



ACADEMY  
OF OPPORTUNITIES

# **MANUAL FOR TRAINERS AND FACILITATORS**

**Promoting Personal Development with People 50+**



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## Dear Reader,

Welcome to Catch the Ball, the Manual for Trainers and Facilitators for the Academy of Opportunities. This Manual is an intellectual output, developed within the Catch the Ball project, funded by the Erasmus Plus program of the European Commission. It has been developed as a European cooperation effort between partners from Iceland, the UK and Lithuania.

The Manual is a tool for trainers and others who are engaged in adult education, coaching and counselling of people 50+.

The material and the structure of the training was developed by a team of experienced trainers from Iceland, UK, and Lithuania. The developmental work lasted for two years, where the teams built on the ideology presented by the preceding Erasmus Plus funded BALL project and started working towards materializing it into an actual training material.

During the two-year working period the group developed a common training framework with various possibilities of teaching methods and materials. Each national team taught pre-pilot courses in their local communities. The pre-pilot educational results have been individually assessed and compared, later on, followed by specifically designed for the target groups pilot courses in each country.

Finally, the lessons learnt were analyzed and evaluated, constructing a common European approach to training people 50 + in adult learning settings. The project team of adult education experts and trainers jointly developed an European training course, which was piloted in a Training for Trainers event in Lithuania in April 2018.

The material presented here is the final product of these two years of European co-operation and development of adult learning approaches for promotion of active participation of people 50+.

The purpose of the Manual is to provide information that will help training program leaders plan and implement adult education programs on Active Ageing with people 50+ that have the following characteristics:

- The programs are learner-centered. The content of the lessons are relevant to the learners' lives and are drawn from their own experiences.
- They are community-centered. Community members, and especially the 50+ learners, take leadership in making decisions about their educational programs from the very beginning. They are active participants in the learning process and shape its development and outcomes.
- They are development-oriented. Personal development programs in the Academy of Opportunities are considered tools to help the learners achieve their own goals.
- The programs are sustained because the learners, and their communities, recognize the benefits that the adult education programs have brought to their lives.

## USING THE MANUAL

One of the most exciting, and most challenging, things about the continuous adult education is that, by its nature, it is a grass-roots or bottom-up (rather than a top-down) endeavor.

The purpose of the personal development academy is to serve the specific learning needs of the people 50+ in the entire European community and, therefore, it begins in the community and is owned by the community members. The Catch the Ball Manual for Trainers and Facilitators of the Academy of Opportunities focus on issues and topics that are most interesting to the ageing European citizens and relevant to their lives and the instructional methods are appropriate to their learning styles.

In that sense, the Manual is not a set of directions, but rather a resource for the adult educators, trainers and learners, as well as for all the others who support them.

The training implementation teams are encouraged to adapt the ideas and suggestions in each chapter to their particular needs.

## THE BALL PROJECT

The BALL-project (Be Active through Lifelong Learning), was defined and carried out to investigate how best to plan and implement preparations as to make the most and best use of the possibilities that may lie ahead in the latter part of life and for retirement. The idea was tabled in 2013 through early discussions on the strategy of U3A Reykjavík,

The project idea aimed at developing guidelines and recommendations for early preparations for a dynamic third age, and grew into a cooperative European project, involving three U3A organizations, U3A Reykjavík, UPUA in Alicante, Spain, and LUTW in Lublin, Poland. The project management was taken on by the company Evris Foundation in Reykjavík. The project was accepted for funding by the EU Erasmus+ program, department for adult learning, and started in September 2014. The project results; the BALL guidelines and recommendations, were published in the book “Towards a Dynamic Third Age” in September 2016.

The BALL recommendations are defined in three actions, a three-step process proposed as a “best practice” system for preparing individuals for the changes, challenges, and opportunities lying ahead in their latter part of life, summarized as follows:

- Awareness Raising on the value and importance of the Third Age, directed both towards the society and the individuals themselves
- Personal Development Academy, supporting individuals who need and want to evaluate their strengths, desires, and possibilities to be prepared for the latter part of their lives
- The Warehouse of Opportunities for the Third Age, a virtual pool, a portal, where individuals get access to relevant opportunities.

The BALL guidelines have been disseminated world-wide and have been very well received, The project received the Erasmus+ quality award in the field of adult education in November 2016.

The logical step forward was therefore to embark on a new project, aiming at implementing the ideas put forward in the BALL project.

## CATCH THE BALL

The “Catch the BALL” project was defined and prepared in 2016, with the aim of realizing and implementing the BALL guidelines and recommendations. Catching the BALL, and get it rolling.

The Catch the BALL project received continued support from the Erasmus+ program and was launched in December 2016. This time new partners joined the Icelandic BALL partners, U3A Reykjavík and Evris Foundation. These partners are STPK, the Science and Technology Park in Kaunas, Lithuania, and MBM, Training and Development Center in Liverpool, UK.

The Catch the BALL project implements two of the three BALL recommendations that will be available in June 2018. Firstly, the Personal Development Academy, working name being “Academy of Opportunities” as a course program for trainers to instruct and assist people who want to identify their strengths, needs and dreams a desires to fulfil, to create a dynamic third age. Secondly, the Warehouse of Oppor-

tunities is being developed in the image of a real warehouse or a store, as a web portal with web pages as racks and shelves, presenting opportunities as products.

The aim is to offer people a user-friendly gateway to diverse opportunities to enhance the content of their latter part of life, improving skills and life fulfilment, getting advice on finances, on starting a new career, and other issues useful for creating their own dynamic third age. The model warehouse is a European Warehouse with global opportunities that will be linked to national warehouses in the partner countries.

## THE IDEA

According to World Health Organization data, people worldwide are living longer. Today, for the first time in history, most people can expect to live into their sixties and beyond.

A longer life brings with it opportunities, not only for older people and their families, but also for societies as a whole. Additional years provide the chance to pursue new activities such as further education, a new career or pursuing a long-neglected passion. Older people also contribute in many ways to their families and communities. If people can experience these extra years of life in good health and if they live in a supportive environment, their ability to do the things they value will be little different from that of a younger person.

The phrase Third Age came from French universities, les Universités du Troisième Âge (the Universities of the Third Age), which since the 1970s have offered study opportunities to seniors relatively healthy and active, and entered English-speaking countries.

Peter Laslett (1915-2001), a British historian, established his rather positive aging theory of the Third Age in the 1980s. In P. Laslett's (1987) theory, one's life comprises four ages, and the culmination is in the Third Age.

According to the theory of the Third Age, each person has his own lifespan and four ages do not begin or end at particular age. The underlying ideas of the CATCH THE BALL project and the Academy of Opportunities are based on this idea of the third age being an era for personal achievement and fulfilment. It presents the idea that people that have reached the third age should ask themselves in full earnest how they want the next years to be. Just like they did thirty, forty years ago, they should ask what they want to be and become in the next thirty years. Do they keep some unfulfilled dreams deep inside, this is the right time to consider them, to ask if they still can come true, what could prevent it – to ask what they really want from life.

This is the right time to consider if participants perhaps want to learn something new – to start a new chapter in their life, some new career which interests them. The question is, whether they are ready to use the freedom they have from the laws of nature to choose a new future. To choose a future like they once did as a teen or as a young adult, but this time the choice can be based on their life experience, their interests, their abilities, their ideals – not so much on the practical necessities they then had to consider.

Around the beginning of the so-called „third age“ people should seriously reconsider and eventually revise their course in life. This is what inevitably is going to happen, this is a reaction to changes which are on their way and we are going to live with in the future. It is extremely important that individuals do not spend thirty years of their life waiting but do instead what they enjoy and benefits their community. It is important that they enjoy their life and are happy. But it is no less important for the community not to lose their ingenuity, their experience, their knowledge. The last thirty years are no less important than the thirty years before. For that reason, the Academy of Opportunities focuses the program, the teaching material as well as teaching methods, on participants that face the milestone of entering the third age and thus often find themselves on a new crossroad in life.

## METHODOLOGY: ADULT TRAINING 50+

Lifelong learning is important for keeping the mind and memory working as people age. Ongoing education and learning activities can compensate for age-related degenerative brain diseases like Alzheimer's, encourage seniors to develop and maintain social connections, improve their self-confidence and quality of life, and prevent depression due to social isolation.

Research shows that learning new skills, something that is mentally demanding, keeps the aging mind sharp. These findings, described in a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, reveal that less demanding activities, such as listening to classical music or completing word puzzles, do not bring significant impact on the sharpness of the mind. It is important not just to do something, but to do something that is unfamiliar and mentally demanding.

People over the age of 40 have an advantage, when it comes to learning material which calls for good judgement or is related to experience. Adults can do "fast memorizing" more efficiently than young children; however, youngsters retain the fact longer. The reasons adults may appear to learn not as well is based on reaction time, not intelligence. If time is not a factor, there is no difference in ability to learn.

Some of the difficulties in teaching seniors come from physical limitations and a lower endurance than younger students. Other difficulties are caused by changes in the brain due to age – it takes more time. Most of the difficulties can be avoided or lessened by modifying the classroom or teaching methods.

## EFFECTIVE TRAINING METHODS IN ADULT EDUCATION SETTINGS

The adult education classes are to be learner-centered and promote interaction and participation, the training should be trainee-centered. It should encourage trainees to take an active role in identifying their training needs, solving problems and evaluating their own progress.

The adult education lessons are to build on the knowledge and skills that learners bring to the training, the educational process should encourage trainees to use what they already know and can do as the foundation for their own learning.

The teaching methods are to encourage self-directed learning, the training process should encourage trainees to examine critically the information and methods that are being introduced, suggest alternatives and experiment with their own ideas.

Trainers and facilitators are supposed to give the adult learners time to master new knowledge and skills and to gain confidence in themselves as learners, the training process should give trainees time to build their own abilities and confidence.

Training in adult education programs should ensure that all learners have the capacity to fulfill their own learning aims and take ownership of the training program and also to encourage others in the community to do the same.

Capacity-building includes helping trainees to develop:

- Competence, including the knowledge and skills required to fulfil their personal development goals
- Confidence in their own abilities and in the abilities of the learners;
- Creativity to think about and use new ideas.



# How can trainers equip themselves as capacity-builders?

Trainers who are good capacity-builders have the privilege of seeing those they train take ownership and responsibility of their program and of seeing the program become a valued part of the community it serves.

- They can learn how to be good listeners and how to give positive feedback.
- They can learn how to think and act creatively, so they can encourage trainees to do the same.
- They can learn how to model the attributes and skills that they want to impart to their trainees, because good modeling is more effective than telling others what to do and how to do it.
- Finally, they can learn how to be good mentors because this is the best way to encourage and equip others to take leadership.

In order to make teaching-learning plan effective, it must be individualized to fit the needs and lifestyle of the Third age group listeners.

## **1. Slower pace:**

- Third age group can be slower to learn and remember new information, so tasks need to be step-by-step and often repeated.
- Patience is definitely needed in the senior classroom - the learners need to be encouraged to be patient with themselves and each other, and the teacher should not be frustrated to repeat instructions or tasks.

## **2. Comfort:**

- Chairs may be uncomfortable – have back pillows in your class or suggest learners bringing them.
- Heating and cooling - senior people might need warmer temperature to feel comfortable.

## **3. Make it pleasant:**

- A short class length, regular breaks.
- Tea/coffee and cookies/cake at the end of a class prevent tiredness and allow time for friendships between the students to form.
- And socializing is what matters!

## **4. Suitable materials:**

- Most language textbooks are aimed at younger students. Textbooks used in senior classes need to be modified to suit the interests of the elderly students.

## **5. Rely on their experience:**

- Contemporary training is usually related to fast changing of activities to prevent boredom. However, for senior learners, relying on their long-term memories while connecting new experiences to the old ones through discussions, sharing of their experience may be more effective.

## **6. Encourage questions:**

- Many elderly students will not ask questions when they are lost, the teacher needs to notice that they don't understand something.
- It is best to start with the basics, and not to assume prior knowledge. Ask them many questions to check understanding and encourage the students to ask questions too.

## **7. Resistance to technologies:**

- Especially in classes that use technology or tools that learners may be fearful of, small classes are best.
- Additional teacher-student time is very supportive.
- More advanced students can also be encouraged to support the less experienced students.

### **8. Third age people CAN learn a new language:**

- As travelling is getting more and more affordable, people are motivated to learn foreign languages.
- The adult brain learns languages just as easily (and more thoroughly) than children. They can reach a working level of proficiency much quicker than children can, as they draw on their existing language knowledge.

### **9. Teaching seniors is rewarding!**

- Wisdom - seniors have a lifetime of experience and wisdom to share. I have learned so much more from my classes of older students than from teaching school-age classes!
- Motivated students - senior students are generally more motivated to learn than younger students, although they can complain just as much about getting homework!
- Gratitude – older students express more gratitude and add more feelings than younger students.
- Social connections - being part of a classroom, helps seniors feel they are part of a community. These social connections help prevent or reduce feelings of isolation. Friendships from the classroom can help provide support and distraction in times of loss and sadness.
- Improved health - keeping the mind and body active, avoiding isolation and depression by maintaining social connections help to maintain good health as you age.

## Method for teaching seniors:

Goal	Purpose	Example
One-way communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Informing</li><li>• Explaining</li><li>• Convincing</li></ul>	Lecture
Loosening up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Getting to know each other</li><li>• Relieving tension</li><li>• Promoting communication</li></ul>	Ice-breaking exercises
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Active involvement of participants</li><li>• Sharing of responsibility</li><li>• Sharing information</li></ul>	Group work
Autonomous work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participants taking on full responsibility regarding content and processes</li></ul>	Project work

## Assumptions about adult learning

In 1980, Knowles made 5 assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners (andragogy) that are different from the assumptions about child learners (pedagogy). In 1984, Knowles added the 5th assumption.

**Self Concept** – When we get older, our concept of who we are (self-concept) shifts from dependence towards independence and self-direction.

**Adult Learner Experience** – As we grow and experience more life, we accumulate knowledge based on this experience that then becomes a more valuable resource for future learning. By the time we are adults, we have an abundance of experience to draw upon across a variety of contexts.

**Readiness to learn** – Our readiness to learn becomes more oriented to the developmental tasks of our social and work related roles.

**Orientation to Learning** – As adults, our perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediate application, and as such our orientation shifts from.

**Motivation to Learn** – As we mature, the motivation to learn is internal.

# Assessment for senior learners

Senior learners detest being assessed or graded by another adult. Therefore, the best assessment methods are:

- Presentation of work results.
- Celebration.
- Journal.
- Reflection.
- Peer discussion.

**“The excitement of learning separates youth from old age. As long as you are learning, you are not old.”**

(Rosalyn S. Yalow)

# THE ACADEMY OF OPPORTUNITIES

The Academy of Opportunities is based on the idea that the traditional attitudes to old age, at present common to both the younger and the older generations, are rooted in circumstances which were in many ways fundamentally different to those now prevailing in modern society. It is seen as important, that people now take a more holistic look at their life as a continuum. When the upbringing of children and the traditional working life of modern people ends, there will still be twenty to thirty years left to live, and in most cases these years will be spent in a relatively good health.

This is a long time - it covers near to one third of the total lifetime - and it is important for individuals to prepare for it with no less devotion than they did when they choose their future career as young adults. We see it therefore as advisable for people, at around fifty-five years age, to go through a kind of self-examination and ask how they want the second half of their lives to be, if they want to make changes in their lives, even radical changes, if they want to start a new career of some kind, if they have desires and dreams they still want to realize. We mean hereby a kind of personal SWOT-analysis, which leads to a strategy and an action plan for the years to come.

The need for self-examination of this kind is not obvious: people are used to prepare their future life in their early years and not in their middle age. A new social understanding and awareness is needed to make it obvious and people may need encouragement to go through such a process. Furthermore, is an earnest and through self-examination not an easy task. Many individuals will need professional assistance and group support in performing it in an effective way. The purpose of the Academy of Opportunities is exactly to provide this.

As a general framework for such a course is the following:

1. Introduction. (Module I) The rationale and purpose of the course. Icebreaker. Happiness and quality of life.
2. The past. (Module II) What is my situation and what brought me here? What can I learn about myself from the past?
3. The present. (Module III-IV) My identity and self-assessment. What are my values? What do I find important? What are my strengths, weaknesses? Which are my desires and dreams?
4. The future. (Modules V– VI) What do I want? What are the barriers? Where do the opportunities lie? Where can I find solutions and help to proceed?
5. The development of a plan; goal, sub-goals, time-frame and action plan for the future.

The course, as it is presented in this manual, is divided into 6 different modules or sessions which are steps in developing an individual plan for their future. The participants embark on an inner journey and with the tools provided during the course, they will get the support to take the first step towards creating their own path.

This Manual and its publication in three language versions is foreseen to serve as a medium through which European adult educators, working with 50+ adults will be supported in their non-formal learning activities for personal development and personal reinvention after 50. The goal is to increase the skills of people working with the age group 50+, such as trainers, HR employees, counselors, on the scope of supporting their educational and developmental needs.

The Manual can certainly also be used as a guideline by individuals and self-help groups.

The course as it is presented here is only one possibility of many. Trainers and facilitators are encouraged to adapt this framework to the specific learning needs of the participants each time and to local conditions, to vary methods, add material and try new exercises.

# COURSE PROGRAM

The Academy of Opportunities can be taught and presented in many different ways and for different group types. In this Manual a certain framework is presented, but each Module also includes suggestions for variations to the programme. It is recommended though that the group size is preferably 14 – 18 people and that the training involves at least 2 meetings of 9 hours in total. In this particular framework we introduce a course of three meetings, where each meeting includes two different modules and each module is 90-minute long. The modules are the following:

Module I: My personal well-being

Module II: Where am I now and why am I here

Module III: Strengths and skills

Module IV: Dreams and passions

Module V: Embracing the change

Module VI: Mowing forward

The themes and the order of the Modules have been carefully developed and tested throughout the Catch the Ball project. These themes have been drawn as important for the people aged 50+ during the pre-piloting and piloting phases of the local trainings of Academy of Opportunity in each partner country. By developing training tools for those themes, our training team seeks to offer training materials will help facilitators and educators to enable people in their third age to find new ways and means to develop themselves for an active and enjoyable latter part of life.

The order of the themes is designed to invite participants on a journey where they start by examining the theme the guides the rest of the course, that is, finding out what they believe to be happiness or well-being. After that they start seeking ways to get closer to this theme, by examining their strengths and defining their dreams. Finally, they find ways to fight their inner and outer barriers, which is a fundamental factor to take the next step towards building up courage to make a change or chase a dream. Throughout the course, participants present, evaluate and re-evaluate their goals. In the last Module, the group takes final steps towards making an actual plan for their future, hopefully in deeper connection with their true dreams and passions and feeling empowered to follow those dreams.

In the Academy of Opportunities program, a great variety of teaching material and techniques can be found, as the manual aims to meet the needs of different trainers. These techniques are often designed to encourage participants to actively participate in the activities presented and to go under the surface and evaluate how they can move forward from there. The trainers are never teachers that tell participants what to do in each situation, but rather tries to guide them in their journey. Even though this material has proven to work well in pilot trainings, trainers are encouraged to adjust material to teaching methods that suits them best, while taking into consideration to follow the course objectives and motives. The course introduces presentations as trainers' inputs, various interactive activities, handouts, variations to the activities, possible follow-ups, and important tips for trainers. Many of the presentations are linked with PDF files that suggest power point presentations that could be turned into a fancier prezi format as well. It is recommended though, that each trainer designs their own presentations – as it tends to be show the best outcome for training. Besides the Modules themselves, a section of group building activities is presented, as it is very important to work thoroughly on building up trust in the group.

In the Manual, standardized icons are used to mark different sections within the Modules. They can be described as follows:



Main goals and objectives of the module



Suggested timetable



Presentations and handouts



Overview of activity



Instructions for an activity



Materials and resources



Tips for the facilitator



Variations



Suggestions for follow-up

## TEAM-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Team-building is a collective term for various types of activities used to enhance social relations and define roles within teams, often involving collaborative tasks. Many team-building exercises aim to expose and address interpersonal problems within the group.

Team building is one of the most widely used group-development activities in organizations.

The team-building activities include icebreakers, energizers, creative and fun indoor or outdoor activities, and exercises that help building unity, teamwork, community, and improved group dynamics. They are often challenging and require planning, problem solving, coordination, and trust. Using them certainly makes a difference in a group of participants and successfully turns groups into teams.

Team-building activities usually aim to:

- Prepare participants for the dynamics within the specific group in training event;
- Work actively together as a group/team;
- Facilitate the group-building process;
- Explore both individual and group perspectives (ways of seeing);
- Provide a context for co-operation and networking that are not only dependent on oral discussion;
- Open up creative avenues for exploring the themes of the training course;
- Introduce participants to practical activities that could be used with a variety of groups and in different training contexts.

Benefits of the team-building activities:

- Improving the group work's productivity is one of the most common goals of team building activities. Take the opportunity to identify ways to improve the three Ps (policies, processes and procedures) that can affect productivity.
- Increasing motivation: team building activities can help increase participant's motivation in a number of ways. When a group of participants successfully complete a team building activity it creates momentum and makes them feel good about themselves, it increases participants confidence in their, and their team's, ability.
- Increasing collaboration: one of the most important benefits of a properly planned team building activity is greater collaboration between participants. By creating activities that people enjoy and can experience as a group, participants can build relationships and develop networks of contacts outside their day-to-day role that will help them in the future.
- Boosting creativity and innovation: an out-of-the-ordinary team building tasks stimulates participants to use their imagination to come up with creative solutions, and they send the message that creativity and bouncing ideas off each other, is welcome.
- Improving communication – a key benefit of a properly planned team building activity is improved communication between participants. Enjoyable, fun activities enable them to get to know each other, create a better understanding of each other and break down walls of mistrust by encouraging people to focus on what they have in common rather than their differences.



Team-building activities can be a powerful way to develop collaboration and trust, improve motivation, nurture strengths, and address weaknesses. However, they need to have a real purpose and be properly planned in order to make a genuine impact. Finding the right exercise can be challenging; not every team is comfortable with certain types of activities. It is important to choose an activity everyone feels safe doing.



### **Presentations and handouts**

Presentation – [Blobs and thought bobbles](#)

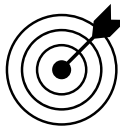
Handout/instructions - [The Blob Tree \(Pip Wilson\)](#)

[Handout: Activity: BINGO](#)

## **Training activities**

### **Activity 1: Name Circle**

Estimated time 10 – 20 minutes



### **Main goals and objectives of the activity**

This is an introductory exercise that could also be used as an icebreaker at the beginning of the event. It aims at introducing participants to each other by learning the names of each person in the group.



### **Overview**

Participants stand in a circle. The trainer starts by making a short statement (such as “This is a pen”) and says their name, passing the pen. The next person gets the pen and rephrases the statement by saying “John said that this is a pen and my name is Adam”, passing the pen. The next person goes: “Adam said that John said that his is a pen and my name is Mary” ... and this way until the last person in the circle who is in the lucky position to repeat all names in the group.



### **Instructions**

Preferable group size is any starting from 10 to 40. Smaller groups make it too easy and larger groups would make it too long and hard to perform towards the last participants.



### **Materials and resources**

Special requirements for study room or working space: A large room or an outdoor space that can accommodate the entire group, standing in a circle.



### **Tips for facilitators**

Make sure that all participants have the physical capability to handle the exercise.

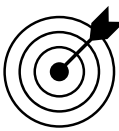


## Variations

The exercise could be performed by asking people to not just say their name but also make a specific gesture. This way every next person will need to repeat not only the names of the previous participants in the circle but also their gestures. Please note that this variation might not be very suitable for groups over 30 participants as it is time-consuming to go over all names and gestures.

## Activity 2: Introducing your partner

Estimated time 20 – 30 minutes



### Main goals and objectives of the activity

This is an introductory exercise used as an icebreaker at the beginning of the event. It aims at introducing participants to each other, by letting them introduce each other to the group. It is often easier to introduce other people than yourself, and by having two people getting to know each other straight from the beginning you might not feel as alone.



### Overview

Participants work in pairs. Each participant has four minutes to answer three questions asked by their partner. Good questions are for example: What is your name? What are your expectations for this course? Tell me about an event in your childhood that had an effect on you. After three minutes the partners switch roles, and the questions are turned around. Afterwards, the participants introduce their partner using the answers that were given during the exercise.



### Instructions

Divide the group into pairs. Introduce the exercise and write the questions on the board, so that all participants can see. Ask participants to watch the time but remind them to switch places when four minutes have passed. When eight minutes have passed, the trainer asks participants to introduce their partner.



### Tips for facilitators

The facilitator does not give ideas or examples to how they should introduce each other. Facilitator presents the questions, or it is also possible to have no questions and let participants control what they want to talk about. If questions are presented, it is important that those questions do not serve the purpose of putting people into boxes, that is, asking about things such as profession, education, family and so on.

Be aware of time, some might go on and on. One idea is to tell everybody that we have certain amount of time and let them take care of it or say that they have max 2 min to introduce each person.

It is important that the pairs do not know each other beforehand. Sometimes it is helpful to move the class around, instead of introducing the person sitting next to you. Also, possible to put half the names in a bowl and let the other half draw a name from the bowl.

## Activity 3: Mazinga

Estimated time 3 – 5 minutes



### Main goals and objectives of the activity

This is an energizer that could be used in a group of participants that already know each other. It aims at connecting participants to each other by focusing on the group energy and working as a team.



### Overview

Participants stand in a circle. The trainer starts by explaining the energizer and invites the group to perform together. The activity is finished when the groups achieve to goal to perform the energizer successfully and together. This energizer trains team attention, focusing and collaborative action.



### Instructions

Gather the group to stand in a circle, preferably outdoors.

Explain the rules of the activity: the trainer starts with raising both hand at the level of her chest, while saying a prolonged syllable “Maaaaa”. Each of the next participants clockwise is following the gesture, also keeping the sound “Maaa”, until the last participant is involved, and the signal is back to trainer, who pronounces the final word “Mazinga!”

The groups should be careful to pronounce the prolonged syllable one after another, not together.

Another challenge is saying “Mazinga!” all together at the same time.



### Materials and resources

Special requirements for study room or working space: A large room or an outdoor space that can accommodate the entire group, standing in a circle.



### Tips for facilitators.

Make sure that all participants have the physical capability to handle the exercise.

## Activity 4: Blobs and Thought Bubbles

Estimated time 10 – 30 minutes



### Main goals and objectives of the activity

This is an evaluation exercise that could also be used as a Self-Assessment tool in relation to “Where Am I Now” exercise. It aims at self-reflection; looking at participants fears, challenges

and opportunities; self-learning.

It aims at practicing self-reflection and storytelling skills in a group. Helps participants evaluate their feelings and situation within the group of participants. And finally, it can foster links between individual self-reflection and sharing in a community (externalizing the internal dia-



## Overview

This activity focuses on self-reflection, self-assessment and sharing in a community of trust. Using Blobs and thought bubble methods as animated ways to nominate and discuss feelings, the activity is looking for unleashing participants' potential via a FEELosophical experience. Engaging, visual and interactive, the Blobs and thought bubbles are fun and creative learning tools that blend qualitative and quantitative best practices in lifelong learning to unlock deep-seated emotions, latent behaviours and potentials, while providing self-reflection, visual and verbal understanding and sharing opportunities.

The Blob Tree developed by Ian Long and Pip Wilson as well as other Blob figures, can be used as an evaluation tool. It has been developed particularly for schools, hospitals, youth workers, psychologists, carers, counsellors, and anyone working with people. It can be used in many different settings. It is copyrighted, and you need to purchase it before you use it. In the Academy of Opportunities, the Blobs have been used at the end of each Module as a form of evaluation. Participants are asked to identify themselves with one of the Blobs in relation to how they feel at the end of the section. It is recommended to use different pictures and the facilitator is encouraged to use pictures that they feel fit the subject or theme each time. It encouraged though to use the Blob tree in the beginning and at the end of the training, as it helps participants to be aware of changes in feelings and experience during the course.



## Presentations and handouts

Presentation – Blobs and thought bobbles  
Handout/instructions - The Blob Tree (Pip Wilson)



## Instructions

It is important to start with introducing the Blob figures to participants as well as the methodology of Blobs. Facilitators should explain that Blobs are amorphous characters that comprise a range of gestures and expressions to help consumers articulate thoughts and emotions. After distributing the Blob figure selected for that occasion, facilitator asks participants to select a Blob that characterize their feelings or associations in response to questions, such as "What is your state of mind by the end of this Module?" or "To what extent does this Module help your journey?" Participants take time to choose their Blobs. Here the facilitator can choose to have the evaluation anonymous, asking them to hand in the Blobs and then possibly overviewing them all together as a final evaluation in the end, or participants can introduce their findings. This has to be clear before the exercise begins.



## Materials and resources

Printed handouts for individual work  
Large study room with good acoustics  
Few small working spaces or division options in the large study room  
A downloadable copy and license for use can be purchased from the Blob Tree Shop at:  
[www.Blobtree.com](http://www.Blobtree.com)

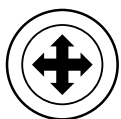


### Tips for facilitators

When introducing the activity, make sure participants feel safe and the group has already passed the trust-building phase. Ensuring a good group dynamic is essential with this group activity.

Participants often find it difficult to find the “correct” Blob to describe their feelings. In these cases, it is important to emphasize that the Blobs are abstract and can signify whatever participant choose. Always talk about the figures as Blobs, as they are both genderless and colourless. This keeps the Blob tool as open as possible.

Follow-up probes reveal vivid language and narrative. It’s very important to use the name Blobs, rather than he or she, as they are not white males or females, but genderless and colourless.



### Variations

The activity can offer a broad range of visual scenarios and can be customized to specific client needs. For example, the BLOBS have been used in the Academy of Opportunity as Self-Assessment in relation to “Where Am I Now” exercise. However, this tool allows a lot of flexibility and could be used as introductory exercise.

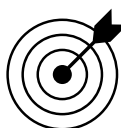


### Suggestions for follow-up

If the facilitator finds it appropriate to further explore the Blob and Thoughts Bubble methods with the group, there are opportunities to step further into higher Level activities that offer more specific and contextualized self-reflections.

## Activity 5: Strength Bingo

Estimated time 10 minutes



### Main goals and objectives of the activity

This activity serves as an icebreaker at the beginning of the course or at the beginning of each event with different themes according to the theme of that day. It aims at getting the participants to move around, talk to as many of the groups as possible and consequently get to know each other and build up trust. When it is related to the theme of the day it is a way to revisit the homework. It is energizing and can be fun and if there is a prize involved it can get even livelier.



### Overview

Each participant gets a Bingo card with different nouns/strengths/professions etc. In order to get a Bingo and win the game, the participants need to walk around and ask other participants questions. Once the participant gets an answer that fits that particular box in the Bingo card, he gets to fill out that box. This is referred as an “cocktail party style” activity. The facilitator controls how many boxes participants need to fill out in order to get Bingo and win the prize. It can for example be to fill out the whole Bingo-card or get for a one vertical line and one horizontal line, and when that is done call out a Bingo.



## Instructions

Facilitator has to start out with asking if everyone is familiar with the game of Bingo. After that, the facilitator explains what participants need to in order to get Bingo. Instruct participants to ask a question according to the ones on the Bingo and if they get a “yes” they write down the name of that person in the right spot. When there is a Bingo the facilitator goes over the whole card, box by box, and reads out what stands there and ask persons to raise their hands if that applies to them. A prize is always popular (does not have to be expensive).



## Materials and resources

Create a BINGO on a A4 paper. A pen or a pencil. A spacious room so they can walk around.



## Tips for facilitators

State in the beginning how long time they have and how much of the BINGO should be filled out. They are not supposed to write their own name but walk around and get as many names as possible.



## Variations

The Bingo can be used with various themes such as strengths, values, first jobs etc.



## Main goals and objectives of the module

Happiness not only feels good, it is good. Happier people have more stable marriages, stronger immune systems, higher incomes, and more creative ideas than their less happy peers. Furthermore, cross-sectional, longitudinal, and experimental studies have demonstrated that happiness is not merely a correlate or consequence of success but a cause of it. For most people around the globe who report wanting to be happy, these findings would be disheartening if happiness could not be achieved intentionally. Despite evidence suggesting that individual differences in well-being are strongly influenced by genetics, researchers have theorized that much of people's happiness is under their control. A study that combined results from 51 randomized controlled interventions found that people prompted to engage in positive intentional activities, such as thinking gratefully, optimistically, or mindfully, became significantly happier. (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005).

In this module we are introduced to positive psychology and some keys to well-being. We take a happiness test and get the opportunity to experience some interventions that have been proven to increase well-being.



## Suggested timetable

1. Introduction of module. Purpose and expectations – 5 minutes
  2. Activity: what makes me happy? - 30 minutes
  3. Conclusions and discussions - 10 minutes
  4. Break - 10 minutes
  5. Activity: what is my situation? - 15 minutes
  6. Input: benefits of wellbeing - 10 minutes
  7. Evaluation and remarks - 10 minutes
- Total: 90 minutes



## Presentations and handouts

Handout: [Introduction of Module I](#)

Handout: [Activity: Dieners Test](#)

Presentation: [Input: Benefits of Wellbeing](#)



## Tips for facilitators

- It is important that the facilitator does not give answers to the question “What is happiness?” in the beginning of the section, but rather get original answers from participants. It is therefore recommended not to start with a presentation but with an exercise where participants work with this question.
- Talking about wellbeing or happiness can be easily put into well-known phrases that don't necessarily reflect the true answers. It is therefore important to try to get underneath the surface and encourage participants to really reflect on what they believe to be wellbeing and happiness – is it the same? If not, what is the difference?
- Input: benefits of wellbeing. Here you can talk about Seligman [PERMA](#) or the five evidence-based actions for wellbeing as presented by [The New Economics Foundation](#) for the British Government's Foresight project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing. Furthermore, it can be helpful to research the [New Measures of Wellbeing](#).



- Evaluation: gratitude circle. The participants stand in a circle and express their gratitude (for example one thing they will take away after the day – that they are grateful for).

## Training activities

### Activity 1: Whats makes me happy?

Estimated time – 25 minutes



#### Main goals and objectives

The goal is to discuss the difference between happiness and wellbeing and give the participants opportunity to define what makes them happy. The purpose of using Dixit cards is to encourage participants to go well underneath the surface, while talking about their ideas of happiness and wellbeing.



#### Overview

Participants work in groups of three. Each participant collects cards that best describe their strengths. After playing the game of giving and receiving cards, participants present their strengths to the rest of the group.



#### Instructions

Participants work in group of 3. The deck of cards is divided randomly between groups, the groups place the cards heads up on the table. Each participant gets 5 minutes to examine the cards and choose three cards that they find applicable to their ideas of well-being. After this, each participant gets 3 minutes to present their cards. During this presentation they should introduce, using images, what they believe to be well-being and why – in relation to this they could also mention a happy moment. Each group uses five minutes to come to an agreement about what is well-being and/or happiness. They can continue using the cards if they want. Finally, each group introduces their findings to the rest of the class. Ask – “popcorn style” – about the discussion and ask for couple of example of happy moments.



#### Material and resources

Dixit cards. Must be bought. They can be found for example on Amazon or in stores that sell boarding games.



#### Tips for facilitators

As many participants are not used to working with images it is important to remind them that the purpose of the card is to give them ideas and they should not spend too much time on choosing, rather thinking abstract, use the imagination. The cards are supposed to be useful, not a stress factor.

While people are introducing their cards and ideas the other members of the group should be silent, not interfere with comments. However, they are allowed to ask questions but they have to be aware of the time. 3 minutes per person.





## Variations

The cards could all be on one table, picture up and all the participants walk around and choose from the whole deck. The facilitator can also divide 3 cards per persons and people have to work with what they get.

## Activity 2: What is my situation? Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB)

Estimated time – 15 minutes



## Main goals and objectives of the activity

The goal is to encourage participants to get a better sense of their own situation as well as introduce to them important aspects of human well-being.



## Overview

The Psychological Well-Being scale consists of eight items describing important aspects of human functioning ranging from positive relationships, to feelings of competence, to having meaning and purpose in life. Each item is answered on a 1–7 scale that ranges from Strong Disagreement to Strong Agreement. All items are phrased in a positive direction. Scores can range from 8 (Strong Disagreement with all items) to 56 (Strong Agreement with all items). High scores signify that respondents view themselves in very positive terms in diverse areas of functioning. Although the scale does not individually measure facets of psychological well-being, it does yield an overview of positive functioning across the domains that are widely believed to be important.



## Instructions

The facilitator introduces the Diener's test, its function and history. After that the scale and scoring is introduced:

- 7 Strongly agree
- 6 Agree
- 5 Slightly agree
- 4 Mixed or neither agree nor disagree
- 3 Slightly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly disagree

Scoring: Add the responses, varying from 1 to 7, for all eight items.

Participants get a test, one per person, they answer it individually and calculate the score. A high score represents a person with many psychological resources and strengths. The average is 44. Afterwards there is an open discussion about the results.



## Materials and resources

Diener's test. Copyright by Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener, January 2009.



### Tips for facilitators

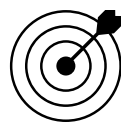
It is important during the discussions, that participants do not feel pressured to share their outcome from the test. The discussion should be “pop-corn” style, which means that it is random, and participants choose to share or participate.

Some participants can get frustrated or shocked by their scores. It is important to emphasize that this is only a test made more for fun and not very deep. It can be helpful for facilitator to grab the ball in the discussion and focus more on what can be done with the result instead of the result itself. For example, asking what can possibly be changed in the participants life to higher the score. The possible range of scores is from 8 (lowest possible) to 56 (highest PWB possible).

## Alternative Activities

### Activity 3: How long have I got? And how do I want to spend my time?

Estimated time 10 minutes



### Main goals and objectives of the activity

The goal is to encourage participants to get a better sense of their own situation as well as introduce to them important aspects of human well-being.



### Overview

Each participant gets a measurement tape (for example from IKEA, 100 cm). The average living expectancy in the country is stated (for both men and women) and they are asked to cut the tape there; then they are asked to cut off at their present age. The “stub” is what they can expect to still have unlive. How do they want to use it? What do they want in life?



### Tips for facilitators

Beware if the group is “old” they might find it difficult to face that they have so “few” years left. Most often participants think this is very inspiring and even make up their minds not delaying or postpone changes.



### Variations

Write it down – ask participants to imagine life after 5 years when everything is perfect; how will it be? Write down constantly for 15 minutes, never take the pen off the paper.



### Follow up

This exercise could be linked to A Bucket List – see for example Creating Your Best Life: The Ultimate Life List Guide by Caroline Adams Miller.

## Activity 4: Positive Interventions Cards

Estimated time 15 minutes



### Main goals and objectives of the activity

The goal is to give ideas of how we can add to our happiness by doing certain interventions.



### Overview

This activity explains the usefulness and importance of regular interventions. Participants go through a deck of cards in groups and together they decide on important interventions that might change the course of their lives or how they think about themselves. The cards serve as a pool of ideas. They are not necessary for the training, as the facilitator can also give up a list of ideas or ask participants to work together on finding possible interventions. In the end, each group presents their findings and discusses them with the others.



### Instructions

Explain the goal of the activity and introduce the deck of cards to participants. Discuss the importance of different interventions to help us grow new habits and ditch the old ones that are getting in our way. Divide the participants into groups of 3 or 4 people. Divide the card deck among the groups and ask them to discuss interventions and even choose 1 or 2 that they would like to try themselves.



### Materials and resources

[Positran](#) has a deck of positive interventions cards that fit well for this exercise. They furthermore offer some good ideas on how to use the cards in various ways.



### Tips for facilitators

The trainer could link this exercise to PWB, what kind of interventions could be useful and/or interesting to try were people were not happy with their scores?



### Variations

Have one deck of cards per group, pictures down, and each one draws 1 intervention and tells the group how it could be useful for PWB, then the next etc. The group has a certain amount of time and should try to discuss as many as possible.

It is also possible to use photos instead of positive interventions cards.



### Suggestions for follow-up

Ask the participants to try the positive interventions, for example to keep a Gratitude journal, even make a gratitude visit.

Daily exercise – 30 minutes.



### Main goals and objectives of the module

The general purpose of this particular module is to help the participants to understand the situation they are in at present; as persons entering the third age, contemplating how to organize the next thirty years in order to get as much life-satisfaction out of them as possible.

Whereas in module I the concept of life-satisfaction and happiness was treated in module II the individual life-story up to now is in focus; the classical, existential question: why am I here?

Some interesting points of view are presented in Module II, regarding freedom, alternatives and choices in life. The aim is to:

- awaken the interest of the participants in this topic generally;
- to introduce to them concepts which are useful in analysing life-stories;
- encourage them to analyse their own life-story through reflecting on and answering some important, personal question.

This self-analysis is seen as an important starting point for the future plan which is going to be developed during the course. Through the theoretical inputs, the homework and the exercises the participants are supposed to come to new insights, more self-knowledge and be better prepared to take positive, realistic decisions about their future.

Together with a short orientation the homework should be presented to the participants at the end of Module I. The participants will have some hours at least, preferably some days to work on it, depending on the schedule of the course/ total length of the course.

In the homework some personal questions about the participants life-history are presented, which they are supposed to contemplate and answer for their part. They are advised to do so in writing, but without any requirement to present it to others.

In Module II the participants are encouraged to share their thoughts and answers with other participants and take part in the group-discussion about the homework and this topic.

The participants should be reminded not to share answers or thoughts which they find too personal.

The specific goal of Module II is to help the participants to:

- understand better which alternatives they have in their actual life-situation.
- understand better the limits of their freedom.
- make solid and realistic decisions for the personal plan for the future which they are going to create during the course.



### Suggested timetable

1. Introducing the module. Purpose and expectations – 5 minutes
  2. Input: Destiny, free will and the power to make decisions - 15 minutes
  3. Input: Blobs methodology - 15 minutes
  4. Break - 10 minutes
  5. Activity: Blobs – where am I now? – 30 minutes
  6. Evaluation and remarks - 10 minutes
  7. Homework for Module III: Introduced and distributed – 5 minutes
- Total: 90 minutes



### Presentations and handouts

Handout: [Introduction of Module II](#)

Lecture: [Input: Destiny, free will and the power to make decisions](#)

Presentation: [Input: BLOBS methodology](#)

Handout: [Homework: Module II](#)



### Tips for facilitators

The trainer gives a lecture (theoretical input) and answers questions. Advise: the trainer draws a tree with many branches on a flipchart, which he can use to explain the discussion of the decisions in life and the statements at the end of the lecture. In handouts, facilitators can find an example of a lecture given in the pilots, but it is recommended that each trainer adjust lectures to their own teaching methods and character. If lecture is to be handed out, it is advised to do so by the end of training.

It has proven successful to have a group discussion about the homework right after the lecture. The participants are encouraged to share their answers and reflections. It is advisable to start with rather neutral questions, like role-models in youth or how decisions of study or occupation came around. The trainer should be careful not to press the participants to share personal and delicate matters.

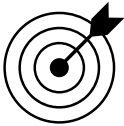
The time this discussion takes depends among other things on the group size, but 5-6 minutes per person should do; lecture and discussion together would then take one hour for a group of eight.

After a ten minutes break it is proposed that the participants approach the questions „Where am I? Why am I here? from another angle or through the Blobs exercise.

# Training Activities

## Activity 1: Blobs: Where am I now?

Estimated time 30 minutes



### Main goals and objectives of the activity

Participants find a new way to express their current situation or state of mind through the use of BLOBS. They practise self-reflection and storytelling skills in a group. Furthermore, it aims to foster links between individual self-reflection and sharing in a community.



### Overview

This activity is based on the methods of the therapist Pip Wilson. Blobs are amorphous characters that comprise a range of gestures and expressions to help people articulate thoughts and emotions. Participants get a Blob and select one that characterizes their feelings or associations in response to questions.



### Instructions

Facilitator ensures that participants have fully grasped the ideology and methodology of Blobs. The activity is introduced, its motives and goals. Each participant gets three different Blob images, with three different themes. The facilitator can choose which themes will be the focus of the class. It can be good to use themes such as family, career, and lifespan. Participants then get 20 minutes to choose one figure in each image, which represent them and to write a few lines about why they have chosen this figure. They are also asked to speculate if they are happy with this BLOB or if they would prefer to be another Blob, and then how they can reach that goal. Afterwards, participants are invited to share at least one image with the class – but this is not obligatory. They are asked to focus on the once where they can spot the possibility of change.



### Materials and resources

Downloaded Blob images, which are printed and handed out for individual work. Large study room, few small working spaces or divisions where people can work on their Blobs. Crayons in different colours.



### Tips for facilitators

- It is important to keep the Blobs as neutral as possible, they should be genderless and colourless. In that way, participants find it easier to think of them as abstract and pair them with their own situation or feelings. Use for example always the name Blob, instead of he or she.
- Facilitator should explain that the selection of one particular Blob, is a snap-shot of how that person is feeling at that very moment. It does not exclude other feelings or situations. Selections depend on state of mind and also on character of participant. Some people only feel able to select from the negative Bobs, whilst others tend to fly straight to the top.



## Variations

The activity can offer a broad range of visual scenarios and can be customized to specific needs. The questions can be: Where are you? (one colour), where are you going? (another colour) and where do you want to be? (third colour).



## Main goals and objectives of the module

According to Professor Alex Linley, “a strength is a pre-existing capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that is authentic and energising to the user, and enables optimal functioning, development and performance” When we use our strengths, research tells us we are happier, engaged and more likely to achieve our goals. Knowing our strengths helps us to focus on the tasks we do well and enjoy. When we know our strengths and make use of them group and team relationships are stronger, and people produce better work. The knowledge and utilisation of one’s strengths is considered to be one of the most direct routes to personal and professional fulfilment. Many people know their weaknesses, but when it comes to strengths they are not as sure. In this module participants get an opportunity to spot their strengths and have other people spotting them as well. Knowing their strengths might make it easier for participants to make changes in their lives and reach their goals.



## Suggested timetable

1. Introducing the module. Purpose and expectations – 5 minutes
  2. Input: Group building (Strength-Bingo) - 10 minutes
  3. Activity: Your strengths according to ... - 15 minutes
  4. Input: the importance of knowing your strengths - 10 minutes
  5. Activity: Strength Rummy – 25 minutes
  6. Discussion - 15 minutes
  7. Evaluation and remarks - 10 minutes
- Total: 90 minutes



## Presentations and handouts.

Handout: [Introduction of Module III](#)

Presentation: [Input: The importance of knowing your strengths](#)

Handout: [Instructions: Activity: Strength Rummy](#)



## Tips for facilitator

In the input talk about importance of knowing your strengths:

- Happier and more confident;
- Higher levels of self-esteem and energy;
- Experience less stress and more resilience;
- More likely to achieve goals;
- Perform better and more engaged at work;
- Develop quicker in areas of strength.

There are several activities that could be used here and a lot of information. It is recommended that the facilitator takes the VIA and Strengths Profile tests him/herself before teaching the course. The participants should know about the various strengths tests (these two and Strength Finder).



Be aware that before this module there is homework – depending on the activities the facilitator chooses:

- A list of the first 9 jobs the participants hold (from unpaid jobs during childhood up till adulthood). What did they love about each job?
- The participants should ask 10 people (spouse, children, work colleges, childhood friend, neighbour, a parent, a sibling etc) to describe them with only one adjective. Ask them to bring the list of adjectives to class.
- Take a strength test (VIA? Strengths Profiler or Strength Finder) – Everybody takes the same test.



### Suggestions for follow-up

A lot of material can be found about strengths and how to use them. Here are some sites that can be helpful. Furthermore, it is possible to buy strength cards at these sites. It is best to use cards in the main language of the group if possible.

- [Positran](#)
- [atmybest](#)

Furthermore, the home pages of these three common strength tests have a lot of information about strengths:

- [VIA](#)
- [Strengthsfinder](#)
- [Strengthsprofile](#)

## Training Activities

### Activity 1: Strength Bingo

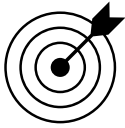


### Main goals and objectives of the activity

A strength bingo as an icebreaker can open up the discussion about strengths. It furthermore broadens the horizon towards what can be considered as strengths. Please find further instructions for this activity in the section: Group building activities.

### Activity 2: Your strength according to your friends

Estimated time: 5-15 minutes



### **Main goals and objectives of the activity**

This activity helps the participants to look at themselves through the eyes of those close to them. This will give them a new perspective, a new vocabulary of strengths to use for themselves and hopefully boost their energy and self-confidence.



### **Overview**

If there is an opportunity, participants are asked to prepare this activity at home. They should ask to ask 10 people (spouse, children, work colleges, childhood friend, neighbour, a parent, a sibling etc) to describe them with only one adjective. Participants then bring the list to class and facilitator will lead a popcorn discussion about the words that came up. Participants will then get five minutes to write a speech about themselves.



### **Instructions**

Facilitator opens up the activity by asking if there were any adjectives that shocked or surprised the participants. Also, good to ask if they see a red thread and if they find it accurate. When instructed to write a speech, participants are asked to write it as if they were a best friend writing a birthday speech. Participants are asked to write constantly for three minutes without taking the pen off the paper.



### **Tips for facilitator**

The speech could also be prepared as an obituary, which participants write about themselves. Have napkins ready as this might get emotional.



### **Variations**

It is possible to deepen the activity by asking the participants to read their speeches aloud. Facilitator catches the ball by commenting and encouraging discussion about what those words mean to us and how they can help us detect our strengths.

## **Activity 3: Strength Rummy**

Estimated time: 25 minutes



### **Main goals and objectives of the activity**

Understand the language of strength. The aim of the game is to gather a hand of cards that most closely resembles your own strengths through trading your cards with the other players. It also encourages participants to introduce themselves using their own strengths as conversation starter.



### **Overview**

In this activity, participants play cards. Each player gets a hand of cards and during the game they can ask others around the table to switch cards or draw new ones. At the end of the

game, everyone around the table should be perfectly happy with their hand. At this point they can introduce their hand to the rest of the group, they should introduce their strengths and explain why they believe this to be their strength.



### Instructions

Participants work in groups, four people in each.

1. Shuffle the cards and deal seven cards to each player.
2. Place the remaining cards face down in the center of the table.
3. Set a timer for ten minutes.
4. The player to the left of the dealer starts by choosing a card in their hand that they do not want and would like to trade. The other players should offer their own cards to swap with this card. If they do not want to trade with another player, they may want to swap a card with the pile in the centre of the table.
5. Each player takes it in turns to trade a card.
6. When the time sounds, all players should lay out their cards and describe their strengths to the other players.



### Material and resources

Strength cards – can be bought in many variations.



### Tips for facilitators

Facilitators can use different strength cards here. The participant that deals the card should set the timer. After the groups have shared their cards with each other, there should be open discussions (popcorn) about the exercise.

Activities that can be added to the module or used instead of other activities mentioned above.

## Alternative Activities

### Activity 4: The First 9 Jobs

Estimated time: 10 minutes



### Main goals and objectives of the activity

Look at your experience from the perspective of strength. Examine if there is a red threat of strengths used in different jobs.



### Overview

By looking into the back mirror to see what you have done in the past you can shed a light on what you like to do in the future. Is there a red threat or anything that the participant would like to revisit? This will help participant to get a better overview of strengths and also helps with working on passions and desires.



## Instructions

This activity requires home preparation. Ask participants to write down the first 9 jobs they had and what they loved about them.

Participants work in pairs. Participants read out loud their list and together with partner, they will spot strengths. Is participant still using those strengths? Are these strengths perhaps overused? Are there any strengths spotted that participants would like to examine further or try to use more?



## Tips for facilitators

As participants are working in pairs, each participant gets 5 minutes to present their list of jobs. Ask participants to be very aware of the time limit. It is helpful that they take responsibility of the time frame, facilitator nevertheless has to be on the lookout that every participant gets a chance to talk.

When presenting this activity, it is important that the facilitator introduces possible variation for those that have not had that many jobs in the past. This means that participants can also list other activities such as voluntary work, leisure activities, hobbies, participation in committees and so on.

Afterwards, the facilitator uses the “pop-corn” method, asking the group what surprised them and if they got any new ideas for the future. This exercise can help participants realize that changes have possibly been a part of their life all along, so that can help them see that changes ahead do not have to be that scary.

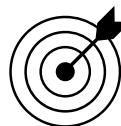


## Variations

“The First 9 jobs” is also a good icebreaker. Ask them to send them in advance and make a Bingo. The participants come to know each other better, discover similar experience and might get new ideas.

## Activity 5: Strength Test

Estimated time: 20 minutes at home and 15 minutes in class



## Main goals and objectives of the activity

By knowing more about your strengths, you can understand what really motivates you. By taking a strength test you can use the insights to shape your personal and career success by doing more of what you enjoy and less of what you don't. Know yourself – achieve your goals – be happy.



## Overview

Participants do homework, where they are asked to do a strength test, VIA or Strengths Profile. In the classroom, participants work in pairs. They are asked to tell each other about their 5 character strengths (if using VIA) or their unrealized strengths (if using SP). Pairs have discussion about how they can better use these strengths, especially focusing on the change

they want to make in their lives. If participants relate the tests to PWB – how can they use them there? (to increase your well-being).



### Tips for facilitators

Facilitators should take the test for themselves, so they are familiar with it. If they take the Strength Profiler it might be useful for them to ask a certified coach to go through it with them. If they take the VIA – it might be useful for facilitators to buy the report to get more ideas of how to use it.

## Activity 6: Offer and Request

Estimated time: 20 minutes



### Main goals and purposes of the activity

To practice offering our strengths and ask for what we need.



### Overview

Each participants write's his or her name on 3 stickers (post-it notes):

- Write 2 strengths offers on 2 of the stickers and place on your left arm;
- Write 1 request on 1 sticker and place on your right arm;
- Walk around the room offering people your strengths and see who can support your request.



### Materials and resources

Post-it notes, pens.



## Main goals and objectives of the module

In this module, participants evaluate their dreams and passions. Participants have now had sessions where they have discussed what is personal wellbeing and evaluated their own situation. Before moving forward and embarking on a journey where participants dig into speculations about where they want to go from here, they are prepared by both evaluating their strengths and visualizing their passions. This is aimed to prepare them for a journey outside the comfort zone and finally planning for the next steps.



## Suggested timetable

1. Introducing the module. Purpose and expectations – 10 minutes
2. Input: the importance of dreams and how to discover your desires - 15 minutes
3. Input: What is a Vision board and how to make one – 5 minutes
4. Break - 5 minutes
5. Activity: Making a Vision Board – 45 minutes
6. Evaluation and remarks - 10 minutes

Total: 90 minutes



## Presentations and handouts

Handout: [Introduction of Module IV](#)

Presentation: [Input: The importance of dreams and how to discover your desires](#)

Presentation: [Input: What is a Vision Board and how to make one](#)

Handout: [Instructions: Activity: Making a Vision Board](#)

Handout :[Homework: Module IV: Finding your Passions](#)



## Tips for facilitators

Before diving into the topic, it is good to warm up by discussing the questions that participants answered at home. Facilitator should keep the focus on passions and why they are important. Was there anything surprising?

The main goal of the input “The importance of dreams and how to discover your desires”, is twofold. Firstly, it is aimed to encourages discussion about the importance of dreaming and secondly it covers the topic of those who have problems finding their dream. What does it mean. if you don’t know your passions? For further material it is interesting to read the following article by Laura Berman: [What if I don’t have a dream?](#) and also watch her inspiring lecture on TEDx called: [Finding your dream job without ever looking at your resume](#).

Evaluation: The best way to evaluate this module is for participants to present their Vision Boards and discuss them. A Blub can be used to evaluate how the participant feels during the lesson and another one to evaluate how useful the lesson was for their personal journey.

# Training Activities

## Activity 1: Vision Board

Estimated time: 45 minutes



### Main goals and objectives of the activity

Vision Board is a visualization tool that serves as a representation of where you are going. Serves to strengthen and stimulate emotions as the mind responds strongly to visual stimulation. It helps participant define their dreams and visualize them.



### Overview

Participants take 30 minutes to create their own Vision Board. The facilitator can decide if there will be a theme for the Vision Boards or if participants can choose what the theme will be. It has been helpful for the course development to ask participants to focus particularly on their vision of change or the dream they wish to chase. Participants create their Vision Boards, present them to their groups, those who volunteer can present their board to the whole class and in the end all the Vision Board are put up on the wall.



### Instructions

It is important to thoroughly present the ideology behind the Vision Board before starting to present the activity itself. There is a lot of literature to be found about this on the internet which can be useful as preparational material. What is important is to show some examples of vision boards, emphasize the importance of the journey not the goal– the fact that the vision will not actually be realized not the main essence of the Vision Board -, and finally the importance of participants planning for how they intend to use the Vision Board in the future.

Divide the class into group of four. Facilitator informs the groups about the time limit and encourages them to take time to think about the theme of their Vision Board. It should reflect their dreams and passions.

After some brain-storming, each participant will work individually on their Vision Boards. Facilitator encourages them to take few minutes to think about their vision, and then start clipping, drawing, gluing, and writing – until the Vision Board is ready.



### Material and resources

Posters, scissors, glue sticks, magazines, quotes, sound-system.



### Tips for facilitators

It is very important to create a warm and secure environment for the participants. Facilitator should preferably play some nice music and make sure that the lighting is not too bright.

Facilitator will have to prepare well for this class. Choose different magazines, so they fit the interests of all the participants. Find memes and print them out. Sometimes it is better to have cut out some images to save time.



### **Variations**

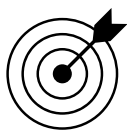
There can be multiple variations of this activity. Vision board can for example be designed in groups or with more focused theme. The tools can also be different. Participants can for example design their vision boards on the computer, finding photos and quotes for themselves and the saving them as background on desk top.



### **Suggestions for follow-up**

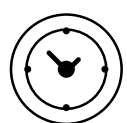
A suggested follow up would be to meet the group again and see how the visions on the board came along. This can be done in a vision board – Facebook group as well. Do we want to update our Vision Board after some time and why?





## Main goals and objectives of the module

Change almost always starts when we are open and ready to take a chance and look at things from new perspectives, new points of view. Being aware and fully present is the first step toward shifting our point of view, and in effect – toward personal, professional and even organizational development. The magic happens when stepping out of the comfort zone. This module aims at helping participant stepping out of their comfort zone by facing their fears. We recommend an activity called 50+ reinvented, which is presented below. This is an activity that goes deep and is only recommended for experienced trainers. As an alternative, it is possible to offer an activity comparable with “What is wellbeing” in Module 1, where participants use Dixit cards to vocalize their fears and barriers in a group environment.



## Suggested timetable

1. Introducing the module. Purpose and expectations – 5 minutes
  2. Activity: 50+ reinvented - 15 minutes
  3. Workout: 50+ reinvented – 60 minutes
  4. Evaluation and remarks - 10 minutes
- Total: 90 minutes



## Presentations and handouts

Handout: [Introduction of Module V](#)

Handout: [Homework: Module V](#)

## List of Activities

### Activity 1: 50+ Reinvented

Estimated time: 75 minutes



## Main goals and objectives of the activity

This is a participatory applied drama exercise aiming at focusing on the social approach to ageing. The main objective of this activity is to challenge cultural stereotypes on aging and disability/different ability, to foster emotional learning as a tool for self-reflection and self-evaluation. Finally, it serves perfectly to practice personal decision making and inner consensus building skills as tools for overcoming internalized oppression and achieving personal liberation.



## Overview

This activity focuses on challenging the myth of 50+ people's reinvention, particularly during the transition to third age. It seeks to provoke reflection and discussion on the issues of socio-cultural determination of the model of the aging person in Europe aiming at liberation from the pressure of the cultural environment. In this context the Cliché of the Ageing person's Reinvention is challenged and a search for personal liberation is promoted.



## Instructions

This activity is based on the methods of the Theatre of the Oppressed, developed by the Brazilian director Augusto Boal. The particular method in this activity is called "The Cop in the Head" and it focuses on overcoming internalized oppression via social drama.

1. Introduce briefly the topic of cultural perceptions in aging. Social and medical concepts of aging and disability. Relation to internalized oppression as an obstacle for self-realization during the age of 50+. (10 minutes)
2. Explain the methodology of the activity (brief step-by-step intro). (10 minutes)
3. Divide the group of participants into smaller working groups (depending on the size of the general group) who work on developing a 3 min scene of internalized oppression of a person 50+. Those scenarios focus only the oppression and don't yet seek for liberation. (15 minutes)
4. Each group acts out the scenes of oppression in front of the others and receives a feedback on the clarity of the presentation from the rest of the group. (10 minutes)
5. Now ask each group to re-make the scenes, seeking for personal liberation from state of mind of internalized oppression. (15 minutes)
6. Each group acts out the scenes of personal liberation in front of the others and receives a feedback on the clarity of the presentation from the rest of the group. (10 minutes)
7. Finally, go to deliberation and group evaluation.



## Materials and resources

- Sound system (Beamer is optional)
- Large study room with good acoustics



## Tips for facilitators

When introducing the activity, try to get participants to think about personal reinvention of people 50+ as a stereotypical cliché in their cultures. Examples and visualizations are encouraged in most cases.

Debriefing and Evaluation. Begin by reviewing how each group felt with the task. Then structure your debriefing session around questions like:

- Was it hard to come up with a situation on internalized oppression?
- Was it challenging to act out a victim/oppressor?
- Did you feel connected with the social/cultural environment? Would you consider this environment a hostile one or rather an accommodating one?
- How did you feel about the role of the cultural environment in the choice-making of the oppressed person?
- How practical were the solutions offered for personal liberation?

- Did you feel liberated (to those acting victims of internalized oppression)?
- Did you feel the victims of personal oppression were liberated indeed (to the spectators)?
- Has personal liberation been related to the “classical personal reinvention”?
- Did we manage to deconstruct the myth of personal reinvention?



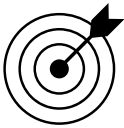
### **Variations**

The activity offers a wide range of interpretations and variations, according to the learning needs of each group of participants; the human and material resources available; the experience of the facilitators and the levels of group dynamics in each group.



### **Suggestions for follow-up**

If the group would like to explore further the methods of the Theatre of the Oppressed, there are opportunities to step further into Level 5 activities on Forum Theatre.



## Main goals and objectives of the module

The goal of this module is to strengthen the participants to make for themselves desirable but at the same time realistic plan for their future years.

The module deals with courage and anxiety.

On one side the focus is on the courage which is needed if a middle-aged individual is going to make a more or less radical change in his life and face the real and/or imagined risk accompanying it

On the other side the focus is on obstacles the participants are likely to meet, counterargument they are likely to hear from other people and from within.

It is wise to know this obstacles and counterarguments in advance and be prepared with answers to important questions.



## Suggested timetable

1. Input: Lecture and Group discussion. Moving forward: Courage and anxiety – 25 minutes
  2. Input: Introducing the Warehouse of Opportunities - 15 minutes
  3. Break - 10 minutes
  4. Activity: Walt Disney - 30 minutes
  5. Evaluation and comments – 10 minutes
- Total: 90 minutes



## Presentations and handouts

Handout: [Introduction of Module VI](#)

Lecture: [Input: Moving forward – Courage and anxiety](#)

Handout: [Activity: The Disney Model](#)

Handout: [Activity: My action plan](#)

Handout: [Homework: Module VI](#)



## Tips for facilitator

It is advisable to stimulate a group discussion especially about topic of the lecture; for instance, by asking if somebody has experience of this particular obstacle and then new viewpoints will emerge.

The participants should by now have made some preliminary plan for their future. The discussion in module III and IV, together with the homework for module V, should have resulted in that.

In the group discussion at the end of the lecture, they should be encouraged to share with other participants their ideas and receive some reactions or advices. This can be arranged in several ways:

- Group work: The participants discuss their plans in groups of three/four and then each group gives a short report.

- Open group discussion which is led by the trainer.

It should be stressed that at this stage the plans of the participants are only preliminary and open to changes and new ideas.

At this stage ideas are evolving and should have opportunities to develop. This is also the case for bad ideas.

The trainer should therefore prevent too harsh criticism on behalf of the participants

In the case that some participants are proposing a very modest changes/plan the trainer should point that carefully out, same if some participant is thinking about some obviously impractical plan. In both cases the trainer should, either during the group discussion, or privately after it, should suggest modifications of the plan.

## Training Activities

### Activity 1: Walt Disney

Estimated time: 30 minutes



#### Main goals and objectives of the activity

Disney's creative strategy is a well-known tool for creative thinking. The goal is to assist the participants in refining their dream and come up with solutions.



#### Overview

Participants work in pairs using the Disney Model to introduce their plan or idea. Each participant has 15 minutes to go through the 3 stages: The Dreamer – The Realist - The Critic, and 3 minutes afterwards to write down their plan. Each participant has 5 minutes for each stage. A starts and B listens and asks questions. B cannot have opinions or criticise. As a result of the three main stages above A reaches a solid creative idea with an action plan to apply it. A has 3 minutes to write down the action plan before it is B's turn. When A has finished – it is B's turn with the same procedures.



#### Instructions

The dreamer: A shares his/her dream without no restrictions or criticism. B asks questions like: What do you want? What is the solution? How do you imagine the solution? What are the benefits of applying this solution?

The realist: A pretends the dream is possible and starts putting plans to achieve it. The plans aim to turn the imaginary ideas into a manageable action plan. During this stage all the thoughts and questions should be constructive and target turning the idea into a real plan. B could ask: How can you apply this idea in reality? What is the action plan to apply the idea? What is the timeline to apply this idea? How to evaluate the idea?

The critic: After having an action plan to turn the idea into reality, the critic thinking mode tends to discover the barriers of applying the idea and how to overcome it. In this session A

provides a constructive critique for the idea in order to find the weak points and solve it in the final solution. B could ask questions like: What could be wrong with the idea? What is missing? Why can't you not apply it? What are the weaknesses in the plan?



### **Material and resources**

Handout: The Disney Model



### **Tips for the facilitator**

Robert Dilt, an NLP expert, modelled Disney's strategy in 1994. He defined the technique as Disney's method for turning his dream into reality.

Be aware of the time-frame, let them know when 1 minute is left at each stage. It is very important that B holds his/her own opinions for him/herself while A is going through the stages and vice versa. Walk around and if you see conversations taking place, or judgement passed ("this is never going to work") remind them of the rules.



### **Variations**

It is possible to make this activity even more affective by dividing the class-room according to different stages of the activity. Four parts of the room are set for each thinking method. The first part is for dreaming and imagination, the second part is for realists and/or planning, the third part is for critics and the fourth part is for getting the mind outside the thinking flow – and writing down the action plan. The pair moves between stations in the classroom – depending on where they are situated in the activity.

For further information see for example: [www.designorate.com/disneys-creative-strategy/](http://www.designorate.com/disneys-creative-strategy/)



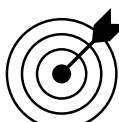
### **Suggestions for follow-up**

See the Disney Model, brainstorming, slide show by Paul Sloane on YouTube.

## **Alternative Activities**

### **Activity 2: My Action Plan**

Estimated time: 30 minutes



### **Main goals and objectives of the activity**

To give participants an opportunity to plan their next steps.



### **Overview**

The participants have used different methods through the course to work on their plan. The Action Plan gives them an opportunity to map the next steps. What am I going to do? When? What resources do I have? What assistance/help do I need?



### Instructions

Participants are asked to write down their next steps in their plan. They can look at their vision boards, their strengths (tests or results from the rummy), the 10 words that describe them – i.e. everything they have gathered so far. What is the dream? How can it be realized? What resources do they have? What kind of help do they need?



### Materials and resources

Printed handouts for individual work. Previous assignments: Vision Board, the Strength Test, the BLOB evaluations.



### Tips for facilitators

Urge the participants to be courageous. No dream is too big. And they can ask for help. Usually people are better at offering help than asking for help. Discuss why? The activity: Offer and request can be used to support this activity. It might be useful for the participants to look forward, for 5 or 10 years; how do they want their life to be then? What do they have to do now to make that possible?



### Variations

After working on “My action plan” alone for 5 minutes, divide the group into pairs. Person A starts, describes the plan and what is going to be done (the resources and the need for help) and B asks questions to help A clarify and make the plan even better. If A wants advice or add suggestions he/she asks for it. Then B goes through his/her action plan.

Another version is a mini master-mind group. In a group of 4 each person gets 5 minutes to go through MAP and the others ask questions to make the plan better. They can give advice if the person wants it, no judgement, just questions.

## Activity 3: Lighthouse

Estimated time: 20 minutes



### Main goals and objectives of the activity

The “lighthouse” is a section that should inspire the participants to take the next steps towards change.



### Overview

This activity is really a presentation, performed by someone that has actually made some fundamental changes in their life after they reached the third age. The story does not have to reflect pure success, but rather give an insight into real life situation – where someone actually took a good look at their dreams and passions, used their strengths and decided to embrace the change and move forward.



### **Tips for facilitators**

Try to find a person with a story that fits well for your group, taking into consideration how the course has developed so far and also the interests of the group.

Make sure that the person presenting will be willing to answer questions, as it is likely that the participants will have several of those.



### **Variations**

If the facilitator cannot find anyone to come and tell about their journey, there is always the option to find a good lecture or an interview to show to the group.



## SUGGESTED VARIATIONS AND FOLLOW UPS TO MANUAL

During the four pilot-courses in Iceland, UK and Lithuania the facilitators tried different activities, different time lengths and different sizes of groups. This manual presents one way of doing it, with a twist of activities. Of course, there are other ways.

A preparation before starting the actual course can be helpful for both participants and facilitators. Participants can be interviewed beforehand and the course program thus adjusted to their needs. It is also possible to send homework to participants before the first meeting (for example: Where am I? and Why? Where do I want to go?).

Additional follow-up in between classes can deepen the effect of the training. If the course is taught over a three-week period, as suggested in this manual, the participants could have coaching sessions in between. A 30 minutes session between week 1-2 and again between week 3-4 would add value to the participants plans. A strength test with a reading from an accredited Strengths Profile practitioner (which usually takes one hour) can be valuable for the participants to enable them to make the most of their strengths.

Many participants expressed interest in a follow up after the course ends. The follow up could for example be a Facebook-group where people share their struggles and successes. It could also be mastermind groups; where four persons meets regularly and support each other. It is also possible to have the third coaching session two months later to follow up on the changes and/or get back on track. The mastermind model could be applied from the first meeting and the groups could meet in-between and after the course. That might help them even further to start working on their projects.

## CONCLUSIONS

Across Europe, higher life expectancy rates combined with a decreasing number of births are the main rationale behind an increasingly ageing European population. According to the European Commission, the proportion of people over 65 will reach almost 1/3 of the European population by 2030, while the working age population in the EU is expected to decline by almost 15%.

The growing number of people that have reached their third age, has been perceived by many as a threat to Europe's economy and competitiveness. In order to counter this negative approach to ageing, the European Commission has launched several initiatives to promote active ageing across Europe, ensuring that the generation of baby-boomers does not only stay longer in employment and retire later, but can also benefit from healthier lives, such as the Active Ageing Index - managed jointly by the EC and the UN Economic Commission for Europe – have been promoted to measure to what extent the potential of older people is used to contribute to the economy and society as well as to help policymakers develop active ageing policies enabling them to live independent and healthy lives.

The concept behind the „Catch the Ball“ takes general ideas about active ageing even further, as the main goal is to empower people by encouraging them to evaluate their strengths, desires and possibilities to be prepared for the latter part of their lives. The course itself is divided into modules, where each session is dedicated to the next steps in the path of setting goals as participants evaluate their strengths, their dreams and their current situations. The participants embark on an inner journey and with the tools provided during the course, they will get the support to take the first steps towards creating their own path.

The educational approach of „Catch the Ball“ promotes a social approach to ageing, opposing the old-fashioned and discriminating medical approach, which sees the ageing persons as a deviating from the young healthy body, hence medicalizing the community approach to dealing with ageing and older age people. Seeing ageing not just as a social-economic, but also as a cultural issue, the „Catch the Ball“ Manual of „Academy of Opportunities“ offers a set of learning opportunities, educating for a culture of non-discrimination and reasonable accommodation of all 50+ people across Europe.

The Manual provides a timely opportunity to explore practical solutions to the challenges associated with an increasingly ageing population in Europe. It draws good training practices from the Erasmus+ project „Catch the Ball“, realized by a consortium of international partners from the UK, Iceland and Lithuania. The educational practices offered in the Manual focus on how to support active ageing through innovation and partnerships in order to grasp the opportunities for social development and economic growth in Europe that underlie this societal change.

Because, as Betty Friedman puts it, ageing is not a lost youth but a new stage of opportunity and strength.

# OVERVIEW OF HANDOUTS AND PRESENTATION

## Group building activities:

Presentation – [Blobs and thought bobbles](#)

Handout/instructions - [The Blob Tree \(Pip Wilson\)](#)

Handout: [Activity: BINGO](#)

## Module I:

Handout: [Introduction of Module I](#)

Handout: [Activity: Diener's Test](#)

Presentation: [Input: Benefits of Wellbeing](#)

## Module II:

Handout: [Introduction of Module II](#)

Lecture: [Input: Destiny, free will and the power to make decisions](#)

Presentation: [Input: BLOBS methodology](#)

Handout: [Homework: Module II](#)

## Module III:

Handout: [Introduction of Module III](#)

Presentation: [Input: The importance of knowing your strengths](#)

Handout: [Instructions: Activity: Strength Rummy](#)

## Module IV:

Handout: [Introduction of Module IV](#)

Presentation: [Input: The importance of dreams and how to discover your desires](#)

Presentation: [Input: What is a Vision Board and how to make one](#)

Handout: [Instructions: Activity: Making a Vision Board](#)

Handout : [Homework: Module IV: Finding your Passions](#)

## Module V:

Handout: [Introduction of Module V](#)

Handout: [Homework: Module V](#)

V

## Module VI:

Handout: [Introduction of Module VI](#)

Lecture: [Input: Mowing forward – Courage and anxiety](#)

Handout: [Activity: The Disney Model](#)

Handout: [Activity: My action plan](#)

Handout: [Homework: Module VI](#)

VI

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