



EMPATHY

Guidelines for working
with young people with
fewer opportunities



Co-funded by
the European Union



Co-funded by
the European Union



The guidelines are part of the project
»EMPATHEATRY: Development of inclusive theatre groups for
emotionally empowered and active youth«
Project number: 2023-1-SI02-KA220-YOU-000151073

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or National Agency. Neither the European Union nor the National Agency can be held responsible for them.



COBISS.SI-ID 226463235
ISBN 978-961-94542-4-4 (PDF)

EMPATHEATRY: Guidelines for working with young people with fewer opportunities

Editor: Maja Jotić

Authors: Maja Jotić, Jerneja Šibilja, Doroteja Jemec, Olivija Grafenauer, Pau Jarne Soler, Camile Delmarcelle, Anja Marojevic

November 2024

Proofreading: Anja Marojevic, Redial Partnership

Design: Lučka Cencič, STEP Institute

Publisher: STEP Institute

Year of publication: 2024

Circulation: Digital, available at: <https://empatheatry.eu/results>

Price: Free-of-charge



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or National Agency. Neither the European Union nor the National Agency can be held responsible for them.

Content

INTRODUCTION	4
1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	5
1.1 Expert opinions: Insights from the international research	5
1.2 Importance of creating a safer and more inclusive environment	7
2. PRACTICAL METHODS AND TECHNIQUES	9
2.1 Tips and traps for continuous work with young people	9
2.2 Methods and recommendations for developing emotional intelligence	13
CONCLUSION	16
HELPFUL RESOURCES	17

INTRODUCTION

The EMPATHEATRY project involves 5 organisations from Slovenia, Belgium, Spain and Ireland. We aim to increase the accessibility of theatre activities for young people with fewer opportunities and thus promote their holistic development. To achieve our goal, as a first step, we want to train and empower youth workers, theatre educators, mentors and related profiles to work with young people. In this context, the guidelines you are about to read are training materials. They are based on international research, training in Brussels, literature and the experience of the organisations involved.

For whom are the guidelines written? For youth workers, (theatre) educators, mentors, teachers and other professionals who work with young people with fewer opportunities.

Who is the target group of young people? The concept of young people with fewer opportunities covers a vast population. Specifically, the project focuses on young people coming from socially disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g. due to poverty, race, religion, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, physical disability) and young people experiencing various forms of mental, intellectual, emotional, behavioural or neurodevelopmental disorders (e.g. ADHD, autism). In developing the guidelines, we have aimed to be general but simultaneously specific and have tried to cover a broader group of young people.

How are the guidelines structured? They are divided into two parts. In the theoretical part, we present the main findings of our international research on how to work with young people with fewer opportunities (with a focus on the theatre context). We concluded that the creation of a safer environment is one of the more important conditions when working with young people, so we elaborate on this topic in more detail in the second part. This is followed by a practical section, which presents tips and concrete activities on how to maintain continuous work with young people and how to promote emotional intelligence among them. The latter is particularly important for their overall personal development. At the end, you can find some resources for further practical activities.

How can you use these guidelines? The purpose of the guidelines is to serve as a basis for preparing to work with young people with fewer opportunities. You can use them as a guide to establish an appropriate environment and relationship with young people. More directly, you can also use practical tips and methods to help maintain relationships and develop young people's emotional intelligence. They are primarily intended for theatre activities, but can also be helpful in related fields.

The guidelines reflect the authors' insights gained through our experience in youth work and participation in this project. They are not intended to show the right way to work with youth but to offer guidelines and possible methods to consider when developing and implementing activities. The ways of working with youth are as diverse as the target population, so we encourage a critical approach. Terms such as emotional self-regulation or healthy coping strategies are professional concepts used in the context of emotional intelligence. Our intention is not to impose one specific way of behaving but to highlight the importance of emotional management as a skill that impacts our physical and mental health, relationships and dealing with challenges in life. The aim is to support youth in exploring different methods, emphasising that there are different ways to manage emotions in a healthy and authentic way.

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Expert opinions: Insights from the international research

To better understand the needs of young people at risk of exclusion and the challenges faced by youth workers when implementing creative theatre activities with this target group, a research process has been carried out within the framework of the Empatheatre project to address these issues.

Young people can face the risk of exclusion due to different reasons related to economic aspects (poverty or the risk of poverty, material and social deprivation, homelessness) or individual and social aspects (physical, intellectual, emotional or learning disabilities, neurodevelopmental disorders (e.g. ADHD, autism), being migrant or of immigrant background, being a member of ethnic, sexual or religious minority etc.).

This research process has been carried out in 4 countries (Slovenia, Spain, Ireland, and Belgium) and consisted of 4 focus groups and 15 semi-structured interviews with different youth workers and pedagogical professionals with experience in working with young people at risk of exclusion. The result of this research has culminated in a list of topics and aspects to consider as key points when implementing activities with the target group. These are the results:

Creating a safer environment: Most participants agreed that conducting theatrical methodologies requires a safer, non-judgmental environment built on trust, respect, and acceptance. This involves establishing clear guidelines for respectful behaviour, encouraging open communication, and promoting diversity and inclusion. Encouraging open communication through regular check-ins, feedback sessions, and group discussions allows participants to share their thoughts and feelings openly. Some of the practical steps to create a safer environment include: setting clear guidelines (related to the process as well as to the cooperation of the group), encouraging open communication, promoting diversity and inclusion, providing support and resources, and leading by example. Using the term "safer" acknowledges that while complete safety is unattainable, continuous efforts can enhance the sense of security. This framework allows young people to express themselves freely and step out of their comfort zones.

Collaborative and flexible methodology: The planning of the activities and the ability to develop a flexible and collaborative agenda emerged as a key point to engage young people, suiting their interests and needs. Some of the participants highlighted the importance of adjusting and adapting the agenda to changing circumstances. Moreover, other professionals called out for a participatory approach in the design of the activities, asking for a more active role of young people in the design and implementation of activities.

Promoting expression: During the research, theatrical methodologies were considered a huge opportunity for encouraging expression. This space for expression can take various forms: whether it is a space for young participants to show and express their feelings, or a space that encourages critical thinking, activism, or empowerment.

Inclusion: Participants mentioned the need to create an inclusive space - an environment where all individuals feel welcomed, respected, and able to participate fully (at their own pace) regardless of their background or abilities - for young people during the development of theatre activities. They stressed the importance of adapting activities to individual needs, encouraging participation, promoting diversity, and being aware of the prejudices and biases that professionals themselves may have when working with such diverse groups. For young people with mental, emotional or neurodivergent disorders, an inclusive space means providing flexible activities, reducing stress, and fostering a non-judgmental atmosphere. Non-inclusive practices might involve rigid structures or ignoring individual needs, which could make some feel isolated. Youth workers can support inclusivity by adapting activities, encouraging open communication, and reflecting on their own biases to ensure every young person feels empowered to participate.

Theatrical methodologies approach: The exploration of theatrical methodologies has revealed a variety of innovative approaches: theatre of the oppressed, body expression, improvisational theatre. One suggestion involves using informal self-expression methods, such as dancing and singing at community gatherings, to inspire theatre activities and make them more engaging. Participants also encouraged the incorporation of multidisciplinary theatre methodologies to enhance youth participation and add a modern twist to traditional methods. The importance of incorporating reflective discussions into creative activities was also highlighted, along with questioning the necessity of a final performance. Instead, focusing on open communication with participants to align activities with their needs and expectations was suggested. Additionally, it was noted that young people often prefer activities involving active movement and bodily expression, advocating for dynamic and physically engaging theatre work. These diverse suggestions highlight a blend of traditional and modern approaches aimed at enriching theatrical practices and improving participant engagement.

Participation of families and caretakers: Different views emerged during the discussion of this topic. Some participants considered the involvement of the family in the learning process as a fundamental pillar of support for young people at risk of exclusion, stressing the need to create strong links with them. However, other participants argued that sometimes the family can be detrimental to the personal development of young people, becoming more of an impediment than a point of support. This is why some participants prefer to limit the involvement of family members to purely logistical and administrative issues, outside of the activities.

Access to cultural activities: Participants highlighted the lack of opportunities for vulnerable young people to access cultural activities in the field of informal learning and participation. They mentioned poverty, lack of information, and language and cultural differences as the main barriers. These activities may serve as bridges between societal segments and they emphasise the need for more inclusive and accessible opportunities for participation in artistic and cultural activities.

Community engagement: Participants emphasised engaging with the community as a way to reach youth at risk of exclusion, particularly those young people living in disadvantaged areas. During the research, it was also mentioned the need to create connections with groups and professionals who already work with this target group as a way to reach young people and motivate them to participate in artistic and creative activities.

The points outlined above are the result of the analysis of the interviews and focus groups carried out with these workers and professionals in the 4 countries that are part of the project. In this way, we wanted to obtain information that came directly from professionals who work or have experience in working with young people.¹

1.2 Importance of creating a safer and more inclusive environment

In contemporary educational and community settings, creating environments that are safer and more inclusive requires a thoughtful integration of theoretical proposals that promote equity, respect, and active participation. These proposals serve as guiding principles for designing programs, policies, and practices that support the diverse needs and experiences of all individuals involved.

Clear communication and consent

Effective communication forms the foundation of a safer and more inclusive environment. It begins with transparent and accessible dialogue that sets clear expectations and boundaries for all participants. By fostering open channels of communication, facilitators can establish trust and ensure that everyone feels empowered to voice their needs and concerns. This principle extends to obtaining informed consent, respecting personal boundaries, and promoting a culture of respect where youth's choices and preferences are honoured. Incorporating comprehensive communication strategies involves not only verbal but also non-verbal signs to create an inclusive atmosphere. Utilising visual aids, body language, and active listening techniques ensures that every participant feels heard and understood. It is important to emphasise that participants can share their experiences at their own rhythm and pace without pressure from others in the group or facilitators. This approach not only enhances the quality of interactions but also strengthens the overall community by fostering empathy and understanding among its members.

Adaptive and inclusive practices

Adapting to the diverse needs of young participants is essential for fostering inclusivity. This involves recognising and accommodating a wide range of abilities, learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and accessibility requirements. Implementing inclusive practices ensures that every individual can fully engage and contribute to the community, regardless of their unique circumstances. Moreover, integrating adaptive technologies and resources further enhances accessibility and participation. By embracing technological innovations, such as assistive devices and digital platforms, facilitators can bridge gaps and empower individuals with diverse needs to participate fully in educational and social activities. This commitment to inclusivity not only promotes equity but also enriches the learning experience by valuing and leveraging the strengths of every individual.

¹ The full research report is available [here](#).

Feedback and iterative improvement

Continuous feedback is crucial for fostering a dynamic and responsive environment. By soliciting feedback from participants, youth workers can gain valuable insights into their experiences, preferences, and areas for improvement. This approach allows programs and initiatives to evolve in real time, addressing emerging needs and enhancing overall effectiveness. Furthermore, establishing feedback loops promotes a culture of accountability and transparency within the community. By actively incorporating participant input into decision-making processes, facilitators demonstrate a commitment to collaboration and shared responsibility. Additionally, the feedback received can directly influence the content, ensuring that it remains relevant and responsive to the participants' needs and interests. This collaborative approach also cultivates a sense of ownership and investment among all participants.

Supporting identity development

Creating opportunities for identity exploration and affirmation is fundamental to promoting personal growth and well-being. This involves designing curricula, activities, and mentorship programs that validate and celebrate diverse identities, experiences, and perspectives. By providing safer spaces for self-expression, educators empower individuals to embrace their identities authentically and with pride. Fostering positive role models and mentorship relationships further supports identity development. By connecting individuals with mentors who share similar backgrounds or experiences, educators can provide invaluable guidance and encouragement, promoting resilience and self-confidence among participants.

Cultural competence and sensitivity

Promoting cultural competence - the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds - requires a deep understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural norms, values, and traditions. Youth workers must try to eliminate prejudices and establish welcoming environments that value and respect cultural variety. For example, fostering cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration enhances mutual understanding and promotes social cohesion. By creating opportunities for individuals from different cultural backgrounds to learn from one another, educators cultivate a culture of curiosity, empathy, and global citizenship within the community.

SUMMARY:

- Effective communication and consent establish trust and empower all participants.
- Adaptive practices ensure inclusivity for diverse abilities and backgrounds.
- Feedback mechanisms drive continuous improvement and accountability.
- Identity development fosters resilience and authentic self-expression.
- Cultural competence promotes understanding and respect for diversity.

In conclusion, integrating these theoretical proposals into educational and community settings lays the foundation for creating safer, more inclusive, and empowering environments. We can create environments where diversity is celebrated, equity is upheld, and every person can thrive and contribute meaningfully by placing a high priority on clear communication, adaptive practices, feedback-driven improvement, identity development, cultural competence, and collaborative engagement.

2. PRACTICAL METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Following are practical recommendations, tips and methods that youth workers can use directly in their work with young people.

In our research and needs analysis, we found that one of the biggest challenges for the project partners and youth workers is to maintain a continuous relationship with young people and to motivate them to attend extracurricular activities consistently. This is therefore the content of the first part of the practical methods and techniques. To promote the holistic development of young people, concrete guidelines for the development of emotional intelligence, which is the basis for personal, academic and professional prospects, follow.

2.1 Tips and traps for continuous work with young people

TIPS FOR CONTINUOUS WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Building a relationship

- Conduct “team-building” activities to foster connections and cooperation.
 - *Positive check-in at the beginning of the activity.*
 - *Game about common point: one person in the middle of the circle says something they like, everyone that shares this switches places.*
 - *Celebrates birthdays and successes.*
 - *Positive gossip: in small groups, one person turns his back to the group and the others will gossip about him/her only saying positive elements.*
 - *Project activities where they have to collaborate to reach a specific goal.*
- Encourage self-confidence and mutual respect among participants.
- Teach mediation skills to handle conflicts constructively.
- Create a safer, non-judgmental environment (see page 5) celebrating diversity (small events to represent different cultures, follow the diversity calendar ...)
- Offer sincere compliments and show genuine interest in each young person’s life: wishing birthdays, good first day at school, and religious events.
- Encourage and implement individual conversations.
- Be positive, enthusiastic and motivated. Point out the positive behaviour/actions more than the negative ones.
- Implement a pedagogy based on care and trust.

2. Develop a solid pedagogy

- Train mentors in group management: respect, trust, helping each other, mediation and conflict resolution skills, non-violent communication, positivity, empathy, and framework setting.
- Understand the significant impact of a mentor’s presence.
- Plan activities tailored to different age groups:
 - **Ages 9-12:** Structured, adult-guided activities with clear direction.
 - **Ages 13-16:** Project-based activities with roles suited to interests and talents.

- **Ages 16+:** Youth-led activities with mentors providing a guiding framework.
- Adapt activities to meet the evolving needs of the participants. For example - if we have participants with lower cognitive abilities, the tasks should not be so cognitively demanding that some of the participants are not able to understand them. At the same time we should make sure that the tasks are still interesting enough.
- Be flexible and responsive to the logistical and practical challenges faced by young people. If you see that an activity is not working (they are not enjoying it, they don't understand it ...), don't be afraid to change it. It is best to give them very specific exercises with short, clear and concise instructions.
- Care & trust.

3. Long-term planning

- Develop long-term plans that adapt to the age and developmental level of the participants.
- Encourage goal setting and provide consistent support to achieve these goals².

4. Make the youth feel responsible and involved

- Involve them in decision-making.
- Give them information about optional activities or other opportunities.
- Share (and cocreate) the calendar with them.
- Ask them to inform the mentor when they are absent.
- Ask for their feedback and take it into account for the following activities.
- Nominate a captain every week that will have special responsibilities for his/her group (you can also have different roles that participants can choose to take, each role is connected to specific task (tasks), e.g. one participant is responsible for short warm-up/introductory activity, one takes care of the equipment needed for the activity etc.).

5. Reflect on the involvement of parents (depending on the age of the young people and their needs)

- Parents are an important factor in the involvement of youngsters in activities.
- Reflect on the approach linked to parents and caretakers involvement according to the family situation and young people's age (see page 6) :
 - Parental involvement and positive communication with the youth worker might increase youngsters' participation and motivation for the activities (for example, making sure the youngsters attempt the activities).
 - This collaboration could also weaken the trust between the youngsters and the youth worker. Theatre activities should be a safe place for the youngster with the support of youth workers, outside of family oversight.

² Goal-setting techniques are available [here](#).

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES

- Welcome everyone in a personal way. Start the activity with everyone sharing with the group one thing that happened to them since you last saw each other. This helps build group dynamics and also gives the participants a space to express themselves.
- Start with a check-in or an energizer to start the session with something positive and fun and set the tone for the main activity.

Check-in example: Ask the participants to choose for example an animal, an object, a colour (or any other category you choose) that would best describe their current feelings. They can pair their feelings with a sound and a movement that the group then repeats. Optional: the participants can share why they chose that animal/object/colour ... With that the participants learn how to articulate their emotions.

Energizer example: Samurai. The first person, who is a samurai, raises their hands above their head as if holding a samurai sword (katana) and makes a loud sound (HA!). She still holds her arms above her head, while the two neighbours swing their imaginary swords towards her waist (as if trying to cut her in half) and again shout loudly HA! (they have to look each other in the eye to be in sync). Then the first samurai points her raised hands towards someone else in the circle, looks at her and says "HA!". That person then becomes the new samurai and again raises the imaginary katana above her head and says HA! and continues the game.³

- Implement routines adapted to the group and the activities. Don't be afraid to repeat the same exercises. This gives the participants a feeling of safety as well as an option to develop the exercise and make it their own.
- Decide together on a clear framework, agreement and rules (charter). It is important that the initiatives come from the participants themselves. Ask them what they need to feel comfortable and safer in the group. As this is a continuous work, new initiatives can also be added at any time during the activity.
- Finish the day with a connection activity to build the relationship between the group and with the mentor.

Example of a check-out activity: The group chooses one word that represents the days' activities. We stand in a circle with one hand pointed to the middle and the other to the outside. Then we all clap our hands together in the middle and say the word we chose. Choosing the word is a great bonding experience that reflects on the day's work and the clap is a clear sign that the "formal part" of the activity is over.

³ An example of Samurai activity can be found [here](#).

TRAPS TO AVOID

1. Ignoring individual needs

- Overlooking the unique challenges faced by young people or assuming they all face the same issues.
- Not addressing transportation issues that might hinder participation.
- Not taking into account cultural and socio-economic differences (language barriers, religion, money, concept of time and attitudes toward professionals and schools).

2. Lack of immediate benefits

- Failing to communicate the immediate and long-term benefits of participation to the youth and their families.
- Assuming all participants will see the value in learning new skills without relating them to their current interests and needs.

3. Inflexible programming

- Sticking rigidly to a curriculum without considering the evolving interests and circumstances of the participants.
- Neglecting to involve older youths in planning and decision-making processes.

4. Underestimating the role of mentors

- Underestimating the importance of building trust and showing genuine care.
- Not providing enough support and training for mentors to effectively engage with young people → Mentors need to understand youth, their behaviours, their development and evolution, and their interests.

2.2 Methods and recommendations for developing emotional intelligence

Promoting the development of emotional intelligence (EI) in youth is crucial for their personal, academic, and professional success. EI increases resilience and self-awareness, and assists in developing healthy relationships. Daniel Goleman's EI theory outlines five key components: self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills, and motivation.

Addressing emotional intelligence is an important part of young people's involvement in theatre activities, as it encourages them to reflect on themselves, to manage their experience and to interact more easily with other individuals. At the same time, it helps us to encourage young people's motivation for continuous participation in artistic activities.

General guidelines for enhancing emotional intelligence

Share key messages about emotions: All emotions are OK, normal, valid, acceptable, and they give us important information. They come and go, we feel different emotions, they can be pleasant or unpleasant and the intensity of an emotion depends on the person and the situation. There are no good or bad emotions (it is important not to label them as positive or negative), but there are appropriate and inappropriate ways of expressing (or acting on) emotions. Emotional intelligence is not fixed and can be developed over time with effort and practice.

- Step-by-step approach: Adjust activities to the group's EI levels, and be patient and persistent.
- Be an EI role model: Demonstrate good listening, respect, perseverance, and caring behaviour. Provide guidance and supportive feedback.
- Celebrate emotions: Notice, express, and celebrate all emotions.

COMPONENTS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND IDEAS FOR PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

1. Self-awareness

Self-awareness involves recognizing and understanding one's own emotions and their impact on thoughts and behaviour. It is the first step towards understanding how we can manage them.

Activities:

- Emotion check-ins: Regularly encourage youth to reflect (and share) their feelings through journaling, group discussions, or brief check-ins (e.g. by sharing or marking current emotion by using emoji cards or emotion scale⁴). Encourage learning new words for emotions. Use body silhouettes to discuss where in the body emotions are felt.

⁴ Examples can be found [here](#) or [here](#).

- The emotional name game: Each participant writes down an adjective that describes a positive trait for each letter of his/her name (e.g. JACK = Joyful / Assertive / Calm /Kind). Discuss the importance of these traits and emotions.
- Tune-in with emotions: Stop, notice and name the emotions during different activities. How do you feel? How intense are these emotions? Do you want to feel more or less of a specific emotion? What can you do for that?
- Notice and discuss emotions in art, songs, and movies.
- Mindfulness practices: Practice exercises like meditation, deep-breathing exercises⁵ or body scans that help us become more aware of our emotions. Emphasise that mindfulness is about noticing, observing, and accepting without judgement.

2. Emotional self-regulation

Self-regulation involves the capacity to regulate and manage emotions and impulses. It is about having control over our reactions and behaviours.

Activities:

- Deep breathing exercises can help us calm down and pause before responding. Practise different relaxation techniques, using music (participants can create their own playlists for calming down), visualisation or progressive muscle relaxation⁶.
- Role-playing: Play “What would you do if...?” to reflect on reactions to different scenarios (e.g. “What would you do if someone lied to you?” or “What would you do if you won the tournament?”).
- Use emotion cards to discuss how often participants feel certain emotions and ways to respond to these emotions (individually or in situations with others). Create a list of possible healthy coping strategies for different emotions.

3. Empathy development

Empathy is the ability to recognise and relate to other people’s emotions, experiences and understand their perspectives.

Activities:

- Active listening skills: Practise active listening in pairs where one speaks about their experience and emotions while the other listens and paraphrases to show understanding. Encourage observing body language, asking open questions and trying to understand how others might be feeling.
- Perspective-taking exercises: Engage youth in role-playing activities where they must understand and act out different perspectives, e.g. reflecting a disagreement or conflict from the perspective of the other person.⁷
- Play the “Maybe” game: When situation happens (e.g. a person doesn’t show up at the group session), others think about possible reasons (e.g. “Maybe he got sick.”, “Maybe

⁵ Examples of breathing exercises can be found [here](#) or [here](#).

⁶ Script for progressive muscle relaxation is available [here](#).

⁷ An example of perspective taking activity is available [here](#).

she had to babysit her sister.”, “Maybe he feels really sad and wasn’t up for meeting other people.”).

4. Social skills

This component involves understanding and managing the emotions of others to connect, interact and collaborate with them.

Activities:

- Encourage group activities with a common goal to promote teamwork, collaboration, communication, and conflict resolution.
- Play charades to practice focusing on facial and body language.
- Use role-playing to simulate real-life conflicts and practice resolving them constructively.
- Volunteer work⁸: Encourage participation in community service to expose youth to diverse life situations. By engaging with diverse people and helping each other, young people can foster empathy, compassion, responsibility, the sense of fulfilment and purpose, and the sense of belonging. Volunteering can contribute to the development of self-esteem and confidence, social skills, and to learning new skills and making friends.

5. Motivation

Self-motivation is a key component of social and emotional learning, and essential for accomplishing tasks and achieving goals. It is strongly affected by our emotions.

Activities:

- Goal setting and achievements: Teach different goal-setting techniques (*see page 10*) and celebrate achievements. Develop self-discipline through regular practice and by breaking down tasks into manageable steps. Praise the achievement of each step individually - focusing on the effort put in.
- Accepting mistakes: Create an environment where mistakes are welcomed and discuss how making mistakes can provide learning opportunities. Respond positively even to less successful attempts. Feedback should be given to encourage learning and trying again.

⁸ Some ideas for volunteering can be found [here](#).

CONCLUSION

Creating a safer and more inclusive environment is the basis for working with young people, especially those with fewer opportunities.

It is important to establish open, clear and consensual communication, tailor activities to young people's needs and ask for their feedback. Their development must be supported, and their specificities must be strengthened, considering their special needs, cultural, geographical and other differences. The focus must be on building a relationship with youth.

Before starting, youth workers should ask themselves what the purpose of the activities is and what is the goal of working with young people. They need to pay attention to their beliefs, to their unconscious bias, self-motivation and to reflect on their socio-emotional development.

When working with youth it is important to use positive reinforcement to encourage behaviours that reflect emotional intelligence, such as perseverance and self-discipline. Youth workers should give youth recognition for their efforts and accomplishments, fostering a sense of achievement.

By incorporating different activities and strategies (presented in the guidelines) into programs for youth, mentors can help young individuals become socially and emotionally intelligent, resilient, and socially adept adults. This will result in young people being encouraged to become more active members of society and develop into responsible citizens who will take care of their future and the future of others.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Examples of practical activities for young people:

1. Activities to promote resilience, flow, mindfulness, and gratitude (developed during the LTTA in Brussels organized by the partners of the EMPATHEATRY project):

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/122b3Zmqf80VQkdLwUvQTCVOgAO2rI9qK/view?usp=sharing>

2. Goal-setting techniques:

Burk, A. (2023, January 2). *A Beginner's Guide to Goal Setting for Teens - Powerful Youth*. Powerful Youth. <https://powerfulyouth.com/beginners-guide-goal-setting-for-teens-smart-goals/>

3. Script for progressive muscle relaxation:

Progressive muscle relaxation script. (n. d.). Baylor University. <https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/183466.pdf>

4. Activities to take the perspective of others:

Sutton, J. (n. d.). *Trading Places Worksheet*. PositivePsychology.com. <https://positive-b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Trading-Places-Worksheet.pdf> [Trading%20Places%20Worksheet%20ois](https://positive-b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Trading-Places-Worksheet.pdf)

5. Activities for building relationships:

20 Social skills Activities for Teens. (2023, November 21). Mental Health Center Kids. <https://mentalhealthcenterkids.com/blogs/articles/social-skills-activities-for-teens>

Relationship Skills - SEL Toolkit - ACT for Youth. (n.d.). <https://actforyouth.net/program-toolkit/ya-activities/sel/relationship.cfm>

6. Example of a simple quiz to reflect on emotional intelligence:

Emotional Intelligence quiz. (n.d.). Greater Good. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/ei_quiz

7. Examples of materials for emotion check-ins:

Emotion Check Ins: Emoji Wheels/Cards, Emotion Wheels, and Mood Meters. (n.d.). BetterLesson. <https://teaching.betterlesson.com/strategy/161>

The 5-Point Scale: A Tool to Learn Emotions and Calming Strategies. (n.d.). Milestones Autism Resources. <https://www.milestones.org/map/browse-articles/the-5-point-scale-a-tool-to-learn-emotions-and-calming-strategies>

8. Examples of breathing exercises:

Breathing exercises: relaxation activity for children, teenagers and parents. (n.d.). Raising Children Network. <https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/activity-guides/wellbeing/breathing-exercises-relaxation-activity>

Mindful Breathing Exercises. (n.d.). Action for healthy kids.

<https://www.actionforhealthykids.org/activity/mindful-breathing-exercises/>

9. Ideas for volunteering:

Schwartz, M. (2023, October 24). *50 Community Service Ideas for Teen Volunteers*. TeenLife.

<https://www.teenlife.com/blog/50-community-service-ideas-teen-volunteers/>

10. Apps to promote the development of emotional intelligence:

App – Calm. (n. d.). Calm. <https://www.calm.com/>

App – Smiling mind. (n.d.). Smiling Mind. <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app>