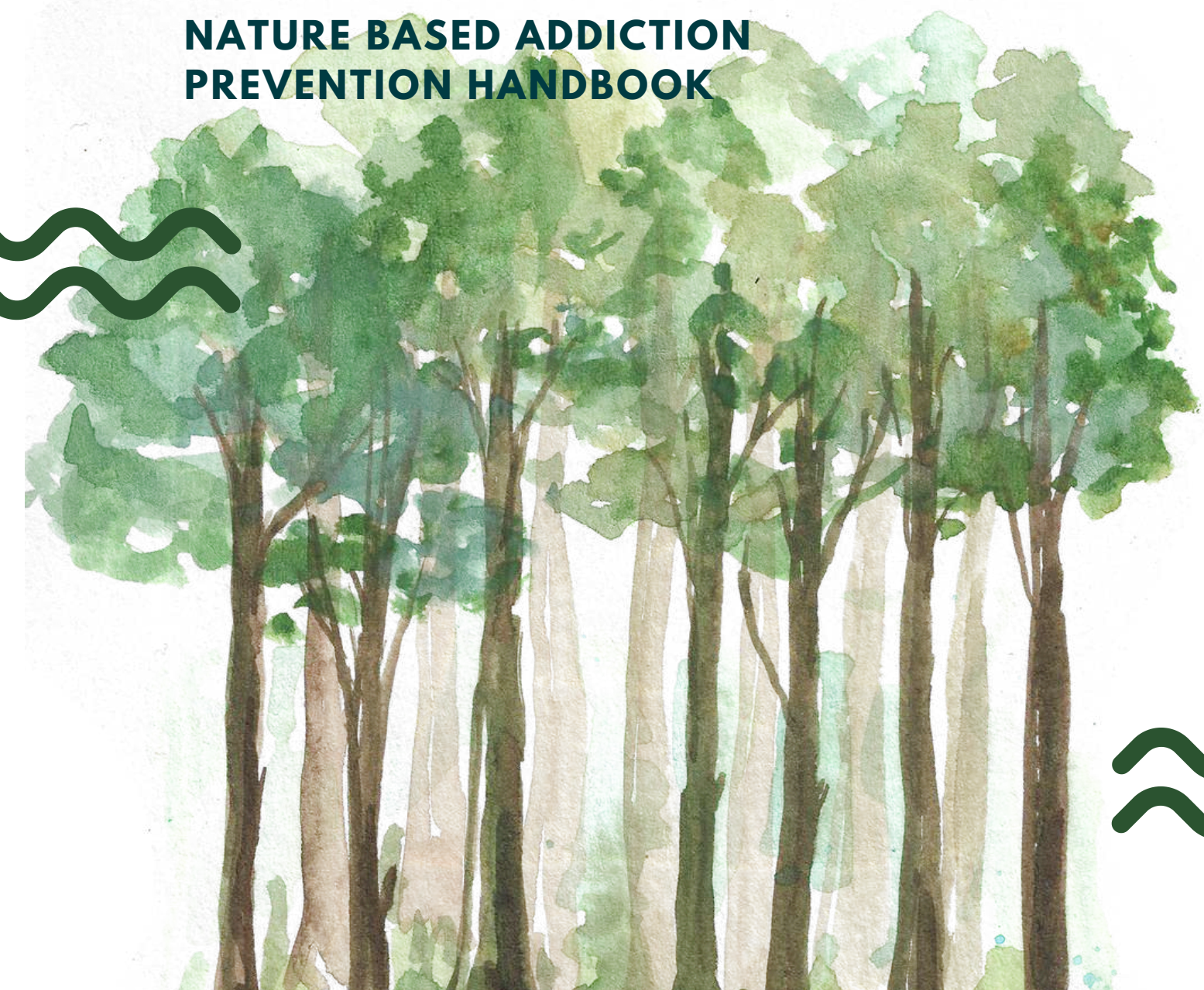


ERASMUS +
KA210 YOU "BACK TO NATURE: EMPOWERING YOUTH AGAINST ADDICTION
THROUGH FOREST THERAPY"

BACK TO NATURE

NATURE BASED ADDICTION
PREVENTION HANDBOOK



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FOR THE PUBLISHER:

IVANA ANDREJIĆ

EDITOR:

IVANA ANDREJIĆ

AUTHORS:

**IVANA ANDREJIĆ
INGA DREIMANE
MANUELA RENZI
TAMARA URBANČIČ
MAJA MILAVEC
SANDRA VERDEV
MOJCA ŽNIDARŠIČ**

GRAPHIC DESIGN:

**POENTA, SERBIA IN COLLABORATION WITH MILOŠ STANKOVIĆ PR, FOTOGRAFSKA
RADNJA BUBE**

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AGAINST ADDICTION THROUGH FOREST THERAPY"**

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

A consortium of partners is implementing the project titled "Back to Nature: Empowering Youth Against Addiction through Forest Therapy" (2024-3-SI02-KA210-YOU-000290063), aimed at strengthening the capacities of youth workers and supporting young people in overcoming mental health challenges and addiction through innovative, nature-based approaches.

The project is funded through the Erasmus+ programme.

The consortium consists of organizations with diverse expertise in youth work, education, and environmental approaches:

- **Secondary School of Forestry, Woodworking and Health Care Postojna (Slovenia)** – Project coordinator, an educational institution with strong expertise in forestry, environmental education, and youth engagement;
- **Poenta (Serbia)** – A youth-focused organization experienced in non-formal education, sustainability, and social innovation, with a strong focus on empowering young people;
- **Forest Therapy Hub (Portugal)** – An organization specializing in forest-based practices, environmental awareness, and innovative methods such as forest therapy.

The project aims to achieve the following main and specific objectives:

- The main objective is to develop innovative strategies that promote mental well-being and resilience among young people.

Specific objectives include:

- Empowering young people and strengthening their role in youth work;
- Promoting mental health through reconnection with nature;
- Developing intellectual outputs, particularly a handbook of methods for preventing addiction through forest therapy;
- Ensuring inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities and promoting EU values through project activities such as meetings, mobilities, and events.

The main output of the project will be a comprehensive manual of methods for preventing addiction through forest therapy, designed for youth workers and educators.



The project activities include:

- Development of innovative methods in youth work:
- The project introduces forest therapy as a new and innovative approach in youth work, focusing on addiction prevention and mental well-being. Youth workers will be actively involved in all phases of the project, contributing to decision-making, implementation, and evaluation processes. This participatory approach will enhance their competences and foster innovation in the youth sector.
- Environmental awareness and nature-based learning: Through forest therapy activities, young people will explore the connection between nature and mental health.

The project promotes environmental awareness by encouraging participants to understand the positive impact of nature on well-being, leading to more sustainable attitudes and behaviours.

Overall, the project contributes to improving the quality and innovation of youth work, supporting mental health among young people, and fostering stronger connections between individuals, communities, and the natural environment.



INTRODUCTION - ABOUT HANDBOOK

Addiction is a complex disease that affects both the person themselves and their loved ones. It is one of the few diseases in which the person is often blamed, because the decisions made by the individual and their daily habits are seen as having played a major role in its development.

However, the decisions a person makes and their daily habits are only the smallest, visible part of the development of addiction. Its invisible side includes genetic and biological factors, social and environmental factors, and psychological and individual factors. Although many factors cannot be influenced or changed directly by the individual, everyone can strengthen their individual and psychological factors, especially if they receive knowledge about them and the opportunity to develop skills.

Developing knowledge and skills is an important part of addiction prevention, and it is more important than moralising or trying to scare people with the consequences. Therefore, this handbook focuses on strengthening individual factors such as stress management, emotion regulation, and the development of healthy habits and motivation. Scientific research also confirms that strengthening these factors is much more accessible and effective when it is connected with nature. Being in nature especially supports stress resilience and therefore also emotional regulation, motivation, and the strengthening of daily habits.

In this handbook, you will find:

- The main theoretical ideas that are appropriate to share with young people,
- Examples of activities that can be practised individually while being in nature.

The programme is based on forest therapy principles, which emphasise the importance of nature connection through the senses, creativity, social cohesion and interaction. Being in nature is an important experience in itself. It encourages participants to be in nature in an easy and accessible way, and it offers a supportive platform from which to explore daily experience – something that is especially important for addiction prevention.

As with topics such as abuse or difficult relationships, addiction is not something that is recommended to be discussed first, or without first building trust. This handbook therefore offers examples of how to implement sessions of an educational addiction prevention programme in nature, combining practical experience and theory for each session.

All session examples are developed using a peer-to-peer approach and are based on content created by young people who had experienced nature connection training before developing the session content.

The project activities include:

- Development of innovative methods in youth work:
- The project introduces forest therapy as a new and innovative approach in youth work, focusing on addiction prevention and mental well-being. Youth workers will be actively involved in all phases of the project, contributing to decision-making, implementation, and evaluation processes. This participatory approach will enhance their competences and foster innovation in the youth sector.
- Environmental awareness and nature-based learning: Through forest therapy activities, young people will explore the connection between nature and mental health.

The project promotes environmental awareness by encouraging participants to understand the positive impact of nature on well-being, leading to more sustainable attitudes and behaviours.

Overall, the project contributes to improving the quality and innovation of youth work, supporting mental health among young people, and fostering stronger connections between individuals, communities, and the natural environment.



MODULE 1

EMOTIONS



ABOUT THIS MODULE

In this module, we explore what emotions are, how they are connected to our senses and daily experiences, and how they are regulated by different internal systems.

Understanding emotions and these systems helps young people to recognise what is happening inside themselves, to name their experiences, and to develop healthier ways of responding to difficult situations.

- **Senses and feelings** – reactions to the external world (sight, light, sound, scent, touch, etc.).
- **Affection** – a feeling or emotion of liking and caring for someone or something.
- **Emotions** can be described as subjective mental reactions to situations that bring to the conscious level information about our psychological state. Emotional reactions are subjective because they are built on:
 - a. **personal experience in similar situations before,**
 - b. **present needs and available resources,**
 - c. **Expectations in the present moment and in the future.**
- **Emotions** (according to Paul Gilbert) are regulated by three systems:
 - a. **Threat-focused system**
 - Looks for safety and protection and has an activating and inhibiting effect.
 - Drives emotions such as anger, fear, rage, etc.
 - In everyday language, we might call it a survival system.
 - b. **Affiliating, non-wanting focused system**
 - Looks for safety, kindness, and connection and has soothing effects.
 - Drives emotions such as calm, peace, nurture, etc.
 - In everyday language, we might call it a restorative system.
 - c. **Incentive, resource-focused system**
 - Looks for wanting, pursuing, achieving, and consuming, and has activating effects.
 - Drives emotions such as joy, excitement, achievement, etc.
 - In everyday language, we might call it a motivation system.

Well-being is affected by how much each system is used. Most often, the threat-focused system and the incentive, resource-focused system are overused, while the affiliating, soothing system is underused.

EMOTIONS IN DAILY LIFE

In this module, we focus on how emotions show up in everyday life, especially during youth. We look at how emotional regulation is linked to brain development, daily habits and the environment, and how nature can support the restorative system and improve motivation, thinking and overall quality of life.

- **Emotional regulation** depends strongly on brain development and functioning. Brain development is very intensive up to around 30 years of age, which means that emotional regulation is still developing during youth and young adulthood.
- **In youth**, emotional reactions are often more impulsive (actions come before thoughts) and are strongly influenced by the environment, relationships, daily schedule, and habits.
- **For young people**, the affiliating-focused system (restorative, supportive relationships and encouragement) is extremely important. It gives strong support to the incentive, resource-focused system and therefore to motivation and daily activity.
- **Emotions** affect cognitive processes, such as:
 - attention, focus, and endurance,
 - memorising and remembering,
 - thinking processes (imagination, planning, self-awareness, etc.).
- **Daily habits** such as sleep, diet, physical activity, time in nature, hobbies, and time with other people help to strengthen emotional regulation.
- **Activating the restorative system** takes time and effort because it is usually easier and faster to shift into survival or motivation mode. Being in nature and doing activities in nature are tools that help to “turn on” the restorative emotional system and:
 - increase daily life quality,
 - support cognitive processes (attention, memory, thinking),
 - Improve emotional regulation.
- When enough time is given for restoration, the motivation system works with better quality and more effectively. If there is not enough restoration, it is easy to move from motivation mode back into survival mode, and therefore into stress.

EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS:

EMOTIONS IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE

Session length: 45–60 minutes

Group size: 6–16 participants

Overall goals:

- To experience pleasant and supportive emotions in connection with nature.
- To strengthen awareness, skills, and knowledge related to emotional regulation.

This session was co-created with young participants during the in-person training. The activities below have been adapted to be clearer and aligned with forest therapy principles, while keeping the spirit of their original proposals.

1st ACTIVITY – Silent Sitting with Nature

Time: ~10 minutes

Aim:

To arrive in the place, calm the nervous system, and open the senses to the surrounding environment.

Description:

Invite participants to choose a comfortable place to sit, either on the ground or on a stable surface.

- Invite them to sit quietly for about 5–7 minutes.
- They may gently close their eyes or soften their gaze.
- Encourage them to notice:
 - sounds (near and far),
 - temperature on the skin,
 - movement of air (for example, wind),
 - contact of their body with the ground or seat.
- Remind them there is nothing to do “right or wrong”; simply notice what is present.

Sharing:

Invite each participant (only if they wish) to share one word that describes how it was to sit with closed or soft eyes and notice the environment around them.



EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS:

EMOTIONS IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE

2nd ACTIVITY – Nature Objects & Shared Sculpture

Time: ~15 minutes

Aim:

To explore nature through touch and sight, to awaken curiosity, and to create a sense of connection and cooperation in the group.

Description:

Divide participants into small groups. In each group, one person will begin as the group leader.

1. Invite the group leader to slowly walk around the area and choose one small natural element (e.g., leaf, stone, stick, cone) for each member of the group, making sure not to damage nature.
2. While the group leader is searching, invite each group member to quietly find one small element for the group leader.
3. When everyone has received their element:
 - Invite them to observe it:
 - colours, shape, size, weight, texture, temperature.
 - If appropriate, you can gently invite them to notice if any emotion, memory, or association appears while holding this element.

Optional variation – Common sculpture & story:

- Each group uses its collected elements to create a small shared sculpture on the ground.
- Invite them to create a short story or image connected to the sculpture, for example, around the theme “getting to know each other” or “how we are as a group today”.

Sharing:

Invite each participant to share one pleasant moment from this activity (for example, receiving an element, touching a texture, creating the sculpture, or listening to the story).



EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS:

EMOTIONS IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE

3rd ACTIVITY – Nature Memory Game

Time: ~10–15 minutes

Aim:

To playfully engage attention and memory, and to connect emotions and personal experiences with nature elements.

Materials:

- 36 memory cards (18 pairs) with pictures of nature elements (leaves, stones, water, trees, animals, etc.).

Description:

1. Place all cards face down on a table or on a flat surface.
2. One by one, each participant turns over two cards:
 - If they match, the participant keeps the pair.
 - If they do not match, both cards are turned face down again.
3. The group is invited to see this as a cooperative game: the “success” is that, by the end of the time (about 5–7 minutes of play), as many participants as possible hold at least one pair of cards, and all cards have been discovered together.

Optional extension:

If there is enough time, invite each participant to:

- show the pair they have, and
- share one pleasant or meaningful moment or memory from their life that is connected to the element in the picture (for example, “this reminds me of walking by the river”, “I felt calm looking at the trees”, etc.).

Sharing:

In small groups, invite participants to reflect on:

- What emotions did they notice in themselves during the game (for example, curiosity, joy, frustration, excitement, calm),
- What emotions did they observe in others (without naming people)?

Then, in the big group, they can share some of these observations in a general way (e.g., “I noticed there was a lot of laughter when someone found a pair”, “I felt a bit nervous when it was my turn”).





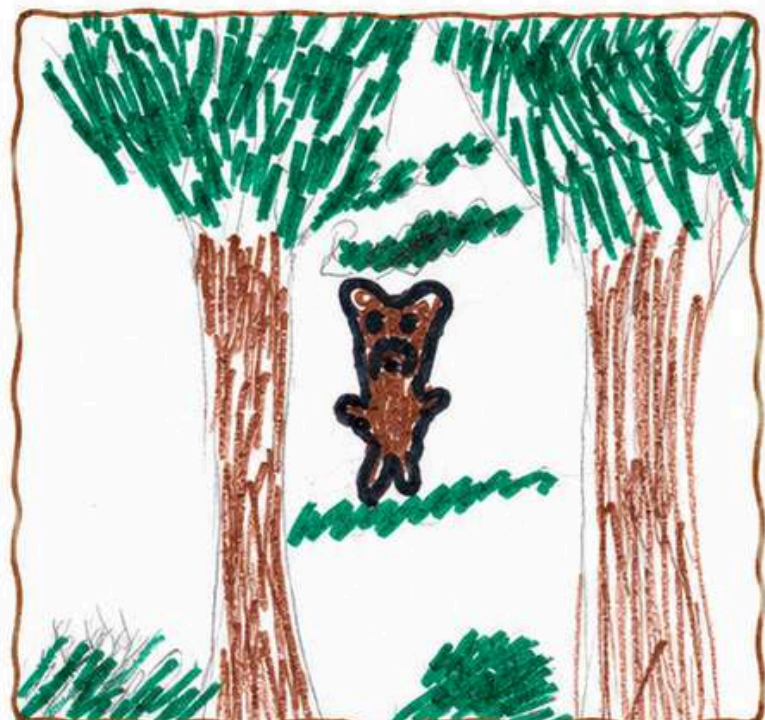
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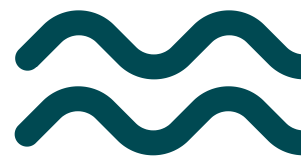
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EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS: EMOTIONS IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE



4th ACTIVITY – Emotions in Daily Life

Time: ~10–15 minutes

Aim:

To connect the emotional experiences of the session with basic theory about emotions and emotional systems, and to link this to daily life.

Description:

The session guide invites participants to name which emotions they felt or experienced during the activities (e.g., calm, curiosity, joy, embarrassment, excitement, etc.).

After collecting some examples, the guide briefly shares a small amount of theory, adapted to the group's age and understanding:

- What are emotions and sensations?
- The three emotional systems (survival/threat, motivation/drive, restorative/soothing).
- Examples of emotions that belong to each system.
- Examples of activities and habits (including nature connection) that can help activate the restorative system in daily life.

Encourage participants to connect what they learned in the session with their own routines (sleep, time outside, hobbies, relationships, etc.).

5th ACTIVITY – Reflection

Time: ~5 minutes

Aim:

To integrate the experience and close the session with a simple, positive reflection.

Description:

Gather the group and invite each participant (only if they feel comfortable) to share one thought, moment, or insight from the session, for example:

- something they learned about emotions,
- a pleasant moment they experienced,
- something they would like to remember or try again in their daily life.

Thank the group for their participation and acknowledge their contributions.

MODULE 2

STRESS



ABOUT THIS MODULE

In this module, we explore what stress is, how the body reacts to stressful situations, and how these automatic reactions can lead to different types of behaviour. Understanding the biological stress response helps young people recognise what is happening in their bodies and minds and is an important step in learning how to manage stress in healthier ways.

Stress – a state of mental and physical tension that appears when a person faces a difficult situation. According to the World Health Organization (2023), stress is a natural human response that helps us react to challenges and threats in life. Everyone experiences stress to some degree.

Biological stress response – three main stages:

- **A stressor** is perceived by the sensory systems of the brain. The brain evaluates and compares this stressful challenge with:
- **The current state of the organism, and**
- **Previous stress experiences.**

When the brain detects a challenge to homeostasis (the internal balance of the body), it activates the Autonomic Nervous System. Through the **Sympathoadrenal Medullary (SAM) system**, this activation triggers the rapid release of the catecholamines noradrenaline and adrenaline.

At the same time, the brain activates **the Hypothalamic–Pituitary–Adrenal (HPA) axis**, which results in the release of adrenal glucocorticoids, especially cortisol in humans.

Based on this biological response and the person's mental and emotional capacity, different adaptive or non-adaptive behavioural responses can follow. These are often described as the **"fight–flight–freeze" model**, to which the "flop" and "fawn" responses have been added:

- **Fight** – defensive, emotional, dominating or intimidating behaviour.
- **Flight** – avoiding, anxious, restless, or escaping behaviour.
- **Freeze** – slowed, automatic, unaware or emotionally "numb" behaviour, not fully present.
- **Flop** – apathetic, dissociative behaviour with poor awareness.
- **Fawn** – self-confusing behaviour, people-pleasing, submitting or over-adapting to others.

STRESS IN DAILY LIFE

In this module, we look at how stress appears in everyday life. Stress is not always negative: in small and manageable amounts, it can help us stay active, focused, and able to adapt. The challenge comes when stress becomes too intense or too long-lasting, especially if a person does not have enough internal and external resources to cope.

Stress is a natural part of daily life and can help maintain effectiveness and the ability to adapt to different situations and circumstances. However, it is important to consider how many resources a person has to keep a balance between inner needs and environmental demands.

Examples of stressors can be:

- life events (changes, losses, transitions),
- environmental factors (noise, light, temperature, crowded places),
- daily schedule and level of predictability,
- quality of social network and relationships,
- school or work demands, financial difficulties, etc.

Eustress – a chronic stress experience that is accompanied by the ability and capacity to adapt and to obtain some benefit from the situation. Eustress can:

- strengthen motivation,
- support learning and growth,
- encourage approach behaviour (moving towards challenges).

Distress – a chronic stress experience that is accompanied by a lack of ability to adapt and to meet basic needs. Distress is often followed by:

- anxiety,
- depression,
- or a combination of both.

Eustress can turn into distress when stress moves from positive or tolerable to toxic.

- Tolerable stress
- Serious, but temporary stress.
- Biochemical stress reactions are present, but there is enough support to recover.

It is buffered by:

- positive daily routines,
- supportive relationships,
- strong or stable self-esteem.

Toxic stress

- Intense and prolonged stress mode.
- Includes ongoing biochemical reactions (for example, cortisol levels that are too high or too low for a long time).

There is no sufficient support from:

- daily routines,
- relationships,
- or self-esteem.

Over time, toxic stress can seriously affect mental and physical health.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

In this module, we introduce a simple framework for understanding stress management at a psychological level. The goal is not to remove stress completely, but to help the body and mind return to balance and to support a good quality of life, with satisfaction, purpose, and meaning.

- The goal of stress management at a psychological level is:
 - to help maintain the body's homeostasis (internal balance), and
 - to support a good quality of life, including satisfaction, purpose, and a sense of meaning.
- Stress management can be understood through different levels of awareness and action:
 - **Level of control**
 - Recognising what is possible to control and change through direct action.
 - For example, a person can control where to go or what activity to choose, but cannot directly control their blood pressure by will alone.
 - **Level of regulation**
 - Recognising what is possible to regulate indirectly through behaviour.
 - For example, a person cannot simply decide that their heart rate changes, but they can regulate it through breathing or relaxation exercises.
 - **Level of knowledge**
 - Recognising and understanding the situation, its reasons, and its possible course (prognosis).
 - **For example:**
 - understanding that a panic attack is not actually a life-threatening situation,
 - recognising that a craving for something is a strong urge, but not a real need.
 -

- **The level of reaction**

- The ability to keep some space between feeling and action, and to choose how to respond.
- This means not acting only on automatic impulses, but having the capacity to notice a reaction and then decide on a response.

- **Stress management focuses on:**

- Maintaining a sense of safety, predictability, and resilience.
- Creating time between reaction and action, to choose the most helpful response.
- Giving the person a better chance to solve problems and find good solutions.

Stress management itself is not the same as problem-solving, but it creates the inner conditions that make problem-solving easier.

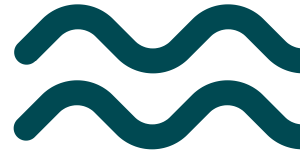
- **Stress management tools include:**

- **Action** – what people choose to do (behaviours, routines, activities).
- **Thought** – what thoughts people choose to focus on and follow (interpretations, self-talk, beliefs).

In this programme, many of these actions and thoughts are practised in connection with nature to make stress management more accessible and embodied for young people.



EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS: STRESS MANAGEMENT IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE



Session length: 45–60 minutes

Group size: 6–16 participants

Overall goals:

- To experience calming and pleasant emotions in connection with nature.
- To strengthen awareness, skills, and knowledge related to stress and stress management.

This session was co-created with young participants during the in-person training. The activities below have been adapted to be clearer and aligned with forest therapy principles, while keeping the spirit of their original proposals.

1st ACTIVITY – Taking a Pause and Listening in Nature

Time: ~8–10 minutes

Aim:

To arrive in the place, slow down the rhythm, and notice how pausing and listening can influence the stress response.

Description:

Invite participants to:

- Start walking slowly in any direction, staying within hearing distance of the guide and on safe, even ground.
- After a short time, give a gentle signal (for example, two soft hand claps or a bell).
- When they hear the signal, invite them to:
 - stop where they are,
 - close their eyes or soften their gaze,
 - focus attention on the sounds around them (near and far), the temperature, the contact of their feet with the ground, and their breath.
- After about 30 seconds to 1 minute, give the signal again and invite them to open their eyes and continue walking slowly.
- Repeat this cycle 3–4 times, alternating walking and pausing in silence.

Sharing:

Gather the group and invite each participant (only if they wish) to share one word that describes how it was to stop and close their eyes for a moment in nature.

EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS:

STRESS MANAGEMENT IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE

2nd ACTIVITY – Exploring Nature by Touch (in Pairs)

Time: ~15 minutes

Aim:

To deepen sensory awareness, trust and co-regulation, and to experience how slow, focused contact with nature can influence stress.

Description:

Invite participants to form pairs. In each pair, one person will start as the guide and the other as the explorer.

- The explorer is invited to gently close their eyes (or look down/keep a soft gaze if closing the eyes is uncomfortable).
- The guide:
 - leads the explorer slowly and carefully, using their voice and/or a light touch on the arm or shoulder,
 - chooses a safe path on even ground,
 - brings the explorer to one or more natural elements (for example, tree bark, moss, stone, leaves),
 - briefly describes the element without naming it and without giving obvious key words (for example: “this surface is rough and cool” instead of “this is a stone”).
- The explorer is invited to explore the natural element with touch and to notice sensations in their hands and body while keeping their eyes closed.

After about 4 minutes, invite partners to switch roles and repeat the activity for another 4 minutes.

Sharing:

Invite each participant to share one word or short phrase about how it was to explore nature with closed eyes or reduced vision (for example: calming, strange, safe, surprising, grounding).

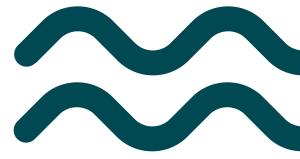


EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS:

STRESS MANAGEMENT IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE

3rd ACTIVITY – Deep Breathing with the Landscape

Time: ~10 minutes



Aim:

To connect breath regulation with visual connection to nature, and to experience breathing as a tool for stress management.

Description:

1. Invite participants to stand or sit in a comfortable position.
2. Introduce a simple breathing pattern, for example, 4–4–6:
 - breathe in while counting mentally to 4,
 - hold the breath gently while counting to 4,
 - breathe out while counting to 6.
 - Explain that this is only a suggestion and that they can shorten or lengthen the counts if they feel discomfort.
1. Invite them to place one hand on their belly to feel the movement of the diaphragm and practise this breathing for about 2–4 minutes.
1. Then invite each person to find a place where they can sit comfortably and observe a part of the landscape (trees, sky, ground, horizon, etc.).
1. While they are observing the landscape, invite them to continue with the same gentle breathing. From time to time, the guide can remind them to notice:
 - the rhythm of their breath,
 - the contact of their body with the ground or seat,
 - the colours and shapes in front of them.
 - Continue for about 5 minutes

EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS:

STRESS MANAGEMENT IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE

4th ACTIVITY – Small Group Sharing about Breathing & Stress

Time: ~5–8 minutes

Aim:

To reflect together on how breathing and nature observation influenced their state and stress level.

Description (invitation):

Invite participants to walk slowly around the area. From time to time, the guide calls out a number between 2 and 6.

- When participants hear a number, they are invited to quickly form groups of that size (for example, “3” → groups of three people).
- Repeat this a few times to mix the groups.
- In the last round, invite them to form groups of 4.

In groups of four, invite them to share:

- how the deep breathing and landscape observation felt,
- whether they noticed any change in their body (tension, relaxation), thoughts, or emotions,
- if they would consider using this kind of breathing in stressful moments in daily life.



EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS:

STRESS MANAGEMENT IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE

5th ACTIVITY – Short Reflection on Stress Management

Time: ~10 minutes

Aim:

To link the practical experience of the session with basic concepts of stress and stress management.

Description:

The session guide leads a brief group reflection, inviting participants to share their ideas about:

- What is stress?
- What kinds of stress reactions do they know or have experienced (for example: fight, flight, freeze, flop, fawn)?
- How deep breathing and walking/being in nature can help with stress management.

The guide can connect their answers with the theory from the previous lessons (Lesson 2.1–2.3):

- stress as a natural response,
- the role of the body and nervous system,
- the importance of practices that support the restorative system.

6th ACTIVITY – Closing Activity

Time: ~5 minutes

Aim:

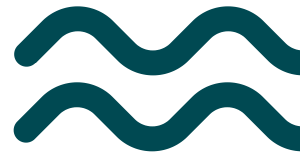
To integrate the experience and close the session with a simple, personal reflection related to stress.

Description:

Invite participants to sit or stand in a circle. Each person (only if they feel comfortable) is invited to share:

- one thing they learned,
- or one moment of pleasure or calm,
- or one tool or idea they would like to remember for managing stress in daily life.

Thank the group for their presence and participation, and acknowledge their contributions.



PLACE TO
DRAW YOUR MAP OF SOUNDS.



MODULE 3

ADDICTION



ABOUT THIS MODULE

In this module, we introduce a basic understanding of addiction. The goal is to see addiction not as a moral failure, but as a complex disease that develops over time and affects the whole person and their relationships. This helps reduce stigma and opens space for more compassionate and informed prevention and support.

- **Addiction is a primary, chronic, and progressive disease** that increases the risk of mortality, contributes to individual disability, and affects the whole family.
- Addiction is sometimes described as a “dopamine-addicted disease” – the person consumes too many “free dopamine” activities:
 - These are activities that release dopamine very quickly in the brain and increase motivation for a short time,
 - but they do not bring real results or deeper satisfaction,
 - After repeated use, it becomes more and more difficult to start doing things that do not release dopamine so easily, even if those activities could bring higher and more lasting satisfaction.
- **The development of addiction is complicated**, and there is not just one single cause. Most often, addiction appears as a combination of several factors at different levels:
 - genetic or biological,
 - social and environmental,
 - psychological and individual.
- It is important not to confuse addiction with human needs (such as the need for food, relationships, sleep, emotions, etc.).
 - Needs are natural and healthy.
 - Addiction is caused by psychological and physical dependence on a substance or a process/behaviour.
- **The characteristics of addiction** are often described in four groups of symptoms (signs):
 - Craving – strong desire or urge to use the substance or engage in the behaviour.
 - Tolerance – needing more and more of the substance or behaviour to feel the same effect.
 - Loss of control – difficulty limiting or stopping use, even when there is a wish to stop.
 - Withdrawal – unpleasant physical or emotional symptoms when the substance or behaviour is stopped or reduced.
- **Addiction cannot be “cured” in the traditional sense**, but a person can live in recovery or “sober” – without using the addictive substance or process – and build a meaningful life.
- **The development of addiction hinders:**
 - the formation and maintenance of healthy relationships,
 - the development of healthy self-esteem,
 - school or professional growth,

- As difficulties increase in:
 - expressing one's emotions and needs,
 - tolerating problems and routine,
 - managing uncertainty,
 - dealing with the expectations and demands of other people.
- The daily use of addictive substances or processes is often facilitated by states such as:
 - fatigue,
 - hunger and thirst,
 - loneliness,
 - intense and accumulated emotions (not expressed or processed).

ADDICTION PREVENTION

Let's look at how addiction prevention is organised at different levels and why it is important to adapt interventions to the needs and risks of each group. Understanding these levels helps youth workers and young people see where specific programmes, like nature-based activities, can have the greatest impact.

- Addiction prevention is commonly organised on three levels:

1. Universal Prevention

A set of measures aimed at the entire population in a specific context or area, especially where there is:

- a high level of substance or process use,
- many regular users and people with addiction,
- and visible negative consequences (health, social, school/work, legal, etc.).

Examples: school-wide programmes, public campaigns, community events, general education on addiction risks and healthy lifestyles.

2. Selective Prevention

A set of measures aimed at a specific part of the population that has an increased risk of starting to use addictive substances/processes because of their social and psychological circumstances. This may include young people with:

- observable early signs of use (experimentation, strong interest in substances/processes),
- regular time spent with friends who regularly use substances/processes,
- observable psychological and social difficulties, such as:

- problems in studies or school performance,
- difficulties in relationships with peers and family,
- low or unstable self-esteem,
- aggressive behaviour,
- poor motivation,
- difficulties with emotion and stress management.

3. Indicated (Indicative) Prevention

- A set of measures aimed at a specific group of individuals who already show clear signs of problematic use, such as:
 - observable repeated or regular use of addictive substances/processes,
 - and psychological and social difficulties, including:
 - problems in studies,
 - difficulties in relationships with peers and family,
 - self-esteem problems,
 - aggressive behaviours,
 - poor motivation,
 - difficulties with emotion and stress management.

Focus of Selective and Indicated Prevention

At the selective and indicated prevention levels, intervention programmes are usually more effective when they are carried out at an individual or small-group level, where the focus is on strengthening protective factors, such as:

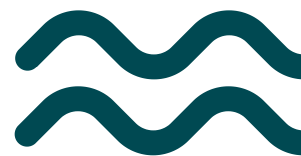
- maintaining and supporting motivation,
- self-regulation of stress and emotions,
- building and maintaining healthy self-esteem,
- forming and sustaining healthy relationships.

Nature-based and forest therapy-inspired activities can be integrated into these levels of prevention to make strengthening these protective factors more experiential, accessible, and meaningful for young people.



EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS:

ADDICTION PREVENTION IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE



Session length: 45–60 minutes

Group size: 6–16 participants

Overall goals:

- To experience pleasant and meaningful emotions in connection with nature.
- To strengthen awareness, skills, and knowledge about addiction and addiction prevention through metaphors and group reflection.

This session was co-created with young participants during the in-person training. The activities below have been adapted to be clearer and aligned with forest therapy principles, while keeping the spirit of their original proposals.

1st ACTIVITY – Choosing What to Take, What to Leave

Time: ~5–10 minutes

Aim:

To arrive in the place, focus attention, and introduce the metaphor of choices (what we bring into our lives and what we leave behind).

Description:

Invite participants to:

- Walk slowly around the area, observing the natural elements around them.
- Gently pick up to three small natural elements (for example, stones, leaves, twigs, cones) that attract their attention, making sure not to damage plants or living beings.
- Encourage them to notice what guided their choice: colour, shape, texture, feeling, intuition.

Sharing:

Gather the group and invite each person (only if they wish) to share one word or a very short phrase about how it felt to choose what to take and what to leave in nature.

EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS:

ADDICTION PREVENTION IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE

2nd ACTIVITY – Building a Tower of Habits

Time: ~20 minutes

Aim:

To explore, through a simple, playful metaphor, how habits are built, how cooperation works, and what can make something feel stable or unstable.

Description:

Invite participants to form groups of four.

- Each group places all its collected elements (stones, leaves, twigs, etc.) together.
- Invite them to create a “tower” or small structure using the elements they brought. They can also add a few extra elements from the surroundings only if needed for stability, and always without damaging nature.
- **Encourage them to:**
 - experiment with different ways of stacking or balancing,
 - notice how easy or difficult it is to make the structure stable,
 - observe their own reactions during the process (patience, frustration, joy, teamwork).
 -

When the towers are finished, invite each group to:

- take a moment in silence to observe their creation,
- reflect on how easy or difficult it was to build, and how stable or fragile it looks.

If they wish, groups can show their towers to others and, if they feel inspired, share a short story or image connected to their structure (for example, “this tower is like our daily routine”, “this part feels like weekends”, etc.).

Sharing:

Invite each participant to share one word or one short thought about how it was to create the tower (for example: challenging, fun, unstable, satisfying, chaotic, balanced).

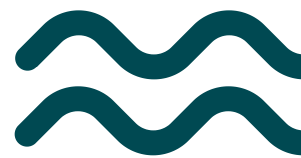


EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS:

ADDICTION PREVENTION IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE

3rd ACTIVITY – Linking Towers, Habits and Addiction

Time: ~10 minutes



Aim:

To connect the experience of building the tower with the concepts of habits and addiction in a simple, non-stigmatising way.

Description:

Gather the group in a circle near the towers. The session guide leads a short reflection, inviting participants to consider the tower as a metaphor for daily habits:

Possible guiding questions:

- “If this tower were your daily routine, what parts would be the strong base?”
- “Which parts feel more fragile or harder to keep in balance?”
- “Some habits are easier to create, some are more difficult. Which kinds of habits feel difficult to keep?”

Then the guide introduces a gentle link to addiction:

- **What do habits and addictions have in common?**
 - both involve repetitive patterns,
 - both can bring pleasant emotions at some level,
 - both can affect daily life.
 -
- **And what are some differences?**
 - habits usually require more effort at the beginning, but can bring more satisfaction and improve daily life;
 - addictive patterns often feel more impulsive and automatic, bring short-term relief, but are followed by disappointment and do not help reach deeper satisfaction.

Encourage participants to share examples of healthy habits they want to keep and what makes them difficult or easy to maintain.

EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS:

ADDICTION PREVENTION IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE

4th ACTIVITY – When Habits Are Shaken

Time: ~10 minutes

Aim:

To reflect on how fragile or stable habits can be when life brings stress, impulses or unexpected events.

Description:

Invite participants to return to their towers.

- Explain that, in this metaphor, the tower represents their supportive habits and daily structure.
- Life sometimes “throws things at us”: stress, tiredness, conflicts, strong emotions, temptations.

Invite each participant, one at a time, to:

- Take a small stone or natural element,
- From a safe distance, gently throw or slide it towards the base of their tower (or gently tap the structure with it),
- Observe what happens:
 - Does the tower fall completely or only partly?
 - Does it stay mostly stable?
 - How do they feel watching it being shaken?

Sharing:

In small groups, invite them to share:

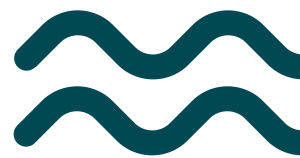
- how it felt to “challenge” or partially destroy the tower,
- whether the result was as expected or different,
- what this reminds them of in daily life (for example, “how easy habits can be broken when I am tired”, “how one small choice can change a lot”).

EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS:

ADDICTION PREVENTION IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE

5th ACTIVITY – Habits vs Addiction – Group Discussion

Time: ~10–15 minutes



Aim:

To deepen understanding of the difference between healthy habits and addictive patterns, and to identify what supports prevention in daily life.

Description:

Gathering the group, the session guide invites participants to reflect on impulsive decisions that are common in daily life, for example:

- procrastinating (“I’ll do it later”),
- spending more time on the phone than planned,
- skipping sleep, meals or responsibilities to stay online or play, etc.

The guide then links back to the tower metaphor:

- The tower can represent daily habits that support quality of life.
- The stone thrown at the tower can represent an impulsive decision or an addictive pattern that “hits” those habits.

The guide briefly summarises with the group:

- **What habits and addictions have in common:**
 - both involve repetition,
 - both bring some form of pleasure or relief,
 - both affect daily life.
 -
- **How habits and addictions differ:**
 - habits often need more effort at the beginning, but bring more long-term satisfaction and improve daily life;
 - addictive patterns are more impulsive and automatic, bring short-term relief, but are often followed by disappointment and do not help reach real satisfaction.

MODULE 4

MOTIVATION



MOTIVATION

Here we explore what motivation is, how it changes over time, and what can help to keep it alive in a healthy way. Understanding the motivation cycle and simple daily strategies can support young people in building habits that protect them from addiction and help them move towards what really matters to them.

- **Motivation is the inner drive that pushes a person to do something.**
 - Sometimes it is sparked by wanting to achieve a specific goal.
 - It can be influenced by both inner factors (values, interests, needs) and outer factors (expectations, rewards, pressure).
- **The motivation cycle is often described in several stages:**
 - Precontemplation – not yet seeing a need or not thinking about change.
 - Contemplation – starting to think about change, but feeling unsure or ambivalent.
 - Preparation – getting ready for change, making small plans or first steps.
 - Action – actively changing behaviour or starting something new.
 - Adjusting (maintenance and adaptation) – continuing the new behaviour, adjusting it to daily life, learning from difficulties and relapses.
- **A motivation resource is not always at the same level.**
 - It naturally has ups and downs.
 - This is especially true when there is strong external motivation (for example, doing something mainly for others or for rewards).
 - It is important to recognise low motivation phases in order to support and strengthen inner motivation (doing something because it feels meaningful, important or aligned with one's values).
- **It is difficult to maintain effective, long-term motivation without rest and restoration.**
 - If there is not enough rest and recovery, motivation can easily turn into stress.
 - When this happens, tasks and goals start to feel more like threats than like meaningful goals.
- **Motivation tips for daily activities:**
 - Break tasks down into smaller steps – this makes them feel more manageable and less overwhelming.
 - Take effective 10–15 minute breaks – short, conscious breaks (preferably with movement or a bit of nature contact) help to restore focus.

- Start with the most unpleasant or difficult task – doing the hardest thing first often reduces anxiety and makes the rest of the day easier.
- Focus on beginning, not on the final result – committing to “just starting” can reduce pressure and resistance.
- Focus on a time period rather than on perfection – for example, “I will work on this for 20 minutes” instead of “I must finish everything now”.
- Ask for help – sharing difficulties with someone and receiving support can increase motivation and reduce the feeling of being alone with the task.

In the programme, motivation is also explored through nature-based metaphors and activities, helping young people to experience motivation as something that can grow, rest, and be supported by healthy routines and connection with nature.

RELAPSE

Let’s look at relapse as part of the addiction process, not as a failure. Understanding the different stages of relapse helps people recognise early warning signs and take care of themselves before returning to substance use or addictive behaviours.

- **Relapse** – returning to using an addictive substance or behaviour after a period of not using.
- A relapse can happen after 2 weeks, 1 year, or even 10 years of a sober period.
- **Relapses are often described in three levels or stages:**
 - Emotional relapse
 - There are no clear thoughts or desires about using or going back to regular addictive behaviour.
- **Emotionally, the person may feel:**
 - more fatigue,
 - emotional withdrawal or numbness,
 - increased irritability,
 - more anxiety,
 - stress that feels more intense.
- **The person may start skipping healthy habits, such as:**
 - sleep,
 - eating regularly,
 - physical activity,
 - meeting people and maintaining social contact.
- **Mental relapse**
 - From time to time, thoughts about using return.
 - The person starts to remember the “good parts” of using.
 - They may return to habits, places, and situations that were associated with using.
 - Over time, thoughts about using become more frequent and more intense.

- **Behavioural relapse**

- Daily life is organised more and more in a way that makes it easier to return to using than to avoid it.
- At the same time, the person may still deny their desire, thoughts, and inner tension.
- In this stage, it becomes very difficult or almost impossible to avoid a full return to using.
- Almost every person who lives with addiction will, from time to time, experience at least an emotional relapse.
- If a person can recognise emotional relapse early and be conscious about it,
- and then take care of themselves (rest, support, healthy routines, nature, etc.),
- it is possible to prevent mental and behavioural relapse and avoid returning fully to use.

- **Motivational tools and strategies** for overcoming cravings for substances or processes, and for staying engaged in recovery, can include:

- Nature connection activities and being in nature daily (even short moments outdoors or near trees, water, or green spaces).
- Breathing activities, indoors or outdoors, to help regulate the nervous system.
- Journaling or drawing, indoors or outdoors, to express and process emotions, thoughts, and cravings.



EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS:

MOTIVATION IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE

- **Session length:** 45–60 minutes
- **Group size:** 6–16 participants
- **Overall goals:**
 - To experience pleasant and meaningful emotions in connection with nature.
 - To strengthen awareness, skills, and knowledge about motivation, inner resources, and supportive habits for addiction prevention.

This session was co-created with young participants during the in-person training. The activities below have been adapted to be clearer and aligned with forest therapy principles, while keeping the spirit of their original proposals.

1st ACTIVITY – Observing Small, Medium, and Big in Nature

Time: ~10 minutes

Aim:

- To invite participants to notice different “scales” in nature (small, medium, big) and to use this as a metaphor for small steps, medium goals, and bigger dreams in life.

Description:

- Invite participants to:
- Find a comfortable place to sit in nature.
- Take a few moments to arrive, feeling the contact with the ground or seat.
- Then invite them to gently observe:
- something small in their field of vision (for example, a leaf, an insect, a stone, a piece of moss),
- something medium-sized (for example, a bush, a small tree, a group of flowers),
- Something big (for example, a large tree, a hill, the sky, a wider landscape).
- Encourage them to notice:
- how each of these elements “fits” in the environment,
- What might help them grow, stay, or be where they are (for example, light, water, protection, support from other elements).

Sharing:

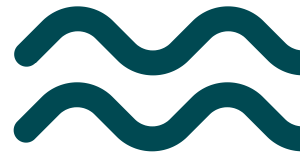
- In a circle, invite each participant (only if they wish) to share one word or one short thought about what they observed or realised when looking at small, medium, and big elements in nature.

EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS:

MOTIVATION IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE

2nd ACTIVITY – Collecting Symbols of Relaxation, Resilience and Support

Time: ~15–20 minutes



Aim:

To help participants identify and symbolically represent inner resources that support motivation: relaxation, resilience, and support.

Description:

- Invite participants to take a slow walk in the area and gently look around.
- Ask them to collect three small natural elements (for example, stones, leaves, twigs, cones) that attract their attention, without damaging nature.

Each element is invited to symbolise:

- one that represents relaxation,
- one that represents resilience (the ability to recover and continue),
- one that represents support (from people, nature, activities, etc.).

When everyone has returned:

- invite participants to sit in a circle with their three elements in front of them,
- give them a few moments to think about why each element could represent relaxation, resilience, or support.

Then invite them, one by one (only if they feel comfortable), to:

- show their three elements,
- And share a short story or explanation about them (for example, “this smooth stone is relaxation because it feels calming in my hand”, “this strong twig is resilience because it bent but did not break”).





EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS:

MOTIVATION IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE

3rd ACTIVITY – Creating a Nature Picture of Motivation

Time: ~15 minutes

Aim:

To co-create a visual, shared metaphor of motivation and supportive resources using natural elements and group imagination.

Description:

Invite participants to form small groups of 3–4 people.

- Each group places its collected elements together on the ground.
- They are invited to create a “nature picture” – a small image or arrangement on the ground that represents motivation and what supports it (relaxation, resilience, support, healthy habits, etc.).
- If they wish, they may add a few more natural elements found nearby, as long as they do not damage nature.
- Once they have arranged their picture, invite them to create one short story, image or sentence about it (for example: “this path of stones is our journey, the leaves are our rest stops, the big rock is our long-term goal”).

Sharing:

Each group is invited to show their nature picture to the others and tell a short story or explanation behind it, focusing on:

- what represents motivation,
- what represents support,
- what represents challenges and how they are faced.

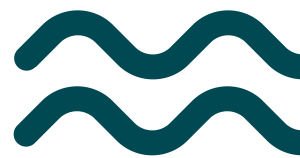


EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS:

MOTIVATION IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE

4th ACTIVITY – Keeping Motivation

Time: ~10–15 minutes



Aim:

To connect the nature metaphors with concrete ideas on how to maintain motivation in daily life.

Description:

In a circle, the session guide leads a short discussion about motivation. Possible guiding questions:

- “What is motivation for you?”
- “When do you feel more motivated? When do you feel less motivated?”
- “Looking at what we did today, what in nature reminded you of your own motivation?”

The guide can then share and briefly summarise some daily tips for keeping motivation, linking them to participants’ experiences and previous theoretical content:

- Breaking big tasks into smaller steps – like noticing something small before looking at the bigger landscape.
- Taking effective 10–15 minute breaks (for example, going outside, stretching, breathing).
- Starting with the most unpleasant or difficult task to reduce stress and procrastination.
- Focusing on the beginning, not on the perfect result (just taking the first step).
- Focusing on a time period (“I will try for 15–20 minutes”) rather than on doing everything at once.
- Asking for help and doing things together – just as the group created a shared picture and story.

Invite participants to name one small strategy they would like to try in their own daily life to support their motivation.

5th ACTIVITY – Closing Activity

Time: ~5 minutes

Aim:

To integrate the experience and close the session with a simple, positive reflection connected to motivation.

EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS: MOTIVATION IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE

Description:

Invite participants to sit or stand in a circle. Each person (only if they feel comfortable) is invited to share:

- **One thing they learned,**
- **or one image or symbol from nature they want to remember when they need motivation,**
- **Or one pleasant or meaningful moment they experienced during the session.**

Thank the group for their presence and contributions, and acknowledge their reflections on motivation and nature.



MODULE 5

CREATIVITY



CREATIVITY

In this module, we explore how creativity can support emotional well-being, resilience and adaptation. Creativity is not only about art; it is also about finding new ways to respond to difficulties, to express inner experience, and to transform fear and resistance into movement and growth.

1. Creativity, Resistance and Resilience

- Creativity can be a way to overcome our biggest fears and to transform them into practical results that strengthen resilience. It can help us shift from resistance to resilience when needed.
- Creativity – the ability to make or bring into existence something new:
 - a new solution to a problem,
 - a new method or way of doing something,
 - a new device,
 - or a new artistic object or form.
- Resistance – the ability to withstand stress without showing obvious signs of disturbance or dysfunction, and to keep the original line or position. This can include resistance to change and reduced flexibility.
- Resilience – the ability to recover and adapt to new situations, gaining some benefit for oneself and including personal growth.

2. Creativity Activities

Examples of activities that support and express creativity include:

- Observation with all senses – seeing, hearing, touching, smelling (and sometimes tasting) the environment with curiosity.
- Collecting – gathering natural or simple elements and materials.
- Clustering, grouping and systemising – arranging elements into patterns, categories or structures.
- Repeating, copying – repeating forms, movements, words, images as a way to learn and explore.
- Experimenting, improvising – trying new combinations, changing forms, playing with possibilities.
- Redoing – starting again, changing or improving something that already exists.

3. Resilience Activities

Examples of activities that strengthen resilience include:

- **Presence and support** – being present with oneself and others, offering and receiving support.
- **Sharing and generosity** – sharing experiences, time, attention and resources with others.
- **Humour and spontaneity** – allowing playfulness, laughter and unexpected responses.
- **Appreciation and gratitude** – noticing and expressing what we value in ourselves, in others and in the environment.

MODULE 6

NATURE & HEALTH



NATURE & HEALTH

In this module, we explore how being in nature supports physical and mental health. Different types of activities in nature (simply being there, walking, working, or doing physical activities) have specific effects, but there are also some general benefits that appear across almost all kinds of nature contact.

- Although different activities in nature bring different benefits for health and well-being, some general benefits come from almost any kind of time spent in nature.
- **Activities such as:**
 - simply being in nature,
 - working in nature,
 - or doing physical activities in nature,
 - help to improve:
 - the immune system,
 - sleep quality,
 - stress tolerance and resistance,
 - mental resilience,
 - attention, focus, and endurance,
 - memory quality,
 - emotional regulation,
 - impulse control.
- Time in nature also helps to reduce:
 - symptoms of stress,
 - overall stress level,
 - symptoms of depression, anxiety, and other mental health difficulties,
 - aggressiveness and irritability.
- Already about 20 minutes daily in nature, or 2 hours once a week, can help to reduce stress levels and improve emotional mood.
- Although scientists are still researching why we specifically need nature to support our health, several main factors have already been identified as having a positive effect on human health, including:
 - phytoncides (substances released by trees and plants),
 - negative air ions,
 - certain mycobacteria in natural environments,
 - environmental biodiversity (contact with a variety of living organisms),
 - natural sounds and sights (for example, birdsong, water, leaves, natural landscapes).
- In forests, there are some additional specific benefits, such as:
 - protection from excessive light,
 - protection from wide temperature variations,
 - Shelter from wind and other weather extremes.



MODULE 7

PEER TO PEER



PEER-TO-PEER

Group Dynamic

The activities in this handbook were designed to help explore emotions, stress, habits, addiction, motivation, creativity, and nature & health. When young people later choose to repeat some of these activities with classmates, friends, or colleagues, it can be helpful to consider not only the exercises themselves, but also how the group feels, what people are going through, and what kind of environment they are in.

In previous modules, we saw that:

- emotions can be intense and sometimes hard to regulate,
- stress can become toxic when there are not enough resources,
- habits and addictions are influenced by daily life,
- motivation goes up and down,
- nature and creativity can support resilience and recovery.

All of these processes are influenced by relationships and group experiences. Being together in nature can become a protective factor when the group feels safe, respectful, and supportive.

Group Dynamics in Nature-Based Activities

In a group, people influence each other's emotions, thoughts and behaviour. This is especially important when exploring topics like emotional regulation (Module 1), stress (Module 2), addiction and relapse (Module 3), creativity (Module 4), and nature & health (Module 5). When doing nature-based activities with others, it can be helpful to keep in mind that:

- **Emotions can spread in the group**
- Just as we saw in the modules on emotions and stress, one person's tension, laughter, calmness, or anxiety can be felt by others. A group that is respectful and kind can help everyone feel more regulated; a group that is judgmental or dismissive can increase stress.
- **Nature can support co-regulation**
- Practices like silent sitting, observing the landscape, breathing together, or exploring nature by touch can calm the nervous system not only individually, but also at the group level. This can make it easier to talk about sensitive themes such as stress, habits, cravings, or motivation.
- **Trust grows gradually**
- When talking about topics related to addiction, motivation or relapse, people may feel vulnerable. Simple experiences like creating something together with natural elements, building a tower, making a nature picture, or sharing a single word in a circle can gradually build trust without forcing anyone to speak more than they wish.
- **Different ways of participating are valid**
- In the previous modules, we used many forms of expression: words, writing, drawing, land art, metaphors from nature. Some people feel comfortable talking; others prefer to express themselves through creativity or by listening. All these forms are valuable and can support self-awareness and prevention.

Paying attention to group dynamics means noticing who is more silent, who seems more tense or tired, who needs more space or encouragement, and allowing different styles of participation while maintaining a general climate of respect.

Creating Safe and Supportive Environments

Because the themes of this programme touch on stress, habits, addiction, motivation, and relapse, safety is not only about the physical space but also about how people feel inside the group.

Some aspects that can support a safe and supportive environment include:

- **Basic physical safety in nature**
- Choosing a place that fits the group's age, physical condition and energy level; paying attention to paths, weather, temperature and accessibility. This connects to what we learned in Nature and Health (Module 5): nature can support health and stress reduction, but it needs to be approached with care and awareness.
- **Clear and kind shared agreements**
- Even simple, shared understandings like “we listen without laughing at others”, “we do not pressure anyone to share personal stories”, or “we respect nature and each other's space” can make it easier for participants to relax and benefit from activities related to emotions, stress and motivation.
- **Emotional sensitivity**
- After working on topics such as emotional systems (Module 1), stress responses (Module 2), and relapse (Module 3), it becomes easier to recognise signs that someone may be overwhelmed, withdrawn, or highly activated. In such moments, it can be helpful to slow down, return to simple sensory activities (like noticing sounds, touch, or breathing), and reduce the pressure to talk.
- **Inclusion and respect for different experiences**
- Not everyone has the same life story, level of stress, family situation or relationship with substances and habits. Valuing different perspectives and avoiding judgement is important, especially when people speak about personal challenges related to stress, motivation, family, school, or addictive behaviours.
- **Connection to protective factors**
- Many activities in this handbook are built around protective factors identified in the previous modules:
 - recognising and naming emotions,
 - using nature to manage stress,
 - understanding the difference between habits and addiction,
 - strengthening motivation and resilience,
 - using creativity as a way to process internal experiences.
 - When repeating the activities with peers, it can be helpful to remember that the goal is not perfection, but to create moments of connection, relief, understanding, and support, both with nature and with other people.

Keeping these aspects in mind can make the examples in the handbook more meaningful when they are shared with colleagues or friends. Even small adjustments—choosing a calmer place, allowing silence, inviting creative expression, accepting different levels of participation—can help the group experience nature as a safe and supportive ally in their own process of well-being and prevention.



MODULE 8

ACTIVITIES



ACTIVITIES

NATURE-BASED PRACTICES FOR DAILY LIFE

This module offers four simple nature-based activities that you can use on your own, in your daily life, to support your emotional well-being and resilience. They are not “exercises to perform correctly”, but gentle invitations to reconnect with nature, your body and your inner world—using what you have learned about emotions, stress, addiction, motivation, creativity and nature & health in the previous modules.

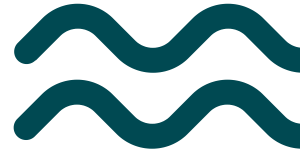
The four activities were chosen because each of them supports a different protective factor:

- **Nature Connection** – helps you slow down, regulate emotions and stress by using your senses and presence in a natural environment.
- **Breathing with Nature** – combines conscious breathing with visual focus, supporting the nervous system and the stress regulation mechanisms you explored in Module 2.
- **Land Art in Nature** invites creativity and play, turning inner experiences into visible forms, strengthening resilience and meaning-making (Module 4).
- **Expressive Writing in Nature** offers a way to give words to emotions, thoughts, and memories, helping you process experiences related to stress, habits, cravings, or motivation.

You can use these practices whenever you need support: during stressful periods, when you feel stuck or unmotivated, or simply to maintain your balance and well-being. Even short moments in nature, practised regularly, can reinforce the protective factors described throughout the handbook and become a personal resource for prevention and self-care.



EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS: NATURE CONNECTION



1. Arrive and choose your place

Find a natural area where you can walk or sit comfortably, such as a forest, park, garden, or beach. Take a short moment to arrive: slow your pace, take a few deep breaths, and gently put aside daily worries as much as possible.

2. Explore with your senses

Begin to walk slowly or sit in one spot, using your sight, hearing, smell, and touch to explore the environment. Notice colours, shapes, light and shadows, the textures of bark or stones, the sounds of wind and birds, the smells of earth and plants. Stay curious about both small details and the wider landscape. (Do not eat anything from nature unless you are completely sure it is safe.)

3. Pause and focus on one element

From time to time, pause and choose one aspect of nature to focus on for a minute or two – for example, the sound of leaves, the movement of water, the warmth of the sun, or the feeling of the ground under your feet. Let your attention rest there and notice how your body and mind respond.

4. Close with reflection and gratitude

When you are ready to finish, stop in a comfortable place and take a few deep breaths. Ask yourself: How do I feel now compared to before? What changed in my mood, thoughts or body? Take a moment to thank nature in your own way and make sure you leave the area as you found it, taking any litter with you.

EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS: BREATHE WITH NATURE

1. Arrive and ground yourself

Find a natural area where you can walk or sit comfortably, such as a forest, park, or beach. Take a moment to arrive: notice what you see around you, the sounds you can hear, and, if you wish, gently touch something natural (like bark, leaves, or a stone) to feel its texture and temperature.

2. Find a natural “frame”

With your eyes, look for a kind of natural frame in the landscape. It might be tree trunks forming a square or rectangle, branches that outline a shape, or any natural elements that create a simple frame for your gaze.

3. Let your breath follow the frame

Imagine that your breath moves along the four sides of this frame:

- **first side – breathe in,**
- **second side – hold the breath gently,**
- **third side – breathe out,**
- **fourth side – rest briefly between breaths.**
- Continue this “breathing with the frame” for a few minutes, adjusting the length of each part so it feels comfortable for you.

4. Close with reflection and gratitude

When you are ready to finish, let your breath return to its natural rhythm and take a few comfortable deep breaths. Notice any changes in your mood, thoughts, or body. Take a moment to thank nature in your own way and make sure you leave the place clean, taking any litter with you.

EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS: LAND-ART IN NATURE

1. Arrive, choose your place, and prepare

- Find a natural area where you can walk or sit comfortably, such as a forest, park, or beach. Bring a small notebook and pencils if you can. Take a moment to arrive: breathe, look around, and choose a spot that feels pleasant and safe.

2. Collect and observe natural elements

- Gently collect 5 to 10 small natural elements that attract your attention (for example, leaves, stones, twigs, cones), without damaging plants or living beings. Take time to observe each element: notice its colour, texture, shape, size, weight and any other detail that stands out.

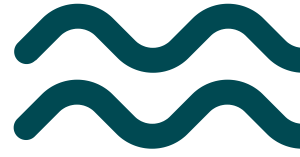
3. Create your land-art and give it a story

- Using the elements you collected, create a small land-art piece on the ground. It can be a shape, a symbol, a pattern, or anything that feels right to you. When you finish, observe your creation from different distances and angles. If a name, word, image, or story comes to mind, write it down or make a simple drawing in your notebook.

4. Close with reflection, gratitude, and letting go

- When you are ready to finish, take a few comfortable deep breaths and notice any changes in your mood, thoughts, or body. In one word or sentence, write down how it felt to create in nature. Thank nature in your own way, make sure you take any litter with you, and leave your creation in place, so it can slowly return to the natural environment.

EXAMPLE OF SESSIONS: CREATIVE WRITING



1. Arrive and prepare to write

- Find a natural area where you can walk or sit comfortably, such as a forest, park, or beach, and bring a notebook and pencils. Take a moment to arrive: breathe, look around, and choose a spot that feels pleasant and safe.

2. Free writing with your senses

- Walk slowly or sit in one place and write whatever you see, hear, smell, or feel around you. Your writing can be a flowing story, separate words, short sentences, or fragments. There is no “right way” to write—just let the words come as they wish.

3. Create a short poem from your words

- Read what you have written and underline three key words or short parts of sentences that feel important to you. Then write a haiku or very short poem in three lines, including your underlined words or phrases (one in each line).

4. Close with reflection and gratitude

- When you are ready to finish, take a few comfortable deep breaths and notice any shifts in your mood, thoughts, or body. Write down one word or sentence about how it felt to write in nature. Thank nature in your own way and make sure you take any litter with you when you leave.

P.S. A haiku is a traditional Japanese poem of three lines. The first line has 5 syllables, the second line 7 syllables, and the third line 5 syllables again.



**PLACE TO
WRITE YOUR NOTES.**

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This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



TESTIMONIALS



"Group activities in the forest helped me connect better with others."



"I was surprised by how quickly I forgot about my everyday worries while spending time in nature."



"Now I see the forest in the new light."

"Nature helps me disconnect from my phone more easily."



Forest therapy provided a deep sense of peace, helped release stress, and supported reconnecting with oneself.



"I would recommend this experience to other young people who need a break from the pressures of everyday life."



"It helped participants escape reality, recalibrate, and develop gratitude for well-being."

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