important people in our lives who have in some way given us joy, happiness and support in our lives. I will give each of you however many cards and envelopes you want, and you can write to the important people in your life about the ways in which they bring meaning to your life. Adults can either help children write their messages or, instead of writing, children can draw a picture on their cards. Whatever you write will only be read by you and the person who receives the letter. The letters will not be read during our meeting. Once you have written your letters, you can put them in envelopes and give them to the recipients whenever you want.”

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- “How did it feel to write a letter to a family member or friend?”
- “What does gratitude mean to you?”
- “How do you think gratitude affects your life?”
- “Can gratitude sometimes have a negative effect on life?”

(It is important for the activity leaders to emphasize that gratitude should never be used to hide sadness, disappointment or other emotions that are considered negative)”

Required materials:

- Cards and envelopes
- Pencils or pens

Group activity: “Picture of our joy”

When people gather together around a common goal to learn and cooperate, the potential of the group is unleashed, creating new insights. The shared discussion of the group can act as a significant resource for each participant when identifying factors that influence daily well-being.

In this activity, participants are asked to work together and use words, pictures and drawings to create a poster of the things that bring joy to their daily life. Before working on the poster together, the activity leaders divide the poster into six sections: 1) a skill I didn’t believe I had before I tried it; 2) a person with whom I can be myself; 3) a type of exercise that refreshes my body; 4) an activity that almost always makes me happier; 5) something that helps me calm down; 6) a food I really enjoy. The idea is that each participant can freely add their own contribution to each of the six sections in “the picture of our joy”. At the end of the activity, the activity leaders ask the participants to – voluntarily and in their own words – share with the rest of the group some of the things that are part of their everyday life or that resonate with them.

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- *“How did it feel to work together on a picture of the things that bring joy to our group?”*
- *“What did I learn?”*
- *“How could we create more opportunities for peer support in our daily life?”*

Required materials:

- White poster, at least 2 metres x 2 metres
- Printed pictures
- Colouring pencils / paint



Emotions and promoting emotional skills

Refugees and those who have fled persecution have to face a large number of stress factors, such as learning a new language, laws and cultural norms, looking for a job and a place to live, and feeling homesickness and missing the friends and family who stayed behind in the country of departure. Many are suffering from trauma already before arriving in the receiving countries, and living in the new country and all the things that come with this can aggravate emotional anxiety. Overcoming emotionally difficult situations and adapting to the new sociocultural environment can create challenges with regulating and accepting emotional experiences. This can be due to, for example, stereotypes and beliefs that concern the appropriateness or desirability of certain kinds of feelings and that often come from embracing the values of the environment where the person grew up. Naming, accepting and normalizing emotions should always be a top priority when strengthening well-being.

It is also important to acknowledge that the difficulties faced by the refugee population that stem from displacement and its causes and settling in a new country can challenge both the individuals' and families' ability to build a gentle attitude towards feelings of sadness, guilt and anxiety. It is also worth remembering that feelings are expressed differently in different cultures and the concept of well-being also has different meanings. Consequently, considering and fostering diversity when supporting well-being is crucial. It is essential that individuals and families can understand that there is no one right way of fostering well-being. Well-being means somewhat different things for everyone, and it consists of social, mental and physical factors.

Objectives of the activities:

- Name factors that support personal well-being
- Recognize the diversity of emotional experiences
- Normalize different emotions
- Identify effective ways to process emotions



Activities:

Group activity: “Fishing for feelings”

Individuals who are able to name their feelings and calm down or adjust their behaviour while listening to how they feel can maintain relationships that are conducive to well-being and overcome challenging situations more effectively. Emotions can be described as our internal compass: they help us not only to understand how a situation feels but also to make decisions on how we should respond and react to the situation. The experience of being able to identify and regulate emotions has a significant effect on the individual's sense of meaning and ownership in their life.

The purpose of this activity is to help improve emotional intelligence, or the ability to identify and understand both our own emotions and the emotions of others. The activity helps the participants form links between situations, words and emotions, which will lead to a more profound understanding of self and others. The activity leaders ask all the participants to take one picture from a cloth pouch (the picture can be an emoji or show a nature, event etc. theme) that represents a particular emotion for that individual. The objective is that each participant will describe a) the emotion (their thoughts and ways of expression concerning that emotion) and b) its attributes (how the emotion feels in their body). For example, the participant can describe how the people in their culture typically express the emotion (popular sayings, body language) and what meanings/characteristics are associated with that particular emotion. In addition to this, the participant will describe how stress, for example, appears in their body. The activity leaders can go first to make the task easier.

“We have this pouch full of pictures of different things, situations and environments! We ask each of you to take one picture from the pouch and tell us what thoughts you associate with that picture and the emotion it triggers in you. We'd also like to hear how the people in your culture express that emotion and how it feels in your body. For example, if I took a picture of the beach from the pouch, I could say that the picture reminds me of summer and thinking about summer makes me feel joy and freedom. Joy and freedom make my body feel more energetic and lighter.”

After the participants have all spoken, the activity leaders should facilitate a brief discussion where the group discusses the importance of emotional intelligence and openness for emotional experiences and well-being.

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- “What does this feeling mean to me?”
- “Is it useful to feel this way?”
- “What is the role of this feeling in my life?”

Required materials:

- Cloth pouch
- Colour-printed pictures

Group activity: “I hear and I feel”

This activity facilitates an understanding of emotional skills, such as identifying emotions, empathizing and understanding other perspectives. It helps give more meaning to the individual's world of experiences and to build connections between events, emotional experiences and actions. The objective of the activity is that by listening to various pieces of music (we recommend that the selected songs are instrumental, without lyrics), each participant can identify some of the emotions that the songs trigger. You do not have to play the songs in full; a one-minute sample, for example, is enough. Before listening to the pieces of music, the activity leaders give each participant a small piece of paper (with the question “What thoughts and feelings did the music evoke in you?” and eight columns for the eight songs that are played). The purpose of filling in the piece of paper is to practise naming the emotions we feel. The set of pictures shared by the activity leaders earlier can also help with this task, and participants can choose a picture that goes with each piece of music.

“When we listen to music, we often associate it with different emotions. When we listen to a cheerful song, for example, it can evoke feelings of joy in us. And when we feel joy, we always think about something associated with joy. The idea of this activity is to listen to eight songs, which we will play to you, and try to identify the feelings that they evoke in you. The songs will be played one at a time, and after you have listened to them and identified the feeling they evoked in you and the thought that came to your mind, you can write your observations on the piece of paper we give to you. You can also choose a picture from our set of pictures that matches how you feel and attach it next to your written observation. For example, if the first song evokes feelings of joy in me, I could find a picture of joy and put it here. Let's listen to the songs! If you want, you can close your eyes while listening to the music.”

After listening to the pieces of music, the idea is to discuss the feelings and thoughts evoked by the activity. It is important for the activity leaders to pay attention and notice if a particular song evokes a more powerful emotional response from the participants during the exercise. The activity leaders and the participants should discuss the many ways in which people can experience emotions, what they are trying to tell us, and the many different ways in which they shape our actions.

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- “What are some of the possible sensations in your body and/or thoughts associated with this emotion?”
- “In what situations do you usually feel this way?”
- “What could this feeling be trying to tell me?”
- “What do I do when I feel this way?”

Required materials:

- Radio/smartphone for playing music
- Playlist
- Sheets of paper
- Pencils or pens
- Colour-printed pictures

Group activity: “Hand of hope”

Life involves tolerating uncertainty and accepting your limitations, which can sometimes feel scary. Because of this, it is important that people can feel that there are also things in their life that are partly in their hands. Emotional regulation means the individual's ability to understand their emotions and try to see situations as they are in reality, without letting the emotions triggered by the situations influence them or their relationships in an unreasonably powerful or negative way. Emotional regulation can be practised, for example, by distancing yourself from the situation, seeking social support or through positive reassessment.

The activity leaders give the participants A4 or A3 sheets of paper, asking everyone to draw or paint their hand on the paper. After this, the participants are instructed to write some everyday things that they can either regulate or control inside their hand and things that feel beyond their control outside their hand. The hand is an important visual reminder of the interaction between control and regulation. Envisioning yourself opening your grip and letting go of things you cannot control can be an effective way of putting down a burden you do not need to carry. The individual then has more resources to direct at things that they can actually control. The activity leaders should give the participants concrete examples of things that can be controlled/regulated and things that are beyond our control.

Example for adults: *“I can’t control the fact that many jobs in Finland require Finnish language skills. But I can control my own actions. I can choose to study Finnish for one hour every day and try to speak Finnish whenever I go to the store. I can choose to watch Finnish-language series or read the news in Finnish.”*

Example for children: *“I can’t control the school or class in which I study. But I can control my own actions. I can choose to go to school every day to get to know my new classmates and try to play with the other kids during break times. I can choose to always tell my teacher and my parents if I’m worried about something at school.”*

At the end of the activity, it is important that the activity leaders try to facilitate a discussion between the participants about the role of accepting our limitations on the one hand and identifying our opportunities to influence matters on the other from the perspective of well-being. For example, if an individual tries to hold on to something that is beyond their control, they may start to feel overwhelmed. But on the other hand, the experience of total powerlessness in relation to the course of your life can similarly have a negative effect on well-being.

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- “What thoughts did the activity evoke in me?”
- “How did it feel to do the activity?”
- “Was it easier for me to identify things that I can regulate or things that I cannot?”
- “How could I better identify things in my life that I can influence?”

Required materials:

- A4 or A3 sheets of paper
- Pencils or pens
- Colouring pencils / paint

Group activity: “The story of my shoes”

Active listening supports relationship-building, conflict prevention, the growth of empathy and the building of trust. Active listening is not just about listening quietly to what the other person has to say, but rather about showing interest towards the person while avoiding hasty conclusions. Active listening requires a genuine will to understand the other person’s world of experiences regardless of how much it differs from the reality of the person who is listening. Finding similar opinions is not essential, but practising putting yourself in someone else’s shoes and approaching diversity kindly.

The participants are divided into pairs before the activity. The pairs should tell each other the story of the shoes they are wearing at the time. It is important for the activity leaders to explain the basic rules of the activity, which the participants need to follow when conducting the activity. a) Each pair has to respect the principles of active listening. The purpose of the activity is to show interest towards your partner and to try to understand their thoughts and feelings concerning the story of their shoes. b) Each pair makes sure that both parties have an opportunity to be heard and to hear the other person during the activity for the agreed five minutes.

“I would like to invite you to tell the story of your shoes to each other. We will divide you into pairs and each pair can find a quiet place to do the task. Each member of the pair has five minutes to tell the story of their shoes to the other person, so you have 10 minutes in total for completing this task. We ask that you listen to the story of your partner’s shoes according to the principles of active listening. After 10 minutes, we will gather back here and each person may share the story of their partner’s shoes with the whole group. Do you have any questions? We will let you know when the first five minutes are up, so you can switch roles. Let’s get started!”

At the end of the activity, the activity leaders lead a discussion concerning the activity as a whole.

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- “How did it feel to be heard and noticed?”
- “How did it feel to listen to the other person according to the principles of active listening?”
- “What was easy in this activity, and what was hard?”
- “In what ways could I/we as a family use active listening in my/our daily life?”

Required materials:

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Group activity: “My safe place”

The sense of safety is an essential part of the experience of overall well-being. However, it can be hard to find a sense of safety in the middle of difficult situations and traumatic life events. Imagining a safe place can calm you down, if you are feeling anxious, stressed or traumatized. When an individual feels hyperalert, one of their self-regulation strategies can be to return internally to a safe place that they have imagined before. A safe place can be imagined in a variety of ways. Art can add more depth to the experience due to its visual and experimental qualities.

The activity leaders should explain the instructions for this activity to the participants as neutrally as possible. They should not mention trauma or difficult experiences. Instead, the participants are asked to imagine situations, places and scents that have made them feel calm. They can engage all five senses to create the experience, and the safe place can consist of both experienced and imagined things.

“It’s important for each of us to find a safe place where we can go whenever we want – even without others noticing it. The more detailed our safe place is in our imagination, the better. For instance, you could visualize what your safe place looks like and what it consists of. Where is your safe place located, what colours are there? Are you surrounded by the important people in your life or are you alone in your safe place? You can also imagine what your safe place feels like. Is it warm or cool, quiet or noisy? Do you associate scents or music with your safe place? You can use all your senses to imagine your safe place – every safe place is unique and there are no right or wrong answers. If you want, you can draw your safe place on the piece of paper we give you. The more elaborately you imagine your safe place, the easier it will be for you to find it again when you want to.”

At the end of the activity, the activity leaders emphasize that the more often you imagine your safe place as a mental exercise, the easier it will be to find it when your mind is feeling restless.

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- “How did it feel to imagine your safe place?”
- “What is the most important thing for you in your safe place?”
- “What word or figure would you use to describe your safe place?”

Required materials:

- A4 papers
- Colouring pencils

Communication and constructive interaction

Interaction is an essential part of overall well-being. It is more profound than simply exchanging thoughts, because it is both a tool and a skill that facilitates connections with other people and with the individual themselves. It means sharing the elements of being alive: communication allows the individual to share their thoughts and feelings about everything in their life with other meaningful people around them. Communication allows the individual to verbalize their hopes and fear, successes and struggles, happiness and sorrow. Through this, the choice of words, body language, tones of voice and the way in which communication takes place have a significant effect on the experiences of well-being of the individual, family and community.

Effective communication provides a framework for interaction that empowers the individual and the community in many ways. It builds a foundation for trust and cooperation. It brings people together to look for ways to address challenges in their environment and to rejoice over shared moments of joy and happiness. Constructive, safety-inducing interaction is closely related to stress and anxiety relief and building closer relationships with other people. In other words, effective communication is the foundation for any activities that take place between people. Because of this, facilitating interaction skills is essential also when supporting groups of people in a vulnerable position. It improves their ability to put their thoughts and feelings into words, ask for help, handle stressful situations and benefit from peer support.

Objectives of the activities:

- Strengthen constructive interaction skills
- Facilitate active listening
- Support conflict resolution skills



Activities:

Group activity: “Non-verbal communication”

Non-verbal communication is important, because it can potentially supplement or question the message conveyed by verbal communication. Non-verbal communication can provide valuable information about a situation, for example about how a certain person is feeling, how someone is receiving information or how a person or a group of people should be approached. The importance of non-verbal communication grows in situations where the interacting parties do not share a common language or the common language is not fluent enough to ensure effective communication.

The purpose of this activity is to help the participants realize that, despite linguistic challenges, it is possible to engage in dialogue through non-verbal communication. The activity leaders divide the participants into two groups, group A and B, and these groups switch roles during the activity. At first, group A is given a post-it note with a word written on it (the word can be related to a particular topic/theme/event/situation) and they need to explain this word to group B. However, the participants may not use any words or other verbal communication methods to get their message across. They need to try to communicate their message successfully to group B using only their movements, gestures and expressions. Group B, on the other hand, may talk and have a discussion to try to guess what group A is trying to tell them. After group B has guessed the word correctly, the groups switch roles.

“I will divide you into two groups, group A and B. The groups take turns explaining words to the other group that I have written on these post-it notes. This exercise is based on non-verbal communication, which means that the group explaining the word may only use body movements, expressions and gestures to communicate. The group trying to guess the word is allowed to talk, but I ask to you carefully observe the body language of your group members. Are you ready? Let’s get started!”

After the activity, the activity leaders should facilitate a discussion concerning non-verbal communication and its role in the participants’ daily life. It is important for the activity leaders to acknowledge the potential of non-verbal communication in terms of addressing linguistic challenges.

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- “How did it feel to communicate without words?”
- “How important is non-verbal communication in your daily interactions?”
- “How could we use non-verbal communication more than we do now?”
- “Why is the match between non-verbal and verbal communication important?”

Required materials:

- Post-it notes

Group activity: “Our line”

! Works well instead of or after the above activity “Non-verbal communication”

In this activity, the group must form lines based on a specific request using only non-verbal communication. For example, the activity leaders can ask the group to line up in order of age, shoe size, the number family members they have or their favourite month of the year. The participant with the smallest number is on the far left of the line and the participant with the biggest number on the far right of the line.

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- *“What was the easiest thing about this task? What was the hardest?”*
- *“How did it feel to communicate without words?”*
- *“How important is non-verbal communication in your daily interactions?”*
- *“How could we use non-verbal communication more than we do now?”*

Required materials:

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Group activity: “Cash register story”

The concept of communication can be simplified as a process that enables the exchange of information, opinions or other interaction, verbal or non-verbal, between two or more people in a certain situation. It consists of sharing thoughts, feelings and experiences with someone else. However, due to their human subjectivity and interpretations that are taken for granted, communication processes are sometimes susceptible to misunderstandings and conflicts.

The activity leaders try to support the growth of awareness among the participants concerning the mistakes we make in communication and interaction and the gaps in our mutual understanding. The purpose of this activity is to help the participants recognize the pitfalls of communication and not to take their ability to always understand others for granted. It is highly natural for each individual to interpret the communication produced by someone else through their own points of view and presumptions. Effective communication is not so much based on individuals understanding each other perfectly, but on everyone being able to recognize their humanity and fallibility in interaction situations. Questions such as “what do you mean?”, “what does this mean to you?” and “why?” cannot be asked too often.

Step 1:

The activity leaders explain that they are about to read a short text called “cash register story”. The participants are asked to listen carefully to the story so that by the end they will be able to answer statements about the story with either a) correct/true, b) incorrect/false or c) unknown.

Step 2: The activity leaders read the following text:

*“A **shopkeeper** has just turned on the lights in the shoe shop when **a man** walks in to ask for money. **The owner** opens the cash register. The contents of the cash register are taken out and the man starts running. **Police** are immediately called to the scene.”*

Step 3:

The activity leaders ask the participants to answer the statements below on the pieces of paper they have given out with either a) correct, b) incorrect, c) unknown, without revealing the right answers yet.

1. *The man appeared as soon as the owner had turned on the lights in their shoe shop – incorrect, because the lights were turned on by the shopkeeper.*
2. *The thief was a man – unknown, because the story does not tell us who the thief was.*
3. *The man did not ask for money – unknown, because the story tells us that the man walks in to ask for money. But we can't be sure if he actually did so or not.*
4. *The man who opened the cash register was the owner – unknown, because the story does not mention the owner's gender.*
5. *The owner of the shop took out the contents of the cash register and ran away – incorrect, because the story does not tell us who took out the contents of the cash register or if someone ran away.*
6. *Someone opened the cash register – correct, because the story tells us that the owner opens the cash register.*
7. *After the man had asked for money, he took the contents of the cash register and ran away – unknown, because the story does not tell us who took the contents of the cash register.*
8. *Although there may have been money in the cash register, the story does not tell us how much there was – correct, because the story does not tell us how much money there was in the cash register.*
9. *The thief asked the owner for money – unknown, because the story does not tell us if the thief was the man or if the man actually asked the owner for money.*
10. *The story describes a series of events involving three people: the owner, a man asking for money and the police – incorrect, because there are four people in the story: the shopkeeper, the man, the owner and the police.*

Step 4:

The activity leaders re-read the story to the participants. The participants still have time to change their answers, if they want. After re-reading the story, the activity leaders give the text to the participants themselves to read. Once the participants have read the text, the activity leaders reveal the right answers to each of the ten statements one by one so that each participant has a chance to share their answer (“true/false/unknown”) and explain why they chose this answer. It is important that the whole group understands what the right answers are by the end of the activity.

Step 5:

The activity leaders try to facilitate an exchange of thoughts between the participants about communication, its complexity and challenges. The participants are also encouraged to name ways that would help make communication smoother in daily interactions.

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- *“What did we learn from this activity?”*
- *“In what situations can we make the mistake of taking things for granted?”*
- *“How could we develop our ability to listen to others?”*
- *“What factors make successful interaction possible?”*

Required materials:

- Blank pieces of paper on which the participants can write down their answers to statements 1–10 in steps 3 and 4 of the activity.
- If you want, you can also print the cash register text on a piece of paper so that in steps 4 and 5 of the activity each participant can compare the text with their answers after the text has been read out loud.



Group activity: “Everyday interactions”

This activity aims to support the participants’ ability to act meaningfully in interactions where they do not have a common language with the other party. Addressing challenges posed by a language barrier is important for mental well-being, as it supports the building of self-confidence, the improvement of non-verbal and verbal interaction skills and the growth of independence in everyday situations that require communication.

In this activity, the activity leaders invite the participants to act out short situations based on interaction that are part of the participants’ real social environment. The participants are divided into two groups, group A and B. Each group acts out an interaction situation chosen by the group themselves. The situation should be something that has happened in the participants’ everyday life and that has felt challenging due to a language barrier. The situation can be, for example, visiting a shop, going to school or buying a ticket. The main idea of the activity is that the participants need to recreate the situation they have experienced so that they discover more effective ways to convey their message to the receiver. The participants can use both non-verbal and verbal communication methods to help them, as long as they only use Finnish. Groups A and B act out their situations in turns, so that both groups get a chance to not only practise their interaction and communication skills, but also to support the performance of the other group by providing constructive feedback.

By acting out everyday situations, the participants can observe their own reactions and behaviour and the reactions and behaviour of the other participants. Through this, they gain a better understanding of their own skills and capabilities, which facilitates the growth of self-reflection, self-knowledge and self-confidence.

Questions that help you lead the activity:

- *“What method could we use to improve our mutual understanding in this situation?”*
- *“What is the most important interaction skill in this situation? Why?”*
- *What is the role of non-verbal and verbal communication in finding a solution to the challenges created by a language barrier?”*

Required materials:

- –

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Humanity
Impartiality
Neutrality
Independence
Voluntary service
Unity
Universality