

CHAPTER I

"I Communicate Better Because I Believe in Myself" Methods to Increase Self-Confidence and Face-to-Face Communication Skills for Generation Z

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the BE YOU Guide, a comprehensive resource designed to empower individuals on their journey towards self-discovery, self-confidence, and purposeful living. In an

increasingly fast-paced and interconnected world, understanding who we are and what drives us has never been more essential. This guide offers a structured approach to exploring your inner self, aligning with your core values, and cultivating practices that enhance your overall well-being.

Whether you are at the beginning of your self-exploration journey or looking to deepen your understanding of yourself, this guide provides practical tools, exercises, and insights to support and inspire you every step of the way.

Purpose of the Guide

The BE YOU Guide aims to:

- **Facilitate Self-Discovery:** Provide frameworks and exercises that help you explore and understand your true self, including your passions, strengths, and aspirations.
- **Build Self-Confidence:** Equip you with strategies and practices to enhance your belief in your abilities and worth.
- **Cultivate Purpose:** Assist you in identifying and connecting with your life's purpose, leading to more meaningful and fulfilling experiences.
- **Enhance Well-being:** Introduce mindfulness and relaxation techniques to promote mental, emotional, and physical health.
- **Foster Connection:** Encourage deeper connections with others through shared experiences and reflective practices.

Key Definitions

Understanding the core concepts discussed in this guide is essential for maximising its benefits. Below are definitions of key terms that will be explored throughout the guide.

1. Self-Discovery

Self-Discovery is the process of gaining insight into your own character, values, beliefs, and desires. It involves exploring your inner world to understand what truly motivates and fulfils you. Through self-discovery, individuals can make more informed and authentic choices that align with their true selves.

Importance: Engaging in self-discovery allows you to live more authentically, make decisions that resonate with your true desires, and fosters personal growth and satisfaction.

2. Self-Confidence

Self-Confidence refers to the belief in one's abilities, qualities, and judgement. It is the trust you have in yourself to handle various situations and challenges effectively. Self-confidence influences how you perceive yourself and how you are perceived by others.

Importance: High self-confidence empowers you to take on new challenges, pursue your goals, and recover from setbacks. It contributes to better performance, healthier relationships, and overall well-being.

3. Purpose

Purpose is the sense of meaning and direction that guides your actions and decisions. It is the overarching intention that drives you towards fulfilling and impactful goals. Discovering your purpose involves identifying what is most important to you and how you can contribute uniquely to the world.

Importance: Living with a clear purpose enhances motivation, resilience, and satisfaction. It helps prioritise actions and align daily activities with long-term goals, leading to a more meaningful and enriched life.

4. Core Values

Core Values are fundamental beliefs and principles that guide your behaviour and decision-making. They represent what is most important to you and serve as a personal compass in various aspects of life.

Importance: Recognizing and aligning with your core values ensures consistency and integrity in your actions. It aids in making choices that are true to yourself and fosters a sense of fulfilment and authenticity.

5. Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the practice of being fully present and engaged in the current moment, aware of your thoughts, feelings, and surroundings without judgement. It involves intentional focus and acceptance of the present experience.

Importance: Practising mindfulness reduces stress, enhances emotional regulation, improves focus, and promotes mental clarity. It contributes to better decision-making and a deeper appreciation of everyday experiences.

6. Well-being

Well-being encompasses the holistic experience of health and happiness, including physical, mental, emotional, and social aspects. It involves maintaining a balanced and satisfying state of being through healthy practices and fulfilling relationships.

Importance: Prioritising well-being leads to increased resilience, productivity, and life satisfaction. It supports overall health and enables individuals to thrive in various life domains.

Guide Structure

The BE YOU Guide is structured into several interactive sections and exercises, each designed to delve deeper into the facets of self-discovery and personal development.

1. Workshop on Self-Confidence

- Objective: To explore and strengthen your self-confidence through reflective and interactive exercises.
- Key Activities:
 - *Back-to-Back Sharing Exercise:* A powerful practice to uncover personal passions and aspirations by sharing and listening in a supportive setting.
 - *Commitment Statements:* Defining actionable steps to integrate newfound insights into daily life.

2. Values Exploration

- Objective: To identify and align with your core values, ensuring your actions and decisions reflect what is truly important to you.

- Key Activities:
 - *Values Identification Exercise*: Reflecting and prioritising personal values.
 - *Alignment Assessment*: Evaluating how well your current lifestyle reflects these values and identifying areas for adjustment.

3. Mindfulness and Relaxation Practices

- Objective: To introduce techniques that promote mental clarity, stress reduction, and emotional balance.
- Key Activities:
 - *Body Scan Meditation*: A guided practice to enhance bodily awareness and relaxation.
 - *Breathing Exercises*: Simple techniques to centre the mind and alleviate tension during daily routines.

4. Purpose Discovery

- Objective: To help you articulate and connect with your life's purpose, providing direction and motivation.
- Key Activities:
 - *Ikigai Exploration*: Utilising the Japanese concept of Ikigai to find the intersection between what you love, what you are good at, what the world needs, and what can be rewarding.
 - *Future Visioning*: Envisioning and planning steps towards living a purpose-driven life.

5. Reflection and Integration

- Objective: To consolidate learning and plan for ongoing personal development.
- Key Activities:
 - *Reflective Journaling*: Documenting experiences and insights gained throughout the guide.
 - *Action Planning*: Creating a personalised roadmap for continued growth and self-discovery.

How to Use This Guide

- **Engage Actively:** Approach each section with openness and willingness to explore and reflect deeply.
- **Take Your Time:** Progress through the exercises at your own pace, allowing sufficient time for reflection and integration.
- **Be Honest:** Practise honesty with yourself during reflections and discussions to maximise personal growth.
- **Stay Open-Minded:** Embrace new concepts and techniques, even if they are unfamiliar or challenging.
- **Seek Support:** If possible, work through some exercises with a partner or group to enrich the experience through shared insights.
- **Revisit Regularly:** Return to exercises and reflections periodically to assess growth and realign with your evolving self.

Conclusion

The journey of self-discovery and personal growth is ongoing and deeply rewarding. The BE YOU Guide serves as a companion and resource on this journey, offering structured and evidence-based practices to help you uncover and embrace your true self. By engaging with this guide, you are taking meaningful steps towards greater self-awareness, confidence, purpose, and well-being.

Embark on this journey with curiosity and compassion for yourself, knowing that every step you take brings you closer to living authentically and fully.

Welcome to the journey of being you.

GUIDING VALUES



Source: the image was created by Well-being LAB. The four areas of the wheel are based on ChangemakerXchange methodology for it's internal global facilitators pool, which one of the co-founders of Well-being LAB is a part of.

When we consider well-being, we approach it from a holistic perspective, where the interconnectedness of the four areas - Mind, Body, Heart, and Purpose - becomes the centrepiece. This means that each aspect of our well-being is deeply linked to others, and true well-being or what others would call “wholebeing” arises when all four areas are nurtured together. The goal here isn't to achieve perfect balance in all areas, but to ensure that no aspect of our well-being is neglected. It's about maintaining awareness and care for each area, so that we can live healthier, happier, and more meaningful lives.

When we talk about well-being, the word “balance” often comes up - questions like “how can we balance our personal and professional lives?” or “Is that kind of balance even possible?” arise. However, we believe that the goal shouldn't be to reach perfect balance

across all areas of life, but to embrace the constant movement and change in our experiences and finding an equilibrium in the areas that matter for us, that makes us thrive.

You can ask yourself this: - whenever you strive for perfection, does it make you fulfilled or does it add more stress? What sacrifices are you making to reach that level of perfection? And do you feel more at ease when you push for perfection in everything, or when you allow things to flow naturally?

As our personal and professional lives become increasingly interconnected and the line between them grows ever thinner, striving for a perfect balance between the two can feel unrealistic and extremely stressful. Instead of chasing that imaginary balance, we can shift our focus to ensuring that all four areas contributing to our well-being - Mind, Body, Heart, and Purpose - are nourished, with none of them being neglected. This helps us maintain a more holistic sense of well-being and potentially can eliminate a lot of stress and pressure from our lives.

This doesn't mean that we will always be able to dedicate equal time to each area every week. There will be times, like during exam periods, when focusing more on one area - such as studying for exams - will be necessary, which might leave less time for other areas like working out and taking care of our body or relationships, like going out and meeting a good friend for a cup of coffee. And that's okay. The key here is to recognize that this is temporary. The exam period soon will be over and once you get through that busy period, you can shift your focus back and give extra time, attention, and care to the areas you might have neglected. It's all about adjusting to the constant flow, movement and changes of life and ensuring that, over time, each area of well-being gets the nourishment it needs.

Imagine that your well-being is a scale with four areas, each represented by a different weight or dial.

Are all four areas being nourished, or is one area receiving more attention than the others?

Now, let's explore each area of well-being and see what that means to us and our lives.

1. **Mind:** This area represents mental health and cognitive well-being. On this scale, you might adjust this dial by engaging in activities that unlock your creative potential, stimulate your intellect and learning, manage and reduce stress. It's not just about

being free from mental illness or burnout, but about actively nourishing your mind, so that you can thrive and flourish at ease.

2. **Body:** This dial reflects physical health. It's about cultivating a loving relationship with our bodies by adopting healthy eating habits, staying physically active and getting enough rest. It's not just about being free from physical illness, but about nourishing your body to keep it strong, healthy and vital in the long run.
3. **Heart:** This area covers emotional health and relationships. You might balance this dial by nurturing and building compassionate and supportive relationships with others, yourself and the world around you. It's not about avoiding difficult feelings and emotions, but learning how to embrace, process and integrate the full spectrum of human emotions.
4. **Purpose:** This dial symbolises our quest for meaning, our innate human desire to connect with our authentic selves and something greater than us. It represents that part of us seeking a deeper sense of fulfilment and belonging, and finding a reason to wake up each morning with joy. In Japan, this is known as "**Ikigai**", a concept that encourages discovering what truly matters to you in life and pursuing it with passion and joy.

As mentioned earlier, the goal with this scale isn't to keep each dial at the same level all the time. Instead, it's about making sure none of the dials is completely neglected. During various phases of life, you may need to shift your focus and adjust the dials to align with your current needs and priorities. Balancing these dials helps maintain overall well-being, ensuring that each area gets the attention it needs when it's most important.

In this chapter, we will delve deeper into each area of well-being and explore how they can enhance our self-confidence, and help us live healthier, more fulfilled, and happier lives. We will also share our favourite suggestions and tools that we use personally to nurture our Mind, Body, Heart and Purpose.

PART I. SELF-CONFIDENCE

I.PURPOSE (SPIRIT)

I.1. Self-compassion

The relationship we have with ourselves is a crucial and essential element of wellbeing. It shapes the way we interact with the world and others. Research shows that high levels of self-compassion are connected to increased feelings of happiness, optimism, curiosity and connectedness, as well as decreased anxiety, depression, rumination and fear of failure. But what is compassion and how can we develop it in our lives, but also give it to ourselves?

The word compassion comes from latin, the term refers to how we're with (com) suffering (passion). It helps us connect with the others in a non-judgemental way, to be with them through their suffering, but not trying to save them or solve their problems, but trust their abilities and resources for doing so. **Also it helps us realise that suffering, failure, and imperfection is part of the shared human experience, and that are valuable lessons to learn from these challenging experiences.**

Compassion is a virtue, a quality that brings us together in a heart-to-heart connection. There are **three main elements of compassion: mindfulness, common humanity, and kindness** (Neff, K. 2023). There is a universality in our human experience, both when it comes to beautiful or difficult moments, and becoming aware of this principle of our shared humanity helps us to develop compassion, to not feel isolated or different, to not feel we are the only ones going through a certain situation, but it is shared, it is lived in different ways or at different times by all humans. This can help us tap into the feeling of belonging and interconnectedness.

Compassion is a valuable resource, turning it towards ourselves can improve the quality of our life, but also can facilitate the access to our internal resources. As Neff (2023) states

“self-compassion refers to being supportive toward oneself when experiencing suffering or pain—be it caused by personal mistakes and inadequacies or external life challenges”. **It has 6 components: self-kindness versus self-judgement, common humanity versus isolation, and mindfulness versus over-identification** (Neff, K. 2023).

- **Self-kindness** means putting an end to the self-criticism and meeting ourselves with genuine care, for example - stopping for one moment to acknowledge “this (what I am going through) is really hard, how can I best take care of myself in these moments? What do I need?”. It is a way of being emotionally available for ourselves.
- The **common humanity** principle helps us connect with others, rather than feeling isolated. When we do something “wrong”, or struggle, we tend to isolate and feel ashamed, thus separating ourselves more from the others and the emotional support that we could get.
- **Mindfulness** is the approach that helps us get closer to our own pain, to become aware of it, from an objective perspective. Mindfulness is a type of balanced awareness that neither avoids nor exaggerates the discomfort of our present-moment experience (Shapiro et al. 2006). We need this awareness to be able to deal with our struggles and go beyond them. Avoiding our emotions and pain, won't solve the problem, it only postpones it.

It is said, we are our worst enemy, we can be or tend to be much more judgemental and harsh with ourselves than with others. We tend to set unrealistic expectations and are prone to have a more negative evaluation of ourselves. These tendencies are rooted in past experiences, but also in the erroneous self-perception developed when we were kids - children in the beginning of their lives tend to believe that what happens in the world, how their parents feel and so on is because of them and their parents reactions is a direct reflection of the their worth and value. To believe, as a child, that “it is my fault, it is because of me”, is in fact a survival mechanism that gives space for hope to be present, when, in fact, one has barely any control over the situation. If whatever happens at home or at school, for example, it is because of me, then I can do something to prevent it, to make things better, to make my parents happy, to make a situation stop, to get the attention I need, etc.. For example, the narrative “if someone is mean to me, must be because I deserve it” is a very common false belief present in our psyche, that influences our self-perception and further development. **Healing our relationship with ourselves, becomes an essential step towards wellbeing, towards developing self-confidence and tapping into our authenticity and true potential.**

Simple practices can help us reflect on our relationship with ourselves, and see the aspects of it that we would like to change in order to bring more self-compassion to it. NVC (non-violent communication, see second part of the document) is a powerful tool used in developing self-compassion. It helps us restructure the evaluation of ourselves and reframe the language we use. We want to have a positive contribution to the world, thus mistakes can make us be very critical of ourselves, promoting self-hatred, rather than self-understanding. It is critical to know how to evaluate events and conditions in ways that help us learn and make ongoing choices that serve us. Self-hatred does not promote learning, on the contrary it promotes aggression, anxiety and depression.

We can use NVC principles to heal our inner dialogue. For example, we can transform our negative statements into compassionate observations and requests. Instead of using harsh criticism, we can reframe our thoughts in a way that acknowledges the efforts we have made and encourage growth instead of guilt and shame.

Practice: Self-compassion break (Neff, K. 2023)

Bring to mind a situation that is challenging, allow yourself to feel the stress or suffering brought by that event. Remember the 3 principles of compassion: mindfulness, common humanity and kindness.

- Mindfulness - acknowledge the difficulty you are in and say to yourself - “This is really challenging”, “this hurts”, or “this is a moment of suffering”
- Common humanity - remember that “Suffering is a part of life”, “other people feel this way”
- Kindness - ask yourself “What do I need to hear right now to express kindness to myself?” or say to yourself “May I learn to accept myself as I am”, “May I forgive myself”, “May I be patient with myself”

Use this practice any time you need, throughout the day, or while reflecting or journaling, make it a usual practice, to learn to develop a different narrative and inner dialogue.

Practice 2: Treat yourself as your best friend

- Start by thinking of your closest friend who goes through a difficult situation and feels really bad about themselves. How would you respond to your friend in this situation

(especially when you're at your best)? Write down your thoughts and the tone of voice in which you typically talk to your friend.

- Think about times when you struggle and feel bad about yourself. How do you speak to yourself? What type of thoughts and words do you use? What is the tone of voice? Write down your reflections.
- Read both texts, do you notice any difference? If yes, ask yourself why? What factors or fears come into play that lead you to treat yourself and others so differently? What makes you deserve a different treatment than your friend?
- Write a new text, imagining that you are your best friend, and you respond to yourself in the same way as to your friend. What changed? How would this approach change in the way you feel? What would happen if you treated yourself as if you were your best friend?

The journey to self-discovery and authenticity can bring us face to face with many aspects of ourselves, and maybe we won't like all of them, but it is necessary to look at them with love and compassion, to become aware of who we are, what we need, what is our purpose and what we want to give to the world we live in. It is crucial as well to learn to motivate ourselves, to be emotionally available, to have patience and be kind, as life is full of uncertainty and unexpected turns, which can be perceived as challenging, but still have a potential to support personal growth.

I.2. Purpose-Ikigai

According to the Japanese, everyone has their own Ikigai. Some have already discovered it, while others are still searching for it. Our Ikigai lies dormant within us, waiting to be awakened. People living on Okinawa Island, Japan, where the highest number of centenarians are found, believe that our Ikigai is the reason we get up in the morning. This concept is also associated with longevity and overall happiness and well-being. It encourages people to live a life aligned with our true passions and values.

Ikigai combines the ideas of "iki" (life) and "gai" (worth or value), translating to "a reason for being." It's the idea of having a purpose that makes life worthwhile and brings joy.

It's said that when we connect with, embody, and express our purpose—or what some might call our "calling in life"—it helps us live more meaningful lives, allowing us to connect with

ourselves and others on a deeper level. Researchers Héctor García and Francesc Miralles have also found that it increases the likelihood of living a longer, healthier life.

However, we understand that searching for your purpose can feel quite stressful, especially if you're unsure about what you want to do with your life or are at a crossroads and feeling lost. And if we put a lot of pressure on ourselves to find that one true purpose, it can become even overwhelming.

Over the past decade, we have worked with thousands of youth globally, supporting them and following their journey in the quest for meaning. We have witnessed their beautiful inspiration, energy, and motivation as they seek to discover their passions and create lives aligned with their heart's desires. We have also discovered how different stages and experiences in life can lead us to different passions and how our purpose can change. Therefore, to lift the pressure of our shoulders, bring more flow and ease into our lives, when we talk about purpose, we look at it from the perspective that some people might have one purpose in their lives, while for others their purpose can change over the years.

What matters most, regardless of what stage of life you find yourself in, is to pursue what brings you joy and fulfilment. What we believe is equally important is to remind ourselves that we are all interconnected with each other and the natural world. And as long as we bring empathy and compassion to our actions, support one another, and nurture the well-being of all living beings, we have the potential and power to create a more harmonious life for ourselves, those around us, and the environment. So, where do we begin?

Ikigai lies at the intersection of four key elements:

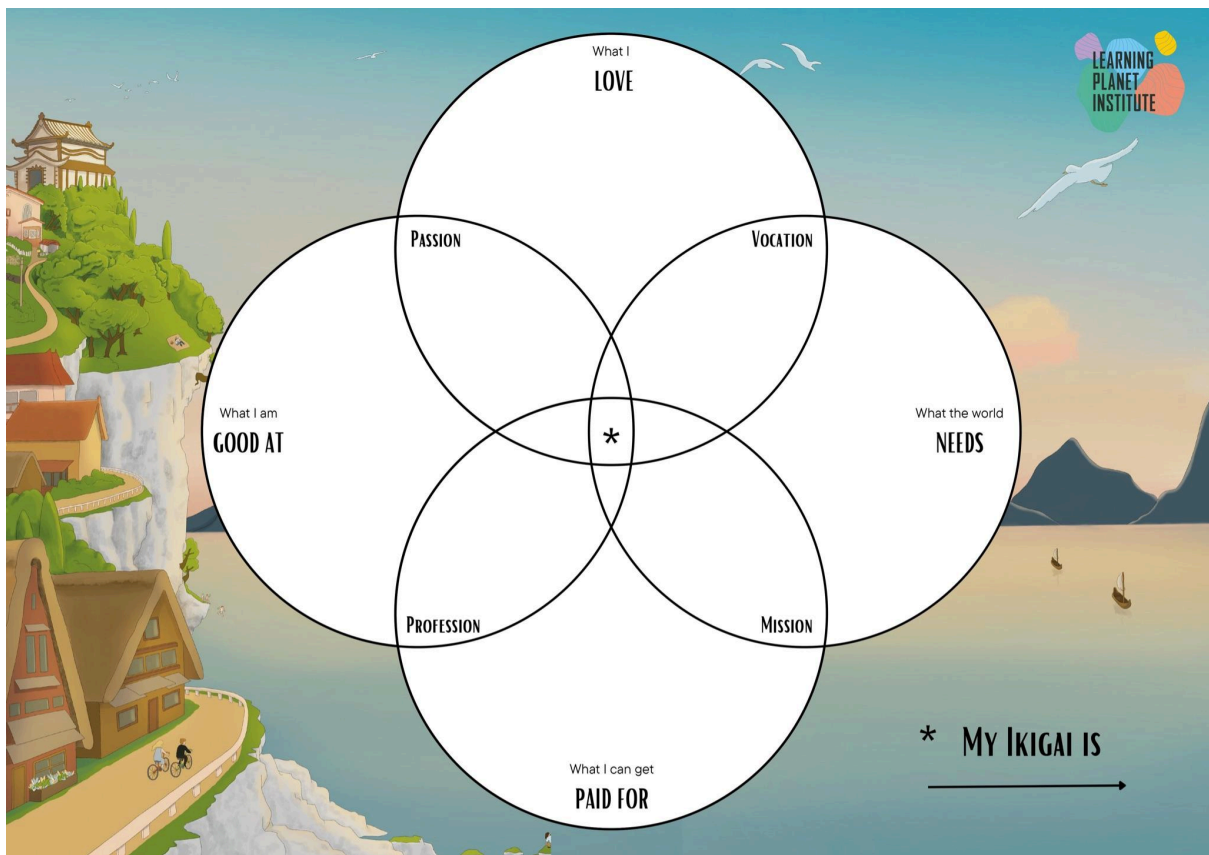
1. **What You Love (Passion):** Activities that bring you joy and fulfilment. What makes you excited? Which activities make you lose track of time? Is there a specific topic you find yourself drawn to and wanting to explore it deeper?
2. **What You Are Good At (Profession):** Skills and talents you excel in. What are you naturally good at? What seems easy for you? What type of activities do you feel gives you energy and satisfaction?
3. **What the World Needs (Mission):** How you can contribute to others or society. Thinking about what's happening in your community, city, or country, what do you think needs to change or improve? What have you overcome and learnt in your life?

How can you use your experience and learnings to help others who perhaps are struggling with the same issues?

4. **What You Can Be Paid For (Vocation):** Activities or skills that provide financial stability. Think about people you know, who you respect and admire related to the cause you are interested in. How do they earn their living? What kind of work do you love doing from which you could make a living from? What skills or talents do you have that are needed for others?

Finding your ikigai means discovering where these elements overlap in your life. When they align, they lead to a fulfilling and meaningful life, where you wake up with a sense of purpose and joy each day.

Now take some time to write down your reflections. Below you can find the Ikigai diagram. You can print it if you wish so, draw your own diagram in your journal or on your laptop.



Source: Learning planet institute

Once you have finished filling in your Ikigai diagram, to explore your purpose further, we invite you to do a very simple, yet profound exercise. The exercise is called “Back2back” and to do it, you will need to invite a friend or a colleague with whom you feel comfortable doing this exercise as it can’t be done on your own. The exercise can help you become more aware and understand even better what drives you in life, and what you love doing. To prepare yourself, try to find a space where you and your friend won’t be interrupted for the next 30-60 min and will both feel comfortable. You will need a sheet of paper, pen and a timer to track the time.

To start with, sit with your friend back to back, you can choose to sit on the ground or on the chairs. The most important thing is that you sit back to back, feeling the closeness of your friend, but not facing each other. Why is that important? When we face each other, our facial expressions might unconsciously influence us and at times even block us from truly sharing what's on our hearts vs when we sit back to back, we feel the presence of our friend, knowing that he or she is listening to us, but his or her body language won’t influence us. Instead, sitting back to back helps us reach the spaces in ourselves and our hearts, which we are not able to reach or simply don’t have time for in our daily life.

When you have prepared yourself and the space in which you are, you can choose who will be the listener and who will be the speaker. There will be two rounds, so both of you will take the roles of both at some point, - the speaker and the listener. You just have to decide who wants to start the first round as a speaker. The listener's role is simply to listen with absolute presence and write down everything that she or he hear the speaking telling, while the speaker needs to speak for 7 min answering one simple question:

Imagine that tomorrow you wake up in the morning and you are told that from this moment onwards you have to choose one thing, which you would do for the rest of your life and why. What would you do for the rest of your life and why?

And that’s it. That’s the only question you need to answer in those 7 minutes. We invite you to not overthink it or question why this specific question and not the other. By the end of the exercise you will find your own meaning and reasoning for it. You might even be surprised by your discoveries. Enjoy the process and take it as it comes. One step at a time.

You might also wonder why 7 minutes? We have tested this exercise with different timings and discovered that 7 minutes is that perfect sweet spot - not too short and not too long. At

some point in those 7 minutes, there might be the time of silence. It might feel that you don't have anything else to say. Allow the silence to be and keep on going. What we discovered is that the silent moment is the moment of transition when we unconsciously switch - from speaking from the mind to speaking from the heart. Some real gems from the deepest corners of ourselves might come out from those silent moments. What the listener can do at the silent moment is to ask the same question again: what would you do for the rest of your life and why?

After 7 minutes are over, you switch the roles - the speaker becomes the listener and the listener becomes the speaker.

Once you both have spoken, you can now face each other and exchange the papers where each of you have been writing about the other. You can choose to read the paper yourself, however, it can be even more powerful, if the person who was listening to you, reads what he or she heard you saying. It's your choice to decide how you want to approach the process.

Below we are providing you with some reflection questions, which you can use after you have finished sharing what you heard each other saying.

Was there something very difficult about this activity?

Was it easier to be the listener or the speaker?

Was there anything that surprised you?

Did you learn something new about yourself or your partner? What steps can you take to get closer to your purpose?

Now what's left to do is to enjoy the journey and exploration of your purpose and passions in life. We hope that these exercises will help you get closer to understanding what drives you in life, what you love doing the most and what brings to your life flow, health, well-being and happiness.

As Georgie Elliot said:

“It is never too late to be what you might have been”

II. THE HEART (EMOTIONS) - Emotional well-being and relationships

“To be beautiful means to be yourself. You don't need to be accepted by others. You need to accept yourself”

- Thich Nhat Hanh

II.1 Meditation as a tool for self confidence (Gabor Maté)

Self-confidence is a key element in how we express ourselves and connect with others. It shapes the way we communicate our thoughts, emotions, and needs. When we feel confident, we're more likely to engage in conversations that are authentic, clear, and impactful. But how do we cultivate that inner confidence, especially when faced with self-doubt or fear? Dr. Gabor Maté, a renowned expert in trauma, stress, and mental health, suggests that meditation can be a powerful practice to develop self-confidence from within.

Meditation, as Dr. Maté teaches, is not just about relaxation or clearing the mind. It is a practice that allows us to connect deeply with ourselves, to become aware of the thoughts and emotions that often undermine our self-belief. We all carry negative patterns of self-talk—those voices that say, “I’m not good enough” or “What if I fail?” Over time, these narratives can erode our confidence. However, through meditation, we can learn to observe these thoughts without getting caught up in them. This mindful awareness helps us see that our thoughts are just that—thoughts, not truths.

By regularly practising meditation, we begin to cultivate a sense of inner calm and self-acceptance. We stop identifying with the internal critic and start developing a more compassionate relationship with ourselves. This is essential because how we communicate with others is deeply influenced by how we communicate with ourselves. If our internal dialogue is filled with harsh judgments or fears, it becomes much harder to express ourselves confidently in the external world. Meditation gives us the space to pause, to be with ourselves in a non-judgmental way, and to reframe our thoughts with kindness and patience.

As we meditate, we become more aware of our breath, our body, and our emotions in the present moment. This awareness helps ground us, making us less reactive and more thoughtful in our interactions. Instead of second-guessing ourselves or worrying about how others will perceive us, we become more focused on the message we want to share. Meditation strengthens our ability to communicate from a place of authenticity and self-assurance, allowing us to express our ideas with clarity and conviction.

Moreover, as Dr. Maté highlights, meditation helps us build resilience in the face of discomfort. Whether it's public speaking, difficult conversations, or standing up for

ourselves, these moments often trigger stress and anxiety. Through meditation, we learn to sit with discomfort, acknowledging it without letting it control us. This emotional resilience directly translates into better communication. When we believe in ourselves, we can navigate challenging conversations with ease, staying calm and clear even when emotions run high.

In essence, meditation creates a powerful shift from self-doubt to self-belief. It reminds us that we are not defined by our fears, past mistakes, or negative self-talk. Instead, it allows us to embrace our full potential and communicate with confidence, knowing that our voice matters.

Practice: Self-Confidence Meditation

Here is a simple meditation practice that can help strengthen your self-confidence and enhance your communication skills:

1. Find a Quiet Space: Sit comfortably in a quiet place, where you won't be disturbed for at least 10 minutes. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths.
2. Focus on Your Breath: Begin to focus on your breath, noticing the sensation of the air entering and leaving your body. Let your breathing become slow and steady.
3. Observe Your Thoughts: As you sit quietly, notice any thoughts that come up, especially those related to self-doubt or fear. Instead of engaging with these thoughts, simply observe them as they arise and let them pass like clouds in the sky.
4. Affirmations for Confidence: After a few minutes, bring your focus to affirming statements like, "I am enough," "My voice is valuable," or "I communicate with clarity and confidence." Silently repeat these affirmations, allowing them to sink in.
5. Visualise Success: Picture yourself in a situation where you feel confident, whether it's speaking in a meeting, having an important conversation, or sharing your ideas with others. Visualise yourself handling the situation with ease and assurance.
6. Return to Your Breath: After a few minutes of affirmations and visualisation, return your attention to your breath. Gently bring your awareness back to the present moment before opening your eyes.

Use this practice whenever you need to centre yourself before a conversation, presentation, or any situation that challenges your confidence. Over time, you will notice a shift in how you approach communication, grounded in a deeper belief in yourself.

Through meditation, we gain the tools to believe in ourselves more fully, which allows us to communicate more effectively, authentically, and with greater impact. By trusting our voice and understanding our worth, we naturally improve the quality of our relationships and interactions with others.

II.2 Brene Brown: Atlas of the heart (wholeheartedness): emotions (wheel of emotions)

When we think and talk about the well-being of our heart, the first thing that comes to mind is emotions and our emotional well-being. We all experience a wide range of emotions on a daily basis. It's what makes us human—the ability to feel so deeply. Emotions are powerful and can greatly influence our choices and behaviours. When we connect with our emotions in a healthy way, they can bring us wisdom and inspiration. However, if we struggle to express our emotions, try to push away difficult feelings, or become overwhelmed by the intensity of emotions we experience, it can lead to significant suffering.

In her research on emotions, Brené Brown says that understanding and acknowledging how our feelings, thoughts and behaviours work together, helps us connect on a deeper level with ourselves and others around us. She emphasises that embracing and accepting all of our emotions, even the most difficult ones like anger, sadness, and heartbreak, enables us to embrace our authentic selves, build resilience, and live a wholehearted life.

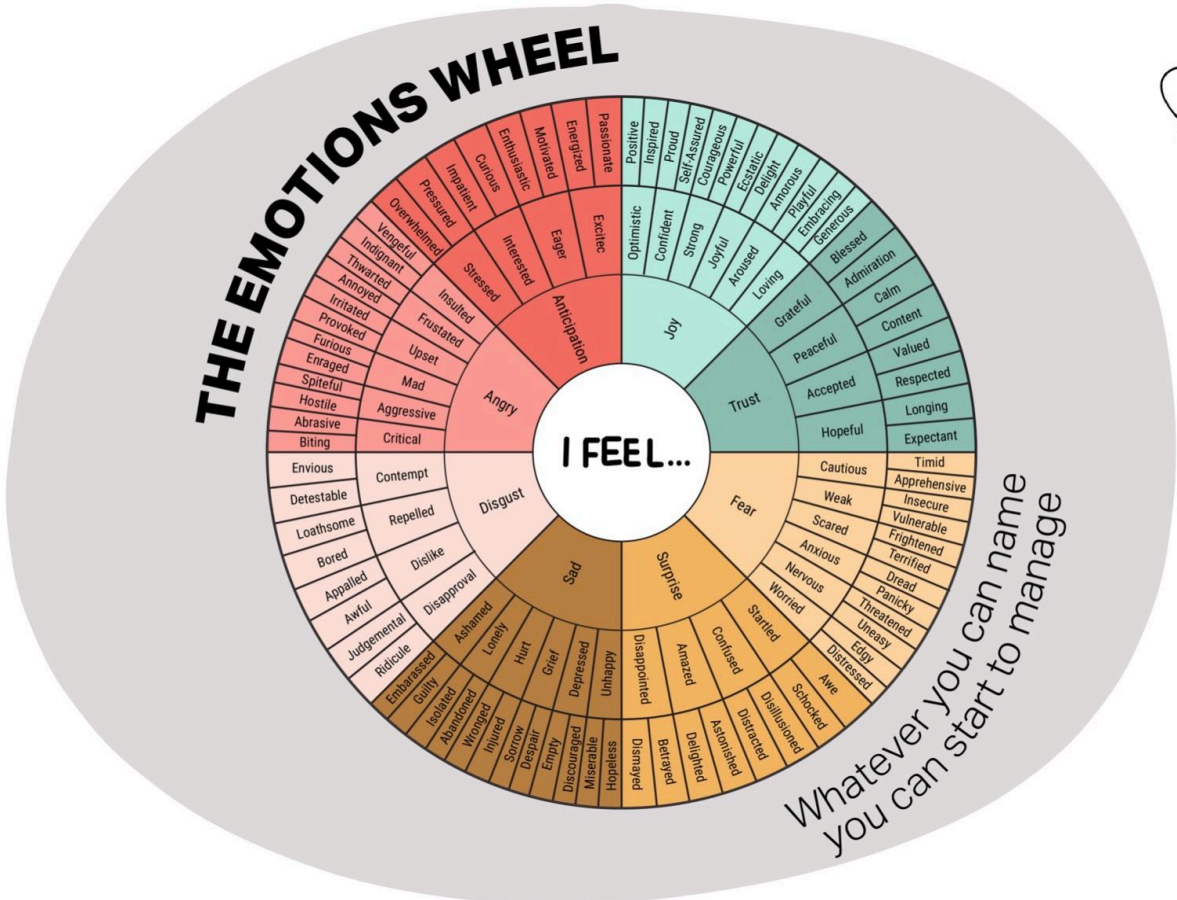
In addition to that, the research and work of Gabor Maté, a renowned Canadian physician and author shows that suppressing our emotions can have serious consequences, including making us physically and mentally unwell. Maté emphasises that unprocessed emotions can manifest as stress, anxiety, and even physical illness, highlighting the importance of acknowledging and addressing our emotional experiences for overall health and well-being.

So if we know that learning to express, regulate, and accept our emotions can significantly impact our lives, where should we begin?

A good starting point is to recognize that we experience a wide range of emotions every day and learn how to name them. As Brené Brown puts it, “Language shows us that naming an experience doesn't give the experience more power, it gives us the power of understanding and meaning.”

Below we are providing you with a Wheel of Emotions, which was created by the Recipes of Wellbeing, inspired by Dr Robert Plutchik's petal model. This wheel consists of 8 primary

emotions (joy, trust, fear, surprise, sadness, disgust, anger, and anticipation) and many more subtle emotions. It gives us the opportunity to expand our emotional vocabulary and recognize that there are far more emotions than we might have imagined. You can use this wheel for yourself to better understand and name your own emotions whenever needed. You can also use it in your personal relationships and with your colleagues to better understand what others are experiencing, check the group's mood, or address conflicts. Allowing people to express and name their emotions can increase empathy and compassion, which can ease conflicts and help resolve them more smoothly. We'll explore this in more detail in the second section of this chapter.



Source: Recipes for Wellbeing

Now that we have a better awareness of our emotions and can name them more easily, the question remains: How can we truly accept and embrace the most painful emotions, such as anger, sadness, hurt, and grief? The truth is there is no quick fix for dealing with deep sadness or heartbreak, and no amount of knowledge or skills can make these feelings and experiences less painful. However, the insights and tools we share can lead to a sense of empowerment,

giving you control over how you react, feel, and act. Paradoxically, accepting, surrendering and embracing the most difficult human emotions can also lead to a deeper sense of love, belonging, gratitude and connection - with yourself and others.

From Buddhist teachings in Thailand, we learnt that recognizing the impermanence and constant change of everything, including our emotions, can give us relief and help us navigate life's experiences with greater ease. Have you ever had days when you felt deep sadness in one moment, and the next moment it shifted to laughter or even joy later in the day?

We certainly had those days and many more days like this are ahead of us. Do you see what we mean by impermanence of things and constant flow in life?

If you want to explore how many emotions you experience in a single day, try this simple yet effective exercise:

Throughout the day, whenever you notice an emotion, acknowledge it out loud to yourself three times. For example, if you feel joyful, say out loud three times "I feel joyful. I feel joyful. I feel joyful". Repeat this process for every emotion you experience during the day. Now, we know it might seem strange or silly at first, you might even question what's the point of all this and that's okay. This exercise shows you how quickly your emotions can change and how many different feelings you experience in a single day. You might find it truly surprising. This simple practice of recognising the impermanence of emotions can also make it easier to accept and embrace all our feelings. Try it. There is nothing to lose, isn't it?

Brene Brown says that when we learn how to accept our emotions, we get closer to understanding how others might feel and connecting to ourselves and others with an open heart. And that in itself makes this journey worthwhile.

III. BODY

III.1 Body awareness and Breathwork

"The body is the shore on the ocean of being" - Sufi (anonymous)

As human beings, we live and experience this world through our bodies. To be able to see, to feel, to taste, to experience, to interact with others, to connect, to act and to create are possible only through the body. Crucial to our well-being and health is the connection with this unique body that we inhabit for a limited period of time. How do I feel, how does my

body feel? What do I think and feel about the Self-system that I have built? are some questions that even if we don't consciously think about them, still affect our inner state. As long as we can develop a positive perception of our self-system, the way we interact with others and the way we relate to life will be utterly changed. Nowadays, many young people struggle with low self-esteem, a weak sense of self, or a negative self-definition, but the way towards well-being, mental health, emotional stability, maturity, and conscious and authentic engagement with others, requires a restructuring of our Self-system, as John Churchill points out, "to the extent that when we look at ourselves we see a piece of artwork".

All starts with the body as contemporary neuroscience tells us: **our sense of self is anchored in the connection with our bodies** (Kolk van der, B. 2015). To know oneself requires the ability to feel and interpret our physical sensations, and from this understanding, we can navigate safely and enhancingly through life. As Bessel van der Kolk states in his book "The Body Keeps the Score": "You can be fully in charge of your life only if you can acknowledge the reality of your body, in all its visceral dimensions." Our bodies store all our experiences, past ones, recent ones, present ones, even those we can't recall mentally. All that we have experienced stays in the memory of our body and creates a general physiological state, a certain sensitivity to specific stimuli, a level of tension or relaxation, a sense of safety or danger, a particular longing and search for connection or on the contrary a tendency to isolate and withdraw. All our emotions are in fact translated into chemical reactions in our bodies and are controlled by the complex cooperation of neurotransmitters and hormones. Charles Darwin (1998) writes about mammalian emotions (thus humans too) as being rooted in biology, and he sees them as an essential source of motivation towards initiating action. The Latin word for emotions is "emovere" - meaning to move out, therefore our emotions give action and direction to whatever we do, primarily through our face and body. The facial expressions and physical movements reflect our mental state and intention to others.

At the core of reclaiming our sense of self is **Awareness**. The body awareness puts us in contact with our inner world. The simple fact of observing whatever we experience be it stress, frustration, or nervousness, helps us shift our perspective, thus opening up the space for new behavioural possibilities, instead of our usual automatic reactions. From an early age we develop a personal way of relating and interacting with the world, as time passes we develop behavioural and thinking patterns (most of them are developed as survival strategies), which makes us react in an automatic pre-defined way in the present moment. **Instead of acting we are reacting, instead of creating we are avoiding.** Growing up and

becoming adults means learning to be responsible. Gabor Mate (2019) sees it as the “ability to respond with awareness to the circumstances of our lives, rather than just reacting.” For him, this is a way to be in charge of our lives, and he goes further saying that “**true responsibility starts with self-awareness**”.

Of course, there are difficult emotions and feelings that most people would prefer not to experience, and would choose to avoid, but there are also experiences that are overwhelming. In these situations, our bodies are very wise and immediately **activate survival strategies (such as dissociation, numbing, and freezing among others) that help us stay alive**. The cost of these strategies is dire in the long term. For example, numbing decreases the awareness of our inner landscape and experiences, and with this, we also lose the sense of being fully sensually alive. On the other hand, trying to avoid feelings or sensations in our bodies makes us more prone to feeling overwhelmed by them; understanding what and why we feel a certain way can help us be able to choose how we want to act, instead of just giving in to the intense previously ingrained behavioural patterns. **Mindfulness is an essential tool to help us pay attention to our inner experience, to our bodily sensations, and recognize the transitory nature of our feelings**, noticing the flow of our emotions and thus increasing our control over them.

Befriending our inner world

Recent research in neuroscience shows “that the only way we can change the way we feel is by becoming aware of our inner experience and learning to befriend what is going inside ourselves.” (Kolk, van der B. 2015). It is a process of reestablishing ownership of our body and mind - of our self, as Kolk says “only by getting in touch with your body, by connecting viscerally with yourself, can you regain a sense of who you are, your priorities and values”.

There are multiple practices and exercises one can do to become aware of what one feels, to allow the feelings to be without being overwhelmed, ashamed or frustrated, but the essential steps are the following:

1. Finding ways to stay calm and focused
2. Learning to keep that calm as you face images, thoughts, or sensations that trigger past memories

3. Being aware of the present moment, in a state of aliveness and meaningful engagement with others
4. Being fully honest with yourself.

We have the capacity to deal with very difficult and intense emotions, but what helps the most is to remain conscious that what we experience is constantly shifting. It happens often that when we experience a difficult emotion, we have the impression that it will stay with us forever, we forget that it is transitory. Remembering that all we experience is in a flow, thoughts, emotions, and feelings, come and go, they are transitory, and we can welcome them in as guests, knowing that they are only visiting, as Rumi says in his beautiful poem The Guest House:

This being human is a guest house.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,

some momentary awareness comes

as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!

Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,

who violently sweep your house

empty of its furniture,

still, treat each guest honourably.

He may be clearing you out

for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,

meet them at the door laughing,

and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,

because each has been sent

as a guide from beyond.

Jalaluddin Rumi

To be able to see our difficult experiences and emotions as “guides from beyond” who have gifts in the form of teachings for us, is a sign of maturity and wisdom, being humble and ready to learn from life, as to become the best version of ourselves.

Practice:

- Start by allowing your mind to focus on the sensations you have in your body, and notice how these sensations can respond to slight changes in your breathing rhythm, in your body posture or shifts in thinking.
- Once you have observed them, you can start labelling them - “When I feel sad, I feel heaviness in my chest”
- Focus on that sensation and breathe deeply - noticing what changes in the sensation as you breathe

Practising mindfulness calms down the sympathetic nervous system, so that you are less likely to be thrown into fight-or-flight mode. As Peter Levine (1997) says: “**The past doesn't matter when we learn how to be present, every moment becomes new and creative**” highlighting the power of befriending our emotions and all the experiences we carry inside our bodies.

Vagus nerve and Breathwork

Somatic Experiencing and trauma work mention two different approaches to regulating the nervous system: top-down and bottom-up. Top-down regulation “involves strengthening the capacity of the watchtower to monitor your body’s sensations”, practices such as mindfulness and yoga are extremely useful in this case. The bottom-up regulation “involves recalibrating the autonomic nervous system” (Kolk, B. van der 2015). Breath, movement and touch give access to our autonomic nervous system.

The breath is one of the most powerful tools we have. The way we breathe is the way we live. The breath directly influences our inner state, but it goes both ways - how we feel impacts our breathing, and through our breathing, we can influence how we feel. Every emotion comes with a particular way of breathing. Even the tiniest mood change is reflected in your breathing. When we are stressed or agitated we tend to breathe faster and more shallowly, which activates the Sympathetic Nervous System (SN) (in charge of increasing our state of alertness or activating the “fight or flight response”), when we are relaxed, calm and feel safe, we tend to breathe deeper and slower, which activates the Parasympathetic Nervous System (PSN) (in charge of “rest and digest”). SN and PSN are part of the Autonomic Nervous System. As stated before, the relationship between breathing and our emotional state goes both ways - one influences the other and vice-versa. It has been shown that breathing changes in response to changes in emotions, such as sadness, fear, happiness, and anger. Even more, by consciously changing the way we breathe we can influence the way we feel. But why? There is a simple explanation and it has to do with a nerve which spreads in our body - stretching from the head to the stomach, connecting most of the major organs between the brain and colon, like a system of roots or cable - **the vagus nerve**, which is also the longest nerve in the body.

The vagus nerve has been described as “largely responsible for the mind-body connection,” for its role as a mediator between thinking and feeling. Around 80% of its fibres are afferent, meaning that they go from the body to the brain. This allows us to regulate our nervous system by the way we breathe, chant or move. This knowledge has been used for centuries in the Chinese and Hindu cultures, which have developed multiple practices to benefit from this body-mind connection. For example, the Hindu tradition has a wide variety of breathing practices called pranayama, and even more, they use chanting as a healing practice.

How does it work?

The vagus nerve is connected to the diaphragm, it stretches from the neck to the abdomen. When we inhale deeply, into the belly, using the diaphragm, we activate the vagus nerve, in charge of turning off the “fight or flight” response, thus reducing the state of alertness or stress in the body. We could say that the vagus nerve listens and responds to the way we breathe, sending these messages to the brain and the heart. When we breathe slowly, the oxygen demands of the heart muscle are reduced, and our heart rate drops. If we breathe fast it must mean that we are in danger or we need more oxygen and energy, thus the heart rate

increases, and we feel excited, or anxious. The vagus nerve is activating the parasympathetic nervous system - the rest and digest response. If we breathe in a deep way, we can stimulate this nerve which will banish the effects of the sympathetic nervous system. **Important to remember that what triggers the relaxation response is the exhalation.**

Our emotions, body and mind can't be separated, as shown by research in psychoneuroimmunology (the science studying the interaction between the mind and the body). Gabor Mate says in his book "When the Body Says No": that "there is no body that is not mind, no mind that is not body", highlighting the importance of addressing human beings from a holistic perspective, and studying the mind-body interaction to understand health and well-being.

To be human, alive, and confident with a positive self-definition means to reclaim our bodies and our sense of self. This process is possible but it requires awareness. For example, as neuroscientists have shown - the only way to access our emotional brain is through self-awareness ("by activating the medial prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that notices what is going on inside us and thus allows us to feel what we're feeling" LeDoux, J. (Kolk, b. van der, 2015)). This helps us learn how to cope with our emotions, how to become aware of our inner landscape, and how to create new possibilities for ourselves, thus developing the ability to master the complexity of our inner experience, in order to take charge and full responsibility for ourselves and our lives.

Reclaiming the reality of our bodies gives us a sense of empowerment and security, an awareness that we can feel safe only in our bodies, but even more, our sense of self is rooted in our bodies. **It turns out that when you pay attention to yourself: the default state activates the brain areas that work together to create your sense of "self"** (Bessel, van der K. 2015).

Practice Breathwork

Find a comfortable position, with feet on the ground, hands resting on your knees or lap, and close your eyes. The focus during this short and simple breathing practice is on the movements of your belly while counting the breath.

Inhale and exhale 3 times through your nose, taking the biggest breaths you have taken the whole day.

Inhale count to 5, the air goes through the nostrils in the belly and then up the chest. Notice the movements of your belly. Hold the breath, counting to 5. Exhale from the chest downwards to the belly, counting to 5, noticing how the belly is dropping towards the spine. Hold, counting to 5. Repeat this technique for several minutes.

*If counting to 5 is too difficult, you can start with 4 seconds, if it is too easy you can increase it to 6.

III. 2 YOGA AND VOICE PRACTICES

Yoga: Building Physical and Mental Strength

Yoga is a powerful practice that goes beyond just stretching or exercise. It's about building a connection between your body and mind, helping you develop both physical strength and mental clarity. For Generation Z, who often face the pressures of fast-paced digital lives, yoga can be a great way to pause, breathe, and regain control over your inner world.

Here's how yoga can help boost your self-confidence:

1. **Physical Postures (Asanas):** Practising yoga poses can help you become more aware of your body and its capabilities. As you gain flexibility, strength, and balance, you'll also develop a sense of accomplishment and self-assurance. Try starting with poses like Warrior II for strength, Tree Pose for balance, and Child's Pose for relaxation. These not only improve your physical health but also make you feel more grounded and confident in your body.
2. **Breath Control (Pranayama):** Learning to control your breath can have a huge impact on how you handle stress and anxiety. Techniques like deep belly breathing or alternate nostril breathing can calm your nervous system and help you feel more in control. Practising breathwork daily can reduce feelings of anxiety and increase your focus, making you feel more confident in tackling challenges.
3. **Mindfulness through Movement:** As you move through yoga poses, focus on how your body feels and how your breath guides your movement. This mindfulness practice can help you stay present, reduce negative self-talk, and build a positive relationship with yourself. Over time, this practice helps you become more attuned to your needs and more confident in your decisions.

Voice Practices: Expressing Yourself with Confidence

Your voice is a powerful tool for self-expression, and learning to use it effectively can significantly boost your self-confidence. For many in Generation Z, who communicate more through screens than face-to-face, voice practices can help you reconnect with the power of spoken words and develop greater confidence in expressing yourself.

Here's how to use voice practices to build self-confidence:

1. **Vocal Toning:** Vocal toning involves making simple sounds, like humming or chanting vowels, to explore how your voice feels and resonates within your body. This practice can help you become more comfortable with the sound of your own voice, which is a key step in building self-confidence. Try humming for a few minutes each day to get used to hearing and feeling your voice.
2. **Expressive Voice Work:** Don't be afraid to use your voice in different ways—whether it's singing, speaking up in class, or simply practising your speech in front of a mirror. The more you use your voice, the more comfortable and confident you'll become. Start small, like reading out loud to yourself, and gradually challenge yourself to speak more in social situations.
3. **Voice Meditation:** Combine meditation with simple vocal sounds, like humming or repeating a positive affirmation, to help calm your mind and focus your thoughts. This practice not only helps you manage stress but also encourages a positive mindset, which is crucial for building self-confidence. Set aside a few minutes each day to practise voice meditation, focusing on the sound of your voice and the feelings it evokes.

Practical Tips for Getting Started

- **Start Small:** You don't need to dive into complex yoga routines or vocal exercises right away. Start with simple poses or basic vocal sounds, and gradually increase the time and complexity as you become more comfortable.
- **Consistency is Key:** Like any practice, consistency matters. Try to incorporate yoga and voice practices into your daily routine, even if it's just for a few minutes. Over time, you'll notice the benefits in your self-confidence and overall well-being.

- Find a Community: Practising with others, whether it's in a yoga class or a voice workshop, can help you stay motivated and feel supported. It's also a great way to build social confidence and make new friends.
- Focus on Progress, Not Perfection: Remember, the goal is to build confidence, not to achieve perfection. Celebrate small wins and be patient with yourself as you grow.

By integrating yoga and voice practices into your life, you can develop a stronger sense of self-confidence and a deeper connection with your own voice and body. These practices can help you navigate the challenges of modern life with greater ease, resilience, and self-assurance.

IV. MIND (UNDERSTANDING)

IV.I Mindfulness as a Tool for Self-Awareness

The mind, our centre for understanding, is where we process information, make decisions, and interpret the world around us. However, it is also where distractions, anxieties, and misconceptions can take root, clouding our judgement and distancing us from our true selves. To navigate this complexity, mindfulness emerges as a powerful tool for cultivating self-awareness and clarity.

Mindfulness, at its core, is the practice of being fully present in the moment, observing our thoughts, feelings, and surroundings without judgement. This heightened state of awareness allows us to see our mental processes more clearly, enabling us to recognize patterns, biases, and habits that may be influencing our behaviour unconsciously.

Engaging in mindfulness practice helps in developing self-awareness in several ways:

1. Observing Thoughts: By regularly practising mindfulness, we can observe our thoughts as they arise, without immediately reacting to them. This helps in identifying recurring patterns of thought, particularly negative or self-defeating ones, that can undermine our self-confidence and skew our perception of reality.
2. Reducing Mental Clutter: Mindfulness teaches us to focus on the present moment, reducing the mental clutter that often overwhelms our minds. This clarity allows us to distinguish between useful thoughts and distractions, leading to more focused and deliberate decision-making.

3. **Emotional Regulation:** Mindfulness is closely tied to emotional regulation. By observing our thoughts and feelings without judgement, we create space between stimulus and response. This space empowers us to choose how we react to our emotions, rather than being driven by them impulsively.
4. **Cultivating Inner Peace:** As we become more mindful, we begin to experience a sense of inner peace that comes from being present. This tranquillity nurtures self-confidence, as it is rooted in a deep understanding and acceptance of oneself, rather than external validation.

By incorporating mindfulness into daily life, we build a foundation of self-awareness that supports personal growth and emotional resilience. This self-awareness is crucial for understanding who we are, what we need, and how we can live more authentically and confidently.

IV.II 12 Areas of Life Balance (Inspired by LifeBook by John Butcher)

Achieving a well-rounded and fulfilling life requires more than just mindfulness—it also demands a comprehensive approach to understanding and balancing the various facets of life. The LifeBook framework, developed by John Butcher, is a holistic tool that guides individuals through the process of evaluating and improving 12 key areas of life. Each area represents a vital component of our overall well-being and contributes to our sense of purpose, happiness, and fulfilment.

Here is an overview of the 12 areas of life balance:

1. **Health and Fitness:** This area focuses on your physical well-being, including your diet, exercise, and overall health. A strong, healthy body is the foundation for a vibrant life, enabling you to pursue your goals with energy and vitality.
2. **Intellectual Life:** Your intellectual life is about continuous learning and mental growth. It involves engaging in activities that challenge your mind, expand your knowledge, and foster creativity.
3. **Emotional Life:** This area covers your emotional well-being and the quality of your emotional experiences. It's about understanding, managing, and expressing your emotions in a healthy way, which is closely linked to mindfulness and emotional intelligence.

4. **Character:** Character encompasses your values, ethics, and integrity. It involves living in alignment with your core principles and consistently striving to become a better version of yourself.
5. **Spiritual Life:** Spirituality relates to your connection with something greater than yourself, whether that is a religious faith, nature, or a personal sense of purpose. It's about finding meaning in life and experiencing inner peace.
6. **Love Relationship:** This area addresses your intimate relationship with a partner. It's about creating and maintaining a loving, supportive, and mutually fulfilling relationship.
7. **Parenting:** Parenting focuses on your relationship with your children and your role as a parent. It's about guiding, supporting, and nurturing your children to help them grow into happy, healthy, and independent individuals.
8. **Social Life:** Your social life includes your relationships with friends, family, and community. It's about building and maintaining meaningful connections and feeling a sense of belonging.
9. **Financial Life:** This area concerns your financial health and how you manage your resources. It involves not only earning and saving but also using money in a way that supports your overall life goals and happiness.
10. **Career:** Your career is about your professional life and the work you do. It's about finding fulfilment in your job, aligning it with your passions and strengths, and achieving your professional goals.
11. **Quality of Life:** Quality of life refers to the lifestyle you create, including your environment, experiences, and material possessions. It's about living in a way that reflects your values and brings joy to your everyday life.
12. **Life Vision:** Your life vision is the overarching purpose and direction of your life. It's about having a clear vision for your future and ensuring that all other areas of your life are aligned with that vision.

Integrating Mindfulness and Life Balance

By combining the practice of mindfulness with the structured approach of the LifeBook, you can achieve a deep understanding of your life as a whole. Mindfulness helps you become aware of your current state in each of these areas, while the LifeBook framework provides a roadmap for assessing and improving them.

As you work through each area, mindfulness ensures that you approach your self-assessment with honesty and clarity, free from the distortions of ego or external pressure. This combination of self-awareness and strategic planning is essential for creating a balanced, fulfilling life where all aspects of your being—physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual—are in harmony.

By paying attention to each of these areas and using mindfulness to stay present and focused, you can create a life that is not only successful but deeply satisfying and true to who you are.

IV. 3 Identity, belonging and authenticity

One of our biggest challenges in life is to embody our true Self, to be our most authentic Self, and especially for Generation Z as they find themselves at the age where they desire to know themselves, to find their place in the world, but also to be liked and appreciated. As humans, we have two core needs - **the need to belong and the need for authenticity**. To juggle between these two needs, or even more to meet both of them is an art.

The first part of life is governed by the need to belong - since this one will ensure our survival. Most of the time, at an early age, one will sacrifice authenticity in order to belong. This happens almost unconsciously, as belonging is essential for our survival. As a child, we can not survive without our caregivers, we come into this world in a state of dependency, which characterises the first part of our lives. Initially, we express ourselves authentically, but based on the feedback and reactions from our caregivers and environment, we learn very fast which parts of our personality are accepted, which parts are less desired, and which parts are too much for others. As a consequence, out of our desire to belong, to be loved, and to be accepted, we will sacrifice the parts that are more challenging or less liked. Unfortunately, even though loving and having good intentions, our parents can inhibit our authenticity, because of their past experiences, childhood and personal traumas. Some of our emotions might be too difficult for them to manage, as they struggle to cope with and accept their own emotions. But **before the age of 7, nearly all of our personality structure is formed**, and as John Churchill (2024) says - it is all relational. We become who we are based on our relations, our interaction with others, their reactions towards us, and their approval or disapproval. **The second part of our life is designated to reclaim our authentic Self.**

Many youth from Generation Z can find themselves in front of this threshold - letting go of the comfort of old identities developed mostly to belong, and stepping into the unknown of

their authenticity, which of course, poses a threat to their previous life system and social structures. They are at a place in their lives, where the need for authenticity becomes stronger. As one goes down this path, old inner protectors and survival strategies will kick in, and one can find oneself overwhelmed by fear, anxiety, criticism, shame, and so on. These are signs that we are going on a new path, trying out something different, but older parts of our psyche which have the function to protect us (Bill Plotkin (2013) calls them subpersonalities) will fight against it, as they still believe being authentic is a threat to our wellbeing.

Nevertheless, the art is to embrace authenticity and belong to the greater web of life. As Bill Plotkin (2021) says “Authenticity is a piece of cake if you don’t mind alienating others and possibly being friendless. And social acceptance is a snap if you’re okay with being an impostor, willing to act in whatever ways are necessary to be accepted.” But finding a balance between the two is not an easy job. One needs courage, confidence, empathy, awareness, compassion and guidance.

Growing up, from a teen to a young adult is a process through which one learns more about the place they want to take in the world, who they are, what they bring and how can they enrich this world. The challenge comes from our consumerism, conformist, fear-infused society - in which important is to fit in, to look good, and to respect the norm, thus one can lose contact with one's own values, needs, desires, attitudes, and beliefs. Unfortunately, little guidance is there in childhood or teen years. But authenticity and belonging remain perhaps the most widespread longings of our times. Bill Plotkin (2021) translates the people's yearning for “greater meaning or purpose in their lives” as “the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the world. They want to feel more real and more in communion with the web of life. They want their lives to make a difference”. The aforementioned author distinguishes between three different types of belonging:

- **psychological belonging** - knowing who you are, personal authenticity,
- **social belonging** - acceptance in a peer group or community
- **ecological belonging** - communion with the more-than-human world

The tasks of the growing-up process are to cultivate authenticity (I know who I am and I can express and embody this identity in my social life) and to belong and be socially accepted. Bill Plotkin (2021) gives us clear steps to how to cultivate belonging and authenticity*:

- Asking questions like: What is worth striving for? What genuinely brings me alive? What has heart for me and what doesn't? Who are my people? What principles will I fight to uphold? To whom and what will I be faithful? What is necessary for a decent life? What is the meaning of human existence? What, to me, is God? Death?
- Learning to distinguish between authenticity (your own) and self-deception.
- Cultivating emotional skills. This includes the capacity for the full somatic experience of your emotions; the skill of insight into their meaning and significance; and the ability to compassionately express and act on your emotions in a way that honours both yourself and any others involved.
- Learning the art of conflict resolution.
- Developing the ability to define yourself culturally and to co-create your social world.
- Cultivating dexterity and sensitivity in sex and sexual relationships.
- Developing the ability to take care of yourself and earn a living.
- The practice of human-nature reciprocity and ecological responsibility for the well-being of the greater Earth community.

*These 8 steps are taken from his book “The Journey of Soul Initiation: A Field Guide for Visionaries, Evolutionaries, and Revolutionaries” (2021)

Attachment

Authenticity and belonging are deeply connected to our attachment. As social beings, we cannot develop independently of the world we live in. From our closest relationships to our community, culture and society, all have an influence on our character's development, on the values we introject, the life perspective we develop and so on. Working with our attachment style means addressing our relationships: me in relation with others, with the world and with myself.

How I communicate, how I relate, and the place I take in the world is essentially connected with the sense of Self, a sense of authenticity, and acceptance. The self-concept is developed with the help of our caregivers from an early age. As previously mentioned, most of our character is developed by the age of 7, and all starts with - the first relationship we have - the

primary caretaker (usually the mother) and the baby. The baby learns to feel oneself through the mother - and as Bessel van der Kolk (2015) says the way a mother holds her child underlies “the ability to feel the body as the place where the psyche lives”. **Based on the qualities of this primary interaction different types of attachments can be developed: anxious, avoidant, disorganised, and secure.**

The attachment style plays out in our relationship throughout life. The way we communicate, express our emotions and needs, the trust and safety we can experience are based on our attachment style. **Regardless of what attachment style we have, we can work to heal it and develop a secure attachment.** The more we can embody and internalise safety, the more authentic we can be, the more we can develop further in life and we can create healthier and nourishing relationships. A secure attachment combined with the cultivation of competency builds an internal locus of control, the key factor in healthy coping throughout life.

John Churchill (2024) describes attachment as being formed of 4 qualities.

- **The first quality is safety** - feeling physically safe. This is internalised as a deep sense of security, when as babies we were held by someone, for example, one of the caretakers being physically present and holding us in their arms.
- **The second quality is attunement.** For example, if a parent is physically holding the child, but emotionally they are absent, checking their phone or being mentally and emotionally somewhere else, then attunement doesn't happen. Attunement is defined as the capacity to feel into someone else's nervous system, to be felt by someone else and to be feeling someone else. The experience of feeling felt means taking the other person's nervous system inside of you. In the case of children, the parents' nervous system is used to organise and regulate the nervous system of the child. When a child doesn't have this experience, it can be difficult to develop the ability to organise their internal landscape.
- **The third quality is feeling valued.** This is experienced and internalised when, for example, the child is in the playground and looking behind and sees the parents looking after them with love and interest, in awe at the miracle this child is. The child feels seen but also cherished - in those moments we internalise the feeling of being valued and cherished.
- **The fourth quality is developing a sense of self,** a capacity to ask questions to yourself about yourself. This is modelled by parents, since the children can't do it on

their own. For example, the parents notice the interests of the child and ask the child - “what do you want to do? What do you like? I see you want to play/to be a musician etc”. The parents mirror and encourage the child to explore what she likes and is curious about. This behaviour can be translated as “a deep caring from the adult to help instil inside of the child the GPS system” (Churchill, J. 2024) through which we learn to navigate in life following what is in alignment with ourselves. Without this help, the child can’t ask themselves “What do I think about this? What do I want” and so on.

Healing our attachment wounds

Imagination is a powerful tool in our lives, it can enable us to go beyond what we know and create new possibilities, it is essential for making our hopes come true. It boosts our creativity, can alleviate our pain, helps heal wounds, restructure narrative and so on. Recent research shows that the brain can struggle to make the difference between what we imagine and reality. “The more vividly a person imagines something, the more likely it is that they believe it’s real” (University College London researchers). Their study showed, as Dr. Dijkstra (Kolk, B. van der, 2015), said, “there is no categorical difference between imagination and reality; instead, it is a difference in degree, not in kind”. Thus, our projections onto reality have as big influence on the brain as reality itself. Using our imagination we can reparent our inner child and develop a secure attachment style. For example, in meditation or visualisation, one can envision the ideal parent or guide, how they would act, what they would say, and how they would feel in their presence.

Using Bill Plotkin’s model of the human psyche (2013) which has 4 directions - representing 4 facets of our psyche, we can learn to connect and embody the qualities of the North - defined as the **Nurturing Generative Adult**. The figure below shows the map of the psyche as described by Plotkin, but in this section, we will address only the Nurturing Generative Adult - the qualities of the North - as a foundational work for developing our ideal inner parents, those that have the resources and qualities to reparent our inner child. The NGA is “emphatic, compassionate, courageous, competent, knowledgeable, productive and able to provide genuine loving care and service to both ourselves and others. Through the NGA, we contribute our best and most creative parenting, leading, teaching, directing, producing and healing”. It is the inner parent - the one that is emotionally grounded enough to take care of our young wounded parts.

MAP 1:

Intrapersonal view of the Self and Subpersonalities (how we relate to ourselves)



Image from Bill Plotkin (2013)- Wild Mind, page 21

Practice:

One way to connect and evoke the ideal inner parent is to recall examples or models that inspire these qualities to you. From there envision the ideal parent or guide - what would they be like, what would they say? Envision a situation where you see the healing mother, taking care of the kids - how does it feel when you watch her, how is she moving? How is she talking - familiarise yourself with that energy. A next step is to imagine you are in her presence - how does it feel to be close to her? Later we can engage in conversation, ask for support, or just imagine the idea of a parent holding our scared, sad or wounded parts.

John Churchil (2024) says that even if we have a developmental lack, our brain recognizes and responds to love, since it has been shaped by years of love, “if we can go through the past conditioning, the deep structure of our body is innately good and knows love”. Imagination allows us to internalise this new facet, this ideal parent and make it part of ourselves, and this image we can invoke at any time we need and it will help restructure our attachment. In this

way we can use our imagination to resource ourselves, any time we need, we can have the healing parent with us.

PART II FACE TO FACE COMMUNICATION

I. Non-violent communication - Active Listening (Rosenberg)

How are we as humans meant to relate to one another? What impact do we have on each other? Can our words nurture or damage our relationships? Can communication enrich the world we live in? Can we feel confident and satisfied when we move through life with compassion? Can others better meet us and our needs if we express them clearly and take responsibility for our emotions?

These are some questions that Non-violent Communication, developed by Dr. Marshall B. Rosenberg, answers through theory and practice. This method fosters intra and interpersonal relationships of compassion, collaboration and caring. It can be applied in various settings, from close relationships, to work conflicts, schools, and even interracial conflicts, and it serves as a valuable resource for communities facing violent conflicts and intense ethnic, religious, or political tensions.

Humans are social beings, and there is no human activity that does not depend on a relationship. No matter where one lives, from an early age until death one is surrounded by people and significant others, and his/her life is enriched by social interactions and human connections. Relationships are influencing one's satisfaction in life and well-being and even more, they are a key factor for peace and happiness in modern society. Relationships can be enhanced or hindered by language forms and communication. Unfortunately, many times our communication style impedes a true connection and the efforts to relate to one another with compassion are obstructed by a language that leads to defence, guilt, attack or humiliation. **Blaming, judging, criticising, and comparing, are the major obstacles of healthy and empathic communication.** Nevertheless, NVC gives us the tools to learn how to express ourselves and hear others. We all have built communication patterns, and often when we speak we are not fully aware of what we really want to say or how our words can impact the other, through NVC we learn to give conscious responses based on what we are perceiving, feeling and wanting.

NVC has two main parts:

1. **Expressing ourselves honestly**
2. **Receiving with empathy what the other person is saying**

Thus, it is both about learning to express myself and learning to listen and receive with empathy what the other person is telling me. As Rosenberg says: “we are led to express ourselves with honesty and clarity, while simultaneously paying others a respectful and empathic attention”.

NVC is a powerful tool for different reasons. Firstly, using it in our interactions - with ourselves, others or even in a group - helps us to stay grounded in our natural state of compassion. Therefore, it can be used from a personal level for example intimate relationship, to a professional level. Secondly, it does not require that the other person knows the NVC principles. If we continue to apply the principles, slowly the other person will eventually be able to join us in the process and mutual compassion will be possible.

1. **Expressing ourselves honestly**

“NVC fosters deep listening, respect, and empathy and engenders a mutual desire to give from the heart” (Rosenberg, M. 2015), using its principles we can connect with each other in a healthier and nourishing way, allowing for our compassion to be manifested. In expressing ourselves and listening to others we focus on four areas: what we are observing, feeling, and needing, and what we are requesting to enrich our lives.

1. **Observations**
2. **Feelings**
3. **Needs**
4. **Requests**

The first component: **Observing**

The Indian philosopher J. Krishnamurti said that observing without evaluating is the highest form of human intelligence. We tend to mix observation with evaluation or judgement. Observing means simply noticing what we are seeing, hearing, touching that is affecting our sense of wellbeing without making any kind of evaluation nor labelling it. For example: *I am seeing socks on the floor* (an observation) or *The room is messy because of the socks on the floor* (an evaluation). If we make an evaluation instead of an observation, the others won't

really hear what we are saying, they will most likely hear criticism and resist our message, maybe even become defensive.

In his book *Non-violent Communication*, Rosenberg gives us a table that helps us make the distinction between observation and evaluation. See the figure below for more details.

Communication	Example of observation with evaluation mixed in	Example of observation separate from evaluation
1. Use of verb <i>to be</i> without indication that the evaluator takes responsibility for the evaluation	You are too generous.	When I see you give all your lunch money to others, I think you are being too generous.
2. Use of verbs with evaluative connotations	Doug procrastinates.	Doug only studies for exams the night before.
3. Implication that one's inferences about another person's thoughts, feelings, intentions, or desires are the only ones possible	She won't get her work in.	I don't think she'll get her work in. <i>or</i> She said, "I won't get my work in."
4. Confusion of prediction with certainty	If you don't eat balanced meals, your health will be impaired.	If you don't eat balanced meals, I fear your health may be impaired.
5. Failure to be specific about referents	Immigrants don't take care of their property.	I have not seen the immigrant family living at 1679 Ross shovel the snow on their sidewalk.
6. Use of words denoting ability without indicating that an evaluation is being made	Hank Smith is a poor soccer player.	Hank Smith has not scored a goal in twenty games.
7. Use of adverbs and adjectives in ways that do not indicate an evaluation has been made	Jim is ugly.	Jim's looks don't appeal to me.

Image from Rosenberg, M. (2015) Non-violent Communication, chapter 3.

! Important: Distinguish observation from evaluation!

The second component: **Expressing feelings**

Building self-awareness is a key component for an accurate expression of our feelings. First of all, I have to be able to identify what I am feeling in order to be able to express it out loud in a clear and compassionate way. Thus, meditation, self-reflection, and developing the felt

sense are necessary steps. Also, equally helpful is to build a vocabulary of feelings. Many of us have the tendency to say “I feel that...(I am not good enough)..”. Whenever the word *feel* is followed by *that*, we are not expressing a feeling, but rather an opinion or a thought.

In the following example: “I feel that you don’t listen to me”, “I feel like you don’t care”. The feeling is not expressed and the listener will most likely hear criticism and become defensive. Thus the message has not reached the listener, and both parties will feel frustrated and misunderstood.

! Important: Distinguish between feelings and thoughts!

The third component: **Acknowledging the needs as the root of our feelings**

It is important to learn to see the behaviours of others as a stimulus, but never the cause of our feelings. No one has power over our emotions, except us, they are subjective reactions based on what we choose to receive from what others say or do, what meaning we give to their words and actions as well as our needs and expectations at that moment. Our emotions are in our hands, and becoming aware of the thoughts behind them can help us understand our reactions but also work with them and choose what we want to express - from our mature conscious self.

In the same way, what the other person is saying or doing is a reflection of their emotions and needs, and not of our behaviour. NVC show that, in front of a negative message - we have four options as to how to receive it:

- **Blaming ourselves** - we can take their comments personally, hearing blame and criticism which will lead to feelings of guilt, shame, or sadness and it will affect our self-esteem. It means we accept their judgement and blame ourselves.
- **Blaming the other** - leads to anger and defensive behaviour
- **Sensing our needs and emotions** - we can notice the feelings of hurt that come from our efforts to be recognized, approved, liked etc.
- **Sensing others’ needs and emotions** - it is not the same as taking responsibility for their emotions, but rather trying to hear what they are trying to say, and what are their unexpressed needs and emotions.

Some common language patterns are enabling us to avoid taking responsibility for our emotions. For example, we tend to say *I feel hurt because you didn’t remember my birthday.*

or *You make me angry*. Using these types of expressions we place the responsibility of our emotions on the other person's words and actions. Using NVC principles, a more accurate and healthier way of expressing ourselves would be: *I feel angry that you didn't make any plans for my birthday because I need to feel celebrated and see that I am important to you.*

Depending on how we express ourselves the other person might be more or less receptive to our message. When people hear criticism they will invest their energy in defending themselves and attacking back. Thus your emotions and needs will not be heard and received. When we focus on ourselves expressing our feelings and needs, rather than pointing at their behaviour, the other will be more receptive to hearing and answering with compassion.

Rosenberg has noted that when people begin speaking of their needs, rather than blaming and criticising each other, it increases the possibility of having both parties' needs met. One reason is that we share more or less the same needs, we as humans have basic universal needs shared by our humanity:

- Autonomy
- Celebration
- Integrity
- Interdependence
- Play
- Spiritual communion
- Physical nurturance

Another important point made by Marshall Rosenberg (2015): **“If we don't value our needs, others may not either”**, other people will treat us the way we allow them to and the way we treat ourselves. It is our responsibility to take care of and value our needs, as well as setting the boundaries that are adequate for us. There is no right or wrong, nor general, it is based on the person.

! Important: Connect your feeling with your need: “I feel ... because I need ...”

The fourth component: **The request**

After having expressed our emotions and needs in a certain situation, we can continue by making a clear request that would enrich our lives and meet our needs. It is recommended to leave behind ideas such as “but they should know how I feel and what I need”, “I should not

have to tell them” etc. Each of us is a unique individual, and even though we share the same universal needs and emotions, we have our own specific way of expressing our emotions or of having our needs met. Therefore, if we want to make sure the other person will better understand us and if we want to avoid disappointment and further frustration, it is our responsibility to say very clearly and as specifically as possible what we want - in the form of a request. It is recommended to use **positive action language** - say what you want, not what you don't want. Make a request as concrete as possible, and avoid vague, abstract or ambiguous phrasing.

For example: *Could you listen to me when I speak to you?*

For you “to be listened” might mean that the other person will reply or will ask questions, for others it might mean that the other person is having eye contact and focuses only on the person speaking and so on. In this case, just saying “listen to me” is not specific enough, and maybe the way in which the other person is listening doesn't meet your understanding of active listening. Therefore making requests in concrete, clear and positive language can show what you really want and increases the possibility of having your needs met.

Of course, daring to say what we really want and need can be frightening, as the other person can say no. And they can, it is part of their freedom. But a question to ask ourselves is “Would I really want another person to do something for me that they do not want to do?”, for many of us the answer would be no. We want others to respond to our request as long as it is in alignment with themselves and as long as they truly want to.

! Important: Distinguish between requests and demands.

A demand doesn't accept a no, it can lead to judgements and criticism or guilt-tripping if it is not complied with. It also infringes the freedom of the other person, who can feel they only have two options - to submit or to rebel. On the contrary, a request accepts a no, it is an invitation, and the other is free to answer as it is adequate for them. If the request is not followed by emotions and needs, it may sound like a demand.

“The objective of NVC is not to change people and their behaviour in order to get our way; it is to establish relationships based on honesty and empathy that will eventually fulfil everyone's needs.” M. Rosenberg (2015)

NVC in action

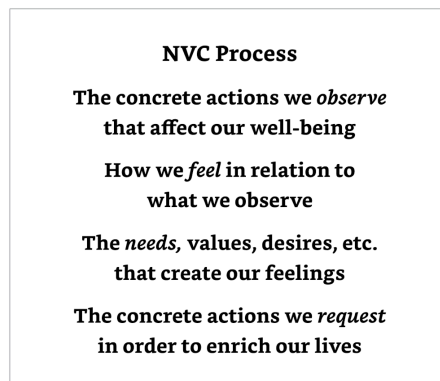


Image from Rosenberg, M. (2015) Non-violent communication, chapter 1.

The process

We start by observing what is happening in a situation: what is being said and done that is either nurturing or not for our life? Express these observations without introducing any judgement or evaluation. Just say what you see, hear, what you observe, regardless of what you think about it. The second step is to identify how we feel: what is happening in my body in that situation? What emotions, sensations, and feelings move inside me? and then put these emotions and feelings into words. A third step is to express the needs connected to these emotions. The last step is to share our request: what do I want that would enrich my life? in a concrete, positive and clear way.

For the practice to be applied with success, it requires a good level of self-awareness and contact with one's emotions and needs, as well as high empathic abilities and compassion.

2. Receiving emphatically

The second main part of NVC is focused on how we meet the other person, and how we listen and receive with empathy what is being said or what is not being said. The Chinese philosopher Chuang-Tzu says that empathy requires listening with the whole being: “The hearing that is only in the ears is one thing. The hearing of the understanding is another. But the hearing of the spirit is not limited to any one faculty, to the ear, or to the mind. Hence it demands the emptiness of all the faculties. And when the faculties are empty, then the whole being listens. There is then a direct grasp of what is right there before you that can never be heard with the ear or understood with the mind.”

Empathy asks of us to put aside our judgement and criticism and listen with an open heart. It doesn't require giving advice or reassurance, nor finding solutions or solving their problems. Instead, it means focusing our full attention on the other person, giving them the time and space to express what they need and to feel understood, this is captured by the Buddhist saying: "Don't just do something, stand there."

When we learn to listen empathically we can use the NVC principles and only hear what the person is: observing, feeling, needing and requesting. Even when they don't say clearly what they feel and need, we can learn to hear that and mirror it back to them through questions. For example, the person says: *I am unhappy because you never call me.* Using NVC, we can notice the needs are not expressed, instead the emotions are a consequence of the behaviour.

Tools: **Paraphrasing**

Using paraphrasing we can ask for clarification and help the person say what they need: *Are you feeling unhappy because you would need me to show you you are important to me by calling more regularly?* or *Do you want me to call you every day?*

It is helpful to express firstly our own feelings and needs when we ask for clarification. For example, instead of saying "What did I do that makes you feel this way?" to say "I'm frustrated because I'd like to understand clearly what you are referring to. Would you be willing to tell me what I've done that leads you to see me in this way?"

Reflect back messages emotionally charged.

Listen for emotions and needs - as we develop self-awareness and are more connected to our emotions and needs, it will become easier to identify the emotions and needs of others. We can use our abilities to mirror their emotions and needs even though they are not directly expressed. When we do this, we do it in the form of a question or reflection: *It sounds to me like you feel frustrated, and you would like to be treated with respect.* We can always share how we feel when we do not know how to show the right support to the other person: *I am concerned about you, and I would like to know how to best support you. Could you tell me what I can say or do to help you feel.....* As Bessel (2015) says "Emotional intelligence starts with labelling your own feelings and attuning to the emotions of the people around you".

Through the fundamental aspects of NVC, learning to express themselves honestly and receive empathically, to create a deep connection as the basis of any relationship

II. Power of non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication plays a significant role in how we express ourselves and connect with others. In fact, studies show that a large portion of communication is non-verbal, meaning the way we say things often has more impact than the words themselves. For Generation Z, who have grown up in a digital world, mastering non-verbal communication is crucial for building deeper, more meaningful face-to-face relationships. Drawing insights from Mindvalley's resources on communication and personal growth, let's explore how to harness the power of non-verbal cues to boost your confidence and improve your social interactions.

1. Body Language: Speaking Without Words

Body language is the most prominent aspect of non-verbal communication. From your posture to your gestures, your body conveys confidence, openness, and interest—or, conversely, insecurity and disinterest. Learning to use your body language intentionally can help you communicate more effectively.

Key Principles of Body Language:

- **Posture:** Standing or sitting tall with your shoulders back and head held high signals confidence and self-assurance. Slouching or hunching can give off the impression of uncertainty or low energy.
- **Open gestures:** Keeping your arms open and uncrossed indicates that you are approachable and receptive. Crossing your arms or closing off your body can make you appear defensive or closed-off.
- **Eye contact:** Making direct but natural eye contact helps establish trust and shows that you are fully present in the conversation. Avoiding eye contact can make you seem disengaged or insecure.
- **Smiling:** A genuine smile can disarm tension, make you appear friendlier, and put others at ease. Smiling also triggers positive emotions in yourself, helping to reduce nervousness.

Actionable Tips:

- Mirror practice: Practise standing or sitting with good posture in front of a mirror to become more aware of how you carry yourself. Notice how different postures make you feel more or less confident.
- Record your interactions: If possible, record yourself during a casual conversation or presentation to review your body language and identify areas for improvement.

2. Facial Expressions: Your Emotions on Display

Your face is often the first thing people notice, and it's incredibly expressive. Whether you're smiling, frowning, or raising your eyebrows, your facial expressions communicate emotions and attitudes without saying a word.

Mindvalley Insights on Emotional Awareness: Facial expressions are closely tied to emotional awareness. According to Mindvalley's teachings, becoming aware of your emotions allows you to control how they are displayed on your face. This emotional regulation can help you remain calm and composed, even in high-pressure situations.

How to Use Facial Expressions Effectively:

- Be aware of your default expression: Many people have a "resting face" that may unintentionally convey boredom or frustration. Practice maintaining a neutral or slightly positive expression when you're not actively speaking.
- Match your expressions to your words: Ensure that your facial expressions are aligned with your message. Smiling while delivering positive news or showing concern when discussing serious topics makes your communication more authentic.

Actionable Tips:

- Observe others: Watch videos of public speakers or leaders you admire and pay attention to how they use their facial expressions to enhance their message.
- Facial exercises: Try facial exercises to relax tense muscles, which can help you appear more at ease and open during interactions.

3. Gestures: Enhancing Verbal Communication

Gestures, such as hand movements, can complement and emphasise your verbal communication. In fact, using gestures while speaking has been shown to improve clarity and

engagement in conversations. Mindvalley emphasises that deliberate and purposeful gestures not only make you appear more dynamic but also help you articulate your thoughts more clearly.

Effective Use of Gestures:

- Use natural gestures: Let your hands move naturally as you speak, but avoid over-exaggerated or fidgety gestures that can be distracting.
- Complement your words: Gestures should enhance what you're saying, not contradict it. For example, using a wide-arm gesture when describing something large helps your audience visualise your message.
- Avoid nervous habits: Fidgeting with your hair, jewellery, or hands can signal nervousness or lack of confidence. Becoming aware of these habits will help you eliminate them from your communication style.

Actionable Tips:

- Practice speaking with gestures: Record yourself while giving a short presentation or explaining something to see how you use your hands. If they're stiff or inactive, try adding more gestures that naturally align with your words.
- Stay mindful of nervous tics: If you tend to fidget, consciously work on keeping your hands calm during interactions.

4. Tone of Voice: Conveying Emotion and Authority

Your tone of voice can dramatically influence how your message is received. A calm, steady voice can make you appear confident and in control, while a shaky or monotone voice might undermine your authority. Mindvalley's lessons on communication highlight that your voice can carry both emotional energy and intention, making it an essential part of non-verbal communication.

Mastering Tone of Voice:

- Pitch and pace: Varying your pitch and pace helps keep your listener engaged and adds emphasis to key points. Speaking too quickly can signal anxiety, while speaking too slowly may lose your audience's interest.

- Volume control: Speaking too softly can make you seem unsure, while speaking too loudly may come across as aggressive. Find a balanced volume that conveys confidence without overwhelming your listener.
- Pause for effect: Pausing briefly after making an important point allows the message to sink in and gives you time to gather your thoughts, demonstrating poise and control.

Actionable Tips:

- Record and review your voice: Listen to how your voice sounds in different scenarios, such as when you're excited, nervous, or relaxed. Identify areas where you can add more variation in tone or improve clarity.
- Practice breathing exercises: Proper breath control helps you maintain a steady tone and reduces nervousness. Deep breathing from your diaphragm supports a stronger, more confident voice.

5. Space and Proximity: Respecting Boundaries

How close you stand or sit to someone during a conversation communicates a lot about your comfort level and relationship with that person. Mindvalley's communication experts emphasise the importance of understanding personal boundaries and cultural differences when it comes to proximity.

Using Space Effectively:

- Respect personal space: Standing too close to someone can make them feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed. Be mindful of how much space the other person needs, and adjust accordingly.
- Use space to assert authority: In professional settings, standing tall and grounded in your space can signal leadership and authority, while shrinking or retreating may convey insecurity.

Actionable Tips:

- Notice space in interactions: Pay attention to how much space you naturally give others and how they react. Adjust your distance based on the situation and relationship.

- Practice grounding techniques: Grounding yourself by standing with your feet shoulder-width apart helps you feel stable and centred, projecting confidence in your interactions.

Conclusion: Harnessing Non-Verbal Communication for Confidence

Non-verbal communication is a powerful tool that can enhance your confidence and improve your ability to connect with others. By mastering your body language, facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, and spatial awareness, you can become a more effective communicator in any situation. As Mindvalley's resources suggest, these non-verbal skills are key to unlocking your full potential and expressing yourself authentically. Practise them consistently, and you'll notice a significant improvement in how you present yourself and interact with others.

PART III WORKSHOP OUTLINES

I. WORKSHOP ON SELF CONFIDENCE

Materials needed:

A4 paper, pens, speaker for music, colourful pens and markers

Step 1 - Framing the session (5 min)

Introduce yourself and give an overview of the session. You can tell the participants that during this workshop, we will explore and strengthen our self-confidence by better understanding our values, what drives us in life. The workshop will be interactive, participatory and reflective.

Step 2 - Values exercise (20 min)

Begin by explaining to the participants that they will be engaging in a short exercise to reflect on their core values in life. First, they will complete the exercise individually, followed by a group debrief. Invite everyone to take out paper and a pen. Ask them to spend the next 5 minutes reflecting on the most important values in their lives. They should write down their top five values, ranking them from 1 (most important) to 5 (still important, but less so than the first).

While they write, you can play gentle, relaxing music in the background. Once everyone has finished, ask them to look at their list and consider whether these values are reflected in their everyday lives. You might provide examples to guide their reflection: For instance, if someone listed family as a top value, they could ask themselves whether they spend as much time with their family as they'd like, or if work often takes priority. If personal space is a value, they might consider whether they carve out time each day to do something they love, or if they tend to put it off.

Give participants another 5 minutes to reflect on these questions and write down their thoughts.

Afterward, invite the group to share their reflections. If the group is small (5-10 people), you can have everyone share in a large circle. For larger groups, suggest pairing up or forming trios to discuss their reflections. Offer some guiding questions:

- Are your values aligned with and expressed in your everyday life?
- Would you like to make any small changes if they aren't?
- How do you feel after completing this exercise?

Step 3 - Identity exercise (90 min)

Explain that the exercise is designed to help participants explore and understand their personal and cultural identity. Share examples from your own life to illustrate how various aspects of your identity have influenced your decisions and shaped who you are. This personal sharing helps to create a trusting environment and sets the stage for the participants' own exploration.

Facilitator's Note: It is highly recommended that you complete this exercise yourself before facilitating it for others. By doing so, you'll gain a deeper understanding of the process, which will enable you to guide participants through a more impactful and meaningful journey.

1. Drawing Your Identity "Flower" (30 min)

After framing the exercise, invite participants to create a visual representation of their identity by drawing a personal "flower" with their name in the centre. Each petal should represent an element that defines their identity. Encourage participants to

include as many petals as they feel necessary to fully explore the different facets of their identity.

Explain that if they don't resonate with the idea of a flower, they can choose another symbol that they feel represents them better, such as a hot air balloon, geometric figure, river, or tree. The goal is for participants to create a symbol that is personally meaningful.

Tell participants to write a word or sentence on each petal (or equivalent) that represents a part of their identity. Examples include roles (e.g., social entrepreneur, student etc.), relationships (e.g., daughter, son), aspects of their background (e.g., citizenship, education), interests (e.g., hobbies, religion, language), and values (e.g., love).

Give participants 30 minutes to work individually on this task, letting them know they will have time to share their reflections with others afterward.

Facilitators Note: Below you can see an example of categories that might be a part of people's identity. You can share them with participants as an example or choose your own examples.

Proposed list of Categories:

religion	origin
gender	sexual orientation
profession	age
social status	hobby, leisure time
family	friends
citizenship	nationality
Education	sports
non-profit activities	political interest/ orientation
neighbourhood, home	language
minorities	music and other fine arts

Source: Anna Lindh Intercultural Citizenship Education Handbook

2. Guided Reflection (10 min)

After participants have drawn their flower or chosen symbol, guide them through a deeper reflection process. Introduce a series of questions to help them explore their identity further. These questions can be displayed on a screen or written out where participants can easily refer to them:

- Who or what shaped your identity? Was it shaped by you, or were there significant influences from family, friends, school, or the society you grew up in?
- Are there any parts of your identity that you no longer need or wish to carry with you through life?
- How might your identity change in ten years? Would it look the same in a different context?
- What factors influence how you define your identity?
- Can you identify any beliefs that are directly linked to specific parts of your identity?

Participants should continue to reflect individually during this time, while you circulate the room to offer support if needed.

3. Peer Sharing (20 min)

Once participants have had time to reflect, invite them to pair up and share their findings with a partner. Emphasise that they should share only what they feel comfortable discussing, allowing for an open yet respectful exchange. Provide 20 minutes for this peer sharing session, ensuring that each person has time to speak and listen.

4. Group Debriefing and Discussion (30 min)

Bring the group together in a circle for a collective debriefing session. Facilitate a discussion using the following guiding questions:

- Was there anything particularly challenging about this activity?
- Did you realise during this exercise that you overlooked certain groups or aspects of your identity? What might be the reason for this?
- What connections do you see between identity, values, and behaviour?

- Is it a natural process to seek belonging within a group? Do we always strive for this? Why or why not?
- What elements contribute to forming a group identity and a sense of belonging? How do these elements influence the way we perceive others and different groups?

Encourage participants to share their thoughts and insights, fostering a deeper understanding of how identity shapes both individual and collective experiences.

Note: this exercise was adopted from Anna Lindh Intercultural Citizenship Education Handbook

Step 4, - Coffee break (15-30 min)

Step 5 - Breathing exercise (10-20 min)

1. Introduction:

- Begin by introducing the purpose of the activity to participants: *“We’re going to do a simple breathing exercise that will help us slow down, calm our bodies and minds, and create some space for relaxation.”*
- Invite participants to sit comfortably, either on the ground with their backs straight or in a chair if they prefer.

2. Explanation and Demonstration:

- Before starting the exercise, explain the steps clearly to the participants: *“We will breathe in for a count of 8, hold the breath for a count of 8, and then breathe out for a count of 8.”*
- Demonstrate the breathing pattern a couple of times so participants can see how it’s done.

Facilitators Note: the breathing in for a count of 8, holding the breath for a count of 8 and breathing out for a count of 8 is a suggestion. We do recommend that you adjust the breathing in and out count based on what feels comfortable for you. It will be equally helpful for participants to calm down their minds, if you count to 6 or 4. We also suggest to mention to participants before the beginning of the exercise to follow up to the number they are comfortable with and keep it until the end of the exercise (for example, if they can hold their breath for 5 seconds, telling them to do 5 second inhale and 5 second exhale).

3. Guiding the Exercise:

- Invite participants to gently close their eyes and prepare to follow your guidance.
- Use the following script to guide them through the exercise: *“We are going to breathe in as I count to 8: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Now, hold your breath for a count of 8: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. And breathe out, counting to 8: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.”*
- Repeat this sequence up to 10 times.

4. Post-Exercise Relaxation:

- After completing the breathing exercise, invite participants to keep their eyes closed and breathe naturally in their own rhythm.
- Encourage them to observe how their body feels for 2-3 minutes.

5. Bringing Participants Back:

- Gently guide participants back to the room by inviting them to slowly open their eyes, taking as much time as they need.

6. Debriefing:

- Conclude with a quick check-in, asking participants to share their experiences:
 - *“How did your body feel during the exercise?”*
 - *“Did you notice any particular sensations in your body?”*
 - *“Did you have many thoughts coming in?”*
 - *“Was it challenging to calm your mind?”*
 - *“How does your mind feel now?”*

This process helps participants connect with their bodies and minds, fostering a sense of relaxation and presence.

Step 6, - Back2back exercise (60 min)

After participants have reflected on the values exercise, it's time to move on to the "Back2Back" exercise. This activity is designed to help participants become more aware of what drives them in life, what they love doing, and possibly even what their purpose in life might be. Feel free to adapt the instructions to suit your style and the needs of your group.

Note: this exercise was tested with diverse groups of people all over Europe since 2017 and while it might seem extremely simple, the impact it has on people is truly profound. It works each time and brings out incredible a-ha moments in people.

Instructions for Facilitators:

1. Introduction: Begin by explaining the purpose of the exercise: *“For the next 30 minutes, you will work in pairs. We’ll be doing an exercise to help you explore what drives you in life, what you love, and perhaps even uncover your purpose.”*
2. Preparation:
 - Ask participants to pair up and find a comfortable, private space in the room.
 - Each pair will need a sheet of paper, a pen, and a timer.
 - Invite them to sit back-to-back, either on the ground or in chairs, ensuring they feel each other's presence without facing each other.
3. Explanation:
 - *“Sitting back-to-back is important because when we face each other, facial expressions can unconsciously influence our thoughts and sometimes block us from truly sharing what’s in our hearts. Sitting back-to-back allows you to feel the presence of your partner without their body language influencing you. This can help you access deeper parts of yourself that you might not explore in daily life.”*
4. Exercise Overview:
 - Once settled, participants should decide who will start as the speaker and who will be the listener.
 - There will be two rounds, so each person will have a chance to speak and listen.
 - The listener’s role is to listen attentively and write down everything the speaker says.
 - The speaker will talk for 7 minutes, answering one question:
5. *“Imagine that tomorrow you wake up and are told that you must choose one thing to do for the rest of your life. What would it be, and why?”*
 - *“Don’t overthink it. Simply respond to the question as it comes to you. By the end of the exercise, you may find your own meaning and reasoning behind it. Enjoy the process and take it one step at a time.”*

6. Timing:

- Explain why the exercise lasts 7 minutes:

“We’ve tested this with different timings and found that 7 minutes is the sweet spot—not too short, not too long. During the 7 minutes, there may be moments of silence. Allow these moments to be; they often signal a transition from speaking from the mind to speaking from the heart. In these silent moments, the listener can gently prompt the speaker by asking the same question again.”

7. Switch Roles:

- After 7 minutes, participants switch roles so that both have the opportunity to be the speaker and the listener.

8. Reflection and Sharing (10 min):

- Once both participants have spoken, they should face each other and exchange the papers where they’ve written about each other.
- Encourage them to decide whether to read the paper themselves or have their partner read it to them, which can be a powerful experience.

9. Guiding Reflection Questions for group debrief (10 min):

- Provide these questions for participants to reflect on after the exercise:
 - Was anything challenging about this activity?
 - Was it easier to be the listener or the speaker?
 - Did anything surprise you?
 - Did you learn something new about yourself or your partner?
 - What steps can you take to get closer to your purpose?

10. Commitment statement (5 min)

After the group debriefing, invite participants to take an A4 sheet of paper and some colourful pens or markers. Explain that for the next 5 minutes, they will be working individually to create a commitment statement.

Tell them that this is the perfect moment to think about and write down one small step or commitment they can take in the next week or month to move closer to living and fulfilling the purpose they’ve just discovered.

Provide a few examples to inspire them:

- *“If your goal is to be a writer, a simple commitment could be, ‘I will write a small article or post on social media once per week.’”*
- *“If you want to be a photographer, your commitment might be, ‘I will go out once per week and take photos of my surroundings’ or ‘I will join a photography course in the upcoming month.’”*
- *“If you aim to start your own company, a small commitment could be, ‘In the upcoming month, I will create a step-by-step plan of everything I need to do to start my company.’”*

Encourage participants to think of their own specific commitments.

11. Solidifying the Commitment (10 Minutes)

Group Sharing:

- If the group is small (up to 30 participants), gather everyone in a big circle. For larger groups, divide them into smaller circles.
- Explain that now each participant will stand up and share their commitment statement out loud with the group.

Importance of Verbalizing Commitment:

- Emphasise the significance of verbalising commitments: *“When we say our commitments out loud, it creates a sense of accountability to the group, which increases the likelihood of following through. Additionally, sharing our goals can open up opportunities for support from others in the room, who might be able to help us achieve our dreams and purpose.”*

Sharing:

- Invite participants to take turns standing up and sharing their commitment statements with the group.
- Encourage them to listen actively and support each other’s commitments.

This process not only helps participants solidify their intentions but also fosters a supportive community environment where they can inspire and be inspired by one another.

Step 7 - Body scan meditation (20 min)

Purpose: To calm and relax the mind and body after a full day of activities.

Preparation:

- Invite participants to sit comfortably, either on a chair or on the ground using a pillow or yoga mat. Emphasise the importance of maintaining a straight back for alertness, while ensuring they are comfortable enough to relax without falling asleep during the meditation.

Process:

Setting Up:

- Once everyone is seated comfortably with their backs straight, invite participants to gently close their eyes.
- Introduce the meditation with a calm and soothing tone. You can follow the script below or adjust it according to your style and intuition.

Guided Meditation:

“We are going to gently and softly close our eyes. We can take a couple of deep breaths in and out to start coming into this present moment, calming our minds and relaxing our body. We can take a couple of more deep breaths in and out. And we start breathing naturally in our own rhythm.

We are going to gently and softly start relaxing our head and our forehead. And we start relaxing our eyes and our eyeballs, feeling how the eyes after a whole working day start slowly being relaxed. While you are relaxing different parts of the body, try to bring your attention to that part of the body and feel how it is getting relaxed. When the body truly relaxes, it starts getting warmer, - warming us from the inside and spreading the warmth to all our body parts, our cells and inner organs.

We are going to relax our nose, our cheeks and our lips. While we are relaxing our lips, we can give a little smile to ourselves to prepare in a positive way for the meditation. And all our bodies are slowly getting relaxed from the top of the head until the toes. Feel how the way of relaxation is covering your whole body.

We are going to relax our neck and our shoulders. And once we relax our shoulders, we can feel how they gently fall down, while we are releasing the tension from our shoulders. We continue to relax our upper back and our lower back, remembering to breathe gently and slowly. If you have any thoughts coming in, imagine that your thoughts are like leaves on the tree and like the leaves are slowly falling down from the tree onto the ground, we are letting our thoughts fall down and go without focusing on them. We can come back to our thoughts later.

We continue to relax our arms, hands and fingers feeling the warmth in our hands and fingers. And just feel how this warmth is spreading throughout our whole body and warming us from the inside.

We continue to relax our chest and heart area, releasing all the feelings and emotions, which we might be holding inside our chest and heart area, freeing ourselves from those emotions and feelings, and feeling how all our body is slowly getting relaxed.

We continue to gently relax our belly. While we are relaxing our belly, we can feel how the belly is lifting with every breath we breathe in and out. And all our bodies are slowly getting relaxed, from the top of the head until the toes.

We gently relax our hips, knees and our legs and we can feel more and more relaxed. We relax our feet and toes and all our body is now relaxed. For a moment, we will continue breathing and bringing our attention to our breath in silence.

Note: stop talking for 3-5 min, so that participants can stay in silence and focus on their breath. After 3-5 min are over, continue the guidance.

We will now start slowly coming back from the meditation by gently wiggling our fingers, feet and toes, and moving our body softly and gently. Perhaps you want to stretch a little with your closed eyes. And whenever you feel ready, you can slowly gently and in your own time, open your eyes”.

Reflection:

After the meditation, invite participants to share their experiences. You can ask the following questions:

- How did it feel?

- Did the meditation feel long or short?
- Do you feel more relaxed now?
- How do you feel intellectually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually?

Note: Remind participants, especially those new to meditation, that it's normal if they didn't fully relax. With practice, it becomes easier to be present and achieve deeper relaxation.

Step 8 - Check- out (5 min)

Invite each participant to share 1 word, which defines what they are taking away with them and how they are leaving the session. If you have a group of over 30 participants, then you can simply ask a couple of participants in the room to share how they are feeling and what they are taking away with them.

Encourage participants to enjoy the journey of exploring their purpose and passions. Remind them that these exercises are tools to help them understand what drives them, what they love doing, and what brings flow, health, well-being, and happiness into their lives.

II. WORKSHOP ON FACE TO FACE COMMUNICATION

Objectives:

- learning to identify needs and emotions, and express them with clarity, in a way that promotes connection
- develop skills for active listening;
- build a healthy communication style, learning to express oneself honestly and with kindness and listen with empathy;
- increase self-awareness, focus on speech patterns.
- create connection through non verbal practice, exploring interconnection and increasing the awareness of others, building empathy
- An understanding of the universality of human needs and emotions, and the development of moral imagination (our ability to imagine ourselves in the shoes of others) and the sensitivity to imagine what it might be like to be that person
- learn self-compassion practices

Non-violent communication practices based on focusing our consciousness on four areas: what we are observing, feeling, and needing, and what we are requesting to enrich our lives,

as well as what the other is feeling, needing and requesting, regardless of how they are expressed;

Creating connection as the basis of conflict mediation and resolution - the participants will learn to play the mediator's role which is to create an environment in which the parties can connect, express their needs, understand each other's needs, and arrive at strategies to meet those needs;

Establish relationships based on honesty and empathy that will eventually fulfill everyone's need

Step 1 - Introduce yourself and the topic of the workshop. (5 min)

“How are we as humans meant to relate to one another? What impact do we have on each other? Can our words nurture or damage our relationships? Can communication enrich the world we live in? Can we feel confident and satisfied when we move through life with compassion? Can others better meet us and our needs if we express them clearly and take responsibility for our emotions? These are some questions that Non-violent Communication, developed by Dr. Marshall B. Rosenberg, answers through theory and practice. This method fosters intra and interpersonal relationships of compassion, collaboration and caring. It can be applied in various settings, from close relationships, to work conflicts, schools, and even interracial conflicts. The objectives and basic steps of NVC will be presented. NVC helps us connect with each other and ourselves in a way that allows our natural compassion to flourish. It guides us to reframe the way we express ourselves and listen to others by focusing our consciousness on four areas: what we are observing, feeling, and needing, and what we are requesting to enrich our lives. NVC fosters deep listening, respect, and empathy and engenders a mutual desire to give from the heart.”

Set the guidelines for the group work: Confidentiality - meaning that what is shared in this group is confidential, and it stays here. Another rule is that nothing is mandatory and everything is accepted (of course, except any form of violence).

To be able to work with the NVC principles, one needs a good awareness of what is happening in their mind and body. Therefore you will start by guiding a meditation with the purpose of increasing their state of awareness and presence.

Step 2 - Developing awareness - 15 min

Introduce meditation - the purpose is to become more aware of the information we receive through our senses. They only need to observe, nothing more, to practice an objective observation.

1. Look - 1 min

Become aware of what you see: notice the richly varied and vivid impressions –shapes, colours, movement, dimensionality, the entire visible world.

2. Listen - 1 min

Become aware of what you hear: register the various sounds taken in by your ears – a diverse range of intensities, pitches, and tonal qualities, perhaps including the commonplace miracle of speech or the wonder of music.

3. Feel - 1 min

Become aware of what you touch: texture (smooth, rough, dry, sticky, or wet), weight (heavy, light, solid, or empty), pleasure, pain, heat and cold, and the rest. Also, note how your body feels right now and compare that to the many other ways it feels at other times, tired or energetic, stiff or limber, painful or pleasant, and so on.

4. Taste - 1 min

Become aware of what it is like to taste: taste a number of different foods and substances, or remember and vividly imagine their tastes.

5. Smell - 1 min

Become aware of what you smell: the odour of warm bodies, earth, incense, smoke, perfume, coffee, onions, alcohol, and the sea. Remember and imagine as many of them as you can.

6. Breathing - 1 min

Attend your breathing. A moment ago you probably were not consciously aware of your breathing even though you have inhaled and exhaled fifty times while doing this exercise. Hold your breath for a few seconds. Let it out. Now take a deep breath. Notice that being conscious of your breathing allows you to alter it deliberately.

7. Emotions - 1 min

Become aware of your feelings. Remember the difference between anger and joy, serenity and excitement, and as many other emotions as you care to feel. How real do emotions feel?

8. Thoughts - 1 min

Become aware of your thoughts. What have you been thinking while doing this exercise? What are you thinking right now? How real do thoughts seem?

9. "I" - 1 min

Become aware of the fact that your world always includes you. As William James noted, it is I see, I hear, I feel, I think that is the basic fact of experience. You are not what you see, hear, think, or feel; you have these experiences. Perhaps most essentially, you are who is aware. You are always at the centre of your multidimensional universe of experience, but you are not always consciously aware of yourself.

10. Keeping the awareness in movement - put an instrumental song - invite the participants to move through the room and guide them again to become aware of what they see, hear, feel, smell etc. (as in the previous sequence, but faster) while they move.

At the end - have a moment of sharing, inviting them to say some words about their experience.

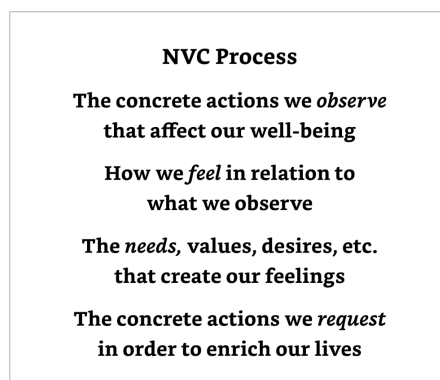
Step 3 - NVC (30 min)

Materials needed - Flip chart

Introduce the NVC process:

We start by observing what is happening in a situation: what is being said and done that is either nurturing or not for our life? Express these observations without introducing any judgement or evaluation. Just say what you see, hear, what you observe, regardless of what you think about it. The second step is to identify how we feel: what is happening in my body in that situation? What emotions, sensations, and feelings move inside me? and then put these emotions and feelings into words. A third step is to express the needs connected to these emotions. The last step is to share our request: what do I want that would enrich my life? in a concrete, positive and clear way.

Give examples.



Introducing the **golden rule** and writing it on the flip chart - **I feel(emotion).... when(behaviour)..... I need ...(need). Could you....(request)?**

Ask the participants to make pairs and choose one situation in their lives where they have conflict or tension and use the principles of NVC to try to address that situation. Person A - chooses a situation and gives a role to Person B. Person A uses NVC principles to express their needs, and feelings and make a request, and at the end, Person B answers. They change roles, and it is Person's B turn.

Reflection with the whole group - sharing their observations, insights, and experiences.

Step 4 - Connection exercise (25 min)

Materials needed - speaker and music

Introduction: Explain the exercise: Being in interaction with others is a play of leading and listening, of connecting, following, inspiring and creating together. In this practice the participants will make pairs. Standing in front of each other, hands facing, one person will start (role A) and move their hands and body while the other person (role B) will mirror the movements, following as accurately as possible. Let them explore for 5 minutes, person A leading, and person B following. When the song ends, ask them to switch roles. Person B will lead and person A will follow, for another song. At the end, the final 5 minutes (or the last song) the roles are not set anymore, they are invited to experiment with taking lead and following, creating a movement together.

Reflection

Invite the participants to share about their experience, first for 3 minutes in their pair, and at the end dedicate some minutes for sharing in the big group.

- Which role was more comfortable for them?
- What was difficult?
- How did they understand each other in the 3rd part of the exercise?

Step 6 - Coffee break (15-30 min)

Step 5 - Active Listening (30 min)

Materials needed - clock and a bell, flip chart (write the questions on it)

Introduce the activity: The second main part of NVC is focused on how we meet the other person, and how we listen and receive with empathy what is being said or what is not being said. Empathy asks of us to put aside our judgement and criticism and listen with an open heart. It doesn't require giving advice or reassurance, nor finding solutions or solving their problems. Instead, it means focusing our full attention on the other person, giving them the time and space to express what they need and to feel understood, this is captured by the Buddhist saying: "Don't just do something, stand there."

When we learn to listen empathically we can use the NVC principles and only hear what the person is: observing, feeling, needing and requesting.

The participants will form pairs again, one will share an event from their lives for 5 min, the other has to listen, carefully, without saying anything, without nodding, just being present and attentive. Then they switch roles. The trainer will keep a track of time and ring the bell when the allotted time has passed.

The second part of the exercise is, in the same pairs, one speaks, sharing an event from their life, for around 4 minutes, while the other person is listening, having in mind these 5 questions.

- What do I see?
- What do I hear?
- What do I feel?
- What do I imagine?
- What moves inside me?

After the story, write down the answers to these questions. After this change roles and repeat. The second person will share now for 4 minutes a story, without being interrupted. The other one is listening with the 5 questions in mind. Give the participants 5 minutes to share their experience and reflections.

The third part of the activity is to practise listening, focusing on what the person is saying. One is speaking, the other one is listening, trying to identify their feelings, needs and requests even if they are not present. Again in pairs, one will speak for 5 min, and the other will listen to the feelings, needs and requests. Change roles.

End with a moment of sharing in pairs, then a debriefing with the whole group.

- What differences did they notice in the quality of their attention?

- How was it to listen, to share a story without being interrupted?
- Which role was difficult?
- What did they struggle with?

Step 6 - Self compassion (30 min)

Materials needed - papers and pens

Introduction: We all have parts of ourselves, behaviours, characteristics etc., that we don't like, that can make us think we are not good enough, or experience shame or guilt. It is the human condition to be imperfect, and feelings of failure and inadequacy are part of the experience of living a human life.

Invite the participants into a journaling practice. They will begin by thinking of features, events, mistakes that they struggle to accept, writing about an issue they have that tends to make them feel inadequate or bad about themselves. Give them 7 minutes to write freely about this topic, identifying the narrative and inner dialogue and emotions they experience. Prompt with some questions, if needed: what though they have, how do they feel, what is challenging? How do they feel about themselves?

For the second part, invite them to think of the person they love the most and imagine that this person is feeling bad with themselves, they struggle, they are judging and blaming themselves for their shortcomings or mistakes. Write down what they would tell them? How would they speak to their loved one? (5 min)

For the third part, invite the participants to read both texts and notice if there is any difference, and if yes, what is the difference and why is it there? What makes them deserve a different treatment than their loved one? (5 min)

For the last part (7 min) , invite the participants to write a letter to themselves from the perspective of an imaginary friend, a friend full of unconditional love, care, affection, compassion, a friend can see all their strengths and weaknesses, including the aspect of themselves they have just been writing about. Invite them to fully feel what this friend feels for them, and write a letter from this loving friend focusing on the topic they have been writing about in the beginning, what would this friend say? How would the friend speak to them? What word of wisdom, love and care this friend has to offer? Try to infuse the letter with their compassion, with their affection and acceptance. Afterwards, take some moments

to tap into the feeling of compassion, receiving this unconditional love from a friend, read the letter again and allow the body to fully feel and receive compassion.

Step 7 - Check- out (10 min)

Invite the participants to reflect on what they are taking home with them and ask some of them to share with the group. For the closing, ask each one of them to share one word that would reflect how they feel. If you have a group of over 30 participants, then you can simply ask a couple of participants in the room to share how they are feeling and what they are taking away with them.

RESOURCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

Books

1. Brown, B. (2021): *Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of Human Experience*. Random House.
2. Darwin, C. (1998): *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. London: Oxford University Press.
3. Garcia, H. & Miralles, F. (2016): *Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life*. Tuttle Publishing.
4. Kolk, B. van der (2015): *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. Penguin Books Ltd.
5. Levin, P. (1997): *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma: The Innate Capacity to Transform Overwhelming Experiences*. North Atlantic Books.
6. Mate, G. (2019): *When the Body Says No: The Cost of Hidden Stress*. Vermilion.
7. Mate, G. (2019): *Scattered Minds: The Origins and Healing of Attention Deficit Disorder*. Vermilion.
8. Neff, K. D. (2023): *Self-Compassion: Theory, Method, Research, and Intervention*. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 74:193-217.
9. Plotkin, B. (2003): *Soulcraft: Crossing into the Mysteries of Nature and Psyche*. New World Library.
10. Plotkin, B. (2008): *Nature and the Human Soul: Cultivating Wholeness and Community in a Fragmented World*. New World Library.
11. Plotkin, B. (2013): *Wild Mind: A Field Guide to the Human Psyche*. New World Library.

12. Plotkin, B. (2021): *The Journey of Soul Initiation*. New World Library.
13. Rosenberg, M. B., & Chopra, D. (2015): *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*. 3rd edition. PuddleDancer Press.
14. Rumi, M. (1997): *The Essential Rumi*. Castle Books.

Articles

15. Shapiro, S. L., Carlson, L. E., Astin, J. A., & Freedman, B. (2006): Mechanisms of mindfulness. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62(3), 373–386. doi: 10.1002/jclp.20237. PMID: 16385481.

Web Links

16. Wheel of Emotions: [The Wheel of Emotions](#)
17. Ikigai Diagram: [Ikigai Poster Printout](#)
18. *Lifebook* by John and Missy Butcher: [Mindvalley Lifebook Online](#)
19. Self-development program for learning meditation and mindfulness by World Peace Initiative Foundation: [World Peace Initiative Foundation](#)
20. SriMa School of Transformational Yoga: [SriMa Transformational Yoga](#)
21. *Speak and Inspire* by Lisa Nichols: [Mindvalley Speak and Inspire](#)
22. Dr. John Churchill - *Attunement as World Medicine* podcast, 9 March 2024, on *Emerge: Making Sense of What Is Next*.
23. Dr. John Churchill - *How to Wake Up and Show Up for a Planet That Needs You*, 14 May 2024, on *Know Thyself*.