Personal growth
as a TOOL
for youthworkers

PERSONAL GROWTH AS A TOOL FOR YOUTH WORKERS

PREFACE

In accordance with the vision of the Covenant, stated by Androulla Vassiliolu, our project focuses on the area of mental health care – we include both: young leaders and workers, as well as all those young people who work under the auspices of other leaders. Good mental health enables us to enhance and exercise our intellectual and emotional capacities. But on the other hand mental health also helps us to play certain role in our professional, social and private lives. Only a mentally healthy person can effectively contribute to the community - therefore mental health should also be understood as a kind of social capital or basis for economic well-being.

In Brussels (2008), Androulla Vassiliou, commissioner for Health presented the EU Pact for Health and Wellbeing, which also covers the field of youth mental health and education in this direction. She emphasized the fact that 50% of mental disorders occur in the teens, therefore there must be organizations or institutions that deal with young people trained to recognize the symptoms and respond quickly. In the MSS document, titled as "Youth health" we can read that the mental health of young people is becoming a growing problem in the developed world. Research has shown that 19-28% of young people face mental health problems, manifested as lack of will, depressed mood, self-harm, thought of suicide or attempted suicideResearch also confirm that for most adults with a mental disorder, this mental illness first appeared in childhood or adolescence. But there are even more examples where unprocessed childhood traumas trigger mental diseases in adulthood. Therefore, mental health monitoring from an early age and adolescence should be understood as a key task in preventing mental disorders and enhancing positive mental well-being.

About 11% of the Europeans are diagnosed with one of the more common types of mental illness annualy. Such mental disorders can lead to suicide (in the EU every 9 minutes one person does suicide),Most european partners in our project come from countries where the suicide rate is the highest (Slovenia, Poland, Belgium).

As a youth center, based on many years of experience, we have to say that we are extremely satisfied with our proactive approach to youth workers.

As soon as we opened the counseling center, young animators started to engage with us, because they needed a conversation, different tips and hints, or just wanted to express their distress. We soon realized that the need to acquire additional knowledge and skills in the field of inter-psychic interaction increased, which was especially reflected in working in a group. Psychosocial interactive dynamics play an important role for the individuals as well as for the group, both at the level of visible behavior and at internal processes, which are unconscious at the same time.This kind of work helps the individuals to aware of the intrapsychic dynamics and -on the other hand- it also helps helps them while discovering a new way of thinking and feeling, which relaxes and intensifies the whole dynamic of pedagogical and counseling processes in the group. So it is very important what the youth worker brings to the group: he have to understand these interactive dynamics as well as he need to realize that he can give only what he has. In particular, it is important to have a consolidated attitude towards himself. Youth workers have to accept their strengths and weaknesses. If a youth worker is working on his or her personal growth, this it affects the growth of the whole group and the individual within it.

This project -designed as useful tool- is our answer to the EU Pact health and wellbeing, particulary concerned with the field of the mental health of young people and th education of all working with young people.

Sanja Obaha Brodnjak

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Comprehensive experiential pedagogy in the service of personal growth

With many scientific discoveries, the developed world notes that the 20th century was not only a century of progress but also of decades of moral decay (Borba 2001, 46). The psychological profiles of criminals in the vast majority of cases drastically show a classic moral deficit, a lack of moral sense and responsibility. In this context, even with the ever-evolving scientific knowledge, the future cannot escape the moral challenges, but they will become increasingly important (Coles 1999, 188-189). Man is already cognitively and secularly too intelligent to survive without "emotional intelligence". Therefore, young people are calling for a redefinition of education, for a new "philosophy of education", that would enable us to be and dare to be "as we are" without concealment and reproach, while accepting each and every part of our responsibility through the process of mutual education. Young adults do not want guidance for life, but long for good examples shown by our lives as adults (Adams 2013, 120).

Of course, the "new philosophy of education" presupposes sensitive, in-depth, positive, and creative optimistic communication. Neurobiology notes that all communication translates into signals in the brain (Firestone 2009, 78) that affect behaviour, which again conditions our communication (Bauer 2007, 15-16). This means that positive communication trains us for better relationships, and negative and aggressive communication robs us of those sensitive communication skills that we once had. Thus, positive and holistic communication trains and strengthens us for constructive pedagogical dialogue based on recognizing and accepting our own biography, which enables us to accept and understand the life stories and biographies of others based on this experience. It is therefore an experiential pedagogy that involves the widest possible range of communication pathways, all of which are intertwined with the dimensions of biographical learning that connect theory with practice at the existential level and vice versa (Marentič Požarnik 2003, 123). In this context, the whole pedagogical process is designed to promote personal growth (Reichel, Scala 2005, 10).

Also, painful biographies and experiences can become useful tools for transforming views of life and related personal growth. Although long-lasting negative experiences can paralyse people and block the search for solutions (Beard, Wilson 2013, 34), but with the support of the group and the sharing of experience that comprises the dimensions of crisis management, crisis can become an additional motivation for change and personal growth (Combe, Gebhard 2007, 12).

In the educational work, especially education for personal growth, where relationships play a key role, the involvement and activation of both cerebral hemispheres is important. As we know, there are more cognitive-logical functions in the left-brain hemisphere, and the right hemisphere is more holistic and, as such, discusses life more holistically, while also strongly considering the emotional dimensions of thought processes. We also know that, according to modern research, emotion-related intelligence takes over 70% of influential power in all human decisions.

To successfully activate both cerebral hemispheres and achieve an ambivalent balance between them, we usually begin a comprehensive experiential educational process with a group dance. Harmonious dancing in the rhythms of relaxing music slightly reduces the frequency of brain waves, thus relieving cognitive effort and opening up the flows between the left and right hemispheres, which enables a more holistic view of life and the world of our relationships. In this way, personal growth ceases to be trapped in the "machinery" of cognitive logical reasoning and becomes a vision that is not only "thought" but also "felt". Despite the seeming contradiction, "feeling" motivates more strongly than "thought"; the thought stops at our desires, and the emotion is transformed into a longing that has a dimension of infinity. I can fulfil a certain wish and then I no longer feel it, but the longing never fades. In this context, personal growth is tied to longing, not desire.

GESTALT THERAPY AND GESTALT PEDAGOGY

Gestalt therapy

Gestalt pedagogy evolved from gestalt therapy4 which is based on simple premise:
the real change could be achieved through a different mode of action, when the client realizes and integrates all his/her personalities. This means that our client -even in conflict- does not focus on the expectations of his surroundings but instead he is able to lean on his own experience, to understand himself as a person living here »at this moment«. In the background of all this we have the ongoing process between the individual and the environment. Mann (2010, 4) defines a paradigm of gestalt therapies by constructing 3 different sectors:

1. Field theory and holism: personal experience as an object of inquiry is always in the context of the whole situation or the whole field.

2. Phenomenology: searching for understanding through what is

   obvious and clear, but not through the interpretations of the observer. The aim is methodology of awareness.

3. Dialogue: an existentialist approach to dialogue where we focus on specific relationship between the client and the environment and on what is created 'in between' in this relationship. The focus of Gestalt therapy is on "Here and now« type of experience based on awareness that everything what is happening around, is just a momentary experience (15).

Another important concept of gestalt is "self". But »self« can not exist without the »other«, so in this case we are talking about »relationship«. We use the term "relationship" more broadly, because we would like to express people, things, activities, interests and their changing views on mentioned areas (18).The main feature that distinguishes Gestalt therapy from some other approaches is that it does not treat the individual separately (isolated from the whole situation). Moreover, Gestalt therapy is also intensely concerned with biological, sociological and spiritual factors. In gestalt therapy individuals are treated as a living organisms in a specific environment (holistic approach), with all the nuances created by spiritual and religious components (23-24).

Gestalt pedagogy

Gestalt pedagogy is based on Gestalt philosophy, Gestalt psychology and Gestalt therapy (Hufnagel 2011, 7). The knowledge related to the areas mentioned above, is then proceeded to pedagogical practice, where the only principle that we need to take into accont is "here and now". As a matter of fact, we are talking about humanistic pedagogy that focuses on human contact with himself, on self-awareness and -especially- on taking responsibility for our thoughts and actions.

It focuses on the progress of fundamental process paying most attention to the relationship that is formed between the participants. The teacher is never a central actor, but merely a kind of "facilitator" or coordinator of the learning process, based on a holistic approach. In this kind of pedagogy, the learning content becomes truly cogent only when all the characteristics of the involved person are taken into account (Hufnagel 2011, 9).

The central goal of gestalt pedagogy is education and the holistic development of diverse personality potentials. Among other goals, Hufnagl (10-11) also defines some others:

- perceiving and promoting a sense of personal needs, interests and opportunities,
- promoting potentials and skills for independent learning and accountability,
- identifying and overcoming internal and external blockages in the process learning and personal development,
- empathetic perception of the mood of others (which is essential for a good and productive dialogue),
- developing potential for critical and communication and constructive cooperation,
- development of feelings in understanding relationship between freedom and responsibility,
- promotion of personal engagement (in the field of society, culture, ecology etc.).

NOTE[4]:
[4] Gestalt therapy is one of three psychiatric schools affiliated with phenomenology and existentialism. The other two are Frankl Logotherapy and Binswanger's Dasein Analyse. One of the most important personalities in the field of Gestalt therapy is
F.S. Perls (Narano 1983, 15).

SHORT CONTENT DESCRIPTION OF EACH MODULE

1. Recognizing their own image in the **form of a tree** (Integration of my personality) will empower the participants to respect their own life story, which - like a tree - is embedded in some natural laws, where both the respect for one's own life powers and the respectful consideration of another, as well as the ability to integrate personal and social experiences come together.

2. Participants will further explore these lessons in the next module (My Backpack), through which they will integrate **the messages** they received from their parents into their own personality. Youngsters always receive both positive as well as painful and burdensome messages in their family. They integrate positive messages **with gratitude**, while processing painful messages by transforming them into experiences that can make them stronger and more self-contained in the process of integration, while at the same time sensitizing them in that direction so that they no longer feel the need for violent reactions. Namely, the adolescent realizes that the life he has received from his parents is the only one he has, that he has to accept it and make it the best and most meaningful possible. At the same time, he will also realize that violence does not lead to the positive results, since violence - even when it seems justified at first glance - always leads to additional conflicts and problems.

3. In the third module (This is me), the adolescent encounters **his own body**. In addition to adopting and evaluating one's physical skills and weaknesses, this module helps the adolescent to learn how to ask for help, which enables him to accept himself fully and to feel sensitively about physical and social closeness. In the fullness of his physical powers, he will also discover the laws of the transience of the body, thus sharpening his sense of socially non-violent treatment of human beings and other living beings.

4. This feeling will deepen in module four (Permanent and Temporary Relations) that focuses on forming a network of lasting and less lasting relationships. At this stage, he will learn to be **grateful** for the life content given by his fellow man through his relationships, as well as the **responsibility** that goes into shaping his relationships.

5. In the fifth module (*Visions, Goals and Communication*), the youngster will form and visualize his/her own life **goals and visions** based on previous experience and knowledge - both at the level of temporary (partial) and permanent and lifelong perspectives on the future. Especially at this stage, they will learn to set and achieve goals by harnessing their **life potential**, while overcoming any need for peer and intergenerational violence. Everyone who will experience **the journey of these five modules** will carry the potential for transfer within; each person participating in this experience finishes the process with a different personality, richer, more tolerant, and calm. Such an individual will spread this vibration in his environment and thus transfer knowledge within his organization, transferring it to younger youth workers and to the wider local, national environment. Participants will learn a higher level of self-esteem and respect for others, as well as more sensitive, non-violent communication, respect and acceptance of diversity, as well as experientially the basic laws of coexistence in diversity.

In accordance with the theme and goal, there are usually fairly intense individual processes, the so-called "work on oneself", which of course is strongly associated with the whole group. When an individual places a picture of their tree "in the middle," they leave the word to the group. Individual members of the group embark on a journey of deepening.

▸ **"I see ..."** They begin by simply **observing** and they verbally convey to the author and each other what they "see". At this stage, it is important that no interpretations occur. They only put into words what their see with their eyes. At this stage, the author does not actively engage, but only observes the group's observations - does not comment on anything.

▸ With the initials **"Interesting that ..."** (we can also use **"Tell me ..."** instead) we move on to the next level of deepening, which can be called **optical focusing**. At this stage, we extract the details that most appeal to our eyes and assume that they may carry a significant message within them. The author monitors the process but is not actively involved in it.

▸ The sentence **"I feel like this detail ..."** (part of the root, trunk, crown or other detail of the picture) **..."** invites us to open up feelings where we feel **emotional focus**. At this stage, instead of detail, we can also focus on the whole tree ("I feel like this tree ...") or a larger part of the tree (roots, trunk, and crown). The author monitors the process but is not actively involved in it.

That stage is followed by the level of **holistic interpretation**, where - to avoid extensive theorizing that is not desirable - we give the picture various **titles**. The author monitors the process but is not actively involved in it.

It is only in the next step that the author enters the active process by selecting the title or titles that are the most interesting. Then he explains his picture, where he indirectly and sometimes directly presents his life story. It is a form of personal **confession** that should be only so deep that the author feels safe and without fear of any abuse or double-crossing. The author independently decides what he shares with the group and what he does not want to share. Participants may also ask him/her questions and the author reserves the right not to answer questions. Since this is a rather deep interconnection of relationships, it is important that before we begin, we create an environment that is secure enough to allow honest, in-depth, genuine and confidential communication.

It is essential that each individual process completes positively. Therefore, in the final part it is the turn of expressing **wishes to the** author (also to the tree, which of course indirectly represents and addresses the author) who presented his painting. In the end, the author can summarize the wishes that have most addressed him, but it is advisable that he wishes something more for himself.

If we carry out such an individual process in a circle, it can also be completed **by closing the circle with our hands** and staying silent for a few moments.

As we can see, this is an **in-depth and intense process** of working on oneself that takes considerable time, so it is better for the groups to be smaller. It works very well in groups of 3 to 5 participants; if we there is more time available, we can increase the group by 2 or 3 participants.

When all the individual processes are completed, it is good to talk about everything that transpired, share the feelings and the basic lessons we have learned and want to remember in our future lives.

1. INTEGRATION OF MY PERSONALITY

The tree as a prime symbol of man invites to integrative reflection of life. Everybody quickly approaches and identifies himself with the tree. At the level of intuitive symbolism at the roots, we quickly feel our own "roots" (parents and other ancestors) from which we emerge and grow. In the trunk, we intuitively recognize the feelings of the present and the kind of tension between strength and stability on the one hand, and uncertainty and vulnerability on the other. From here, we automatically look up to the treetop, where we detect flowers and fruits that direct and make sense of our lives. The tree thus connects us on a symbolic and emotional level to our past (personal history), present and future.

Based on these existential feelings and perceptions, we can enter into a dialogue with ourselves and with others. We first acquire these communicative competences on a personal level. Here we experience what it means to really take yourself and the person we are communicating with seriously, using the methods of holistic and especially biographical learning as a great tool. Biographically designed teaching processes help us feel the importance of integrating our own life stories to understand our fellow human beings. Sincere and authentic communication encourages and teaches us that fears and failures are not an obstacle to dialogue, but can become a "learning tool" that leads to increasing interconnectedness and dialogical belonging. When learn how to communicate in an authentic, empathetic, respectful, and responsible manner on a personal level, we are trained for dialogue at all other levels of life and activities.

Biographical education means learning from other biographies and being able to reflect on my own life story to discover new qualities of relationships, based on which I am capable of deeper empathy and better dialogical communication, which is crucial for the formation of individual and collective identity.

The process of personality integration runs on two levels: the level of discovering "*who I am*" in my own eyes, how I see, experience and accept myself, and the level of recognizing how I see and experience myself in relation to others, how others recognize, experience and accept me. Especially at this second level, where I recognize myself in relation to others, this process does not follow the steps of some assimilative sociological integration of an individual into a group, where the individual more or less transforms into "quantity" and an individual more or less loses, but rather a process where an individual - with the support of a group - strengthens his or her individuality and consolidates it to enrich the group with it. With my integration into the group, I not only enlarge the group but also enrich it qualitatively first and foremost.

The tree symbol enables and even promotes integration at both levels. On the one hand, an individual becomes integrated with him-/herself and at the same time becomes an irreplaceable member of the group with the sensitive and supportive communication of other participants in the process.

To avoid the pressures of cognition and open as many communication paths as possible, we have to start out by calming down, finding contact with our body and harmony with its functions, and then indulging in guided meditation.

Drawing is one of the most elementary forms of communication and conversation, certainly more primal and older than writing. In this case, too, we first draw the tree that appeared to us in meditation.

It is good to allow a pause after drawing, to calm and awaken a bit in meditation and while drawing. In this sense, it is best that drawing is some kind of evening activity.

1.1. MEDITATION AND WORKFLOW

Preparation:

- mat, A4 paper, instrumental music

Instructions:

- lie down on your back on the mat
- the head is in the direction of the centre
- the arms by the side of the body with the palms facing up

Meditation:

Close your eyes. Take a deep breath through your nose, exhale through your mouth - 3x. Be aware of your breathing, your heart rate is slowing. The hands lie on the ground by the body.

Lay down and feel your body relax, aware of the points where your body touches the ground. Feel your body being carried, safe ... Imagine heading out to the beautiful lawn now. Listen to the sounds that surround you, be aware of the colours and smells. Sit down and slowly open your eyes and look around... Slowly get up and look around... be aware of what you see, feel, smell, hear. Now you can see the tree in the distance and take 5 steps towards the tree and stay in that place for a while and look at the tree from that distance. Take 10 more steps and you are right in front of that tree. Look at that. What do you see? Pay attention to the colours, sounds, smells and your emotions. What do you see, smell, hear and feel? You can touch the tree, you can hug your tree, and you can talk to the tree. Now go around the tree and you can sit by the tree ... do what you feel is right. For a few moments, hang out with the tree and open all your senses ... what you see, smell, feel, hear. Also, pay attention to the colours.

Now, when you are standing in front of the tree, look at it again ... and say goodbye to your tree.

Be aware of your emotions. When you say goodbye, turn around and take 10 steps away from the tree in the same direction you came from. Turn around and look at your tree again.

Then turn around and take the last 5 steps and sit facing the tree. Look at the tree one last time.

Then lie on the grass. Back in this space, your eyes are still closed … take 3 deep breaths through your nose and exhale through your mouth. When done, stretch your arms and legs and open your eyes. When you are ready, sit up.

Drawing:

Place greeting cards and sheets of paper in the centre of the room. Participants have to draw a tree from their meditation. They are then split into groups of 3 to read the picture, which is done in the following steps:

▸ I SEE

▸ INTERESTING THAT

▸ FEELINGS - I FEEL AS THIS DETAIL

▸ TITLE

Interpretation of the picture/Wishes to the author:

The author places his picture in the middle and silently receives the messages of the other two in his group. The author speaks only in the section Interpretation of the picture. The wishes are given to the author standing behind his back, with both hands placed on his shoulders (as a sign of support); the author is observing the picture in front of him. The process is repeated for all three participants in the group. If there are fewer participants, the exercise can be performed in pairs.

> **WHEN DRAWING A TREE IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW:**
> * the roots represent the parents,
> * the trunk represents the author,
> * the crown is the future.

2. MY BACKPACK - MESSAGES FROM PARENTS

Parents' messages are food that comes from my "roots". Despite the assumption that our parents love us a priori, we probably (on our part) received painful messages. In conjunction with specific situations from our childhood, this is the "backpack" that forms a big part of our identity and we carry it throughout our lives. When we process this content as we grow up and in our adulthood, we not only see "burdens" in it, but also increasingly discover the contents that nourish us and enhance our joy to work and live.

In this exercise, it is important to allow ourselves to feel both the encouraging and the fortunate and the painful and restrictive messages of both parents. We usually feel those most deeply when we put them in context and relive the specific situations we have experienced. Appropriate meditation is the first stage that helps us, and at the level of individual processes, a group of participants (3-5) who, with different accents and voice tones, repeats the messages so that the author can relive them more easily and deeply.

In the mutual sharing of messages and feelings, the author perceives which messages feed and stimulate him and which hinder and lame him; at the same time, he tries to figure out whether there is something "nutritious" even in painful messages. Namely, if we are able to integrate the painful message without any hesitation, sooner or later we will discover that the pain can be transformed into a "fertilizer", which ensures greater fertility in the future.

2.1. MEDITATION AND WORKFLOW

Preparation:

• mat, A4 paper, instrumental music

Instructions:

• Lie on your back on the mat
• The head is in the direction of the centre
• The arms by the side of the body with the palms facing up

Meditation:

I invite you to take a short trip to the past, to your childhood. Sit comfortably, close your eyes, rest your hands on your knees. Relax. Take a deep breath through your nose and exhale through your mouth 3x times. Your body is relaxed, your thoughts are calm, your breathing is slower, you feel peaceful. Feel the points at which your body touches the ground. Feel that you are being carried, safe. Breathing is increasingly slow, heart rate is slowing.

Imagine being on a beautiful, spring meadow and in front of you see a door, a big door with writing: MY CHILDHOOD.

Stand still for a moment and think of your childhood (age of children/adolescents you work with - for youth workers; in the period of compulsory education (up to 14-15 years) for adolescents). Open the door wide and enter (pay attention to the feelings of whether I am happy to enter my childhood or if it is difficult to take the first step). Take 5 steps forward in your mind and see your home in front of you… pay attention to your feelings when looking at your childhood home… what is waking up, maybe what you hear, smell, feel what colours are there. Hold on to the hook. Enter through the home door. Take a look around. Try to feel at home, try to feel yourself in those years. Walk around the house and look around … what do you see … are there any family pictures, souvenirs from family vacations?

Now pay attention to your family, is anybody with you at this moment… try to think about your family, family members, family ties, relationships… remember the Sunday lunch, Saturday afternoon… what was the atmosphere like at home. Recall the moments when you spent your free time together. Pay attention to your feelings, colours, smells, sounds.

Enter your ROOM; look around - what do you see, how do you feel. Remember the beautiful moments that you experienced in your room, remember the people who were with you at those beautiful moments ... Focus on your feelings, sounds/words heard, colours, smells. Say goodbye to these people, say goodbye to these events/moments. Say goodbye to these people, say goodbye to these events/moments.

Recall 1 difficult moment that you experienced in your room. Are you alone or is there someone with you? What do you see, hear, feel, smell? Say goodbye to these people, say goodbye to this event/moment. Step towards the door of the room, look at it one last time and say goodbye to that room and close its door behind you.

In the hallway you see a big picture, which is not clear. Step closer to it and you'll see the caption of the picture: my family. The picture focuses. You see a picture of your family in front of you. What do you feel, hear, when you see that picture?

You see the front door and walk toward to it. For the last time, turn around and look at your childhood home. What do you see now, did anyone accompany you? Open the front door and step outside. You have entered the lawn of your childhood and take 5 steps forward. For the last time, turn around and look at your childhood home. It's time to say goodbye to it. Then step to the big door in the garden and walk through it, closing it behind yourself. Take 3 deep breaths and exhale and return to this space... let's stretch our arms and legs and when we are ready, open our eyes.

Drawing:

Drawing an umbrella: Participants have to draw an umbrella on a piece of paper with wax crayons, a pot under it, and notice everything that falls on that umbrella: on one side there are messages from my father, on the other from my mother. What goes through the umbrella and falls into the pot, what remains in the pot, what does not fall in the pot, and what falls out of it. Messages can be expressed as symbols. Participants should then write down the strongest words they have heard from their parents, positive and negative. Work in threesomes or pairs follows.

Interpretation of the picture:

a.) The author places his picture in the middle. At this point, author only receives **messages**. The other two look for the message that speaks to them. The author closes his eyes, the other two in different contexts and shades repeat the selected messages.

b.) The author **chooses** the most eloquent messages (at least 1 positive and 1 painful) and chooses the context of the situations, when he heard those messages and presents it.

c.) The other two repeat the selected positive messages several times.

d.) The wishes are given to the author standing behind his back, with both hands placed on his shoulders (as a sign of support); the author is observing the picture in front of him. The process is repeated for all three participants in the group. If there are fewer participants, the exercise can be performed in pairs.

3. THIS IS ME

In fact, the claim "*This is me*" actually hides the question "*Who am I?*" We try to answer this question in a way that involves intuition and as much communication of connected senses as possible, while relieving and transcending cognitive logic. To relieve the most commonly and consciously used channels of expression and communication, the answer to the question "*Who am I?*" is reached only with hands and a "prime material" (clay or other modelling material).

We know that the closed eyes further sensitize the hands and give them extra dimensions and abilities that they do not need and do not use but consciously carry within. Therefore, we form clay or modelling material with our eyes closed, if possible, in a darkened space. However, even in a dark place, hands transform our moods, and in this sense, we can only use them fully with our eyes closed. It is not about making our products beautiful; the focus is on finding the answer to the question of my identity that goes beyond the eyes and can be beautiful even when it is not beautiful for the eyes.

Especially from the point of view of external beauty, it is important for me to free myself from the pressures of perfectionism and to be able to accept the "flaws" in my sculpture, e.g. on your product. The faults and shortcomings represent the "playground" where I "play" my life or a place where I realize myself. If I discover only my perfection and completeness, and if my sculpture is perfect, then I have nothing more to do on myself, and sooner or later I lose both the meaning of life and the motivation to work. Disadvantages and flaws are therefore challenges that motivate us to work (on ourselves).

Gradual deepening of communication with a sculpture that is usually in anonymous writing and in four stages (*I see...*; *I feel like this sculpture...*; *Interesting that ...I wonder...*) the "common points" of the sculpture, the author of the sculpture and the "writer" are often shown, as one is usually most acclaimed when he recognizes either his talents or his faults. Therefore, every wish that I directly address to sculpture and indirectly to the author applies to me as well.

3.1 MEDITATION AND WORKFLOW

Preparation:

- mat, A3 paper, instrumental music, a piece of clay or other modelling material

Instructions:

• Lie on your back on the mat
• The head is in the direction of the centre
• The arms by the side of the body with the palms facing up

It is performed in the evening as the last activity of the day. If this is not possible, it is performed by blindfolding. The sculpture is made out of sight, blindfolded or in the dark.

Meditation:

We lie on our backs and feel the mat carrying us. The palms rest by the side of the body. Slowly bring your palms over your chest and rub them, first gently then more forcefully to warm them.

Bring the palms in front of your face and gently stroke it, first the right cheek (use mainly three fingers: the ring finger, the middle finger and the index finger), then the left cheek, the hands meet on the chin, then surround the lips, and observe whether they are smiling. We then proceed to the nostrils, over the tip of the nose to the eyes, first stroke the right eyebrow and eye, then repeat on the left. Continue towards the forehead. Maybe you will feel a wrinkle ... massage the scalp, then the neck. With the left hand touch the right shoulder blade, with the right the left one. The hands are moving forward: left from right shoulder over the upper arm, elbow to wrist, then from the little finger to the thumb, so you can feel each knuckle, nail, and fingertip. Repeat on both hands. Return to the inside of the arm to the underarm and then across the chest to the breastbone. Move the hands towards the belly and feel the navel. Then move over the right leg: thigh, knee, calf, ankle, instep, each toe individually and then to the knees, buttocks and hips. Then repeat on the left leg. Hug yourself gently.

Sit down and close your eyes. Participants should put blindfolds on. We sit and wait in the dark ... a piece of clay appears in front of us ... We mould the clay with our eyes closed and in the dark: under the sculpture it says - This is me.

Sculptural Exhibition:

The presenter prepares the exhibition in the absence of participants. He places the statues on the tables, and with each of them 4 pieces of A4 paper and a pen. The presenter gives instructions to the participants in front of closed doors and then invites them to the exhibition.

Participants stroll through the exhibition in silence (with instrumental music), and stop at a sculpture other than their own. Finally, they go to sculpture they made. They take a good look at the sculpture and write down their observations and feelings on the piece of paper next to it (write the title of the step at the top):

‣ I SEE

‣ I FEEL AS THIS SCULPTURE

‣ INTERESTING THAT

‣ WISHES TO THE SCULPTURE

Participants record their observations for all sculptures; by individual steps. In the first step, they record their observations for all the sculptures and then follow with steps 2, 3 and 4. Participants circulate between sculptures all the time. There should be no communication. Messages should not be offensive. When they have completed all 4 steps, they should stand next to their own sculpture, pick up the messages and read them. They are then split into groups of three.

Interpretation:

Each marks 1-3 messages from each sheet and shares them with the other two group members. The author places his sculpture in the middle and delivers selected messages. The other two take the posture of the statue and from this position express their emotions and feelings (pain and tension in the body, cramping, etc.) and what they can and cannot do in that posture. Then the author takes the posture of the sculpture and in this position the other two participant share their wishes to the author who has the statue in front of him.

4. PERMANENT AND TEMPORARY RELATIONS: SOCIOGRAM

The theme of permanent and temporary relationships is intertwined with symbols.

With the first step, when we pass around a ball of wool and symbolically (through animals, plants, fruits...) present ourselves, and thus express some of our personality and character dimensions, we feel the power of network interdependence of relationships. In this interdependence, with life we have also been given a living space, which I can largely design and perfect. However, sooner or later, circumstances arise when others enter into "my" living space; they improve and change it in their own way, and that leads us to the realization that I am no longer completely in charge of my living space and that eventually I might even have to give it up. A very good feeling is born in me, if I can do it with gratitude and the knowledge that I designed it well and meaningfully.

Enriched with feelings of network interdependence of interrelationships in the next step, I formulate a sociogram of childhood relationships by using coins or other appropriate symbolically powerful objects. On one hand, for an adult, these relationships are already obsolete, but at the same time, we are aware that they are largely resonating in our lives. Thus, despite its "transience", this sociogram illustrates the lasting relationships we carry throughout our lives. When designing a sociogram, I consider the size, weight, value, shape, historical message etc. of the coins, and above all, I place coins in a way to illustrate the whole system and dynamics (distance, proximity, etc.) of interactions. We conclude this step in small groups (3 to 5 members) by first explaining to the other participants the system, dynamics and characteristics of my primary (childhood) relationships, and then saying goodbye to each person hiding behind a single coin. Then I hand over the coin to my "angel", who I choose as my companion. With this coin, I thank the person for everything that person has given me in my life, and I also add a message that (may) contain something painful. I finish the same with my coin.

Then we compile a sociogram of lasting present relationships, which in small groups is reflexively similar to that of a "child" - by adding "wish" to "gratitude" and "message". Thus, we have already included the dimension of the future in lasting relationships.

Comparatively, as we have compiled a sociogram of the present, we can also design a sociogram of working groups or teams, which of course represent temporary relationships, since we are not included in them in terms of sustainability. That is why we say goodbye to them a little differently. Technical speaking, however, saying goodbye contains the same steps as the sociogram of our lasting relationships of the present, with the dimension of "last encounter" is added to it. This means that we take the three steps outlined in an otherwise imaginary emotional context, as if it were our last dialogue with this or that colleague.

4.1 MEDITATION AND WORKFLOW

Preparation:

- ball of wool, base (cloth, coloured paper, cardboard, etc.)

1. Wool - With which I weave a network of relationships. Personal presentation and feelings represented by a symbol: animal, plant, fruit. Unroll the ball of wool and give yourself a living space. When we are done unrolling, we put the thread of wool under the chair's leg to keep the net.

2. Living space

Each participant selects 3-5 symbols and places them in their living space (base: cloth, coloured paper, cardboard, etc.). After a simple and brief explanation of the symbols, I gratefully tidy up this living space and roll the wool back to the ball that I have been given earlier. Living space has been given to me, the day - I design it myself. I put content with symbols in it.

3. Designing a family sociograph - permanent relations

I design it with an object (coins, buttons, pebbles, figurines, etc.) and illustrate distance, connection, closeness, size, weight, value, shape, with individuals.

Participants select an item (coins, buttons, pebbles, figurines, etc.) for each family member and arrange them according to their relationships, ties. Then work in threesomes or pairs. The instructions are the same for both options.

Threesomes:

By using the sociogram of the present, the author explains his sociogram to the other two participants. Then he chooses an angel/companion. He says goodbye to the people behind the coins in three steps:

• Thanks to the person

• Message for the person (the message refers to something that may have hurt me - which refers to that person's shadow side)

• Tells the person the wish

Coin, pebble, button is then given to attendant to put away. Lastly, he says »goodbye« to his coin in the same way.

Sociogram of temporary relations:

To set up a sociogram of the future, however, only the step *I WISH FOR YOU* is used to say goodbye. This sociogram also includes people who are not yet present.

We can design:
• A sociogram of my childhood
• A sociogram of my lasting relationships today
• A sociogram of my lasting relationships in the future

In the same way, a sociogram of a working team, a class, or different groups to which I belong can be made.

The process is the same as the sociogram of the present, but you say goodbye to the object in the context of the last meeting. It contains following three steps: what I am grateful for, what my message is, and what I wish for him.

5. VISIONS, GOALS AND COMMUNICATION

5.1 WORKFLOW

Preparation:

A4 paper, pens

Execution:

1. The participant writes 3-5 possible goals (verbal-linguistic intelligence) on a piece of paper.

2. He / she chooses one of the goals that he / she thinks is most appropriate for him / her (mathematical-logical intelligence).

3. Then writes the selected goal in the middle of the new piece of paper. He / she writes as many associations, various terms, and expressions connected to that goal he / she can think of all over that piece of paper (verbal-linguistic intelligence).

4. Then he divides the written terms into four groups by colouring them with four different colours. The participant himself (mathematical-logical and spatial-visual intelligence) chooses logic or the rules of discernment.

5. Then he connects all the concepts of individual groups with lines. In doing so, he looks for paths so that the lines intersect as little as possible. In this exercise, he is intuitively already seeking ways to achieve his life goal (or conflict resolution). At the same time, he is introduced to mastering the logic of space and learns to avoid unnecessary conflicts (spatial-visual intelligence).

6. He translates the terms of the same colours into groups on the next sheet. He paints the groups with the same colours and then connects two of them with a bridge. In this case too, the reasons for the connection are participant's choice (visual-spatial intelligence).

7. Then, on a new piece of paper, he presents his view of the chosen goal in the form of colours or a drawing. Letters and numbers should not be used. The image should be as abstract as possible, and sheet filled with colours as much as possible. A coloured background should also be added to the goal, with as few white spots on the sheet as possible. This will make the picture more complete and comprehensive (spatial-visual intelligence).

8. Selected goal in then put in a sentence. Participant has to find its rhythm, which he then repeats quietly or semi-loudly (musical-rhythmic intelligence) for a while.

9. Considering the rhythm in which he repeats the sentence, a melody should then be added to it. He can also use the tune of any famous song. He then repeats/sings the sentence a few times in a quiet or semi-vocal manner (music-rhythmic intelligence).

10. His body posture should reflect the chosen goal and it should be kept for at least a few seconds. It is better to experience several different postures and then decide on the best one (physical-kinaesthetic and mathematical-logical intelligence).

11. The selected posture is then slowly transformed into movements and for some time the goal is "danced" (body-kinaesthetic intelligence).

12. Participants are divided into pairs and they discuss individual goals and process so far (interpersonal intelligence).

13. Participants should then calm down, take a comfortable position (if they are seated, lean against the backrest, close their eyes and put their hands on their knees) and be taken into the world of imagination.

With storytelling, we take them to the train station, where they wait for a train heading into the future. When the train arrives, they enter and travel (with or without a leader) into the future, e.g. for 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 400, 600... years. At one of the stations, they step out and look back to the present. Far in the present, they notice a person like themselves who deals with the questions, what is the meaning of his life, what his life goal is and what he would like to do in life. They observe and wonder under guidance of the leader how they see this person, what resources he has at his disposal, who supports him and who encourages him or her, what advice would be given to this person if they ever meet him or her in life. The participants should try to remember the answers to this question. Once they got the "tips", like before from the past, we take them back to the present. At the station, they meet with themselves and write down their tips in addition to their goal. If the initial choice of goal does not seem to be the most appropriate for the whole learning process, it may also be corrected or supplemented (intrapersonal intelligence).

14. That step is followed by reading the pictures. The participants shall be divided into small groups, where they focus on each picture according to the following rules:

- I see (each group member at least once - without interpretation - tells what he sees in the picture).

- It addresses me (each member of the group only once - chooses the detail from the picture that most appeals to him; if he cannot describe, he can show; without interpretation).

- I feel like this part of the picture/character (every member of the group shows, which part of the picture makes him feel well and which unwell).

- Title - interpretation (each member of the group presents at least one title-interpretation; the author of the picture chooses the best title - can add his own).

- The author presents the picture in a few sentences.

- After the presentation (not sooner), the other members of the group ask questions; the author may not "lie" but may refuse to answer.

- Expression of wishes: "Marko," I wish that you (the members of the group express their wishes - at least once; wishes can be repeated).
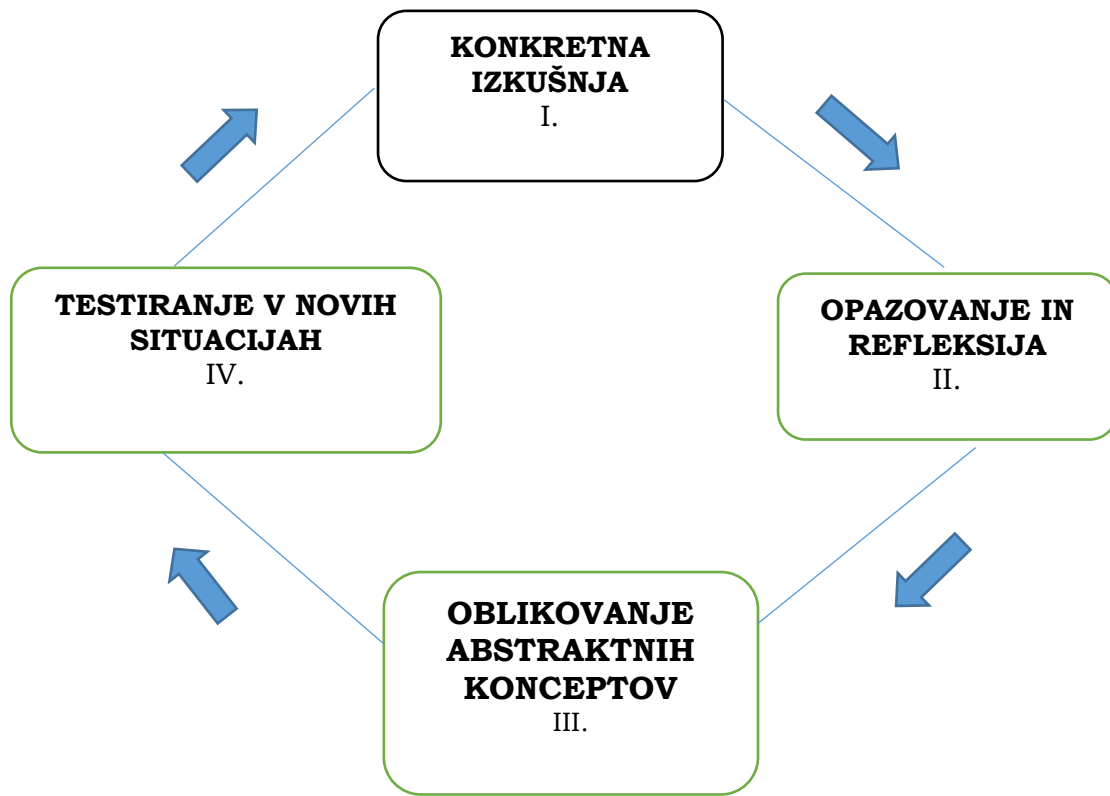
EXPERIENCED LEARNING

In the face of numerous personal life stories and existential dilemmas, we find many problems and inadequacies in relation to experiential learning. Personal life stories are living proof that we can not rely solely on theory. Stories can also become an important warning that highlights serious problems that we humans have when expressing ourselves. Sometimes we are not able to express ourselves fully: we do not know how to put something into words or how to share our personal experience with others. So we can say that the stories persuade us with a very explicit invitation: "Come and see."

Traditional school teaching, based on the verbal, symbolic and cognitive levels, has been at the heart of criticism for a long time. It especially applies to ineffective learning, poor motivation, short-term effects etc. As a result, there has been an increase in many initiatives that have made learning (in school or out of school) more enjoyable and more effective. The initiatives mentioned above aim to ensure a favorable learning environment and maximize brain capacity as well. Experiential learning is turning in the same direction: with the fundamental aim of making the diverse learning processes ultimately cohesive (emotional and sensual experiencing, thinking, analyzing through reflection (Marentič Požarnik, 2000, 120).

The term »experiential learning« or also »experiential education« is used in a wide variety of contexts: for learning in a relaxed environment, for individual learning and as a method of learning in formal or non-formal education as well.

The experiential learning model was developed by David Kolb. It came from the assumption that in classical educational practice the individual's concrete experience is neglected, while abstract theoretical knowledge remains unrelated to life, practice and real problems. According to Kolb, learning is about the intersection of two different cognition dimensions. The first one represents subjective experiencing and conceptualizing, while the second dimension covers wide range of activities from reflective observations to active interventions. It is important to put link between each of them, because Kolb says that learning is a constant interplay of four activities: experience (the learner engages in the learning experience), reflections of the experience (the learner analyzes the experience by thinking about it in a focused way), abstract conceptualisations (the learner compares his experience with the experience of classmates, he forms new concepts, explores his own concepts and confront them with scientific ones, integrate new knowledge and new concepts) and active experimentation (what the student has become aware of or has learned in teaching, testing and using it in a real life situation). During this process, the reflected experience is transformed into new knowledge.

Picture 1: The Circle of Kolb (Clark 2012)

The picture shows that experiential learning is a circular (cyclical) process. In this specific process, conflicts between opposing modes of perception are trying to be resolved (concrete experience, observation and reflection, formation of abstract concepts, testing of new lessons in new circumstances).

As we have said in the lines above, it is a holistic (comprehensive) way of learning, in which all processes (erception, emotion, thinking and acting) are thoroughly connected into an indivisible whole.

Experiential learning should not be understood as passive acceptance of already acquired knowledge from the outside, because it is actually completely active process, based on knowledge creation. And -what is more- our knowledge (concepts and ideas) are thoroughly transformed during this process. This absolute change colud happens only on the basis of our theoretical knowledge and personal experience. On the other hand, we must remember that such a process can never be completed, it is happening all the way to the rest of our lives (Marentič Pozarnik 2000, 124).

In experiential learning, the content, related to specific circumstances, persuades each student individually. To summarize, experiential learning is related with a direct desire to learn something (riding a bicycle, fishing, climbing etc. ...). It is usually about the skills that people actually need to survive and where motivation is not an essential factor. During the experiential learning process the role of "assistant" is assigned to the mentor, who guides his through all stages of the whole process. It also means that the success rate of the whole process can be determined by ourselves.

Therefore, experiential learning is considered to be reasonable - the individual learns key lessons by himself while using all his physical, emotional and cognitive abilities. We need to provide a proper learning atmosphere and as relaxed relationships as possible, without excessive hierarchy.

Interpersonal communication (discussion - thinking - acting) is an essential dimension of the experiential learning process. Experiential learning is thus also a kind of social learning as it blurs the boundaries between performers and participants. Because experiential learning very obviously blurs the boundaries between performers and participants, we can also relate it to the term »social learning« where all participants focus on solving a specific problematic situation (Marentič Požarnik 1987, 39).

"Experiential learning is actually a kind of gestalt, during which the participant fully engages in a particular event that takes place »here and now'" (Ščuka 2007, 269). According to Ščuka, holistic learning is also based on the interplay of the three dimensions: physical, mental and spiritual. The first -physical- dimension of learning refers to motor-sensory action. The second -mental- is related to »emotion, thinking, and understanding (mathematical-logical integration), which is one of the central (but not the only!) characteristic of human learning. The third -spiritual- dimension refers to language, and more broadly to »reporting about the experience, evaluation and meaning of the learning process«. This is not a sum, but rather a balanced combination of three dimensions. Fresh knowledge acquired during the learning process is not only the sum of all personal skills, because it represents completely new situation and, consequently, another integrity (Ščuka 2007, 170).

Only when we look at the experience from a psychological perspective, we realize how complex the field of our research really is. People share the experience from generation to generation and for the most part this "transmission" is happening at an unconscious level. It is the fact that our parents' experiences and insights can directly determine future generations.The positive experiences (metaphorically interpreted as valuable dowry) of the older generations can even have a very beneficial effect on the younger generations. But, on the other hand, the burdens of the past also could have a great potential to affect future generations as well (Gerjolj 2006a, 44-45).

DIMENSION OF PERSONAL GROWTH

Many educational theorists who have focused on experimental learning, including Kolb, have have given different interpretations. David Kolb, known for his theories of experiential learning and learning styles, has defined three significant periods in the lifelong learning process:

The first - **knowledge acquisition phase** - is placed in the formal schooling period. The second - **specialization phase** – during which we specialize in professional or professional knowledge. The last and therefore the third -phase of integration- is set in a period when we integrate our knowledge into a broader social context (Marentič Požarnik 2000, 124). Kolb presupposes a personal growth that lasts until the final stage of the most creative adulthood. People of this stage try to make sense of their knowledge and work, and at the same time they ask themselves questions about the meaning of a human life. Experiential learning (as a holistic education), on the other hand, also stimulates personal growth – in terms of the mental, spiritual, emotional and physical dimensions of life.This is not about trying to integrate more experience into the education system, on the contrary, in this way a new philosophy of education that emphasizes the integrity of personality and development is formed" (Mijoč 1995, 39).

The most important components of such learning are: value orientations, subjectivity, emotions, social interaction, personal and spiritual growth. Compared to the traditional learning paradigm, experiential learning is defined by different ones philosophical and cognitive -theoretical starting points that more closely connect theory and practice, as well as experiential learning and concrete action (regardless of student's age) as these methods have been used since kindergarten through elementary schools to university and adult education (Marentič Požarnik 2003,123).

The experience involved in this process is an important source of learning. Every personal experience has a significant impact on the human inner world. Each experience has the potential to shape the human inner world and, if necessary, drastically change it, since the human inner landscape is also influenced by the external world (*this includes human affiliation, his behavior in certain space and time, within a specific social, cultural, political context). Through the process of learning, people strive for an memorable and effective experience (Beard and Wilson 2013, 26). Every human mindset (idea/concept/theory...) is transformed by deep personal experience and during this process, people acquire new knowledge, which is a major step forward towards personal progress and personal growth.

Human experience is based on the components of our present, past and future: although the student gets experience here and now (present), they also relate to experience from the past. No one has the ability to detect a particular event as accurately as ourselves and also no one has the same experience as ourselves. Evenmore, no one has the ability to detect and process all information the way we do. That is what makes us belive that experiential learning is very personal and unique to each individual "(Beard, Wilson 2013, 30). On the basis of human experience, which involves attention and reflection, people in different stages of life also have different ideas about the world, things, substances and people (Jarvis 2003b, 21).

Comprehensive experiential education is a process whose most important function is to stimulate human personal growth. During the process we are trying to explain in this chapter and which is happening in a concrete situation (»here and now«), people always acquire new knowledge, related to both, our personal and social experience. The fundamental basis for human personal growth is defined on the basis of conscious perception of ourselves and our surroundings, and also on the back of learning from concrete personal contact and stimulating intersubjective relationships. This means that each goal set by individual during the teaching process can be realized and self-assessed, which is very important for any mature and integrative personality (Reichel and Scala 2005, 10).

During our personal growth, we also have to face specific crisis situations, which can be successfully eliminated through various experiential methods (for example, "role-playing, empty chair, etc.").

On the one hand, people are always confronted with a borderline situation during a crisis, so at this point each individual begins to seek answers to the questions about the final sense of life«(Combe, Gebhard 2007, 13), on the other hand, an individual always has the opportunity (especially with group support) to find a suitable solution for existential fears which completely coincides with the pedagogical-therapeutic motto "change it, accept it or leave it". Difficult experiences are processed gradually according to the individual's psychic abilities (also known as the onion method).
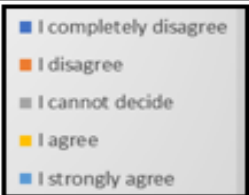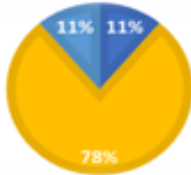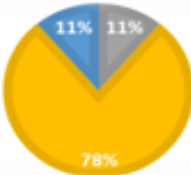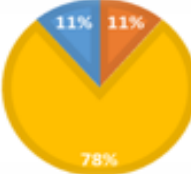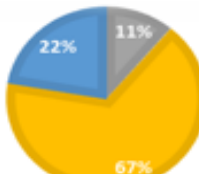
The onion method illustrates our specific approach, while we have to face with our painful experience. The process begins at the point where it does not hurt or. – in other words - "*where the leaf is dry*". However, the process only goes so far that the core (personality) can survive without dangerous wounds. Only in this way we can thoroughly remake our past, we get rid of the inappropriate patterns provided to us by our parents or any other important actors; the second area - field of healthy partnerships - requires a similar approach, because even within the examples cited above, our compulsive patterns of past behavior may be repeated; the third area is based on the reflexction of our attitude towards children - in this field we also face the processing of intergenerational relations between educators and teachers; the last -fourth- area covers all different forms of business-social relations.
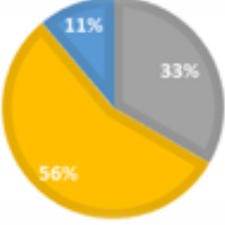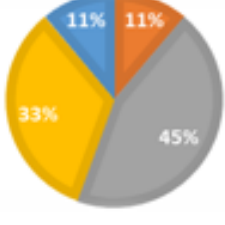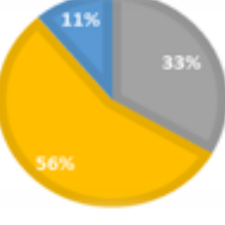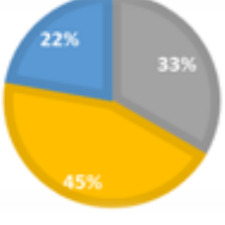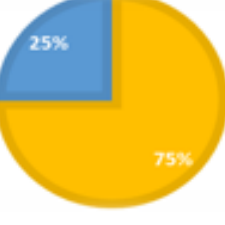
Therefore, it is an effective way in which we develop the appropriate skills and insights that will help us in the future to cope with the most difficult situations in our lives. We will be able to handle each situation in the way that is envisaged by each specific role: »as a child, an adult man or woman, husband, wife, father, mother, educator, youth worker or teacher.
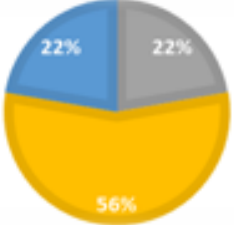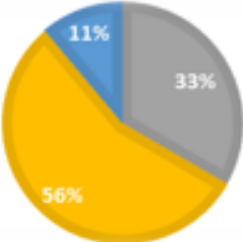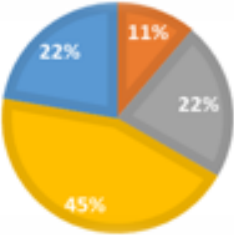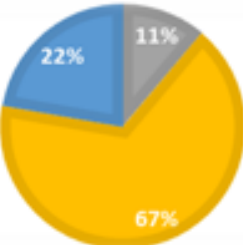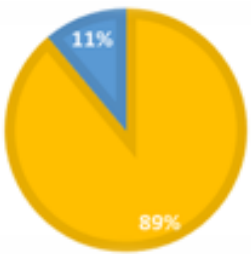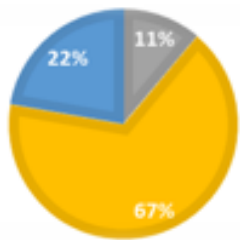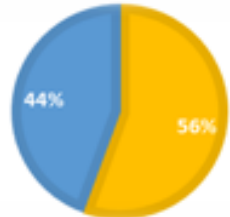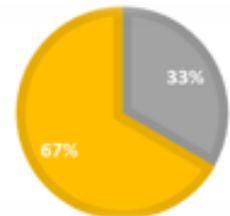
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MEASURING PERSONAL GROWTH

1. During the course of education, or upon its completion, did the following changes occur on a personal level? (mark with X: 1 - I completely disagree, 2 - I disagree, 3 - I cannot decide, 4 - I agree, 5 - I completely agree). You can also add your own findings in the boxes below and evaluate them similarly.

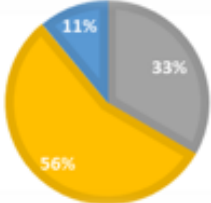|	I completely disagree (%)	I disagree (%)	I cannot decide (%)	I agree (%)	I strongly agree (%)
■ I completely disagree ■ I disagree ■ I cannot decide ■ I agree ■ I strongly agree	1	2	3	4	5
 Changes in the perception and conception of one's life story and the discovery of one's own sources of power	11,11			77,78	11,11
 Deeper and more complex awareness that benefits me in different areas of life			11,11	77,78	11,11
 Self-sensibility		11,11		77,78	11,11
 Sensibility to your body			11,11	66,67	22,22
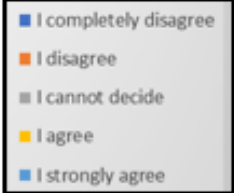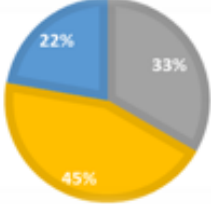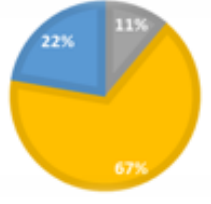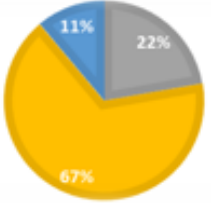
Sensibility in relationships with others			33,33	55,56	11,11
Sensitivity to nature and the environment		11,11	44,45	33,33	11,11
Recognizing new perspectives on solving and recognizing life stories			33,33	55,56	11,11
Deeper recognition of (self) responsibility			33,33	44,45	22,22
Focus on "here and now"				75	25

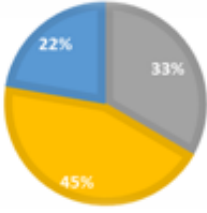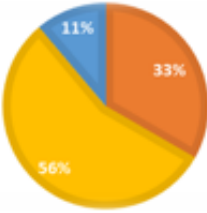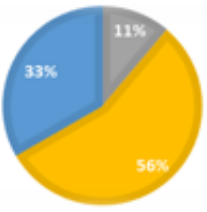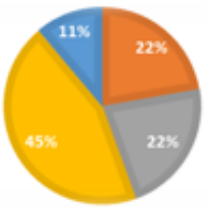|			22,22	55,56	22,22
Positive evaluation of direct experience					
Easier and better restoration of psychological balance and inner calmness			33,33	55,56	11,11
Reinforcing the confidence that things are happening in life with a specific purpose, that there are no coincidences, that nothing is impossible	11,11	22,22	44,45	22,22	
More successful resolution of conflicts and difficult situations on a personal level			11,11	66,67	22,22

				88,89	11,11
Positive orientation in forming self-image					
Better acceptance of oneself			11,11	66,67	22,22
Recognizing and accepting one's personality boundaries				55,56	44,44
Less defensive actions			33,33	66,67	
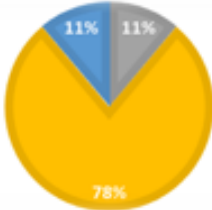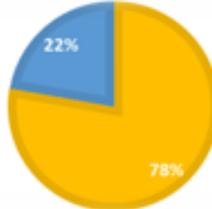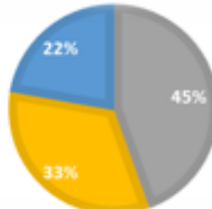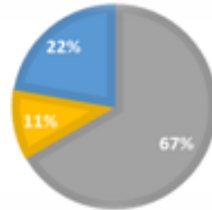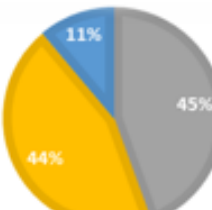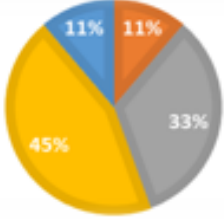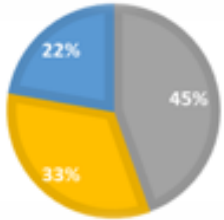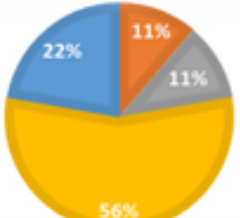
2. During the course of education, or upon its completion, did the following changes occur on a professional level? (mark with X: 1 - I completely disagree, 2 - I disagree, 3 - I cannot decide, 4 - I agree, 5 - I completely agree). You can also add your own findings in the boxes below and evaluate them similarly.

	I completely disagree (%)	I disagree (%)	I cannot decide (%)	I agree (%)	I strongly agree (%)
	1	2	3	4	5
■ I completely disagree ■ I disagree ■ I cannot decide ■ I agree ■ I strongly agree					
Calm and relaxed			33,33	55,56	11,11
More holistic view of people			33,33	44,45	22,22
More holistic view of upbringing			11,11	66,67	22,22
Better insight into situations			22,22	66,67	11,11

Greater motivation			33,33	44,45	22,22
Less anxiety		33,33		55,56	11,11
Increased creativity and confidence in own work			11,1	44,45	44,45
Including intuition and emotions in decision making			11,11	55,56	33,33
Discovering new work and research areas		22,22	22,22	44,45	11,11

Better communication and collaboration with colleagues			11,11	77,78	11,11
Establishing a healthy work/life balance				77,78	22,22
Establishing a healthy distance to work and colleagues			44,45	33,33	22,22
More successful resolution of conflicts and difficult situations in professional life			66,67	11,11	22,22
Increased sensibility and			44,45	44,45	11,1

empathy in relationships with colleagues					
 Easier identification of personal crises of individuals and acquiring more appropriate forms of reaction to them			11,11	33,33	44,45	11,11
 Better response in difficult situations				44,45	33,33	22,22
 I do not experience professional challenges with fear, but accept them as an opportunity			11,11	11,11	55,56	22,22

Based on the closed-ended questionnaire presented in the tables above, we have found important findings regarding the positive impact of education. As for the purely positively evaluated statements (I agree / I strongly agree), four stand out. Experiential education had a strong effect on participants' focus on '' here and now '' (I agree: 75%, I strongly agree: 25%). It also significantly contributed to a positive attitude in the formation of self-image (I agree: 88.89%, I strongly agree: 11.11%). Self-image or self-esteem is closely correlated with recognizing and accepting one's personality boundaries, which was also the third exclusively positively evaluated statement (I agree: 55.56%, I strongly agree: 44.44%). Education has also helped to strike a healthy work-life balance (I agree: 77.78%, I strongly agree: 22.22%). It is interesting to note that 66.67% of the participants did not decide (I cannot decide) whether education influenced the successful resolution of conflicts and conflict situations at work. In addition, the only strong disagreement (I completely disagree) with regard to changes in the perception and conception of one's life story and the discovery of one's own sources of power (11.11%) stands out. Likewise, education in 33, 33% of participants did not have any effect on reducing anxiety (I disagree). It is interesting, however, that none of the participants chose to disagree, when we were interested in the impact of education on calmness and relaxation, since 33.33% could not decide.

3. Were there any significant changes in your personal life during your education or upon its completion? Can you list those changes?

- It helped me look into my life with better insights. So, significant changes are happening in my personal life. I could find some sense of my behaviour as it was related to my past and roots.

- I realized that the relationship with my sister and brother was more important than I thought; partnerships have also been strengthened.

- More awareness of my body. It was very good to have more attention for the body. The idea of working holistic is very good to take to our practices. Communicate more about my (difficult) feelings. To try more creative ways of getting in touch with my own feelings and naming them was refreshing for me as I found this to be a good way for me to express myself. I used to think that my drawings, paintings or work with clay was not nice enough, but now I write my fairy tale, as I received very good feedback about it, so when I get home I will draw a picture. It might also be a good idea to use this in my work to make it easier for children to talk about difficult things. Drawing or painting (doing something with my hands) is good for me, because this is how I can get out of my head.

- There were no major differences, but I can testify to the increasing openness.

- The focus on life here and now has improved the mental (mental) balance. There was also a decision to stabilize my life in the near future.

- The realization that my life is not perfect and, if I want to change something, I have to stop burdening myself with what others will say and do what I think is right.

- Yes, there were. I broke up with my long-time friend; I quit eating meat and decided to become more independent in housing (accommodation).

- No

- No

4. Were there any significant changes in your professional life during your education or upon its completion? Can you list those changes?

- Education has helped me approach young people with a different and more holistic view of their personality / behaviour. It created and helped to better understand the situation.

- Yes. Education was a good help to start distinguishing, which is very important to me in life and to be able to limit myself.

- I take with me the idea of working with children more and more holistically on their personal level. Maybe give them some yoga poses or work on imagination (meditation) and drawing / painting...

- Initially, no major changes could be detected. With the development of the program itself and the next module, more and more benefits were perceived at the personal and professional levels.

- I am not afraid of new challenges, I treat everything as a post-development, I do what gives me pleasure, I work 100% professionally.

- I feel like a valued employee and have the opportunity to develop through participation in various training courses, which translates into earnings. For the sake of increasing self-esteem, I am not afraid of challenges at work, as through education there has been a greater openness to challenges.
- No, I don't remember any significant changes ...
- No.
- Yes, more self-esteem at work and greater sensitivity to others.

5. Please evaluate to what extent you perceive a positive change in your satisfaction with personal life after education? 1-very small, 2-small, 3-neutral, 4-large, 5-very large.
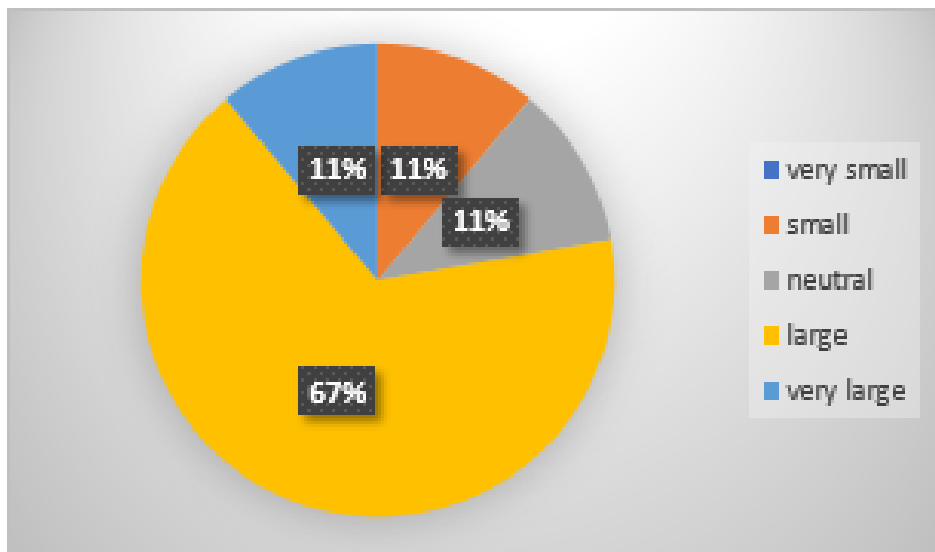
6. Please evaluate to what extent you perceive a positive change in your satisfaction with professional life after education? 1-very small, 2-small, 3-neutral, 4-large, 5-very large
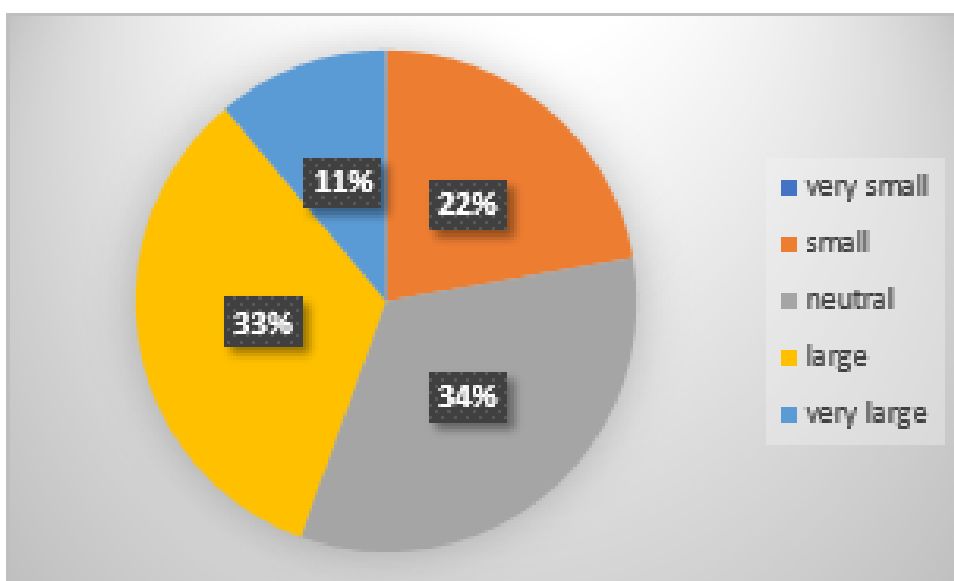
7. Which topic was crucial for your personal growth? (Sort by relevance. Highlight important matters in the description.)

a)   Integration of my personality – Tree (3. most frequently mentioned and evaluated)

b)   Messages from my parents - My backpack (2. most frequently mentioned and evaluated)

c)   This is me – Modelling (5. most frequently mentioned and evaluated)

d)   Permanent and temporary relationships – Sociogram (4. most frequently mentioned and evaluated)

e)   Visions, goals and communication - Looking to the future (1. most frequently mentioned and evaluated)

8. Which of the following methods of work have particularly influenced your personal growth? (Choose up to three.)

a)   Searching for and identification of symbols (4 marks)

b)   Dancing (1 mark)

c)   Guided imaginative meditation (4 marks)

d)   Artistic expression and modelling (5 marks)

e)   Verbalization and "reading" of pictures - a process with an individual in a "small" group (6 marks)

f)   Creative writing (1 mark)

g)   Body work and exercises (4 marks)

h)   Theoretical explanations (3 marks)

9. How has education influenced your view of your childhood and adolescence?

- It helped me get back to my childhood. Although I had done this before, education had a different dynamic, because it was done in a different group, with different layouts.

- It did not change my view but confirmed it.

- My view of childhood and adolescence was already 'in the composition', in progress. However, I can say that there is more room for a positive look back and for a milder view of what has been happening in the past. The fact that I drew a tree without roots certainly says something about myself and it was good to reflect this side of myself.

- It did not affect.

- Situations where I was not heard as a child have a direct impact on my adult life and the decisions I make.

- It came to the realization that negative childhood experiences had 'shut down', prevented the possibility of exploring new areas within me to authentically " become ", be and take from the world what I needed.

- Education was just a confirmation that in my life my parents were always *'on the side-lines*' because they were more focused on quarrelling with each other than on us, their children.
- It did not affect.
- Now I can look at childhood events from a distance and from a professional perspective.

10. How has education affected your view of relationships in your primary family (relationships with parents, siblings)?

- It reaffirmed the connections and influences of the family.
- I can better accept things from the past and that also makes our contact calmer and more pleasant. I have found a healthy balance between distance and proximity.
- There is more room for positive thinking than negative. When I was telling the stories, good things about the past came up; and it was nice to feel them again.
- I realised that the relationship to my primary family is very loose.
- I understood that because of the rigid rules at home these were not the right relationships, I felt a lot of injustice from my parents. I felt lonely without any involvement with my loved ones, but now I know that it all made sense and that no one wanted me bad.
- While creating the sociogram of my family, I saw what places they occupy in my life and how important their presence is. I also realized that everyone has to talk about everything going on here and now in order for these relationships to be good.
- I understood the relationship with my sister in a new light. Now I know that what I feel and think about my relationship with my mom is not wrong or abnormal.
- It did not affect.
- The view became more realistic, and not so much idealized.

11. How has education influenced the formation of your permanent (family) relationships?

- /
- I take more time for myself, my partner and my extended family. I have gained more confidence so that I also let others come closer.
- I think I'm more connected to my parents than before. However, I am really leaning on my husband knowing that the focus now is more on creating our own family with the help of my family / parents. I feel that I have progressed more as an adult; I am no longer a child of my parents, but I may become a mother myself.
- I realised again (what I already knew) how important my children are to me.
- I understood how important it is to have someone close with you. a person you can trust, with whom you can enjoy life together and take all the best from it. I don't have to do it alone as I thought.

- In my opinion the answer is simple. Changes in relationships or marriages can be painful but sometimes we have to make them to see that staying in a place where we are uncomfortable is much more painful.
- I understood that if I wanted to be a good parent, one that I never had, I needed to allow my children to leave, make their own decisions, mistakes, and the like. I allow my kids to go and come back without complaining(s) and not feeling guilty. These are the things I miss about my parents ...
- It did not affect.
- Education did not greatly affect lasting relationships. I may experience them just a little more distant.

12. How has education influenced the formation of your temporary (colleagues and friends) relationships?

- It helped me understand my behaviour as well as the behaviour of my colleagues and friends.
- I try to communicate faster when I reach my limit and ask for help. I strive for more quality time with my colleagues and friends.
- I will no longer be satisfied with 'less'. If I am investing in a relationship, it must be worth the deep rather than the superficial relationship. I need a relationship more than some superficial conversation.
- I have found that each colleague has their own backpack, so I can more easily understand reactions to certain situations.
- It did not affect, although now my Belgian colleagues know more about me than before and more than my other colleagues.
- Before this education, I had a very large distance to the people and did not need close relationships. I did not trust my friends and I preferred to do everything myself with caution; now I'm starting to realize that it's nice to have people you can rely on.
- I now understand that setting boundaries and healthy distance affects my friendships, my psychological well-being, and my inner peace.
- I am more certain of myself and better protect myself; I don't let others hurt me so easily.
- It did not affect.
- In temporary relationships, I can keep a healthy distance, while being open and empathetic enough for the relationship to develop.

13. How has education affected your spiritual, ethical and moral dimensions of life?

- It certainly influenced the spiritual, ethical and moral dimension of life. It has helped me to look at certain situations in a different way.

- I have received some new insights into my spiritual life e.g. regarding the connection between developmental psychology and biblical stories.

- I think that it just confirmed that this side of me is an important side. It encouraged me to keep this part 'warm'.

- It did not affect, and I am very pleased that education leaders were open to it.

- With the help of faith in God, I began to see signs that I had never paid attention to

- before, but now I know that certain things happen in life for some reason, that it is no coincidence that everything happens because of something (with reason).

- I do what I think is consistent with my principles and my ego. I began to believe that nothing happens by chance, that all actions are the result of something. My values have also changed.

- It helped me to be more honest with myself and with God; now it's easier to name certain things by name.

- It did not affect.

- Education has deepened the spiritual dimension of life and added a bit to the overall understanding of one's life.

-

14. What obstacles and barriers do you still encounter in your personal life?

- I still find it hard to say no and set boundaries.

- I like to help and please people, so it's hard to say no when they ask me for help.

- I think the hardest part is the transformation of acquired knowledge into real life. I really liked the silence, rest and breaks, thinking about myself and getting to know other stories. It is easy to forget when I get home, so I have to stick with it and do more things that are good for me and make me happy.

- The problem that I'm afraid to set for myself is repeated.

- For me, the biggest obstacle in life is low self-esteem. I am working on it now and am changing my boundaries.

- There are still a lot of negative feelings about my parents … *I change, but they don't* … : (they get older and thus less susceptible to influence and change.

- Lack of confidence (self-esteem).

- Above all, how to evaluate yourself in a circle of family and lasting relationships.

15. What obstacles and barriers do you still encounter in your professional life?

- It is a challenge that needs creativity to be able to apply these good methods to young people at our center in Belgium and Ostend.

- I feel a strong responsibility, so I will take on a number of tasks. Learning to say no occasionally remain a point of attention.

- Bridging acquired knowledge into real professional life.

- Similar to my personal life… Everything is one Gestalt ;)

- /

- I am a very sensitive and empathetic person. When someone is hurt, I immediately express a desire to help, but it often happens that people do not do so because of jealousy or lack of understanding and are unable to identify and respond to other people's crises.

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- Above all, with a sense of doubt and uncertainty, will I be able to help someone in the way they need to accomplish change.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF ALL INCLUDED PARTNERS

1) Društvo SMC Maribor

was founded in 1998 as a non-profit NGO with the mission to provide support to the youngsters and youth workers and to promote active citizenship, responsibility, and voluntarism, and to contribute to personal growth of youth and their families. Centre primarily works in the local and regional area and it has become one of the best non-governmental youth centers in the region. Our focus group is teenagers and our doors are open to them every day of the week. We provide tutorial help, consultations for them and their parents and other assistance they may need growing up. A lot of them join us as volunteers working with younger generation of children.

In the last 5 years, we have started to develop psychosocial programs based on the needs perceived in the local environment. We have also opened a counseling center for young people and their parents, which offers different activities in the scope of:

- Personal development of young people, youth and pedagogical workers.
- Counselling of parents and families with youth
- Child play therapy
- Development of psychosocial programs for youth, couples and families

We also provide trainings and non-formal learning opportunities at really low or no costs at all. In recent years we participated in several international youth exchange projects and or focus is to extend our work in that area to ensure even more possibilities for local youth and to enable international learning experiences to our youngsters.

Društvo SMC Maribor (Don Bosco Youth Center Maribor) has a lot of experience in various events, trainings, workshops, youth exchanges on local and national level. Our participation in international projects and cooperation with partners from abroad has shown us importance of better understanding and presenting cultural diversity in local environment. We organized and participated as partners in several youth exchanges and TC's under the Youth in Action and Erasmus+ Programme. That was a very significant step in our organizational development, and we want to continue our growth with international projects. Our team is familiar in logistical part of running projects and managing the budget. At the same time, our members have acquired a lot of experiences in the field of trainings as they've participated in some, and are very interested in this kind of methodology and non-formal learning process. We teach youngsters how to respect the nature and how to be connected to it in camps that wee organize in the mountains and woods.

Our successful programs:

- Giants of Hope (mentoring program),

- Traps of growing up (lectures and workshops),

- Non-power of relationship (free proffesional lectures related to a specific topic/thematic evenings),

- Ball therapy (guided sports activity as a means of regulating anger, violence and distress)

- Children's circus workshops (creative strengthening of personal and physical development).

2. The Pope John Paul II Youth Education Center,

established on October 15, 2007, operates as an educational institution focused on helping young man with behavioral and psychosocial disorders. The center is located in the village of Rzepczno, in a rural environment that provides effective ground for introspection, reflection and consequently for understanding the meaning of life. All educational activities are carried out on the basis of the educational system of Fr. Bosco, which promotes mutual love and understanding. In this way, the center provides a suitable environment in which young people could form appropriate personal values and take care of their personal growth.

An important element of the entire educational system is the constant presence of educators who help to co-create a pleasant family atmosphere and who are also the animators of individual study groups. They are actively involved in the lives of young people (supervising - advising - helping - offering support and compassion), and -what is more- they also teach young people how to understand their inner feelings and cope with different everyday problems better.

The staff is capable of independent, creative and effective problem solving, because they specialise wide range of different activities, such as :

- rehabilitation pedagogy,
- sociotherapy, psychology,
- therapy,
- oligophrenic pedagogy.

They are also further trained in various workshops and trainings in the field of youth work

Essential characteristics of the educational center:

- individual conversations with children and regular group meetings (all activities are subordinated to group and individual work)
- long-term and systematic work with young people (holistic approach)
- constant cooperation with various non-governmental organizations in the field of work with young people
- numerous workshops, trainings, preventive educational events and innovative solutions for young people and their personal development, such as felinotherapy.

3. Jeugdhulp Don Bosco Vlaanderen

is organization taht focuses on youth work and has been operating in Belgium since 1946. It has 11 different institutions spread throughout the Flemish region (4 housing institutions, 2 specialized institutions and 5 day care centers), in which they offer assistance to 188 young people who facing problems such as:

- attention and concentration disorders

- behavioral disorders

- oppositional and rebellious behavior

- mourning, processing, and depression

- conflict at home and at school

- psychosomatic disorders

- anxiety, panic attacks, stress

- educational problems

Most of their clients have a combination of the challenges / problems / disorders listed above. As other family members often need help, the organization actively involves them in the procedures, thus ensuring the successful rehabilitation of both - young people and their parents.

The organization pays special attention to young people without parents (orphans), whose problems are very pressing and who need personal growth, empowerment and qualified staff who will also help and encourage them in this area. Participants in the program are experts in psychology, social work and education.

Approximately 240 employees actively participate in various trainings in the field of pedagogy, psychology and personal growth. Otherwise each center focuses on the goals and visions of the region, but in general, all of these institutions want to offer the following:

- Home

- Learning and work support

- Guidelines in the field of education and personal growth

SMC
MARIBOR

Młodzieżowy Ośrodek Wychowawczy im. Jana Pawła II
* RZEPCZYNO *

JEUGDHULP
DON BOSCO
VLAANDEREN