



Case study collection

Toolkit for youth workers

IMELO

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THE EXCLUDED STUDENT

Title: "The excluded student" – developing acceptance, empathy and group cohesion through drama pedagogy tools

Topic: Exclusion, social connection, social acceptance in the school community

The focus is on the psychosocial effects of social exclusion, lack of empathy, and opportunities for community intervention. The story uses the example of a specific participant, Bence, to show how participants' social sensitivity can be developed in a peer community.

Objective: To mobilise participants' own life experiences and review stereotypes related to the topic, as well as to develop empathy and social responsibility, understand how exclusion works, and raise awareness of stereotypes.

Time: two 60-minute sessions

Situation, dramatic setting: In a class of 16 10th-grade vocational school students, the teacher noticed that Bence was regularly excluded: he was not included in group projects and was often the target of jokes.

The problem: The participants show little empathy and often react cynically to their classmate's differences (introverted behaviour, speech impediment), which reinforces the mechanisms of exclusion.

Method: the session uses drama pedagogy and competence development tools to address the topics of exclusion, acceptance and empathy. Together, these methods support the development of **empathy**, **communication skills** and **social awareness**, and help young people process the difficulties they face in a safe environment while gaining real-life experience of the issues.

The series of sessions is based on the principles of drama pedagogy developed by Gavin Bolton^[1], Dorothy Heathcote^[2] and Jonathan Neelands^[3], as well as on soft skills competency-based development models. The methodology used in the processing allows participants to acquire the skills necessary for social coexistence through roles in an imaginary situation.

Description of the activity:

1. "Map of our common ground" - tuning in

Objective: to strengthen community spirit, raise awareness of similarities, and deepen inclusivity

Description:

The facilitator reads out various statements (e.g. *"I like listening to music"*, *"I have felt alone in a group"*, *"I find it difficult to speak in front of new people"*, *"I like being listened to"*). Anyone who identifies with the statement takes a step forward or raises their hand.

Then they pair up and share a common experience or feeling related to the shared experience. During the exercise, the feeling of *"I am not alone"* develops, which reduces anxiety and prepares the group to deal with more sensitive topics.

Competencies developed: empathy, connection, self-reflection, trust building

2. "I am a star" convention

Objective: to strengthen positive self-image, highlight unique qualities, create an accepting atmosphere

Description: everyone says something positive about themselves that they are proud of, and the others reinforce this with applause. Particularly useful for developing self-esteem and a positive self-image.

Developed competencies: self-reflection, positive self-image, social reinforcement

3. "A day at school" role play

Objective: to develop empathy, perspective-taking and social sensitivity

Description: In small groups, students dramatise a day in the life of Bence, either from an internal or external perspective. After the presentation, the group gives feedback together, reflecting on the feelings and behaviours they experienced. The role play is suitable for sensitising group members to each other's perspectives.

Competencies developed: empathy, perspective shifting, cooperation, reflective thinking

4. Thought tracking – reflective convention

Objective: understanding internal motivations, emotional awareness, deepening empathy

Description: Participants are asked to create a short scene about a situation of exclusion in the classroom. During the activity, the facilitator repeatedly stops the game, and asks each participant to

"Think out loud": share what you feel, why you don't intervene, what you fear, what is going on inside you. The others listen actively, followed by a small group discussion.

This method facilitates dramatic reflection. The dramatic convention allows participants to reflect on events from different roles (victim, abuser, observer) while articulating their own experiences and internal dilemmas. The task is particularly effective **in developing empathy, emotional awareness, critical thinking and individual responsibility**, as well as in recognising that the same situation can be interpreted in different ways

. Dramatically re-enacting the situation also helps participants identify possible courses of action.

Competencies developed: emotional awareness, self-reflection, empathy, decision-making awareness

5. "Bence in me" – reflective circle

Objective: processing experiences, strengthening group cohesion, introspective awareness

Description: At the end of the series, sitting in a circle, each participant shares a thought or feeling that they will take away from the sessions. Facilitated questions help to raise awareness of experiences: "Where did you see yourself in the situations?" "What would you change in the next similar situation?"

Competencies developed: self-reflection, emotional intelligence, social responsibility

Outcome of the learning process:

With the help of drama pedagogy tools, participants can put themselves in the shoes of different characters: the excluded participant, the observers, and those who actively or passively contribute to the exclusion.

This method allows participants to connect emotionally with the situation, develop their empathy skills, become more sensitive to social responsibility, understand what someone who does not fit into the community may experience, and how indifference or ridicule affects them. As a result of the session, the functioning of 'listening' and indifference, the recognition of individual responsibility and the formulation of constructive behaviour patterns are seen in a new light.

Overall, the session not only serves to raise awareness of the topic, but also actively contributes to the development of community skills, self-reflection and empathy, allowing participants to work through real-life difficulties in a protected, safe space.

Competencies developed:

- empathy, communication
- conflict management
- social awareness



ANNA'S CHOICE

Title: "Anna's Choice" – drama education approach to identity conflict and external expectations

Topic: identity conflict and external expectations, conflict between personal desires and parental expectations, decision-making and the search for self-identity, career orientation

Objective: Participants use their experiences to explore the burden of decision-making, the conflict between their own desires and external expectations, awareness of their relationship to their identity, and the development of their ability to act through understanding conflict.

Duration: Two 60-minute sessions

Situation, dramatic setting: The main character, Anna, is a 19-year-old who is studying economics under pressure from her parents, even though she wants to be an actress. She does not enjoy her studies, experiences an identity crisis, feels lonely and becomes increasingly anxious. The story begins when she is invited to a talent audition, but this coincides with an important exam.

Method: The session uses **drama pedagogy and competence development tools:** it explores the conflict between identity and expectations through personal experiences, role-playing, forum drama and reflective exercises. Together, these tools support **the** development of **emotional awareness, decision-making skills, self-assertion, communication and social responsibility.**

Description of the session

1. Anna's inner voice" - attunement

Objective: to encourage participants to empathise with the protagonist's dilemma, to draw on personal experiences relating to identity and expectations.

Description: The group sits in a circle. The facilitator asks a question: "Have you ever been in a situation where you had to choose between the expectations of others and your own desires?" Participants respond briefly, creating an inner monologue (e.g., "I wanted to... but instead..."). Afterwards

they discuss their feelings about the situation in pairs. The exercise helps to open up the group and prepares them to engage emotionally with Anna's story.

Competencies developed: self-awareness, emotional awareness, empathy

2. "Playful dialogue identity" - role play

Objective: To experience the conflict between external expectations and internal desires in an experiential way, using humour to relieve tension.

Description: Participants are divided into pairs. One person plays the role of Anna, who wants to become an actress, while the other plays the role of her parents, who want her to pursue a career in economics. The dialogues are deliberately fast-paced, exaggerated and humorous, as if they were arguing in character. The aim is for participants to experience the emotional impact of conflicting opinions. After the scenes, the group gives feedback on how they felt and where the communication was difficult or ridiculous.

Competence developed: conflict management, communication dynamics

3. "My inner film" - title sentences

Objective: To express the internal experience of decision-making in a creative form; to raise awareness of the tension between internal and external expectations.

Description: Participants imagine making a "film" about Anna's story. Individually, they write 2-3 "title sentences" related to each scene in the film (e.g. *"I stood there in front of two doors: exam or stage?"*, *"My mother's voice echoed in my head, but my heart whispered something else"*). They write these down on large sheets of paper. Then, in small groups, they share their sentences with each other and choose one that they will illustrate together (e.g. in the form of a still image).

The task helps participants to look at an internal conflict from the outside and find the voice of their own narrative.

Developed competencies: emotional awareness, creative self-expression, self-reflection, sense of identity

4. Extended forum theatre – in-depth drama education convention

Objective: active involvement, raising new perspectives, experiencing community

support

Description: Participants work **in small groups** to develop three alternative solutions, each with a possible outcome, prepare and present scenes, while the other participants can join in the scenes and ask the actors questions ("Why did you choose this?", "How does this affect you?").

- o **Anna herher desires** – – goes to audition, and accepts the consequences.

o **Anna gives in to her parents' expectations** – she cancels the audition and continues her studies.

o **Anna tries to compromise** – she talks to her parents and looks for another solution.

Competencies developed: creative cooperation, interpersonal sensitivity, reflexivity, developing alternative solution strategies.

5. “Anna’s decision in me” – reflective circle

Objective: To bring experiences to a personal level, self-reflection on the topic, formulating internal lessons.

Description: The group returns to the initial question. The participants sit in a circle and say: "If I were in Anna's place, I would... because...". They share what would have been difficult for them in this situation and what would have helped them make a decision. The closing circle helps to raise awareness of the experience, reinforces self-reflection and builds self-knowledge.

Competencies developed: self-reflection, identity reinforcement, decision-making awareness

Learning process and results

Participants experience the weight of an identity conflict on an experiential level. The dramaturgical approach to decision-making alternatives makes them aware that the choice is complex. The development and visualisation of decisions results in active learning and reflection. Forum drama gives group members the opportunity to respond personally, thereby learning responsibility and empathy. Participants can experience **that each decision-making situation can be interpreted from multiple perspectives**

.

Competencies developed:

- self-awareness, emotional awareness, empathy
- conflict management, communication dynamics
- interpersonal sensitivity, cooperation, alternative solution-seeking
- decision-making awareness, identity reinforcement, responsibility



Title: "Alone in the crowd" – from superficial communities to genuine connection

Topic: Personal well-being and meaningful relationships, superficial communities and the lack of genuine connection in adolescence

Objective: To confront participants with the emptiness of superficial relationships, to raise awareness of the value of genuine human relationships, and to develop the skills necessary for forming deeper, trusting relationships.

Time: two 60-minute sessions

Situation, dramatic setting: Mark is 20 years old and a second-year university student. He lives with his flatmates in a rented flat in the city centre and goes out almost every night. He has 2,800 followers on Instagram, and his posts always receive dozens of comments and likes.

One Saturday evening, Mark is sitting with his friends at a nightclub. Everyone is having a good time, and he himself is smiling and joking. However, when he tries to share his family problems with them, the others do not respond meaningfully: "Hey, let's not be depressed!"

On his way home, as Mark walks alone, he is overcome by a strange emptiness. He remembers that he has been in similar situations countless times in recent months. He participates in at least 4-5 events every week, but in reality, no one knows how he feels, what his fears are, or what really concerns him. No one listens to him.

The problem: Despite his popularity and active social life, Mark is experiencing increasing loneliness. He recognises that his relationships are superficial, but he does not know how to change this without losing his current status. His friends do not understand his problem; in fact, they think he has a perfect life. Mark's dilemma is that he longs for real relationships but is afraid of vulnerability and of being left alone if he changes.

Method: The session combines drama pedagogy and coaching tools. Drama pedagogy conventions (e.g. "inner monologue") help participants understand Mark's difficulties, while coaching tasks support solution-oriented thinking and the development of action strategies.

Description of the session:

1. "Relationship map" – tuning in

Objective: To assess the quality of one's own network of relationships and personalise the topic.

Description: Participants draw their own "relationship map" on a large piece of paper. They draw themselves in the centre of the page and then place the people who are important to them around them. The distance indicates the closeness of the relationship. The thickness of the lines indicates the frequency of communication, and the colours indicate

the quality of the relationship (e.g. green: trusting, yellow: superficial, red: conflictual). After sharing the maps, the participants analyse their experiences together.

Competencies developed: self-reflection, critical thinking, visual communication, systems thinking.

2. Hot seat – drama education convention

Objective: To promote deeper understanding, explore different perspectives, and develop empathy.

Description: A volunteer participant sits in the "hot seat" in the role of Mark. The others stand around him and ask him questions about his motivations, feelings and fears. The questions gradually become more profound: "How do you feel when you go home alone?" "What are you most afraid of?" "What would you like to say to your friends?" The facilitator moderates the discussion and helps to explore deeper layers. After the exercise, "Mark" shares his experiences, and the others reflect on what they have heard.

Competencies developed: empathy, active listening, questioning techniques, emotional intelligence.

3. Three Paths" - small group improvisation, deepening convention

Objective: To try out alternative courses of action and experience the consequences of different choices.

Description: The group is divided into three smaller groups, each of which develops an alternative solution and acts it out through improvisation. Group 1: Mark tells his friends that this situation bothers him and he would like to change it. Group 2: Mark keeps his feelings to himself, but tries to form deeper relationships with new people in a new environment. Group 3: Mark gradually tries to initiate more honest conversations with each of his friends individually. Each group prepares a 5-8 minute scene and then presents it. The others evaluate the advantages, disadvantages and feasibility of the solutions.

Competencies developed: alternative thinking, decision-making, assessing consequences, creative problem-solving

4. "Action plan workshop" - coaching tool

Objective: To develop concrete, practical solutions for Mark's situation and explore possible courses of action.

Description: Participants work in small groups and collect specific suggestions for what Mark can do in his situation. The suggestions are divided into three categories: 1) What can he say/do the next time someone rejects a deeper conversation? 2) How can he initiate more honest relationships? 3) What new situations/environments can he seek out where deeper relationships can develop? The results are evaluated together.

Competencies developed: problem solving, creativity, strategic thinking, action planning.

5. "Relationship intention" - reflective closure

Objective: To summarise what has been learned and make a personal commitment to change.

Description: Each participant formulates a specific intention to deepen their own relationships. The intentions are written on a shared poster, which is displayed in the classroom. The exercise emphasises personal responsibility and the power of community support.

Competencies developed: self-reflection, awareness, commitment, action plan development.

Outcome of the learning process:

During the session, participants understand that the quality of real relationships does not depend on quantity. They recognise the importance of vulnerability and honesty in forming deep relationships. They become able to pay more conscious attention to their own and others' communication and are given specific tools to move beyond superficial conversations. The combined use of different methods allows participants to work through the topic in a complex and experiential way, resulting in change in their relationships.

Developed competencies:

- social and relationship-building skills
- communication skills
- creative problem solving
- creating balance in relationships



Title: Perfect life? – The conflict between online identity and the real self

Topic: Digital well-being, mental health

The tension between online identity and the real self, distorted expectations, media sensitivity. The focus is on how online presence distorts self-image, what role expectations play

expectations – our own and those of others – play a role, and how we can remain conscious of this.

Objective: The aim of the session is to encourage participants to reflect more consciously on their online presence, recognise the distorting effects of social media, and strengthen their self-esteem despite comparisons, as well as to enable them to consciously recognise their own online behaviour and emotional reactions, and engage in digital self-reflection.

Situation, dramatic setting: "Perfect life?" – University students under pressure from Instagram

Several first-year communication students at a popular university told their mentors that they felt tired, frustrated and anxious. During an informal group discussion, it emerged that a significant proportion of students spend several hours a day on social media, primarily Instagram and TikTok. Several admitted that seeing "perfect bodies," "peers living dream lives," and "successful content creators" made them feel that they were not productive, attractive, or interesting enough.

Kinga is an excellent student who edits every photo before uploading it, and even then she is unsure whether she "looks good enough" compared to others. She increasingly compares herself to others and feels that she has "become invisible." She doesn't dare to post content that is important to her because she feels that it is "not interesting enough and would spoil the image of her feed." Kinga puts it this way: "I have an ex-girlfriend who now lives in Dubai, became a fitness trainer, and constantly posts about the beach and her luxurious life. I look at it and feel like I'm sitting in my dorm room, eating a sandwich, and have no idea what I want out of life."

Method: The session uses drama pedagogy and soft skills tools, with creative tasks helping participants discover the tension between their online self and their real self-image. The method creates a safe environment where real-life difficulties can be processed through role-playing, reflection and joint thinking.

Session description:

1. "Me behind the screen" - tuning in

Objective: To promote personal involvement and bring to the surface one's own online experiences and feelings.

Description: Participants sit in a comfortable circle and are invited to mentally scroll through their last five posts on one of their social media platforms. The facilitator asks helpful questions: "What did you reveal about yourself in these posts?", "Was there anything you left out or embellished?", "Who was the post actually intended for?" Participants then write down a short internal monologue: "What I didn't share but should have shared is..." This is followed by pair sharing. The goal is not to induce digital guilt, but to experience honest connection and initiate internal self-reflection.

Competencies developed: self-reflection, emotional awareness, authentic self-expression

2. "Online ME – Real ME" mirror game

Goal: To highlight the differences between external and internal self-image, the connection between body awareness and self-image

Description: In pairs, participants first present their "digital selves" to each other – a few poses, gestures, and words they often use online (e.g., "filter smile," "caption mood"). Then, the same pairs show each other their "real selves" – they move, talk and behave as they would at home, in a trusting environment. After the game, there is a short discussion: "Which felt more natural?", "How did it feel to wear these masks?"

Competencies developed: self-identity, body awareness, confidence in communication

3. "The case of the influencer profile" – group dramatic improvisation

Objective: To dramatically explore online roles and develop critical thinking

Description: Participants form groups of three. Each team must create a "influencer profile" – they can choose to build a profile based on gastronomy, fashion, lifestyle or self-branding. They come up with a name for the profile, its tone, target audience, and present the content they would create in the form of a short scene (as if they were shooting a story). After the presentations, the group reviews the scene together: what is behind the frames? How does the character really feel when they turn off the camera? The goal is to recognise the intentions and emotions behind media consumption habits and communication strategies.

Competencies developed: media sensitivity, creativity, critical thinking, social sensitivity

4. "Thought tracking: Kinga before her last post" - drama game

Goal: to explore the conflict between internal motivations and expectations

Description: They act out a jointly agreed situation: Kinga is about to share a photo that is sensitive to her (e.g. unflattering appearance, experience of failure). During the scene, the game leader stops time and asks the actor to "think aloud" – to share their thoughts: "I'm afraid they'll laugh at me...", "I want someone to see that this is also me." Others can join the scene and share their own thoughts. The improvisation is followed by a small group discussion.

Competencies developed: emotional intelligence, self-identity, courage, social security

5. "Who am I online?" - reflective circle

Objective: To conclude shared experiences, raise awareness of individual insights and share them with the group; to reinforce the connection between digital identity and real self-image, self-expression in a safe space

Description: Participants sit in a circle in a calm, trusting space. The facilitator first asks questions to encourage participants to reflect on themselves: "What did you take home with you today?", "Was there any insight that surprised you?", "How could you be braver in representing your true self in the

online space?" Then everyone formulates a sentence: "If I could show something about who I am in the online world today, it would be..."

Competencies developed: identity reinforcement, self-expression in a safe environment, emotional integration, reflective thinking, social acceptance

Learning process, results

Through the exercises, participants can understand how the media distorts real identity and how important online presence is in shaping self-image. The session helps participants recognise the distorting effects of the online space, encourages self-reflection, reinforces offline identity and self-esteem, and promotes honest dialogue about expectations and self-image issues.

Competencies developed:

- self-reflection, emotional awareness
- self-identity, body awareness, self-confidence
- digital awareness, media sensitivity, critical thinking
- emotional intelligence, courage, social security
- identity reinforcement, reflective thinking, social acceptance



Title: "Giving voice to ourselves" – self-assertion and cultural identity in minority existence

Topic: Cultural identity, the experience of minority status, difficulties in self-expression, acceptance of identity in an intercultural environment, *uncertainty in self-assertion arising from minority status*, self-confidence

Methodology: the exercises used are based on established drama pedagogy and soft skills tools. The drama pedagogy background of the session provides participants with a learning process that allows them to examine and process **personal, moral and social issues through their own experiences in a safe environment within the world of fiction.**

Objective: To raise participants' awareness of their own minority identity, to practise self-assertion, to review stereotypes and to strengthen cultural self-confidence.

Duration: two 60-minute sessions

Situation (dramatic setting): In a fictional country called Valoria, young people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds live together, and a new youth forum is formed, with representatives delegated from different regions. The aim is to establish common rules for schools, community spaces and cultural representation. Among the members are young people who speak minority languages and bring different cultural customs with them. Despite their abilities, many of them are withdrawn and do not dare to express their opinions in the presence of the majority nationality. Mira, a Hungarian native speaker and active participant with creative ideas, is involved in the joint rule-making process, but she is uncertain: she becomes withdrawn in the presence of her majority peers and does not dare to express her opinion.

The problem: the tense dynamic between the participants' uncertainty stemming from their cultural identity, their need to make their voices heard, and their need to conform to expectations, which hinders the strengthening of their self-image and their role in the group.

Description of the session

1. "Cultural connectors" - attunement

Objective: to prepare for personal involvement, to create a common cultural basis, to convey the message that "I am not alone".

Description: The facilitator reads out cultural statements (e.g. "Have you ever written a poem in your native language?"). Those who agree raise their hands or step forward. This makes the cultural glue visible. Then, in pairs, they share a relevant experience for 1-2 minutes (e.g. when they were proud of their culture).

Competencies developed: self-reflection, sense of identity, community sensitivity, communication

2. "Multifaceted identity" (social roles) – drama game

Objective: to reveal and highlight identity dilemmas and differences in positions of power

Description: Create small group situations: e.g. people taking on different roles in a new environment (minority, majority, mixed background, living in two countries, etc.). After the scene, each group recalls how they felt as "themselves" and "others".

Developed competence: identity sensitivity, empathy, role awareness, social situation interpretation.

3. "Breaking down barriers with your voice" - coaching tool

Objective: self-confidence, vocal self-expression, embracing culture

Description: Participants take turns saying a short, emotionally important message about their cultural background ("I grew up in Valoria, and...") - first quietly, then louder and louder. The others respond with applause and encouragement.

Competencies developed: self-assertion, linguistic self-confidence, emotional expressiveness

4. Thought tracking – drama teaching convention

Objective: to explore internal barriers and develop emotional awareness

Description: The group acts out a scene in which a participant in a mixed team conducting a vote experiences uncertainty. The game leader stops the scene and selects a participant to express their thoughts aloud ("Why am I not speaking up? Why am I afraid to stand up?"). They then reflect on this in small groups.

Competencies developed: emotional awareness, recognition of internal resources, decision-making, empathy

5. "Where am I in this?" - reflective circle

Objective: personal learning, identity awareness, final reflection

Description: Participants sit in a circle and briefly state: "Until now... I felt this way..." followed by "I am proud of... and I would like others to see me this way." This concludes the process and raises awareness of the change.

Competencies developed: self-reflection, emotional stability, self-image development, community communication

Learning process, results

During the role play, participants try to find common ground in different roles (majority, minority, neutral mediator). During the session, participants gradually open up about their cultural identity, and their ability to express themselves increases through role play and voicing their inner thoughts.

Competencies developed:

- self-reflection, identity awareness, community sensitivity
- identity sensitivity, empathy, role awareness

- self-assertion, linguistic self-confidence, emotional expressiveness
- self-reflection, emotional stability, self-image development



Title: "Unspoken Anxiety"

Topic: Mental health, resilience, overcoming communication barriers

The focus is on the effects of internal tensions and unshared anxieties, as well as the possibilities for establishing trusting communication and emotional security. It draws attention to how often we fail to see the internal struggles of others. During the session, participants explore what internal and external factors hinder open communication and how to create a safe environment for emotional support.

Objective: To mobilise participants' personal experiences on the topics of mental health and internal pressure; to recognise and break down communication barriers; to develop emotional awareness and empathy.

Time: two 60-minute sessions

Situation, dramatic setting: In a Year 12 secondary school class, the participants are under serious pressure as their final exams approach, with several tests a week, regular oral exams, career decisions, upcoming entrance exams, as well as parental expectations and their own internal desire to conform. The participants often exist in a competitive atmosphere where there is little room for honest sharing and vulnerability. The community functions well on the surface, with no conflict visible, yet the internal distance between classmates is growing.

Kata, a quiet, high-achieving participant, has been more withdrawn and tired for months, speaking less and less. Kata is preparing for medical school, and her parents and those around her have high expectations of her. Lately, Kata has been complaining more and more about headaches, she doesn't attend group activities, and her social media page is completely inactive. One of her friends, Dóri, notices this but doesn't know how to help. Her dilemma is whether to bring it up in an environment where

everyone tries to maintain the appearance of functioning perfectly. The story begins when Kata fails to show up for a crucial biology exam and does not respond to messages from her class or private messages.

Method: The session uses drama pedagogy and soft skills development tools to address the topics of mental well-being, resilience, communication barriers and emotional expression. The methods support the development of emotional intelligence, social empathy, self-reflection and trust. Participants can reflect on their own experiences and the possibilities for community support in a safe, fictional space.

Description of the session:

1. "Hidden storms" - attunement

Objective: to mobilise personal experiences about the difference between internal anxiety and outward behaviour

Description: Participants draw a picture on two sides of a sheet of paper: on one side, a smiling face symbolising the image they present to the outside world; on the other side, an image representing an inner feeling (e.g. storm, fog, emptiness, darkness, wind, pressure). The participants then sit in a circle and share their thoughts in a guided discussion, asking questions such as: "Have you ever smiled on the outside but felt something else on the inside?" "What situations trigger this contradiction in you?" This exercise creates emotional security and openness, laying the foundation for dramatic processing.

Competencies developed: self-reflection, emotional awareness, connection

2. "Kata's Diary" - drama game

Objective: dramatic representation of inner experiences

Description: The facilitator reads a short, fictional diary excerpt from Kata's point of view, which refers to the girl's inner world and isolation ("I didn't talk to anyone again today, even though Dóri asked me something... it's so easy to hide behind a five. Sometimes I feel like I don't really exist."). Then, in groups of 3-4, the participants create dramatic scenes from different moments in Kata's day: at home, at school, with her friends or alone. After the scenes are presented, the facilitator stops the game and activates the actors by asking them to follow their thoughts ("What's going on inside you right now?", "Why aren't you saying anything?"). The actors respond in an internal monologue, and the others give feedback on the emotional content they hear.

Competencies developed: empathy, perspective taking, dramatic expression

3. "What if Kata spoke?" - forum exercise

Objective: to explore opportunities for opening up, to identify communication barriers

Description: Participants act out a situation in which Kata tries to talk to a teacher, a friend or her parents. The scene begins with typical internal resistance (“They wouldn’t understand anyway...”), then at a certain point the scene is stopped. Participants can step into Kata's shoes, try out what they would say differently, and see what arguments and feelings they could use to change the situation. The others give feedback on which attempts they found credible, helpful or thought-provoking. The focus of the exercise is on what can help Kata not to suppress her feelings.

Competencies developed: emotional self-expression, communication courage, social sensitivity

4. "My inner helpers" - group work

Objective: to raise awareness of internal resources and external supporters

Description: Participants work in small groups and creatively represent Kata's inner resources. Each group creates "inner helpers" – for example, her sense of humour, the encouraging words of a kind teacher, a memory of a good day, or the voice of an imaginary friend. They visualise these (drawing, object composition, sculpture group) and then present them to the others, explaining what each helper represents and when it could help Kata. During the exercise, participants can also draw parallels with their own experiences of helpers.

Competencies developed: resilience, positive self-image, creative thinking

5. Resource circle – coaching exercise

Objective: to raise awareness of and activate internal resources to overcome everyday difficulties

Description: The group sits in a circle. The facilitator asks participants to recall a previous situation in which they faced difficulties but managed to overcome them. Everyone describes their experience using the following sentence starter: "I succeeded because..." Then, using cards with keywords (e.g. "perseverance", "friend", "time", "music", "writing"), they build a resource wall. To conclude, everyone chooses a card that they could rely on now if they were in Kata's place.

Competencies developed: self-reflection, resilience, emotional awareness

6. "What am I taking with me?" - reflective

circle Objective: closing reflection, integration of

experiences

Description: The participants of circle each word or sentence close the session: "Today I understand that...", "If I were Kata, then...", "I will take this forward: ...". Sharing gives group members the opportunity to recognise their own internal parallels and delve deeper into the topic. Finally, the facilitator summarises the jointly formulated values and experiences.

Competencies developed: self-reflection, emotional integration, community awareness

Learning outcome:

During the session, participants experience how much internal tension and unspoken feelings can lie behind apparent "good functioning". Through dramatic and reflective exercises, emotional awareness deepens, empathy develops, and participants recognise the importance of a safe, supportive environment for young people to be able to open up.

Competencies developed:

- emotional awareness
- self-reflection
- communication courage
- empathy and connection
- resilience and supportive behaviour

**Title: Your first job – expectations and compromises in career building**

Topic: workplace expectations, work-life balance, professional challenges, career building, career orientation issues

Objective: To confront participants with the realities of the working world, raise awareness of the importance of work-life balance, and develop the skills needed to find a balance between workplace expectations and personal values.

Time: two 60-minute sessions

Situation, dramatic setting: Tamás is a 20-year-old university student studying economics. He is working for the first time in his life and is doing an internship at a multinational company. He has performed well during his internship, his colleagues like him, and they have offered him a job at the company after he graduates. However, employees are expected to work weekends and overtime, and to put "the company first" in their lives. During his internship, he has already experienced staying late, often until 7 or 8 p.m., and receiving urgent tasks on weekends.

Tamás thinks about how they always talked about the importance of work-life balance at university, and he himself imagined a future where he would have time for friends, hobbies and sports. Tamás increasingly feels that his expectations were "too naive". He sees that the other interns also accept these conditions and no one questions them. At the same time, he needs the job – he wants to become financially independent and knows that it is difficult to find a good job in the labour market.

Focus: Reality vs. expectations, work-life balance, first work experiences, social pressure, self-assertion vs. conformity

The problem: Tamás' dilemma is whether to accept the job offer with its tough conditions or look for something else, thereby risking his secure income and career opportunities. He does not know whether his expectations are unrealistic or whether he has legitimate demands. He feels social pressure to be "grateful" while internally resisting the conditions.

Method: The session combines the tools of drama pedagogy, coaching and value clarification. Drama pedagogy conventions help participants understand Tamás's inner world and different points of view, coaching tasks support the decision-making process, and value clarification exercises help define personal priorities.

Description of the session:

1. Value pyramid – attunement

Objective: To raise awareness of one's own values and priorities, to personalise the topic.

Description: Participants draw a pyramid and write their most important values at the top (e.g. family, career, freedom, security, creativity). Less important values are placed on the lower levels of the pyramid. After the exercise, they discuss their values in pairs, and then the group analyses how these values can influence decisions at work.

Competencies developed: self-reflection, value awareness, priority setting, communication.

2. Internal monologue – drama education convention

Objective: To develop empathy, gain a deeper understanding of the problem, and bring internal conflicts to the surface.

Description: A volunteer participant plays the role of Tamás on the tram on his way home. He voices his thoughts, feelings and dilemmas aloud: "What will my parents say if I turn it down?" "Is adult life really like this?" "Am I expecting too much?" The others listen quietly, then share their own thoughts after the monologue.

Competencies developed: empathy, perspective taking, emotional intelligence, active listening.

3. Montage – deepening convention

Objective: To present the positive and negative consequences of possible decisions simultaneously, to understand the complexity of decision-making dilemmas, to develop a nuanced approach to choices.

Description: Montage is like film editing, where different images, texts and scenes are placed side by side to convey a complex message and show the contradictions of a situation. Participants jointly examine the consequences of possible decisions: they form four groups and simultaneously present the negative and positive effects of different decisions using various tools. During the presentation, while one group acts out the scene they have created, another group reads the written text.

a) Let us assume that he has accepted the job:

1. Group: Writing a letter of praise from the boss to Tamás after one year, highlighting his career achievements.

2. Group: The negative aspects of accepting the job must be depicted in a silent scene. A 3-4 minute scene shows Tamás's everyday life one year later (e.g. at home at 11 p.m., exhausted, still working, or friends calling him on the weekend, but he has to work).

b) Let's assume he did not accept the job:

3. Group: A letter from a friend to Tamás, writing about how much fun they had during their joint activities and training for the marathon.

4. Group: Mime scene depicting Tamás turning down the job and the consequences of his decision. A 3-4 minute silent scene showing Tamás's financial and professional difficulties (e.g. job hunting, financial problems, loss of self-confidence, etc.).

Competencies developed: Critical thinking, understanding the complexity of decisions and different points of view, decision-making, conscious consideration of consequences

4. Decision scale - coaching tool

Objective: To structure the decision-making process and consciously weigh up the pros and cons.

Description: Participants create a table with two columns: "I accept the job" and "I do not accept the job". Both columns are divided into two further sections: short-term and long-term consequences. After completing the table, they discuss which factors are most important in the decision and how these can be weighted.

Competencies developed: critical thinking, decision-making, strategic planning, assessing consequences.

5. Alternatives workshop – coaching tool

Objective: To find creative solutions, expand possibilities, and avoid black-and-white thinking.

Description: Participants work in small groups to find alternative solutions to Tamás's situation. For example: negotiating working conditions, part-time work opportunities, looking for other companies, further education. Each group must find at least 3 creative alternatives, which are then presented and evaluated together.

Competencies developed: creativity, problem solving, negotiation skills, exploring options, learning decision-making strategies

6. Personal action plan – reflective conclusion

Objective: To summarise what has been learned and make a personal commitment to conscious decision-making.

Description: Each participant formulates a personal action plan for their own career: what values they will base their decisions on, what compromises they are willing to make, when they would say no. The plans are written on a shared "values wall" poster. The exercise emphasises personal responsibility and conscious living.

Competencies developed: self-reflection, awareness, commitment, action plan development.

Outcome of the learning process:

During the session, participants understand that navigating the world of work is a complex process that requires conscious decisions and value-based choices. They recognise that they do not have to accept all workplace expectations uncritically and that they have the right to represent their own values and needs. They are given practical tools for decision-making and finding alternatives.

Competencies developed:

- conscious decision-making
- value-based lifestyle
- creative problem solving
- developing alternative solutions
- learning decision-making strategies



TRAPPED IN DIGITAL ADDICTION

Title: "Trapped in digital addiction"

Topic: digital wellbeing, digital addiction and maintaining real human relationships, digital balance

Objective: To confront participants with the dangers of excessive screen time, raise awareness of the value of real human relationships, and teach strategies for achieving digital balance.

Time: two 60-minute sessions

Situation, dramatic setting: Sára, a 12th-grade high school girl, is spending more and more time online, neglecting her studies and friendships. Her classmates notice that Sára is becoming isolated, but they don't know how to help her.

Sarah's behaviour causes tension in the class community. Her friends feel helpless, and her teachers are concerned about her academic performance. Sarah does not recognise the problem and reacts defensively to any attempts to approach her.

Method: The session combines drama pedagogy and coaching tools. Drama pedagogy conventions allow participants to put themselves in Sara's shoes and those around her, while coaching tasks help them develop solution-oriented thinking and action strategies.

Description of the session:

1. "Digital footprint" - tuning in

Objective: To raise awareness of one's own digital habits and personalise the topic.

Description: Participants draw their own "digital footprint" on a large piece of paper: what platforms they use, how much time they spend online, and for what purpose. The drawings are analysed together and participants share their experiences with each other. The exercise takes place in a non-judgmental atmosphere, with the aim of initiating joint reflection.

Competencies developed: self-reflection, critical thinking, communication.

2. Exploring Sára's inner world – thought tracking

Objective: To understand Sára's inner motivations, fears and desires, and to deepen empathy.

Description: Participants act out a typical day in Sara's life: she gets up in the morning, goes to school, sits in class, is alone during break time, goes home, spends time online. The facilitator stops the scene several times and asks "Sara" to say her thoughts out loud:

- In the morning, when she wakes up: "What are you thinking now, Sarah?"
- During class, when the teacher is talking: "What's on your mind?"
- During break time, when the others are talking: "How are you feeling right now?"
- At home, when you turn on the phone: "What do you want?"
- At night, when you can't sleep: "What are you afraid of?"

The other participants can also add their thoughts: "I think Sarah is thinking about..." or "Maybe Sarah feels that..."

Competencies developed: empathy, emotional intelligence, understanding internal motivations, active listening.

4. Image and reality – caption convention

Objective: To raise awareness of the difference between superficial images in the digital world and the underlying reality, to expose the illusion of a "perfect life" on social media, and to develop critical media awareness.

Description: Sarah often shares photos on social media. These photos always look perfect, but what is the reality behind them? Participants are divided into four groups, each of which creates a still image, a "Sarah photo", which appears on social media. To do this, they create a double caption: the social media caption that appeared on social media and the real caption that draws attention to the reality behind it. Themes: Perfect morning, Best friends, Family harmony, Successful day

Developed competencies: critical media awareness - evaluation of social media content, honesty and authenticity - real self vs. online personality, self-reflection - examination of one's own social media habits, social awareness - recognition of the effects of media

3. "Timeline" - coaching tool

Objective: To visually represent the development of digital addiction and the deterioration of real relationships, and to raise awareness of the consequences.

Description: The group depicts Sarah's story on a timeline: from initial enthusiasm to complete isolation. Key events, turning points and missed opportunities to help are marked on the timeline. The exercise helps to understand the process and the importance of intervention.

Competencies developed: systems thinking, analytical thinking, problem solving.

4. "Support network" - group problem solving

Objective: To develop specific action strategies to help Anna and strengthen community responsibility.

Description: In small groups, participants collect ideas on how to help Sara. The suggestions are written on a "support network" which is then hung up in the room. The exercise symbolises shared responsibility and proactive action.

Competencies developed: creativity, cooperation, problem solving, social responsibility.

5. "Digital detox" – reflective conclusion

Objective: To summarise what has been learned and make a personal commitment to change.

Description: Each participant makes a personal commitment to change their digital habits. The commitments are written on a shared 'digital detox' poster, which is displayed in the classroom. The exercise emphasises personal responsibility and the power of community support.

Competencies developed: self-reflection, awareness, commitment, action plan development.

Outcome of the learning process:

During the session, participants understand the dangers of digital addiction and the importance of real human relationships. They become able to recognise the problem in their own environment and are given specific tools to help. The combined use of drama pedagogy and coaching methods allows participants to process the topic not only intellectually but also emotionally, resulting in a more lasting change in their thinking and behaviour.

Competencies developed:

- critical thinking
- developing conscious media use
- social responsibility
- problem solving

· action plan preparation



Title: When friendship becomes toxic – setting boundaries and healthy relationships

Topic: Relationship tools, conscious relationship development, toxic friendships, emotional manipulation, and the importance of self-assertion

Objective: To enable participants to recognise toxic relationships, set healthy boundaries, and develop self-confidence and assertiveness skills.

Situation, dramatic setting: Petra, an 11th grade girl, is emotionally blackmailed and controlled by her friend Zsófi. Petra does not dare to leave the relationship because she is afraid of being alone. Her classmates see the problem but do not know how to intervene. Petra becomes increasingly isolated from her other friends, and Zsófi completely takes control of her. Petra's self-confidence diminishes, she becomes anxious, and she does not dare to stand up for herself. Tension and helplessness prevail in the class community.

Method: The session combines drama pedagogy, coaching and assertive communication tools. Drama pedagogy conventions help participants understand the situation from both sides, coaching tasks support solution-oriented thinking and the development of action strategies, and assertive communication exercises help with effective self-assertion.

Description of the session:

1. "Friendship thermometer" - tuning in

Objective: To raise awareness of the characteristics of healthy and toxic friendships and to personalise the topic.

Description: Participants place their own friendships on a scale (from "icy cold" to "hot"). After the exercise, they share their experiences with each other and jointly compile the characteristics of healthy and toxic friendships.

Developed competencies: self-reflection, critical thinking, communication, clarification of values.

2. Internal and external voices – portraying Petra's dilemma

Objective: To gain a deeper understanding of Petra's internal conflicts, the mechanisms of manipulation and the reasons for her decision-making difficulties.

Description: Petra (a volunteer participant) stands in the middle of the room. Two circles form around her: one group of participants forms the inner circle, representing Petra's inner voice and fears (e.g. "Zsófi is my best friend, she loves me", "I'm afraid that no one else will love me"), while another group of participants forms the outer circle, representing healthy self-esteem and self-assertion (e.g. "This is not a healthy relationship", "You are valuable too"). During the exercise, the inner circle "whispers" to Petra, while the outer circle tries to "reach" Petra (supportive voices).

Developed competence: understanding internal conflicts, recognising manipulation, becoming aware of supportive voices

3. Thought tracking convention

Objective: To expose manipulative techniques and understand the mechanism of gradual influence.

Description: Participants act out a typical conversation between Zsófi and Petra. Petra wants to go to the cinema with another friend, but Zsófi wants to convince her to spend the evening with her instead. The facilitator stops the scene several times and activates the participants by following their thoughts ("What is going on inside you right now?", "Why do you feel that way?"). The actors respond in an internal monologue, and the others give feedback on the emotional content they hear. This makes the actors' emotions and thoughts accessible and allows for a deeper understanding of their meaning.

Competence developed: recognition of manipulative techniques, critical thinking

4. "Boundary line" - coaching tool

Objective: To raise awareness of personal boundaries and develop the ability to say "no".

Description: Participants draw a line in the room to symbolise their personal boundaries. The facilitator reads out various requests and situations, and participants must decide whether they would cross their own boundaries in the given situation. The exercise helps participants become aware of their own needs and the importance of boundaries.

Competencies developed: self-reflection, awareness, self-assertion, decision-making.

5. "I-messages" - assertive communication exercise

Objective: To learn effective and non-violent communication and develop conflict management skills.

Description: Participants practise using "I-messages" in pairs. The task is to talk about their own feelings and needs in a conflict situation, rather than blaming the other person.

blaming the other person. The exercise helps participants learn constructive communication and conflict resolution skills.

Competencies developed: communication, assertiveness, conflict management, emotional intelligence.

6. "Support circle" - reflective closure

Objective: To experience the power of community support and reinforce what has been learned.

Description: Participants stand in a circle and each person says a positive, affirming message to the person next to them. The exercise emphasises the power of community and the importance of supportive relationships. At the end, participants express what they will take away from the session.

Developed competencies: self-reflection, empathy, social support, community building.

Outcome of the learning process:

During the session, participants learn to recognise the signs of toxic relationships and understand the importance of healthy boundaries. They acquire specific communication and self-assertion techniques that enable them to represent their own interests with greater confidence. The combined use of drama pedagogy, coaching and assertive communication methods enables participants to approach the problem in a complex way and achieve lasting change in their thinking and behaviour.

Competencies developed:

- self-assertion
- conflict management
- assertive communication
- awareness of personal boundaries



Title: Finding your own voice – searching for identity and independence

Topic: identity search, independent living, difficulties in becoming independent, mental health

Objective: To confront participants with the consequences of late adulthood, to support the discovery of their own identity and desires, and to develop the courage and skills necessary for independent living.

Time: two 60-minute sessions

Situation, dramatic setting: Máté studied economics and has just graduated from university. He has always been the "perfect child", never causing any problems, always obedient, getting good grades. His parents are proud of him because he is "easy to deal with". He performs well and would like to continue his studies with a master's degree, but he is increasingly doubtful: did he really want to study this, or was he just meeting his parents' expectations?

Máté still lives at home. His mother cooks for him, does his laundry, cleans up after him, and takes care of his affairs. Máté lives comfortably, but when he sees that all his friends have moved out, are living independently, working, and building relationships, he feels worse and worse. At a university party on Friday, his friends talk about where they live, what they cook for themselves, and how they pay their rent. Máté listens because he has nothing to say. When they ask him when he is moving out, he gets embarrassed: "I don't know yet... maybe next year."

The problem: Matthew never learned what his own desires and interests were because he always lived according to the expectations of others. The role of the "perfect child" was comfortable, but now it is preventing him from becoming an adult. He is afraid of change, of making mistakes and of disappointing others. He does not know how to start living independently and is ashamed that he has "fallen behind" his peers.

Method: The session combines drama pedagogy, identity development and self-awareness coaching tools. Drama pedagogy conventions help to explore Máté's inner world, identity development exercises support the discovery of his true self, and coaching tasks develop concrete steps for change.

Description of the session:

1. "Masks and faces" – tuning in

Objective: To raise awareness of the difference between external expectations and the inner self, to make the topic personal.

Description: Participants draw two faces: one depicting how others see them (external mask) and the other depicting how they really are (internal face). After sharing their drawings, they discuss the differences and similarities. The exercise helps to raise awareness of how much we live behind "masks" and how well we know our true selves.

Competencies developed: self-reflection, self-awareness, authenticity, critical thinking.

2. Thought tracking – drama education convention

Objective: To understand Máté's inner conflicts and dilemmas, to develop empathy.

Description: A volunteer participant plays the role of Máté on his way home after the party. The facilitator stops the scene several times and Máté voices his thoughts aloud: "Why can't I live like my friends?" "Am I really weak?" "What do I really want?" The audience can also add their thoughts.

Developed competencies: empathy, emotional intelligence, understanding internal conflicts, self-reflection.

3. If I were you – drama education convention

Objective: To present different perspectives and advice, to support decision-making, to raise awareness of consequences.

Description: To help the character make a decision, the participants give advice to the character walking among them. The participants work in pairs to think about what advice they will give and what the consequences of following that advice will be. When they are done, they stand facing each other, with one row of advisors and the other row of consequence tellers: each pair stands opposite each other. This way, when the protagonist enters the thought corridor, they hear the positive and negative consequences of each piece of advice.

Competencies developed: decision-making, weighing consequences, multi-perspective thinking, empathy.

4. "What if..." small group improvisation

Objective: To try out different change strategies and identify possible courses of action.

Description: The group is divided into three smaller groups, each of which develops an alternative solution in the form of a report: Group 1: Matthew changes gradually, in small steps (first he takes a job, then he moves away). Group 2: Máté makes a radical break with his old life (moves away, changes career, starts a new life). Group 3: Máté initiates an honest conversation with his parents and they look for a solution together.

Competencies developed: creative problem solving, alternative thinking, decision making, improvisation.

5. "Value pyramid" – identity development exercise

Objective: To discover one's own values and priorities, to distinguish between external expectations and internal desires.

Description: Participants draw a pyramid and write their most important values at the top (e.g. security, freedom, recognition, creativity, family). They place less

important values. They then examine which values are their own and which they have "inherited" from others. The exercise helps to clarify personal values.

Developed competencies: value awareness, self-awareness, setting priorities, authenticity.

7. Reflective review – group work

Objective: To process the situation after the decision, to understand the emotional dimensions of change.

Description: It is now three months later. Three groups prepare a 5-7 minute scene or read an excerpt from a diary that shows Máté's inner world after the decision.

1. Group 1: How does he explain his decision to his parents?
2. Group: What does he tell his friends?
3. Group: What does he write in his diary that day?

Competencies developed: emotional processing, self-reflection, change management, communication.

Outcome of the learning process:

During the session, participants understand that remaining in the role of a child is comfortable, but it can hinder becoming a true adult. They recognise that it is never too late to start discovering their own identity and building an independent life. They are given practical tools for clarifying values, making decisions and planning change. The combined use of drama pedagogy, identity development and coaching methods enables participants to work through the topic in a complex way and find the courage to change.

Competencies developed:

- self-awareness
- identity search and independence
- independent living
- decision-making and change management
- courage and self-confidence

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[3] Neelands, Jonathan: Conventions, in: László Kaposi (ed.): *Drama Pedagogy Reader*, Marczibányi Square Cultural Centre, Budapest, 2013.