

A Creative Europe project

# Art for the Prevention of Mental Health Problems

**(MPAS)**

Mental Prevention Through Artistic Skills

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## TOOLKIT



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# Introduction

This Toolkit has been developed as part of the **Creative Europe project “Mental Prevention through Artistic Skills” (MPAS)**.

The project focuses on the role of art in preventing mental health challenges among **vulnerable young adults**, by addressing their disconnection from themselves, others, and their surrounding environment.

MPAS program highlights the importance of artistic expression as a means of fostering emotional resilience, social inclusion, and a deeper sense of connection.

The project is coordinated by **Proyecto Nagual (Spain)**, in partnership with:

- **Hopeart (Greece)**, transferring the “Art of Connection” methodology by Angeliki Voulgari
- **Omphalos (Italy)**
- **APB (Bulgaria)**

Together, these partners bring diverse expertise in art, mental health, and community empowerment, uniting around a shared purpose: to use **art as a path for prevention, transformation, and belonging**.

This publication has been **co-financed by the European Union**.

More information about the project can be found on the website: [mpas-project.eu](http://mpas-project.eu)

# Chapter 1



# Prologue

This toolkit refers to artists and people who use artistic tools in their work with youngsters. The main goal is to provide a framework to build safe and creative spaces for the youngsters to prevent them from experiencing mental issues emerging nowadays in our societies.

A good mental health might include an inner state of confidence and joy that allows authentic expression and bonding with the social and natural context. From a psychological humanist approach, every individual tends to realize either their potential or the psychological difficulties that may arise from the interruption of this process. That is why expressive arts can be so important in mental health preventing, taking into consideration that arts allow us to identify and express the issues that might be interfering with the wellbeing of the person (katharsis) and eventually detach from them, creating space for realizing the inner natural attitudes and qualities of the person. The creative process can be therefore seen as a way of identifying the truth within us, expressing it and making beauty out of it.

This toolkit approaches this process as an inner call to be listened to, followed and realized, in the hero's/ heroine's journey through which we all travel in different stages of our life. For this reason, **Proyecto Nagual** (Spain) brings **narrative tools** into this toolkit, in combination with **mythology** and **storytelling**, for using creative writing as a way of relating with **identity, belonging and bonding**.

To facilitate this journey, we approach the **human being as three dimensional: spirit-soul-body**. This threefold is also the base of the artistic methodology **"The Art of Connection"** from **Hopeart's** organiza-

tion (Greece). We take into consideration the connection of a human, first with the environment (nature) and secondly with another person to reach a fulfillment and meaningful inner state of being and relating.

These 2 steps are a path that leads someone to the connection with the authentic self.

For this journey towards connection, we use 4 natural life skills of the artistic methodology which are:

- empathy
- expression
- generosity
- vulnerability

This methodology can be deployed in the use of different expressive arts, as the base to approach the person and facilitate their connection with their natural and therefore healthy state of being and relating.

Following this possibility, **Omphalos Cultural and Musical Association** (Italy) in collaboration with experts in **dance**, brings its experience in **music through movement**, as two main artistic therapies, considering these two fields an expression of the body that allows it to connect with emotions and the inner self.

In the same way, expression through painting, as it is considered a main tool in art therapy, will be combined in this toolkit as a powerful mean to work with youngsters.

Finally, **APB** (Bulgaria) as a national organization of psychologists, relate the expressive tools and frames developed in this toolkit with **trauma-informed practices** that allow to approach each individual considering the most sensitive issues that may arise.

# Mental Health and Prevention in Young Adults (Aged 18–30)

## Understanding Mental Health in Young Adults



Mental health is a vital component of human well-being and is widely recognized as more than just the absence of mental illness. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is a state of mental well-being that allows individuals to cope with the stresses of life, realize their potential, work productively and contribute to their community.

It encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being and significantly influences how people think, feel, behave and connect to others. Mental health is not a fixed or binary condition, but rather a dynamic continuum that fluctuates across different life stages and in response to changing environmental, biological and social factors.

A person may move along this spectrum between states of thriving mental well-being to states of moderate distress or significant psychological difficulty. Recognizing this continuum is essential when considering mental health promotion and prevention strategies, particularly for young people navigating complex developmental changes.

The age period from 18 to 30 is a particularly important developmental window. It marks the transition from adolescence to full adulthood and involves major life changes, including leaving home, completing education, entering the workforce and establishing independent social and romantic relationships.

At the same time, brain development continues well into the mid-20s, especially in areas responsible for impulse control, emotional regulation and executive decision-making. These biological, social and psychological transitions make this age group especially vulnerable to mental health challenges.

Statistically, mental health disorders often begin during this stage of life. It is estimated that about 75% of all mental disorders manifest before the age of 25. Depression and anxiety are among the most commonly reported conditions, alongside substance use disorders, eating disorders and in some cases, the

early onset of more serious conditions such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. Stress related to academic expectations, job insecurity, social pressures and identity formation contributes to a heightened risk of emotional distress during this time.

The use of social media, while offering opportunities for connection, also plays a complex role in the mental health of young adults. It can foster feelings of inadequacy, social comparison and digital burnout, particularly when users are already experiencing insecurity or isolation.

## Prevention Strategies and Early Interventions

In this context, mental health prevention becomes essential. Prevention strategies can be classified into three levels: **universal**, **selective** and **indicated**.

- **Universal prevention** targets the general population and includes efforts such as public awareness campaigns, mental health education in schools and universities and promoting healthy lifestyles.
- **Selective prevention** focuses on individuals or groups who are at a higher risk of developing mental health problems, such as youth from disadvantaged backgrounds or those experiencing family breakdown or discrimination.
- **Indicated prevention**, on the other hand, is directed at individuals who are already showing early signs of psychological distress but do not yet meet diagnostic criteria for a mental illness.

For young adults, preventive interventions that are embedded in everyday environments, such as schools, universities, workplaces and community settings, have shown to be particularly effective.

**Mental health literacy programs** can enhance awareness, reduce stigma and empower young people to seek help when needed. **Skills training** that includes problem-solving, emotional awareness and regulation such as resilience-building can help young people manage stress and navigate life's challenges more effectively.

Increasingly, **digital tools** like mobile apps and online therapy platforms are becoming important components of prevention, especially for tech-savvy youth who may be reluctant to seek face-to-face help.

**Peer support** is another promising approach. Programs that involve trained peer mentors can increase

trust, reduce stigma and offer relatable guidance. These programs are especially valuable in university settings and among groups that might feel alienated from traditional healthcare services.

In conclusion, it is essential to highlight the importance of **art** in mental health prevention, as art was, is, and will continue to be a means of emotional and psychological balance, as well as a bridge to one's deeper, inner essence.

## Addressing Inequities and Vulnerable Populations

It is crucial to recognize that not all young people enter adulthood on an equal footing. Socioeconomically vulnerable youth face a distinct set of challenges that significantly increase their risk for poor mental health outcomes. Vulnerability in this context refers to the lack of access to social, educational and economic resources that can buffer against mental distress. Young people who are unemployed, living in poverty, from minority ethnic backgrounds, migrants, refugees, or part of the LGBTQ+ community are all at elevated risk.

The **social determinants of mental health**, such as income inequality, housing insecurity, education levels, discrimination and access to healthcare – play a fundamental role in shaping psychological well-being. Poverty is strongly linked to chronic stress, hopelessness and feelings of exclusion, all of which can contribute to mental illness.

Unemployment or precarious work can undermine a young person's self-esteem, purpose and future outlook. Similarly, low levels of education often correlate with limited mental health literacy and reduced access to information about support services.

Certain vulnerable groups experience compounded disadvantages. For example, a young person who is both part of an ethnic minority and unemployed may face structural discrimination, social isolation and financial insecurity simultaneously. These overlapping forms of disadvantage are referred to in psychological and sociological literature as **intersectional vulnerabilities**.

The concept of **intersectionality** highlights how systemic inequalities multiply and interact, placing certain individuals at much higher risk for mental health issues than others. Youth from migrant or refugee backgrounds often experience cultural dislocation, trauma and barriers to accessing culturally appropriate mental health care. LGBTQ+ young people may face rejection from family or community, which increases the risk of depression, anxiety and suicide.

Homeless youth are disproportionately affected by substance use, post-traumatic stress and serious mental illness.

Another particularly at-risk group includes **NEET youth**, those not in education, employment or training, who often suffer from isolation, lack of direction and low self-worth. To support these populations, mental health strategies must be both **inclusive** and **equitable**.

Interventions need to be culturally competent and sensitive to the lived experiences of the people they aim to serve. Services must be accessible, affordable and embedded in settings where young people already spend their time.

At the same time, policy-level interventions are essential to address structural causes of mental health inequity. This includes investing in education, job training programs, affordable housing, anti-discrimination legislation and universal access to mental health care. It is also important to **promote collaboration across sectors**. Educational institutions, healthcare systems, local governments and community organizations must work together to identify at-risk youth and deliver support in a coordinated, consistent and sustainable manner.

Empowering young people to participate in the design and evaluation of mental health programs can further improve effectiveness and relevance.

## A Comprehensive and Inclusive Approach Forward

In conclusion, mental health among young adults aged 18 to 30 is shaped by a complex and dynamic interaction of biological maturation, psychological development, social role transitions and broader environmental conditions. This life stage is one of significant opportunity, marked by identity exploration, independence and the pursuit of long-term goals in education, work and relationships. However, it is also a period of **heightened vulnerability**.

Neurological development, particularly in the pre-frontal cortex, continues into the mid-to-late twenties, influencing decision-making and emotional regulation. Simultaneously, young adults face pressures related to academic achievement, employment instability, financial insecurity, social comparison, especially via digital media and the search for belonging. These pressures can significantly strain **mental resilience**.

For those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, the psychological risks are even more pronounced. Young people living in poverty, experi-

encing unemployment, exclusion, discrimination or family dysfunction often face chronic stress, reduced access to healthcare and limited educational and employment opportunities.

These stressors are compounded for individuals who identify as part of marginalized groups, including ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ youth, migrants and refugees, who may simultaneously face cultural isolation, stigma and barriers to care.

In such contexts, mental health challenges are not only more likely to emerge but are also less likely to be identified and treated in a timely and effective manner.

## Moving Forward: Policy, Collaboration, and Youth Empowerment

Given this complex reality, mental health promotion and prevention in this age group must be comprehensive, **inclusive** and **rooted** in both **psychological science** and **social policy**. First and foremost, mental health must be reframed as a collective responsibility, not merely an individual issue.

Governments, educational institutions, health systems and community organizations all have vital roles to play in fostering environments and safe spaces that support psychological well-being. **Proactive prevention** should begin with increasing **mental health literacy** across the population.

Educational initiatives, starting in secondary schools and extending into higher education and the workplace, should teach young people to recognize early signs of distress, develop life and social skills and seek help without shame or stigma. These programs must be designed to be **culturally sensitive** and **accessible** to individuals with varying levels of education and language fluency. Mental health services must also become more youth-centered and equity-focused.

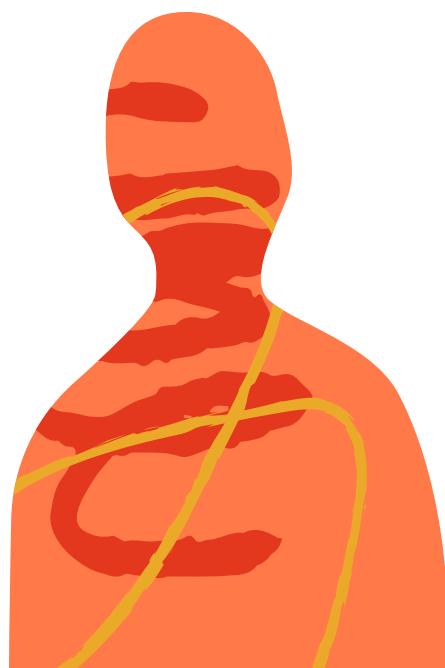
This means expanding access to low-cost or free psychological care, especially in underserved communities. It also requires integrating mental health into primary care and community settings, so that help is available in locations where young people already go for other needs.

Peer-led interventions, digital health tools and mobile support services have shown promising results and should be scaled up to reduce barriers related to stigma, mobility and trust in institutions. Beyond individual interventions, **systemic and structural change** is essential.

Governments should implement policies that reduce the social and economic inequalities that contribute to mental distress. These include investment

# Mental health cannot be addressed in isolation.

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in **affordable housing, quality education, job training and meaningful employment opportunities** for youth. Social protection systems should be strengthened to support those facing homelessness, joblessness or family breakdown. Anti-discrimination laws and inclusive policies should protect the rights and dignity of all young people, particularly those from marginalized communities. **Cross-sector** collaboration is a critical factor for achieving these goals.

Mental health cannot be addressed in isolation. Effective prevention strategies require partnerships between the health sector, education systems, employment services, housing authorities, youth organizations and civil society as well as **cultural centers or arts-based institutions**, where young people can come into contact with various forms of art.

A **coordinated, interprofessional approach** where science and art operate in a complementary way, enables early identification of risk factors and more seamless referral pathways for care and support. Furthermore, **youth participation** must be prioritized in the design, implementation and evaluation of mental health programs. Young people are experts in their own experiences and their involvement ensures that services are relevant, acceptable and effective. Empowering youth also promotes agency, reduces stigma and strengthens community resilience.

In summary, the mental health of young adults is a **critical public health and societal issue** with far-reaching consequences. The period from 18 to 30 years represents not only a time of increased vulnerability but also an **extraordinary opportunity for intervention**. If appropriately supported during this formative stage, young people can develop the emotional tools, social connections and personal confidence needed to thrive.

A sustained and inclusive approach to prevention – grounded in scientific evidence, social equity and youth empowerment, which is essential to ensuring that all **young adults, regardless of background, have the opportunity to lead mentally healthy and fulfilling lives**.

# The Foundation of Mental Health: Who We Are, Where We Belong, Why We Exist

In this section we will explore some elements which are fundamental for the human experience. We will also explore the importance of artistic contribution in these core dimensions of human flourishing which are identity, belonging and life purpose.

Mental health prevention is most effective when it incorporates a psychological framework that acknowledges some fundamental experiences such as identity formation, the need for belonging and the exploration of life purpose.

These elements shape emotional resilience, interpersonal relationships, foster a meaningful and fulfilled life and overall well-being.



## IDENTITY Understanding and Strengthening the Self

Identity is the foundation of psychological well-being. It shapes how individuals see themselves, relate to others and navigate the world. A strong sense of identity fosters confidence, resilience and emotional stability, while a fragmented or conflicted identity can lead to anxiety, depression and low self-esteem.

### Challenges Related to Identity Development

- **Self-doubt and low self-worth:** Uncertainty about personal values and strengths can contribute to mental health struggles.
- **External pressures and expectations:** Social and cultural norms often impose roles and ideals that conflict with authentic self-expression, especially during adolescence or early adulthood.

- **Identity shifts and transitions:** Major life changes—such as career redirection, relocation, or exploration of gender identity—can cause internal disorientation and psychological distress.
- **Systemic entanglement and family roles:** Through unconscious loyalty, individuals may take on inherited roles within the family system that do not reflect their true self. These dynamics, though rooted in love, blur personal boundaries and distort self-perception.
- **Cultural displacement and loss of ancestral grounding:** Disconnection from one's cultural or ancestral background (e.g. through migration or globalization) can leave identity development fragile or fragmented.
- **Internalized stigma or inherited narratives:** Growing up with unspoken stories of shame, exclusion, or trauma may lead young people to adopt limiting beliefs about who they are or what they deserve.

## Artistic Prevention Strategies Helping the Experience of Identity

- Using **storytelling**. The ability to change who we are through storytelling has been timeless throughout human history. As Yuval Noah Harari argues in his analysis of Artificial Intelligence and storytelling, the ability to tell ourselves stories remains a fundamental aspect of human imagination and, therefore, of personal and collective transformation.
- By discovering and liberating our personal **sound** (voice). Exploring the mechanism concerning the ear and our neurological system, allows us to receive sounds in a proper and healthy manner and thus maintain our identity as human beings and avoid anxiety, frustration, distress and dysregulation.
- Using **music and dance**. These two arts have always played a fundamental role in social life; they touch our minds, our emotions, our bodies, our spirits, allowing everyone to find a role within the proposed activities, gaining in well-being and self-esteem.
- Using **shapes and colors** to encourage spontaneous expression, allowing each person's authentic self and unique essence to naturally surface and be revealed. Through the intuitive selection

of colors, symbols, geometries, and materials, as well as personal words and phrases, individuals embark on an unconscious yet deeply rewarding journey of self-discovery.

- By exploring **mindfulness** to strengthen self-realization. Creating true human connections through "presence", people engage in a deeper level beyond mental connection, sometimes without even the use of words.

## BELONGING The Protective Power of Connection

Humans are inherently social beings, and a sense of belonging is essential for emotional well-being. Social isolation and loneliness are major risk factors for anxiety, depression and even physical health issues. Feeling connected to a community serves as a buffer against mental health struggles.

## Which Are the Barriers Nowadays to the Sense of Belonging?

- **Social rejection or exclusion:** Experiencing bullying, discrimination or isolation can harm mental health.
- **Lack of community support:** Individuals without strong social networks are more vulnerable to stress and emotional distress.
- **Personal Identity Conflicts:** Feeling disconnected from one's cultural, gender or personal identity can lead to feelings of alienation.
- **Disconnection from roots:** Especially among younger generations, we see a growing distance from ancestral lines, cultural heritage, and even from a shared sense of place. Globalization, digital culture, and the erosion of traditional community structures have created a generation that often doesn't know where they come from — not just geographically, but spiritually and systemically. When people don't know where they come from, they often struggle to know where they belong.

# Playfulness is key.

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- **Reality of war:** The wars we see across the world, from the Middle East to Eastern Europe and beyond, have created mass displacement. When someone becomes a refugee, they are not only separated from their land, but from the web of life that held them: their language, community rituals, their ancestor's graves, their songs, and the unspoken safety of home. Refugees carry this fracture inside them, even when they find physical safety. And this fracture touches the core of their sense of belonging.

## Artistic Prevention Strategies to Strengthen the Sense of Belonging

- Group Mindful activities** engage the sense of "presence", connection and experiencing through the body the "collective soul"<sup>1</sup> of a team.
- Creating Sharing Groups** where individuals can share their vulnerable part, either using improvisation techniques /role playing/theater or sharing directly personal experiences can foster emotional safety and create a sense of safe belonging experience.
- Choir Activities** where people express their voice in a safe place as parts of a bigger supportive collectivity. Singing in unison is a great gift to recover from isolation, depression and a sense of not being worthy.
- Meditative Dance** accompanied by specific rhythms and sound vibrations that promote the attainment of an altered mental state known as 'trance'. With Trance Dance one is able to experience authenticity in one's inner movement, entering a space of transformation and satisfaction.
- Encouraging healthy relationships** by teaching

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Collective Soul" may be approached through Carl Jung's concept of the collective unconscious, a shared psychic field that holds archetypal images, emotional patterns, and ancestral memories inherited across generations. This transpersonal dimension influences human behavior, creativity, and identity formation. In the context of art and mental health, the Collective Soul is evoked and expressed through symbols, myths, and embodied artistic practices that connect the individual to something greater than the self.

Jung, C. G. (1968). *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Princeton University Press.

social and life skills such as empathy and generosity in an experimental artistic way, strengthens the sense of belonging and social bonding.

f. **Creating a Collective Artwork** —a shared creation that is rooted in individual expression while embracing the diversity of all participants. Each person's contribution, no matter how different, is celebrated as a unique and essential element, enriching the final composition. **Playfulness** is key; when participants allow themselves to move freely and spontaneously, their individual creative flow intertwines with the collective energy.

## LIFE PURPOSE / MISSION

### The Essence of Human Existence

Having a sense of purpose, even a small one, can give direction when the world feels like a confusing place. It can be a source of inner strength when things get complicated and overwhelming. It can remind us that we all have something to offer, small or big it doesn't matter. Each one of us has come to this world with a "mission", to leave a unique and unrepeatable print on Earth. Art can help us find that purpose because, by expressing ourselves we can reach this part of our being that knows why we are here on Earth.

### Common Triggers for Struggling to Find Life Purpose (Ages 18-30)

- **Pressure to "figure it all out" too soon:** Feeling rushed to define a career, identity, or future path before they're ready.
- **Comparison and social media pressure:** Constantly comparing their journey to others' "highlight reels," leading to feelings of inadequacy or failure.
- **Economic and social instability:** Worrying about survival (money, housing, security), which leaves little space for dreaming or long-term purpose.
- **Lack of role models or mentors:** Growing up without examples of people living fulfilling lives, making it hard to imagine possibilities for themselves.

- **Low self-worth or internalized stigma:** Feeling "not good enough" to dream big or to believe they deserve a meaningful life, especially if they've faced rejection, discrimination, or trauma.
- **The Speed of Change:** We live in a technological era where everything evolves rapidly — careers, relationships, language, even the values of society. This speed creates instability. Young people often feel there's no solid ground to stand on long enough to ask, "What am I really here to do?"
- **Shifting Values and Meaning:** It's not just the tools and technologies that change — the meaning we assign to things changes too. What was considered important or sacred a decade ago may feel obsolete today. This leads to a sense of existential confusion: "What can I trust? What still matters?"
- **Disconnection from personal passions:** Being so focused on survival or external themes that are more oriented towards social and professional achievement, rather than existential wholeness and self-realization.

### Artistic Prevention Strategies for Life Purpose Exploration

- a. **Theatre:** Theatre allows people to step into a possible future, feel what it's like emotionally and physically, and begin believing that a meaningful life can be reachable.
- b. **Painting:** Painting lets them bypass overthinking and tap into their deeper intuition about what feels meaningful, without the pressure of finding the "perfect" life path.
- c. **Dancing-Movement:** Dance connects them to their internal energy, desire, and aliveness. It helps embody hope and opens space for inner motivation without needing words.
- d. **Sound:** Sound gives them a way to express inner emotions and visions they might not yet fully understand. It helps them hear their own emotional landscape about the future in an "abstract" way.
- e. **Storytelling:** Storytelling helps them reframe their struggles as part of a bigger journey toward growth and meaning. It builds resilience but mostly encourages ownership of their life story.

# The MPAS methodology

The MPAS methodology is built upon 3 fundamental pillars that together form an integrated and transformative framework for mental health prevention and creative self-exploration.

First, we work through the **3 existential dimensions** of human experience: Identity, Belonging, and Life Purpose. These are core needs, both personal and systemic, which shape the inner landscape of every individual.

Secondly, we cultivate the **"Art of Connection"**, which invites us to activate the **4 essential life skills**: empathy, expression, vulnerability, and generosity. These skills are grounded in the triptych of the human soul — mental, emotional, and sensory — allowing for holistic connection within and between human beings.

Third, we apply the **5 steps of narrative therapy**, a narrative-based process that helps individuals explore, transform, and re-signify their life stories. These five steps support participants to move from identification with limiting narratives towards a renewed and empowered sense of self.

Together, these 3 components offer a **systemic, artistic, and soul-based approach** to fostering **mental resilience, expression, and meaning**.

Let's keep in mind that the current toolkit aims to address a complex and outstanding topic nowadays: **mental health**. For doing so, we must share that our starting point comes from the humanist perspective that every human being has a natural inclination for health and realization of their own potential. And from our point of view, this is a process of evolution that requires a ground on different existential dimensions.



## A. The three existential dimensions

### Identity

Every human being needs to develop a perception of their own existence to relate with the social, natural

and existential dimensions of life. To get to know one-self better is a key process for developing a healthy sense of self and eventually know a deeper self from what is usually built in society.

A person's identity – especially that of a young person – is not separate from the system into which they were born and raised. In systemic thinking, identity is shaped through the position one holds in their family system. But this position is not always clear or natural. Often, through unconscious dynamics, we take on roles that are not truly ours. Roles that arise from love and loyalty to the system — but that eventually pull us away from our authentic self. When someone is not in their rightful place, their sense of identity becomes blurred, fragile, or borrowed. They may become confused between who they truly are and who they need to become in order to... belong.

## Belonging

From a psychosocial and ecological point of view, human beings are social animals interdependent with each other and other species in the natural world. Belonging allows us to feel safe, protected, recognized and loved. Belonging is not just an emotional state — it is a **vital force** that shapes identity, coherence, and psychological well-being. Every person is born into a system — a family, a lineage, a social fabric. Within this system, belonging is a fundamental need, as essential as nourishment. When a young person feels seen, acknowledged, and rooted in their rightful place within their family system, a foundation of inner stability is formed. This invisible grounding provides a sense of worth, a sense of continuity, and the strength to navigate life's complexities. But when this sense of belonging is **interrupted**<sup>2</sup>, the young individual may unconsciously carry **emotional burdens that do not belong** to them. They may feel alienated, unseen, or compelled to take on roles that do not serve their development. These displacements, though often unconscious, are deeply destabilizing and can manifest as anxiety, depression, identity confusion, or self-harming behaviors.

From an existential point of view, the search for one

group, a person, a place or a project that would allow us to feel complete and realized is a common human experience, widely described in every human culture as a **mythological journey towards our original home**.

## Life's Purpose

This is not a philosophical abstraction; it is a core **human need**. When young people sense they are here for a reason, that they have something meaningful to offer to the world, an inner light begins to guide them. This purpose may not be a job title or a clear goal, but a felt **sense of direction**. It is a sacred thread that connects them to life. Life purpose emerges when a person dares to step out of inherited roles and into the **uniqueness of their spirit**. It is the moment they stop asking, "What do others expect of me?" and start asking, "What is longing to be expressed through me? From a spiritual perspective, **every soul enters this life with a gift** — a frequency, a medicine, a way of seeing or being that no one else can replicate. When a young person connects to this inner calling, they become rooted, not only in their body or their story, but in something greater. They begin to experience vitality, alignment, and meaning. Without this sense of purpose, a young person may drift, mimic others, or chase empty forms of success. But when they begin to feel their mission, they can endure hardship, take responsibility, and grow with integrity. Purpose becomes the compass that gives direction even when the path is unclear. Supporting young people to uncover their life mission is **not about telling them who they are**. It is about **creating spaces where they can remember it**. In our project this 'remembrance' is succeeded through **creativity**. We believe there is an **intrinsic search for meaning or purpose in human's life**, that brings every individual into developing a unique way to interact with the world for the sake of feeling **socially useful, naturally engaged and existentially realized**.

Growth of course is never a solitary journey — and there is no real meaning in reaching one's destination alone — below, we will speak more about connection.

<sup>2</sup> An 'interrupted sense of belonging' often arises when the natural flow of love and connection is broken — for example, through experiences of loss, exclusion, poverty, or displacement. This interruption can leave a deep feeling of disconnection from one's family, community, or the larger human story.

Empathy,  
expression,  
generosity, and  
vulnerability are  
fundamental  
capacities.

.....



## B. The 4 Skills of the “Art of Connection”

The **Art of Connection**, as embodied and developed by **Angeliki Ariadni-Voulgari**, is one of the main pillars of the methodology of this program.

Empathy, expression, generosity, and vulnerability are fundamental capacities that enable us to truly recognize who we are, what our identity is, and to connect with the deeper core of our being. These are the same skills that help us understand where we are going and what we have come to do in this world — to **find our purpose**.

And of course, **expression** —especially when it involves exposing our vulnerable parts— is a vital channel through which we connect with others and experience the deep truth that **we are not alone**, and that we **belong**.

Grounded in the **triptych of the human soul** —the mental, emotional, and sensory soul— a structure found both in various therapeutic approaches such as Gestalt psychotherapy and in other spiritual traditions like Rosicrucianism, we cultivate the core skills mentioned above to **foster a holistic connection from one human soul to another**.

An artistic practice might be complete when it invites us to respond to three essential questions:

*What am I thinking right now?*

*What am I feeling right now?*

*What is my body sensing right now?*

True connection with another person can arise only when all **three aspects of the soul** are engaged.

We connect *mentally*,

we connect *emotionally*,

and we connect *through the senses* —sensorially, physically, and energetically.

## C. The 5 Steps of Narrative Therapy

**Narrative therapy** offers a structured yet flexible pathway for individuals to explore, deconstruct, and transform the personal stories that shape their identity. Particularly in the context of social vulnerability, trauma, or interrupted belonging, these stories often carry internalized messages of limitation, exclusion,

or pain. The following five steps outline a narrative process that supports individuals in reconnecting with their agency, re-signifying their experiences, and discovering new meaning. When integrated with artistic practices, these steps create a space not only for **healing** but also for **creative self-expression and social connection**:

- Create a safe space*
- Identify the narrative*
- Externalize the problem*
- Dis-identify from the narrative*
- Re-signify the personal story*

## 1. Create a Safe Space

Creating a safe space is the foundational step in narrative therapy. It involves establishing a trusting, non-judgmental environment where people feel emotionally secure enough to share their stories. This space allows individuals to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences without fear of criticism or invalidation. A safe space fosters openness and honesty, which are essential for the therapeutic process to unfold, helping clients begin to explore and make sense of their personal narratives.

## 2. Identify the Narrative

Identifying the narrative means helping people articulate the story they've been telling themselves about who they are and how their life has unfolded. These narratives are often shaped by cultural, familial, or societal influences and may center around themes of inadequacy, failure, or victimhood. By bringing these stories to the surface, one can begin to examine how these narratives have influenced emotions, behaviors, and life choices.

## 3. Externalize the Problem

Externalizing the problem is a technique used to separate the person from the issue they are facing. Instead of saying "I am anxious," one might say "Anxiety is trying to take control of me." This shift in language helps people view problems as external forces rather than intrinsic flaws. It reduces shame and self-blame,

empowering individuals to see that they can take action against the problem, rather than feeling that the problem defines them.

## 4. Dis-identify from the Narrative

Dis-identifying from the narrative involves recognizing that the current story is not the only possible version of one's identity or experience. Once a problem is externalized, people can begin to see that the narrative they've lived by may have been shaped by limiting beliefs or external influences. This step encourages people to step back and critically reflect on how much of the story truly belongs to them, and how much has been imposed or adopted unconsciously.

## 5. Re-signify the Personal Story

Re-signifying the personal story is the process of co-creating a new, more empowering narrative. After dis-identifying from the limiting story, the person is guided to reinterpret past events in a way that highlights resilience, growth, and agency. This new narrative helps people construct a renewed sense of self that aligns with their values, hopes, and preferred identity, fostering a more positive and proactive outlook on life.

Taking this into consideration, we, as **social artists**, bring our methodologies in different fields to develop a **creative, playful and curious relationship with this dimension of existence**.

As a result, we have created a methodology that approaches **every individual from a holistic point of view**:

- Body
- Mind
- Environment (nature)
- Existence (spirit)

Considering the following dimensions:

- **Mental Health:** identity, life's call, anxiety and belonging
- **Psychological element:** comfort zone, ideals, handling emotions, integration.
- **Part of the Being:** physical body, emotional body, cognitive mind, awareness.
- **Centers, instinct, mind, emotions and presence**
- **Natural elements:** earth, air, fire and water

- **Natural landscapes:** mountain, sky, night and sea
- **Narrative:** home, call for adventure, ordeal, return.
- **Archetypes:** guardian, mentor, “beautiful monster” and wise.

We have organized these dimensions, relating factors of them with each other, according to similar stages in the process of Being:

1. **Home** – Identity – Comfort zone – Physical body - Instinct – Earth – Mountain - Guardian
2. **The call for adventure** – Life's purpose – Ideal (and limiting beliefs) – Cognitive mind – Mind – Air- Sky (Cloud/stars) – Mentor
3. **Challenge** – Resilience – Coping with emotions – Emotional body – Emotion – Fire – Night – Ordeal
4. **Returning home** – Belonging – Integration – Awareness – Presence – Water – Sea – Wise.



# Artistic Tools for Mental Prevention

## A. The Inclusive Power of Painting

Painting is more than just an art form—it is a bridge that unites people across cultures, abilities, and experiences. It provides a space for self-expression, healing, and communication, making it one of the most inclusive creative outlets.

### Painting Breaks Barriers: Is Art for Everyone?

Unlike other forms of communication that rely on language or technical skills, painting is accessible to all. Whether through finger painting, abstract expressionism, anyone can participate regardless of age, education, or physical ability.

This inclusivity is particularly important for individuals with disabilities, neurodivergent people, or those who struggle with verbal communication. It includes individuals with cognitive challenges, mental health conditions, or neurological differences. Through painting, people can express themselves in ways that words often cannot capture, making it a powerful tool for inclusion and emotional well-being.

### Painting as a Preventative Tool for Mental Health

Painting is not only beneficial for those with existing cognitive or mental health challenges but also serves as a powerful tool for preventing mental health issues.

Studies have shown that creative activities like painting help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression by promoting mindfulness and relaxation. When individuals focus on painting, they enter a state of “flow,” where they become deeply immersed in the activity. This state is linked to reduced cortisol levels (the

stress hormone) and increased feelings of happiness and satisfaction.

For people at risk of developing mental health conditions—such as those experiencing high levels of stress, social isolation, or trauma—painting can be a form of self-care. It provides a safe outlet to process emotions, work through difficult experiences, and participate in a positive, meaningful activity. Many therapy programs incorporate painting to help individuals handle and navigate grief, sorrow or chronic stress.

### A Non-Judgmental Space for Expression

One of the most powerful aspects of painting is that there are no rules—no right or wrong way to create. This makes it particularly effective for individuals who fear judgment or criticism. People who struggle with perfectionism, anxiety, or self-doubt often find painting liberating because it allows them to express themselves freely.

Painting programs, art workshops, and therapy sessions create supportive spaces where individuals feel seen and heard without pressure. Whether someone paints abstract emotions, detailed landscapes, or simple shapes and colors, their work is a valid and valuable expression of their inner world.

Painting is an inclusive and therapeutic activity that benefits people of all cognitive abilities and mental health backgrounds. By offering a non-verbal expression, reducing stress, and encouraging confidence, it serves as both a creative outlet and a preventative tool for mental well-being.

### Cultural and Social Connection

Throughout history, painting has been a way for communities to share their stories, preserve traditions, and come in dialogue. From ancient murals to contemporary public art, it brings people together, creating shared experiences and understanding. Community art projects, street murals, and collaborative paintings further reinforce inclusivity by inviting diverse voices into the creative process.

From the other side hospitals, mental health programs, and refugee camps often use painting as a way to promote well-being and emotional strength.

## Overcoming Socioeconomic Barriers

While some artistic disciplines require expensive equipment, painting can be done with minimal resources. From natural pigments to recycled materials creativity is not limited by financial constraints. This makes painting one of the most accessible and democratic form of artistic expression.

The power of painting lies in its ability to welcome everyone, regardless of background or skill. It provides connection, encourages emotional expression, and gives a platform for voices and points of views that might otherwise go unheard and unseen. In a world where division often prevails, painting serves as a universal language that unites us all.

## B. Dancing with the Four Elements

In an era where mental health challenges among young adults are escalating, innovative and holistic approaches are essential to foster resilience and well-being. Dance therapy emerges as a potent tool that harnesses the expressive capacity of movement, music, and cultural diversity to promote mental health. Grounded in a methodology centered around the three dimensions—identity, belonging and life purpose—dance therapy offers a multidimensional pathway to healing and prevention. By integrating body movement inspired by the qualities of the four elements and incorporating diverse musical traditions such as African rhythms and Middle Eastern melodies, this approach enriches mental health interventions for vulnerable young adults.

Vulnerable young adults often grapple with identity confusion, social isolation, anxiety, and existential questions about purpose. Dance therapy, as described through this holistic methodology, provides a safe, expressive, and culturally rich environment to address these issues proactively.

### *Identity and Dance*

Our dance methodology facilitates self-exploration by encouraging individuals to express their unique stories, emotions, and cultural backgrounds through

movement. When participants engage in improvisation or guided movement inspired by personal or cultural narratives, they deepen their understanding of who they are, fostering self-acceptance and confidence.

Through movement and music rooted in personal and cultural narratives, participants develop a stronger sense of self, counteracting feelings of alienation.

### *Belonging and Dance*

Group dance sessions create a communal space where young adults can connect beyond words, sharing experiences through synchronized movement, partner work, or collective improvisation. This shared physical experience nurtures empathy and social cohesion, reinforcing that they are part of a supportive community.

Group dance sessions create community, reducing loneliness and fostering social support networks vital for mental resilience.

### *Life's Purpose and Dance*

Engaging in meaningful movement and musical expression can inspire a sense of purpose. When young adults connect with their body's potential and cultural expressions, they discover new avenues for personal growth and self-fulfillment. Expressive dance and musical exploration can serve as a transformative journey that aligns individual passions with broader life goals, fostering hope and motivation, inspiring personal growth and direction.

In our approach, the body movement is inspired by the **four elements**.

## The 4 Elements

Another fundamental aspect used in the various dance practices proposed is the activation of the four alchemical elements whose properties are closely related to the intrinsic qualities that resonate with human experience and can be harnessed to foster emotional and psychological resilience.

The connection between the rhythms and drums of different cultural traditions, such as African, South American and Mediterranean, and the four natural elements - earth, fire, air and water - is profound and symbolic. Drums, in these traditions, are not only musical instruments, but also vehicles of spiritual communication and connection with nature and the

universe. Each rhythm, each beat, each pulsation can evoke a particular quality of one of the natural elements, reflecting the interconnection between the body, music and the elements themselves.

## Earth

The earth is the basis of the elements, which gives us stability, security and enhances the individual's sense of belonging, strength, perseverance, patience and practicality.

African rhythms, of indigenous tribes, percussion and drums favour the awakening of the primordial instinct and accompany the inner journey of reconnection to one's roots and the earth. Dance practices applied to awaken, in our body, mind and spirit, the qualities of the earth element, are accompanied by drums that reproduce deep, heavy and vibrating sounds and rhythms, evoking the feeling of solidity and rootedness.

In many African cultures, drums such as the djembe, dundun and talking drum are instruments that reflect the power of the earth. For example, the dundun produces a deep sound, often used in ceremonies celebrating the earth and its resources.

In many South American cultures, drums such as the atabaque, congas, surdo and bombo are used to represent the energy of the earth. The rhythm they emit is often slow, loud and repetitive, with deep bass that vibrates like the earth beneath our feet. The sound of these drums can be compared to the heartbeat of the earth, which maintains balance and connection with nature. The dance that accompanies these rhythms is sometimes slow and rooted, with movements that seem to imitate the strength of the earth.

## Water

The fluidity and flexibility of the water triggers a soft, undulating movement of all parts of the body, relaxing all contraction, tension and anxiety. It allows deep emotional introspection, fostering a free expression of creativity, sensuality and improving the individual's capacity for imagination, understanding, sensitivity and empathy.

Water-related rhythms tend to be softer, undulating and sometimes rhythmic, like the flow or motion of water. For example, in African music, water is evoked by drums and percussion instruments such as the water drums and the udu, which create a rhythm that simulates the flow of water and a fluid, undulating sound.

In Mediterranean traditions, drums, such as the bendir, duff or darbuka, often produce a deep sound that can evoke a connection with the earth. In particular, the darbuka, a percussion instrument very common in the Middle East and some areas of the Mediterranean, creates a variety of tones ranging from deep bass to high-pitched sound, which accompanied by the duff, riq, mazhar and finger cymbals create the ideal rhythmic support to trigger an undulating and sensual movement of the body.

As in oriental dances, the undulatory movement of the belly and of the entire body promotes a fluid circulation of vital energy that, starting from the navel, from the hara spreads like water currents through all the cells of the body. This promotes a state of relaxation both physically and mentally.

## Fire

Fire is the element of transformation, of the transmutation of emotional and mental blocks that are released through repetitive movements, shaking the whole body following ritual rhythms of percussion and drums that trigger an altered, meditative state of mind. Fire-related drums tend to be fast, intense and produce sharp, frenetic sounds that evoke the heat and movement of fire. The music can be almost frenetic, like flames rising and falling, creating an atmosphere of overwhelming energy.

In South America, drums that symbolise fire may be those that accompany dances such as salsa or cumbia, where the rhythm is fast and pressing, reflecting the intensity and passion of fire.

In Mediterranean traditions, fire is often represented by fast and intense rhythms, such as those found in the Salento dances (South Italy), the now well-known "pizzica d'amore" and the "tarantella", linked to the most atavistic and purest concept of agitated passionate frenzy. The pressing rhythm and frenetic beat reflect the destructive and purifying nature of fire. According to tradition, these musical rhythms, which accompanied a frenetic and ecstatic dance, were used as an antidote to get rid of the poisonous effect of the spider (Lycosa Tarantula) that caused convulsions and a form of disease called tarantism.

The transformation and destructive power of the fire, that burns away matter and what weighs down our body and mind, leads to mental and emotional lightness that triggers a state of joy, enthusiasm and strengthens, the sense of self-esteem, identity and self-affirmation.

## Air

Air stimulates lightness of mind, free expression by improving verbal and mental communication, social interaction and the sharing of ideas. Through vocal exercises that awaken the communicative power of the individual accompanied by ethereal sounds, the body is also awakened and regenerated with light and free movements.

The rhythms associated with air tend to be lighter, ethereal and floating, with a quality that simulates the lightness of the wind or movements in the atmosphere. The instruments used reproduce melodic, bright and light sounds such as the balafon or mbira in African traditions or all the melodic and harmonic wind and string instruments used in various musical traditions around the world.

To achieve such lightness and higher vibrational frequencies, one of the best instruments used is also the voice.

Through the voice, by emitting higher and lower sounds, it is possible to produce frequencies that make our cells vibrate to the point of triggering a process of centralization and harmonization between body, mind and spirit.

## Meditation and Trance Dance

Among the applicable and most effective dance techniques for intervening in the accompaniment of young people suffering from mental disorders is meditative dance, accompanied by specific rhythms and sound vibrations that promote the attainment of an altered mental state known as 'trance'.

With Trance Dance one is able to be authentic in one's inner movement, entering a space of transformation and satisfaction. Expressing oneself through this vital dance heals old wounds and traumas on a cellular level. Both trance and meditation bring one into a state of non-mind. Trance was used mostly in shamanic cultures while in the East it was contemplation and meditation. In trance this happens through rhythm, sound and body movement and through this movement one reaches a very deep meditative state.

As Gabrielle Roth states about trance:

"It's a condition of extreme attention that only occurs when you abandon your usual habits and immerse yourself in your self, reaching such a depth that something clicks within you, and you find yourself simultaneously living and witnessing yourself. By moving the body, releasing the heart, and freeing the mind, one can connect to

the essence of the soul, the source of inspiration in which an individual has unlimited possibility and potential." (Gabrielle Roth, *The 5 Rhythms of the Soul*, Sperling & Kupfer, 1998)

The free movement of the body (perhaps barefoot to better feel the rootedness to the earth), music (favouring low sounds, like percussion), conscious breathing techniques and eyes closed to be free in living the experience, are the ingredients for an inner meditative dance session, a moving experience of sensations, sounds, rhythms, forms, in which one comes to experience what one really is: one hundred per cent spirit and matter, pure consciousness expressing itself through the body and its rhythms. It is a totally free way of dancing with evocative rhythms and melodies, tribal, drums and ethnic instruments.

Trance dancing has always been accompanied by the rhythm of drums, because that sound is known instinctively and deeply: it is like the beating of the heart. That pulsation is a meditative sound and indeed, when one is calm and relaxed, one can perceive it clearly in one's body. When the sound of the drums has an uninterrupted and constant rhythm, it leads to a state of trance. At a certain point, the brain stops listening to it and simply trusts that it is there.

Thus, using indigenous, organic and tribal music, a mixture is created of healing sounds and dynamic rhythms that lead to an inner journey that transcends the limits of usual space-time perceptions.

Dancing to this type of music is in fact a transformational technique that stimulates a trance-like state that promotes mental clarity, physical endurance and emotional well-being.

Aided by the breath and leaving the body free to express itself in the movement awakened by the music, one gains access to unknown inner spaces, observing what is happening in thoughts, emotions and perceptions.

This is why Trance Dance is pure self-celebration, it is a vital expression of life celebration. Dancing is one of the greatest joys in life, a true gift when you practice it naturally without the need to control and guide your movements.

## Connection With the Vital Centre: "Hara"

The vital centre of movement is no longer the mind, but the navel, the so-called Hara, the centre from which life enters and from which the life force leaves the body when one dies, and thus it's the contact point between body and soul. Quoting Osho,

That which is supreme cannot be known through the brain, because when you operate with the brain you are in conflict with the roots from which you come. Your whole problem is that you have moved away from the navel. You came to life through the navel and you die through it. It is necessary to return to the roots.

Reconnecting with one's life centre promotes a centralisation and harmonisation of both body movements and the psychic and mental state.

In all dance practices proposed, the focusing and concentration of energy starts, flows and gathers in the Hara, the point from which the primordial undulatory impulse starts, which, crossing the spinal column, spreads throughout the body, generating free movements.

## C. Sound as Our Primal Connection

### Existence is Brought into Form by Vibration

Before there is breath, there is pulse. Before the light of vision, there is the echo of sound. Our first encounter with life is not visual—it is rhythmic. It is the beat of the mother's heart, the oceanic swirl of amniotic fluid, the pulsing of breath and blood that surrounds us in the womb. Vibration is the language of the unborn, and through it, we learn how to exist.

The womb becomes a safe and resonant chamber, like that of a mole in the earth, sensing only the tremors and waves of the world outside.

It is a biological, emotional, and spiritual fact: rhythm is the foundation of identity. The disruption of rhythm is the disruption of self.

### The Body as a Rhythmic Instrument

This early exposure creates a foundational pattern—a first rhythm. From that point on, human development becomes an ongoing effort to coexist with rhythm. As we grow, we begin to craft our own internal tempo: the beat of our hearts, the rhythm of our breath, the pace of our steps, and the tone of our listening.

When we come into harmony with our inner rhythm, we find balance. Balance breeds harmony, and harmony becomes the gateway to well-being. And all of this begins with sound—how it enters us, how it vibrates within, how it shapes our soul.

Breathing, for instance, is not just a biological function—it is a rhythmic ritual. And when breath is shallow, erratic, or unconscious, we fall out of tune with life itself. We feel unsafe, anxious, unwell.

Now place that body in modern society—a society driven by speed, noise, pressure. The collective rhythm of today's world is aggressive and unnatural. It does not resemble the steady rhythm of rivers, the breathing of animals, or the slow opening of flowers. It is artificial and relentless. And so, we lose our breath. We lose our rhythm. We lose our ground.

### Disruption and Disconnection

So, when speaking of identity, we must ask: Have I found my rhythm? Have I discovered my balance? Have I learned to listen deeply? These questions point us back to the belly, to the original soundscape of safety and connection. That place of primal rhythm becomes the blueprint for any safe space we attempt to recreate in our lives.

When our internal rhythm is disrupted—often due to trauma or other difficulties—we enter a state of dissonance. This shows up as illness, emotional volatility, disorientation, and a fracture in our sense of self. Trauma, in essence, is a break in rhythm—a rupture in the flow of time, safety, and belonging.

Without rhythm, there is no coherence. And where there is no coherence, identity struggles to form. We begin to feel unworthy, invisible, distant. We become disconnected from our essence, and from each other.

### A Giant Ear: The Body as Resonance

Dr. Alfred Tomatis, in *The Ear and the Voice*, reminds us that the brain is activated by vibration. Sound triggers chemical and neurological processes, igniting the brain and body into action.

The ear is not merely a sensory organ—it is a foundational system of perception, balance, and integration. The ear receives vibration and transmits it to the brain, activating creativity and sustaining vitality. If the ear does not receive well, neither does the brain, nor the body. Speech becomes strained. Balance becomes shaky. Listening becomes shallow.

We sing not just with our mouths but with our entire being. Our nervous system, which connects every cell, is like a vast and sensitive ear. We are, in essence, one giant ear that listens, speaks, and sings. Have you noticed how a soft voice often accompanies soft skin, or how roughness in voice reflects roughness in body? Everything is vibration. Everything is music. Our bodies want to live in harmony with ourselves and our environment.

Singing is a dialogue with space. When we sing, we fill the air with vibration. We become one with the environment. If the space does not resonate—if it is acoustically dead—it does not “bounce back” the sound. There is no echo, no feedback, no connection. In such places, thought becomes stagnant, bodies feel unbalanced, and communication fades. These are not spaces for life.

When the ear is overloaded—by noise, by trauma, by disconnection—it begins to shut down. This isn’t a metaphor, it’s neurological. If we cannot hear properly, we cannot connect properly. If our soundscape is disharmonious, we lose the rhythm that binds us to others and to ourselves.

## Human Connection as Frequency

We communicate through vibration—through tone, timbre, pitch, and rhythm. Some people’s frequency aligns with ours, and we feel harmony. With others, there is friction. This is not just chemistry—it is vibration. It is resonance.

When we speak, we release energy into the space. When we sing, we vibrate with the world around us. When multiple voices align, a powerful healing takes place. Singing in unison—whether in a choir or around a fire—is one of the most ancient ways of recovering from isolation and despair.

We do not heal in isolation. We heal in rhythm, in voice, in vibration—together.

## Nature: The First Conductor

Nature functions according to a rhythm based on pairs: inhale-exhale, day-night, wave-shore. This is the rhythm of creation. “One-two.” Not “one-one-one,” a monotony without movement or meaning. It is the in-between, the step that creates tempo, that allows forward motion.

Walking, for example, is not possible without this alternating rhythm. Even the sacred space between

life and death is a rhythmic process—a slow, sacred unfolding.

Nature, then, is not static. It breathes. It sings. It holds us in a pulse. When we align with it, we feel calm. When we fall out of step, we feel disturbance.

In Nature, we find breath. Then, we rediscover our tempo—our balance. We rediscover speech—authentic, grounded—and we begin to tell our true story.

## The Architecture of Sound

Just as we vibrate, so do spaces. When we walk into a room, we bring vibration. And if a room cannot receive it—due to poor resonance, architectural dissonance—it feels dead. It gives us nothing back. There is no echo, no feedback, no affirmation. We feel unbalanced, uninvited. Our voices don’t land. Communication falters.

Imagine a world where spaces were built to resonate with the human body—like a second womb. Where the acoustics reflect your voice back to you in harmony. That would be a space of belonging. A space of coherence.

## Polyvagal Insights: Rhythm and Regulation

Polyvagal Theory shows us how our nervous system responds to rhythm, vibration, and safety:

- Ventral Vagal: Safe, connected, open, social—this is the rhythm of belonging.
- Sympathetic: Fight or flight—disruption, anxiety, chaos.
- Dorsal Vagal: Collapse, shutdown, isolation.

Neuroception, the subconscious scanning for safety, is constantly evaluating the rhythm of our surroundings. Is this environment steady? Is this person calm? Is this voice soothing? If not, we retreat—internally or externally.

To co-regulate with others, we must feel rhythmically safe. We seek those whose systems vibrate in balance. Connection, therefore, is rhythmic. It is a shared tempo of trust.

## Returning to the Pulse of Life

We are all here to tell a “story”. Each soul longs to express itself. Expression is proof of life—not just verbal expression, but the embodied narrative of our essence. Our inner light—our warmth and kindness—yearns to be seen. Yet modern society programs us to dim that light, to suppress genuine interest in others, to trade joy for efficiency. We move to the tempo of a capitalist conductor.

In a world of fast, fragmented tempo, returning to rhythm is a “revolutionary action”. Listening deeply is revolutionary. Breathing with intention, singing with others, walking slowly in nature—these are not luxuries. They are how we repair ourselves.

Our story begins with rhythm and must return to it. The path of healing is the path of vibration.

*Let us breathe again—not in panic, but in rhythm.*

*Let us sing again—not alone, but together.*

*Let us remember we are not machines. We are music.*

## D. The Power of Rhythm in Music From Different Traditions

Music, like dance, has always played a fundamental role in social life; it touches our minds, our emotions, our bodies, our spirits, allowing everyone to find a role within the proposed activities, gaining in well-being and self-esteem.

In fact, they are not only used to mark religious, ceremonial, commemorative events, but also simply for pure emotional and social pleasure. They can sometimes even take on a therapeutic role, as a form of liberation from those illnesses generated by imposed cultural constraints and legacies.

Everyday life is filled with musicality in the most diverse social activities.

Cultures vary, as do the types of instruments, the use made of them within the community, following what are the social cycles, also experienced through the festive and joyful aspect.

Music has long been recognized not only as a form of artistic expression but also as a profound tool for

healing and personal development. Its ability to influence emotions, foster social connections, and promote physical well-being makes it a vital resource in mental health prevention, especially among vulnerable young adults. Through musical practice, improvements are achieved on a psychophysical, logical and communicative level. The aid of musical instruments and improvisation methods improve self-knowledge, realize greater bodily awareness, and also improve the ability to interact and understand others, learning to express and communicate one's emotions.

A comprehensive methodology that leverages the three core dimensions—identity, belonging and life purpose—can harness the transformative potential of diverse musical traditions, such as African rhythms and Middle Eastern oriental music, through body movement techniques to bolster mental resilience.

### 1. Identity: Music as a Reflection and Reinforcement of Self

At the heart of mental well-being lies a strong sense of identity. Music from different cultures offers a rich tapestry of sounds, stories, and traditions that can serve as mirrors and builders of personal identity. For vulnerable young adults, exploring musical traditions from their own heritage or other cultures fosters self-awareness and cultural pride. Engaging with African rhythms or Middle Eastern melodies allows individuals to connect with their roots, shaping a positive self-image and fostering confidence.

Methodologically, incorporating body movement—dancing, drumming, or rhythmic gestures—facilitates embodied learning. When young adults learn to move in sync with these musical styles, they internalize cultural symbols and narratives, reinforcing their sense of self. For example, mastering a traditional African dance or a Middle Eastern belly dance can serve as a form of embodied storytelling, empowering individuals to embrace their uniqueness and develop resilience against societal pressures or internalized stigmas.

### 2. Belonging: Building Social Connections Through Shared Musical Experiences

Humans are inherently social creatures, and music acts as a universal language that bridges differences

and cultivates community. For vulnerable youth, feelings of isolation and alienation are common risk factors for mental health issues. Participating in group musical activities—such as communal drumming circles from Africa or group Middle Eastern dance classes—fosters a sense of belonging and social support.

Using body movement as a communal activity enhances this effect. Group drumming sessions, synchronized dance, or rhythmic movement exercises promote cooperation, empathy, and social bonding. These activities create safe spaces where young adults can express themselves authentically, share cultural stories, and build trusting relationships. Such social cohesion acts as a protective factor against depression and anxiety, providing emotional support networks essential for mental health maintenance.

### 3. Anxiety Reduction and Life's Purpose: Music and Movement as Therapeutic Tools

Chronic anxiety can impair daily functioning and diminish life satisfaction. Music's rhythmic and melodic qualities have a calming effect on the nervous system, lowering cortisol levels and reducing stress. Incorporating body movements synchronized with music—like gentle swaying, guided dance, or percussion exercises—enhances this calming effect through physical engagement, which stimulates the release of endorphins and serotonin.

For example, African rhythmic drumming involves repetitive patterns that can induce trance-like states, promoting mindfulness and emotional regulation. Similarly, Middle Eastern music with its intricate melodies and maqams can facilitate meditative states when paired with slow, deliberate movements. These practices help young adults develop a sense of purpose and mastery, fostering resilience by providing meaningful activities that anchor their daily routines.

The beauty of this methodology lies in its flexibility and cultural inclusivity. African rhythms, characterized by complex polyrhythms and call-and-response structures, can be adapted into drumming circles or dance routines that emphasize physical coordination and communal participation. Middle Eastern music, with its maqam systems and expressive melodic ornamentation, lends itself to improvisational dance and movement exercises that emphasize mindfulness and emotional expression.

By integrating traditional movements with therapeutic objectives, facilitators can create culturally resonant interventions. For example, teaching young adults to perform traditional African dances while exploring personal expression can reinforce identity; participating in group drumming sessions can foster belonging and practicing rhythmic breathing or movement to Middle Eastern melodies can help manage anxiety and evoke a sense of purpose.

These approaches not only nurture individual resilience but also strengthen community bonds, ultimately fostering a healthier, more connected generation equipped to navigate life's challenges through the universal language of music.

## E. Theatre as a Soul Practice

Theatre is one of the oldest and most sacred practices through which humans have sought to understand who they are, where they belong, and why they are here.

In Ancient Greece, theatre was not seen as entertainment. It was a civic and spiritual act — a ritual of self-inquiry and communal reflection. Citizens would gather to witness stories that mirrored their own inner conflicts, moral dilemmas, and destinies. The goal was not escapism, but self-knowledge (*γνῶθι σαυτόν*). Through watching — and often performing — theatre, individuals were invited to confront the truth of their own nature, come closer to their life's purpose, and strengthen their place within the cosmos and the polis.

Inspired by this lineage, the Art of Connection methodology places theatre at the heart of its mental health prevention model. When guided through the four core skills — Empathy, Generosity, Expression, Vulnerability — theatre becomes a living art of psychic integration and soul activation.

We understand the human soul as a triptych composed of:

- The Mental Soul – capacity to reflect, imagine, name
- The Emotional Soul – capacity to feel, resonate, empathize
- The Sensory Soul – capacity to embody, sense, respond

Theatre engages all three dimensions organically:

- It invites the Mental Soul to step into new perspectives and symbolic worlds.

- It allows the Emotional Soul to feel deeply and connect through emotional truth.
- It awakens the Sensory Soul through body, movement, rhythm, and spatial awareness.

This triune activation supports participants to connect to themselves and others in a full-bodied, full-hearted, and full-minded way — laying the groundwork for deep psychological resilience and inner alignment.

Mental health prevention, particularly in youth, involves cultivating inner resources before disconnection hardens into suffering. Theatre offers exactly this: a space for symbolic rehearsal — for exploring truth, expressing parts of the self, and strengthening core human capacities.

## Theatre & Identity

Through role-play and embodiment, theatre allows participants to explore multiple versions of themselves — their shadows, dreams, limits, and powers. In this sacred mirror, they begin to ask: Who am I beneath my roles? Who am I when I am truly myself?

When vulnerability is honored and expression is supported, theatre becomes a process of reclaiming the authentic self — just as it was in ancient times.

## Theatre & Belonging

In a play, every role is essential. No story exists without all its voices. Working within a theatrical ensemble requires empathy, cooperation, generosity — and creates an immediate sense of interdependence.

Participants begin to feel that they matter, not only as individuals, but as contributors to something larger — a shared story, a collective truth.

This embodied experience of belonging supports mental health by counteracting isolation, disconnection, and invisibility.

## Theatre & Life Purpose

Every myth, every tragedy, every scene holds within it a search for meaning. When a young person steps into the arc of a character in search of justice, love, truth, or transformation, they begin to resonate with these longings in their own life. Theatre allows existential questions to come alive — not only as thoughts, but

as felt experiences. Through performance, they begin to sense :

*I, too, have a path.*

*I, too, am here for something.*

In the Art of Connection methodology, theatre is not used to "fix" something broken — it is used to remember what is already whole.

It is a space of exploration, rehearsal, embodiment, and discovery — where the threefold soul is activated, the core human skills are trained, and the inner forces of identity, belonging, and life purpose are nourished. In this light, theatre is not merely an artistic tool.

It is a sacred encounter. A mirror. A guide.

A rite of passage into wholeness.

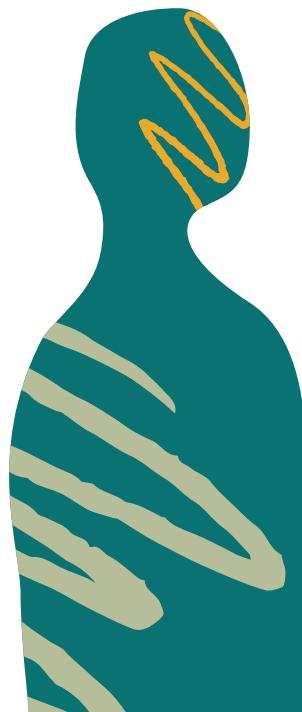
## F. The Power of Narrative as a Tool for Personal and Collective Change

Narrative is one of humanity's oldest and most powerful instruments. It not only allows us to transmit knowledge or memories but, above all, grants us identity, meaning, and purpose. On a personal level, what we tell ourselves shapes much of what we live. Our internal stories order experience, provide a thread that gives coherence to the unfolding of life, and situate us within a context of belonging. It is often said that life is what happens while we think about what to do with it. Yet it is equally true that what we think, imagine, and narrate — whether through creative or imaginal thought (Corbin, 1964), or what some traditions call "manifestation" (Dispenza, 2014) — shapes the way we experience existence.

This becomes particularly evident in the case of limiting beliefs. What we repeat to ourselves, what we turn into a fixed narrative, can act as a filter conditioning the possibilities we perceive and, therefore, the steps we dare to take. When we cling to these stories, we give power to narratives that make us smaller and prevent us from moving forward (Katie, 2002). Only when we pause and begin to become aware of what we tell ourselves does the possibility of resignification emerge: we shift from being what we tell ourselves to telling what we are. This turn is transformative, because it allows us to step out of the determinism of

# Myths have always had mobilizing power.

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the automatic narrative and open up to new ways of inhabiting our lives.

The same occurs on the collective level. Societies are held together by great shared stories, by mythologies that for millennia have shaped the worldview of entire peoples (Naranjo, 1998). These stories were less about scientific explanation than about understanding social, psychological, and natural phenomena in emotional and symbolic terms. Mythology offered a metaphorical language to cross the unknown, to give meaning to the ineffable, to unite communities around shared values and horizons (Abram, 1996). Myths have always had mobilizing power: they have guided civilizations, inspired change, and helped communities restart after crises. Think, for example, of the great flood myths: stories present in diverse cultures that preserve the memory of climatic or social catastrophes and turn them into collective teachings about renewal, reconstruction, and the values that should guide a new beginning.

Today, it may seem that we live in a world governed by technology and rationality, far from myths and metaphors. However, the truth is that we remain deeply governed by narratives, perhaps more than ever (Harari, 2014). The civilizational crisis we face is, to a large extent, a crisis of meaning (Ruiz-Sola, 2019), a loss of symbolic references that leads to what Giddens has called ontological vulnerability (Giddens, 1991). As Frankl (2015) noted, human beings cannot live without meaning, and when it is lost, existential emptiness, disorientation, and the social and psychological pathologies we know arise. Today we suffer a radical disconnection: from ourselves, from others, from nature, and from life in its transcendent dimension (Loy, 2019). This disconnection erodes the pillars of identity, purpose, and belonging that sustain us.

In the face of this panorama, articulating new personal and collective narratives becomes an urgent task—healthy, resilient, responsible, and creative narratives that help us face present and future challenges. Here, narrative therapy offers valuable tools. This approach invites us to identify the stories that trap us; to externalize them in order to understand that the problem is not ourselves but the stories we repeat; and to resignify them in order to integrate what is fragmented and open the door to possible and desirable futures (White & Epston, 1990; Metcalf, 1995). In this process, the individual and the collective are intertwined: letting go of the personal story, as Don Juan said (Castaneda, 1968), impacts the way we relate to others and to the world (Mindell, 2007).

In this sense, mythology remains a teacher. Joseph Campbell showed how the hero's journey, that monomyth present in all cultures, reflects the vital process

each human being undergoes: the call to adventure, the trials, symbolic death, resurrection, and return with learning to share with the community (Campbell, 2004). Each of us is that everyday hero or heroine whom life pushes to grow, to trust the process, to discover our true potential. Recognizing our own story in that universal structure helps us navigate difficulties with greater confidence and gives our experience a framework of learning and meaning.

The power of narrative also manifests in contemporary practices of personal exploration. From testimonial narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), auto-biographical research, or therapeutic writing (Kohan, 2003; Reyes Adorna, 2017), to creative writing (Cassany, 1995; Coronado, 2009; Cameron, 2016), all these methodologies show how narrating oneself opens doors to transformation. The famous “know thyself” becomes a living practice: telling what has been lived, exploring memory, shaping experience in words, images, or symbols, until reaching autofiction, where reality and invention dialogue (Jodorowsky, 2001), and one discovers oneself in a process of reinvention.

At this point, creation acquires a spiritual dimension. Authors such as Nachmanovitch (1990) remind us that true creativity is not an act of control but of channeling: one is not so much the author as the in-

strument through which the work manifests. This experience has been recognized in mystical and artistic traditions worldwide, from the improvised chants of Tibetan Dzogchen (Dowman, 2006) to the teachings of non-duality (Sesha, 2006; Aṣṭāvakra, 2007; Vyasa, 2008). When we stop clinging to the ego of the author and understand that the protagonist is the work itself, creation flows spontaneously and becomes a vehicle of something greater than ourselves.

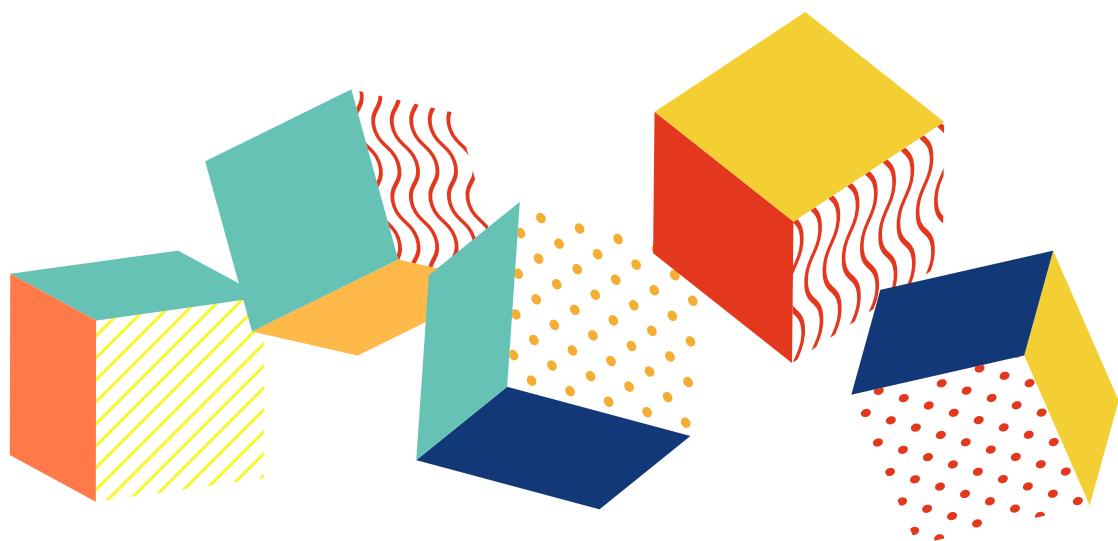
Thus, narrative can guide us from the intimate to the collective, from personal identity to the universal horizon. It helps us recognize our shadows, resignify trials, recover lost meaning, and share stories that unite us around a fuller and more conscious life. In this sense, narrative is also a path toward mental health: by investigating, externalizing, and resignifying our personal and collective stories, we process emotions, articulate a healthier and more functional identity, and find meaning, purpose, and belonging.

This methodology, developed by Proyecto Nagual, results from the integration of knowledge bequeathed to us by mythical traditions, humanistic, existential, and transpersonal therapy, and contemporary creative practices. We place it at the service of personal and social transformation, in the hope that it may contribute to healthier minds for a healthier world.

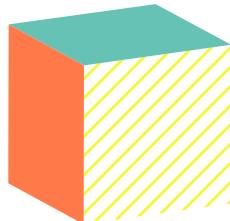


# Chapter 2

## Activities



# 1. Create a safe space



## 1. Group Agreements

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 10 min.

**Number of participants:** Any group size

**Materials needed:** Optional flipchart/markers for visual note-taking

### Steps

A group exercise inviting participants to co-create shared agreements that establish psychological safety, mutual respect, and a sense of belonging. Through open dialogue, intention setting, and a simple closing ritual, the group sets collective values to guide their time together. The process fosters deep listening, presence, and vulnerability, and serves as a grounding practice for opening and closing future sessions. With this team "contract" each member will have their own active contribution that reflects the collective intention as well as the unique presence of each individual.

1. Invite participants to stand or sit in a circle.
2. Invite the group to call out values or practices they believe are important to hold during your time together. Write them visibly (optional).
3. Invite each person to share a word or short phrase that captures their intention for the journey ahead.

**Guided script:** *"Now, take a moment to reflect on your own intention for being here. What do you want to bring or receive from this experience?"*

4. Close the agreement-setting process with a symbolic group ritual. Choose one of the following or adapt your own:

#### Ritual Options:

- Hands in the center: Everyone places a hand into the center of the circle and collectively takes a deep breath.
- Collective bow: Everyone bows their head or torso slightly to the group in acknowledgment.
- Silent eye contact: Participants look around the circle in silence to witness one another.

# 1. Create a safe space

- Group breath: Inhale and exhale together in silence.

**Guided script:** "Let's lock in this shared space with a simple ritual to honor our intentions and agreements."

**Facilitator notes:** Keep a visual reminder of the agreements posted, or revisit them verbally as needed. Normalize self-responsibility for upholding agreements — it's a collective effort. Revisit or revise agreements if the group grows or the dynamic shifts.

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise facilitates the co-creation of shared values and behavioral agreements, establishing a psychologically safe and respectful environment for the group. By openly discussing intentions and collaboratively setting guidelines, participants develop awareness of their own contributions and responsibilities, while also attuning to the needs and presence of others.

The symbolic closing ritual reinforces collective commitment, grounding participants in shared intention and creating a tangible anchor for future sessions. The process fosters vulnerability, deep listening and a

sense of belonging, helping the group navigate interpersonal dynamics with mutual respect and clarity.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Awareness of personal and collective intentions
- Psychological safety within the group
- Active presence and attentional focus

#### Encourages:

- Vulnerability and authentic sharing
- Mutual respect and attentive listening
- Intentionality in group interactions

#### Strengthens:

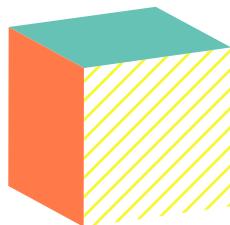
- Group cohesion and sense of belonging
- Commitment to shared agreements and values
- Trust and relational safety within the group

#### Supports:

- Establishing a grounding ritual for sessions
- Clear communication of expectations
- Sustainable group dynamics and collective responsibility

**Reflection time:** Not necessary

# 1. Create a safe space



## 2. What Do You Sound Like?

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 15 min.

**Number of participants:** 7-15

**Materials needed:** None

### Steps

A vocal expression and listening activity that invites participants to share their present inner state using non-verbal sound. In a circle, each person introduces themselves and makes a sound that reflects how they're feeling—no words, no pressure, just presence. The group then echoes or passes each other's sounds, building connection, playfulness, and embodied awareness. A brief reflection closes the activity, deepening empathy and group cohesion. Perfect for warm-ups, icebreakers, or emotional check-ins.

**1.** Invite participants to come together in a circle facing each other. Explain the aim: to express their present inner state through sound, building presence, awareness, and group connection.

**Guided script:** *"This is an opportunity to check in—not with words, but with your voice and sound. It doesn't have to be musical, pretty, or loud. It just has to be yours, right now"*

**2.** Everyone takes his turn to step into the circle, bows, says his name and makes a sound as a trademark of his present inner state (check in). It can be vocalization, a sigh, a shout, an imitation of a bird voice or an animal roar, mouth percussion, whistle and so on. In the same circle the facilitator indicates that everyone makes his sound in a clockwise direction. We hear all sounds again until the circle is back to No1. Movement can be added to the sound.

**Facilitator notes:** Model the first example if needed. Reassure participants that there are no wrong sounds. Keep the tone playful and safe—no judgment, just presence. Allow participants to pass if they're not ready (they can join later).

# 1. Create a safe space

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise invites participants to connect with their present emotional state and express it through non-verbal sound. By externalizing inner states vocal-ly, individuals increase awareness of their emotions and bodily sensations. The echoing and passing of sounds within the group enhances mutual attunement, empathy and the sense of belonging, while the playful, non-judgmental format encourages comfort with vulnerability and experimentation. This practice fosters both individual self-expression and collective resonance, strengthening group cohesion.

## Psychological Benefits

### Improves:

- Self-awareness and recognition of current emotional states
- Emotional regulation through embodied vocal expression
- Attunement to group dynamics and shared energy

### Encourages:

- Creative, playful self-expression
- Openness and comfort with vulnerability
- Active listening and embodied attention

### Strengthens:

- Group cohesion and interpersonal connection
- Empathy and perspective-taking
- Confidence in expressing oneself authentically

### Supports:

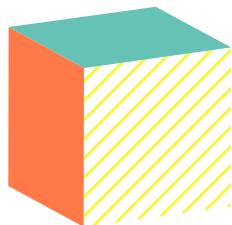
- Safe exploration of inner experiences
- Experiential learning through sound and move-  
ment
- Development of presence and mindfulness within  
the group

**Reflection time:** 15 min.

### Guided script:

*"What did it feel like to express yourself through sound?"*  
*"What was it like to hear other's inner states in this way?"*  
*"Did anything surprise or amuse you?"*

# 1. Create a safe space



## 3. Sound Greeting

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 10-15 min.

**Number of participants:** Any group size

**Materials needed:** None

### Steps

A playful, embodied exercise that invites participants to connect through spontaneous, non-verbal sound interactions while moving freely through a shared space. As participants make eye contact, they exchange unique vocal greetings—ranging from musical to expressive—fostering presence, empathy, and curiosity. A mirrored variation deepens the connection by including sound, facial expression, and body posture. The activity encourages sonic awareness, relational attunement, and lighthearted exploration, with optional reflection to integrate the experience.

**1.** Invite participants to freely move around the space. Ask them to fill the space evenly and avoid moving in circles or fixed patterns.

**Guided script:** *“Move through the space with soft focus. Let your body stay loose and curious. Avoid fixed paths. Just explore and stay open to meeting others.”*

**2.** When participants make eye contact, they are invited to greet the other with a sound—this can be vocal, playful, gentle, musical, etc. This exchange can be simultaneous, one leading and one following, or a call-and-response.

**3.** Once participants are comfortable, introduce the mirroring variation: One person makes their personal sound, and the other mirrors it back—sound, facial expression, and body posture included.

#### Guided script:

*“Try to feel when the other is about to make a sound. Let the exchange be about connection rather than performance. It’s a moment of shared attention.”*

*“Move through the space with soft focus. Let your body stay loose and curious. Avoid fixed paths. Just explore and stay open to meeting others.”*

# 1. Create a safe space

**4.** Invite participants to gather in a circle or pause in stillness.

**Facilitator notes:** Encourage relaxed, aware movement—not rushed or mechanical. Encourage lightness, curiosity, and embodied awareness. Encourage participants to attune to one another, so as not to speak over or overpower each other.

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise engages participants in playful, embodied sound interactions to foster presence, attunement and relational awareness. By exchanging spontaneous vocal greetings while moving freely, participants practice non-verbal communication, active listening and emotional expression in a low-stakes, playful context.

The mirrored variation deepens connection by aligning sound, facial expression and body posture, creating a shared sensory experience. This practice promotes curiosity, improvisation and interpersonal sensitivity, while the group setting supports social bonding and emotional safety. Concluding with stillness or reflection allows participants to integrate both the energetic and relational experiences.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Emotional expression and vocal communication
- Present-moment awareness and sensory attention
- Nervous system regulation and stress modulation

#### Encourages:

- Spontaneity, creativity and playful exploration
- Empathy and attunement to others' cues
- Relational curiosity and openness

#### Strengthens:

- Social connection and group cohesion
- Confidence in non-verbal communication
- Emotional presence and interpersonal awareness

#### Supports:

- Reduction of social anxiety or self-consciousness
- Integration of embodied and vocal expression
- Safe, shared experiential learning

**Reflection time:** 5 min.

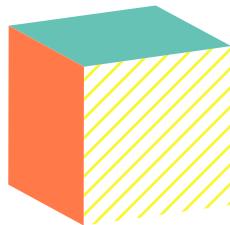
#### Guided script:

*"How was it to greet someone with sound instead of words?"*

*"Did you notice any shifts in how you connected with others?"*

*"How did your sound change as you interacted more?"*

# 1. Create a safe space



## 4. The Humming Circle

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 30 min.

**Number of participants:** 7-15 (enough to form a complete circle)

**Materials needed:** Optional: Singing bowl (for tonal grounding and to signal transitions), comfortable, quiet space.

### Steps

A grounding and connection practice that uses gentle, closed-mouth humming to foster calm, body awareness, and group resonance. Participants sit or stand in a circle, begin with breath-focused grounding, and gradually move into collective humming, tuning into internal vibrations and the shared group sound. A sound echo circle may be introduced to deepen presence and attunement. The practice concludes with silent reflection or group sharing, helping participants integrate the experience and return to stillness with a sense of calm and connection.

**1.** Invite participants to form a circle (standing or sitting depending on the energy and physical ability of the group). Briefly introduce the purpose: a gentle humming exercise to foster inner calm, group connection, and body awareness.

**2.** Invite participants to relax their bodies, feet firmly on the ground and encourage natural, comfortable postures—not rigid but present.

**3.** Guide participants to place one hand on their belly (optional) and notice the rise and fall with the breath, encourage soft, deep breathing from the belly rather than the chest. Eyes can be gently closed or unfocused—emphasize safety and consent.

**Guided script:** *"Allow your breath to settle naturally in your belly.", "Feel the ground beneath your feet and how it supports you.", "Notice your breath without changing it, just observing."*

**4.** The trainer demonstrates Bouche Fermée (closed-mouth humming) and invites the participants to gently join in, starting softly. Encourage them to notice vibra-

# 1. Create a safe space

tions in the chest, head, or throat area. Remind them to stay connected to their breath and body sensations.

## *Optional Group Practice: Introduce the sound echo circle*

- One person begins with a hum.
- The sound travels clockwise, gradually fading.
- The originator receives their sound returned, completing the circle

**5.** Slowly guide participants back to normal breathing.

**6.** Invite them to open their eyes when they feel ready.

**7.** Share a moment of quiet stillness or gratitude before reflection.

**Facilitator notes:** Use the singing bowl to initiate or end the humming segment. If appropriate, gradually shift volume—starting soft, gently increasing, then back to soft. This exercise may stimulate parasympathetic activation, leading to calmness and emotional openness. Encourage participants to stay grounded—invite them to move their fingers or stretch gently if needed. Adjust intensity based on the emotional energy or comfort level of the group.

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise fosters grounding, body awareness and group resonance through gentle, closed-mouth humming. By focusing on breath and internal vibrations, participants activate a calm, parasympathetic response, which supports emotional regulation and reduces stress. Collective humming creates a shared sensory field, enhancing attunement and non-verbal connection among participants.

The optional sound echo circle further deepens presence and group cohesion, providing a tangible experience of mutual influence and shared energy. Concluding with quiet reflection allows integration of the experience, promoting calm, centeredness and psychological safety.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Mind-body awareness and interoception
- Focus and present-moment attention
- Stress regulation and nervous system balance

#### Encourages:

- Emotional openness and containment
- Grounded connection with self and others
- Gentle, mindful exploration of sound and vibration

#### Strengthens:

- Group cohesion and collective resonance
- Mood regulation and sense of calm
- Self-awareness through embodied listening

#### Supports:

- Emotional safety and psychological containment
- Integration of physiological and emotional states
- Social bonding through shared sound experience

**Reflection time:** 10 min.

#### Guided script:

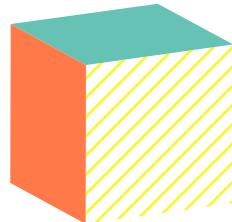
*"How did this experience feel in your body?"*

*"What did you notice about your voice or breath?"*

*"Was there anything challenging or surprising?"*

*"What part of the exercise did you enjoy the most?"*

# 1. Create a safe space



## 5. The Sufi Circle

Proyecto Nagual - Spain

**Duration:** 60 min.

**Number of participants:** Any equal number /  
(Enough to form two equal circles: inner & outer)

**Materials needed:** A bell, Tibetan bowl, gong, or any sound signal

### Steps

A partner-based storytelling and listening practice designed to cultivate deep interpersonal connection, presence, and emotional trust. Participants form two concentric circles and engage in timed rounds of one-on-one sharing, rotating partners after each question. One partner speaks while the other listens mindfully, without interruption or feedback. The questions range from light and joyful to reflective and meaningful, encouraging self-expression and vulnerability. The exercise fosters empathy, connection, and a safe space for authentic human exchange, making it ideal for building group cohesion early in a program or retreat.

**1.** Invite participants to form two concentric circles: Inner circle faces outward. Outer circle faces inward, each person paired with someone from the inner circle.

**2.** Inner circle members ask the questions. Outer circle members answer each question within a 2-minute time limit. Members of the inner circle do not answer back.

**Guided script:** *"What's a place that feels like home to you?", "What is a challenge that shaped who you are today?", "Why are you here?", "What do you hope to discover in this experience?"*

**3.** After 2 minutes, a bell rings and the outer circle rotates one person clockwise to meet a new partner. The inner circle stays fixed. The inner circle then asks the next question (either prepared by themselves or read from a prompt).

**Guided script:**

*"What makes you feel at your comfort zone?"*

*"Did you ever feel a call to change and go into something new and unknown?"*

# 1. Create a safe space

*"Could you share about one life challenge that you went through in the past?"*

*"Did you ever meet a person who helped you give steps forward in a challenging time?"*

*"Is there any learning from a past meaningful process that you'd like to share with the world?"*

*"What is the life you dream about?"*

**4.** Invite participants to switch and go from the inner circle to the external one and viceversa. Then repeat the guidelines of steps 2 and 3.

**5.** Invite participants to step out of the circle and form a large group circle.

**6.** Ask each person to share one word or short phrase that describes how they feel after the experience.

**Facilitator Notes:** The questions can be formulated by the facilitator anytime the bell is played. Adjust depth of questions based on context, group readiness, or emotional tone. Be attentive to the group's energy. You can pause between rounds to offer grounding if needed. Balance the circles. If there's an odd number, you can join as a participant or create a floating triad. Participants may pass if they don't feel ready to share. No comments, no feedback—just listening with open hearts and soft eyes. Maintain eye contact if comfortable.

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This experiential exercise invites participants to explore connection, trust and self-expression through structured partner storytelling and mindful listening. By forming concentric circles and engaging in timed rounds of one-on-one dialogue, participants share personal stories, reflections and aspirations while practicing attentive listening. The exercise emphasizes presence, allowing individuals to be fully engaged with their partner without interruption or judgment.

Through this process, participants cultivate empathy, deepen interpersonal awareness and experience emotional safety within the group. The rotation of partners broadens perspectives, highlighting the shared human experience while allowing each individ-

ual to witness and be witnessed. By combining guided prompts with active listening, the activity strengthens both self-awareness and relational skills, fostering trust, group cohesion and authentic expression.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Enhances:

- Self-expression by articulating personal stories, reflections and aspirations
- Emotional presence and awareness through mindful listening and attention
- Understanding of personal identity through relational reflection

#### Encourages:

- Safe vulnerability by sharing meaningful experiences in a structured environment
- Curiosity about others' perspectives and lived experiences
- Compassionate engagement through attentive listening without feedback

#### Strengthens:

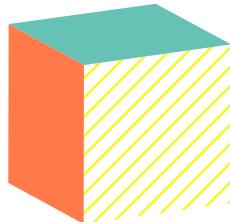
- Empathy and interpersonal connection within the group
- Trust-building by creating a safe container for authentic human exchange
- Social cohesion and a sense of belonging through shared dialogue

#### Supports:

- Reflection on personal growth, challenges and aspirations
- Integration of emotional experiences into self-understanding
- Development of communication skills grounded in presence, patience and respect

**Reflection time:** 10 min.

# 1. Create a safe space



## 6. Relaxation Through *DO-IN*

**Omphalos - Italy**

**Duration:** 20 min.

**Number of participants:** 15-20

**Materials needed:** Speakers, pre-recorded music with slow-relaxing tracks

### Steps

At the beginning of each activity, it is important to create a personal, safe space that allows them to integrate harmoniously with their inner and outer space. To make the atmosphere more relaxed, the trainer can guide the participants to balance their energy points through the practice of *DO-IN*.

The *DO-IN* practice is a very effective method to relax tensions in the body and prepare it to perform any activity in a more relaxed manner. *DO-IN* derives from traditional Chinese medicine and aims to rebalance, control and strengthen the vital energy flowing through the body. It uses as tools the stimulation of the meridians through acupressure and self-massage on various points of the body (from the head down to the feet), breathing and the practice of exercises for the reactivation of Ki (life energy).

**1.** Create a circle. Participants are invited to create a circle, with a distance of 1.5-2 meters from each other, so that everyone has their own safe space. This circle must have at least 4 openings that will allow anyone to leave the circle if they deem it appropriate, and then return independently without creating confusion during the performance of the workshops.

It is advisable to use the circle as a geometric shape because it breaks down any form of supremacy over the other, everyone is equal there are no differences, nor are privileged positions created compared to others.

**2.** Bow. Before and at the end of each activity, once inside the circle, all participants and the trainer are invited to bow. The bow, present in various cultures and eras, is both a sign of greeting but above all a gesture of education and humility. Especially when interacting with particular social contexts, where classist conditions and neighborhood subjugation exist, a simple bow to everyone without exception, pacifies the social status and puts everyone in a condition of greater consideration towards others.

# 1. Create a safe space

**3.** Relaxation through deep breathing. Before starting the activities, participants will follow relaxation practices through guided breathing with eyes closed to connect more deeply with their inner space, their body, letting go of all tension. This moment will be accompanied by slow, relaxing music that can recall the sounds of nature such as the flowing of water, the wind, the chirping of birds, etc.

**4.** Warm-up exercises for the body – Do in. The Do-In practice consists of three basic elements:

- self-manipulations, which aim to distribute the energy circulation equally by reactivating stagnant Ki or dispersing excess Ki throughout the body;
- intake of Ki from the Universe, by consciously introducing oxygen through breathing so as to recharge the organism;
- recanalisation of Energy in the Hara, which, through abdominal strengthening work, has the purpose of revitalising our vital center by favouring mechanical, visual psychic and mental balance, increasing memory and general assimilation, which are closely connected with the Hara.

Let the participants feel their inner energy through deep breathing, keeping their hands up to the Hara (a central vital point situated two fingers down of the navel).

From this point, concentrating their vital energy in their hands, invite them to rub their hands to increase the perception of this energy and transfer it to each part of the body.

Starting from the head, they can give small taps with their fingers on various points of the head until they gently massage the whole head.

These small taps and gently massage must be done for each part of the body : the face, the neck, the shoulders, the arms, the breast ( tapping especially in the center of the breast to stimulate the thyroid), the whole spine and lumbar area, the leg until the feet.

At the end gently caress the whole body to release any tension.

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise provides a structured method for participants to relax, reconnect with their bodies and harmonize their vital energy before engaging in other activities. By combining deep breathing, guided relaxation and Do-In self-massage techniques, participants develop heightened bodily awareness, reduced tension and an increased sense of personal space and safety. The circle format fosters equality and inclusion, enhancing group cohesion and psychological comfort.

Through Do-In practice, participants stimulate both physical and energetic balance, integrating mind, body and emotional regulation. The gentle self-massage, energy circulation and breath awareness not only reduce stress but also cultivate self-responsibility for one's well-being, supporting the ability to respond rather than react in daily life.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Physical relaxation and release of bodily tension
- Vital energy circulation and overall bodily balance

#### Encourages:

- Mindfulness and awareness of internal bodily states
- Empathy and sensitivity toward oneself and others

#### Strengthens:

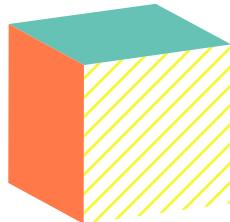
- Sense of safety, equality and inclusion in group settings
- Connection between mental, emotional and physical well-being

#### Supports:

- Preventive health through early recognition of bodily imbalances
- Harmonization of spiritual, psychic and instinctual intelligence

**Reflection time:** 20'

# 1. Create a safe space



## 7. The Story of Today

Proyecto Nagual - Spain

**Duration:** 5-15 min.

**Number of participants:** Flexible – suitable for both small and large groups

**Materials needed:** None (optional: chairs, cushions, or mats for sitting comfortably)

### Steps

A brief and creative emotional check-in where participants share a story—such as a movie, book, song, or myth—that symbolizes how they feel in the moment. Seated in a circle, each person offers their chosen reference without needing to explain or elaborate, allowing for subtle vulnerability and self-expression through metaphor. This playful, low-pressure exercise encourages emotional awareness, fosters group connection, and sets a tone of openness and presence, making it an ideal ritual to begin a session or workshop.

- 1.** Invite participants to sit in a circle so everyone can see each other.
- 2.** Invite each of the participants to think of a story that represents how they feel right now. It could be a movie, a book, a myth, a song a radio station, podcast or tv channel—anything that speaks for your mood today. Go clockwise to maintain flow.

#### Examples:

*“Today, I feel like ‘The Little Prince’—a bit dreamy and far away.”*

*“I’m definitely ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’—all over the place!”*

*“Forrest Gump—I’m just flowing with whatever comes.”*

- 3.** After the last person shares, offer a moment of silence or a grounding breath together. Optionally, acknowledge the group: “Thank you for sharing. It’s beautiful to hear how we each bring a different story to this circle today.”

**Facilitator Notes:** Maintain a gentle, non-judgmental tone. Accept silence if someone prefers to pass.

# 1. Create a safe space

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This brief and creative check-in invites participants to explore and express their current emotional state through metaphor. By selecting a story, song, movie or myth that reflects how they feel in the moment, participants externalize their inner experiences in a safe and playful way. The exercise promotes emotional awareness, allowing individuals to notice and name subtle feelings without the pressure of explanation or interpretation.

Seated in a circle, participants engage in shared listening, fostering connection and presence within the group. The simplicity of the activity encourages openness and vulnerability while maintaining a light, low-pressure environment. This ritual not only supports participants in tuning into their own emotions but also cultivates empathy, as listening to others' metaphorical expressions highlights the diversity of experiences within the group.

## Psychological Benefits

### Enhances:

- Emotional awareness by identifying and reflecting on current feelings
- Recognition of personal inner states through symbolic and metaphorical expression
- Mindfulness and presence by focusing attention on the present moment

### Encourages:

- Safe, non-verbalized vulnerability within a supportive group setting
- Creative self-expression through choice of story, song or symbol
- Exploration of personal mood and emotional shifts in a playful format

### Strengthens:

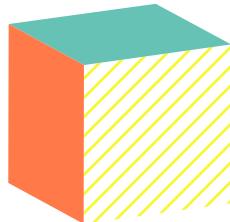
- Empathy by hearing and observing others' metaphorical expressions
- Group cohesion through shared attention and collective storytelling
- Comfort with expressing feelings indirectly, reducing performance pressure

### Supports:

- Establishment of an open and safe container for ongoing group work
- Reflection on subtle emotional states without judgment or interpretation
- Connection between personal experience and collective presence

**Reflection time:** Not necessary

# 1. Create a safe space



## 8. My Element Sound

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 20 min.

**Number of participants:** 15-20

**Materials needed:** 4 bowls containing natural elements: leaves, stones, soil, water, cushions or chairs for seated grounding, calm space with minimal distractions

### Steps

A sensory and vocal exploration that invites participants to connect with natural elements—leaves, stones, soil, or water—and express their experience through sound. After selecting an element, participants are guided through breathwork and a five-senses meditation to deepen presence and body awareness. Each person then creates a spontaneous sound inspired by their element, which the group echoes in unison, fostering creative expression, groundedness, and group connection. This playful, nature-based practice encourages mindfulness, trust, and non-verbal bonding, making it ideal as an opening or re-centering group activity.

1. Invite participants to stand or sit in a circle.
2. In the center, place four bowls filled with natural elements (leaves, stones, soil, water).
3. Ask each participant to step forward and choose one element that intuitively calls to them, then return to their place.
4. Invite participants to close their eyes or soften their gaze.

**Guided script:** *"Feel your body where it touches the ground... Let your arms relax... Just observe your breath—no need to change it... simply feel the air coming in and going out."*

5. Invite participants to inhale through the nose for 4 seconds and then exhale through the mouth for 6 seconds. Repeat 3 times, encouraging participants to gradually extend the exhale.

# 1. Create a safe space

**6.** Invite the participants to a gentle sensory meditation, with a slower pace and pauses between each prompt.

## Guided script:

*"Feel the element you're holding", notice its weight... its texture...*

*"What does it feel like in your hand?" (Touch)*

*"Now listen... What sounds do you hear inside this room? Outside?" (Sound)*

*"Breathe in... Can you sense any smell coming from the element in your hand?" (Smell)*

*"Notice the taste in your mouth—even if it's neutral, just observe." (Taste)*

*"With your eyes closed or softly open, observe the colors, light, or patterns you see." (Vision)*

**7.** Invite each participant (one by one, going clockwise) to create a sound inspired by the element they are holding (e.g., a rustle for leaves, a rumble for stones, a bubbling for water, etc.). Once they share their sound, the rest of the group echoes it in unison.

**Guided script:** *"Now let your element speak. Don't worry about how it sounds—just let it come through you. After you share, we'll echo your sound as a group to honor it."*

**8.** Invite participants to end with a shared breath or moment of silence. Optionally, invite them to place the element back in the bowl mindfully.

**Facilitator notes:** Demonstrate the first sound if the group seems unsure. Encourage non-verbal connection—eye contact or gestures can replace words. Be aware of sensory sensitivity in participants—offer alternatives if needed (e.g., observing without holding the element directly). At step 7 if movement arises along with the expression of sound it is welcome. Encourage playful, honest expression —no performance, just presence.

ral element and engaging all five senses, participants anchor attention in the here and now, fostering mindfulness, groundedness and inner stillness. Creating a sound inspired by the element allows emotional and creative expression to emerge in a safe, playful context.

The group echoing of each participant's sound builds a shared, non-verbal dialogue that strengthens cohesion, trust and collective presence. The practice combines sensory awareness, vocal exploration and mindful attention, creating conditions for self-expression, relaxation and relational attunement within the group.

## Psychological Benefits

### Improves:

- Present-moment awareness and mindfulness
- Sensory perception and body awareness
- Vocal and creative self-expression

### Encourages:

- Playful engagement with the environment
- Connection with nature and inner stillness
- Non-verbal communication and group responsiveness

### Strengthens:

- Group cohesion and shared experience
- Trust and safety in creative expression
- Emotional regulation through embodied play

### Supports:

- Integration of sensory experiences into self-awareness
- Mindful attention and grounding
- Gentle ice-breaking and social connection

### Reflection time: 5-10'

### Guided script:

*"Why did you choose this element?"*

*"How did it feel when the team echoed your sound?"*

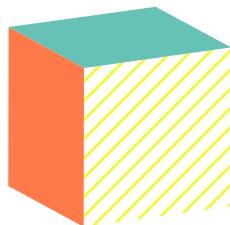
*"What does this element mean to me?"*

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise engages participants in a sensory and vocal exploration that deepens present-moment awareness and body – mind connection. By selecting a natu-

# 1. Create a safe space



## 9. Find Your Match

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 10 min.

**Number of participants:** Any even number of participants (for pairing)

**Materials needed:** None

### Steps

A fun and engaging group activity designed to build trust, enhance non-verbal communication, and sharpen auditory awareness. Working in pairs, participants create a unique sound to represent their connection. After mixing up in an open space, they close their eyes and attempt to find each other using only the agreed-upon sound. This playful yet mindful exercise encourages active listening, intuitive movement, and group cohesion—making it an excellent ice-breaker, energizer, or sensory-focused trust activity.

**1.** Ask participants to form pairs (or assign them randomly).

**2.** Each pair should decide on a unique sound that will represent their connection. It can be a hum, whistle, syllable, animal sound, or other brief vocal expression.

**Guided script:** *"With your partner, come up with a sound that represents you both. Keep it short and simple—something you can easily recognize later with your ears only."*

**3.** Ask all participants to walk around and mix up in the space.

**4.** Once the room feels mixed, invite everyone to pause at a random spot in the room.

**5.** Ask everyone to close their eyes (or blindfold if available and comfortable).

**6.** Encourage participants to start walking slowly and carefully through the space, making their unique pair sound, and listening for their match.

**7.** When one meets the other the couple freezes until all pairs have met.

**8.** If time allows proceed with reflection time.

# 1. Create a safe space

**Facilitator notes:** Ensure enough space between participants to avoid collisions during the next step. Emphasize slow, mindful movement to maintain safety. Remind participants to keep their arms slightly out to avoid bumping into others. End the search once all or most have found their partners.

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This playful yet mindful activity strengthens non-verbal connection and deep listening through sound. By relying solely on their auditory senses and intuitive orientation, participants move beyond habitual ways of interacting and develop a heightened awareness of others. The process of searching and finding one's partner cultivates trust, joy and presence, while reducing social barriers.

The combination of sound, movement and sensory deprivation (closing the eyes) creates a powerful opportunity to engage intuition, attune to subtle cues and build relational confidence in a lighthearted, energizing way.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Auditory awareness and active listening
- Mindful attention to the present moment
- Sensory sensitivity beyond visual perception

#### Encourages:

- Playfulness and spontaneity
- Trust in others and the group process
- Intuitive movement and responsiveness

#### Strengthens:

- Non-verbal communication and bonding
- Confidence in navigating uncertainty
- Social connection and group cohesion

#### Supports:

- Reducing social anxiety and self-consciousness
- Embodied learning through sound and movement
- Openness to alternative modes of communication

**Reflection time:** 3-5 min.

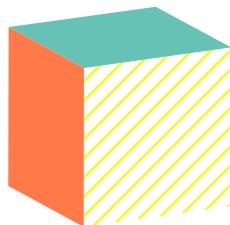
#### Guided script:

*"How did it feel to find your partner through only sound?"*

*"Was it easy or hard to trust your senses?"*

*"What did you notice when you were listening?"*

# 1. Create a safe space



## 10. The Circle of Senses

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 30 min.

**Number of participants:** 6-30

**Materials needed:** None

### Steps

A group exercise that builds deep sensory awareness, group presence, and non-verbal communication. Participants sit or stand in a circle and attempt to collectively count aloud from 1 to 30, one person at a time, without any coordination or cues—starting over if two people speak at once. Across four progressive rounds—shifting posture, eye contact, and physical touch—the group gradually enhances its collective intuition and connection. This mindful, often profound activity fosters trust, patience, and a shared sense of presence and belonging.

1. Participants are invited to form a circle with backs facing inward and close their eyes.
2. The group attempts to count from 1 to 30 aloud, one person at a time. If two people speak at the same time, the group starts over from 1. No cues or guidance are given by the facilitator during the counting.

**Guided script:** *"This is an exercise in collective awareness and sensory connection. As we shift our attention inward and toward each other, we may begin to sense something deeper—a shared field or current that links us. Your task is to collectively count from 1 to 30, with no coordination except through your senses. Let's begin."*

3. Now they face the center of the circle, but keep their eyes closed and repeat the procedure.
4. Maintain circle position with closed eyes but join hands and repeat the procedure.
5. Remain holding hands but this time, keep eyes open, looking into the circle or soft gaze on others.

**Facilitator notes:** Keep your guidance minimal during the activity; this supports self-organization and deeper awareness. Pause for a few seconds between rounds to allow for quiet reflection. Ensure the space is phys-

# 1. Create a safe space

ically safe and emotionally inclusive—allow people to step out if overwhelmed. Use gentle tone and non-directive language to encourage mindfulness.

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise invites participants into a mindful, non-verbal journey of collective awareness. By progressively shifting posture, eye contact and physical connection, the group gradually heightens its sensory attunement and ability to act as one. The challenge of counting to 30 without coordination requires patience, trust and an openness to subtle cues, creating a unique experience of group presence.

Each round deepens the sense of connection: starting in solitude with closed eyes, then slowly layering gaze and touch until the group becomes a synchronized, living organism. The process builds trust, nurtures attentiveness and offers participants a direct experience of “the collective field” that transcends individual effort.

## Psychological Benefits

### Improves:

- Sensory awareness and mindfulness
- Attentional focus and concentration
- Group presence and collective attunement

### Encourages:

- Patience and slowing down
- Vulnerability through silence and uncertainty
- Sensitivity to non-verbal cues

### Strengthens:

- Group coherence and trust
- Interpersonal connection and subtle communication
- A sense of belonging and unity

### Supports:

- Embodied experience of collective intelligence
- Deep listening beyond words
- Reflection on the self within the group field

**Reflection time:** 10-15'

### Guided script:

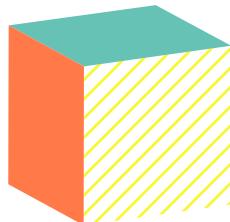
*“How did the experience shift for you from round to round?”*

*“When did you feel the strongest connection with the group?”*

*“Did anything surprise you about the way we communicate non-verbally?”*

*“Can you describe the moment you felt the presence of the group as one?”*

# 1. Create a safe space



## 11. Get Connected With the Element of Water

**Omphalos - Italy**

**Duration:** 20 min.

**Number of participants:** 15-20

**Materials needed:** Speakers, pre-recorded music

### Steps

This immersive activity uses the symbolic and physical qualities of water like fluidity, adaptability, flow and calmness to establish trust, comfort, and openness among participants.

1. The trainer creates a safe circle and he invites participants to breath gently mimicking flowing water, encouraging them to connect with their breath in silence.
2. Guide them through a body scan to release tension, emphasising softness and surrender through undulating and spontaneous movements, gently caressing every part of their body.
3. Alternate grounding movements—shifting weight gently from side to side—helping participants feel secure in their space.
4. Setting intentions through a shared circle, inviting participants to express what they hope to explore or release during the activity.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise engages participants in connecting with the qualities of water — fluidity, adaptability and calmness, through breath, body awareness and gentle movement. By embodying these water-like qualities, participants enhance self-regulation, emotional openness and trust in both themselves and the group. The structured yet flowing sequence encourages a safe exploration of inner states while fostering presence and comfort in the shared space.

# 1. Create a safe space

On a deeper level, participants cultivate mindfulness and attunement to subtle bodily sensations, learning to surrender to movement and release tension. The shared circle and intention-setting encourage relational awareness and group cohesion, allowing participants to experience both personal emotional release and a sense of collective safety and support.

## Psychological Benefits

### Improves:

- Body awareness and physical flexibility
- Mind-body connection and self-regulation

### Encourages:

- Emotional release and relaxation
- Mindful exploration of personal boundaries and intentions

### Strengthens:

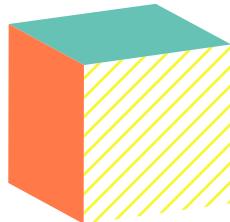
- Trust and comfort within the group
- Adaptability and fluidity in responses to internal and external stimuli

### Supports:

- Reduction of anxiety and stress
- Presence, calmness and embodied awareness

**Reflection time:** 20'

# 1. Create a safe space



## 12. Arrive

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 20 min.

**Number of participants:** 12-15

**Materials needed:** Aromatic elements (sticks, oils), music speaker, open floor space

### Steps

According to the Art of Connection and the threefold soul — mental soul, emotional soul, and sensing soul — we offer the following exercise. Its purpose is to cultivate presence and to help us truly arrive in the body. To arrive means to inhabit ourselves fully, here and now, with awareness.

This opening exercise invites participants into a calm, sensory-rich space designed to support presence and ease. Through a guided grounding practice using breath and the five senses, individuals are gently encouraged to “arrive” in the moment.

**1.** Create a calming, sensory-rich atmosphere that supports arrival and presence.

**2.** Guide participants to connect with the present moment through breath and sensory awareness.

Five-sense check-in: touch, sound, sight, smell, internal sensation.

**Guided script:** *“Notice the weight of your body... the textures on your skin... the sounds around you... Breathe... Arrive.”*

**3.** Invite each participant to share one word or a gesture that reflects their internal state upon arrival.

**Facilitator notes:** No discussion or commentary — just presence and acknowledgment. Conclude with the co-creation of group agreements that emphasize mutual respect, confidentiality, and choice, laying the foundation for a safe and intentional group experience.

# 1. Create a safe space

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This opening exercise guides participants into full bodily and sensory presence, fostering a calm and mindful entry into the group space. By engaging the threefold soul: mental, emotional and sensing aspects, through breath and a five-sense check-in, participants cultivate awareness of their internal state and the surrounding environment.

The practice of sharing a word or gesture to reflect one's internal state encourages acknowledgment without judgment, reinforcing psychological safety and mutual respect. Combined with subsequent group agreements, this exercise lays a foundation for presence, connection and embodied participation throughout the session.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Mindfulness and awareness of the present moment
- Sensory perception and bodily attunement
- Recognition of personal internal states

#### Encourages:

- Calming and reduction of anxiety or tension
- Gentle self-reflection and acknowledgment
- Embodied presence in the group context

#### Strengthens:

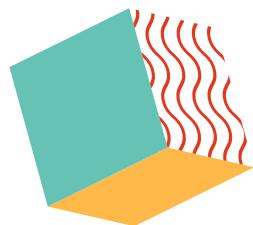
- Group cohesion and sense of psychological safety
- Awareness of the interconnectedness between self and others
- Intentional participation and mindful engagement

#### Supports:

- Creation of a safe, inclusive and supportive environment
- Foundation for co-creation of group agreements
- Integration of mental, emotional and sensory experiences

**Reflection time:** not necessary

## 2. Identify the narrative



### 1. The Line of Life

Proyecto Nagual - Spain

**Duration:** 60-90 min.

**Number of participants:** 6-20

**Materials needed:** Paper sheets (A4, A3, or A2), pens, colored pencils, crayons, or markers. Optional: soft background music

### Steps

A reflective, creative exercise that invites participants to explore their personal life journey through the metaphor of a river. Using drawing and writing, individuals map out key turning points, emotions, and memories along a flowing line symbolizing their life's path. The process encourages deep self-reflection, emotional expression, and meaning-making. Through optional sharing in a supportive circle, the activity fosters empathy, narrative coherence, and a sense of personal resilience and growth.

- 1.** Give each participant a sheet of paper and drawing tools.
- 2.** Instruct them to draw a continuous line (like a river) from the left (representing birth or another meaningful starting point) to the right (the present moment). Encourage them to draw freely, without overthinking, allowing the line to move up, down, or curve naturally.
- 3.** Ask them to place dots on the line to mark turning points or important moments.
- 4.** Invite participants to write a word or sentence near each dot that captures what that turning point means to them. Encourage using feelings, memories, or reflections as inspiration.
- 5.** Then ask participants to use these words or sentences to compose a final sentence or paragraph summarizing their story or feelings.
- 6.** Ask them to create a title for the story inspired by their drawing and writing.

**Optional:** Closing Ritual (10 minutes) Lead a grounding activity to gently close the session, such as:

## 2. Identify the narrative

- A short mindful breathing exercise
- Gentle stretching or movement
- A moment of silence or gratitude
- A simple ritual like collective bowing or placing drawings in a circle

**Facilitator notes:** Encourage openness and respect for confidentiality and emotions during the sharing. Emphasize this is a personal process—there's no "right" or "wrong" way.

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This reflective and creative exercise invites participants to explore their personal life journey through the metaphor of a river. By drawing a flowing line that represents their path and marking key turning points, individuals externalize their memories, emotions and experiences in a tangible and symbolic way. The act of mapping life moments allows participants to view their story with perspective, highlighting continuity, challenges and growth. Through this process, participants cultivate narrative identity, giving structure and meaning to the experiences that have shaped them.

Engaging in both drawing and writing supports emotional expression, as abstract feelings become embodied in visual and verbal form. The metaphor of the river provides a safe symbolic distance to approach sensitive memories, while also reinforcing the idea of movement, flow and resilience. Optional group sharing deepens the impact by fostering empathy and mutual recognition, while grounding rituals ensure that participants close the exercise with a sense of safety and integration.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Enhances:

- Deep self-reflection through symbolic representation of life's journey
- Emotional clarity and awareness by externalizing inner experiences
- Narrative coherence by connecting events into a meaningful story

#### Encourages:

- Expression of vulnerability in a safe and structured way
- Creative exploration through drawing, writing and metaphor
- Gentle meaning-making around past challenges and turning points

#### Strengthens:

- Resilience by recognizing personal growth across life's difficulties
- Empathy and trust within the group through shared storytelling
- A sense of perspective on the continuity and flow of life

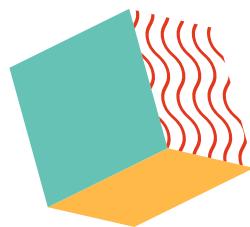
#### Supports:

- Emotional regulation by transforming memories into symbolic form
- Integration of past and present self into a coherent identity
- A sense of closure and grounding through reflective rituals

#### Reflection time: 10-20'

Gather participants in a circle. Invite voluntary sharing of insights, emotions, or stories inspired by their River of Life, use gentle facilitation and non-violent communication principles: listen deeply, speak from "I" statements, honor silence, and respect each person's pace and privacy. Optionally, participants can share their drawings or final sentences if comfortable.

## 2. Identify the narrative



### 2. Between Home and Elsewhere

Proyecto Nagual - Spain

**Duration:** 60-90 min.

**Number of participants:** 6-24

**Materials needed:** Post-its or small papers, pens, pencils, or markers, blank pages or journals for writing, music player and speakers, spacious room to move freely

### Steps

An experiential exercise that explores the themes of belonging and inner movement through gentle physical exploration and creative writing. Participants move freely between symbolic spaces of "home" and "away," tuning into sensations, memories, and emotions that arise. Through reflective writing and optional sharing, the exercise encourages self-expression, curiosity, and embodied insight—offering a safe, imaginative space to explore what "home" means personally and metaphorically.

**1.** Mark two opposite sides of the room clearly: One side symbolizes "Home / Feeling at Home" and the other side symbolizes "Being away from Home".

**2.** Place post-its or small papers and pens/pencils at both ends for participants to use.

**3.** Invite participants to move freely through the room, exploring the space between "home" and "away." Encourage them to pause wherever they feel drawn and write down any words, images, or feelings that emerge on the post-its. Notes can be left on the ground or kept by the participant.

**Guided script:** *"There's no right or wrong way to move—stillness and gentle movement are both welcome".*

**4.** Invite everyone to pause, either sitting or standing quietly.

**5.** Guide a short grounding exercise: deep breaths, body scan, or gentle awareness of the present moment. Encourage participants to gently gather the impressions and sensations they noticed.

## 2. Identify the narrative

**6.** Provide blank pages or journals for participants to write freely using their collected words and feelings as inspiration. Writing style can be poetic, fragmented, dreamy, raw—whatever feels authentic.

### Guided script:

*"I feel at home when..."*

*"I feel away from home when..."*

**7.** Invite participants to pair up or form a circle to share words, gestures, or reflections if they feel comfortable and safe. End with a collective light movement, breath, or silent gesture symbolizing "home" to close the session together.

**Facilitator notes:** Create a welcoming, non-judgmental atmosphere to encourage openness, curiosity and expression. Respect each participant's pace and choice to share or remain silent. Use the music and space set-up to facilitate a calming, creative environment (Soft instrumental or ambient music). Adjust timing flexibly based on group dynamics.

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This experiential exercise invites participants to explore the themes of belonging, identity and inner movement through gentle physical exploration and creative writing. By moving between symbolic spaces of "home" and "away", participants tune into embodied sensations, memories and emotions, giving shape to their inner landscapes. The combination of movement and reflective writing helps participants connect body and mind, fostering insight into what "home" means both personally and metaphorically.

Through this process, participants engage with vulnerability and curiosity in a safe, imaginative environment. The act of embodying "home" and "away" encourages reflection on comfort, safety, exile, longing and the fluid ways in which belonging is experienced. By integrating free movement with reflective writing, the exercise creates a bridge between body and mind,

offering participants the chance to process feelings of safety, displacement, comfort or curiosity. Optional sharing at the end fosters group connection and empathy while respecting individual boundaries, making the activity both grounding and expansive.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Enhances:

- Gentle self-awareness through embodied movement and writing
- Connection to personal memories and emotional landscapes
- Emotional regulation by grounding and integrating sensations into narrative

#### Encourages:

- Safe expression of vulnerability without pressure or judgment
- Playfulness, imagination and curiosity in exploring identity
- Creative self-reflection at each participant's own pace

#### Strengthens:

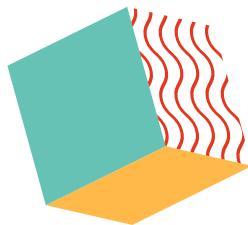
- The ability to recognize and articulate feelings of belonging or alienation
- Empathy and group cohesion through optional sharing of stories
- Resilience by reframing "home" as both an inner and outer experience

#### Supports:

- Integration of body and mind in processing emotions
- A sense of symbolic ritual and closure to deepen insight
- Personal discovery of where safety, comfort and meaning reside

**Reflection time:** 10'

## 2. Identify the narrative



## 3. Embody the Earth Energy

### Omphalos - Italy

**Duration:** 30 min.

**Number of participants:** 15-20

**Materials needed:** Speakers, pre-recorded music or percussion for rhythm

### Steps

Introduction to the concept of earth and embody its qualities of rootedness and stability.

How to recognise and connect to this element? To recognise oneself, one's body and identity, it is important to start from the base, from the roots.

**1.** Find a comfortable position. Let participants choose a comfortable position (sitting, lying down or standing) and invite them to close their eyes.

**2.** Guided visualisation with eyes closed. Guide them into an inner journey, so they can connect with their roots and feel the connection with the earth.

Imagining to be a seed, let them slowly build their roots, which expand and nourish itself more and more with the vital energy of the earth. Through deep breathing feel the life impulse coming from the Hara (life centre two fingers below the navel), recognise this force and let it expand into all the cells of the body.

**3.** Earth energy expansion through a wave-like movement. Let this force to manifest itself through free and spontaneous movements, starting with the impulsive and primordial force of the Hara, which gives rise to a wave-like movement that spreads from the spine throughout the body.

#### Guided script:

*"Through a deep breath, concentrate your attention into your Hara (vital center)."*

*"Feel your vital energy, your strength coming from your belly and through an undulation of your spine start to move slowly."*

**4.** Explore the 4 instinctive phases. If the exercise is carried out on the floor, participants can be invited to discover the 4 instinctive phases to reach slowly the

## 2. Identify the narrative

vertical position: from the fetal position, crawling to the four-legged position and then letting the life energy flow more and more into the legs, moving from a frog-like position to the vertical position.

### Guided script:

*"Feel the energy coming from your vital center, from the center of the earth and let it expand in your body."*

*"Imagine to start to feel your roots expand, feel like you are well grounded to the earth and then let your body slide into the floor following the impulse of your roots."*

*"As you feel your energy raise and get stronger, let it flow in your arms and in your legs, so you can start crawling, moving as a mammifer."*

*"Your instinctive impulse increase and allow you to feel more and more the strength of your legs as long as you can get up into the upright position."*

If the exercise is performed in the upright position, because the participants are not feeling comfortable to lie down, let the life energy and nurturing force of the earth flow down the entire spine in an undulating movement and let the participants freely express this inner force with instinctive movements and postures, in order to perceive this force in the whole body.

**5.** Embody the earth energy. Let the participants return in a circle and invite them to freely express how their experience was, how they felt and how they embodied the earth qualities. They can draw what they felt during the exercise, or write it down or express it and share it with the group.

On a more personal level, participants explore the flow of earth energy through their own body, moving from primal positions to upright posture or through undulating movements if standing. This process encourages them to integrate their physical sensations with inner strength, enhancing self-confidence, balance and a sense of security in both body and identity.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Awareness of bodily sensations and internal energy
- Ability to sense and regulate personal stability

#### Encourages:

- Exploration of instinctive and spontaneous movement
- Emotional grounding and presence in the moment

#### Strengthens:

- Self-confidence and inner resilience
- Connection between mind, body and environment

#### Supports:

- Stability, balance and security in daily life
- Integration of inner strength into conscious action

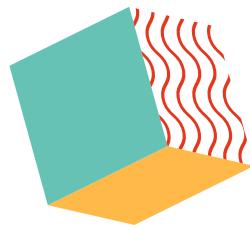
**Reflection time:** 20'

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise engages participants with the element of earth to cultivate a sense of rootedness, stability and bodily awareness. By guiding them to visualize themselves as seeds, expand their "roots" and express the energy of the Hara through spontaneous movement, participants strengthen their connection with their own body and internal life force. The focus on grounding and instinctive movement helps them access a stable, embodied sense of self.

## 2. Identify the narrative



### 4. Let's Dive In

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 60 min.

**Number of participants:** 12-15

**Materials needed:** Speakers, laptop, classical music, A4 papers, pens, flip chart, post-it

### Steps

A guided imagery and creative expression session designed to promote deep relaxation, emotional exploration, and symbolic storytelling. Participants are gently led through a calming visualization with music, then invited to draw scenes or symbols from their inner journey. Through titles, emotions, and optional vocal expression, individuals externalize personal narratives in a supportive and reflective space. This activity fosters introspection, empathy, and imaginative connection among participants.

**1.** We invite the participants to lie down in a comfortable spot and to focus on breathing and relaxation. Classical music is played. See the list below for choices.

**2.** We guide them through calm voice so as for them to start feeling safe and relaxed.

#### Guided script:

*"Let's begin by getting comfortable... gently close your eyes and take a deep breath in... and out... Let your shoulders drop and feel your body getting heavier with each breath."*

*"Now, I want you to imagine a place where you feel completely safe and at peace. It could be a real place... or one from your imagination. Maybe it's a quiet forest, a cozy room, or a sunny beach."*

*"Look around you in this place. What do you see? Are there trees swaying in the breeze? Is there sunlight dancing on the water? Take it in slowly."*

*"What do you hear? Maybe the gentle crash of waves, birds singing, or just silence. Let those sounds soothe you."*

*"Feel the temperature of the air on your skin... and the surface beneath you. Is it soft grass? Warm sand? Let yourself fully rest in this place."*

## 2. Identify the narrative

*"You're safe here. You're calm. Every breath you take fills you with peace and calm."*

*"And now, imagine a light around you—gentle, warm, comforting. This light is protecting you, giving you strength. Let yourself soak in that feeling."*

*"When you're ready, slowly bring your awareness back to this room. Wiggle your fingers and toes... and open your eyes when it feels right."*

**3.** We invite the participants to visualize images, feelings, or sensations that arise. When music is finished, we ask them to draw the scenery they have seen through the journey of music. So, everyone has a paper with a story depicted on it. It can be symbolic drawing, abstract etc. The goal is to capture the powerful or symbolic images seen during the session, integrate emotional or unconscious material that surfaced, externalize inner experiences so they can be reflected upon and discussed. It's not about making "good" art—it's about making meaningful art.

Example: A participant hears a powerful piece of music and envisions walking through a dark forest, then finding a glowing tree. Afterwards, they draw the forest and the tree. In discussion, they realize the tree represents hope or healing in the middle of a depressive episode. That image then becomes a powerful symbol in their therapeutic journey.

**4.** The participants are invited to make a statement as the main title of their drawing. We gather the titles of all participants in the flip chart or in post it to use later. Or the participants could write their titles on the drawing itself and place the drawings on a wall for future reference. All sentences should start with the phrase "The story of my life is a ...".

**5.** Collaboratively we refer to the emotions behind that sentence and write them down (fear, sorrow, grief, excitement or whatever). Each participant is invited to reveal the main emotion behind the drawing. Use a post it to match the emotion with the drawing.

**Facilitator notes:** Set intention for relaxation and openness. Guide the imagery through soft voice. Remind participants that all expressions and emotions are valid. Support participants who might feel vulnerable by encouraging sharing only if they want.

### List of tracks

- Olivier Messiaen – Quartet for the End of Time (selected movements)
- Gustav Mahler – Symphony No. 5, Adagietto
- J.S. Bach – Air on the G String
- Ludwig van Beethoven – Symphony No. 6 & Pastoral (movements II or V)
- Igor Stravinsky – The Firebird (especially the finale)
- Richard Wagner – Liebestod from Tristan und Isolde
- Richard Strauss – Also sprach Zarathustra (opening and development)
- Johann Sebastian Bach – Mass in B minor (selected chorales and arias)

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise combines guided imagery, sensory relaxation and creative expression to facilitate deep emotional exploration and self-reflection. By guiding participants into a calm, safe mental space, the practice encourages access to unconscious material, symbolic imagery and inner narratives.

Externalizing these internal experiences through drawing and titling allows participants to process and reflect on personal themes, emotions and metaphors. Sharing or observing these creations within a supportive group setting fosters empathy, mutual understanding and a sense of connection, while the focus on symbolic rather than artistic skill reduces performance anxiety and promotes authenticity.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Relaxation, stress reduction and emotional regulation
- Awareness of internal states and unconscious content
- Integration of thoughts, feelings and imagery

## 2. Identify the narrative

### Encourages:

- Symbolic expression and meaning-making
- Creative exploration and non-verbal storytelling
- Safe self-disclosure and emotional vulnerability

### Strengthens:

- Reflective capacity and introspective insight
- Empathy and perspective-taking within the group
- Connection to personal narratives and life experiences

### Supports:

- Processing of complex or difficult emotions
- Safe, non-judgmental group interaction
- Development of personal symbols for ongoing self-reflection

**Reflection time:** 20 min.

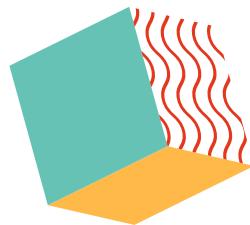
### Guided script:

*“How did the imagery feel?”*

*“What emotions came up?”*

*“Did any difficulties arise during relaxation or drawing?”*

## 2. Identify the narrative



### 5. Show Me Your Element

**Hopeart - Greece**

**Duration:** 30 min.

**Number of participants:** 6+

**Materials needed:** None

#### Steps

A group sharing activity that uses metaphor to explore identity, emotion, and personal stories. Participants complete the sentence, *"I am an [element] because..."* and share a memory or experience that connects them to that element (like water, fire, stone, or air). Through attentive, non-judgmental listening and simple gestures of gratitude, the group fosters empathy, self-awareness, and a deeper sense of belonging—making space for vulnerability, symbolic expression, and connection.

**1.** Invite all participants to sit in a circle to promote equality and connection. Ensure everyone is comfortable and understands the basic group etiquette.

**2.** Each participant completes the sentence: "I am an [element] because...". After stating their element, they share a personal story that explains their choice.

#### Example:

*"I am a stone because I never break",*

*"I am soil because everyone steps on me",*

*"I am water because i know how to dodge"*

#### Guided script:

*"When was the first time you felt this way?",*

*"Which personality trait matches this element?",*

*"What is the oldest memory of feeling like this element?"*

**3.** After each sharing, participants respond with a simple physical gesture like a bow or a movement symbolizing gratitude—done clockwise around the circle.

**4.** The trainer suggests the participants to write on a piece of paper the sentence that arises.

## 2. Identify the narrative

**Facilitator notes:** Emphasize respectful listening and non-interruption. Encourage authentic sharing but respect if someone prefers to keep it brief. Support a warm, safe atmosphere to allow vulnerability. Observe group energy and adjust pacing accordingly.

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise invites participants to explore their identity and emotions through elemental metaphors, transforming abstract feelings into symbolic stories. By declaring "I am an [element] because..." and linking it to a memory or experience, participants deepen their self-awareness while making their inner world visible to others.

The group container of non-judgmental listening and gestures of gratitude cultivates empathy and respect, allowing each person to be witnessed without interruption. The use of elemental metaphors provides a safe distance for vulnerability, offering participants a way to express truths indirectly yet powerfully. Writing down their statement anchors the insight, making it tangible and memorable.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Self-awareness through symbolic expression
- Emotional clarity via storytelling
- Confidence in personal sharing

#### Encourages:

- Vulnerability in a safe environment
- Creative use of metaphor for identity exploration
- Attentive, non-judgmental listening

#### Strengthens:

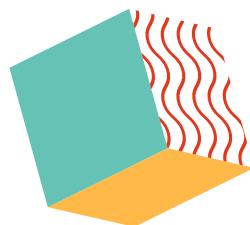
- Group empathy and mutual respect
- A sense of belonging and shared humanity
- The symbolic dimension of personal narratives

#### Supports:

- Integration of memory and identity
- Grounding insights by writing them down
- Recognition of personal traits and emotional truths

**Reflection time:** 20 min

## 2. Identify the narrative



### 6. Be Connected With Your Inner Fire

**Omphalos - Italy**

**Duration:** 20 min.

**Number of participants:** 15-20

**Materials needed:** None

#### Steps

Fire is a powerful element of transformation energy. It burns to transmute inner emotional blockages and give a motivation to move on and reach a state of joy.

**1.** Introduction to the concept of 'Fire'. Explain the qualities and potentials of this element and how it manifests itself in our bodies, including in everyday emotional manifestations (give examples such as anger which unleashes a powerful energy that can externalize itself with sounds or physical gestures that are very often uncontrolled; or frenzy, excessive enthusiasm and how they can have negative effects if not controlled and balanced): *"How to channel such energy so that it can be regenerative rather than destructive?"*

**2.** Guided visualisation. Keeping the circle, let the participants close their eyes and connect with one's inner fire, imagining a small flame in their solar plexus, just up to the navel. Through breathing, nurture this inner flame until they become fully aware of its power, they awaken it and perceive its destructive power, which burns everything within.

#### Guided script:

*"Imagine a small flame lit inside, in the center of your stomach and through deep belly breathing feed this flame."*

*"Do you perceive emotions of anger? of anxiety? of stress? These emotions transform this small flame into a burning fire that expands throughout your body."*

*"Let the same fire that was generated by your emotions to transform your state of mind. If you feel like manifesting your state of mind with a scream or a movement, feel free to express it to free yourself from what burns inside you"*

*"Release any contraction and be concentrated on your deep belly breathing to reach a calmer state of mind".*

## 2. Identify the narrative

### Psychological Benefits

#### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise engages participants with the element of fire as a metaphor for transformative energy. By connecting with their inner flame in the solar plexus and exploring sensations of anger, stress or excitement, participants can transmute emotional blockages into expressive movement or sound. The guided visualization allows them to safely experience intensity while learning to channel energy, fostering self-awareness and emotional regulation.

Looking more closely, participants observe how their inner fire can both challenge and empower them. Expressing emotions through controlled movement or vocalization helps release tension and builds a sense of agency, motivating personal growth, joy and a stronger connection with their embodied self.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Awareness of internal emotional states
- Ability to recognize and process intense emotions

#### Encourages:

- Safe expression of anger, stress or excitement
- Emotional release through movement and vocalization

#### Strengthens:

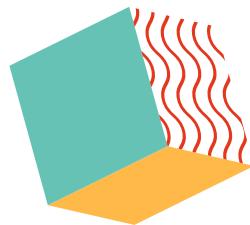
- Self-confidence and authenticity in personal expression
- Resilience and adaptive coping strategies

#### Supports:

- Inner transformation and emotional balance
- Motivation, joy and embodied self-awareness

**Reflection time:** 20'

## 2. Identify the narrative



### 7. Between Purpose and Obstacle

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 40 min.

**Number of participants:** 15 max.

**Materials needed:** Candles, stones, symbolic objects, cloths, aromatic elements (sticks, oils), notebooks, pens, thick transparent rise paper 80X40, A4 papers, crayons, markers, music speaker, open floor space, Questionnaire A

### Steps

This guided embodiment exercise invites participants to explore the unconscious narrative that may be limiting their connection to life purpose. Through a blind systemic constellation, participants physically position themselves in relation to two symbolic elements—Purpose and Obstacle—without knowing what they represent. The experience is followed by reflective inquiry, body-based awareness, and writing prompts to uncover internal beliefs, emotional responses, and new insights about their personal journey.

**1.** The trainer places two symbolic elements on the floor. Life Purpose (could be a candle or inspiring image) / Obstacle (could be a stone or a dark object/cloth). These are placed several meters apart in the space. The participants don't know each element is representing.

**2.** The trainer invites the participants to walk freely in the space and reach a final position.

#### Guided script:

*"You'll now be invited to walk through the space and find your position in relation to these two elements."*

*"Let your legs lead you in the space."*

*"There is no right place—only the one that feels the right place for you right now."*

**3.** Once participants have found their spot, the trainer reveals the elements representation and guides them through reflection.

## 2. Identify the narrative

### Guided script:

*"Observe how close or far are you to your purpose? Are you facing it or turned away?"*

*"What emotion arises when you look at it? What does your body say?"*

*"What is the obstacle in your personal story? What voice or belief does it carry?"*

*"If your life purpose could speak to you, what would it say?"*

After several minutes in stillness, the participants step out of the constellation. They return to the seats they were in the beginning and there they find a sheet of paper with the questions (questionnaire A) they heard before from the trainer and some more writing prompts. They write down their realizations.

### Questionnaire A

*How close/far were you from your purpose? Were you facing it?*

*What emotion arose? What did your body say?*

*Describe your obstacle (voice/shape/face).*

*If your purpose could speak, what would it say?*

*"I don't move toward my purpose because..."*

*"The obstacle I felt carries the voice of..."*

*"What I realized about myself is..."*

*"A truth I now see is..."*

### Guided script:

*"According to the narration I tell myself, I don't move toward my life purpose because..."*

*"The obstacle I felt today carries the voice of.../has the face of.../carries the shape of..."*

*"What I realized about myself is..."*

*"A truth I now see is..."*

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise stimulates exploration of unconscious narratives that limit one's relationship to life purpose. By engaging in a blind systemic constellation, participants encounter their inner dynamics embodied in space, allowing hidden beliefs and emotional responses to surface. This creates a safe context for observing how internalized obstacles shape distance, resistance, or avoidance toward meaningful goals.

Through reflective inquiry, body awareness and journaling, participants are supported in processing emotions, clarifying inner conflicts and discovering new perspectives. The embodied dimension of the exercise fosters integration between thought, feeling and intuition, paving the way for greater self-acceptance, empowerment and alignment with personal values.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Self-awareness and emotional processing
- Clarity about inner conflicts and limiting beliefs
- Mind-body integration and embodied insight

#### Encourages:

- Attentiveness to unconscious patterns
- Perspective shifts and new ways of relating to obstacles
- Reflective self-inquiry and meaning-making

#### Strengthens:

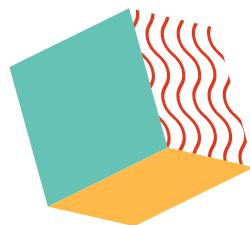
- Connection to intuition and inner wisdom
- Empowerment through insight and choice
- Alignment with personal values and life goals

#### Supports:

- Integration of fragmented parts of the self
- Reduction of internalized judgment or self-criticism
- Development of resilience and psychological coherence

**Reflection time: 20'**

## 2. Identify the narrative



### 8. Like a Drop of Water: Flexible and Adaptable

**Omphalos - Italy**

**Duration:** 30 min.

**Number of participants:** 15-20

**Materials needed:** Speakers, pre-recorded music or instrument for floating music background

#### Steps

This immersive activity uses the symbolic and physical qualities of water like fluidity, adaptability, flow and calmness—to foster personal growth, emotional resilience, and mental health. Through a guided visualisation and particular music, participants will pass from the primordial state of a drop of water that will continue its journey in the flow of a stream, of a river until it follows the ocean currents and the wave motion of the sea.

**1.** Guided visualization: Let them find a comfortable position on the floor (they can choose to lie down or sit down) and close their eyes. Through deep breathing let them connect with their vital energy center (the Hara, two fingers down of the navel). Invite them to imagine being a drop of water so they can start to familiarize with the element of water.

##### **Guided script:**

*"How do you feel being a drop of water?"*

*"What does this state, this feeling of fluidity allow you to do?"*

**2.** Invite them to start exploring different shapes that a drop of water has, adapting to the surface and environment in which it is found, slipping, rolling or simply remaining in his original position moving smoothly. Let this drop of water follow the river's flow which represents their emotional state; notice how it moves, sways, and shifts.

**3.** Gentle movement explorations: Moving slowly as if swimming or flowing like water, paying attention to sensations and emotions that arise. To encourage such movements, use sounds that reproduce the flow of rivers, waterfalls and waves.

## 2. Identify the narrative

**4.** Reflection circle: Sharing insights or feelings that emerge with the others, fostering acknowledgment and validation.

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise invites participants to embody the qualities of water — fluidity, adaptability and flow, through guided visualization and gentle movement. By imagining themselves as a drop of water traveling through streams, rivers and the ocean, participants experience a sense of psychological flexibility and emotional resilience. The combination of imaginative imagery, music and movement encourages presence, self-reflection and an embodied understanding of personal emotions.

Looking a bit closer, participants notice how their feelings can shift and adapt like water, observing emotions without judgment. The reflective circle at the end allows for emotional integration, validation and shared acknowledgment, fostering group cohesion and mutual understanding while enhancing personal insight and emotional intelligence.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Physical flexibility and movement awareness
- Mind-body connection and self-regulation

#### Encourages:

- Emotional release and relaxation
- Mindful observation of personal emotions and adaptability

#### Strengthens:

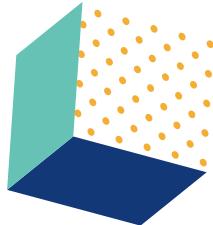
- Emotional resilience and coping strategies
- Empathy and attunement through group sharing

#### Supports:

- Reduction of anxiety and tension
- Presence, calmness and emotional fluidity

**Reflection time:** 20'

### 3. Externalize the problem



#### 1. Embodying the Inner Character

Proyecto Nagual - Spain

**Duration:** 60-90 min.

**Number of participants:** 6-24

**Materials needed:** Printed "Character File" templates or blank paper, pens/pencils, spacious room for movement and forming two circles

#### Steps

An experiential workshop that invites self-exploration through the creation and embodiment of a symbolic or mythical character. Using guided prompts, participants craft a persona that reflects hidden or important parts of themselves, then bring it to life through improvisational dialogue in paired rounds. The process encourages insight, emotional expression, and integration through metaphor, play, and reflection. Ideal for group settings focused on creativity, personal growth, or therapeutic exploration.

**Guided script:** *"We all carry many voices and roles within us—some loud, some hidden. Today, you will meet one of them through the creation of a symbolic character. This character can carry parts of you that are strong, afraid, wise, wounded, or wild."*

**1.** Distribute the Character File, or use blank paper with the following guiding prompts:

##### **CHARACTER FILE:**

*Name of your character*

*Element or symbol associated (fire, shadow, wind, root, etc.)*

*External traits (appearance, voice, clothes, posture)*

*Internal qualities (wisdom, fears, passions, secrets)*

*Superpowers or gifts*

*Vulnerability or weakness*

*What is this character here to teach you?*

**2.** Form two concentric circles: Outer circle: Embodied characters and Inner circle: Questioners (listeners).

### 3. Externalize the problem

The inner circle will ask only one question: "Who are you?". The outer circle responds in character, improvising for up to 2 minutes. Listeners do not comment or respond, just receive.

**3.** After each round, the outer circle rotates one place clockwise. Repeat the "Who are you?" prompt at each new meeting. Participants explore different aspects of their character with each interaction. Total of 4-5 rounds, depending on time and group size. Then, circles can switch and the listeners now speak and viceversa.

**4.** Participants leave their character role, return to themselves, and reflect.

**Facilitator notes:** Encourage imagination and intuition. Use soft music if helpful. Emphasize safety and the power of metaphor to express truth. Gently intervene if someone's character becomes overwhelming. Watch for signs of vulnerability and offer grounding as needed.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise invites participants to explore aspects of their inner world that are often hidden, unspoken or difficult to express directly. By crafting and embodying a symbolic persona, individuals give form and voice to unconscious material, whether: fears, strengths, wounds or unacknowledged desires. This act of projection creates psychological distance, making it safer to examine sensitive material while also empowering participants to see themselves from new perspectives.

The embodied dialogue process deepens this exploration by transforming introspection into lived interaction. As participants improvise answers in character, they experiment with different roles, voices and truths. This encourages playfulness and creativity while also fostering integration of complex inner dynamics. The collective setting strengthens empathy and trust, as participants recognize that others too carry diverse, layered inner voices. Ultimately, the exercise balances self-discovery with social connection, reducing shame and supporting authentic expression.

#### Psychological Benefits

##### Enhances:

- Self-awareness by uncovering unconscious or hidden aspects of identity
- Emotional resilience through safe externalization of vulnerable material
- Imaginative capacity, boosting creativity and problem-solving skills

##### Encourages:

- Emotional expression in a symbolic and playful form, reducing fear of judgment
- Curiosity and openness toward one's inner complexity
- Empathy through listening and receiving the embodied expressions of others

##### Strengthens:

- Psychological flexibility by experimenting with alternative roles and perspectives
- Integration of conflicting inner voices, fostering greater internal harmony
- Confidence in self-expression and improvisation, both verbally and nonverbally

##### Supports:

- Transformation of shame or fear into insight and empowerment
- Group cohesion by creating a safe, validating space for authentic sharing
- Personal growth through metaphor, embodiment and symbolic storytelling

**Reflection time:** 10-15 min.

##### Guided script:

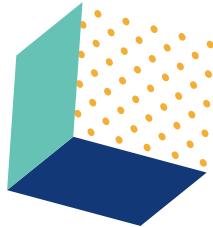
*"How did it feel to be this character?"*

*"What surprised you?"*

*"What does this character reflect about your current life journey?"*

*"Would you like to keep a connection with this character?"*

### 3. Externalize the problem



#### 2. Stories That Shape Us

Proyecto Nagual - Spain

**Duration:** 60-90 min.

**Number of participants:** 6-24 (divided into smaller groups of 3-6)

**Materials needed:** Printed versions of selected myths (or digital copies via PowerPoint), paper, pens, markers, Optional: crayons, collage materials, cloth, or props for creative expression

#### Steps

A group exploration of global myths that reflect themes of identity, belonging, and transformation. Participants choose and discuss one of five intercultural stories, then collaborate in small groups to creatively express its meaning through art, movement, or symbolic performance. The exercise invites personal reflection, shared storytelling, and a deeper understanding of how myths can mirror and shape our inner narratives.

**Guided script:** *"All cultures have stories that try to explain who we are, where we come from, and what 'home' means. Today we will work with myths from around the world to reflect on our own inner narratives of transformation."*

**1.** Introduce the frame of one or several myths to work with them as a mirror of your own narrative (read or summarize them briefly, using printed handouts or projected slides). The following myths are examples of the monomyth of the Great Transformation of Humanity after the last Ice Age and the Great Flood (see Appendix):

**1. Mesopotamia (Middle East, Asia)**  
*Epic of Gilgamesh*

**2. Greece (Europe)**  
*Deucalion and Pyrrha*

**3. Hebrew Tradition (Middle East, Asia/West)**  
*Noah's Ark*

**4. India (South Asia)**  
*Matsya Avatar of Vishnu*

### 3. Externalize the problem

#### 5. China (East Asia)

*The Myth of Yu the Great*

#### 6. Mesoamerica (Americas)

*Popol Vuh (Maya-Quiché)*

#### 7. Oceania / Pacific Islands

*The Flood of Nuu (Hawai'i)*

#### 8. Africa (Sub-Saharan Traditions)

*Examples among Yoruba and Bantu*

**2.** Participants choose the myth they resonate most with (they can also choose randomly or be placed by facilitator to balance groups). Each group forms a circle or finds a corner in the space.

**3.** Groups read the myth together (either aloud or silently) and discuss using guiding questions

#### Guided script:

*"What part of this story stands out most to you?"*

*"What does "home" mean in this story?"*

*"Who or what gets lost, found, or changed?"*

*"Can you relate to any part of this myth with your own experience?"*

**4.** Groups create a symbolic representation of the myth, interpreted through their personal and collective lenses. Tableau (frozen scene), collage or drawing, simple theatrical re-enactment, symbolic gestures or movement sequence, soundscape with voice or body percussion.

**5.** Each group briefly presents or shares what they created/discussed (max 3-4 minutes per group).

**6.** Bring everyone back to the circle. Each participant can share a word or gesture that summarizes what they're taking with them.

**Facilitator notes:** Make sure each myth reflects key emotional themes: comfort, challenge and transformation. The focus is on meaning, not performance.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise invites participants to explore how ancient myths mirror the universal themes of loss, survival, renewal and transformation. By engaging with intercultural flood narratives, individuals reflect on their own identity and inner journey through the symbolic language of story. On a psychological level, myths serve as mirrors: they allow us to externalize inner conflicts, view them through a larger collective lens and find meaning beyond the personal.

This process reduces the sense of isolation by situating personal struggles within a shared human story. By embodying and creatively reinterpreting myths, participants develop emotional distance from their challenges, while simultaneously accessing new perspectives on resilience, belonging and self-discovery. Through group work, they also strengthen empathy and social bonds, transforming storytelling into a communal healing practice.

#### Psychological Benefits

##### Enhances:

- Self-awareness by recognizing parallels between personal experiences and mythic archetypes
- Emotional resilience by reframing struggles as part of a larger cycle of destruction and renewal
- Creative imagination and symbolic thinking, which support problem-solving and personal growth

##### Encourages:

- A sense of belonging by connecting personal stories to universal human myths
- Empathy and cultural appreciation through engaging with diverse global traditions
- Openness to multiple perspectives, reducing rigid self-narratives

##### Strengthens:

- Group cohesion and mutual trust through collaborative creation and sharing
- Confidence in one's voice and expression in a safe, non-judgmental space

### 3. Externalize the problem

- The ability to process complex emotions indirectly through metaphor and symbolic play

#### **Supports:**

- Personal identity exploration in the context of shared human history
- Integration of unconscious material into conscious reflection through mythic storytelling
- The capacity to find meaning and hope in cycles of challenge, change and transformation

**Reflection time:** 10-15 min.

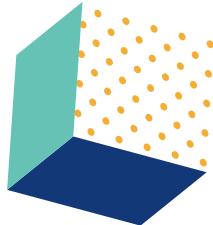
#### **Guided script:**

*"What story or emotion stays with you?"*

*"Did something shift in how you see your own 'belonging'?"*

*"What do these stories remind us about what connects us across cultures?"*

### 3. Externalize the problem



#### 3. Self-Affirmation: Who I am – Fire Element

**Omphalos - Italy**

**Duration:** 20 min.

**Number of participants:** 10-15

**Materials needed:** Speakers, pre-recorded music or percussion for rhythm

#### Steps

The transformative and destructive power of fire, which burns away matter and weighs down our bodies and minds, leads to a mental and emotional lightness that triggers a state of joy, enthusiasm and strengthens the sense of self-esteem, identity and self-affirmation.

Through repetitive movements, shaking the whole body and following the rhythms of percussion and drums, participants are led to get rid of emotional blocks that weigh down one's identity, leading to a more euphoric and joyful emotional state.

**1.** Invite the participants to close their eyes and to breath deeply remaining connected with their vital center (the Hara, which is located two fingers down of the navel). In order to keep this connection during the dance, invite them to imagine an invisible wire between their own Hara and the center of the Earth. Keeping always in mind this connection, it will help them to be grounded during the trance dance.

**2.** Accompanied by repetitive percussion rhythms, let their vital energy circulate throughout their body. Starting from the base of the spine, with an undulating movement, let this force grow and feel the fire of a burning flame expand more and more in all the cells of the body. The trainer should guide them to feel this energy, this flame through their voice and intention, so as to transmit to the group the right vibration to let it grow more and more through their movement.

**3.** Through repetitive shaking movements of the trunk, legs, arms, shoulders and head, allow participants to externalize whatever may come to the surface at that moment (a scream, a gesture or simply silence or stillness). This movement leads to an altered state of non-mind. The participant lets himself be guided by the music, the rhythms of the drums and the energy of the fire that is lit more and more within him to allow

### 3. Externalize the problem

him to free himself from all tensions, blockages. The mind is relieved of all thoughts and lets itself go to the pleasure of movement. The more energetic, frenetic and dynamic it becomes, the more it favors the transformation of everything that weighs them down so as to reach an euphoric state.

**Facilitator notes:** Do not exceed 15 minutes in duration for this exercise, in order to remain in a controllable and well-grounded altered state, so that the participants themselves learn to self-regulate and reduce all excessive forms of liberation and expression of their own identity.

During the exercise remind participants to remain continuously connected with their life centre (Hara) and firmly grounded, even tapping their feet on the ground, to avoid any kind of altered state out of control.

**4.** By slowing down the rhythm of the percussion and slowing down the movement, the trainer invites the participants to channel into their Hara, all the energy developed, placing their hands on their belly below the navel. With eyes closed, through deep breathing, let each person focus on the experience and the emotional effects generated. Guide them to recognise the potential of their own inner strength and how to channel it for self-affirmation and to develop greater self-esteem.

#### Guided script:

*“Belief in yourself is the key to success. If you don’t believe in yourself, no one else will.”*

*“Belief in yourself is what allows you to face any obstacle.”*

*“I believe in myself and I have faith to be able to reach my goals.”*

*“You can’t be great if you don’t believe you are great.”*

*“Most of the things that are important, like confidence, motivation, and determination, start within you.”*

### Psychological Benefits

#### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise uses the transformative and energizing power of the fire element to facilitate emotional release, self-expression and embodiment. Through repetitive, full-body movements, participants engage

in trance-like dance accompanied by rhythmic percussion, allowing emotional blockages and tension to surface and dissipate.

By focusing on the Hara and grounding techniques, individuals maintain connection to their body while experiencing heightened vitality, joy and exhilaration. The process cultivates self-awareness, self-affirmation and empowerment, fostering a sense of inner strength and mental-emotional lightness.

#### Psychological Benefits

##### Improves:

- Self-awareness and embodiment through mindful movement
- Emotional regulation by releasing tension and blocked energy
- Sense of identity, self-esteem and personal empowerment

##### Encourages:

- Joyful, euphoric expression of inner energy
- Active engagement with body, breath and movement
- Exploration of personal limits in a safe, rhythmic context

##### Strengthens:

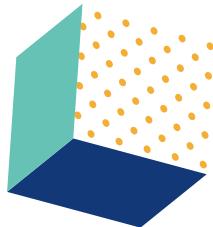
- Connection to one’s vital center (Hara) and grounding
- Inner resilience and capacity to face personal challenges
- Self-affirmation and recognition of inner strengths

##### Supports:

- Transformation of emotional or cellular-level blockages
- Development of non-judgmental, authentic self-expression
- Integration of mind, body and emotional energy into a cohesive sense of self

**Reflection time:** 20'

### 3. Externalize the problem



### 4. Voice and Body as Means of Expression

**Omphalos - Italy**

**Duration:** 40-50 min.

**Number of participants:** 10-15

**Materials needed:** Speakers, pre-recorded music or instrument for melodic music

#### Steps

Coordinating simple bodily gestures with the sound of the voice, discovering the different forms of expression and body shapes in relation to the seven main energy points of our body, called Chakras. Pursuing one's own inner harmony, integrating into the collective harmony with the creation of a spontaneous harmonic polyphony accompanied by movements and gestures as light as wings and each feather caressed by the air.

**1.** Explain to participants the importance of voice and body as tools for communication and self-expression, how the voice can be used to release emotions and to connect with others.

Breathing exercises to free the voice, with focus on relaxation and listening to self. Brief explanation of the chakras and how each is associated with a part of the body; specific emotions and vocal sounds. For example, starting from the first chakra, to ground oneself with the feet firmly fixed to the ground and the base of the coccyx in contraction, inhaling with the contracted Hara, exhaling, one invites the participants to emit the sound of the vowel "U". To explore the creative energy of the second chakra, with the hands on the belly, inhaling and contracting the Hara, one lets the breath go by emitting a closed sound : "O". The third chakra, in correspondence with the solar plexus, the sound of the vocal "O" it becomes more open, which gives a feeling of satisfaction, self-fulfillment. The opening of the fourth chakra, of the heart and emotions, is accompanied by the vowel sound "A", which helps release pain and any repressed emotions. The fifth chakra, the throat, through the emission of the open vocal sound "E", holding the neck muscles in contraction and semi-closed mouth, stimulates the awareness of being able to assert oneself through free expression and communication.

With the sixth chakra, one reaches a higher level of awareness that unites and connects the body with

### 3. Externalize the problem

the being and essence of the individual. Focusing on the third eye, positioned in the centre of the forehead, participants are invited to emit the prolonged sound of the vowel "I" so that its vibration can stimulate intuitive abilities and connection with one's essence/identity. To conclude the exploration of the chakras, with the seventh or crown chakra, participants can experience a deeper contact with their own spirituality by emitting the sound of the "M" that vibrates the entire upper part of the head.

**2.** After a series of vocal exercises that will enable them to become familiar and confident with the sounds connected with each chakra, participants will be able to concentrate on themselves, feeling free to spontaneously express their inner sounds .

**3.** Remaining in a circle, slowly each participant can explore the connection of the sound of the voice with light and spontaneous movements and gestures, giving free expression to their creativity and externalization of their being. Accompanied by melodic music, they can let themselves free to smoothly move in the space, trying to express their inner desire and life purposes through gesture and vocal sounds.

**4.** Once a state of inner harmony has been reached, through the sound vibrations and coordinated movements that each person has freely expressed, the group begins to tune in, creating a spontaneous collective polyphony, which the coordinator must be able to monitor in order to maintain a harmonic sound that is effective in guaranteeing a state of peaceful and collective pleasure.

**5.** At the end of the exercise, slowing down their movements and remaining silent, invite participants to listen in silence to the frequencies that continue to vibrate in their bodies. Having stimulated their communication and expression skills, invite them to freely express their dreams, wishes, life projects through dialogue, writing or drawing.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise engages participants in exploring voice and movement as primary tools for self-expression. By linking bodily gestures with vocal sounds across the seven Chakras, participants become more attuned to

their inner emotional landscape and energetic states. The combination of vocalization, breath and movement fosters embodied self-awareness, allowing participants to release tension, access creativity and experience emotional regulation.

On a more profound level, participants move from individual exploration toward group harmony, creating a spontaneous collective polyphony. This encourages attunement with others, strengthens empathy and fosters a sense of collective presence. The practice enhances the integration of mind, body and voice, promoting identity exploration, personal empowerment and expressive freedom.

#### Psychological Benefits

##### Improves:

- Awareness of body sensations and energy flow through vocal and physical exploration
- Emotional articulation and recognition through sound and movement

##### Encourages:

- Creative expression of thoughts, feelings and inner experiences
- Spontaneous exploration of identity and personal purpose

##### Strengthens:

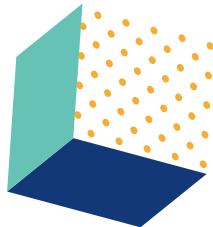
- Group cohesion and collective attunement through shared polyphony
- Confidence in expressing self authentically in a safe environment

##### Supports:

- Mind-body integration and embodied presence
- Emotional regulation and release through vocal and physical expression

**Reflection time:** 20'

### 3. Externalize the problem



### 5. Let Me Hear Your Voice

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 30 min.

**Number of participants:** 6-24

**Materials needed:** Open space for free movement, optional: soft spotlight or "stage" area for performance, quiet background music to support transitions, journals or paper and pen for optional reflection afterwards

#### Steps

An expressive movement and voice exercise where participants embody a symbolic metaphor drawn from their emotional landscape. Through spoken declarations, imaginative movement, and sound, individuals perform their inner narrative as a creature or force. The experience deepens self-understanding, unlocks creative expression, and invites the group into a shared symbolic space. It ends with optional reflection or journaling to integrate insights.

*Combined with the "Let's dive in" exercise*

1. We invite participants to create a seated circle.
2. We invite participants to pair the title from their "Let's Dive In" drawing with a metaphor or image from nature or imagination. This image should reflect how they feel in that space (title), ideally a choice that offers a sense of action or embodiment.

**Guided script:** *"Look again at the title of your story. If that story were an animal, an element, or a fantastical creature—what would it be? What is it doing? Let your intuition choose the image that holds energy for you."*

#### Examples:

*"When I'm in The Dark Room, I feel like a bat screaming for a window."*

*"When I'm a silky scarf, I feel like nothing can stop me from flying in the sky."*

*"When I'm in The Field of Sorrow, I feel like a snail being trampled on."*

### 3. Externalize the problem

**3.** One by one, participants take the stage (or central space) and embody their chosen metaphor. They begin by declaring their statement aloud to the group (e.g., *"I am a bat screaming for a window."* or *"Nothing can stop me from flying in the sky."*). Then they perform their creature or image through movement and sound.

#### Guided script:

*"What does its voice sound like?"*

*"Let your arms, spine, face take on its shape..."*

*"Show us how it reacts to the world around it..."*

*"How does it move? What's its rhythm, posture, speed, texture? What voice or sound would it have? What emotion does it carry?"*

*"If that element-creature had a voice what would it say?"*

**4.** After their solo, the participant begins to move through the room in character. Others follow, gradually joining the space in their own creature-form, until all are in motion. (Optional: Add ambient music or live rhythm to support fluidity and immersion.) Encourage variety in speed, level, sound, and emotional tone. Participants may interact or remain solitary, but should stay connected to their chosen image's essence. They may repeat their title-statement aloud or let out expressive sounds, words, or silence.

**5.** Ask participants to gather back in a seated or lying-down position. Guide a few deep breaths. Place hands on the Hara (two fingers below the navel) to center and ground. Participants may share verbally in a closing circle or write a short reflection.

**Facilitator notes:** Encourage playful, raw, or poetic associations.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise stimulates embodied storytelling by allowing participants to give voice, sound and movement to symbolic metaphors drawn from their emotional landscape. Through creative declaration and performance, individuals externalize inner experiences in a way that deepens self-understanding and fosters integration of emotions. This process encourages

participants to reframe personal narratives symbolically, making space for healing and new perspectives.

By engaging both body and voice, participants unlock creative expression and expand their range of emotional communication. The group's shared symbolic space strengthens connection, nurtures playfulness and creates conditions for non-linear reflection, grounding and psychological renewal.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Emotional self-awareness and integration
- Vocal and physical expression
- Confidence in embodying inner narratives

#### Encourages:

- Playful and creative re-framing of experiences
- Use of metaphor for emotional exploration
- Shared symbolic storytelling within the group

#### Strengthens:

- Embodied presence and imagination
- Group connection through shared performance
- Flexibility in emotional expression and perspective

#### Supports:

- Non-linear reflection and personal healing
- Creative exploration of identity
- Grounding and psychological resilience

**Reflection time:** 10 min.

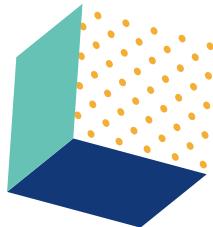
#### Guided script:

*"What surprised you about your image?"*

*"How did it feel to move and speak from this symbolic self?"*

*"What new perspective did it offer to your story?"*

### 3. Externalize the problem



### 6. The One Becomes the Whole

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 30 min.

**Number of participants:** 8-10

**Materials needed:** Percussion instrument (e.g., djembe, congas, cajón, or a soundscape track with a strong rhythmic pulse), open space for movement, Optional: dimmed lights or spotlight for immersive effect

### Steps

A group movement ritual where individual emotional expressions are echoed and embodied by the entire group. Set to rhythmic music, participants take turns leading spontaneous, symbolic movements that the group mirrors, culminating in a powerful moment of spoken or sounded self-declaration. This exercise fosters empathy, emotional validation, and group cohesion by transforming personal metaphors into shared, embodied experiences. It concludes with grounding and reflection to deepen insight and connection.

*Combined with the "Let me hear your voice" exercise.*

**1.** We start the percussion beat or soundscape while participants begin moving freely in the space, staying connected to their breath and intuitive impulses. We encourage them to tune into the group energy and stay alert to shifts.

**2.** At a natural moment, one participant's movement or expression catches on—others begin to imitate until the entire group is embodying the same creature or metaphor (e.g., "the bat screaming for a window," "the leopard leaping," "nothing can stop me from flying" etc.).

**3.** When everyone is synchronized a new originator takes his turn organically and a new creature emerges. Everybody imitates again gradually and so on.

**Important:** The facilitator does NOT assign the leader. The group must attune to whoever initiates the new metaphor. This encourages non-verbal leadership, observation, and group trust.

### 3. Externalize the problem

**4.** After all participants have taken their turn gradually we slow down the rhythm and reduce the volume. Participants come back to stillness.

**5.** Invite them to place hands on the Hara (below the navel), close their eyes, and feel the resonance of having become both leader and follower.

**6.** Invite participants to a seated circle for open sharing. Participants can pass if they prefer not to speak.

**Facilitator notes:** This is an extension of the exercise "*Let me hear your voice*". Note who steps into leadership naturally vs. who hesitates. Pay attention to group cohesion, emotional tone, and expressive risk-taking.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise stimulates emotional expression, empathy and group cohesion through collective mirroring of individual movements. By transforming personal metaphors into shared embodied experiences, participants experience validation of their inner world while simultaneously contributing to the collective expression. This dynamic interplay fosters trust, mutual recognition and the integration of individuality within community.

Through rhythmic movement, spontaneous leadership and group resonance, participants explore both the roles of leader and follower. The practice supports emotional release, enhances confidence and creates conditions for organic connection, playfulness and psychological resilience. The closing reflection anchors insights and deepens the sense of belonging.

#### Psychological Benefits

##### Improves:

- Emotional expression and validation
- Confidence in being seen and mirrored
- Non-verbal communication and body awareness

##### Encourages:

- Playfulness, spontaneity and creative risk-taking
- Surrender to group energy and flow
- Organic, non-verbal leadership

##### Strengthens:

- Empathy and mutual understanding within the group
- Sense of trust and collective resonance
- Group cohesion and unity through shared experience

##### Supports:

- Integration of individuality within community
- Emotional release and psychological resilience
- Reflection on leadership and group dynamics

**Reflection time:** 10 min.

##### Guided script:

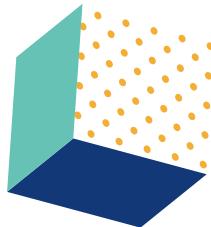
*"How did it feel to be the one who was followed?"*

*"What was it like to become someone else's metaphor?"*

*"Was there a moment you felt truly seen or heard?"*

*"What made it easy or difficult for you to join or initiate?"*

### 3. Externalize the problem



## 7. Dance of the Elements

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 75-90 min.

**Number of participants:** 10-25

**Materials needed:** Open space for movement

Optional: percussion instruments, scarves, ambient music tracks for each element, comfortable clothing, journal & pen (optional for reflection)

### Steps

A group movement journey that uses the four classical elements—Earth, Water, Air, and Fire—as metaphors for personal expression and emotional exploration. Through group choreography, symbolic storytelling, and a culminating Fire Dance, participants embody their chosen element, share its energy through performance, and release emotional residue through communal movement. The experience supports grounding, emotional release, self-discovery, and group connection, blending ritual, improvisation, and reflection in a safe, creative space.

1. Invite participants to a circle.
2. Each person states aloud: "I am [element] because..." (Optionally re-use or refine the metaphor they shared in "Show Me Your Element.")

#### Guided script:

*"What texture does your element feel like today?"*

*"What movement is your element calling for?"*

3. Participants naturally group themselves into: Earth (stone, soil, mountains), Water (oceans, rain, rivers), Air (leaves, wind, breath). Groups of 3-5 participants each. If uneven, participants can support or observe.

4. Each group is invited to choreograph a symbolic movement sequence that expresses their element.

#### Guided script:

*"What rhythm or pattern does your element move in?"*

*"Is it heavy, flowing, swirling, still?"*

*"How do you begin, transform, and end?"*

### 3. Externalize the problem

**5.** Groups decide on: A title for their element's dance, a short intro phrase or chant, accompaniment: use of music, instruments, or silence.

**6.** Each group performs their piece in turn: Briefly announce their title and elemental metaphor, perform their "Elemental Dance" (~3-5 min), end with a gesture of offering to the group (e.g., bow, symbolic posture).

**7.** Once all groups have performed, the trainer invites everyone to join the center of the space and prepare for "The Fire Dance" — to burn, release, and transform. Start with slow, grounded rhythm (drumming or stomping), introduce shaking, vocal release, breath, encourage repetitive, freeing movements, let emotion rise and fall freely — no performance, just release.

**8.** Return to the circle. Everyone sits or lies down. Soft music may play. Prepare for reflection.

**Facilitator notes:** You can pair with exercise "Show me your element". Ensure emotional safety — let participants opt out of any part. Use non-violent communication in reflection. Respect symbolic diversity — no element is superior or inferior. Pay attention to overstimulation in the Fire Dance. Guide a gentle return.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise stimulates personal expression and emotional exploration through the symbolic language of the four elements — Earth, Water, Air and Fire. By embodying these archetypal energies, participants connect with inner qualities such as grounding, flow, vitality or freedom, while also engaging in shared storytelling through movement. This process supports self-discovery, emotional release and the integration of symbolic identity into lived experience.

Through group choreography, collective performance and the culminating Fire Dance, participants release emotional residue in a ritualized and embodied way. The experience strengthens group connection, fosters creativity and creates conditions for renewal, grounding and psychological resilience in a safe and supportive environment.

#### Psychological Benefits

##### Improves:

- Embodiment and body awareness
- Emotional regulation and release
- Grounding and inner balance

##### Encourages:

- Creative self-expression through movement
- Exploration of symbolic metaphors for identity
- Collective storytelling and shared ritual

##### Strengthens:

- Group cohesion and bonding through performance
- Sense of vitality and transformation
- Connection to archetypal dimensions of the self

##### Supports:

- Emotional renewal and resilience
- Safe exploration of identity and inner dynamics
- Integration of body, emotion and symbolic meaning

**Reflection time:** 10-15 min.

##### Guided script:

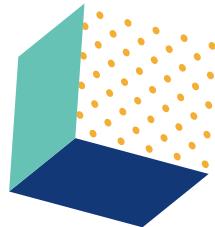
*"What did your body discover in the dance?"*

*"What emotion or message came from your element?"*

*"What do you leave behind in the fire?"*

*"What do you take with you?"*

### 3. Externalize the problem



### 8. Mirror's Dialogue

**Omphalos - Italy**

**Duration:** 40 min.

**Number of participants:** 15-20

**Materials needed:** Speakers, pre-recorded music or instrument for ambient music

#### Steps

Express personal challenges through movement to gain distance and clarity.

- 1.** Let the participants imagine having an Imaginary “water mirror” in front of them. Let them visualize their personal stories, a special event, an emotion reflected in water, watching them ripple, distort, and fade.
- 2.** The trainer invites the participants to focus on a specific issue that creates a bad feeling or any kind of physical contraction. Let them create a connection with any thing they see reflected in water expressing through movements that embody this issue (e.g., stiff, constricted movements for feeling trapped; flowing, swirling, draining, or dissolving motions, expansive movements for openness).
- 3.** Invite them to verbally express what they saw, how they saw it and how they feel about these reflected images. Are they able to emotionally detach themselves by observing what happens as an external observer? What sensation do they feel?
- 4.** Invite the participant to choose a partner. Being face to face they can mirror each other’s movements to externalize shared or individual struggles. So, if a partner externalizes his inner emotional state through a specific body movement like contraction, the other partner will mirror his movement sharing his emotional state .They will create a kind of dialogue that will allow them to share their emotions and release their inner contractions, fostering empathy.

**Facilitator notes:** Play soft and slow music to support their process of relaxation and physical contractions release.

### 3. Externalize the problem

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise engages participants in observing and externalizing personal challenges through movement and reflection. By visualizing their experiences in an imaginary “water mirror”, participants gain psychological distance from difficult emotions, allowing for deeper self-awareness and emotional processing. The mirroring with a partner promotes empathy, attunement and the ability to recognize and validate shared emotional experiences.

At a more introspective level, participants develop skills in emotional regulation and mindful observation by observing their own and others’ movements as externalized reflections. The dialogue created through mirrored movement supports relational awareness, builds trust and fosters a sense of connection, allowing participants to release tension and explore personal resilience in a safe, supportive environment.

## Psychological Benefits

### Improves:

- Self-awareness and understanding of personal emotional patterns
- Ability to observe and regulate emotional responses through movement

### Encourages:

- Creative expression of internal states and challenges
- Empathy and attunement through partner-based mirroring

### Strengthens:

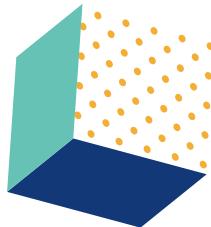
- Resilience and adaptability in coping with personal difficulties
- Social connection and a sense of belonging within the group

### Supports:

- Mindfulness and present-moment awareness
- Emotional release and catharsis through embodied expression

**Reflection time:** 20'

### 3. Externalize the problem



#### 9. Still Frames of the Soul

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 30 min.

**Number of participants:** 15 max.

**Materials needed:** Open floor space

#### Steps

A practice where participants externalize their inner conflict by creating a silent, physical “frozen picture” that expresses the tension between their life purpose and what holds them back. Working in pairs or triads, they embody their internal narrative and share it visually, allowing others to witness and reflect on what they see. This process makes the unseen story visible and opens space for new perspectives, emotional clarity, and transformation.

*Combined with exercise “Between Purpose and Obstacle”*

**1.** The trainer invites each person to create a short “frozen” image representing the inner tension between their purpose and what holds them back. They work in pairs or triads to share their personal “frozen” picture while others reflect.

The facilitator invites each participant to carefully observe the frozen image created by their partner. The observer is then asked to pose the following three reflective questions:

*“What did you notice in their movement?”*

*“What is the main emotion that you can discern from the image you see?”*

*“If this picture were a scene in a film, what title would you give it?”*

**2.** Following the exchange, participants rotate roles so that each individual has the opportunity to both construct a frozen image and to engage as an observer.

**3.** Subsequently, the facilitator invites the participating members to return to the circle, where a reflection procedure follows — open to those who wish to share, entirely voluntarily and without any pressure to participate.

### 3. Externalize the problem

**Important Note:** It is important to emphasize that whatever one person perceives in another does not represent an objective truth, but rather their own subjective perspective, which may also include elements of projection as an external observer.

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise stimulates the externalization of inner conflict and the embodied exploration of tensions between life purpose and perceived obstacles. By creating and observing “frozen” images, participants gain clarity about their internal narratives and increase awareness of their emotional states. This practice supports self-expression, perspective-taking and the development of empathetic observation skills.

Through working in pairs or triads, participants engage in reflective witnessing, which fosters mutual understanding, reduces feelings of isolation and creates conditions for emotional integration and psychological resilience. By making internal experiences visible, the exercise opens space for insight, transformation and a more coherent connection between thought, emotion and body.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Emotional awareness and regulation
- Self-expression and inner clarity
- Integration of thought, emotion and body

#### Encourages:

- Attentiveness and emotional attunement
- Perspective-taking and reflection
- Creative exploration through metaphor

#### Strengthens:

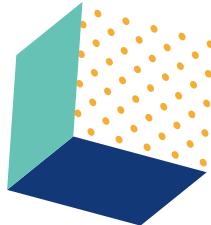
- Empathy and mutual understanding within the group
- Sense of connection and supportive peer witnessing
- Ability to shift from stuckness to possibility

#### Supports:

- Reduction of internal shame or isolation
- Activation of embodied intelligence
- Access to new insights and personal transformation

**Reflection time:** 20'

### 3. Externalize the problem



#### 10. I Hear You

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 30 min.

**Number of participants:** 8-10

**Materials needed:** Percussion instrument (congas, djembe, cajon, or similar) capable of producing a clear, loud beat

#### Steps

A rhythmic group activity that combines movement, voice, and active listening to build empathy, presence, and connection. As participants move to the beat of a percussion instrument, they take turns pausing to share a personal sentence, which the group then echoes back in unison—mirroring tone, rhythm, and emotion. This playful yet powerful exercise fosters vulnerability, deep listening, and group cohesion through shared vocal expression and reflection.

*Combined with the “Let’s dive in” exercise*

**1.** Participants move freely around the room while the facilitator plays the percussion instrument with a steady beat. When the beat stops, everyone immediately freezes in place. Alternatively, beat can be played from a pre-recorded track.

**2.** One participant takes the initiative to say their title from the “Let’s dive in” exercise (e.g., “The story of my life is a river...”). The rest of the group imitates the sentence in “choir mode”—matching volume, tone, force, and expression as closely as possible, exaggerating if desired. Beat starts again and the whole team starts moving again until the beat stops and a new participant speaks. And so on.

**3.** Rotate who initiates the phrase, ensuring everyone has a chance to share and be imitated. Vary the tempo and rhythm of the percussion to influence movement speed and energy.

**4.** Gather participants seated in a circle to allow space for open dialogue and emotional expression (voluntary sharing).

### 3. Externalize the problem

**Facilitator notes:** Use a percussion instrument with a deep, resonant sound to create a clear, grounding rhythm. Encourage participants to fully express themselves vocally and physically during imitation. Create a supportive, non-judgmental atmosphere. Manage pacing to keep energy balanced—avoid rushing or dragging. Observe participant reactions, noting any reluctance or enthusiasm to share or imitate.

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise blends movement, rhythm and vocal imitation to cultivate empathy, presence and collective resonance. By sharing a personal phrase and having it echoed back, participants experience being deeply listened to and acknowledged by the group. The act of mirroring tone, rhythm and emotion enhances trust, fosters vulnerability and creates a sense of belonging.

The dynamic alternation between movement and vocal expression engages both body and voice, balancing playfulness with emotional depth. The group rhythm provides safety and containment, while the echoing ritual reinforces validation and collective empathy. This practice can also reveal comfort zones around visibility, speaking and being heard.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Active listening skills
- Synchronization of body, voice and rhythm
- Confidence in speaking personal truth

#### Encourages:

- Playful expression within a safe structure
- Vulnerability through being echoed
- Shared resonance and rhythmic co-creation

#### Strengthens:

- Group cohesion and trust
- Empathy through embodied imitation
- Presence in both speaking and listening

#### Supports:

- Emotional validation by the collective
- Awareness of personal comfort with visibility
- Grounded group energy through rhythm

#### Reflection time: 10'

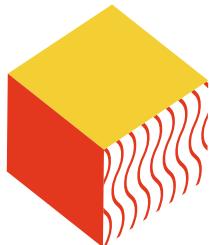
#### Guided script:

*"How did it feel to share your sentence and hear it echoed back?"*

*"What was challenging or enjoyable about imitating others?"*

*"Did you notice anything new about how you listen or express yourself?"*

## 4. Dis-identify from the narrative



### 1. The Rain of Hope

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 30-45 min.

**Number of participants:** 8-24

**Materials needed:** Spacious room with enough space for a circle, comfortable seating or standing space

### Steps

A group ritual centered on mutual recognition and deep presence. Participants take turns standing in the center of a circle to receive words of acknowledgment from others, such as "You are strength" or "You are light." This "rain" of recognition fosters empathy, generosity, and a sense of being truly seen beyond one's personal story. The exercise cultivates vulnerability, connection, and grounded self-worth, making it a powerful tool for group bonding and emotional renewal.

**1.** Invite all participants to form a circle, standing or sitting comfortably, facing inward. Explain the purpose briefly.

**Guided script:** *"This exercise invites us to witness and recognize each other deeply, creating a 'rain' of acknowledgment and generosity."*

**2.** One participant at a time is invited (voluntarily) to step into the center of the circle. The participant in the center establishes eye contact with the group. Trainer guides the group to focus on the person fully, preparing to offer recognition.

**3.** Trainer invites the group to share a recognition for the person in the center, beginning with the sentence: "You are not only your story/pain/experiences, YOU ARE [recognition word], and I SEE you." The group expresses words or short phrases of recognition such as "You are strength," "You are light," "You are courage," etc. The participant in the center is invited to open all five senses—seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, and sensing the acknowledgment—receiving the "rain" of recognition. The trainer reminds the group about the connection between generosity (giving recognition) and receptivity (receiving with openness). If someone finds it difficult to express or to find something positive to say it is enough to express just the following statement : "I SEE YOU".

## 4. Dis-identify from the narrative

**Important:** "To recognize someone means to see the beauty in their body, the kindness in their soul, and the truth in their spirit. It is a generous act that fosters true connection."

**4.** After all who wish have had their turn, gather the group back into the circle. Facilitate a voluntary sharing session guided by principles of Non-Violent Communication

**Facilitator notes:** Create a safe, respectful atmosphere emphasizing confidentiality and kindness. Encourage participants to choose if and when they want to step into the center—never force. Model giving and receiving recognition with warmth and sincerity. Use gentle voice and pacing to allow space for emotional processing.

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise stimulates mutual recognition and authentic presence within the group. By receiving affirmations from others, participants experience being seen beyond their personal stories or struggles, which reinforces grounded self-worth and emotional renewal. This ritual creates a collective atmosphere of generosity, empathy and connection.

Through verbal acknowledgment and embodied receptivity, participants are invited into vulnerability and openness while being supported by the group. This dynamic fosters trust, strengthens community bonds and creates conditions for healing through shared witnessing and affirming identity beyond past experiences.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Sense of belonging and being seen
- Self-worth grounded in authentic recognition
- Emotional openness and resilience

#### Encourages:

- Empathy and generosity in witnessing others
- Vulnerability in a safe and supportive space
- Sensory awareness in receiving acknowledgment

#### Strengthens:

- Identity beyond stories or past experiences
- Trust in the power of collective support
- Emotional bonds within the group

#### Supports:

- Creation of a compassionate and respectful atmosphere
- Group cohesion and connection
- Renewal of personal meaning through shared affirmation

**Reflection time:** 10-20 min.

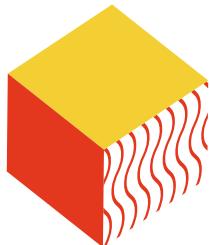
#### Guided script:

*"What did you feel receiving or giving recognition?"*

*"How did it impact your sense of self or connection?"*

*"What did you notice about generosity and receptivity in this exercise?"*

## 4. Dis-identify from the narrative



### 2. The Call for Adventure

Proyecto Nagual - Spain

**Duration:** 60-90 min.

**Number of participants:** 6-24

**Materials needed:** Paper and pens for writing, Optional: printed myth excerpts, symbolic images, or a short slide presentation, comfortable space for group work and sharing

### Steps

The “call to adventure” is a key stage in Joseph Campbell’s Hero’s Journey, a narrative framework that outlines the common stages of mythic stories across cultures. Campbell described this journey in his influential book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

#### What is the “Call to Adventure”?

The call to adventure is the moment when the hero is invited to leave their ordinary world and step into the unknown. It often comes as a challenge, crisis, or opportunity that disrupts the familiar and pushes the hero toward growth, transformation, or self-discovery.

#### Key Features:

- Triggers change — something happens that requires the hero to act (e.g., loss, invitation, danger, discovery).
- Creates tension — the hero may feel fear, reluctance, or doubt.
- Starts the journey — it’s the threshold between the known and unknown, safety and risk.

#### Examples:

- In The Hobbit, Bilbo’s call to adventure is Gandalf inviting him on a quest.
- In The Lion King, Simba’s call comes when he must return to the Pride Lands.
- In real life, it could be a major life event like a job loss, a breakup, or a spiritual awakening.

## 4. Dis-identify from the narrative

### 1. Arrival & Warm-up (10-15 min)

Gentle, atmospheric background music.

Simple exercises to enter the body:

*Shake arms, legs, release tension.*

*Deep breathing with sound (exhaling with a sigh).*

*Walk freely through the space, exploring directions and rhythms.*

**Short introduction:** "Today we are not telling our stories with words. We will listen to the body and the voice, to discover how the Call to Adventure is already moving within us."

### 2. Whisper of the Call — "I am going to..." (15 min)

Music: Subtle rhythm or light percussion, atmospheric drone.

Repeat the phrase "I am going to...", first in whisper, then normal voice, gradually moving to strong, clear voice.

Complete the phrase automatically, without thinking.

Let the body follow the voice: steps, gestures, movements arising naturally.

Allow the phrase to become a mantra and open the body into trance.

### 3. Crossing the Threshold (15 min)

Place a rope, cloth, or line of light on the floor as a symbolic threshold.

Music becomes more expansive and energizing.

Invitation:

*Approach the threshold several times, sensing hesitation, curiosity, or fear.*

*When ready, cross it with a decisive movement, speaking the phrase "I am going to..." aloud.*

*On the other side, allow a new quality of movement to emerge — a response to having crossed.*

Participants may cross more than once, exploring different inner states.

### 4. Expansion & Trance (10 min)

Music: immersive, rising in intensity.

Full freedom of movement in the space, sustaining the phrase "I am going to..." as a bodily and vocal mantra.

Invite sounds, postures, repetitive gestures, trance-like movements.

Maintain the energy, then gently guide towards slowing down — returning to whisper, then to silence.

### 5. Integration (20 min)

Music: soft, contemplative.

Each participant finds a quiet spot with paper and pens/colored pencils.

**Prompt:** *"Without overthinking, draw or write what you discovered about your Call to Adventure. Let the image or words flow just as your movement did: freely, without judgment."*

Optional: brief sharing in circle (a single word, a gesture, or showing the drawing without explanation).

### 6. Closing (5 min)

Gather in a circle, breathing together.

Short round of gratitude, or a shared gesture to seal the session.

#### Facilitator notes:

Music is essential: build it from ethereal/soft → rhythmic/expansive → contemplative/quiet.

Focus is not on explaining the myth, but on embodying the Call through voice, movement, and space.

Writing/drawing at the end helps anchor the experience without pulling it into the rational mind.

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise invites participants to embody the moment when an inner impulse for change, risk or transformation arises. Through voice, movement and the symbolic act of crossing a threshold, they connect with the universal mythic structure of the Hero's Journey and become aware of their own readiness to face the unknown. This experience allows them to feel, in their body, the tension between safety and growth, fear and curiosity, hesitation and movement forward.

On a psychological level, the exercise strengthens identification with one's inner power and activates creative imagination. It reduces fixation on fear through bodily and vocal expression, nurtures adaptability and opens space for personal choice. By symbolically en-

## 4. Dis-identify from the narrative

gaging with the “threshold”, participants develop greater self-trust, a deeper sense of meaning and the ability to view their life story as part of a larger narrative.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Capacity to process transitions and life changes with greater clarity
- Awareness of inner motivations, fears and sources of hesitation
- Emotional resilience through embodied rehearsal of “crossing thresholds”

#### Encourages:

- Narrative flexibility, allowing reframing of life challenges as opportunities
- Personal agency and responsibility for one’s own journey
- Spontaneous creativity and self-expression through body, voice and imagination

#### Strengthens:

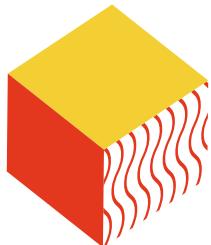
- Connection to universal archetypes, which bring meaning and context to personal struggles
- Identity exploration by integrating both the hesitant and courageous parts of the self
- Ability to sustain and channel emotional intensity in constructive ways

#### Supports:

- Emotional integration by linking bodily experience, symbolic expression and reflection
- A sense of belonging through shared mythic exploration in a group context
- Courage and openness to embrace uncertainty as a natural part of growth

**Reflection time:** 15'

## 4. Dis-identify from the narrative



### 3. Feel Grounded Through the Rhythms

**Omphalos - Italy**

**Duration:** 30 min.

**Number of participants:** 15-20

**Materials needed:** Speakers, pre-recorded music or percussion for rhythm

#### Steps

The earth that is our base, the mother from which everything is born, grows and dies. Through movement and repetitive percussive rhythms, participants are taken on an inner journey to discover their own identity. African rhythms, indigenous tribes, percussion and drums encourage the awakening of the primordial instinct, reconnection with one's roots, the earth and the qualities inherent in our body, mind and spirit.

**1.** Be aware of one's inner strength. After a brief explanation of the rhythms of percussion used, the original cultures, invite the participants which are in the circle, to take a safe distance from each other in order to have enough space to freely move.

With their hands on the belly (Hara), closing their eyes, let them breath deeply and imagine that from their feet, this strong energy coming from the earth, starts to flow into their body.

Let them be connected more and more with this energy and recognize their inner strength as it flow into their spine and all body cells.

**2.** Exploring their body strength. Following the rhythm of the percussions, let them start to hit their feet in the ground to nourish their inner strength through the earth energy.

Then they can let it flow to their legs, moving freely all the articulations. After few minutes guide them to feel this energy in their hips, in their shoulders, in their arms, hands, continuing until the neck and the head.

At the end all the parts of the body move following the pressing rhythm of the percussions.

**3.** Altered state and free dance. The repetitiveness of the rhythm, the low, deep sounds trigger an altered state where the participants let go of all tension, inhibition and get caught up in the frenzy of the rhythm with a liberating and spontaneous movement.

## 4. Dis-identify from the narrative

It only takes 10 minutes to bring participants into this state of 'trance', where the mind is emptied and there is only the rhythm and pleasure of the body in free movement.

### Facilitator notes:

It is recommended not to exceed 10 minutes to avoid eccentric manifestations or loss of control.

During the exercise it is important to continuously invite participants to breathe, to stay connected with their Hara and their roots from the base (their feet).

Releasing all tensions, they can let go their inner strength through dance, movement and sounds if they feel to scream, sing and accompany the rhythms with their voice.

**4.** Externalize feelings, mental state. Slowing down the rhythm also slows down the movement.

Lead participants to the initial state through breathing and channeling the earth energy activated in the Hara, placing both hands below the navel.

Remaining still, with eyes closed and in silence, lead the participants to integrate the experience, to understand how the earth element has given them the strength they need to recognize themselves, to recognize their own identity in relation to their body and their sense of stability, security and balance.

This awareness can be shared with a discursive exchange between the participants, following a clockwise turn in the circle, so as to ensure that everybody can express himself. If the group is not willing to talk, give them a white paper so they can choose to externalize their experience through a draw or a text.

The trainer can guide them to understand how this experience helped them to be aware of their own identity, how they recognize and they are able to channel their inner strength to reach a balance state, self-control and self awareness of their body.

By focusing on the Hara and the flow of energy from the feet upward, individuals develop embodied self-awareness, stability and a sense of security. The activity combines rhythmic entrainment, physical activation and reflective integration to strengthen identity and connection to the present moment.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Grounding and body-centered awareness
- Connection to inner strength and instinctual resources
- Emotional and physiological regulation through rhythmic entrainment

#### Encourages:

- Exploration of personal identity through embodied experience
- Release of tension, inhibition and repressed energy
- Flow states and trance-like engagement for emotional liberation

#### Strengthens:

- Awareness of the Hara and energy rooted in the body
- Stability, balance and personal resilience
- Integration of body, mind and emotional experience

#### Supports:

- Embodied recognition of personal identity
- Development of self-control and centeredness
- Reflection on the connection between movement, rhythm and emotional state

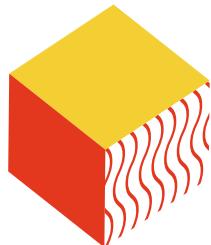
**Reflection time:** 20'

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise engages the earth element to foster grounding, body awareness and reconnection with personal roots. Through repetitive percussive rhythms and guided movement, participants access inner strength, explore bodily sensations and enter a trance-like state that allows release of tension and inhibition.

## 4. Dis-identify from the narrative



### 4. The Refusal

Proyecto Nagual - Spain

**Duration:** 60-90 min.

**Number of participants:** 6-24

**Materials needed:** Paper and pens, Optional: drawing materials (colored pencils, markers), a quiet, safe space for sharing and reflection

### Steps

A reflective practice that helps participants explore their resistance to change by uncovering the fears, needs, and inner conflicts behind hesitation. Through guided partner dialogue, symbolic expression, and optional group sharing, participants gain insight into the tension between safety and growth. This exercise normalizes fear, encourages self-compassion, and builds empathy and trust within the group.

**1.** Facilitator explains the “refusal of the call” motif from the Hero’s Journey: how fear and attachment to safety can cause hesitation when faced with change or growth. Emphasize that resistance is natural and valid.

**2.** Pair participants up. Give prompts to guide conversation. Each partner takes turns sharing while the other listens actively.

**Guided script:** *“What holds me back from stepping out of my comfort zone?”, “What do I fear losing if I change?”, “What do I need to feel safe enough to try something new?”*

**3.** Invite participants to represent their fear, resistance, or needs symbolically through drawing or writing. Encourage abstract or metaphorical expressions (e.g., a cage, a shield, a key).

**4.** Gather participants in a circle. Invite volunteers to share their words or symbolic creations.

**Facilitator notes:** Foster a supportive atmosphere; sharing is optional. Encourage confidentiality and respect during partner dialogue. Remind participants that all feelings are valid and there are no “wrong” answers. Offer support for those who may find this exploration difficult.

## 4. Dis-identify from the narrative

### Psychological Benefits

#### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise invites participants to examine the underlying fears, needs and conflicts that drive resistance to change. By reflecting on personal hesitation and engaging in structured dialogue, participants gain clarity about the tension between safety and growth. This process fosters self-awareness, validates natural responses to uncertainty and provides a space to explore emotions without judgment.

Psychologically, the exercise supports participants in developing self-compassion and resilience. By symbolically expressing resistance through drawing, writing or metaphors, individuals externalize internal struggles, making them more manageable and understandable. Sharing in pairs or a group context also strengthens social bonds, trust and empathy, offering participants both insight into themselves and connection with others navigating similar experiences.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Awareness of personal fears, hesitations and limiting beliefs
- Emotional insight into the sources of resistance and avoidance
- Clarity in decision-making by distinguishing safety needs from growth opportunities

#### Encourages:

- Self-compassion and acceptance of natural emotional responses
- Reflection on personal values, priorities and readiness for change
- Creative expression as a way to externalize and process internal tension

#### Strengthens:

- Empathy for oneself and others navigating fear and uncertainty
- Trust and psychological safety within the group through active listening and shared vulnerability
- Emotional regulation by observing feelings rather than reacting automatically

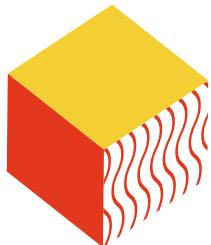
#### Supports:

- Connection to personal growth and readiness for transformation
- Healthy negotiation between security and exploration in one's life
- Integration of internal insights into everyday choices and interactions

#### Reflection time:

 Optional

## 4. Dis-identify from the narrative



## 5. A Bit Closer

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 30 min.

**Number of participants:** 15 max.

**Materials needed:** notebooks, pens, crayons, markers, music speaker, open floor space, Questionnaire B

### Steps

A practice where participants revisit the constellation space with the symbolic obstacle removed. Guided by their body's wisdom, they explore a new relationship to their life purpose—free from previous limitations. Through movement, stillness, affirmations, and reflection, they anchor a deeper sense of clarity, readiness, and alignment. This step supports disidentification from old narratives and opens the way for embodied commitment to personal purpose.

*Combined with the exercises "Still frames of the Soul" and "Between Purpose and Obstacle".*

**1.** The trainer invites the participants to return to the constellation space—but this time, the “Obstacle” element is removed from the field. The “Life Purpose” remains in place.

**Guided script:** *“The obstacle that once stood in your way is no longer here. In this moment, let it dissolve. You are free to find a new place in the space—one that represents your relationship to your life purpose without any barrier.”*

**2.** Participants silently move to their new position, guided by their body's wisdom, not by logic. The trainer ask the participants to move freely again letting their senses guiding them through their body (sensual soul) without the interfering of the intellect (intellectual soul).

#### Guided script:

*“What shifts in your body now that the obstacle is gone?”*

*“How do you want to stand in relation to your purpose now? /what has changed?”*

*“Is there peace, confidence, or clarity emerging?”. “If this version of you could speak, what does it say?”*

## 4. Dis-identify from the narrative

**3.** After several minutes in stillness, the participants step out of the constellation. They return in the sits they were in the beginning, and they find there a shed of paper with the questions (Questionnaire B) they heard before from the trainer. They write down their new realizations.

**4.** Each participant is then invited to walk slowly toward their purpose, or stand beside it, verbally affirm some of the following.

*"Now I dare to come a bit closer to you"*

*"Now I can see the way."*

*"I am ready."*

*"The path opens as I move."*

*"I am becoming who I came to be."*

If the trainer observes that a participant is facing difficulties, suggest the following affirmation:

*"I know you exist; I need some more time to come to you"*

*"Thank you for your patience" or "I will respect my personal rhythm"*

**5.** Participants anchor this new stance by placing a hand on their body and breathing deeply. They then return to their journals to reflect.

### Questionnaire B

*What shifted in your body now that the obstacle is gone?*

*How do you now relate to your purpose?*

*Is there peace, clarity, or confidence emerging?*

*What does this version of you want to say?*

*Choose or write your own affirmation.*

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise stimulates the release from limiting beliefs and the reorganization of one's inner stance toward life purpose. By removing the symbolic obstacle, participants are guided to reconnect with their personal goals and values in a freer, more embodied way. It supports greater clarity, self-acceptance and readiness for change.

Through movement, stillness and affirmations, participants experience how their body responds when barriers are dissolved. This creates conditions for emotional regulation, inner balance and psychological resilience, while anchoring a compassionate and empowered relationship to their life purpose.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Emotional regulation
- Self-awareness
- Inner clarity and confidence

#### Encourages:

- Embodied presence and mindfulness
- Creative exploration of new possibilities
- Patience and self-compassion

#### Strengthens:

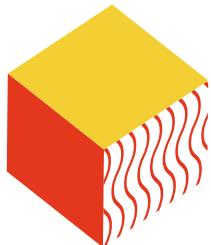
- Connection to personal purpose
- Sense of freedom and agency
- Transformational mindset shifts

#### Supports:

- Empowerment to take next steps
- Sustainable integration of change
- Respect for one's personal rhythm of growth

**Reflection time:** 15 min

## 4. Dis-identify from the narrative



### 6. Coordinated and Cooperative Creativity - The Tribe

**Omphalos - Italy**

**Duration:** 30-40 min.

**Number of participants:** 15-20

**Materials needed:** Speakers, pre-recorded music or percussion for rhythm

#### Steps:

Gaining self-confidence by leading the group to follow one's own gestures and movements. Free expression of one's creativity by following a coordinated tempo and rhythm for the rest of the group to follow.

Move each part of the body, legs, feet, arms, hands, and create mini choreographies in four times, with the whole group taking it in turns to lead the others. These movements will be accompanied by rhythmic music.

**1.** Tell participants a story related to a tribe of any community, which the group may choose for them to identify with. Explain the rules of the community and how one behaves to maintain collective harmony through mutual respect and understanding.

*This part can be combined with storytelling and/or drama activities.*

**2.** Through movement, they can experience their sense of belonging to the community, developing their creativity and ability to relate to the group, remaining in a circle, both following or leading the group.

Each participant is invited to create a movement in four rounds in turn, starting first with the feet (so that the whole group can take root and connect to the earth to acquire more and more strength and stability).

**3.** After finishing the first round with the feet, move on to the knees, then the legs, pelvis, arms, hands, neck and head, concluding a final round with a movement of the whole body (it is suggested to do four movements for each body part). If there is a large number of participants, it is possible to do a half turn of the circle for each body part, so as not to train the group in the repetitive movement of only one body part.

## 4. Dis-identify from the narrative

The accompanying music should be with a well-timed tempo, to facilitate the participants in coordinating the movements according to the rhythm and to allow the whole group to follow it without creating confusion or a sense of frustration because they cannot perform the movement in a coordinated way. So, invite the participants to create simple and clear movements, steps and gestures that everybody can easily follow.

**4.** At the end of the creative co-ordination exercise, invite participants to express their reflections on the experience and how they perceived this interaction with the tribe and how they can apply this awareness in their daily lives, to increase their sense of belonging and co-operation in a team, while protecting their own identity.

This exchange of reflections can be done through debate, personalised writing or painting

### Guided script:

*"How do you feel when you lead the group ?"*

*"Do you prefer to be the leader or to be guided?"*

*"Are you able to cooperate with the group so to achieve the same final results?"*

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise engages participants in coordinated, cooperative movement to explore creativity, leadership and social connection. By taking turns leading the group through simple, rhythmic gestures, participants develop self-confidence, learn to communicate non-verbally and experience how their actions impact

the collective. Following and leading in a structured yet creative environment fosters both autonomy and collaboration.

On a more personal level, participants discover the balance between guiding others and being guided, deepening their awareness of social dynamics, empathy and personal responsibility. The repeated cycles of body-part-specific movements help strengthen focus, rhythm and bodily coordination, while integrating the experience into reflections encourages participants to connect insights to daily life and teamwork.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Coordination, rhythm and bodily awareness
- Ability to follow structured group processes

#### Encourages:

- Creative self-expression through movement
- Exploration of leadership and followership roles

#### Strengthens:

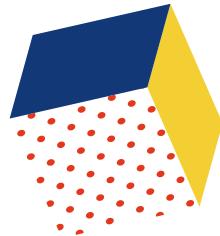
- Cooperation, empathy and group cohesion
- Sense of responsibility for one's actions within a community

#### Supports:

- Confidence in leading and participating in collective tasks
- Application of cooperative strategies to everyday teamwork situations

**Reflection time:** 20'

## 5. Re-signify the personal story



### 1. Coming Back Home

Proyecto Nagual - Spain

**Duration:** 60-90 min.

**Number of participants:** 6-24

**Materials needed:** Paper and pens for writing, candle (if safe to use), acoustic guitar, hang drum, nature sounds, pebbles, bowl, leafs, ribbons etc.

### Steps

A closing ritual designed to help participants integrate their personal growth from a transformative journey. Through writing, breathwork, and the creation of a personal mantra, individuals reconnect with their inner truth and identity. The session ends with a shared embodiment of these mantras, fostering closure, empowerment, and a sense of returning "home" to oneself.

**1.** Invite participants to find a seated position with their feet touching the ground and hands on their belly or heart. Guide them to inhale through the nose – pause – exhale through the mouth.

**Guided script:** *"Breathe in everything you've experienced. Breathe out everything you're ready to carry forward."*

For embracing the different experiences that the participants went through there is the possibility of guiding a meditation with a landscape that allow them to feel grounded or safe. Before the free writing, guide participants through a brief visualization can help.

Example:

*Close your eyes and take three deep breaths.*

*Imagine the ocean agitated on the surface: high waves, wind, clouds, and foam.*

*Then, mentally "dive" down to the depths: feel the quiet, still, and constant waters.*

*Explain that, like the ocean, our thoughts and emotions may be stormy above, but deep within us, there is a space of unchanging calm.*

Usually, the Ocean works as a safe place for a majority, yet it can be triggering for some people with bad memories or traumas in relation with the sea... In that

## 5. Re-signify the personal story

case, substitute the sea for a landscape that can be safe for everyone. They can also choose.

**2.** Distribute paper and pens. Explain the concept of automatic writing: free, uncensored, unedited flow from heart to hand.

### Guided script:

*"What have I discovered about myself on this journey?"*

*"What am I returning to within me?"*

*"What truth is ready to speak through me now?"*

*"What would I say to my past self, or my future self?"*

**3.** Ask participants to re-read what they wrote and highlight any sentence, image, or phrase that carries weight or truth. From this, they craft a short mantra (1-2 lines) that expresses what they are reclaiming, choosing, or becoming.

Examples:

*"I am the river that returns to the sea."*

*"I am not my wound. I am the one who heals."*

*"I carry the light I thought I'd lost."*

*"Even in silence, I am still enough."*

*"My truth is tender, and that is my strength."*

**4.** Create a space for optional ritual sharing of mantras. Step-in Circle: Participants step into the center one at a time, say their mantra aloud, then step back. Whisper Chain: Everyone whispers their mantra to the person next to them, letting it echo softly around the circle. Group (optionally) can softly repeat each mantra back ("choir-style") to amplify affirmation. This can be done in the way of repeating some words that are meaningful for oneself. Only the specific words that the person share, without interpretation, opinion or elaboration.

**5.** Offer a moment of stillness and reflection. Invite everyone to close their eyes and place one hand on their heart, one on their belly. Guide a final breath meditation

### Guided script:

*"You are here. You have returned. You carry your truth, your voice, your essence. You are home."*

*"You've traveled through many waters, winds, and stories. Now you return—not as who you were, but as who you've uncovered beneath it all. This mantra is your*

*seed, your compass, your anchor. It's yours to carry, whisper, sing, or offer to the world."*

### Optional rituals:

Drop a pebble into a bowl of water as a symbol of release or return.

Light a candle for each mantra (if safe).

Give each participant a small object (stone, ribbon, leaf) to take as a symbol of their mantra.

### Suggested Music Playlist:

Moment	Mood	Music Type
Automatic Writing	Reflective, soft	Piano, ambient textures
Mantra Crafting	Inspired, gentle rhythm	Acoustic guitar, hang drum
Sharing Circle	Sacred, present	Drone, slow cello, silence
Ritual Closing	Grounded, luminous	Nature sounds, harmonic vocals

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise provides participants with a structured opportunity to integrate the insights, emotions and transformations experienced during a session or series of exercises. By combining guided breathwork, reflective writing and mantra creation, individuals are invited to reconnect with their inner sense of self and recognize the growth that has occurred. This practice encourages mindful self-reflection and consolidates personal change into conscious awareness, fostering emotional and cognitive integration.

On a deeper psychological level, the exercise nurtures self-trust and strengthens the internal sense of agency. Participants experience a symbolic "return" to themselves, cultivating a feeling of stability and

## 5. Re-signify the personal story

grounding after emotional exploration. Sharing mantras in a safe and structured way further reinforces social cohesion, empathy and the validation of personal truths, supporting both individual growth and group connection.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Self-awareness and emotional integration by reflecting on experiences and distilling personal truths
- Clarity of thought and internal guidance through creation of personal mantras
- Mind-body connection via breathwork, visualization and embodied reflection

#### Encourages:

- Emotional resilience by revisiting challenges in a safe, contained space
- Self-expression and authenticity in sharing personal reflections and mantras
- Mindful presence and grounding, cultivating a sense of returning to the self

#### Strengthens:

- Identity affirmation by acknowledging insights, growth and personal power
- Ritualized closure, allowing participants to symbolically consolidate what they've learned or released
- Compassion and empathy toward self and others through witnessing shared experiences

#### Supports:

- Community and social cohesion by sharing mantras in group rituals
- Ongoing personal development through reflection, affirmation and embodiment of truths
- Integration of emotional and cognitive learning into everyday life

**Reflection time:** 10-20 min.

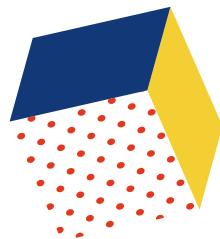
#### Guided script:

*"How does it feel to return to yourself?"*

*"What does 'home' mean to me now?"*

*"What will I carry from this experience into my daily life?"*

## 5. Re-signify the personal story



### 2. Shaking Hands With the Monster

Proyecto Nagual - Spain

**Duration:** 45-60 min.

**Number of participants:** 6-24

**Materials needed:** Pens and paper, printout or poster with Byron Katie's Four Questions, comfortable, quiet space. Optional: soothing background music for writing

#### Steps

A self-inquiry practice designed to help participants identify and question limiting beliefs that cause emotional distress. Using journaling and cognitive inquiry inspired by Byron Katie's *The Work*, individuals explore the truth of their thoughts, uncover their emotional impact, and reframe them with compassion. Through this process, participants build emotional resilience, gain insight, and shift from self-criticism to self-awareness—reclaiming a sense of inner peace and personal agency. Optional sharing and integration deepen the transformation.

**1.** Welcome participants and explain the concept. Briefly introduce The Work by Byron Katie: A method of inner inquiry, not about denying pain, but questioning the thoughts that keep it alive. Distribute handouts or display the 4 core questions visibly.

**Guided script:** *"We all carry thoughts that create stress, pain, or limitation. Today, we'll meet one of those thoughts, question its truth, and gently loosen its grip—maybe even learn to shake hands with it."*

**2.** Invite participants to settle into a few quiet breaths.

**Guided script:** *"Think of a recent situation that caused you distress. What belief or thought was present during that moment?"*

**3.** Ask them to write the thought as a clear, simple sentence.

#### Examples:

*"I'm not good enough."*

*"They don't care about me."*

## 5. Re-signify the personal story

*"I'll never succeed."*

*"I should be doing more."*

**4.** Guide participants through each one slowly, leaving time for journaling and reflection.

**1. Is it true?**

*"Take a breath. Ask yourself gently, 'Is this thought absolutely true?' Don't try to be 'right.' Just listen."*

**2. Can I absolutely know it's true?**

*"Be honest: is there any possibility you're interpreting or assuming? Can you be 100% certain this thought reflects reality?"*

**3. How do I react—what happens—when I believe that thought?**

*"Notice the emotional, physical, and behavioral responses. What happens inside you? How do you treat others? Yourself?"*

**4. Who would I be without that thought?**

*"Close your eyes and imagine yourself in that same moment—but without the belief. How does your body feel? How does your mind shift?"*

**5.** Invite participants to flip the belief and look for real-life evidence that supports the turnaround.

**Types of Turnarounds:**

- To the self: "I don't care about me."
- To the other: "They do care about me."
- To the opposite: "I am good enough."

**6.** Gather participants in a circle or pairs. Invite brief sharing.

**Optional:** Mantra Tie-In. After the inquiry, invite participants to craft a one-line affirmation or mantra (e.g., *"I am already enough."*) to connect with the "Coming Back Home" exercise.

**Facilitator notes:** Encourage kindness and openness, not forced positivity. "The monsters we fear are often the parts of us waiting to be understood. By shaking hands with them, we soften—not because they disappear, but because we no longer believe their story is the only one."

Byron Katie's *The Work* is a simple yet powerful method of self-inquiry designed to help people identify and question the thoughts that cause stress, anxiety, and suffering. It's based on the idea that it's not events themselves that disturb us, but our beliefs about those events.

At the heart of *The Work* are four questions you ask yourself about a specific thought or belief:

*Is it true?*

*Can you absolutely know that it's true?*

*How do you react—what happens—when you believe that thought?*

*Who would you be without the thought?*

These questions invite deep reflection and create space to see the thought from a different perspective.

After exploring the belief, you "turn it around" by rewriting the thought in several alternate forms—for example:

The opposite:

*"He doesn't respect me" ➔ "He does respect me."*

To the self:

*"He doesn't respect me" ➔ "I don't respect me."*

To the other:

*"He doesn't respect me" ➔ "I don't respect him."*

You then find genuine examples of how these new statements could be just as true—or truer—than the original belief.

*The Work* isn't about positive thinking or suppressing emotions. Instead, it's a meditative process that:

- Increases self-awareness and emotional clarity
- Helps dissolve rigid or painful narratives
- Promotes peace, presence, and a sense of personal responsibility
- Shifts identity from "victim of circumstances" to empowered observer

# 5. Re-signify the personal story

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise offers participants a safe and structured way to confront and explore the limiting beliefs that generate emotional pain. By guiding individuals through a process of inquiry, it helps them slow down, reflect and disentangle their automatic thoughts from reality. In doing so, participants often experience a sense of relief, as they recognize that many of their painful beliefs are not absolute truths, but interpretations shaped by fear, habit or self-criticism.

Psychologically, the practice fosters self-awareness and nurtures emotional resilience. By questioning their inner "monsters", participants shift from identifying with destructive narratives to observing them with curiosity and compassion. This reframing reduces emotional reactivity, creates space for new perspectives and builds a sense of agency. Over time, the exercise strengthens the ability to face discomfort without avoidance, transforming fear into clarity and inner empowerment.

## Psychological Benefits

### Improves:

- Emotional clarity by identifying and naming limiting beliefs
- Cognitive flexibility through questioning and re-framing rigid thoughts
- Inner calm and peace by reducing the power of intrusive or distressing thoughts

### Encourages:

- Compassionate self-reflection without judgment or forced positivity
- Greater authenticity in expressing vulnerabilities and inner struggles
- A mindset of curiosity rather than fear when facing emotional challenges

### Strengthens:

- Resilience in dealing with self-critical or fear-based thoughts
- A sense of personal agency by moving from "victim" to "active participant" in one's story
- Emotional intelligence, particularly in recognizing the link between thoughts, emotions and behaviors

### Supports:

- The cultivation of healthier, self-affirming beliefs and mantras
- Long-term psychological growth through regular reflective practice
- The development of empathy, both toward oneself and others, by recognizing shared human struggles

**Reflection time:** 10-15 min.

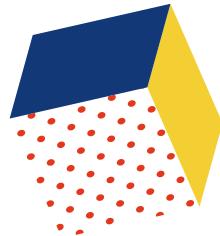
### Guided script:

*"What belief did you work with?"*

*"What shifted for you?"*

*"How do you feel now, compared to before this process?"*

## 5. Re-signify the personal story



### 3. Creating Your Soul Signature

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 45 min.

**Number of participants:** 15 max.

**Materials needed:** Thick transparent rice paper 80x40, A4 papers, crayons, markers, music speaker, open floor space

#### Steps

A creative integration exercise that invites participants to embody and harmonize their insights through the **Threefold Soul Aspects—sensual, emotional, and intellectual**. Using colors, shapes, and symbols, they create a personal “Soul Portrait” that reflects their renewed relationship with life purpose. By physically placing and affirming their portrait, participants anchor their transformation and step into a more aligned and empowered self.

*Combined with the exercises “Between Purpose and Obstacle” – “Still frames of the Soul” – “A bit closer...”*

1. The participants are invited to create a “Soul Portrait”—a simple drawing using shapes, colors, symbols, letters or abstract theme that brings these three aspects into harmony using thick transparent rice papers 80X40. A simple drawing reflecting the now moment of the sensual, the emotional and the intellectual soul.
2. Each person places his soul portrait in the room where he feels that is the right place.
3. Each participant is invited to step on his painted portrait and let integrate this new self by breathing on it placing his hands in the chest in order to capture the moment as if taking a photograph of their inner world.
4. The trainer invites each participant to observe while stepping on his/hers soul portrait what has changed.

**Guided script:** *“What has shifted in your body and in your sensations, compared to before? What has shifted in your emotional state? Has another emotion arisen compared to earlier, or is it the same? Observe what thought*

## 5. Re-signify the personal story

*comes to your mind, and then try to respond to the following questions based on the Threelfold Soul Aspects”*

Affirmation suggested from the trainer for closing:

*“This is a better place for me and my life purpose”*

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise stimulates the integration of body, emotions and cognition through creative expression. It supports awareness of one's life purpose, facilitates emotional acceptance and creates conditions for inner harmony and psychological resilience.

Through the ritualized act of “stepping into” one's Soul Portrait, participants strengthen their sense of meaning, develop a compassionate relationship with themselves and anchor their transformation in a tangible, embodied way.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Self-awareness
- Inner balance
- Emotional regulation

#### Encourages:

- Creative self-expression
- Present-moment awareness

#### Strengthens:

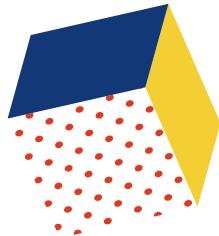
- The sense of personal meaning, purpose and inner coherence

#### Supports:

- Building a compassionate relationship with the self
- Enhancing empowerment and agency

**Reflection time:** 20 min

## 5. Re-signify the personal story



### 4. Celebrate Your Inner Joy

**Omphalos - Italy**

**Duration:** 20 min.

**Number of participants:** 20

**Materials needed:** Speakers, laptop

#### Steps

Once the participants have transformed their toxic emotions and freed themselves from what was weighing them down, the trainer invites them to express the state of joy and affirmation of their identity through free and spontaneous movements. We can use a festive music that the majority of participants can suggest or the trainer can choose based on their group preferences.

**1.** To emphasize this festive and joyful moment let them dance and sing freely with different music that may be chosen from different cultures. Let them enjoy it until they reach a collective joy which helps group members to interact with each other in a spontaneous and natural way.

**2.** At the end of the dances, invite the participants to stop in a point of the room to return to focusing on themselves. With their eyes closed, invite them to breathe deeply and reflect on the benefits that can be brought to them in being able to be themselves, disidentifying from their personal story and inhibitions, allowing themselves to be guided by their inner joy that allows them to affirm themselves in full authenticity.

#### Psychological Benefits

##### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise engages participants in spontaneous movement and music to celebrate joy, self-expression and personal authenticity. By dancing freely, participants can release tension, disidentify from limiting beliefs and experience a heightened sense of emotional liberation. The activity promotes both individual and collective joy, strengthening social bonds and encouraging a safe space for playful exploration.

## 5. Re-signify the personal story

Through this joyful embodiment, participants consolidate the emotional and energetic shifts achieved in previous exercises. Reflecting at the end allows them to integrate the experience, enhancing self-affirmation, presence and awareness of their own inner strengths.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Emotional well-being and inner satisfaction
- Physical coordination, rhythm and body awareness

#### Encourages:

- Spontaneous self-expression and authenticity
- Release of repressed emotions and emotional blockages

#### Strengthens:

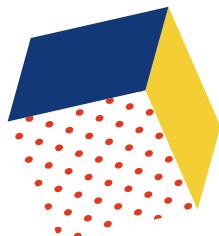
- Group cohesion, shared joy and social connection
- Sense of self-affirmation and personal identity

#### Supports:

- Mindfulness and awareness of emotional states
- Confidence in embracing one's own uniqueness and inner joy

**Reflection time:** 20'

## 5. Re-signify the personal story



### 5. We Are Here

Hopeart - Greece

**Duration:** 30 min.

**Number of participants:** 8-20

**Materials needed:** A djembe, cajón, or any resonant percussion instrument, open space where participants can move freely and safely

#### Steps:

A group exercise that anchors personal emotional truths in a collective, supportive environment. Participants express core emotions aloud and symbolically “fall,” then are gently caught and affirmed by the group. This process fosters a sense of identity beyond emotional struggles, building trust, empathy, and community connection through embodied support and shared witnessing. This exercise reaffirms each person’s identity beyond their core wound or dominant feeling, through the healing power of the group.

*Combined with the “The one becomes the whole” and the “Let’s dive in” exercises*

**1.** After completing “The One Becomes the Whole”, guide participants to begin gently moving around the room again. The facilitator or musician plays a steady beat on the drum to keep them in motion. Encourage mindful walking, sensing others, the space, and their body. The beat can be layered on atmosphere music already playing.

**2.** As the beat goes on, one participant (naturally or prompted) breaks the beat, freezes the group, raises his/her hand and calls out their core emotion (from Let’s Dive In) or a sentence reflecting their present state of emotion, in a powerful voice: Examples:

“FEEEAAR!”

“SORROOOOW!”

“GUILT!”

“I AM STUCK!”

“I AM DROWNING!”

“HAPPINESS”

“JOY”

“I NEED TO BREATHE”

## 5. Re-signify the personal story

They begin to fall slowly (symbolic collapse). Others rush in and catch them, gently helping them stand upright again.

**IMPORTANT:** Body should remain still and firm as falling. Like a broom stick.

**3.** Once the person is standing, the group forms a tight circle around them. (See alternative version below)

They then collectively say (in rhythm or chant):

Variations of Affirmation:

*"You are not only HAPPINESS."*  
*"You are MORE than just FEAR."*  
*"We SEE you beyond your SORROW."*  
*"You are not ALONE in your MELANCHOLY."*  
*"We see your FEAR and that's ok with us."*

The trainer offers the affirmation for each person of the circle. The trainer stands behind each person giving the participant the affirmation asking him/her to repeat it for the person standing inside the circle. Or the trainer can ask a participant of the circle to repeat the affirmation for the one inside.

**4.** When the affirmation is complete: Boom! The circle breaks simultaneously, and everyone starts moving again. The beat resumes.

**5.** Each time someone else raises their hand and the cycle repeats. Continue until most or all participants have had their moment, or until time runs out.

**6.** Gather participants in a circle. Offer a short breathing or grounding exercise

**Guided script:** *"Let's close our eyes, take a deep breath... and bring our attention back to the body. Let everything settle. Can you feel the presence of this group around you?"*

**Facilitator notes:** Emphasize safety and consent: if someone does not want to be caught or fall, they can simply raise their hand and be "witnessed" in place. If time is short, invite some participants to group-share at the end instead of going one by one.

### *Elevated version*

When the originator is in the circle the others start flipping him/her around and within the circle and the trainer is speaking the affirmations for him/her. The originator should keep a steady base, steady feet and a firm body so as not to break his waist during the centrifugal movement and if possible eyes shut.

### *Alternative version*

At step3 when the circle is ready the person inside starts transmitting his "now" sound. Then the rest of the participants forming the circle start transmitting their sound. It could be something that binds harmonically like creating a chord, it could be a call-response pattern, it could be a new addition that "builds" up the soundscape (whistle, note, imitation of nature sound, a cough etc). A mantra of the team is created which can be recorded and handed to the participants. You go on with the rest of the steps. if time does not allow you can create just two or three mantras.

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise stimulates the expression and recognition of core emotions within a safe, collective space. By voicing personal truths and being physically supported by the group, participants experience validation that they are more than their dominant emotional states. This process reinforces identity beyond struggle, promotes trust and fosters a deep sense of belonging.

Through embodied interaction, affirmations and shared witnessing, participants cultivate empathy, co-regulation and resilience. The group's collective response provides conditions for emotional release, grounding and the development of a supportive community identity.

## 5. Re-signify the personal story

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Emotional expression and self-awareness
- Trust in interpersonal relationships
- Ability to regulate emotions through group support

#### Encourages:

- Empathy and responsiveness within the group
- Physical trust and mutual care
- Shared identity and community connection

#### Strengthens:

- Validation of self beyond emotional struggles
- Capacity for catharsis and emotional release
- Resilience through embodied group practices

#### Supports:

- A sense of safety and belonging
- Development of compassionate group identity
- Ongoing emotional integration within community

**Reflection time:** 10 min.

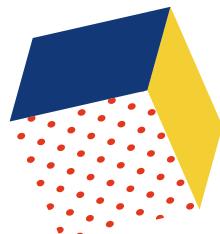
#### Guided script:

*"How did it feel to fall and be caught?"*

*"What did it mean to hear those words?"*

*"What are you taking away from this moment?"*

## 5. Re-signify the personal story



## 6. Move Like a Wave

**Omphalos - Italy**

**Duration:** 40 min.

**Number of participants:** 15

**Materials needed:** Duff, riq, mazhar, finger cymbals or pre-recorded music, speakers

### Steps

Reframe and find new meanings, fostering resilience and hope.

**1.** Let the participants create movement sequences that symbolize transformation—water transforming from turbulent to calm, from constricted to free (such that their inner emotional state can change easily). Let them experience this constant transformation through their body, following the undulatory movement that expands in all body cells and it adapts its shape following the emotional state.

#### Guided script:

*"Imagine to be the ocean... let yourself be guided by the wave – move"*

*"If you wish to externalize your emotional state, how the sea waves should be? Calm? Turbulent? Stormy? Express it through your movement. Which kind of wave are you?"*

Inspired by Middle East music, the trainer should use a variety of tones ranging from deep bass to high-pitched sound, which accompanied by the duff, riq, mazhar and finger cymbals create the ideal rhythmic support to trigger an undulating and sensual movement of the body.

**2.** As in oriental dances, let them experience the undulatory movement of the belly and of the entire body so as to promote a fluid circulation of their vital energy that, starting from the navel, spreads like water currents through all the cells of the body. This enhance a state of relaxation both physically and mentally and allow them to freely express their selves.

**3.** If the group feels confident, let them interact each other so as to transform their inner story in a collective joyful celebration, envision oneself as an adaptable, flowing water source—embracing ongoing change with grace. Lead their dances with middle eastern mu-

## 5. Re-signify the personal story

sic to keep their rhythm and moves in a state of fluidity and relaxation.

**4.** To conclude, invite them to stop slowly, concentrating on their breathing and remaining silent for a few moments to perceive what sensations this exercise has generated in them. Participants will share their sensations with the group verbally, or through a drawing or writing. Then the trainer can share some reflections based on the impact that the water qualities has in each one of use; using word of affirmation, reinforcing positive narratives and self-compassion.

## Psychological Benefits

### Psychological Assessment of the Exercise

This exercise engages participants in fluid, wave-like movements to explore emotional expression, adaptability and resilience. By embodying water and its qualities — calm, turbulent and flowing, participants can safely externalize emotions, reframe inner experiences and experiment with new ways of moving and feeling. The use of Middle Eastern music and rhythmic percussion encourages a sensual, undulating flow that integrates mind, body and emotion.

Through this process, participants not only gain awareness of their physical and emotional states but also cultivate the capacity to navigate change with flexibility and grace. The group interaction component enhances connection, empathy and shared joy, while reflection at the end supports insight and self-compassion.

### Psychological Benefits

#### Improves:

- Physical flexibility, coordination and body awareness
- Mind-body integration and relaxation

#### Encourages:

- Emotional expression and release
- Adaptability and resilience in facing challenges

#### Strengthens:

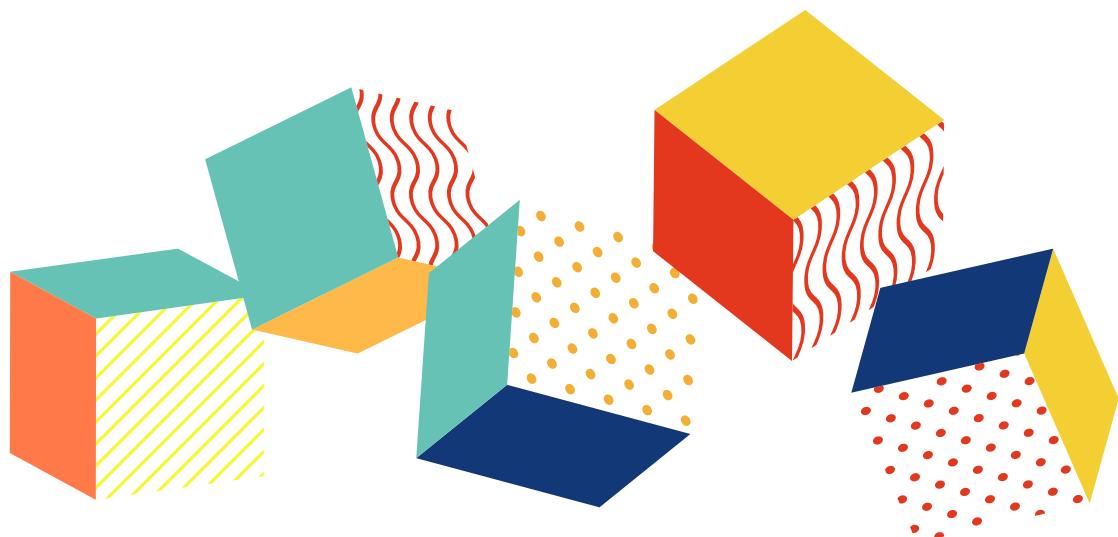
- Group cohesion, social connection and feelings of inclusion
- Mindfulness and present-moment awareness

#### Supports:

- Self-compassion and positive reframing of experiences
- Awareness of personal emotional states and inner transformation

**Reflection time:** 20'

Selection of activities based on  
*Identity - Belonging - Life Purpose*



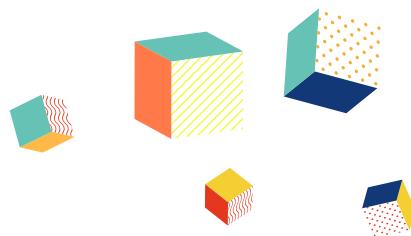
# Selection of activities based on Identity - Belonging - Life Purpose

## Identity

**The Story Of Today**  
**Embodying The Inner Character**  
**Stories That Shape Us**  
**Find Your Match**  
**My Element Sound**  
**Sound Greeting**  
**What Do You Sound Like?**  
**Show Me Your Element**  
**Still Frames Of The Soul**  
**Let Me Hear Your Voice**  
**Creating Your Soul Signature**  
**Self Affirmation: Who I Am-fire Element**  
**Be Connected With Your Inner Fire**  
**Like A Drop Of Water: Flexible And Adaptable**  
**Feel Grounded Through The Rhythms**

## Belonging

**Between Home & Elsewhere**  
**Coming Back Home**  
**The Humming Circle**  
**The Circle Of Senses**  
**My Element Sound**  
**Arrive**  
**Dance Of The Elements**  
**The One Becomes The Whole**  
**The Rain Of Hope**  
**We Are Here**  
**Group Agreements**  
**Celebrate Your Inner Joy**  
**Coordinated & Cooperative Creativity – The Tribe**  
**Voice And Body As Means Of Expression**  
**Relaxation Through Do-in**  
**Get Connected With The Element Of Water**  
**Mirror's Dialogue**  
**Move Like A Wave**



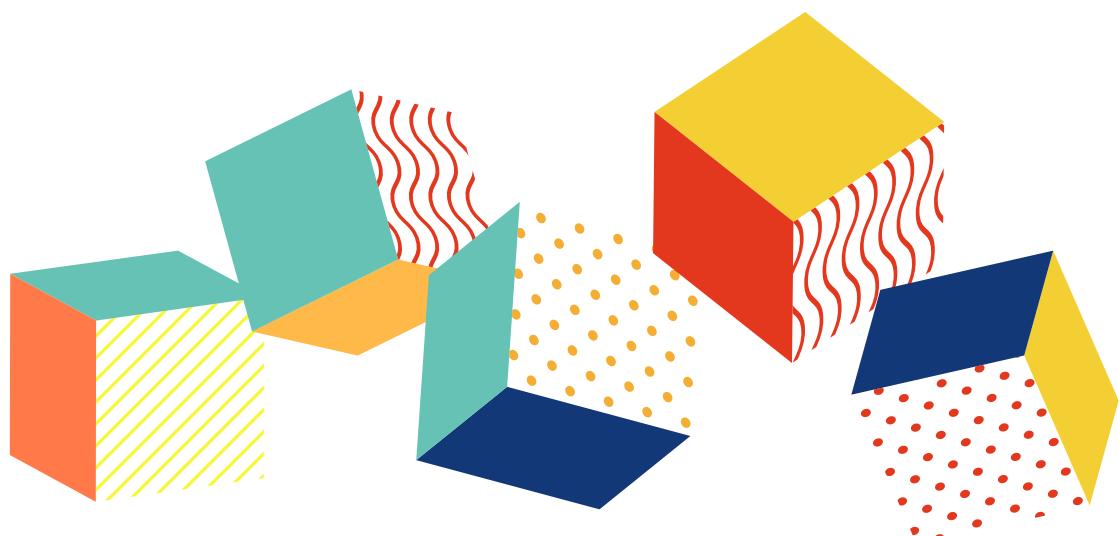
## Life Purpose

**The Line Of Life**  
**The Call For Adventure**  
**The Refusal**  
**Let's Dive In**  
**Between Purpose and Obstacle**  
**A Bit Closer**  
**Embody The Earth Energy**

Combination of activities in form of workshops

### **Combined Workshop No1**

(weekend version)



# Combination of activities in form of workshops

## Workshop No1

### Combined workshop No1 (weekend version)

**Number of participants:** ideally 6-24

#### First day session Working with identity

**Sufi circle**

**Embodying the inner character**

**Relaxation through DO-IN**

**Embody the earth energy**

**Find your match**

**What do you sound like?**

#### Second day morning Life's call

**Circle of senses**

**The line of life**

**Let's dive in**

**I hear you**

**Feel grounded through the rhythms**

**Life's call**

**Integration** (15 minutes)

Sky meditation for Closing (10 min): Gentle grounding and closure through sky meditation.

*Find a comfortable seated or lying position. Gently close your eyes. Take a slow breath in... and exhale fully.*

#### 1. Centering

*Notice the rhythm of your breath.*

*Feel your body resting on the ground, supported.*

*With each exhale, let go of tension.*

*With each inhale, invite calm and clarity.*

#### 2. Visualization

*Now imagine looking up at a wide, open sky.*

*Vast. Infinite. Peaceful.*

*There might be a few clouds drifting — slowly, gently. The sky is always there — spacious, steady, unchanging behind the movement.*

#### 3. The Mind as the Sky

*Your thoughts are like clouds — they come and go.*

*But your awareness, like the sky, remains open and vast.*

*No thought can disturb the space of the sky.*

*You are that space — expansive, open, calm.*

#### 4. Resting in Openness

*Allow yourself to rest in this spaciousness.*

*Thoughts may appear — greet them, then let them pass.*

*Return gently to the breath... and to the open sky within.*

#### 5. Return

*Bring your awareness back to your body.*

*Feel the air on your skin, the weight of your body.*

*Take a deep breath in... and exhale slowly.*

*When you're ready, open your eyes — carrying with you the calm and clarity of the sky.*

#### Second day afternoon Resilience

**Self-affirmation: who I am - Fire element**

**Be connected with your inner fire**

**Celebrate your inner joy**

**Let me hear your voice**

**The one becomes the whole**

**We are here**

**Shaking hands with the monster**

**Closing meditation** (10 minutes)

Candle Meditation: Fire of Presence, Vision, and Warmth

*Close your eyes and take a few slow, deep breaths.*

*Now, imagine a candle gently burning in front of you.*

*Focus on the flame... steady, calm.*

# Combination of activities in form of workshops

## Workshop No1

### Presence

*Notice how the flame lights itself. It simply is.  
Let this be a reminder of your own presence.  
You don't need to do anything — just be, like the flame.*

### Vision

*See how the candle lights the space around it.  
It reveals things as they are.  
Let your inner flame bring clarity and understanding to what you feel or see in your life right now.*

### Warmth

*Feel the gentle heat of the flame.  
This is the warmth of care, of love.  
Let it melt away tension or fear. Let it remind you of your own capacity to love and be kind — to yourself and others.*

*Rest in this quiet space, letting the image of the candle remain with you —*

*steady, illuminating, and warm.*

*When you're ready, take a deep breath and slowly open your eyes.*

## Third day Belonging

### Coordinated and cooperative creativity – the tribe Coming back home

#### Closing ceremony (60 minutes)

To connect the activity "Returning Home" with the idea of **"finding the calm that we are deep inside, despite the storm on the surface"**, you can incorporate the following elements into the design and facilitation:

#### 1. Metaphorical Introduction

Before the free writing, guide participants through a brief visualization:

- Close your eyes and take three deep breaths.
- Imagine the ocean agitated on the surface: high waves, wind, clouds, and foam.
- Then, mentally "dive" down to the depths: feel the quiet, still, and constant waters.
- Explain that, like the ocean, our thoughts and emotions may be stormy above, but deep within us, there is a space of unchanging calm.

#### 2. Guiding Questions for Free Writing

After the visualization, invite participants to let images, words, or sensations emerge. To inspire the mantra, offer prompts like:

*"What word or phrase describes the deep peace you found in the depths?"*

*"If your inner calm were a natural element (stone, lake, light...), what would it be and why?"*

*"What does the silence at your core sound like?"*

#### 3. Creating the Mantra: Weaving Storm and Calm

Invite them to craft a short phrase that includes both poles:

- Acknowledge the external "storm" ("even if the waves crash against me...")
- Affirm the inner "stillness" ("...my center remains serene")

#### Examples of mantras:

*"I am the calm ocean beneath the storm."*

*"The clouds pass; my essence is silence."*

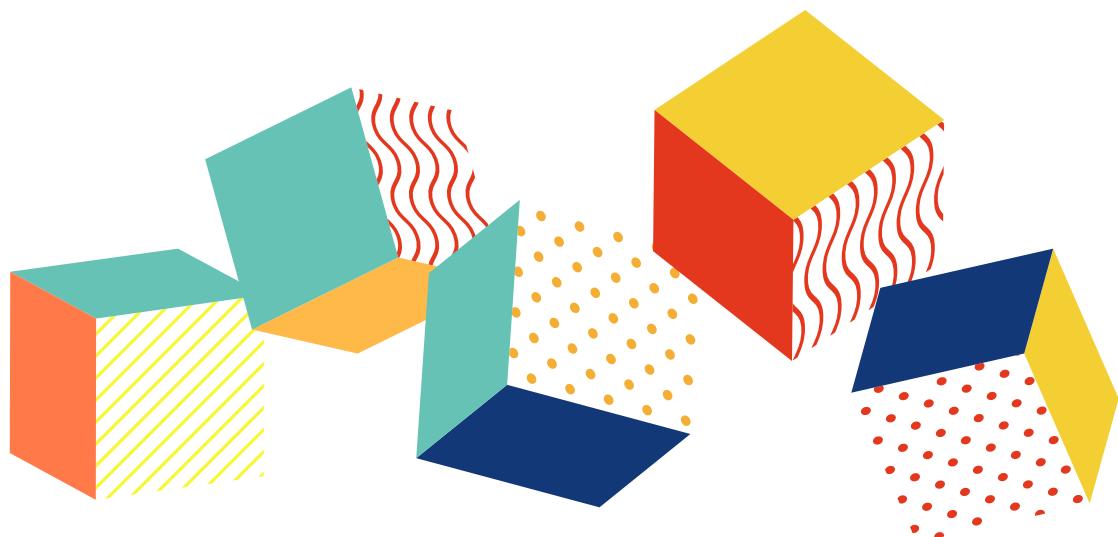
*"In the noise, I find my peace."*

After writing the mantra, offer a small gesture to "anchor" it in the body:

- Gently tap the heart.
- Place hands on the belly, inhale and exhale while repeating the phrase.
- If done in a group, each person can whisper their mantra while placing a candle or stone in a circle — symbol of that deep calm.

Combination of activities in form of workshops

**Combined Workshop No2**  
(full day version)



# Combination of activities in form of workshops

## Workshop No2

### Combined workshop No2 (full day version)

**Number of participants:** ideally 12-24

*First session (2 hours)*

#### Working on creating a safe space

**The story of today**

Arrive

**Group agreements**

*Break*

*Second session (3 hours)*

#### Working on identity & life purpose

**Between purpose and obstacle**

**A bit closer**

**Creating your soul signature**

*Break*

*Reflection time (1 hour)*

**Closing Circle** (30 minutes)

- Create a circle
- Participants are invited to hold their hands
- The trainer softly guides them to close their eyes, bring their attention to their breath and then in their palms and feel the current of the collective soul of this team.
- After a while the participants are invited to open their eyes and connect using the sense of the vision with all the eyes in the circle.
- Then the trainer invites the participants to look to the person on their right side and say: "I see you" and the persons to the right will response: "I allow you to see me." This goes clockwise.

# Appendix



# Opening questionnaire

**First name (optional):** .....

**Age:** ..... **Date:** .....

## 1. What made you join this workshop?

*(Example: I want to try something new, I like music/drawing, I'm curious, etc.)*

## 2. Which ways of expressing yourself do you connect with the most?

*(Check any that speak to you)*

- Telling stories or writing
- Acting or role play
- Music or sound
- Drawing or painting
- Dancing or moving
- I'm still figuring it out

## 3. If your life was a movie, song, or painting—what would it feel like right now?

*(A few words or images)*

## 4. What helps you feel like yourself?

*(Places, people, activities, music, clothes—anything)*

**5. What makes you feel like you don't belong sometimes?**

*(You can write as little or as much as you want)*

**6. Do you ever feel like parts of you are hidden or silenced?**

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

**If yes—what feels hard to express?**

**7. What's one part of your story that you'd love to explore or tell through art?**

*(It can be a memory, a dream, a question, or a feeling)*

**8. What does "purpose" mean to you, if anything?**

*(You can leave this blank if you're not sure yet)*

**9. Do you want your art to say something, change something, or just be yours?**

**10. Is there anything you'd like us to know as we begin?**

# Closing questionnaire

**First name (optional):** .....

**Date:** .....

## **1. What are you taking away from this workshop?**

*(Feelings, thoughts, ideas, tools... anything that stays with you)*

## **2. Which form of expression did you connect with the most during the workshop?**

*(Check one or more)*

- Storytelling or writing
- Theatre or role play
- Music or sound
- Dance or movement
- Painting or drawing
- Something new I discovered here

## **3. Did this workshop help you understand yourself better?**

- Yes, definitely
- A little
- Not really
- Not sure

**If yes, what did you learn about yourself?**

## **4. Did you feel safe, accepted, and included during this experience?**

- Yes
- Mostly
- Not always

No

**Anything you'd like to share about that?**

**5. Do you feel more confident expressing yourself after this workshop?**

- Yes
- A bit
- Not really
- No

**6. What part of your identity or story did you express here that felt meaningful?**

*(You can write about a feeling, a memory, a role, a painting, a movement, etc.)*

**7. Did anything surprise you during this workshop?**

- About yourself
- About others
- About art
- Not really

**If yes, what surprised you?**

**8. Do you feel more connected to:**

- Yourself
- Others in the group
- Your creativity
- Your sense of purpose
- Not sure yet

**9. How would you describe your experience in one word or sentence?**

**10. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us as we close?**

(Feedback, feelings, hopes, anything at all)

## Questionnaire A

**1. How close or far you were from your purpose? Were you facing it or turned away?**

.....  
.....

**2. What emotion raised when you look at it? What did your body say?**

.....  
.....

**3. What is the obstacle in your personal story? What voice /shape/face or belief does it carry? (If it is shape or face make a quick drawing of that.)**

.....  
.....

**4. If your life purpose could speak to you, what would it say?**

.....  
.....

### Realizations:

**5. According to the narration I tell myself, "I don't move toward my life purpose because..."**

.....  
.....

**6. The obstacle I felt today carries the voice of.../has the face of.../carries the shape of...**

.....  
.....

**7. What I realized about myself is...**

.....

**8. A truth I now see is...**

.....

## Questionnaire B

**1. What shifts in your body now that the obstacle is gone?**

.....

.....

**2. How do you want to stand in relation to your purpose now? /What has changed?**

.....

.....

**3. Is there peace, confidence, or clarity emerging?**

.....

.....

**4. If this version of you could speak, what does it say?**

.....

.....

**5. Underline the affirmation that feels more suitable for you this moment:**

- "Now I dare to come a bit closer to you"
- "Now I can see the way."
- "I am ready."
- "The path opens as I move."
- "I am becoming who I came

**If none please create your own affirmation choosing your own words:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

## Terminology used in this toolkit

**Chi or Ki force** is the vital spiritual energy or life force believed to flow within and around a person, guiding their destiny and powering their actions. It represents personal power, energy, and connection to the divine in certain African and Eastern traditions.

**Hara** is a Japanese concept referring to the lower abdomen area, considered the center of a person's physical and spiritual balance. It's seen as the seat of vital energy (ki) and core strength, important in practices like martial arts, meditation, and traditional medicine. Maintaining a strong, centered hara helps with focus, stability, and calmness.

**Chakras** are energy centers in the body according to Hindu and Buddhist traditions. There are seven main chakras aligned along the spine, each linked to different physical, emotional, and spiritual functions. They help regulate the flow of life energy (prana) and influence overall well-being.

**Do-In** is a traditional Japanese self-massage and stretching practice designed to stimulate energy flow (ki) in the body, improve circulation, and promote relaxation and health. It involves gentle movements, pressure, and breathing techniques to balance the body's energy and relieve tension.

**The Work** by Byron Katie is a simple, powerful method of self-inquiry that helps people identify and question stressful thoughts. It involves four key questions designed to challenge negative beliefs and promote clarity, peace, and freedom from suffering. The process encourages seeing situations from a new, more peaceful perspective.

**Call to adventure** (Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey) is the moment when the hero is invited or compelled to leave their ordinary world and begin their quest. It signals the start of the journey, presenting a challenge, problem, or opportunity that pushes the hero to step into the unknown and grow.

# The myths

## Mesopotamia (Middle East, Asia) – Epic of Gilgamesh

The **Epic of Gilgamesh** is an ancient Mesopotamian myth and one of the earliest known works of literature. It tells the story of Gilgamesh, the powerful king of Uruk, who is part divine and part human. After the death of his close friend Enkidu, Gilgamesh embarks on a journey to find immortality. Along the way, he faces gods, monsters, and deep existential questions. Ultimately, he learns that death is inevitable and that humans must find meaning in life and legacy rather than eternal life.

## Greece (Europe) – Deucalion and Pyrrha

The myth of **Deucalion and Pyrrha** is a Greek flood story similar to the tale of Noah. When Zeus decides to destroy the corrupt human race with a great flood, Deucalion (son of Prometheus) and his wife Pyrrha are the only survivors, saved by building an ark. After the flood, they land on Mount Parnassus. To repopulate the earth, they are instructed by an oracle to throw the "bones of their mother" over their shoulders—interpreting this as stones from the earth (Mother Earth). The stones thrown by Deucalion become men, and those by Pyrrha become women, thus renewing humanity.

## Hebrew Tradition (Middle East, Asia/West) – Noah's Ark

The story of **Noah's Ark**, from the Hebrew tradition in the Book of Genesis, tells how God, angered by humanity's wickedness, decides to flood the earth to cleanse it. However, Noah, a righteous man, is chosen to survive. God instructs him to build a large ark and bring his family along with pairs of every animal species. The flood lasts 40 days and nights, destroying all life

outside the ark. After the waters recede, Noah's ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat. God makes a covenant with Noah, symbolized by a rainbow, promising never to destroy the earth with a flood again.

## India (South Asia) – Matsya Avatar of Vishnu

In the **Matsya Avatar** myth from India's Hindu tradition, the god Vishnu takes the form of a fish (Matsya) to save the world from a great flood. He appears to a righteous king named Manu, warning him of the coming disaster. Vishnu tells Manu to build a large boat and gather seeds, animals, and the seven sages (rishis) to preserve life. When the flood comes, Matsya guides the boat safely through the waters, using a giant serpent as a rope. After the flood subsides, life is restored, and Manu becomes the ancestor of a new human race. This story symbolizes divine protection and renewal.

## China (East Asia) – The Myth of Yu the Great

The **Myth of Yu the Great** from ancient China tells of a great flood that covered the land, threatening all life. Instead of stopping the flood with force, Yu, a wise and determined hero, worked for many years to control the waters. He dug channels and canals to guide the floodwaters back to the rivers and sea, making the land livable again. His dedication was so great that he is said to have passed his home three times without stopping, too focused on helping the people. Yu's success led to the founding of the Xia dynasty, and he is honored as a symbol of selflessness, perseverance, and good governance.

## Mesoamerica (Americas) – Popol Vuh (Maya-Quiché)

The **Popol Vuh** is the sacred creation myth of the Maya-Quiché people of Mesoamerica. It tells how the gods tried several times to create humans. First, they made people from mud, then wood, but both failed—mud people were weak, and

wooden people had no souls. Finally, the gods succeeded by making humans from maize (corn), the sacred food of the Maya. The story also includes heroic adventures of the Hero Twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanque, who journey to the underworld and defeat the gods of death. The Popol Vuh explains the origin of humanity, the gods, and the importance of maize in Maya culture.

## Oceania / Pacific Islands – The Flood of Nuu (Hawaii)

The **Flood of Nuu** is a traditional Hawaiian myth about a great flood sent by Kāne, one of the chief gods. Nuu, a righteous man, builds a large canoe with a house on it to survive the rising waters, bringing his family and animals aboard. After the flood recedes, Nuu lands on Mauna Kea, a sacred mountain in Hawaii. He offers thanks to the gods, mistakenly attributing his rescue to the moon. Kāne then descends on a rainbow to correct him. This story shares themes with other flood myths, emphasizing divine judgment, survival through righteousness, and gratitude to the gods.

## Africa (Sub-Saharan Traditions) – Examples among Yoruba and Bantu

### Yoruba (West Africa – Nigeria)

The **Yoruba creation myth** tells how the supreme god Olodumare sent the deity Obatala to create the world from the heavens. Obatala descended using a chain, bringing earth in a snail shell, a chicken to spread the earth, and a palm nut to grow trees. Later, humans were shaped from clay and given life by Olodumare. This myth emphasizes divine collaboration and order in creation.

While not centered on a flood, some Yoruba stories speak of cleansing rains sent by the gods to restore balance or punish wrongdoing.

### Bantu (Central & Southern Africa)

Among **Bantu-speaking peoples**, there are variations of flood myths. In some versions, a great flood is sent by a god (like Nzambi or Kalunga) to punish humanity's disobedience. A lone survivor, often warned by a divine being, builds a boat or finds refuge on a mountain. These myths highlight themes of divine justice, survival, and moral rebirth.

Though less uniform than in other regions, African traditions often focus on moral lessons, harmony with nature, and the role of ancestors and deities in shaping the world.

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