



Udruženje
"Zemlja djece u BiH"



SMART
Balkans

Civil Society for Shared Society
in the Western Balkans

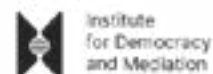
Trainer's Manual for the Development of Life Skills of Vulnerable Youth



Institute
for Democracy
and Mediation



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Sead Olovčić, M.A.

Trainer's Manual for the **Development of Life Skills of Vulnerable Youth**

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SMARTly
connected!

Welcome to the „Trainer’s Manual for the Development of Life Skills of Vulnerable Youth,“ which aims to empower vulnerable youth, facilitate a successful transition into adulthood, and help them protect themselves and others from socially deviant phenomena characteristic of the modern age. This manual provides a concise guide to basic principles for trainers who work with vulnerable youth in Bosnia and Hercegovina and the region, equipping them with significant fundamentals and life skills essential for their personal development, especially from the aspect of personal safety.

Although the work has an academically grounded background, the language of the manual is simplified for the needs of broader audience comprehension. Since the author is unfamiliar with the prior knowledge level of the participants attending the training, the content is generalized as much as possible.

Considering the familiar characteristics of the target group, special attention should be paid to respect, vigilance, and transparency in the training process, and the trainer must be prepared to, at any moment, interrupt an activity which may put a participant in an uncomfortable position, challenging his limits of comfort. The extent to which the trainer, for the purpose of training and gaining trust, will share their personal experience with the participants and to which extent they will ask the participants to share their experiences with the audience is left to the instructor’s assessment, all in accordance with the background of the participants (history of traumatic experiences, violence, criminal activities).

It is also crucial for the instructor to emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers and that we are all here today to try and help each other improve our skills.

Whether the participants make progress depends on many factors, but the most important principle during training is not to cause harm or put anyone in an uncomfortable position.

The 20-page limit does not allow for all topics to be covered, but there is enough content that points to and connects the material so that the knowledge can be deepened through independent research. For this reason, the focus is on some general principles that have a wide range of applications to overall life.

Given that the target group is potentially vulnerable youth, it is crucial that the trainers familiarize themselves in advance with the structure of the participants and their personal backgrounds. Every form of exercise in some way challenges the participants, sometime putting them into positions that are not particularly comfortable, so special attention needs to be paid to which participants are placed in relatively uncomfortable positions and for how long.

Many techniques mentioned in the manual in some way suggest and limit the freedom of the participants, advising them to consciously limit some segments of their freedom to avoid and prevent certain situations. This is from the perspective of utilitarianism or the choice of lesser harm and from the aspect of protecting vulnerable youth – prevention. Of course, the participants are free individuals who can independently decide to directly confront the problematic situations instead of avoiding them and not giving their right to public space to someone else. Such actions, however, carry additional risks, which are warned against.

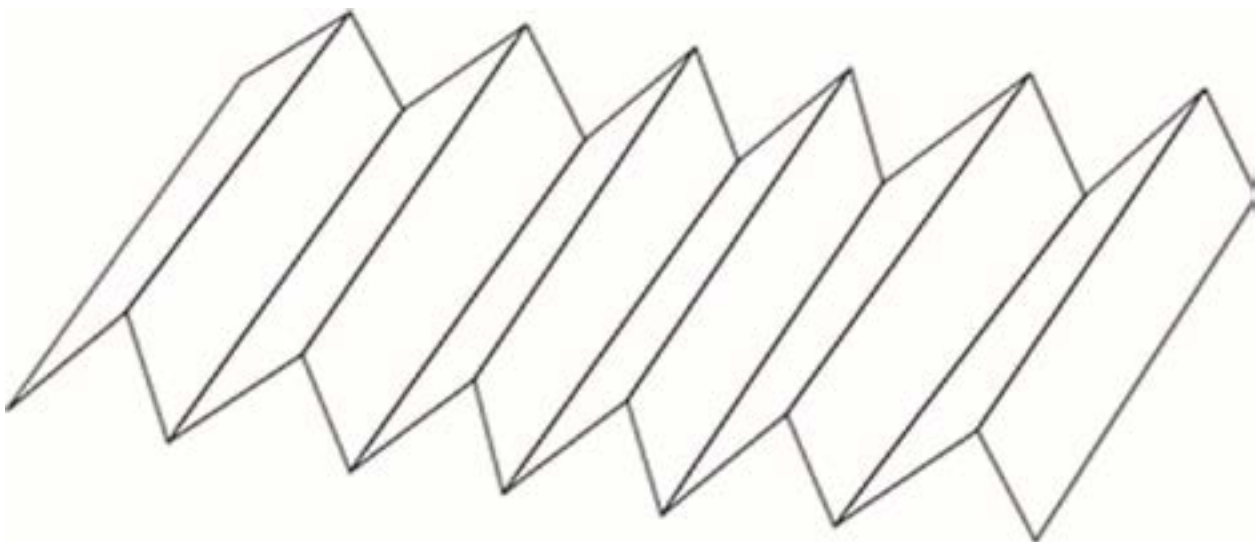
Instructors are obliged to present the material in a way that prevents abuse. For example, we inevitably need to familiarize ourselves with some mechanisms of manipulation, to protect ourselves from them, not to abuse them. We need to pay attention to any history of law violations among the participants.

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Immediately after the introductory presentation and explanation of expectations from both the course leadership and participants, the instructor can conduct the following exercise to engage the participants:

Distribute one A4 sheet of standard thickness to each participant, or ask some of them to assist you (this is an initial small trust-building collaboration/observation of how active and open the participants are to cooperation). Place a horizontal A4 sheet of paper between two chairs about 15 cm apart. The paper should fall to the ground as it cannot support its own weight and relies on the two chairs. Allow the participants to attempt the same experiment between their chairs. Then, fold the same A4 paper like an accordion or fan along its longer side, so the paper forms a zigzag line when viewed from the side. Allow each participant to fold their paper as described. Afterward, place the folded paper back between the two chairs. This time, the paper will remain upright because it can support its own weight. Then, place a pencil or add heavier objects to the paper until it bends, gives way, and falls to the ground. The image demonstrates the error that can occur; the paper should be folded along the longer side of the paper, not the shorter side as shown in the image.



Discussion:

Ask the participants: What has changed about the paper that it can now bear weight? (In this case, we are not interested in the physical or mathematical explanation of the phenomenon)

During or after the discussion, try to guide the conversation toward the following conclusions:

- The purpose of the paper is to write on it, not to carry objects. Sometimes, life can put us into situations where we have to do things for which we are not naturally talented or inclined. At times, we need to repurpose things and give them a new function.
- We invested knowledge, effort, work, energy, and time in repurposing the paper. We had to communicate with each other to express our intentions and requirements, and similarly, we expect participants to do the same.

- Even though the paper now has limits and can handle more than before, it still has its maximum capacity (just like robust things, people also have a breaking point or a limit to the load they can carry, which is completely normal)
- It is important for the participants to notice that the paper can now not only support itself but can also hold other objects, even those heavier than the paper itself.
- We also aim to train the participants to handle heavier burdens and, once they gain confidence and strength, to help others as well.
- **Motto:** „It's not the burden that breaks you, but the way you carry it.“
- If not too heavy, ask the participants or a volunteer to hold the chair with their arms extended. They will notice it's quite difficult to hold the chair this way. However, if they hold the chair close to their body, it's much easier to hold and for a longer time. Even though the chair is the same weight as before, it's all about making things easier for ourselves.
- Each person can always do something to improve their resilience, and you have already demonstrated this with the paper. Now, it's about using specific skills to make ourselves more resilient to the challenges we may face.
- Special forces units, during intense training, assume that when participants say, "I can't go on!" they have only used about 30% of their strength.

Conclusion: We can often do more than we believe, but our body and mind signal us that we are quickly depleting our available resources. In life, we should measure ourselves not against special forces but against our own abilities and possibilities.

If the trainer notices that the exercise has engaged the participants, they can deepen it with the following content:

Caution!

This part should be approached with special care and sensitivity, as it questions the way participants perceive themselves, and challenges the correctness of their actions with the aim of gently encouraging them to raise their self-regard:

- Ask the participants to write in large letters on the used paper: „I LOVE MYSELF AND I AM THE CENTER OF MY WORLD“ and nothing else. Some participants will notice that the paper is no longer ideal for writing and that it should be straightened. Some of them may not want to write that because they do not agree with that statement. Such a stance must be respected. Offer participants the option to explain their position IF THEY WISH TO DO SO.
- The trainer may ask the question: Is it fair for me to ask you to write on the crumpled piece of paper? Some will say it is acceptable, the others may say it is not fair. As participants, you also have the right to have expectations of the instructor. (In the introduction, we asked the participants about their expectations of this course) You invest your valuable time and attention into this course. If you love yourself and if you are the center of your world, which is perfectly fine, why do you allow someone, i.e., the instructor, to ask you to write on crumpled paper without any explanation? The instructor is obligated to explain why they are asking for something unconventional.

- It is important for participants to set their own standards, be aware of them, communicate them, and defend them as much as possible. They may ask the instructor for the new paper and say, „Professor, you weren't properly prepared for the lesson; please be better prepared next time.“ The instructor must be ready for various responses and not take them personally, as the goal is for participants to express their preferences and standards.

It is crucial to learn to say NO! It's important to have your own standards and be able to advocate for them. Additionally, participants need to learn to say NO, especially if the request comes from institutions or authorities and seems wrong by their own standards (Milgram's experiment - more about this in the Chapter: Resilience to Group Pressure). In potentially unfavorable situations, some malicious, criminal, or charismatic authority might ask participants to do something to someone that goes against their own, as well as general, standards of normal behavior. This could be a doctor asking a patient for something inappropriate or any other “perceived” authority. Knowing what is right and what is not, and being willing to stand up to it, helps participants prevent becoming victims of suggestion or malicious coercion disguised as authority.

You are your own best friend, and if you are not, you should work on changing that and becoming one. It is crucial to learn to think for yourself. What does this actually mean? It means that, often, other people's thoughts are based on their own interests, life conditions, and possibilities, and they align with their own needs. They are probably thinking for themselves, and not you. Always check if some suggestions or advice align with your interests and needs.

NO is a type of decision. You decide to say NO. Those who can say NO when they want to and when they believe it is right are capable of DECIDING. People who are unable to say NO have often lost their ability to make decisions, and that is a very unfortunate position because it means they are unable to manage their own life decisions. From this, it can be concluded that they do not feel free or in control, which can lead to anxiety, stress, etc.

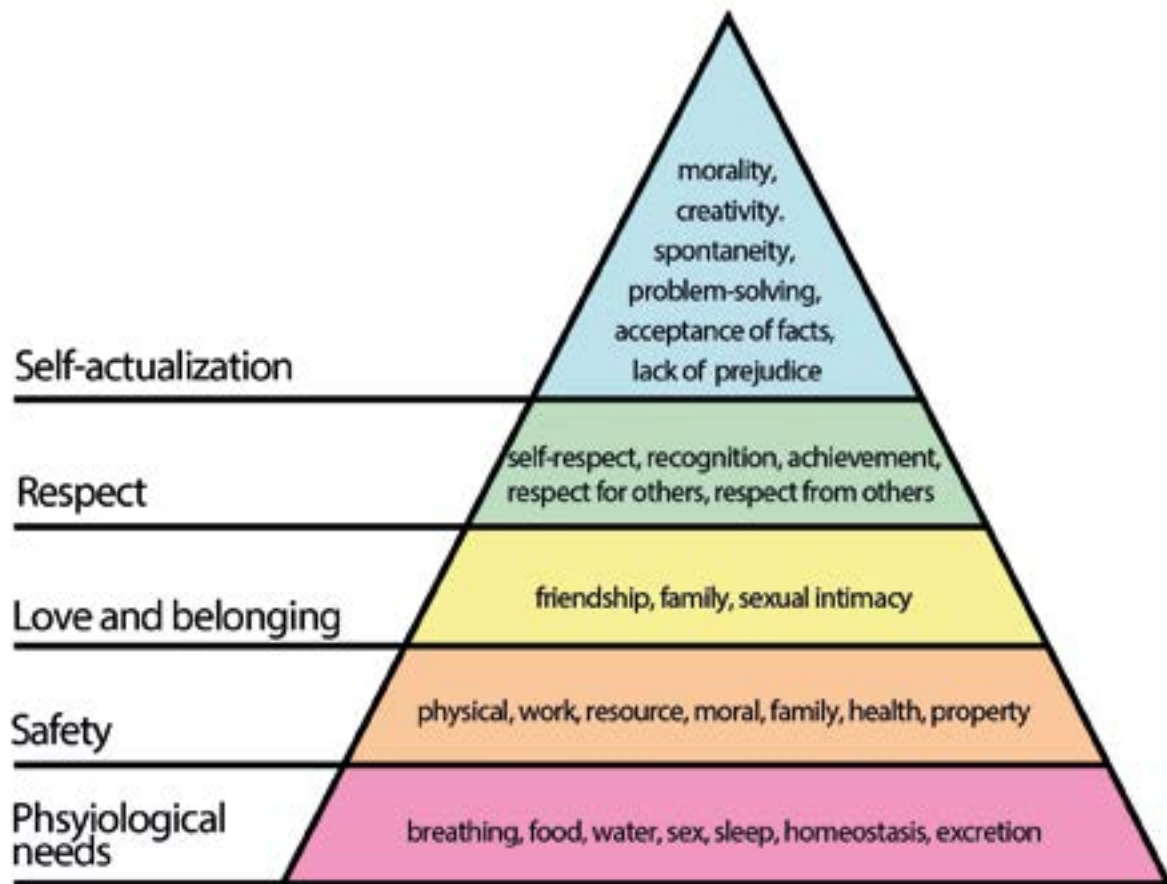
- Certain changes can be corrected (elastic, flexible) while others are permanent or irreversible and leave a lasting mark (plastic changes). Which type of change is a break?
- Furthermore, the instructor may ask to collect all the papers with the following written on them: “I love myself and I am the center of my world.” Then say: “In my hands is a part of each of your identities. What do you think, how is that possible?”
 - The idea is that each handwriting is unique and a professional could determine whose paper it is by comparison. Even though no one signed their name, the handwriting itself is a sort of unique signature for that person. The message is that we leave a mark in the world – but are we aware of the mark we are leaving? Are we masters of all the information we share? Can others learn more about us than we want them to? When returning the papers to the participants, it would be interesting to see if they can recognize their own handwriting.
 - Additionally, the instructor may say that participants who submitted crumpled papers are messy. Of course, this joke should be relativized to show that communication is a two-way process. WE DO NOT HAVE CONTROL OVER HOW SOMEONE WILL INTERPRET WHAT WE DO OR SAY! The interpretation by the other party can be positive, neutral, or negative. What other reactions can there be? No reaction? Is silence also a reaction?

- However, the following comment might also arise: This paper is crumpled because it has been through a lot in life, carrying other people's burdens until it broke. And who are you now to judge it?
- Although we all use the same language and script, we are still unique individuals, even if we convey similar messages. To truly understand one another, we need to express ourselves clearly. This means writing legibly and communicating effectively, while also respecting certain conventions and forms of expression.



What's your
SMART
angle?

Human Needs and Motives According to Maslow



„If everyone takes care of themselves, everyone is taken care of!“ – Swiss proverb

This proverb highlights an important point: every individual has a moral responsibility to care for themselves, to respect themselves, to take care of their health, and so on. If everyone behaved this way, the entire community would be cared for and safe. However, things are not always so simple. Sometimes individuals within our community need the help of other community members to reach a state where they can take care of themselves.

- Can participants give examples of when one part of the community takes care of another part?



Some needs cannot be met without others and without reciprocity, such as friendship and relationships, for example. A representation of human needs is provided in Maslow's hierarchy of needs and motivation. It will help us position ourselves throughout the training process at various times.

- Discussion prompt: Allow participants time to read and reflect on the pyramid of needs based on the previously distributed chart on A4 paper. Ideally, a large printed Maslow's hierarchy chart should be displayed on the wall in the classroom so that it is visible to all participants.

Exercise: As a vulnerable young person, which needs do you think are less or more pronounced in you compared to others?

Caution!

Participants might find it challenging to openly express their opinions in front of an audience due to the potential vulnerability of sharing with strangers. Alternatively, you could ask them to reflect on this privately for now.

Alternative: You might bypass the question of vulnerability and ask: “From your perspective as young people, which needs are more pronounced in youth compared to older people?”

Possible answers: A young person can eat more than older people!

Follow-up question: Why is that?

What about sex? Do older or younger people have a greater need for sex? Libido, hormones, etc.

- It's essential to convey the following point: „Generally, yes, but these elements are highly individual and can deviate from the expected age range. However, they can also be an indication of some health issues”



Question: „Where in Maslow's hierarchy of needs do you see sports betting?”

Which needs would sports betting fulfill?

- Can these needs be met in other ways? **Crucial!**

Participants must recognize that, while needs are normal and important, we must choose how to fulfill them in a way that does not harm ourselves or others.

Understanding needs is essential because some needs can and should be met through interactions with others, which will create SOCIAL, INTIMATE, BUSINESS, and other CONNECTIONS!!! (We will discuss this in more detail later.)

„A healthy person has a thousand wishes, a sick person only one.“

Everyone has some prior knowledge of psychophysical health, sometimes even incorrect (we'll address this later in information verification), and the resources and materials on the topic are vast. However, let's briefly explore this topic from a perspective that can be useful for vulnerable young people. .

Health is definitely the absence of ailments and diseases, but true health is a state of psychophysical and social fulfillment, satisfaction, and meeting most or all needs, along with having enough energy to live an active life. It is also a dynamic balance of our body, psyche, and spirit with our environment and other people. Extensive research into happiness and satisfaction has shown that people feel happiest and most satisfied when they have good connections with others. Our close relationships are generally the most important for our happiness/satisfaction. Regardless of whether with family or friends, studies show that having people we can trust, rely on, and who help us feel valued, encouraged, or loved, positively enhances our well-being and resilience..

Besides time, an irreplaceable and non-recoverable resource, psychophysical health is one of the greatest blessings we can have as it is a prerequisite or condition for happiness and satisfaction.

Question: Can a sick person be truly happy and satisfied?

If our health is compromised or threatened, then our absolute top priority must be to restore our health. There is nothing more important than our health.

Potential problematic discussion (optional): What if we know we cannot be cured? How do we know this?

This desired state of health and happiness does not come on its own, it is not something that lasts forever, and it requires significant effort, knowledge, and energy to achieve or restore whenever it is compromised.

- **Exercise:** What do we do when our health is compromised? How do we recognize this state?
- **Exercise:** Pitanje za polaznike šta po vama narušava naše zdravlje?

Understanding moderation (toxicity, deficiencies).

We consume salt daily, and it is essential for our health. However, consuming a large amount of salt at once can be dangerous or even fatal. The key point is that nothing is inherently toxic; rather, toxicity depends on the amount consumed over time. If we consume more of a substance than our body can process or metabolize, it becomes harmful. (Paper that tears under excessive strain))

- We speak and listen to others daily. How would you feel if you listened to someone for 4 hours continuously? How would you feel if you listened to 4 people simultaneously for 10 minutes? How would you feel if you were silent for 4 hours?

On the other hand, some substances are essential, meaning our body cannot produce them and we must obtain them through our diet. Deficiency in these substances can have equally negative effects on our health. Therefore, a varied and fresh diet is very

important. (Concept: Different foods contain different toxins. If you vary your food, no single toxin will accumulate in your body.)

Essentially, no one should have to tell you to eat properly and varied, to drink enough, or to take care of other bodily needs. These are all things your body tells you itself.

This type of automatic self-regulation developed when humans spent most of their evolutionary history in a natural environment. We must understand that today we live in an artificial and mediated environment. For example, we spend most of our day looking at screens or phones rather than at green spaces or tree canopies, hunting for our next meal.

Thus, we do not drink water only when we feel thirsty. Instead, we aim to drink two to three liters per day as recommended by doctors and nutritionists to avoid dehydration.

A significant part of our resources must be dedicated to health but with initiative and proactivity. Although our body has automatic detoxification, repair, and immune mechanisms, unfortunately, this is sometimes not enough in the modern world. The toxins are different from those found in nature, and our species has not yet had time to fully adapt.

Exercise: It is recommended to attend or revisit a first aid course. This can provide a good understanding of the limits of our body. This is very important for self-awareness and assessing our capabilities. If we find ourselves in a dangerous situation, we must know that one of the first things threatening our life (unless we are injured and bleeding) is hypothermia or cooling.

Question for participants: Can we go longer without water or food? And without sleep?



Psychophysical health spans the entire Maslow's pyramid. Can participants identify which aspects of the pyramid relate to physical health and which to psychological health?

- The correct conclusion is that they are closely connected and, at times, cannot be clearly separated.

Which physiological needs and their satisfaction should we pay the most attention to:

- Nutrition, hydration, sleep, exercise
- Additionally: Regular medical check-ups even if you feel healthy: blood tests, blood pressure, routine exams, etc. Why is it important to visit the doctor even if you feel healthy: prevention, early detection, etc.
- The diagnostic process or identifying the actual cause of your health problem is of exceptional importance. Incorrect diagnosis can result in inappropriate treatment that may worsen your health issues or even create new ones. If you lack trust in a particular doctor, or pharmacist (and that trust is very important), you have the right to seek a second opinion from another doctor or pharmacist. More about these techniques in the chapter on communication and verification of information.

Movement, Physical Exercise, Sport

Movement is an absolutely essential process for your health. Your body is not made to remain still for too long; on the contrary, it is adapted for prolonged movement and physical activity. Certain systems function only when you are moving. Physical activity helps your body get rid of toxins. It is crucial to move in moderation. Elite and professional sports are often not healthy. Similarly, long-term inactivity, sitting, or lying down is not healthy. Moderate movement offers the greatest benefits for the least amount of time invested. Specifically: There is a proven, inseparable connection between brain health and the development of neurological abilities, and movement. Movement enhances intelligence and is intrinsically linked to both psychological and physical health. Movement reduces stress.

Question: When can movement become a source of stress? When we push beyond our limits.

Proper Nutrition

Nutrition is a very intimate act. You are introducing something from your environment directly into your body to provide yourself with energy, strength, and the building blocks for your body. The impact of diet on overall human health is well-established in science. Poor nutrition in youth has a direct impact on intelligence, and psychological and physical well-being, and hinders healthy human development. Nutrition must be hygienically correct, diverse, and fresh.

Every person is a combination of unique genetic makeup and life experiences. Regardless of general advice from any source or authority, your opinion, feelings, and reactions to certain diets are equally important. You need to understand yourself and whether certain measures, dietary regimes, and changes are beneficial or not. What works well for you might not be good for someone else.

Sleep

Regular, stable, and deep sleep is crucial for psychophysical health. One-third of your entire life is spent sleeping. A person can generally go without sleep for up to 3 days before encountering significant psychophysical problems.

- **Exercise:** How do you personally feel when you lack sleep? When have you experienced poor sleep in your life? What do you think affects the quality of sleep?

Exercise: If we sleep 8 hours a day and have, say, another 40 years of life left, how many more years will we spend sleeping in total? We will spend over a decade in bed. How important is the mattress and bed we buy compared to an expensive clothing item we might wear three times a year?

Control exercise on the previous topic: Toxicity and deficit

Near an intersection, there is a place with moderate radioactive exposure. Suppose you need to pass through that intersection. What can you do to protect yourself from that radiation?

Allow participants to give suggestions:

- It is important to mention that we can pass quickly through the radiation to minimize the amount of radiation our body absorbs. (Understanding the dimension of time and accumulation). Also, after a while, that place will no longer be radioactive. We can wait.
- Understand that we can endure heavier loads in a short time, but even small loads over a long period can be harmful as they accumulate.
- When we do not have a solution in space, we can find a solution in time. For instance, if you want to leave the city where you live because of a problematic person, sometimes it is enough to simply not be in the same place at the same time as them. The effect is the same or similar as if you had moved away.
- Time heals wounds! When is this true, and when is it not? Sometimes, even when we move, we carry our problems with us.
- When else in life do we seek for something to pass quickly?

Personal Hygiene and Clothes

People who are experiencing significant problems for long periods often look neglected, do not take care of themselves, have unkempt hair and nails, and refuse to bathe, brush their teeth, and so on. Furthermore, they often have unkempt or dirty clothing.

- **Observation:** By carefully observing and noticing these things, our goal should not be to belittle or despise someone. It is important to understand that this is a signal and often a cry for help from someone with a problem. In such cases, professional help from trained personnel is needed. This could be a mentally ill person who is either using or not using their therapy, which may or may not include substance abuse (alcoholism, pill abuse, etc.). In these cases, sudden and seemingly unwarranted aggressive outbursts, caused by hallucinations, raised voices, incoherent speech, and similar behaviors can be expected. Anticipating or predicting this possibility can prepare you to respond appropriately or avoid an unpleasant situation. In such cases, the most appropriate action is to notify the police or emergency services.
- Can an unkempt appearance be false and serve as a form of masking or deceit?

People are also aesthetic beings; they appreciate beauty, symmetry, and have a sense of what is pleasing. Generally, people prefer to see a smiling face rather than a gloomy one, and a neat person rather than a messy one. While clothing does not define a person, it can help you feel more accepted in social settings and institutions you interact with. For example, it is prohibited to enter courtrooms wearing shorts, as this is considered disrespectful to the court. Some religious communities may require you to adjust your attire when entering their premises, and a bus driver has the right to remove a passenger who disturbs others with their odor.

However, what if wearing shorts is an essential part of your self-expression, almost a trademark? How should we handle this situation?

Exercise:

What can we do and what actions can we take if our self-expression irritates those around us, even if it was not our intention to do so, or if it prevents us from entering certain institutions? What similar situations do you remember?

- If you have made a mistake and you recognize it – offering an apology is crucial!
- Is it right to apologize even if you do not feel it is necessary or do not believe in it? Discussion.
- It is important for the participants to realize that polite and clear communication can prevent misunderstandings and conflicts, de-escalate arguments, and help assert their rights and place in society. For instance, could we write a letter to the court expressing that we highly value the institution and that wearing shorts is not intended as a sign of disrespect, requesting permission to enter in shorts because it is a trademark of our musical group? The success or failure of this request is secondary. The primary goal is for participants to learn to communicate with institutions in writing, assert their rights, etc.
- Every rule, norm, or law restricts some degree of freedom. If you believe that certain rules limit your freedoms without harming others, you have the right to fight for these freedoms to be respected in your society.
- Trainers can discuss possible options and methods of communication with participants.

Maintaining personal hygiene not only prevents infections and keeps us physically healthy, but also serves as a form of self-love. Taking care of oneself means loving, respecting, and caring for ourselves. Moreover, after breathing exercises, personal hygiene is the quickest way to regain control over ourselves and our environment if we feel we have lost control.

- Did you know that people often go to the bathroom and wash their face when they have a problem? Have you ever found yourself needing to go to the toilet due to excitement? (Humorously.)
- Our bodies react to the environment, events, and stimuli. Sometimes, these reactions are so important to our body that we cannot consciously control them.
- Are you familiar with cases of excessive or compulsive hygiene? Does a person use this behavior to try to gain control over their space and self, possibly because they feel like they are losing control? Did you know that this could also indicate stress or a need for psychological help?

Summary:

- Maintaining hygiene is a catalyst/accelerator: It simultaneously helps you stay healthy and demonstrates care for yourself and the community. Proper hygiene requires a routine and habit that structures your time.
- Reminder: It is important to create structure in both time and space that we can rely on, which will help us maintain a sense of control over our lives during difficult times (More on structure later). Personal hygiene must be a part of that structure.
- A disruption in your personal hygiene routine can indicate that you are experiencing stress and that something has disturbed your system, necessitating steps to restore balance.

Note! Be aware that human skin is semi-permeable and, although it protects us from negative external influences, we can also absorb toxins through the skin. Ensure that cosmetic products and laundry detergents do not contain ingredients that could negatively affect your health. Certain psychoactive substances can be absorbed through the skin.



Where would you place hygiene on Maslow's hierarchy? Is hygiene a physiological need, or is it a social construct? Somewhere in between?

Stress

For most people, one of the quickest ways to induce stress is public speaking in front of an audience.

- Does anyone here want to come up and share a story or a joke with us?
- Stress or pressure is a certain burden that is disproportionate to the capacity of the subject or object on which the stress is applied. Stress does not necessarily depend on the intensity of the pressure. A small but sudden burden can be stressful. The temporal structure of stress is crucial in understanding the burden.

People often create stress for themselves due to the way they handle pressure. (Remember the exercise with carrying the chair.)

Goal: Participants should realize that they themselves can sometimes be a source of stress. Can we cause stress for anyone, for example, by insulting them? Or can we irritate anyone by taking inappropriate actions in traffic? Can we forgive, and why or why not? Can we ignore it? Some people can let things pass by them calmly. In some way, it seems that these people are unaffected and above the situation. Discussion.

There is always a certain consent or refusal on our part to give in to someone else's emotional state. Sometimes we are aware of these decisions, and sometimes we are not. Therefore, it is important to practice SAYING NO! And not just to others, but also to ourselves! Saying NO is a measure of control!

Caution!

If any participants have been victims of physical violence or have unresolved trauma, they should not participate in this exercise.

An exercise of imagination: The instructor asks participants to close their eyes, and then reads the following text slowly and with tension:

„You are walking down a street toward a square, where there is a café. In the café, you see some aggressive individuals from your past who are now in a slightly tipsy state. They are in your path. As you come closer, you start to feel increasingly tense. You must pass by them. What thoughts come to your mind, and how do you feel?“

Let the participants keep their eyes closed for a short moment, then ask them to open them. If we were to measure the pulse of some of the participants, we would surely observe a physiological reaction and an increase in heart rate. However, outside, no one is really waiting for you, so the situation is imaginary, but the tension is real. The thoughts alone are capable of inducing a state of stress.

- Does this mean we should stop thinking about and imagining situations that distress us? Certainly not. But we don't have to use our imagination to cause unnecessary stress over situations that will never happen, are unlikely to happen, or are not important for our lives.

Discussion.

Stress can occur at any level of Maslow's hierarchy. It is common for it to appear in multiple places simultaneously. Do you have an example? Consult Maslow's hierarchy.

Question: How do you deal with stress?

Goal: For participants to recognize and become aware of negative coping mechanisms for stress and problems, such as victimization (I can't change anything), stigmatization (this only happens to me), uncontrolled reactions, attacks on health, self-harm or harm to others, etc.

- How do you view hitting a punching bag as a vent for frustration and a stress-relief mechanism? Is it a measure for reducing stress after a certain period, or does it prevent stress from happening in the future?

Sometimes, in a fit of anger, people punch a wall. This is extremely painful. At that moment, the pain we feel clouds or reduces the previous one, as the new kind of pain we've replaced it with seems easier to bear. Why doesn't this solve the problem in the long term??

The goal is for participants to understand the difference between stress mitigation/diversion techniques and problem-solving.

Stress can often lead us to the loss of control and chaos.

Knowing and setting boundaries consciously and proactively can prevent us from entering the stress zone. How will we know if we've crossed the boundary if we are not aware of it or haven't set it for ourselves? Setting boundaries gives us a reference point and an early warning.

Exercise: I'm going out tonight with friends I know. What boundaries do I set for myself? What boundaries does my partner set for me if I'm in a relationship?

What are the consequences of crossing these boundaries?

Transcendental meditation/prayer/gratitude and various breathing techniques are effective tools for stress relief through different methods. Scientific findings show that these practices can reduce the production of stress hormones such as cortisol, lower blood pressure, and improve cardiovascular health, promoting a sense of calm and clarity while reducing anxiety and stress levels.

Breathing techniques:

Deep breathing: Techniques like diaphragmatic or abdominal breathing involve deep, slow inhalations that activate the body's relaxation response, lower heart rate, and reduce muscle tension.

Box breathing: This involves inhaling, holding your breath, exhaling, and holding your breath again at equal intervals, promoting focus and calming the mind.

Mindful breathing: Focusing on the sensations of each breath can help redirect attention from stressors, promoting mindfulness and reducing the physiological stress response.

- **The instructor may choose to practice a deep breathing technique with a participant after exposing them to mild stress to help manage it.**

Journaling can be extremely beneficial for mental health in several ways. By putting thoughts and emotions on paper, individuals gain clarity and insight into their feelings and experiences. This process helps organize thoughts, identify behavior patterns or triggers, and track emotional fluctuations over time. Additionally, journaling provides a safe space for expression without fear of judgment, allowing individuals to release stress, process trauma, and develop self-awareness. Regular journaling can also improve mood, reduce anxiety, and enhance overall mental health by fostering mindfulness and deeper self-understanding.

- In short, journaling is a powerful tool that supports mental health by offering a reflective outlet and promoting emotional regulation.

Together, these practices can improve stress resilience by promoting relaxation, enhancing emotional regulation, and fostering a greater sense of well-being and inner peace.

- During acute stress, it is advised to maintain a calm mind, as a composed mind makes better decisions, and this is something that needs to be practiced.

Remember: “Where the mind goes, the body follows.”



SMART way
-join the
discussion!

Communication is a fundamental social process. Without it, there is neither society nor community.

Through communication, a person reproduces and creates their personality, shaping their attitudes. In the absence of communication (isolation), people have difficulty recreating their personality. Our personality lives and occurs in interaction with others.

The only purely social punishment is excommunication: isolating and refusing to communicate with someone we want to sanction, or imprisoning them when we prevent them from communicating with society in the way they are used to—through violence and similar acts.

- **Exercise:** The instructor may decide which form of communication to focus on, based on their assessment and the needs of the participants.

What forms of communication do you know:

Conversation, Messaging, Letters, Silence?

Signaling is a prevalent yet relatively simple form of message transmission. Signaling is a distinct form of communication.

Signaling (states, emotions): warning, threat, satisfaction, dominance/superiority, crying/calling for help, weakness, protest. A lighthouse?

Non-verbal communication: posture, facial expressions, gestures, stance. The instructor may clarify these concepts.

Internet communication.

Is violence a form of communication? If so, why? And if not, why not?

Yes, violence can indeed be understood as a form of communication, but it is an undesirable form of communication.

1. **Expression of emotions or intent:** Violence often communicates intense emotions such as anger, frustration, fear, or aggression. It can convey the perpetrator's mental state or intentions toward others.
2. **Power dynamics:** Acts of violence can establish or reinforce power dynamics within a group or between individuals. It can be a way to assert dominance, control, or submission.
3. **Social commentary:** In certain contexts, violence serves as a commentary on social or political issues. It can be a way to express dissatisfaction, disagreement, or challenge authority.
4. **Communication of threats:** Violence can communicate a threat, directly or indirectly, warning others of possible consequences if certain conditions are not met or if certain behavior does not change.
5. **Cultural and symbolic communication:** Certain types of violence can carry cultural or symbolic meanings within specific contexts. For example, rituals or ceremonies may involve symbolic acts of violence to convey spiritual or social messages.
6. **Response to communication failure:** When other forms of communication fail or are deemed ineffective, individuals or groups may resort to violence as a way to be heard or exert influence.

Question: If we wear a piece of clothing with a military camouflage pattern, what exactly are we signaling? – Discussion.

If the state punishes someone with an especially long prison sentence, is it sending a message to other potential offenders? (The answer should be yes, legitimate use of force by the state is not violence if it is within the legal framework.)

- **Exercise.**

The instructor needs to have some “acting” skills. The task for the participants is to try to assess how I, as the instructor, feel based on the signals I’m sending, i.e., based on my voice dynamics and the message I’m delivering (also an empathy exercise):

Repeat with: 1.

1. I’m speaking quickly and quietly – Urgency? Fear?...
2. I’m speaking slowly and quietly – Calm? Scared? Secretive? Gentle? Careful? Tired?...
3. I’m speaking slowly and loudly – Problematic? Underlining something? Emphasizing?
4. I’m speaking quickly and loudly – Aggression, Panic, Frustration.
5. I’m speaking at a normal pace and volume.

- Introducing a pause – consciously staying silent. When do we remain silent in our society? While eating?

- Active listening: Who is obliged to listen to you in society? Can listening be monetized?

Regardless of how the participants assessed the emotion I was in, the question should be asked whether I, as the instructor, truly felt that way, or was it acting?

Conclusion: The expression of emotions doesn’t have to be truthful; it can be false, feigned, or acted out

Another important conclusion: Sometimes, I can misinterpret someone’s emotions.

How can we be sure that someone is truly feeling a certain way; that they are genuinely sad, for example?

Certain manipulation techniques are based on this method. Someone might cry, appeal to your sympathy or emotions, and try to get money or something else from you through acting. It’s up to you to be cautious and assess whether someone’s emotions are genuine or fake.

Repeat the same exercise with different messages.

Goal: Participants should understand the multi-dimensionality of spoken language and that it is a tool that can be used for good and bad purposes. We convey our emotions through communication.

- **Exercise:** Choosing the appropriate communication medium. Discuss when it is better to communicate a topic over the phone, face-to-face, via message, or email, and why.

The principle of information verification:

Unfortunately, not many methods are available for verifying a message’s truthfulness. One of the most common methods is that if we receive a similar or identical message, news, or information from two or more independent sources, it is confirmed or verified.

- Can you give an example from your life when it was important for you to know if a piece of information was accurate and what did you do? Have you ever been that second source? Did you ever go directly to the source to verify for yourself?
- Incorrect information can lead you down an undesirable path. You might have excellent reasoning, but if it's based on wrong initial information, it will be futile and lead you to incorrect conclusions. It's always important to verify the foundations upon which we base our thoughts, i.e., verify the incoming information.
- Danger of manipulation: Someone can manipulate you by providing false, wrong, or incomplete information. If you blindly believe or don't verify this information, you may draw incorrect conclusions and take wrong actions
- Someone stole your phone. You confront them. They feel attacked and get into a conflict or argument with you.

Exercise: One participant sits on a chair with their eyes closed, waiting for information. Two others sit close by to ensure they don't fall. A third participant excitedly says: "Watch out! Watch out! You're going to fall!" At some point, the person will open their eyes. Why?

Vision is another channel of information. The brain wants to see if what it heard is true. It's verifying the information.

Sometimes, the person sitting might actually begin to fall. This is the power of suggestion. Even though there's no real reason for them to fall, they will internalize the emotion and turn it into reality through their movements.

Be mindful of the power of suggestion—it can be both positive and negative. Negative suggestions can steer you in the wrong direction.

Despite various verification methods, anyone can still remain unsure and not know whether something is true or not.

The "Millionaire quiz" system: When someone doesn't know something or can't answer a question, what do quiz participants do? They follow these methods:

1. Call a friend they believe knows the answer.
 2. Rely on the power of public opinion—ask the audience.
 3. Use the 50:50 joker, which is an exceptional case. You don't know the answer, but you guess.
- When would it be wrong to guess in life? What is the difference between guessing and assuming?

Assumptions can be grounded in some evidence, a belief that one outcome is more likely than another. Guessing is purely random selection.

„Ask the audience“: In our case, this can be interpreted as vox populi or the voice of the people. If everyone drinks a particular brand of coffee, maybe that coffee isn't so bad after all (commonly known as the saying, "Go with the flow"). The strategy "Go with the flow" is a legitimate and perhaps the most widespread strategy in how people behave and make decisions in everyday life.

- **Test:** There are two restaurants next to each other, and you want to have lunch. One has 10 people in it, and the other only has a waiter. Which one do you choose and why?

Exercise: The participant relies on the strength of the collective. The collective, while often right, is not always right. You decide when, how, and to what extent you trust the power of public opinion. When should you not trust the opinion of the masses? (More on this in the chapter: Resistance to Group Pressure)

Safety and Conflict

So, what would safety be in the context of our topic? Regardless of all the security measures in place, can we truly talk about safety if a person doesn't feel safe? On the other hand, someone might feel very safe while being in immediate life-threatening danger of which they are unaware. Safety is, therefore, both an objective and subjective category. It is also a personal concept.

We often associate safety with something we can rely on—a guarantee, a sense of stability.



Where would you position safety in Maslow's hierarchy of needs?

- We aren't safe if we are in objective danger, if something is threatening us, or if we don't feel secure.
- What does it mean to be threatened? Are we threatened if someone prevents us from breathing? Or if we are denied pay for work we've completed?
- We are safe if there is no danger we cannot overcome and if we feel secure. Moreover, we are safe if we can meet our needs in a socially acceptable way without endangering ourselves or others.

!!! It's not wrong to be sensitive or vulnerable or to be robust. What matters is that you are aware of your own characteristics and performance. A correct self-image is a prerequisite for accurately assessing the risks you are entering.

- If I'm in poor physical condition, will I attempt to climb Mount Everest? Why or why not? How would I approach it?
- Whether it's an expedition to a mountain or a night out, what is your ultimate destination? The top of the mountain? The club?

The goal is your home—you forget that you need to return. The mountain peak or the club is just one stop on your journey.

- People often underestimate the energy needed to achieve a goal. They spend all their energy reaching the peak. If you've opened and started a company, do you have enough money to close it?

Absolute safety probably doesn't exist. There is always an "X factor" and always unpredictable things or an extraordinary set of circumstances that can threaten your safety. Nothing is absolutely safe, but there are probabilities. Some things will happen more frequently and are more likely than others.

Digital transformation, specifically the internet and the connectivity of most people worldwide, has brought unforeseen advantages but also challenges and problems that constantly change. One challenge is that young people are no longer measured or compared only to their peers but have hypothetical “competition” from billions of other peers. Global competition sets unrealistically high standards (in appearance, wealth, sports, or business achievements), which intimidates the observer and discourages them because they know these standards are difficult or nearly impossible to reach. This attitude often results in withdrawal or depression, which follows the belief that if one cannot be the best at something, it's best not to try at all.

This way, we deprive ourselves of beautiful experiences because we fear appearing ridiculous or pitiful in the eyes of others.

Exercise: EXPECTATIONS FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS

We take an empty trash can and place it about 5 meters from the line where participants will throw a crumpled piece of paper. Before each participant throws three times, they must write on a piece of paper how many points they expect to score themselves and how many points they expect from the entire group. Each shot that lands in the trash can counts as one point.

- Conclusion: If we set our expectations too high, we statistically increase the likelihood of disappointment. By setting smaller, more realistic expectations, we increase the likelihood of achieving or even exceeding our expectations, which can make us happy. It's important to set realistic expectations.
- We're not measuring who's a good or bad basketball player; we want to see how realistically you assess yourself and your group.
- **Alternative:** The coach may divide participants into two groups for a rematch to create a sense of competition. Will expectations toward one's own and the opposing group change when competing?

What else can we do to protect ourselves from online threats?

One common tactic is to disable most notifications on your phone. This allows you to check the news when you decide, when you're focused and clear-headed, rather than letting unpredictable events take your precious time and attention by interrupting, diverting, and distracting you. (Reminder: Time is the only non-renewable resource! - Value your and others' personal time.)

It's crucial to control how much of your identity you share online and with whom. In general, it's advisable not to reveal more than three aspects of your identity at the same time.

Discussion and example:

If you post a photo on a platform along with your full name, you shouldn't share your address as well. Too much? Too little? If you don't post a photo, you can share your email and full name. If you don't share your email, you can post your birth year. Is this right? Wrong? Discuss.

- Let's go back to the example with your handwriting. An expert could differentiate each of you based on your handwriting. What is your digital fingerprint (the way you communicate, your greetings, phrases, reactions)? The apps you always use, the same part of the day when you're online, etc.

- As a test, you can create a completely anonymous account on a platform and see if any of your friends recognize that it's you, just based on your writing style.

Don't use apps that don't allow you to extract your data and correspondence and use them in other applications. Applications that do not permit this have become the masters of your data. (Reminder: -> Loss of control -> Stress)

- Discussion on identity, what are the traits of identity. The goal is for participants to understand how sensitive the characteristics of their identity are online.

What can we do with your holiday photos from last year? Someone might say, but I didn't go on holiday last year. The answer: It is possible to reconstruct a photo from five years ago as if you were on holiday this year. The possibilities of digital manipulation (deep fake images and videos). All of this forms the basis of the established technique called identity theft, about which there is ample literature.

If we exclude open-source, free software movements and similar free open-source applications, we can follow the following guideline: If you haven't paid for the application you are using, then you are the product being sold. For example, the free nature of Facebook for you means that ads will be shown to you. The Facebook company sells your attention and time to advertising companies, and in return, you can use Facebook without paying. You must also be aware that data about you has a certain financial value that can generate revenue.

The segment of digital security is too extensive to be covered in a shorter training session. Try to find verified and credible sources and courses that teach this topic.



SMART way
- be proactive!

Immediate Violent Physical Assault

The law allows the legal and legitimate use of force in self-defense in cases where your health, life, or property is under attack. It should be noted that you will likely have to prove that you applied force out of necessity and in self-defense.

- How can you prove that you defended yourself? (Witnesses, humane behavior, not exceeding necessary force, recording with a camera?)
- Furthermore, if you injure the attacker in self-defense by chance, you are obligated to provide first aid and call an ambulance/police.

However, regardless of your level of preparation and training in self-defense, it is likely that the attacker is more experienced (sometimes it is their “profession” which they have practiced for many years), more prepared, and more determined than you, so the phase of force exchange itself should be prevented.

- What is the difference between the use of force and violence?

The attacker can be experienced or inexperienced, may be deliberate (with a clear intention, goal, and plan), an opportunist looking for a chance, could be a drug addict in a desperate state of crisis and urgency, etc. The attacker may know you from before, may have gathered information about you, may have been following you, or may be seeing you for the first time and knows nothing about you. Furthermore, you could be the target as a person, with the desire to inflict pain and fear, or your property could be the target, with the intent to take away the valuables you carry, it could be a case of a sexually motivated attack or attempted rape, or it could be a case of pure unleashing of force and infliction of pain, even though the person doesn't know you.

From the above, it is clear why it is very difficult to be prepared for every scenario and why there is no single solution. However, we can adopt some guidelines:

If you are attacked or an attack is imminent: equip yourself with witnesses or helpers; if you cannot escape to a witness or helper, you can try to call them. There is nothing cowardly or dishonorable about calling for help.

If you are in a dark space, try to move to a lit area where someone can see both you and the attacker. On the other hand, in a dark space, you might be able to hide or escape more easily.

If you can choose in advance: Avoid walking alone in dark and remote paths without informing someone close to you about your location and the duration of the trip.

- Move to a space that is under video surveillance. Warn the attacker that everything is being recorded and that they are visible, even if this is not true.

Perhaps the “simplest” case is an attempt to steal or take a valuable item you have. No material item can be more valuable than your health. It is much easier and cheaper to replace a phone than a kidney you might lose due to a knife wound. The principle is to limit damage and choose the lesser evil, without diminishing the horrible feeling of having your phone stolen. If someone demands a valuable item from you under threat of force, it's better to hand it over. Some people carry two wallets. One would be with a smaller amount that you can hand over at that moment.

- If your wallet is stolen, what else will be missing?

Sometimes thieves throw away identification cards and only take the money. Do you remember how much you had in your wallet? What's the advantage if a thief only takes your cards and you don't have cash on you?

Try to remember the person's face or voice if you need to identify them later. There are apps that allow you to remotely lock and locate your phone, so the attacker will have no use for it; on the contrary, they can be identified.

Some techniques involve deterrence. It's necessary to use what is available to you. If you can run fast and escape, do so! If you have pepper spray ready in your pocket, use it toward the attacker's face, but not if the wind is blowing toward you! If you use pepper spray in a closed space, everyone will be exposed to irritation, including you.

- What do you think about practicing with pepper spray before a confrontation?
- If you have a loud voice, shout and call for help! However, using your voice is debatable. If the attacker is nervous, which you can sometimes notice, and sometimes not, then shouting and yelling can provoke a direct attack in an attempt to silence you
- Many hardened criminals have a genuinely positive opinion of themselves. In some critical situations, it's not a bad idea to appeal to someone's humanity. "Nenad, you're a good man, I don't accept that you're doing this (even if you don't necessarily believe he's a good person)." Sometimes you can place someone in a social context: "Ivica, your mother was a wonderful woman. What would she say about this? Come on, let's resolve this differently, by talking." "Almir, you are a child of our area. Please calm down, we can talk about everything, let me propose that we sit down and talk." However, in certain situations, such techniques can worsen the situation and further provoke the aggressive person. It's very difficult to know what effect such an attempt will have, so caution is necessary. Here, it's primarily about buying time.
- The general idea is that if you can't change a person's behavior, maybe it's easier to manipulate the context and environment. If you can somehow divert the attacker's attention to other thoughts or emotions, make the person laugh, soften them, the attacker may popularly "cool off" and stop the attack and leave (this is common with addicts under the influence of substances). Do you know of any examples when this happened?
- An example of a security concept. The truth is that there is no lock that cannot be broken. All locks differ only in the amount of time it takes for an average burglar to break them. So we have locks that take 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 40 minutes, etc., based on the time it takes an average burglar to break them. The burglar is interested in choosing a moment when no one is watching and doing it as quickly as possible to reduce the chances of being caught. A burglar doesn't break into doors for the art of breaking in but for the loot they expect to find or the person they want to get hold of.
- **Exercise:** Imagine your apartment, and you have a certain amount of financial resources to secure it against a break-in: How would you proceed?



In general: Security is proportional to the value you are protecting.

- What is your value, or how much are you worth? How much are you worth to yourself, and how much are you worth to others? (What does life insurance say about how much you are worth?) Do you agree with that assessment?

Banks, given the amount of money they have, invest heavily in security. On the other hand, some people who drive old cars don't even lock them because they're not afraid anyone will steal them. A burglar can be deterred from breaking into your house if they assess that:

- It will take more time than they wish (one lock takes 5 minutes, another 20 minutes, a third 40 minutes, totaling 1 hour and 5 minutes just for breaking in -> high likelihood of being caught in the act)
- They have no insight and cannot be sure how many people are in the house and what their capabilities are. Will they resist?
- They have been discovered in the attempt (camera, shout, warning)
- How would you apply this concept to yourself? What can you do to make yourself unattractive for an attempted violent robbery?

It's quite difficult (it's not allowed to carry a gun in public openly without special permits, we can't puff ourselves up to look three times bigger than we are). Maybe we can radiate calm and confidence. The thief doesn't know why we're so confident in ourselves and why we feel so secure – maybe they've missed something.

Some people, for example, have a muscular build and display tattoos. What message does that send to others?

- Is it about intimidating others or about deterring others from attacking? Is there a difference? Is it possible that the person is insecure and is actually using such behavior to hide some of their shortcomings or weaknesses? Are they compensating? Is it a fashion statement? Or all of the above?

Example: You are walking down the road towards the square, where there is a café with violent individuals, who are in a tipsy state, and with whom you have had negative experiences before. They are on your route:

We follow the **ODA** pattern:

1. **Orientation/Observation,**
2. **Decision**
3. **Action**

1. **Orientation:**

Observation and assessment: Are they shouting? How much have they had to drink? How many of them are there? Are they introverted or extroverted? Is teasing or provocation inevitable, or can I pass unnoticed? Is there a security guard or café staff that would protect me? Does anyone know I'm on this path, and where I am if I don't reach my destination?

We conclude: They are too drunk to even notice I've passed by them.

Or we assess: They are very quiet and withdrawn; I don't think they're in the mood for a fight.

- Is silence always a sign of calm?

2. **Decision:** Based on the observed situation, how will I act?

What **OPTIONS** are on the table: passing by them? What if they call out to me or recognize me? Should I ignore them or respond? If I respond, what will I say?

3. Action:

Avoidance: choosing another route that bypasses them or quickly passing by them.

Once you've made your decision, act on it with determination and confidence, and bypass that place.

It is very important to practice DECISION-MAKING daily, especially decisions based on your needs, rational thinking, and will. If you find yourself in a situation where you feel like you're not making any decisions, that is a good indicator that things have gone wrong and that you need to get out of that situation. Always strive to make conscious and reasonable DECISIONS.

- **By making decisions, you guide yourself, which is an essential tool for managing yourself in the direction you want to go.**

Don't be afraid of making the wrong decision. It is much more important to maintain the capacity and power to make decisions than to worry about occasionally making a wrong one. You can learn from it and avoid making the same mistake in a similar situation next time.

Even if your path is restricted (you can't go that route), your mental space is not. DECISION-MAKING is the true measure of freedom. The extent to which you can make decisions is the extent to which you are free.

Conflicts

By MAKING DECISIONS and having your own will, you will inevitably enter conflicts in daily life. Conflicts can be civilized and productive - discussions, debates, exchanges of opposing opinions with arguments. However, they can also be violent. Every conflict has different levels we call escalation stages, aiming to **impose** one's will on another or, in the case of violent conflict, to cause emotional and physical harm to someone else. Here are the basic points in a shortened form:

1. Presence is often the first stage of escalation (if people are not present, they can't fight -> avoidance)
 2. Imposing demands/asserting one's will: "Come here when I tell you!" Changes in stance, posture, gestures, expressions, insults, devaluation, and curses often serve as preludes to violence and as tools of escalation. The attacker, in essence, provides "JUSTIFICATION" for why they are attacking you.

"You poor little mouse." "You're a blockhead." "You're nobody!" – dehumanization, conveying the message that if someone is an "animal or object, then they don't have rights and dignity like a human being. There's no issue with hitting them." This way, the attacker somewhat eases the possibility of hitting someone.
 3. The act of physical escalation itself, either sudden or with prior physical contact: pulling, scratching, choking, pushing, hitting, etc.
- We need to be aware that escalation levels can rise and fall multiple times. "He came, appeared, and left." "They shouted but didn't fight," etc.
 - Our goal is de-escalation, i.e., lowering, if possible, every level of escalation.

(For example, if someone insults you, don't insult them back, don't contribute to the escalation.)

In general, the police tend to trust the person who contacts them first, as this shows trust in police authorities.

- Don't hesitate to call the police, even if you made a mistake.

It's better to call the police ten times for nothing than to not call them once when something happens. Simply calling the police can de-escalate the situation. Don't pay attention to the moral discrediting of people who call the police: this is a notion served by criminal circles precisely to prevent calling the police. The police are funded by taxes collected from your work. They are there to serve you and have an obligation to protect you; this is their primary mission.

Briefly about manipulation

Every conflict aims for one side to impose its WILL on the other. Skilled manipulators will succeed in making you believe that their will is actually your own. Skilled manipulators can be in marketing agencies, banks, on the street, or in your family. Remember: For manipulation, feedback is very important. For the manipulator to know where you are in the manipulation process, they must get your reaction.

Exercise: What could be examples of feedback in everyday life?

There are also positive manipulations, such as school. At the end of some lessons, the teacher will give a test. During the test, you demonstrate how much you've learned, and based on the test results, the teacher can assess the progress you've made. Based on that, they can decide who needs to review the material and who has adequately or excellently mastered it.

What else can we do to protect ourselves in terms of prevention?

One of the best forms of prevention is for criminal circles to know absolutely nothing about you or, if that's impossible, to know as little as possible. To achieve this, you need to cultivate a culture of discretion. Specifically, this means gaining control over how much and to whom you disclose information about yourself. It's important to be aware of how you can inadvertently reveal more about yourself than you want to. Professional criminals have their own methods of luring, establishing trust, scouting, getting to know someone, coercing, etc.

It's advisable to attend some form of self-defense course or training. Be cautious when choosing the club where you wish to receive this training. Experiences show that the methodology and character of trainers in the region are often not at a satisfactory level. It happens that instructors treat participants as if they came with prior knowledge or vent their force on them.

As a participant, you are there to learn something, not to know already. An environment that doesn't respect that is not the right choice for you. Furthermore, injuries during training should be an absolute exception or a coincidence and not a regular occurrence. If there are too many injuries, the self-defense instructor is not conducting the training correctly.

- More on this in Preventing manipulations within organizations

For immediate protection, it is advisable to use pepper spray, if it is legally allowed in your country and community. However, even in using pepper spray, certain skills, techniques, and practice are required, which are rarely offered as training.

People are natural security experts. We have excellent warning sensors: fear, instincts, reflexes, intuition, the immune system. The mere fact that all participants are present today at the training means the following: You have survived life up to this point, no one is sick – you are healthy. You are ready to learn and acquire new knowledge, which not everyone is able to do.

Lifestyles

We have many ways to organize our lives. Once you set your goals, it is essential that you also find a particular style or strategy to guide your life toward achieving those goals.

- The instructor may introduce the Ikigai diagram. Ikigai is a Japanese concept that can be roughly translated as “reason for being” or “reason to get up in the morning.” It essentially involves planning one’s activities. It represents the intersection of four elements: what you love, what you are good at, what the world needs, and what you can be paid for. Finding your Ikigai involves discovering a balance where these elements meet, leading to a fulfilled and purposeful life. It emphasizes finding joy and satisfaction through meaningful activities that align personal passions with societal needs.



Minimalist or Frugal Life

“The beginning of every order is a big trash can.” - A general from one army.

We have limited strength and resources to monitor and control things. Items we don’t need, which take up our space, attention, time, and money, can be given, sold, or thrown away.

- Why can’t we do the same with people we don’t need? What do we do in that case?

A frugal life is a way, style, and strategy of living that has certain advantages in modern circumstances, pace, and conditions of everyday life. Interestingly, this is a popular technique among the rich and powerful, who have no immediate need for a frugal life. A large amount of money and significant consumerism enabled them to start many processes and acquire many things that became a huge burden they could not carry. It will reduce your degree of freedom.

- Proverb: “The things you own start to own you.”

This is clearly demonstrated with the simple example of owning a car. There is concern that someone might steal the car or damage or scratch it. There is worry that the car might break down, that someone might be accidentally run over or injured, that you might exceed the speed limit and receive a fine for wrong parking. You need to remember to register the car and to take it for service on time. You need to remember to fill the tank and inflate the tires, etc. Ownership comes with great responsibility.

- Compare the strategy of cooking at home with eating at a restaurant or fast food as an alternative. What are the pros and cons?
- What other lifestyles exist?

The life of a dedicated believer. A sporty lifestyle. An adventurous lifestyle. A gambling lifestyle? Wasteful? Hedonistic?

Can a religious life be connected with a frugal life, or are they in conflict? (Some values are present in different lifestyles.)

What are the advantages and disadvantages? How can they function together? Can we change lifestyles?



SMART way
participate
today!

Financial Security, Business Strategy, and Career Building

- **Exercise:** The instructor places 10 apples on the table if there are 10 participants. The first participant takes 3, the second takes 2, the third takes 2, the fourth takes 1, the fifth takes 1, the sixth takes 1, and the others are left without apples. Uneven distribution creates the illusion of inequality in society. The instructor's goal is to demonstrate redistribution, value creation, social justice and injustice, the market, and incentives. In short, they can show all the main economic flows.

Caution!:

The instructor must have some prior knowledge of economics or be previously informed.

- **Exercise:** Taking out a loan only makes sense if it is understood as a form of investment. The idea is that you will earn more in the long term from some business (or property acquisition) than the borrowed amount and the interest you need to pay to the bank.
- **Exercise:** You took out a loan of 10,000 KM from the bank. The interest rate is 10 percent. How much do you need to pay back in total?

Create your "rainy day fund" through savings. This refers to specific financial resources in two or three different currencies that only you know about, kept for difficult situations that may arise in your life. Having such a reserve will give you flexibility in the event of financial shocks, a certain level of security, and make you feel safer. These funds can be stored in a bank account, a bank safe, or with someone you trust.

In life, it is crucial to know how to be subordinate or superior, meaning to have a realistic understanding of your position in society. For example, we will subordinate ourselves to a traffic officer regulating traffic. We will assert ourselves in society if we feel competent or have the right to do so in a given situation: As a building representative, I will warn a neighbor about breaking house rules. As an older person, I have the right to call out younger individuals for rude behavior.

- **Exercise:** What are the risks you might face when asserting dominance or being subordinate?
 - Communication as assistance
- What kinds of subordination and superiority do we have in a company, and what kinds are present in the military, for example? Who is the head of the family? The importance of leadership.

Work is the most common way of earning a living in a legal and legitimate manner. Employment is a form of structuring life and organizing our daily routines. Work obligations based on a signed contract, and daily commutes to and from work are shared experiences of the majority of the population.

People who work enjoy the respect of the broader community (at least from those who also work honestly to earn a living). This is because they put in the effort to make a living through honest means. Sometimes you hear the phrase, "They work, not steal"

(Understanding opportunity costs). Work in the form of employment not only provides financial resources, but also creates structure in time - it teaches habits, establishes a routine we can rely on, gives us a daily schedule, and assigns meaning to our efforts. It brings satisfaction when we achieve something, create something, and are financially rewarded for our labor. One particular advantage of work is the independence gained from the financial assistance or conditions set by parents, family, or friends acting as benefactors.

Criminal structures often profit from poverty. Impoverished people are conditioned and ready to take significant risks for some financial compensation (often for little money). Through work and employment, you gain independence from such incentives and stimuli.

Choosing a profession, professional orientation, and a company..

- **Example:** Find a good craftsman and become his or her student. In this era of digitalization and migration, there is a massive gap in skilled labor for maintenance and repair jobs. There's a saying, "A trade is golden." Even more so now, as demand for trades is high, raising the value of your work as a craftsman. We still don't have robots that can wire an apartment, fix a faucet, or cut hair.
- In the business world and companies, there is a danger of undesirable manipulation. More on that in the chapter on resistance to group pressure.
- Creativity. Many futurists recommend developing creative and innovative skills because they will be in demand in the future. For everything that can be mathematically described, there is a strong likelihood that such jobs will be taken over by artificial intelligence or robots. However, it is quite certain that in the long term, neither artificial intelligence nor robots will be able to be innovative, creative, or create new value: composing music, inventing new products. Imagination, fantasy, romance, recreation, entertainment, and similar creative endeavors that can sometimes be turned into products or services remain in the realm of fulfilling human needs.

Behind every human need lies an economic branch. People will still need to eat, travel, socialize, drink water, breathe air, and seek medical treatment over the next thousand years. Many things may change, but human nature remains relatively stable. You can start a business based on these needs, and many stable and profitable businesses fulfill some human need. (-> Maslow's hierarchy of needs)

Exercise: From your experience, can you name successful local and global businesses and which human needs they satisfy.



The power of catalysts: **These are various events, actions, or habits that simultaneously satisfy multiple needs**, saving you time.

Example: Walking in nature with a pet. Simultaneously, you get physical exercise, exposure to sunlight for vitamin D and mood improvement, and breathe fresh air.

How else can I enhance this catalyst:

- I could, for example, invite a friend or more and satisfy the need for socialization, friendship, and maintaining relationships, alongside relaxing in nature and the physical activity that keeps me healthy. If we go to the mountains, we might come across raspberries, strawberries, or blueberries and enjoy a healthy meal. Financial cost: zero.

What costs do you save in the process:

- I don't pay for a membership in a crowded and perhaps unhygienic gym – savings!
- Reminder: Whenever I do something good, I'm not just doing that, but I'm also avoiding hundreds of wrong things I could be doing. If you fill your life with the right things, you won't have time for the wrong ones.
- Can you imagine additional catalysts? Hint: Sport = Transport?
- Imagine instead of sitting in a car in daily traffic, you could cycle to work. Simultaneously, you're engaging in cardio exercise important for your fitness while commuting from point A to point B. You come home, and your workout for the day is already done.

Set flexibility as a life goal. It will prepare you to adapt quickly to changes. The world is changing rapidly today.

- What does flexibility mean to you? How can I increase flexibility? How does frugal living help my flexibility? ("When I save money, I can do whatever I want.")

Flexibility will make you more mobile and free, thus reducing the anxiety of long-term commitments. For example, an employer can change/worsen your employment conditions after things seemed fine at first. You need contracts that allow you to quickly and painlessly terminate employment and change jobs. Seek flexibility, and only secondarily loyalty to the company or status in the company.

Salary isn't everything. Sometimes the circumstances or perks of a job are more attractive than the salary itself: the length of vacation, health insurance, days off, the absence of shifts, etc. A relatively high salary that assumes lots of overtime or overly strenuous work will negatively impact your life and health. Therefore, it is crucial to pay attention to these factors during job negotiations and ensure they are agreed upon from the beginning.

Try to distance yourself from people who excessively flaunt their status or wealth in real life and on the internet (influencers and the like). Excessive expectations -> Disappointment/ Envy -> Anxiety -> Withdrawal/Frustration.

There are no quick earnings (without significant problems or illegal activities), so all such campaigns or ads are, more or less, clever attempts to profit off you. Envy is a powerful motivator. It can make you feel bad for not being part of the group that dreams of getting rich quickly, and sometimes succeeds (at what cost?). You want to live a frugal life because it is full of gratitude, accountability, security, stability, mindfulness, reason, peace, and order.

Remember, one day you will grow old and weak, and the pension fund will be minimal or non-existent. Try to find a profession or job you can imagine doing even when you're 70 years old.

- **Ikigai**

The trend of an aging workforce is on the rise, and the average life expectancy is increasing. It is very likely that you will have to work until the last day of your life. (Many people don't reach retirement age or are only in retirement for a short time before death). Try to visualize yourself as an old person and focus your current activities on securing a dignified old age.

The literature that can prepare you for living with fewer resources includes classical Russian literature, Stoics, and Seneca, for example. These sources can be found online for free. If by chance you lead a wealthy life, you will always be prepared for one that is not and stay modest and down-to-earth.

There are billions of products in the world. Only a small number are necessary for your needs, while most are designed for someone to get rich through mass consumerism, without necessarily fulfilling any of your (real) needs. Reject consumerism or excessive spending. Spend money only on what fulfills a real need. Save. Remember, you had to work hard for that money; you didn't find it on the street! You determine the value of that money – don't waste it on unnecessary things.

Functional analysis.

Certain studies have shown that one of the biggest downsides of the “encyclopedic” model of education is that students are trained to reproduce knowledge, but not to develop the ability to use that knowledge or answer the question of why, for what purpose, for which need? This is crucial for applying knowledge, not just communicating it, and for us to benefit from that knowledge and skills. Asking “why” and “for what purpose” are questions we should ask ourselves often. Naturally, if we don't have a goal, we can't even ask ourselves the question of why, for what purpose, or to what end something leads or does not.

Therefore, it is very important to set realistic goals in life so that we can direct our activities toward achieving those goals. These goals are in the future, so we need a calendar to clarify the path to achieving them.

- **Question:** What goals have you set and achieved in life, and which have you not? Are there new goals you would like to set for yourself? Discussion



SMART way
know your
rights!

Relationships

- What kinds of relationships do we have in society? Strong, weak. Professional, family, intimate, traumatic. Shared trauma can connect people. Both positive and negative experiences can connect people.

- Is a dependent relationship a real connection? Strong or weak? Positive or negative?

It is almost impossible to imagine a relationship between two people if there isn't a shared event that they've experienced together (even from different perspectives), spent some time together, or if the two people don't have a similar emotional alignment because they've had similar or identical experiences. In other words, there is no relationship without some shared experience, attitude, values, or emotions.

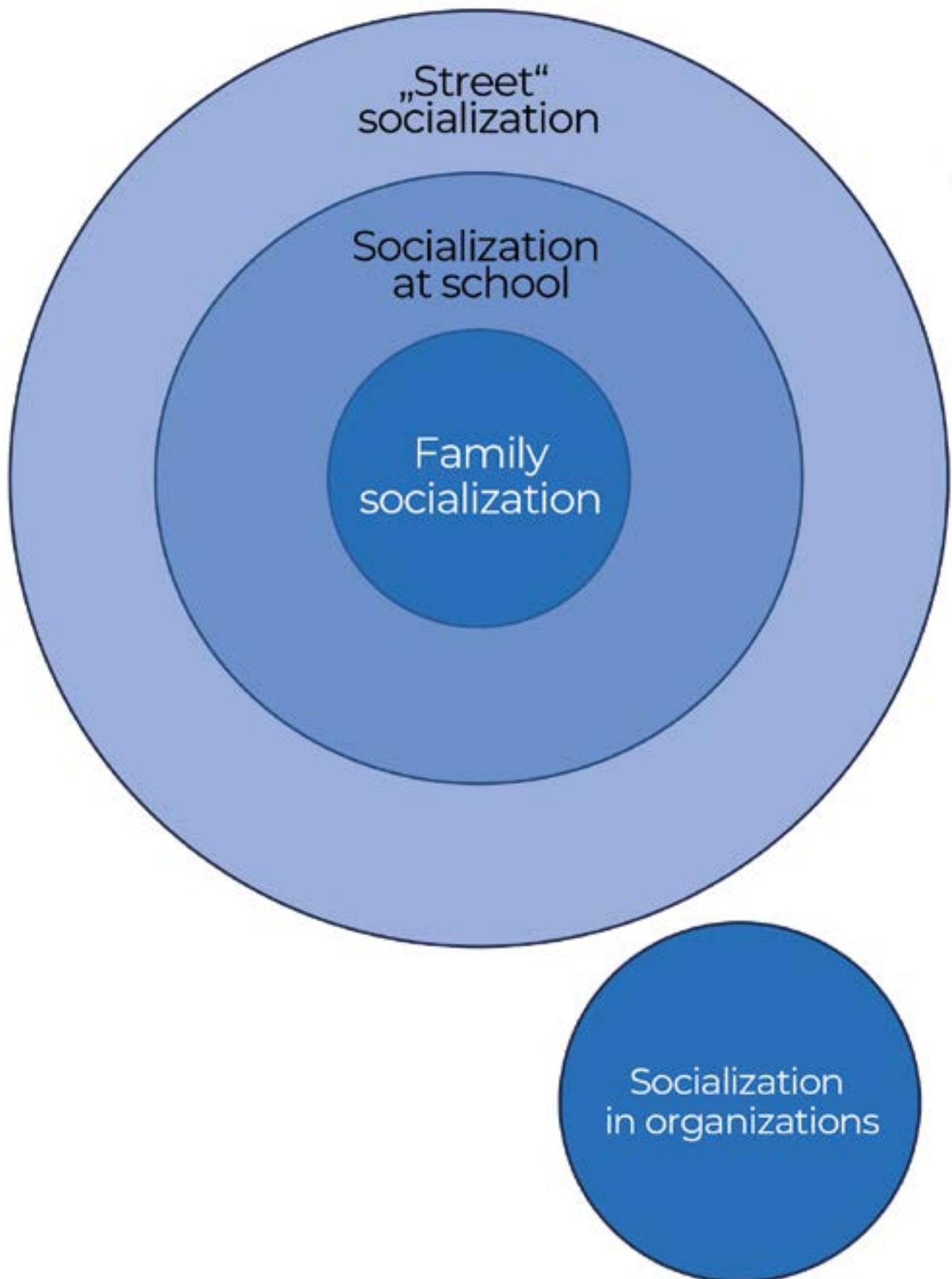
- A counterexample of a contract: Does a business contract create a relationship? Do we crown some intimate relationships with a contract? What is the name of that contract?
- Showing emotions is a display of strength, not weakness. People who feel insecure or weak will seek to hide their emotions or will lack the courage to express them.



- Don't enter relationships that are not at least somewhat equal. Also, avoid relationships that work against you, and relationships that inherently create dependency. Avoid entering relationships that you cannot easily or fairly end if you want to. Communication in the broader sense is a fundamental social process and encompasses a wide range of human verbal and non-verbal interactions. The essence of every relationship lies in the mutual and reciprocal development of the relationship, in complementing each other, in communication, and in shared experiences. The idea is that being in a relationship should make you feel better than being alone. In a relationship, you are allowed to make mistakes. Relationships in which you don't have the right to make mistakes are not healthy. Of course, there is also the responsibility, as it's a positive trait, to apologize if you've made a mistake.

On **SMART** air!

Resistance to Group/Organization Pressure



Criminal Organizations/Organized Crime

Organized crime is a specific topic within the broader realm of criminal activity, and it is qualitatively different from individual crimes. It can be imagined as a well-organized company that has a division of labor: some of the personnel handle logistics and supply, others manage information and personnel, some deal with “business” connections, and others take care of security. Such a criminal organization often has one or more bosses or directors overseeing and managing all processes. Organized crime often has connections in politics, government, and public administration, which it achieves through bribery, blackmail, and similar means. It frequently provides certain illegal services on a mass scale, such as the distribution and sale of illegal substances, such as drugs.

An individual can be drawn into illegal activities of such organizations in various ways if they are not cautious. The scope of these techniques exceeds the possibilities of this handbook, but by following the guidelines in this work, you can greatly reduce your vulnerability to involvement or recruitment into such organizations. One of the initial methods is: if a person is a consumer of illegal substances—they create an addictive relationship that deepens over time.

4. It is assumed that the participants are aware of the dangers of substance abuse, and if not, the instructor should provide a brief introduction to the issue

Organized crime often has multiple rings of organization and can sometimes draw people and organizations into its activities without them being aware of the criminal nature of those activities.

Example: You have a company, and an investor appears who wants to invest money in your company, which is needed for business development.

If you do not thoroughly check who the investor is, the background of that company, or the origin of the capital that the company possesses, you can be drawn into a money laundering operation, making you an accomplice and exposing you to potential prosecution by the state.

A very simple example:

An acquaintance asks you to “just drop off something with them, it will be quick,” and you see it as an opportunity to chat during the car ride. You get into the car, and the police stop you for a vehicle check and discover that there are illegal substances in the car. The acquaintance claims that the substances belong to you.

5. What can you do to avoid this situation? What can you do if you end up in a situation like this?

Simply knowing someone who is part of a criminal organization (having the phone number of a person who belongs to a criminal organization) can lead investigative authorities to suspect that you are also a member of that organization. Therefore, it is best to stay as far away as possible from the influence of criminal organizations.

Organized crime often has the need/strategy to maintain good relations with the local community. To achieve this, members of these criminal organizations often offer gifts, help the community or individuals they perceive as vulnerable, financially or otherwise. Practically speaking, they draw them into their sphere of influence. The essence is that these services will eventually require a return favor, for example, they may ask you under threats to help bury someone whose life they have taken (as seen in real-life situations).

It is extremely important to understand that all these incentives, kindness, and willingness to help are not well-intentioned, and sooner or later, they will ask for something in return. Therefore, it is crucial not to accept such “help” from the very beginning.

Religious/Ideological/Political Organizations and Prevention of Abuse within Them

Regarding religious/ideological organizations and abuse within religious/ideological formal or informal organizations, there are two poles around which the academic debate revolves. On one side, in democratic systems, we have the legally established and guaranteed:

- freedom of religion and the organization of religious life, and on the other hand, we have religious organizations that engage in illegal acts that violate laws and the constitutionally guaranteed rights of their followers. These movements and organizations are often referred to as cults. Without delving into the freedom to choose a religious belief, it is necessary to point out that in many religious paths or narratives, we find smaller organizations that, while invoking the “main” narrative, have unique, different, intensified, or diminished presentations of a particular religious teaching and behavior rules based on it. (This does not mean that large religious organizations, or those recognized by the state through agreements, are immune to illegal practices).

Religious organizations can offer their members, including vulnerable youth as a target group, a sense of community, a substitute family, security, comfort, a spouse, and more.

On the other hand, by meeting these needs that each of us has, an exceptionally strong bond is established with one or more elements of the organization: the leader, the organization itself, its members, its teachings, and/or its activities and actions.



- Dependence is also an example of a strong bond, though not every strong bond is a dependency.

However, sometimes members of such organizations enter a dependent relationship that makes them susceptible to manipulation and abuse. The essence of a dependent relationship is that it almost forcibly takes precedence over all other relationships, leading to the neglect of other needs, obligations, and responsibilities a person has.

Problems can arise, for example, when you agree with some aspects of the organization while opposing others. What consequences will you face because of this? Are you allowed to express disagreement with any elements or anything in the organization, or is complete obedience required? Will you be punished? Do you have the freedom of expression and opinion?

Some questions you can ask yourself: Does this organization, or my membership in it, place me in direct and inevitable violent conflict with the rest of the community that is not part of this religious movement, and why? Does the entire organization support such conflict, or are a few prominent individuals using the organization to settle scores, meaning, are you exposed to risks without the support or justification of the organization? Do you agree with such actions?

- Does this organization implicitly or explicitly require me to relinquish my property or some of the rights I otherwise have as a Bosnian citizen? (Some cults have financially exploited their followers by asking them to completely renounce their property in favor of the organization (or certain individuals within it), which created a dependent relationship with the organization as their only source of income).

- Are there instances of violence against members of the religious community with whom you disagree? (For example, a religious leader slaps a follower, and the person must accept it without protest).
- How does the religious organization resolve internal conflicts: through discussion, conversation, force, or excommunication? Do you agree with such practices?
- Does the organization act following its principles, or do some members or leaders act arbitrarily and consider themselves above the organization's rules?
- Does the organization truly engage in what it proclaims, or is it just a cover for other activities? Is the organization realistic?
- Are there people who have successfully left these organizations, and what are their testimonies or reasons for leaving? How was that accepted by the organization?

Similar or identical questions can be asked of ideological organizations:

For example, an animal protection organization. Animal protection is not only a legal obligation but shows that we have empathy and compassion for all living beings and is an extremely commendable form of behavior because we want to prevent suffering. However, does that organization force or ask me to break into someone else's property to save an abused animal, exposing me to legal risks and criminal prosecution, or a physical altercation with the owner? Does the organization ask me to stalk or harass a person we suspect is abusing animals? Thus, intentions may be right (fighting for animal welfare and the legally mandated prohibition of animal abuse). Still, the methods used to achieve that goal may be wrong and prohibited by law.

A high degree of identification and attachment (my spouse is from that organization, I receive a salary from that organization, my friends are in that organization) can make you succumb to pressure. In order not to lose friends, a spouse, or a source of income, you might agree to do something that is not right. Is that a position you want to find yourself in?

By maintaining a certain level of (financial, social...) independence, we preserve our freedom (freedom of thought, freedom of decision-making, freedom of association, etc.) and will not easily find ourselves in the unenviable position of feeling compelled or forced to do something contrary to our beliefs, what is right, and what is lawful.

Here, I would like to emphasize once again that every degree of freedom, i.e., independence, whether financial, in terms of accommodation and place of residence, or in terms of opinions and attitudes, enables you to enter intimate relationships as equals, not in a subordinate or dependent position. Furthermore, in such relationships, the motives are voluntary, not out of necessity or some interest that should have no place in an intimate relationship.

Sponsor-based lifestyles and relationships rarely lead to sustainable long-term success, but at what cost and how?

- What freedoms must someone give up to enter into such a relationship? Can they freely DECIDE?

We live in a society with certain customs that unfairly place women in a subordinate position regarding earnings (women usually receive less for the same job) and inheritance rights, even though sometimes laws prevent this. Women in our society are more often the target of violence, particularly violence resulting in death. Regardless of your gender, it is crucial to stand up for yourself and for those parts of society that are vulnerable, even if in a specific situation, it doesn't seem to concern you at first glance. Of course, the legal battle is long and costly, but there are organizations, people, and institutions ready to help along the way.

The state is also a large organization. Is everything that the state and society permit good for us? Discussion.

Example: Not everything the state allows is necessarily good for us. The only responsible advice based on scientific research is to avoid both alcohol and cigarettes, even though they are legally permitted. There is no safe amount of alcohol that can be recommended.



For example: Certain painkillers, which are entirely justified for use in certain conditions, can cause addiction with prolonged use.

- Always read the provided instructions. Will you blindly trust them? Can the instructions be wrong?

The essence is that addictions are not hidden only in things that are forbidden, which we might first think of. Cigarettes, alcohol, and gambling are just some examples of legal activities that also cause addiction.

Therefore, we must maintain a critical attitude, and legal/illegal is not the only criterion that can guide us.

- What are the reasons why the state allows cigarette consumption, for example, even though they have warnings that they kill?
- Some marijuana products provide proven health benefits in certain medical conditions, yet they are prohibited. What are the reasons, and what can we do about it?

Everything should be approached with a critical distance (reserve), while simultaneously fostering respect and verification, without resorting to violence against anyone. In cases of urgent self-defense, we have the right to use force, but it is up to us to decide whether or not to apply force (physical, legal, media, etc.).

- Test the loyalty of the group towards you. Choose something insignificant to you but contradicts the group's established stance. Insist on that thing. If the group is willing to discard you over one stance of yours that doesn't suit them but is insignificant, such a group is not worth your time.

I live in a country where power or water outages often occur. Is it better for me to live in an apartment or a house, and why?

Discussion:

For example, if the entire neighborhood loses power and a house there too, what will be the priority for repair and supply, those 10,000 apartments, or a few houses.

- This is an example of utilitarianism in decisions and the power of the collective: Often, state policies are directed towards the greater good or lesser harm, which doesn't mean some people won't be affected. A larger collective requires regulation, a rule that covers everyone.
- With this example, we try to make some DECISIONS that the state makes more understandable. They don't necessarily, in cases of negativity, target us personally.

Again, there is no right or wrong answer: The conclusion is that by becoming aware of certain problems, we become aware of the advantages and disadvantages of our decisions, and it will be easier for us to live with them, as we can compensate for their shortcomings and enjoy their benefits, whatever they may be.

The world we live in has a unique dimension. It is the institutional dimension, or the dimension of paperwork and material evidence. For instance, say you were involved in a car accident and experienced it in a certain way with minor injuries. You have the memory of that event. Now, let's look at how institutions perceived your accident. The judge and the police officer were not at the scene when the accident happened. The police will compile a report on that event based on your statement and the statement of the other party. Institutionally, what happened to you is what the doctor wrote down, not necessarily what actually happened. The doctor might reach a different conclusion than you about what happened to you. Both the police officer and the doctor are people who can make mistakes. So, besides the actual situation that happened to you, there is the reality of the paperwork, and it holds equal or sometimes greater weight in court or with the insurance company.

The state and all its lower levels that make laws are obligated to publish these laws, that is, to make them accessible. Some of these laws you can find for free..

Therefore, it is always important that you:

- Read carefully what you are signing, and if something is unclear, ask for clarification. Don't sign things that you don't understand or agree with.
- Request a copy of every document, especially those you have signed.
- Form an archive of all your important documentation and copies, up to the last 5 years, and sometimes longer if it involves property papers and similar documents. If you lose a personal document or if it is stolen, you will be glad you have (a certified) copy of that document. Also, you should scan all important documents and store them on some secure online cloud service. In case of theft, fire, or flood, you will be able to retrieve copies of your documents, which can ease the arduous process of reissuing documents.
- You have the right to request your copy of every document you sign. If someone claims otherwise, they must refer to a law or a rule within the service. That person is obligated to refer to a specific provision; the statement 'that's the rule' is not enough. They must provide the exact document and article, and you have the right to access those documents.
 - For more details: Law on Access to Information

Primjer:

- A bank employee impatiently waiting for your signature because they are busy can make you feel pressured to sign quickly. You must not give in to this pressure. If others do not give you enough time, you must fight for it because you have the RIGHT. If a report is made about an event, it must be presented to you, and do not sign it until you agree with what is stated in the report. If something is unclear, ask questions. Do not take the answer for granted; ask follow-up questions until everything is clear to you. In the end, you have the right not to sign a report. This means that before institutions, no one can claim that you agreed with what is stated in the report.

We live in a democratic system that has its laws and unwritten norms because the law cannot cover all the rules of the system and all possible interactions between people. As a citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina, you are obligated to respect and adhere to the laws and rules of this country. If we don't like some laws, we have the instrument of choice when we elect those political options that we believe will change the laws in a way that suits us. Otherwise, if we want to change the rules violently, the state has the right to use legal and legitimate force to bring us back into that order.

- There is an opportunity for discussion with participants on what examples of sanctions by the state apparatus they know: fines for speeding. Do they have any examples of positive sanctions: awarding prizes, waiving student fees)?



Western
Balkans need
a **SMART**
approach!

Instead of a Conclusion

Building emotional resilience takes time and practice. By integrating these strategies into your daily life, you can gradually strengthen your ability to cope with challenges and successfully overcome difficult situations:

1. **Self-awareness:** Understand your emotions and reactions. Pay attention to how you react to stress and challenges.
2. **Mindfulness/meditation/prayer/dua/gratitude:** Practice mindfulness and gratitude to stay present and effectively manage stress. Meditation can help build mental strength and resilience.
3. **Positive thinking:** Strive to develop an optimistic outlook on life. Focus on solutions rather than dwelling on problems.
4. **Adaptability:** Embrace change and view challenges as opportunities for growth. Develop flexibility in thinking and approach to problems.
5. **Zdrav način života:** Take care of your physical health through regular exercise, a balanced diet, and sufficient sleep. Physical well-being supports mental resilience.
6. **Društvena podrška:** Build strong support systems in the form of friends, family, or mentors who can provide encouragement and support during tough times.
7. **Goal setting:** Set clear goals and work towards them methodically. Break large tasks into smaller, manageable steps to reduce feelings of overwhelm.
8. **Problem-solving skills:** Develop effective problem-solving techniques to systematically address challenges. This can boost your confidence in facing difficult situations.
9. **Learning from failure:** Instead of viewing failures as permanent, see them as opportunities for learning and growth. Reflect on what went wrong and how you can improve your actions in the future.
10. **Seeking help when needed:** Do not hesitate to reach out to professionals, such as therapists or counselors, if you struggle with managing emotions or stress.
11. **Practicing resilience:** Challenge yourself, and sometimes your friends, in small, manageable ways to gradually build resilience. Gradually expose yourself to discomfort and learn to tolerate it and adapt.
12. **Staying focused on what you can control:** Direct your energy towards things you can influence, rather than worrying about factors beyond your control. Avoid making too many changes at once. One or a few changes remain noticeable and manageable. Introducing too many changes at once can diminish the positive effects of all of them.
13. **Be selective and demanding:** Do not accept just any solution to a problem. Have a certain criterion by which you judge and make decisions in life.

Congratulations on completing this Trainer's Manual for the Development of Life Skills! By providing these essential life skills to vulnerable youth, you are not only helping them transition safely into adulthood but also equipping them to protect themselves from violence and other socially undesirable phenomena in society. Your dedication and commitment to their well-being are key to building resilient communities



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