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TOOLKIT FOR AUTONOMY

PASSI di Autonomia

Formazione e strategie per l'inclusione e l'indipendenza

PREPARED BY

The Toolkit for Autonomy was developed within the Erasmus+ project **"PASSI di Autonomia – Training and Strategies for the Inclusion and Independence of Young People with Autism and Mental Disabilities"** (KA153YOU), hosted by Gli Amici di PUCK in Ercolano, Italy.

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Introduction

The **Toolkit for Autonomy** was developed within the Erasmus+ project **"PASSI di Autonomia – Training and Strategies for the Inclusion and Independence of Young People with Autism and Mental Disabilities" (KA153-YOU)**, hosted by *Gli Amici di PUCK* in Ercolano, Italy.

It is the result of an intensive international training course for youth workers, combining study visits, non-formal education activities, simulations, co-creation workshops and daily reflection. Youth workers, educators and organisations from different European countries contributed their experiences, tools and ideas, which were then systematised into this practical resource.

The Toolkit is designed for **youth workers, educators, NGOs, schools, services and families** who support young people with autism and mental disabilities in their pathways towards greater autonomy, participation and inclusion. It offers concrete, ready-to-use materials that can be adapted to different national and local contexts, even where resources are limited.

Inside you will find:

- core principles and approaches for autonomy and inclusion;
- activity banks on daily living skills, communication, emotional regulation, social participation, work and volunteering;
- real case examples inspired by the PASSI experience;
- templates for autonomy planning, session design, monitoring and reflection, including tools linked to **Youthpass**.

The Toolkit is not a fixed programme to be followed step by step, but a **flexible menu** of activities and tools. Users are invited to select, adapt and combine elements according to the needs, interests and strengths of the young people they work with, co-creating personalised autonomy pathways and documenting learning over time.

Chapter 1 – About the Toolkit and the PASSI Project

1.1 Background: the PASSI Training Course

The **Toolkit for Autonomy** was developed within the framework of the Erasmus+ project **"PASSI di Autonomia – Training and Strategies for the Inclusion and Independence of Young People with Autism and Mental Disabilities"** (KA153-YOU – Mobility of Youth Workers).

The PASSI training course took place in **Ercolano (Italy)** from **3 to 11 November 2025**, hosted by **Gli Amici di PUCK**, an association with long-standing experience in supporting young people with autism and their families. The course gathered **28 youth workers** from **different European countries**, representing NGOs, schools, community centres, social services and informal groups working with young people.

The training was designed as an intensive **non-formal learning experience**, combining:

- interactive workshops on autonomy, communication and coaching,
- study visits to PUCK and local initiatives,
- simulations and role-plays focused on work inclusion and crisis situations,
- co-creation sessions where participants designed activities and tools together,
- daily reflection circles and Youthpass-based self-assessment.

Throughout the training, participants explored practical ways to:

- promote **independent living skills** in young people with autism and mental disabilities,
- support **communication and emotional regulation**,
- prepare young people for **social participation and work experience**,
- collaborate more effectively with **families, schools, services and employers**.

The discussions, activity designs and feedback generated during PASSI are the foundation of this Toolkit. It captures what was learned, tested and refined during the course and turns it into a resource that can be reused, adapted and expanded in many different local contexts.

1.2 Why a Toolkit on Autonomy and Inclusion

Across Europe, many youth workers and educators are committed to inclusion but often lack **practical, ready-to-use tools** to support young people with autism and mental disabilities in their journey toward greater autonomy.

Several needs emerged repeatedly during the PASSI project:

- the need for **simple and structured activities** that can be implemented in youth centres, schools and community settings,
- the need to translate abstract concepts like "independent living" or "inclusion" into **concrete steps**,
- the need to combine **non-formal education methods** (games, group work, reflection) with **structured supports** such as visual schedules, routines and clear instructions,
- the need for **flexible tools** that can be adapted to different countries, cultures, languages and service systems.

The **Toolkit for Autonomy** was created to respond to these needs.

Its purpose is to:

- give youth workers and educators a collection of **tested activities and templates** that can be used immediately,
- help organisations design **small but meaningful paths towards autonomy**, even when resources are limited,
- support families and professionals to work **together** around the same goals,
- encourage a **rights-based and strengths-based approach**, focusing on what young people *can* do, and how they can gradually expand their skills.

Rather than offering a "perfect model", the Toolkit offers a **practical starting point** for experimentation and dialogue. It is meant to be enriched with your own experiences, adaptations and innovations.

1.3 Who this Toolkit is for

The Toolkit is designed to be used by a wide range of actors working with young people, especially those with autism and mental disabilities. It is intentionally written in **accessible, non-academic language**, so that it can support both professionals and non-professionals.

The main intended users are:

- **Youth workers**

  Working in youth centres, associations, informal groups, cultural organisations, sports clubs, volunteering initiatives and community projects. They can use the Toolkit to plan autonomy-focused activities, support individual young people and create inclusive group environments.

- **Educators and teachers**

  Working in schools, vocational training centres, adult education or special education programmes. They can integrate selected activities into school curricula, classroom projects, inclusive labs or support rooms.

- **NGOs and community organisations**

  Associations that work with young people with disabilities, mental health challenges, or fewer opportunities can use the Toolkit to design programmes, workshops, or local projects, and to train their volunteers and staff.

- **Social and health services**

  Professionals in social services, day centres, supported living programmes or community mental health services can use the Toolkit to complement existing methods with non-formal activities that build life skills and social participation.

- **Families and caregivers**

  Parents, siblings and caregivers can use selected activities (especially the simpler, visual ones) in a home setting, to practice daily living skills, communication strategies and autonomy in a safe, familiar environment.

- **Young people themselves**

  Some parts of the Toolkit (especially visual tools, planners and simple worksheets) can be used directly by young people, with or without support, to express their preferences, set goals and reflect on progress.

You do not need to be a "specialist" to use this Toolkit. What you do need is:

- an attitude of **respect and curiosity**,
- a willingness to **listen** to young people and families,
- and a readiness to **adapt** the tools to your context rather than apply them mechanically.

1.4 How the Toolkit was developed (co-creation during PASSI)

The Toolkit was not written by one expert alone. It emerged from a **co-creation process** that involved trainers, youth workers, and the hosting organisation PUCK throughout the PASSI training course.

Key elements of the development process included:

- **Needs analysis**

  Before and at the beginning of the training, participants shared their expectations and challenges. Many highlighted the same issues: lack of structured yet flexible tools, difficulty in supporting transitions to work, and need for inclusive methods for mixed-ability groups.

- **Observation and inspiration from practice**

  During study visits and meetings with PUCK staff and young people, participants observed real sessions, workshops and daily activities focused on independence, communication and participation. These observations provided concrete examples of what works in practice.

- **Co-design workshops**

  Participants worked in small international groups to design **activities, tools and mini-pathways for autonomy**. They used non-formal methods (brainstorming, world café, poster creation, role-plays) to generate and refine ideas.

- **Testing and simulation**

  Some activities were tested (or simulated) during the training itself. Groups played the role of young people, families or staff, and then reflected on what felt clear, accessible and motivating.

- **Continuous feedback and refinement**

  At the end of each day, participants and trainers engaged in reflection circles and feedback sessions. Promising activities and tools were improved, simplified or combined with others.

- **Synthesis and structuring**

  After the course, the materials, notes and drafts created by participants were synthesised and organised into the present Toolkit. The aim was to preserve the **participatory spirit** of PASSI while presenting the content in a readable and practical format.

Because of this process, the Toolkit reflects:

- a mix of **different national experiences**,
- **realistic constraints** from the field (time, resources, settings),
- and the creativity and commitment of youth workers who want to make autonomy and inclusion more concrete in everyday practice.

1.5 How to Use this Toolkit (flexible "menu" of activities)

This Toolkit is meant to be **flexible**. It is not a fixed curriculum that must be followed from beginning to end. Instead, you can think of it as a **menu** of concepts, activities and tools from which you can choose according to your needs.

Here are some suggestions on how to use it effectively:

1. **Start with this chapter**

   Read Chapter 1 to understand the background and principles. This will help you see how the pieces fit together and how to avoid using the activities in a mechanical way.

2. **Scan the chapters for what is most relevant**

   - If you work mainly on **daily living skills**, begin with the activities on routines, self-care, money and home management.
   - If your focus is on **social inclusion and work**, explore the activities on communication, community participation and vocational exploration.
   - If you are planning a **training for youth workers**, you might want to start with the coaching, reflection and Youthpass-related tools.

3. **Select and adapt a small number of activities**

   Do not try to use everything at once. Choose **one or two activities** that match a young person's goals or a group's needs, and adapt them:

   - simplify language or instructions,
   - change examples to match local culture,
   - adjust timing and group size,
   - translate worksheets if needed,
   - combine activities with tools you already use.

4. **Co-create with young people and families**

Wherever possible, involve young people and their families in choosing goals and activities. Ask what is meaningful to them: What would they like to be able to do more independently? What situations are difficult today?

5. **Reflect and document your experience**
   After you run an activity, take a few minutes to reflect:
   - What worked well?
   - What had to be changed?
   - What seemed difficult or confusing?
   - What did the young person enjoy or dislike?

Use these reflections to improve the next session and to adapt the Toolkit to your context.

6. **Share your adaptations**

   The Toolkit is a living resource. If you create new versions of activities, new templates or case examples, consider sharing them with partners, networks or future editions of the Toolkit. In this way, the work done through PASSI can continue to grow.

In short, you are invited to use this Toolkit as a **support and inspiration**, not as a rigid prescription. 😊

1.6 Basic Materials and Set-Up (post-its, cardboard, colours, etc.)

Many of the activities proposed in the Toolkit are based on **simple, low-cost materials** that are easy to find and transport. This is intentional: we want the tools to be usable in different countries and settings, including those with limited budgets.

Below is a list of materials that we recommend having available when implementing the activities:

Basic stationery

- A4 paper (white and coloured)
- Flipchart paper or large sheets of cardboard
- Post-it notes in different colours and sizes
- Pens, pencils, erasers
- Thick markers (for flipcharts) and fine markers (for writing on post-its or cards)

- Coloured pencils or crayons

Creative and visual materials

- Cardboard sheets (A3, A2 or recycled cardboard)
- Coloured paper and index cards
- Glue sticks and transparent tape
- Masking tape (easy to remove from walls)
- Scissors (including some with rounded tips for safety)
- Stickers, dots, smiley faces (useful for voting, highlighting and visual feedback)
- Simple icons or pictograms (printed or drawn) to support communication

Room and furniture

- Movable chairs and tables that can be rearranged (circle, small groups, U-shape)
- Wall space or panels where you can hang posters and flipcharts
- A quiet corner or separate room for one-to-one conversations or de-escalation
- Good lighting and, if possible, control over noise level

Optional equipment

- A projector and screen (for showing visual supports, slides or videos)
- Speakers (for audio or videos, respecting noise sensitivity)
- A whiteboard or magnetic board
- Printed copies of worksheets and templates from the Toolkit
- A clock or timer to help structure activities and breaks

When preparing a session, pay attention not only to materials but also to **environmental and emotional set-up**:

- ensure the space is **predictable and safe**,
- explain the **structure of the session** in advance (e.g., “first we do X, then a break, then Y”),
- agree on **simple group rules** (listening, respecting others, asking for help),
- allow participants to **opt out** or take a break if they feel overwhelmed,
- consider **sensory needs** (noise, light, seating, smells).

You do not need perfect facilities to work on autonomy and inclusion. What matters most is **intentionality**, respect and **consistency** in how you use the space and materials to support young people step by step.

Chapter 2 – Core Principles and Approaches

This chapter presents the key ideas that underpin the Toolkit for Autonomy. Before using the activities and tools, it is important to have a shared understanding of what we mean by **autonomy, inclusion, neurodiversity, non-formal education** and **structured support**, and how these concepts translate into everyday practice.

The principles in this chapter are not theoretical "add-ons": they are meant to **guide concrete decisions** – how we design an activity, how we speak to young people, how we interact with families, how we adapt a space or a schedule.

2.1 Autonomy, Independent Living and Participation

Autonomy refers to the ability of a person to make choices and to have control over their own life, at a level consistent with their age, abilities and circumstances. For some young people, autonomy might mean choosing their clothes or deciding which activity to do first. For others, it might mean managing their own money, travelling independently or negotiating working conditions.

Independent living does not mean living alone or without support. It means having access to the **support and resources** needed to live in the community, to make decisions, and to participate in everyday life as equally as possible.

Participation is the right and opportunity to be actively involved in social, cultural, educational and work life: going to school, joining a club, taking part in a workshop, being included in decisions that affect one's life.

These three dimensions are connected:

- Autonomy supports independent living.
- Independent living creates opportunities for participation.
- Participation strengthens autonomy.

Autonomy is built in **small, realistic steps**. It is not an "all or nothing" state. A person can be very autonomous in some areas (e.g., digital skills) and need a lot of support in others (e.g., managing emotions in busy public places). The aim is to **expand the zones of autonomy** without ignoring or minimising the need for support.

Example – A step towards autonomy

Sara is 17, autistic and lives with her family. She cannot yet travel alone, but she wants to choose her own snacks for school. Together with a youth worker, she creates a simple "snack list" with pictures. Each week, she picks from the list and helps with shopping. This is a small step, but it is real autonomy: she makes a choice, participates in a family task and sees the result of her decision.

When we design activities from this Toolkit, we ask:

- Does this activity **support a real step in autonomy** (even if small)?
- Is the young person involved in making decisions about how to do it?
- Does it contribute to greater **participation in community life**, not isolation?

2.2 Inclusion of Young People with Autism and Mental Disabilities

Inclusion means that young people with autism and mental disabilities are not only physically present in a space, but also:

- welcomed,
- understood,
- able to participate meaningfully,
- and respected as full members of the group.

Inclusion is not achieved by simply "adding" a young person with disabilities to an existing activity without changes. It requires **adaptation and creativity**:

- simplifying instructions and using visual supports;
- allowing extra time;
- offering choices;
- designing group work that does not rely only on verbal speed or social intuition;
- adjusting environmental factors (noise, light, seating).

Barriers to inclusion are often **created by the environment**, not by the person. These barriers can be:

- **Physical** – inaccessible rooms, crowded spaces.
- **Communicative** – complex language, unclear instructions.
- **Social** – low expectations, stereotypes, "tokenistic" participation.

- **Organisational** – inflexible schedules, no adaptation of activities.

Example – Two versions of the same activity

A youth centre offers a debate session on "future jobs". In the first version, participants have to speak quickly in front of a large group with no preparation. A young man with autism remains silent, overwhelmed.

In the adapted version, the facilitator first provides picture cards of different jobs, gives 10 minutes of pair discussion, then invites participants to share short sentences, possibly reading from their notes. The same young man now contributes, showing a card and saying: "I would like to work with computers."

Inclusion does not mean lowering expectations. It means **changing conditions** so that each person can show their abilities and learn at their own pace.

2.3 Person-Centred, Rights-Based and Strengths-Based Work

The Toolkit is built on three complementary approaches:

1. **Person-centred work**
2. **Rights-based work**
3. **Strengths-based work**

Person-centred work means that the young person is not seen primarily as a "case", a diagnosis or a problem, but as an individual with preferences, history, dreams and relationships. Person-centred practice asks:

- What does this person want?
- What gives meaning and motivation to their life?
- How can we adapt our systems to them, rather than always asking them to adapt to us?

Rights-based work recognises that young people with autism and mental disabilities are **rights-holders**, not passive recipients of care. They have the right to education, participation, information, privacy, choice and protection from abuse. A rights-based approach moves from "being kind and helpful" to **ensuring that rights are respected and promoted** in programmes, policies and everyday interactions.

Strengths-based work looks first at what young people **can do**, enjoy and are good at, instead of focusing only on deficits and problems. It does not deny difficulties, but it builds on existing skills and interests. For example:

- a strong interest in trains can be used to practice geography, time management or social communication;
- visual memory can be used to learn new routines or routes;
- attention to detail can be valuable in certain tasks.

Example – Strengths-based re-framing

Tom is very focused on numbers and often repeats train schedules. This is sometimes described as "obsessive". A strengths-based approach asks: How can we use this? Tom is invited to help create a schedule board for the youth centre's activities, using his love for timetables to support time awareness and planning for the whole group.

When combining these three approaches, our questions change from:

- "How do we fix this person?"

  to

- "How do we support this person, as a rights-holder, to use their strengths and make choices in their life, in ways that are safe and meaningful?"

The activities in this Toolkit should therefore be:

- co-planned with the young person whenever possible,
- respectful of their rights and dignity,
- designed to **activate strengths**, not only to "correct" problems.

2.4 Neurodiversity and Respectful Communication

The concept of **neurodiversity** recognises that there is a **natural diversity** in the ways human brains develop and function. Autism, ADHD, dyslexia and other neurodevelopmental differences are seen not only as "disorders", but also as **variations** that can bring unique perspectives, abilities and needs.

From a neurodiversity-informed perspective:

- the goal is not to "normalise" people,
- but to remove barriers and support them to live in ways that are meaningful to them,
- while respecting their rights, preferences and communication style.

Respectful communication is essential. It includes:

- using **clear, concrete language**, avoiding unnecessary jargon;
- speaking with the young person, not only about them;
- avoiding infantilising language with young adults;
- asking about preferences (for example, whether they prefer identity-first language like "autistic person" or person-first like "person with autism", when culturally and linguistically possible);
- not making jokes, comments or labels about behaviour that can be shaming ("lazy", "weird", "difficult"), and instead trying to understand what need might be behind it.

Example – Re-phrasing feedback

Instead of: "You're overreacting again, stop being so dramatic." A more respectful approach: "It looks like this situation is really intense for you. Let's take a break and see what could make it easier."

Instead of: "You don't listen."

Better: "Maybe the instructions were not clear. Let's try again step by step."

Respectful communication also means being mindful of **sensory and cognitive load**:

- giving information one step at a time;
- allowing time for processing;
- checking understanding using simple questions or visuals;
- offering alternatives (writing, drawing, using cards) if speaking is difficult.

The activities in the Toolkit encourage youth workers to **model this type of communication**. The way we speak during an activity is itself a learning experience for everyone present.

2.5 Non-Formal Education: Principles and Group Methods

The PASSI project and this Toolkit are grounded in **non-formal education (NFE)**. Non-formal education refers to organised learning processes that:

- take place outside formal school systems,
- are intentional and structured,
- but are flexible, participatory and learner-centred.

Examples include youth exchanges, workshops, volunteering, community projects, training courses and self-organised groups. Non-formal education is widely used in **Erasmus+ youth work**.

Key principles of non-formal education include:

- **Voluntary participation** – people choose to be there; they are not forced.
- **Learner-centred approach** – activities are based on the needs, interests and experiences of participants.
- **Active participation** – learning happens through doing, not only listening.
- **Experiential learning** – participants experience, reflect, conceptualise and test new behaviours (the "learning cycle").
- **Group as a resource** – participants learn from each other, not only from the facilitator.
- **Safe and inclusive environment** – emotional and physical safety enable honest participation.
- **Reflection and feedback** – space is created to make sense of what happened and how it can be applied.

Common non-formal methods that appear in this Toolkit include:

- ice-breakers and energisers,
- small group work and discussions,
- role-plays and simulations,
- creative workshops (posters, collages, theatre),
- world café and carousel discussions,
- reflection circles and learning diaries.

Example – Experiential learning cycle in practice
Activity: Role-play of a job interview.

1. **Experience** – participants act out a simulated interview.
2. **Reflection** – group discusses: "How did you feel? What was difficult?"
3. **Conceptualisation** – facilitator highlights key ideas (body language, clear answers, asking questions).

4. **Application** – participants try again, applying what they learned, or plan how to use it in a real-life situation.

When working with young people with autism and mental disabilities, non-formal methods need to be **adapted and structured**, but the underlying principles remain: participation, experience, reflection and empowerment.

2.6 Structured Supports: Visual Tools, Routines and Clear Communication

While non-formal education emphasises flexibility and participation, many autistic and neurodivergent young people benefit from **structure, predictability and clarity**. This is not a contradiction. We can design experiences that are both **participatory** and **structured**.

Structured supports may include:

- **Visual schedules** – pictures or words showing the sequence of activities.
- **Step-by-step task lists** – breaking down a task into small, clear steps.
- **First/Then boards** – showing what comes now and what comes next ("First homework, then game").
- **Routines and rituals** – consistent ways of starting or ending a session (e.g., opening circle, closing reflection).
- **Clear rules** – simple, positively phrased group agreements ("We listen when someone speaks", "We can ask for a break").
- **Visual choice boards** – showing options available (e.g., types of activities, possible roles, break options).

Example – Creating a visual routine for a morning activity

A youth worker plans a two-hour workshop. Instead of only explaining verbally, they prepare a flipchart with four pictures and words:

1. Welcome circle
2. Group work at tables
3. Break
4. Sharing and goodbye

At the start, they show the schedule and briefly explain each step. After each part, they return to the schedule and mark what has been completed. This gives participants a sense of **progress and predictability**, reduces anxiety and helps with transitions.

Structured supports are not only for autistic participants. They often benefit **everyone** in the group, including facilitators. They:

- make time more visible,
- help participants understand expectations,
- reduce misunderstandings and frustration,
- support memory and organisation.

In this Toolkit, many activities include suggestions such as:

- "prepare a visual schedule",
- "use a first/then card",
- "write key words on a flipchart",
- "offer a choice between two tasks".

These are not optional decorations; they are **core parts of making an activity inclusive**.

2.7 Working in Partnership with Families, Schools and Services

Autonomy and inclusion cannot be promoted by youth workers alone. Young people with autism and mental disabilities often interact with:

- families and caregivers,

- schools and vocational centres,
- health and social services,
- employers, community organisations and local authorities.

When these actors work in **isolation**, young people receive fragmented messages and inconsistent expectations. When they work in **partnership**, autonomy pathways become more coherent and sustainable.

Key principles for partnership include:

- **Respect and recognition**

  Families bring knowledge of the young person's history, preferences and daily reality. Professionals bring specific skills, tools and resources. Both types of knowledge are valid and needed.

- **Clear communication**

  Use understandable language, avoid jargon, clarify goals and roles. Provide written summaries or visual tools where helpful.

- **Shared goals**

  Agree on a small number of concrete goals for autonomy (e.g. "prepare a snack independently", "take the bus with support"), and work towards them across home, school, services and community.

- **Consistency and flexibility**

  Consistency in routines and expectations helps learning, but plans must be flexible enough to adapt to changes in the young person's situation.

- **Participation of the young person**

  Wherever possible, the young person should be present in meetings about their life or at least informed in an accessible way and invited to express their views.

Example – Coordinating an autonomy goal across settings
A 19-year-old named Alex wants to travel independently to a sports activity once a week.

- The youth worker uses Toolkit activities to practice **reading a timetable** and **asking for help**.
- The family supports Alex to **prepare a backpack**, check the time and walk to the bus stop.

- The school agrees to recognise this as part of his **independent living curriculum**.
- The sports club is informed and knows that Alex may arrive alone and might need support at reception.

Each actor uses their own tools, but all share the **same goal** and coordinate steps. Progress and difficulties are discussed together rather than separately.

Using this Toolkit can be an opportunity to **start or strengthen partnerships**. For example:

- sharing selected activities with families to try at home;
- inviting teachers or social workers to join a workshop;
- co-organising a local event where young people present what they have learned;
- using common templates for autonomy plans that can be shared across services (with appropriate consent).

Chapter 3 – Activity Bank I: Daily Living, Communication and Emotional Regulation

3.1 Getting Started with Autonomy

This section contains introductory activities designed to help young people and youth workers:

- explore what "autonomy" means in everyday life,
- identify strengths and interests,
- set realistic, small-step goals,
- agree on how they will work together.

These activities can be used at the beginning of an autonomy pathway, at the start of a programme, or when you want to review and reset goals.

Each activity includes:

- a clear purpose,
- suggested group size and duration,
- materials,
- step-by-step instructions,

- ideas for adaptation for young people with autism and mental disabilities.

You do **not** need to use all four activities in one session. Choose what best fits your context and the young person or group in front of you.

Activity 1 – My Autonomy Map

Purpose:
To help the young person (or group) explore what autonomy means in different areas of life and to visualise where they already feel more independent and where they would like more support or progress.

Autonomy focus:
Awareness of daily life domains; first self-reflection on autonomy.

Suggested use:

- As a *starting point* for individual work;
- As part of an introductory session with a small group.

Target group:
Young people (approx. 14+) with autism and/or mental disabilities; can be adapted for younger participants with more visual support.

Group size:

- Individual with one youth worker, or
- Small group of 3–6 young people with support.

Duration:
30–45 minutes.

Materials:

- A3 paper or flipchart sheets
- Coloured markers or pens
- Stickers or small post-it notes (two colours, e.g. green and yellow)
- Optional: printed icons/images representing different life areas (home, school, work, friends, leisure, health, etc.)

Preparation

1. Draw a large **circle or mind map** on the A3/flipchart.
2. Divide it into 6–8 "slices" or sections, labelled with key areas of daily life, for example:
    - Home & self-care
    - School / training / work
    - Free time & hobbies
    - Friends & social life
    - Money & shopping
    - Getting around (transport)
    - Health & emotions
    - Family & responsibilities
3. If needed, prepare visual icons for each area to make it more accessible.

Step-by-step

1. **Introduce the idea (5–10 min)**
   Explain in simple language:

"Autonomy is about how much you can decide and do by yourself in different parts of your life. There is no 'good' or 'bad' level – everyone is different. Today we will look at your life like a map."

2. **Explore the areas (10–15 min)**
   Go through each slice/area and ask the young person to give examples of what happens in that part of their life (e.g. "At home I…", "With friends I…").
    - You can write key words or draw small symbols.
    - If verbal communication is difficult, offer choices or use images.
3. **Rate current autonomy (10 min)**
   Give the young person **green stickers/post-its** and explain:

"Put a green sticker in the areas where you feel more independent or confident."
Discuss briefly why they chose those areas.

4. **Identify areas for growth (10 min)**
   Give **yellow stickers/post-its** and ask:

"Now put a yellow sticker in the areas where you would like to become more independent or where you want more support to grow."

Encourage them to choose a maximum of 2–3 areas to focus on (to keep it realistic).

5. **Summarise together (5 min)**
   Ask:
   - "What did you notice about your map?"
   - "Which areas are strong?"
   - "Which areas could be our focus in the next weeks?"

Reflection / debrief

Sample questions:

- "Is there anything that surprised you about your autonomy map?"
- "How do you feel when you look at your green areas?"
- "What would be one small change you would like in a yellow area?"

You can take a photo or keep the map as a **baseline** to revisit later.

Adaptations

- Use more pictures / symbols for each area if reading is difficult.
- For non-speaking young people, work with families or support persons to interpret choices while still centring the young person's signals (pointing, looking, moving stickers).
- If attention span is short, work on **fewer areas** (e.g. only 4 slices) and/or split the activity into two shorter sessions.

Activity 2 – Strengths & Interests Cards

Purpose:
To identify the young person's strengths and interests, which will be used later to design autonomy goals and motivating activities.

Autonomy focus:

Building self-esteem; connecting autonomy pathways to what the young person likes and is good at.

Target group:
Young people (approx. 12+) with diverse profiles.

Group size:

- Individual, or
- Small group of 3–8 young people.

Duration:
30–40 minutes.

Materials:

- Pre-made "Strengths & Interests Cards" (A6 or small rectangles) – you can create them with words and/or pictures, e.g.:
    - "I'm good with computers"
    - "I like animals"
    - "I'm patient"
    - "I like cooking"
    - "I like working with my hands"
    - "I like drawing"
    - "I care about other people's feelings"
    - "I like sports"
- Blank cards for adding new strengths/interests
- Pens, markers
- A large sheet or table space for sorting the cards

Preparation

1. Prepare a set of **20–40 cards**, mixing:
    - concrete interests (music, gaming, nature, etc.),
    - character strengths (kind, honest, focused, creative, etc.),

- practical skills (organised, good with numbers, good memory, etc.).

2. Consider using simple icons or images on the cards to support understanding.

Step-by-step

1. **Introduce the idea (5 min)**
   Explain:

"Everyone has strengths and things they enjoy, even if school or others sometimes focus on what is difficult. Today we will look at what you are good at and what you like. This will help us plan activities that fit you."

2. **First selection – "This is me" (10–15 min)**

   Spread the cards on a table or floor. Ask the young person (or each participant) to pick cards that feel true for them:

"Choose the cards that sound like you: things you enjoy or things you are good at."

They can place chosen cards in front of them.
If needed, read cards aloud and check: "Does this fit you?"

3. **Add new strengths/interests (5–10 min)**

   Give blank cards:

"Is there anything missing? Let's add your own words or pictures." Help them write or draw additional strengths/interests.

4. **Group strengths (optional, 5–10 min)**
   If in a group, invite participants (if comfortable) to share 1–2 strengths/interests and place them on a poster with two columns:

   - "Things we like"
   - "Things we are good at"
     This creates a **visual map of group resources**.

5. **Connect to autonomy (5–10 min)**

   Individually or in small groups, ask:

   - "How could we use these strengths and interests to work on autonomy?"
     For instance:
   - If someone likes cooking → autonomy in preparing simple meals.

- If someone is good with technology → managing online appointments, using apps for routes.

Reflection / debrief

Sample questions:

- "How was it to think about your strengths and interests?"
- "Is there a strength you didn't realise you had before?"
- "Which interest could we use next time in an activity?"

Adaptations

- For participants who find it hard to choose, you can do it as a **yes/no sorting**:

"Does this sound like you? Yes or no?"

- For those with very limited attention, work with fewer cards (e.g. 8–12) at a time.
- In groups where comparison is sensitive, keep individual sets private and only share if participants wish.

Activity 3 – Small Steps Goal Setting

Purpose:
To transform broad wishes ("I want to be independent") into **concrete, realistic and small-step goals** related to autonomy, using the information from Activities 1 and 2.

Autonomy focus:

Goal setting; planning; making autonomy visible and manageable.

Target group:

Young people (approx. 14+) with enough understanding to talk about short-term goals. Can be mediated with families or support persons if needed.

Group size:

- Best done in **individual sessions**,
- Some parts (e.g. brainstorming) can be done in small groups.

Duration:
30–45 minutes per young person (can be split in two sessions).

Materials:

- A4 or A3 "Small Steps Goal" template (you can design it simply with boxes):
  - "My big wish / dream"
  - "Area of life" (home, work, friends…)
  - "My small goal for the next 2–4 weeks"
  - "Steps to reach it" (1, 2, 3…)
  - "Who can help me?"
  - "How will we know it is working?"
- Pens, markers
- Optional: stickers, icons or symbols

Preparation

1. Review the young person's **Autonomy Map** (Activity 1) and **Strengths & Interests Cards** (Activity 2) to have a sense of priority areas.
2. Print or draw the goal template.

Step-by-step

1. **Start from wishes (10–15 min)**
   Ask open questions:
   - "When you think about being more independent, what comes to your mind?"
   - "Is there something you would like to be able to do more by yourself?" Write their words in the "My big wish / dream" box. Examples:
   - "Go to the shop alone."
   - "Cook my own pasta."
   - "Have more friends."
   - "Find a job I like."

2. **Choose one focus area (5–10 min)**
   Explain:

"We cannot work on everything at the same time. Let's pick one thing to focus on first." Link it to the Autonomy Map (e.g. home, friends, work). Confirm:
"Is this okay for you as our first focus?"

3. **Transform into a small goal (10–15 min)**

   Help the young person break the big wish into a **small, time-limited goal**, for example:

   - Big wish: "Go to the shop alone."
   - Small goal: "In the next 3 weeks, I will buy bread at the corner shop with support and then alone."

     Write the small goal clearly in the template.

4. **Define concrete steps (10–15 min)**
   Ask: "What needs to happen first, second, third… to reach this goal?"
   Example steps:

1. Walk to the shop together and just look around.
2. Next time, buy something small together.
3. Practice paying at the youth centre with fake money.
4. Go to the shop while the youth worker waits outside.
5. Go alone and come back, then tell what happened.

Write each step in order, using numbers or simple drawings.

5. **Identify support and indicators (5–10 min)**
   Ask:

   - "Who can help you with these steps?" (family, youth worker, friend, staff)
   - "How will we know it is working?" (less anxiety, success in doing steps, more confidence).

Fill in the relevant boxes.

Reflection / debrief

- "How do you feel about this plan?"

- "Does the goal feel too easy, too hard, or okay?"
- "Which step do you want to start with next week?"

Revisit the goal regularly (e.g. weekly) to update steps and celebrate progress.

Adaptations

- For participants who struggle with abstract thinking, you can offer **pre-defined example goals** and ask them to choose one and personalise it.
- For those with high anxiety, make the first steps extremely small and supportive to create positive experiences.
- In some cases, involve family or staff in the session to ensure that steps are realistic in daily life.

Activity 4 – Autonomy Agreement (Youth Worker & Young Person)

Purpose:
To create a simple, shared **agreement** between the young person and the youth worker (or organisation) about how they will work together on autonomy: what each will do, what is expected and how they will communicate.

Autonomy focus:

Co-ownership of the process; clarity of roles; trust and accountability.

Target group:

Young people engaged in a medium- or long-term support relationship (e.g. regular sessions over weeks/months).

Group size:

One-to-one (youth worker + young person). A family member or support person can be invited if appropriate.

Duration:
30–40 minutes.

Materials:

- "Autonomy Agreement" template (A4), including:

  - Names and date
  - Our shared autonomy goal(s)
  - "What I will do" (young person)
  - "What you will do" (youth worker/organisation)
  - "How we will communicate"
  - "What we do if something feels too difficult / not okay"
  - Space for signatures or symbols
- Pens, markers
- Optional: icons (e.g. handshake, calendar, phone, message)

Preparation

1. Ensure Activities 1–3 have been done or that you otherwise have clarity on at least **one autonomy goal**.
2. Print or draw the Agreement template in a visually clear format (not too dense).

Step-by-step

1. **Introduce the idea (5–10 min)**
   Explain:

"We are starting a journey together to work on your autonomy. It's important that we both know what we want to do, what we promise to each other and how we will work. This agreement is not a contract like in a court; it is a simple plan we create together."

2. **Fill in basic information (5 min)**

   Write both names, the date and, if relevant, the name of the project/organisation.

3. **Write the shared autonomy goal(s) (10 min)**

   Ask the young person to say, in their own words, what their main goal is (you can support them by reminding the Small Steps Goal). Write it in the "Our shared autonomy goal(s)" box using their language as much as possible.

4. **Define "What I will do" (young person) (10 min)**
   Ask:

   - "What are you ready to do to move towards this goal?"

- "What will be your responsibilities?"
  Examples:
- "Come to our meetings on time or tell you if I cannot."
- "Try to do the exercises we agree on at home."
- "Tell you if something is too difficult or upsetting."
  Write 2–4 short commitments, checking that the young person understands and agrees.

5. **Define "What you will do" (youth worker/organisation) (10 min)**
   Share transparently what you commit to:
   - "Listen to you and respect your choices."
   - "Prepare activities adapted to your needs and interests."
   - "Be honest if something is not possible, and explain why."
   - "Keep what you share confidential, except if there is a serious risk of harm."
     Write these commitments clearly and simply.
6. **Agree on communication and safety (5–10 min)**
   In the "How we will communicate" section, define:
   - how often you will meet (e.g. weekly, monthly),
   - how changes/cancellations are communicated (message, call, via family),
   - how the young person can express discomfort or ask to stop an activity.

You can add a simple "safety sentence" such as:

"If something feels too much, I can say 'pause' or 'stop', and we will listen."

7. **Sign or mark the agreement (5 min)**
   Invite the young person to sign, initial, draw a symbol or place a sticker.
   You sign as well.
   Give a copy to the young person (or family) and keep one for yourself.

Reflection / debrief

Ask the young person:

- "How do you feel about this agreement?"

- "Is there something you would change or add?"
- "Does this make our work together clearer?"

Remind them that the agreement can be **revised** later if needed.

Adaptations

- For young people who are not comfortable with signatures, use **symbols** (e.g. drawing, stamp, sticker) as a sign of agreement.
- For those with high anxiety, keep the agreement short (1 goal, 1–2 commitments each).
- In some cultural contexts, it may be appropriate to involve a family member in the agreement; in others, the young person may prefer a more private arrangement. Respect their preference as far as possible.

3.2 Communication and Emotional Regulation

This section focuses on helping young people:

- recognise and name their emotions,
- connect feelings with needs and situations,
- communicate when something is "too much", unsafe or uncomfortable,
- identify and use personal coping strategies.

The goal is not to "eliminate" strong emotions, but to **understand them and respond more safely and effectively**, respecting each person's neurodiversity and coping style.

The four activities can be combined or used separately:

- **Activity 5 – Emotion Thermometer**: understanding intensity of emotions;
- **Activity 6 – Feelings and Needs Cards**: connecting feelings and underlying needs;
- **Activity 7 – Safe Words and Signals**: communicating overwhelm and boundaries;
- **Activity 8 – My Coping Toolbox**: building a personalised set of regulation strategies.

Activity 5 – Emotion Thermometer

Purpose

To help young people recognise different levels of emotional intensity (e.g. calm, a bit stressed, very overwhelmed), link these levels to physical signs and situations, and identify early warning signs before a crisis.

Autonomy focus

Self-awareness, self-monitoring, early self-regulation.

Suitable for

Young people (approx. 10+) with autism or mental disabilities; can be adapted for younger children with more visuals.

Time needed

30–45 minutes (can be split over two sessions).

Group size

1:1 or small group (3–6 participants), each with their own thermometer.

Materials

- A4 or A3 paper (one per person)
- Coloured markers/pencils
- Ruler (optional)
- Optional: pre-drawn "thermometer" templates; stickers or simple emotion icons for different levels

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Preparation

- Draw a vertical **thermometer** with 4–5 levels (e.g. 0–4 or 0–5) with space to write/draw next to each level.
- Label levels in simple language, for example:
    - 0 – Calm / OK
    - 1 – A bit uncomfortable
    - 2 – Upset / stressed
    - 3 – Very upset
    - 4 – Crisis / meltdown

You may use colours (green, yellow, orange, red) if helpful.

Step-by-step

1. **Introduce the thermometer idea (5–10 min)**
   Explain in simple terms:

"Emotions can be weak or strong, like the temperature. Sometimes we are calm, sometimes a bit stressed, sometimes very upset. This thermometer helps us notice where we are."

2. **Define the lowest level – calm / OK (5–10 min)**
   Ask:
   - "How do you feel in your body when you are calm or okay?"
   - "What are you doing? Where are you?"

     Write or draw key words next to level 0 (or bottom level), e.g. "relaxed muscles", "breathing normal", "playing games", "with my cat".

3. **Define a medium level – a bit stressed (10 min)**
   Move to level 1–2:
   - "How do you know you are starting to feel a bit uncomfortable or stressed?"
   - "What happens in your body? In your thoughts?" Examples: "heart faster", "hands moving more", "I get quiet", "I start to shout".
     Write/draw these signs.

4. **Define a high level – very upset / crisis (10–15 min)**
   For level 3–4:
   - "What happens when it is really too much? When you feel you cannot control it?"
     Use non-judgmental language; normalise that this happens to many people.
     Write signs such as: "cry a lot", "shout", "want to run away", "hit things", etc.

5. **Connect to situations (10 min)**
   Ask for **examples of situations** that go with each level:
   - Calm: "at home with headphones", "playing my favourite game".

- Medium: “crowded school corridor”, “teacher talking loudly”.
- High: “someone shouts at me”, “too many people and noise”.

6. **Introduce early warning signs and help (5–10 min)**

   Explain that **noticing levels 1–2** can help us act before a crisis. Ask:

   - “What could you do when you notice you are at level 1 or 2?” (This will link later to the Coping Toolbox.)

     Write simple strategies next to those levels.

Reflection / debrief

- “What did you learn about your emotions today?”
- “Is there a level where you would like to ask for help earlier?”
- “How could we use this thermometer in daily life?” (e.g. in the youth centre, at home).

You can display the thermometer in a relevant space (with consent) or keep a copy in a folder.

Adaptations

- Use pictures instead of words (e.g. faces, colours, relevant icons).
- For some young people, use only **three levels**: OK / Getting stressed / Too much.
- For non-speaking participants, work together with a familiar adult to identify signs.

Activity 6 – Feelings and Needs Cards

Purpose

To support young people in identifying and expressing their **feelings** and the **needs behind them** (e.g. need for safety, rest, support, space), and to practice communicating these in a simple way.

Autonomy focus

Emotional literacy; self-advocacy (“this is how I feel and what I need”).

Suitable for
Young people (approx. 10+) with varying communication abilities.

Time needed
45–60 minutes (can be repeated/shortened in later sessions).

Group size
1:1 or small group (3–8 participants).

Materials

- Set of **Feeling Cards**, each with a word + simple icon (e.g. happy, sad, angry, scared, confused, excited, tired, overwhelmed, calm)
- Set of **Needs Cards**, e.g.:
    - need for safety,
    - need for rest,
    - need for quiet,
    - need for support/help,
    - need for choice,
    - need for friendship/contact,
    - need for space/time alone,
    - need for understanding.
- Blank cards for new feelings or needs
- Table/floor space
- Optional: worksheet "When I feel … I might need …"

Preparation

- Create 10–15 Feeling Cards and 10–15 Needs Cards.
- Use colours and simple drawings to support understanding.

Step-by-step

1. **Introduce feelings and needs (5–10 min)**
   Explain:

"We all have feelings. Feelings are not 'good' or 'bad' – they are messages. Behind each feeling there is usually a need. If we understand the need, we can find better solutions."

2. **Explore Feeling Cards (10–15 min)**
   Spread the Feeling Cards and ask participants to:
   - pick cards that they understand or recognise;
   - briefly describe a moment they felt that way (if they want).
     Support them with examples:
   - "I felt anxious when..."
   - "I felt proud when..."
3. **Connect feelings to body signs (5–10 min)**
   For 2–3 chosen feelings (e.g. anxious, angry, calm), ask:
   - "What happens in your body when you feel this?"
     (Link back to the Emotion Thermometer if used.)
     Write or draw next to the cards.
4. **Introduce Needs Cards (10–15 min)**
   Spread the Needs Cards. Take one feeling (e.g. "overwhelmed") and ask:
   - "When you feel overwhelmed, what might you need?"
     Invite the young person to choose Needs Cards that fit (e.g. quiet, space, support).
     Write or place cards together: **Feeling → Need**.
5. **Practice matching feelings and needs (10–15 min)**
   Repeat with other feelings:
   - "When you feel angry, what might you need?"
   - "When you feel lonely, what might you need?"
     Emphasise that the **same feeling** can have **different needs** in different situations.
6. **Create personal feeling-need combinations (5–10 min)**
   On a small worksheet, ask the young person to complete 3–5 sentences:
   - "When I feel _____, I might need _____."

     These can later be used in communication supports (e.g. cards, posters).

Reflection / debrief

- "Was it easy or hard to find your needs?"
- "Was there a feeling that you often have, but you didn't know the need behind it?"
- "How could telling others about your needs help you?"

Adaptations

- For non-speaking participants, use pointing, eye-gaze or simple switches to choose cards.
- For younger participants, keep fewer cards and use more pictures (e.g. bed for "rest", heart for "friendship").
- In group settings, you can use anonymised scenarios ("A person feels X; what might they need?") to avoid making anyone feel exposed.

Activity 7 – Safe Words and Signals

Purpose

To co-create a simple, respected system of **words and/or signals** that young people can use to communicate when something is too much, when they need a break, or when they feel unsafe or overwhelmed.

Autonomy focus

Self-advocacy, boundary setting, safety.

Suitable for

Young people in any group or 1:1 setting; especially useful in environments that can become overstimulating (youth centres, busy workshops, etc.).

Time needed

30–40 minutes (plus ongoing reinforcement).

Group size

Can be done individually or with a group (3–10 participants).

Materials

- Flipchart or large paper
- Markers

- Optional: coloured cards or small objects (e.g. red, yellow, green) to use as signals
- Optional: printed symbols (pause, stop, quiet, help)

Preparation

- Reflect as a facilitator: are you and your team **ready to respect** these signals consistently? This is essential; otherwise, trust will be broken.
- Decide where and how the agreed signals will be displayed (e.g. poster on the wall, small cards on tables).

Step-by-step

1. **Explain the purpose (5–10 min)**
   Say, in simple terms:

"Sometimes things get too loud, too fast or too confusing. Everyone has the right to say 'this is too much' or 'I need a break'. Together we will create words and signs that we all understand and respect."

2. **Discuss everyday situations (10–15 min)**
   Ask:
   - "When do things feel too much for you?"
   - "What happens then?"
     Write a few examples on a flipchart (crowded room, noise, people shouting, too many instructions).
3. **Brainstorm possible words and signals (10–15 min)**
   Invite ideas for **short words** or **signals** that could be used. For example:
   - Words: "pause", "break", "stop", "slow", "quiet".
   - Signals: raising a hand, showing a card, placing a coloured object on the table.
     Write them down and check understanding.
4. **Agree on 2–3 core safe words/signals (10 min)**
   For example:
   - "Pause" = I need a short break or slowing down.
   - "Stop" = this situation must stop now; I feel unsafe or very overwhelmed.

- "Help" = I need support to handle this.
  Or use a colour system (green/yellow/red).
  Check with participants:

"Are these words/signals OK for you? Do they feel comfortable to use?"

5. **Define what adults will do when they see/hear signals (10 min)**
   This is crucial. For each signal, agree on the adult response, e.g.:
   - If someone says "pause": facilitator stops the activity for a moment or offers a brief break.
   - If someone says "stop" or shows red: facilitator immediately stops or removes the triggering element and checks safety.
     Write these agreements on the flipchart in simple language.
6. **Practice using the signals (10–15 min)**

   Do a short role-play or game where participants can try using the words/signals in a safe context (e.g. during a simple group exercise, one person suddenly uses "pause", and you show the response).
7. **Create a visual reminder (5–10 min)**
   Make a small poster or individual cards summarising:
   - The safe word/signal
   - What it means
   - What adults will do
     Display or hand out copies.

Reflection / debrief

- "How do you feel about having these safe words/signals?"
- "Is there any other word or sign you would like to add later?"
- "What do you need from adults to feel safe using them?"

Adaptations

- For non-speaking young people, rely more on **visual cards** or gestures.
- Make sure other staff and volunteers are **informed and trained** to respond consistently.

- Review the system regularly and adjust if it is not working or if participants propose improvements.

Activity 8 – My Coping Toolbox

Purpose

To help young people identify and collect **practical strategies and tools** that help them calm down, feel safer, or manage strong emotions – and to assemble them into a "toolbox" they can use in daily life.

Autonomy focus

Self-regulation; choosing and using personal coping strategies.

Suitable for

Young people of different ages; can be adapted for individual or group use.

Time needed

45–60 minutes (plus time later to practice and update the toolbox).

Group size

1:1 or small group (up to 6 participants).

Materials

- A4 sheets or small boxes/envelopes for each participant ("My Coping Toolbox")
- Pens, markers, coloured pencils
- Small cards (A7 or similar)
- Optional physical items to inspire ideas: stress balls, headphones, small notebooks, fidget toys, pictures of quiet places, etc.

Preparation

- Decide whether you will create a **physical toolbox** (box or bag with items) or a **paper toolbox** (cards or drawings).
- Prepare a simple template with sections such as:
    - Things I can do with my body (e.g. breathing, walking, stretching)
    - Things I can use (objects, tools)
    - Things I can think or say to myself

- People I can contact

Step-by-step

1. **Connect to Emotion Thermometer and Needs (5–10 min)**
   Start from previous activities:
   - "We talked about how emotions can get stronger (thermometer) and about feelings and needs. Now we will think about what can help you when you start feeling stressed or overwhelmed."
2. **Brainstorm coping strategies together (10–15 min)**
   As a group or individually, list potential coping strategies on a flipchart, e.g.:
   - breathing slowly 5 times,
   - going to a quieter space,
   - listening to music with headphones,
   - playing with a fidget object,
   - talking to a trusted person,
   - writing or drawing,
   - squeezing a stress ball,
   - rocking or using calming movement,
   - thinking of a safe, pleasant place.

Avoid labelling autistic self-stimulatory behaviours ("stimming") as inherently negative; many of them are natural self-regulation strategies.

3. **Select personal strategies (10–15 min)**
   Invite each young person to choose **3–8 strategies** that feel realistic and helpful for them.
   For each chosen strategy, they write or draw it on a small card.
4. **Organise the toolbox (10–15 min)**
   Ask participants to place their cards into categories. For example:
   - "Quick tools I can use anywhere" (breathing, counting, pressing hands)
   - "Things I need a specific place or object for" (quiet room, headphones, computer)

- "People who can help me" (names or roles).
  Place all cards into a small box, envelope or a "toolbox" drawing.

5. **Link strategies to emotion levels (10 min)**
   Using the Emotion Thermometer, invite the young person to decide:
   - "Which tools will you use at level 1–2 (early signs)?"
   - "Which tools might you try at level 3 if possible?"
     Mark this visually (e.g. colour the card borders according to the level).
6. **Plan when and how to practice (5–10 min)**

   Explain that coping tools work better if we **practice them when we are relatively calm**, not only in crisis.

   Decide times or situations for practice (e.g. beginning of sessions, after school, before bed).

Reflection / debrief

- "Which tool do you think will help you most?"
- "Is there a tool you already use without calling it a 'tool'?"
- "Who can remind you about your toolbox when you are getting stressed?"

Encourage revisiting and updating the toolbox over time.

Adaptations

- Use pictures and objects for young people who have difficulty with abstract language.
- For some participants, focus on only **2–3 tools** at first.
- Make sure the environment actually **allows** the use of agreed tools (e.g. access to a quiet room, permission to use headphones).

3.3 Daily Living Skills and Routines

Daily living skills are at the heart of autonomy. This section offers practical activities to support young people in:

- understanding and structuring their day and week,
- participating in simple cooking tasks,
- organising and taking care of their own space,
- managing small amounts of money and making basic purchases.

The activities can be combined as part of a longer "Independent Living" programme or used individually according to each young person's needs and goals.

Activities:

- **Activity 9 – Visual Daily Planner**
- **Activity 10 – Weekly Planner: School, Work, Free Time**
- **Activity 11 – Visual Recipe: Cooking Together**
- **Activity 12 – My Room, My Space (organising and cleaning)**
- **Activity 13 – Basic Money Skills (small purchases and budgeting)**

Let's see them! 😊

Activity 9 – Visual Daily Planner

Purpose

To help young people structure their day using a **visual planner**, making time and activities more predictable and manageable.

Autonomy focus

Time management, routine building, preparation for transitions.

Learning outcomes

The young person will:

- recognise key parts of the day (morning, afternoon, evening),
- use a visual planner to see "what happens next",
- participate in planning and adjusting their daily routine,
- experience more predictability and reduced anxiety around transitions.

Target group

Young people (approx. 8+) with autism and/or mental disabilities; especially helpful for those who struggle with transitions or unexpected changes.

Group size
1:1 or small group (each person with their own planner).

Estimated duration
45–60 minutes (plus daily use in practice).

Materials

- A4 or A3 cardboard or laminated sheet for each planner
- Velcro or Blu-Tack (optional, for movable icons)
- Pre-printed or hand-drawn **activity icons** (e.g. wake up, breakfast, bus, school, lunch, free time, homework, sports, shower, sleep)
- Pens, markers, stickers

Preparation

1. Decide whether the planner will cover:
    - the **whole day**, or
    - just **one part** (e.g. morning routine) as a starting point.
2. Prepare a set of common activity icons and leave some blank cards for personalised activities.

Step-by-step instructions

1. **Introduce the idea of a daily planner (5–10 minutes)**
   Explain:

"A daily planner is a way to see our day on paper, so our brain doesn't have to remember everything and we can know what is coming next."

2. **List daily activities (10–15 minutes)**

   Ask the young person to name the main things they usually do in a day (at home and outside).
    - Write or draw them.

- For younger or less verbal participants, propose activities and ask yes/no or use icons.

3. **Create the planner structure (10–15 minutes)**
   On the cardboard, draw a simple **timeline** or boxes for:
   - Morning
   - Midday / Afternoon
   - Evening

Or hourly slots if appropriate (e.g. 7:00–8:00, 8:00–9:00 etc.).

4. **Place activities on the planner (15–20 minutes)**
   - Work with the young person to place activity icons in order.
   - Check understanding:

"First we have… then… after that… finally…"

   - Include **breaks** and **free time**, not only obligations.

5. **Mark flexibility and changes (10–15 minutes)**

   Explain that some activities are fixed (e.g. school times) and others are flexible.
   - You can use different colours (e.g. blue for fixed, green for flexible).
   - Show how to change an activity if plans change (move or replace icon).

6. **Plan how to use it daily (5–10 minutes)**

   Decide where to place the planner (e.g. in the young person's room, in the centre) and when it will be checked (e.g. after breakfast, before bed).

Debrief and reflection questions

- "How does it feel to see your day on this planner?"
- "Is there a part of the day that you would like to change?"
- "What helps you most: the words, the pictures, or the colours?"

For the youth worker:

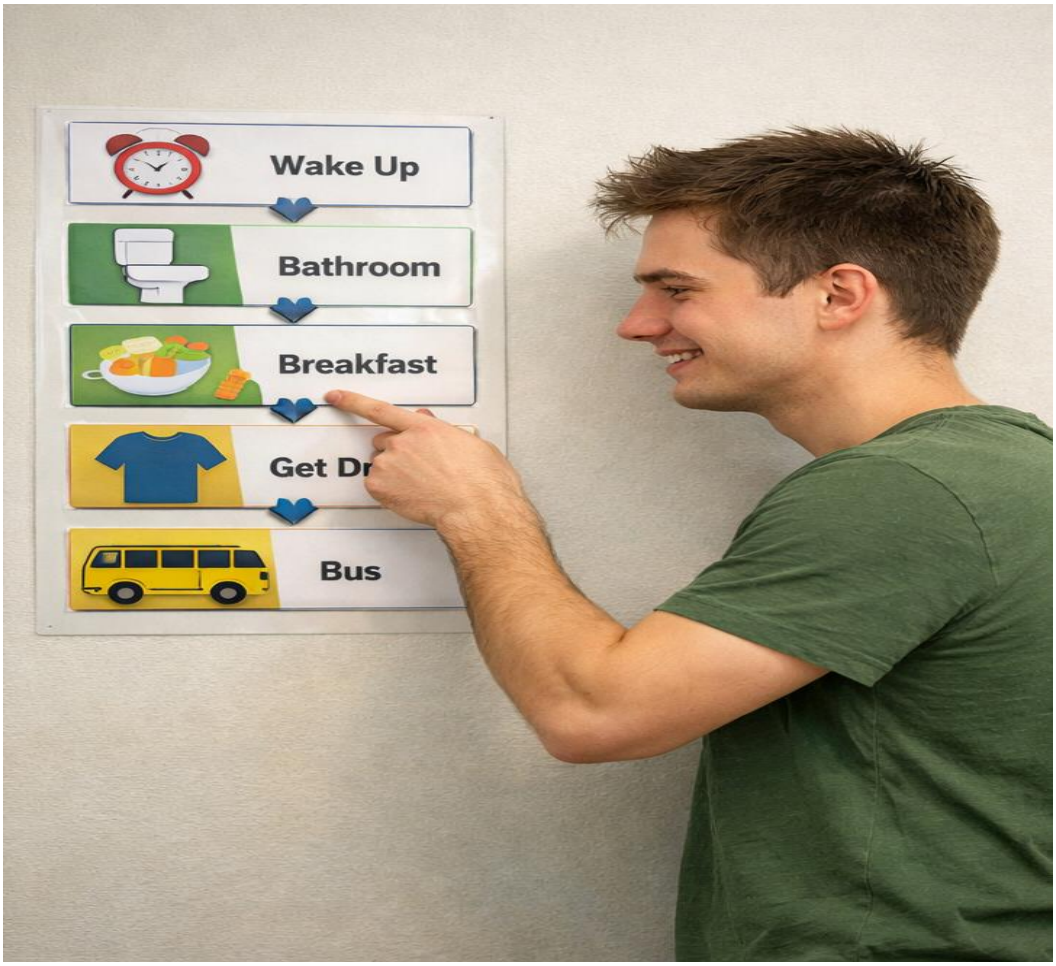
- "Is the planner realistic and not overloaded?"
- "Did I avoid making the planner a tool of control and instead involve the young person in decisions?"

Adaptations

- For some participants, start with **only one sequence**, e.g. “Morning routine” (wake up, bathroom, breakfast, get dressed).
- Use **photos** of the young person performing activities for more concrete support.
- For those with high anxiety about changes, add a **“surprise/flexible” icon** to prepare for occasional changes.

Example

A young person becomes distressed every morning because he doesn’t know what is happening. With **a visual morning planner** (wake up → bathroom → breakfast → get dressed → bus), anxiety decreases, and he gradually takes more responsibility for each step.



Activity 10 – Weekly Planner: School, Work, Free Time

Purpose

To help young people understand and participate in planning their **week**, balancing obligations (school, appointments, work) with **free time, rest and enjoyable activities**.

Autonomy focus

Time management on a weekly level; planning; balancing life domains.

Learning outcomes

The young person will:

- identify regular weekly activities (school, therapy, hobbies, rest),
- use a visual weekly planner to see their week at a glance,
- recognise where free time is available and how to use it,
- feel more prepared for upcoming commitments.

Target group

Young people (approx. 12+) with autism and/or mental disabilities; useful for those dealing with multiple weekly appointments or transitions (e.g. school–work).

Group size

1:1 or small group (each person with their own planner).

Estimated duration

45–60 minutes.

Materials

- A3 (preferred) or A4 sheet divided into 7 days (Mon–Sun or local format)
- Colour markers
- Activity icons from Activity 9 (can reuse)
- Stickers for “school”, “appointments”, “fun/free time”
- Optional: highlighters to code different domains (school, work, family, self-care, social)

Preparation

1. Draw a simple weekly grid with 7 columns (days) and 2–3 rows (e.g. morning/afternoon/evening).
2. Prepare icons/stickers for recurring activities.

Step-by-step instructions

1. **Warm-up: What fills your week? (10–15 minutes)**
   Ask:
   - "What do you usually do on weekdays?"
   - "Do you have any regular activities in the evenings or weekends?"

List school times, therapies, sports, clubs, family commitments, etc.

2. **Build the weekly grid (10 minutes)**

   Show the weekly template and explain the structure (days, times of day). Clarify that this is not a prison, but a **map** of the week.

3. **Place fixed activities first (15–20 minutes)**
   With the young person, place icons or write times for:
   - school / training,
   - work or internships,
   - regular appointments (e.g. therapy, doctor, lessons),
   - regular family commitments.

Use one colour (e.g. blue) to mark these "fixed" items.

4. **Identify free time spaces (10–15 minutes)**
   Once fixed items are in place, ask:
   - "Where do you have free time?"
   - "Where do you rest? Where do you do fun things?"

Mark these gaps in another colour (e.g. green). Discuss if there is **too little rest** or **too much unstructured time**.

5. **Plan meaningful use of free time (15–20 minutes)**
   Using the **Strengths & Interests** from earlier activities:
   - Suggest or ask: "What would you like to add here?"

- Examples: walk, drawing, time with friends, gaming (with limits), reading, sports.

Add 1–3 selected free time activities, ensuring **not to overload** the schedule.

6. **Discuss flexibility and review (5–10 minutes)**
   Explain that the weekly planner can be updated:
   - weekly (e.g. Sunday evening check-in),
   - or when something changes (school holidays, new activity).

Debrief and reflection questions

- "Are you happy with how your week looks now?"
- "Do you feel you have enough time for rest? For fun? For learning?"
- "Is there anything you want to try changing next week?"

For the youth worker:

- "Is this plan realistic for the young person's energy and needs?"
- "Have I respected their preferences, not only what adults want?"

Adaptations

- For some participants, focus only on **school days** first; add weekends later.
- Use strong visual cues for **days of the week** (colours, symbols).
- For those with rigid thinking, emphasise that the planner is a **guide**, not an unbreakable rule.

Example
A young woman often spends entire weekends in bed or on her phone, feeling bored and low. With a weekly planner, she identifies two afternoon slots to try new activities (a walk with a friend and a cooking session with family), improving mood and sense of structure.

Activity 11 – Visual Recipe: Cooking Together

Purpose
To develop basic cooking skills through a **step-by-step visual recipe**, while practicing autonomy, safety, cooperation and following instructions.

Autonomy focus
Food preparation, following sequences, safe use of kitchen tools, cooperation.

Learning outcomes

The young person will:

- follow a simple visual recipe with support,
- practice one or more cooking tasks (e.g. washing, cutting soft ingredients, mixing, using simple kitchen tools),
- experience success in preparing something they can eat or share,
- improve understanding of kitchen safety rules.

Target group

Young people (approx. 12+) with autism and/or mental disabilities; group cooking can also be used with younger participants with high support.

Group size
Small group (3–6 participants) or 1:1.

Estimated duration
60–90 minutes (depending on recipe and group size).

Materials

- Kitchen access (or at least a small space with basic equipment)
- Ingredients for a simple recipe (e.g. fruit salad, sandwiches, cold pasta salad, no-bake dessert)
- Basic utensils (bowls, spoons, knives adapted to skill level, cutting boards, etc.)
- Printed **visual recipe**: pictures or icons of each step + short text
- Aprons, cleaning supplies (cloths, soap)

Preparation

1. **Choose a recipe** that:
    - is simple and safe,
    - has 6–10 clear steps,
    - can be easily shared (e.g. snacks for the group).
2. Create a **visual recipe card** with one picture per step and simple phrases (e.g. "Wash the apples", "Cut into small pieces", "Put in bowl", "Mix").
3. Check any allergies or dietary restrictions.

Step-by-step instructions

1. **Introduce the activity and safety rules (10–15 minutes)**
   Explain:

"Today we will cook together using this step-by-step visual recipe. We will also practice safety: careful with knives, hot surfaces, washing hands, cleaning up."

Go through a short **safety checklist** visually.

2. **Assign roles (5–10 minutes)**
   In a group, ask who would like to:
    - wash ingredients,
    - cut (if safe),
    - mix,
    - serve,
    - clean up.

Ensure everyone has a role adapted to their comfort and ability.

3. **Follow the visual recipe (30–45 minutes)**

For each step:

- Show the step on the visual recipe card.
- Read or summarise the instruction.
- Demonstrate if necessary.
- Let the assigned person(s) perform the step, with support as needed.

- Mark the step as “done” (tick, cross, move the card to a “finished” column).

4. **Taste and share (10–15 minutes)**
   When finished, the group:
   - tastes the result,
   - can share with others (staff, other groups) if appropriate.

Encourage positive feedback and recognition of effort.

5. **Clean up (10–15 minutes)**
   Cleaning is part of autonomy. Assign tasks: washing dishes, wiping tables, putting utensils away.
   Use simple visual prompts if needed.

Debrief and reflection questions

- “Which step did you like the most?”
- “Was there any step that felt difficult or scary?”
- “Would you like to try this recipe at home? What would you need to do that?”

For the youth worker:

- “Did I allow real participation, not just ‘helping’ while doing everything myself?”
- “Did I adapt responsibilities to each person’s abilities, maintaining safety?”

Adaptations

- Start with **no-heat recipes** (sandwiches, salads, cold snacks) for safety.
- Use **adaptive knives** or pre-cut ingredients if necessary.
- For one-to-one sessions, choose recipes connected to the young person’s culture or interests (e.g. favourite dish).

Example

A young man who rarely engages in group activities volunteers to mix ingredients in a “no-bake energy bites” recipe. The clear steps and sensory experience (texture, smell) keep him engaged. He proudly offers the bites to others, increasing confidence and social interaction.

Activity 12 – My Room, My Space (Organising and Cleaning)

Purpose

To support young people in taking more responsibility for their **personal space**, learning how to organise and clean their room (or part of a shared space) in small, manageable steps.

Autonomy focus

Environment management, self-care, responsibility, executive functioning.

Learning outcomes

The young person will:

- identify different zones of their room/space (sleeping, clothes, desk, hobbies),
- learn a **simple routine** to tidy and clean,
- practice at least one step (e.g. making the bed, organising clothes, clearing a desk),
- experience pride and ownership of their space.

Target group

Young people (approx. 10+) with autism and/or mental disabilities, living with family, in residential settings or semi-independent.

Group size

1:1; occasionally can be done with small groups in a shared living space.

Estimated duration

45–60 minutes per session; this activity often needs to be repeated regularly.

Materials

- Paper and markers
- Optional: camera/phone to take “before and after” photos
- Storage boxes, labels, baskets (if available)
- Cleaning materials (for simple tasks): cloths, bin bags, etc.

Preparation

1. Ask permission from the young person and, if needed, family/staff before working on their personal space.
2. Agree in advance whether the session will be in their actual room or in a **symbolic recreation** (e.g. using drawings, pictures, a dollhouse model).

Step-by-step instructions

1. **Talk about personal space (5–10 minutes)**
   Discuss:

"Everyone has a space that is theirs (or partly theirs). It can feel good when this space is organised the way we like it, and it is easier to find things."

Ask what they like and dislike about their current space.

2. **Map the space (10–15 minutes)**
   On paper, draw a simple map of the room/space together:
   - bed area,
   - clothes storage,
   - desk/table,
   - hobby area,
   - other important zones.

This can be very rough and symbolic.

3. **Choose one focus area (5–10 minutes)**
   To avoid overwhelm, ask:
   - "Which part of your room do you want to improve first?"

Examples: a messy desk, clothes on the floor, bed area.

4. **Define "what tidy looks like" (10–15 minutes)**
   Together, decide what "tidy" means for that area. For example, for a desk:
   - books in one pile,
   - pens in a box,
   - rubbish in bin,
   - free space to work.

You can draw or write a **simple checklist**.

5. **Do the tidy-up action (15–20 minutes)**
   Work alongside the young person:
   - divide the task into small steps ("pick up clothes", "separate dirty/clean", "put dirty in basket");
   - encourage choice (where to put certain items);
   - praise effort, not perfection.

Take "before and after" photos if the young person is comfortable.

6. **Create a mini-routine (5–10 minutes)**

   Turn the steps into a short routine that can be repeated, e.g.:
   - "Every evening: clothes in basket, rubbish in bin, desk cleared in 5 minutes."

Write or draw this routine and place it somewhere visible in the room.

Debrief and reflection questions

- "How do you feel when you look at your space now?"
- "Which step was easy? Which step was hardest?"
- "Would you like to keep doing this once a week or once a day?"

For the youth worker:

- "Did I respect the young person's preferences (e.g. how they want to arrange objects)?"
- "Did I avoid imposing my own idea of 'perfect order'?"

Adaptations

- Start with a **very small area** (e.g. one shelf, one drawer).
- For some participants, use incentives (e.g. "after 10 minutes of tidying, we do a preferred activity").
- In shared rooms, negotiate with roommates and families to respect privacy and boundaries.

Example

A young person with depression and autism spends most of his time in a very cluttered room, feeling ashamed and stuck. By focusing first only on clearing the floor around the bed and creating a "laundry basket routine", he experiences a small success. Over weeks, other areas are tackled gradually.

Activity 13 – Basic Money Skills (Small Purchases and Budgeting)

Purpose

To introduce basic money concepts and build confidence in **handling small amounts of money**, making simple purchases and starting to understand budgeting.

Autonomy focus

Financial literacy, community participation, decision-making.

Learning outcomes

The young person will:

- recognise local coins/notes and their values,
- practice paying for small items (in role-play and, if possible, in a real shop),
- understand the concept of a **simple budget** ("I have X, I can spend Y"),
- experience success in planning and completing a purchase.

Target group

Young people (approx. 12+) with autism and/or mental disabilities. This may require several sessions, depending on starting skills.

Group size

1:1 or small group (2–4 participants).

Estimated duration

Multiple sessions of 45–60 minutes (role-play first, then real-life practice).

Materials

- Real or play money in local currency (coins and small notes)
- Price tags or cards (e.g. 0.50, 1.00, 1.50, 2.00, 3.00, 5.00)
- Items to "buy" in the room (snacks, pens, small objects)
- Simple **budget worksheet**: "Money I have", "Money I spend", "Money left"

- Optional: trip to a real shop or café

Preparation

1. Assess current understanding of money (can the young person recognise coins? Compare bigger/smaller amounts?).
2. Choose **very simple price levels** at the beginning.

Step-by-step instructions

Session 1 – Recognising money and prices

1. **Introduce coins and notes (10–15 minutes)**
    - Show each coin/note and say its value.
    - Ask the young person to sort coins by value or size.
    - Use matching activities (e.g. coin → value card).
2. **Price matching (10–15 minutes)**
    - Place price cards on items in the room.
    - Ask: "This costs 1.50. Which coins could you use to pay?"
    - Offer support and repeat.
3. **Simple "shop" role-play (15–20 minutes)**
    - Set up a table as a shop.
    - The young person chooses an item, "buys" it with play money; the youth worker gives change if relevant.
    - Practice a simple script:

"Hello… I would like this… Here is the money… Thank you."

Session 2 – Planning a small purchase (budgeting)

1. **Introduce a small budget (10–15 minutes)**
    - Example: "You have 5 euros for a snack and a drink."
    - Show a list of 4–6 items with prices.
2. **Make choices within the budget (15–20 minutes)**

- Ask: “What would you like to buy with your 5 euros?”
- Support them to add prices and see if they are within the budget.
- Use the worksheet:
  - “Money I have: 5”
  - “Money I spend: 3.50”
  - “Money left: 1.50”

3. **Role-play again or go to a real shop (15–25 minutes)**
   - If possible, go with them to a local shop or café and let them make the purchase.
   - Stand back enough to let them interact with the cashier, but be ready to support if needed.

Debrief and reflection questions

- “How did it feel to pay by yourself?”
- “Was it easy or difficult to choose what to buy with a limited amount?”
- “What do you think you could try next time (maybe a slightly bigger purchase)?”

For the youth worker:

- “Did I ensure the experience was positive and not shaming if mistakes happened?”
- “Did I keep the amounts and choices simple enough for success at first?”

Adaptations

- Start with **one coin and one price** (e.g. always 1 euro items) for those with major difficulties, then increase complexity gradually.
- Use **pictures of items** and price lists for planning at home before going to the shop.
- In some cases, focus only on recognising money and paying exact amounts, leaving change and larger budgeting for later stages.

Example

A young woman who always lets her parents pay in shops practices buying a bottle of water at a local kiosk. After practising with play money and role-playing, she successfully does the purchase alone while her youth worker watches from a distance. This small step significantly increases her confidence.

Chapter 4 – Activity Bank II: Social Participation, Work and Community Involvement

4.1 Social and Community Participation

This section includes activities that help young people:

- explore and map their **community** (safe, meaningful and accessible places),
- practice **social situations** in a structured and respectful way,
- co-plan **group outings** as preparation for real participation,
- design an **intercultural evening** as a space for expression, sharing and inclusion.

Activities:

- Activity 14 – Community Map (mapping safe and meaningful places)
- Activity 15 – Social Situations Role Play (asking for help, saying "no", etc.)
- Activity 16 – Planning a Group Outing
- Activity 17 – Intercultural Evening Toolkit

Let's see them! 😊

Activity 14 – Community Map (mapping safe and meaningful places)

Purpose

To support young people in identifying and visualising **safe, meaningful and accessible places** in their community (or neighbourhood), and to reflect on where they feel welcome, where they face barriers, and what new places they might want to explore.

Autonomy focus
Orientation in the community, sense of belonging, planning for participation.

When to use

- At the start of work on community participation.
- Before planning outings, volunteering or work experiences.
- As a group-building activity linking different experiences.

Target group & group size

- Young people (approx. 12+) with autism and/or mental disabilities.
- Works well in small groups (4–10 participants) or in 1:1 sessions.

Approximate duration

- 60 minutes (can be split into two shorter sessions).

Materials

- Large sheets of paper or flipcharts
- Coloured markers, pens
- Stickers or coloured dots (e.g. green = safe/positive, yellow = mixed, red = difficult)
- Optional: printed map of the local area, photos of known places, magazines for collage

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Step-by-step instructions

1. **Introduce the idea of "my community" (5–10 minutes)**
   Ask:
   - "What places do you go to in your town/city?"
   - "Where do you like to go? Where do you not like to go?"

Explain:

"Today we will create a Community Map that shows places that are important to you – where you feel safe, welcome or curious to go – and also places that feel difficult."

2. **Draw a basic map or layout (10–15 minutes)**
   Options:
   - Use a printed map and write on it, or

- Draw a **symbolic map**: home in the centre and arrows to other places (school, park, sports club, shops, youth centre, etc.).

It does not need to be geographically exact; it is a **personal perception map**.

3. **List and place known places (10–15 minutes)**

   Ask participants to name places they visit or know. For each place:

   - write the name and/or draw a simple icon,
   - place it in the map in relation to "home" or "centre" (e.g. near or far).

Encourage a variety of places:

- practical (shops, transport stations, health services),
- social (parks, youth clubs, cafés),
- cultural (libraries, museums, sports arenas, churches, community centres).

4. **Rate safety and comfort (10–15 minutes)**
   Give coloured dots or markers:

   - green = "I feel safe/comfortable here",
   - yellow = "sometimes OK, sometimes not",
   - red = "I feel unsafe or really uncomfortable here".

Ask each participant to mark "their" places on the map. Discuss patterns:

- "Which places have many green dots?"
- "Where do we see yellow or red?"

5. **Identify meaningful and desired places (10–15 minutes)**
   Ask:

   - "Which place on this map is most important to you and why?"
   - "Is there a place you would like to go but do not go yet (or only with a lot of support)?"

Add "wish places" with a different symbol (e.g. star).

Example – Discovering new safe spaces

In a group, several participants mark the public library as "green" and "safe" because it is quiet and predictable. Others have never been there. The group decides to plan a future outing to the library as a first step towards new community participation.

Adaptations and tips

- For participants with limited verbal communication, use **photos** of places and let them indicate with gestures or dots how they feel about each place.
- If the local area feels unsafe or restricted, also include **online or hybrid spaces** (e.g. safe online communities, project spaces).
- You can create **individual maps** (one per person) instead of a shared one, to avoid influence from others.

Reflection questions

For young people:

- "Looking at this map, what do you like about your community?"
- "Is there a place you would like to go more often?"
- "Is there a place that you would like to feel safer in? What might help?"

For youth workers:

- "Which places could be used for future autonomy activities?"
- "Where do we need to advocate for more accessibility or inclusion?"

Activity 15 – Social Situations Role Play (asking for help, saying "no", etc.)

Purpose

To practice key **social situations** that are important for autonomy and safety, such as asking for help, refusing something, setting a boundary, or starting a simple conversation, using structured, supported role-plays.

Autonomy focus

Self-advocacy, boundary-setting, social communication.

When to use

- After working on emotions and needs (Chapter 3.2).
- Before outings, new placements (e.g. work, volunteering) or transitions.

Target group & group size

- Young people (approx. 12+).

- Best in small groups (4–8 participants), but also possible 1:1.

Approximate duration

- 60 minutes (can be repeated with new situations).

Materials

- Scenario cards describing short situations (text and/or pictures), for example:
  - "You are lost in a new place and need directions."
  - "Someone asks you to do something you do not want to do."
  - "You want to leave a noisy room."
  - "You want to ask a teacher or boss for clarification."
- Optional: props (chairs, desk, jacket, phone, etc.)
- Flipchart for key phrases

Step-by-step instructions

1. **Identify important social situations (10–15 minutes)**
   Brainstorm with the group:
   - "When is it important to ask for help?"
   - "When might you need to say no?"
   - "What situations are difficult for you?"

Choose 2–4 situations to work on in this session.

2. **Create or present scenario cards (5–10 minutes)**

   For each chosen situation, prepare a **short scenario**. Example:

"You are in a crowded bus. Someone is standing very close to you and you feel uncomfortable."

Use simple language and, if helpful, pictures.

3. **Develop a few key phrases for each situation (10–15 minutes)**
   With the group, co-create 2–3 possible phrases or strategies:
   - Asking for help: "Excuse me, could you help me with…?"
   - Saying no: "No, thank you, I don't want to." / "I'm not comfortable with that."
   - Leaving: "I need a break, I'm going outside for a moment."

Write these on a flipchart in large letters.

4. **Role-play in pairs or small groups (20–30 minutes)**
   For each scenario:
   - Choose who will play the "young person" and who the "other person" (teacher, stranger, friend).
   - Act out the scene once, using the key phrases.
   - Switch roles so everyone can try being the one who asks or says no.

Emphasise that mistakes are allowed and it is a **practice space**, not a test.

5. **Discuss and adjust (10–15 minutes)**
   After each role-play, ask:
   - "How did it feel to say that?"
   - "What worked? What was uncomfortable?"
   - "Do we want to change the phrase to make it more natural for you?"

Example – Practicing "no" safely

In a group, young people practice saying "No, I don't like that" when someone touches their belongings without asking. At first they whisper; later, with support, they say it louder and with clear body language. They also practice moving away and asking an adult for help.

Adaptations and tips

- Some participants may be very anxious about performing. Allow **watching first**, then participating when ready.
- Use **scripts or cue cards** they can hold while acting.
- For non-speaking participants, practice using **gesture, cards or devices** to communicate "help", "no", "stop", "I need a break".

Reflection questions

For young people:

- "Which situation felt most useful for you?"
- "Is there a phrase you would like to practice more?"

For youth workers:

- "Are the scenarios realistic for the young people's lives?"
- "Did we also discuss safety (e.g. who it is safe to ask for help, when to leave, how to seek adult support)?"

Activity 16 – Planning a Group Outing

Purpose

To involve young people in the **full planning process** of a group outing (destination, transport, budget, accessibility, risks, roles), rather than only informing them at the end. This builds ownership, planning skills and realistic understanding of what is needed to participate in community activities.

Autonomy focus

Planning, decision-making, community access, shared responsibility.

When to use

- After mapping the community (Activity 14).
- When the group will actually go on an outing (library, museum, park, café, sports event, etc.).

Target group & group size

- Groups of 4–12 young people; individual work also possible, but group setting is ideal.

Approximate duration

- Planning meeting: 60–90 minutes.
- Outing itself: depends on activity.
- Follow-up reflection: 30–45 minutes.

Materials

- Flipchart or large paper
- Markers
- Simple planning template/poster with sections:
    - Destination
    - Why we go

- Date / time
- Transport
- Money / budget
- Accessibility & safety
- Roles (who does what)

- Optional: internet access, brochures, public transport info.

Step-by-step instructions (planning session)

1. **Decide on a destination (10–15 minutes)**

   Based on the Community Map and group interests, brainstorm possible outing destinations:

   - "Where would you like to go as a group?" List 3–5 options and, if needed, vote using dots or hand-raising.

Choose one destination, ensuring it is **realistic** (cost, distance, accessibility).

2. **Clarify the purpose of the outing (5–10 minutes)**
   Ask:

   - "Why do we want to go there?"

Examples:

- to learn something,
- to practice social skills,
- to relax and have fun,
- to practice using public transport.

Write a simple purpose statement on the poster.

3. **Plan date, time and duration (10–15 minutes)**
   Involve the group in choosing:

   - date (or options),
   - meeting time and place,
   - expected return time.

Check with your organisation's constraints, but keep decisions as participatory as possible.

4. **Discuss transport (10–15 minutes)**
   Ask:
   - "How will we get there?"

Consider:

- walking,
- bus/tram/metro,
- car/minibus,
- combination.

If using public transport, check:

- route on a map,
- number of stops,
- tickets needed.

Visualise this on the poster (icons for bus, walking person, etc.).

5. **Discuss money and budget (10–15 minutes)**
   Clarify:
   - "Is there a cost for this outing (ticket, café, transport)?"
   - "What is covered by the project/organisation? What do participants need to bring (if anything)?"

Keep it transparent and simple. Use example budgets:

- "Ticket: 3€; Bus: 2€; Snack: 3€ = 8€ total."

6. **Consider accessibility and safety (10–15 minutes)**
   With the group, think:
   - "Is this place generally accessible for everyone?"
   - "Will it be noisy, crowded, physically challenging?"
   - "What can we do to make it easier (ear defenders, breaks, meeting points, quiet space, support persons)?"

Add these to the plan.

7. **Assign roles and responsibilities (10–15 minutes)**
   Examples of roles:
   - time-keeper,
   - map/route guide (with support),
   - photo/documentation person,
   - snack coordinator,
   - "check-in buddy" (checks on how others are feeling).

Ask for volunteers for each role, respecting abilities and preferences.

Example – Shared ownership

Before a museum visit, the group plans the outing. One participant, who loves maps, volunteers to be "route guide" with a youth worker. Another, who likes taking pictures, is responsible for photos. When the outing happens, they feel that it is "our trip", not "something adults decided".

Adaptations and tips

- For groups with high anxiety, show **photos of the destination** during planning.
- If literacy is low, use icons and drawings rather than long text.
- Keep backup plans ready (e.g. if weather is bad),but avoid overwhelming participants with too many "what if" scenarios.

Reflection questions (after the outing)

For young people:

- "Did the outing go as you expected?"
- "What did you like the most? What was difficult?"
- "Would you change anything next time we plan an outing?"

For youth workers:

- "Did the planning increase participation and reduce stress?"
- "What planning skills did the young people actually practice?"

Activity 17 – Intercultural Evening Toolkit

Purpose

To provide a structured approach for co-creating an **intercultural evening** where participants share aspects of their culture (food, music, traditions, stories) in an inclusive, sensory-aware and respectful way.

Autonomy focus

Expression of identity, public participation, planning, cooperation.

When to use

- In international or multicultural groups (e.g. Erasmus+ projects, diverse local communities).
- As part of programmes focusing on inclusion, diversity and cultural learning.

Target group & group size

- Young people (approx. 14+); mixed abilities.
- Group size: 8–30+, divided into smaller "culture teams".

Approximate duration

- Preparation: 1–2 sessions of 60–90 minutes.
- Intercultural evening itself: 2–3 hours.
- Optional debrief next day: 45–60 minutes.

Materials

- Planning sheets for each team
- Flipcharts, markers
- Tables/spaces for stands or "culture corners"
- Access to kitchen or space for simple food/snacks (if allowed)
- Speakers/music player (with volume control)
- Decorations (flags, coloured papers, etc.)

Step-by-step instructions (preparation sessions)

1. **Explain the concept (10–15 minutes)**
   Present the idea:

"We will organise an Intercultural Evening where each group can share something from their country, region, or culture: food, music, dance, games, stories, etc. The goal is to learn from each other in a fun and respectful way."

Emphasise:

- there is **no obligation** to perform;
- everyone can contribute in different ways (cooking, decorating, presenting, DJ, etc.).

2. **Form culture teams (5–10 minutes)**

   Usually, teams are formed by country or region. In mixed contexts, teams can be formed around themes (e.g. "food", "music", "stories") with participants from different cultures.

3. **Distribute planning sheets (10–15 minutes)**

   Each team receives a simple template:

   - "What do we want to share?" (e.g. 1–2 foods, 1 song, 1 game, 1 tradition)
   - "What materials do we need?"
   - "Who will do what?"
   - "Do we need any support (translation, kitchen, music equipment)?"
   - "How can we make our corner inclusive (not too loud, clear explanations, etc.)?"

4. **Support teams to plan (30–40 minutes)**

   Move between groups, helping them:

   - keep their plan realistic (number of dishes, complexity),
   - think of **simple, low-cost options**,
   - include **non-food elements** in case of allergies/dietary restrictions.

5. **Discuss inclusivity and sensory awareness (10–15 minutes)**

   With the full group, talk about:

   - noise level and music volume,
   - avoiding strong smells if some participants are sensitive,
   - providing clear labels (e.g. food containing allergens, spicy/not spicy),
   - offering quiet areas for those who may be overwhelmed.

Agree on **common rules** for the evening (e.g. sign for quiet zone, limit on very loud music).

Example – Inclusive cultural sharing

One team wants to bring a traditional dish with strong smell. Another participant is very sensitive to smell. The group decides to place this food near a window and provide clear labels, and to limit the quantity, ensuring both cultural expression and sensory consideration.

Running the Intercultural Evening

1. **Set up spaces (30–60 minutes before start)**
    - Arrange tables into "culture corners".
    - Put labels or signs with country/region names.
    - Set up a central area for performances (if any).
2. **Opening circle (10–15 minutes)**
   Briefly explain:
    - what will happen,
    - how long each part will last,
    - where quiet zones and bathrooms are,
    - where to find support if needed.
3. **Free exploration and/or structured rotations (60–120 minutes)**
   Options:
    - **Free flow**: participants move freely among stands.
    - **Rotations**: small groups rotate every 10–15 minutes to avoid crowding.

Encourage:

- tasting (if appropriate),
- asking questions,
- trying short activities (games, simple dance steps, writing name in another alphabet, etc.).

4. **Optional short stage moments (20–30 minutes)**
   If participants wish:
    - short songs, dances, poems, or presentations.

- Keep performances short and voluntary.

5. **Closing moment (10–15 minutes)**

   Gather briefly to thank everyone, share 1–2 highlights, and remind about the next day's reflection.

Debrief and reflection (next day)

In a quieter session, ask:

- "What did you enjoy about the Intercultural Evening?"
- "Did you feel included and comfortable? If not, when did it feel difficult?"
- "What new things did you learn about other cultures?"
- "What would you change for next time to make it even more inclusive?"

For youth workers:

- "Did any participants feel left out or overwhelmed?"
- "Were sensory needs adequately respected?"
- "Can any of the intercultural elements continue in regular activities?"

Adaptations and tips

- Encourage **multiple ways to participate**: cooking, decorating, explaining, playing music, taking photos, welcoming guests, etc.
- Provide **clear expectations** and schedules for autistic participants (what will happen, in what order).
- If some participants do not want to be at the centre of attention, allow them to contribute "behind the scenes" (e.g. preparing labels, arranging tables).

4.2 Pathways to Work and Volunteering

This section supports young people to:

- recognise and name their **skills and interests** in relation to work,
- experience and demystify **job interviews** in a safe environment,
- understand basic **workplace rules and rights**,

- plan a **short volunteering experience** as a realistic first step into the world of work.

Activities:

- Activity 18 – My Skills for Work (skills inventory)
- Activity 19 – Role Play: Job Interview
- Activity 20 – Workplace Rules & Rights (discussion game)
- Activity 21 – Planning a Short Volunteering Experience

Let's see them! 😊

Activity 18 – My Skills for Work (skills inventory)

Short description

A guided activity that helps young people identify their **skills, qualities and interests** that could be useful in work or volunteering. The result can be used later for CVs, interviews and planning experiences.

Autonomy focus
Self-knowledge, confidence, career orientation.

Learning outcomes

The young person will:

- identify at least a few personal strengths and work-related skills,
- connect everyday activities (home, hobbies, school) with potential work skills,
- begin to see realistic areas of work/volunteering that fit their profile.

Target group

Young people (approx. 15+) with autism and/or mental disabilities; can also be used with slightly younger participants if simplified.

Group size
1:1 or small group (3–8 participants).

Duration
45–60 minutes.

Materials

- "My Skills for Work" worksheet divided into sections, e.g.:
    - Things I like doing
    - Things I am good at
    - Things other people say I am good at
    - Skills for work (e.g. punctual, careful, friendly, good with hands, good with computers)
- Pre-printed skill cards (words + icons)
- Pens, markers
- Optional: stickers to highlight "top skills"

Preparation

- Prepare a simple list of skills in accessible language, e.g.:
    - "I am good at listening",
    - "I am careful with details",
    - "I can follow instructions",
    - "I am good with computers",
    - "I like helping others",
    - "I am creative",
    - "I can do physical work", etc.
- Turn these into **cards** and/or a checklist on the worksheet.

Step-by-step instructions

1. **Warm-up: work and skills (5–10 min)**
   Ask:
    - "What is 'work' for you? What kind of jobs do you know?"
    - "What skills do you think are important at work?"

Write a few examples on a flipchart.

2. **Section 1 – Things I like doing (10–15 min)**
   Individually, ask participants to list or choose from a visual menu:

- hobbies (gaming, sports, art, animals, cooking, nature, music, etc.),
- tasks they enjoy at home or school.

Use prompts:

- "What do you like doing when you have free time?"
- "Which activities make you feel proud or happy?"

3. **Section 2 – Things I am good at (10–15 min)**

   Give out the **skills cards** and ask participants to choose those that fit them. Support them with questions:

   - "Do you think you are patient?"
   - "Are you good at remembering details?"
   - "Do people often ask you for help with something specific?"

They can also add their own skills on blank cards.

4. **Section 3 – What others say about me (5–10 min)**
   Invite them to think of positive feedback they have received:

   - "Has anyone told you: 'You are very good at…'?"

If appropriate, you can later ask family or staff to add 1–2 skills.

5. **Connect skills to possible work areas (10–15 min)**
   On the worksheet, draw three simple columns:

   - "My skills"
   - "Where I use them now" (home, school, hobbies)
   - "Possible work/volunteering areas"

Example:

- Skill: good with animals → uses it now: walking dog → possible area: pet shop, animal shelter.
- Skill: organised → uses it now: arranging school materials → possible area: office support, library.

Debrief and reflection

- "Which skill are you most proud of?"

- "Did you discover a new skill you hadn't thought about before?"
- "Is there a type of work that now seems more interesting to you?"

For youth workers:

- "Which skills could be strengthened through volunteering and daily tasks?"
- "Does the inventory highlight areas where the young person undervalues themselves?"

Adaptations

- Use more pictures and fewer words for participants with reading difficulties.
- For those with low self-esteem, start with **what others say** and feedback from trusted people.
- Consider doing this twice: first individually, then with a family member adding their view (if appropriate).

Activity 19 – Role Play: Job Interview

Short description

A structured role-play to demystify the **job interview**, practice answering common questions, and develop simple strategies to manage anxiety and self-presentation.

Autonomy focus

Preparation for employment, communication, managing performance situations.

Learning outcomes

The young person will:

- become familiar with typical interview questions,
- practice answering in their own words,
- rehearse entering a room, greeting, sitting, and closing an interview,
- receive constructive feedback in a supportive setting.

Target group

Young people (approx. 16+) who may soon look for internships, volunteering or paid work.

Group size

1:1 (youth worker & young person) or small group (3–6 participants) where they can take turns.

Duration
60–90 minutes.

Materials

- List of **common interview questions**, simplified, e.g.:
  - "Can you tell me a bit about yourself?"
  - "Why would you like to work/volunteer here?"
  - "What are you good at?"
  - "What is sometimes difficult for you, and how do you deal with it?"
  - "When can you work (days, hours)?"
- Chairs, table to simulate an office
- Optional: camera to record (only with consent)
- Simple feedback sheet (e.g. "what went well", "one thing to improve")

Preparation

- Clarify the **type of work/volunteering** you are interviewing for (realistic example: café, animal shelter, office, youth centre).
- Adapt questions to match that context.
- Prepare clear, **supportive ground rules**:
  - no mocking,
  - mistakes are OK,
  - feedback will be constructive.

Step-by-step instructions

1. **Explain the purpose (5–10 min)**

"Interviews can be scary because someone asks questions and we want to give a good impression. Today we will practice in a safe way, so you can feel more prepared for real interviews."

2. **Discuss the basic structure of an interview (10–15 min)**
   On a flipchart, outline:
   - entering and greeting,
   - short introduction,
   - questions / answers,
   - asking your own questions,
   - closing and saying goodbye.
3. **Prepare answers together (15–20 min)**

   Choose 3–5 questions and help the young person brainstorm answers. Use prompts:
   - "For 'tell me about yourself', you can mention your name, age, what you do now, and one or two interests or skills."
   - "For 'why here', you can say what you like about this place or what you hope to learn."

Write key words on a card they can look at during practice if needed.

4. **First role-play (20–25 min)**
   - One person plays the interviewer (youth worker or peer).
   - The young person enters the room, greets, sits, and answers 3–5 questions.
   - Keep it short (5–10 minutes).
   - Others observe quietly if in a group.
5. **Feedback and encouragement (15–20 min)**
   Use the feedback sheet:
   - 2 positive comments ("You explained X clearly", "You made good eye contact when you wanted to"),
   - 1 suggestion ("Maybe next time speak a bit louder / take a pause before answering").

Ask the young person:

- "How did it feel?"
- "Was there a question that felt very difficult?"

6. **Second role-play with adjustments (10–15 min)**
   - Try again with adjustments (e.g. holding notes, taking more time to answer).
   - Optionally swap roles so they can feel what it is like to be the interviewer.

Debrief and reflection

- "What part of the interview feels easier now?"
- "Is there a question you want to practice again another day?"
- "Do you feel more or less worried about a real interview?"

For youth workers:

- "Is the young person's communication style being respected (e.g. not forcing eye contact if it is uncomfortable)?"
- "What supports (notes, visual aids, pre-sent information) could be helpful in real interviews?"

Adaptations

- For non-speaking participants, practice using **AAC** (communication devices, cards, typing) to answer questions.
- Keep the number of questions small; quality of practice is more important than quantity.
- If anxiety is high, start with **video modelling**: show a simple, positive example interview first (if you have one).

Activity 20 – Workplace Rules & Rights (discussion game)

Short description

A game-based activity where participants discuss **situations at work**, deciding whether they are acceptable, what rules apply, and

what rights workers have. It raises awareness of boundaries, fairness and basic labour rights (in simplified form).

Autonomy focus
Understanding expectations, protecting oneself from unfair treatment, navigating work culture.

Learning outcomes

The young person will:

- recognise examples of **reasonable workplace rules** (punctuality, safety, teamwork),
- identify **unfair or abusive situations**,
- understand basic rights: to be treated with respect, to be safe, to ask questions, to say no to unsafe tasks, to have breaks according to local norms.

Target group
Young people (approx. 16+) with autism and/or mental disabilities.

Group size
4–12 participants.

Duration
45–60 minutes.

Materials

- "Situation cards" describing short workplace scenes
- Two or three labelled areas in the room or on the table:
    - "OK / Fair"
    - "Not OK / Unfair"
    - Optional: "I'm not sure"
- Flipchart to note key rules and rights

Preparation

Develop 10–15 situation cards, mixing:

- **Positive / OK** examples:
    - "Your supervisor explains a task slowly and checks if you understood."

- "You are allowed to take your break at the agreed time."

- **Questionable or unfair** examples:
  - "A colleague makes fun of you in front of others about your way of speaking."
  - "You are asked to do dangerous tasks without explanation or equipment."
  - "You are asked to stay longer without being asked if you agree."

Keep descriptions short and clear.

Step-by-step instructions

1. **Introduce the game (5–10 min)**
   Explain:

"At work there are rules, but workers also have rights. We will read some situations and decide: Is this OK or not OK? Then we will talk about why."

2. **First round: quick classification (15–20 min)**
   - Show one situation card at a time.
   - Read it aloud (and let participants read if they want).
   - Ask participants to move to the area of the room labelled "OK" or "Not OK" (or raise coloured cards).
   - Allow "I'm not sure" as a legitimate option.

3. **Discuss each situation briefly (20–25 min)**
   For each card, ask:
   - "Why did you choose this side?"
   - "What rule or right is involved here?"

Clarify as needed:

- Basic **rules**: being on time if agreed, doing tasks carefully, informing when absent, respecting others.
- Basic **rights**: to be safe, not to be bullied/harassed, to ask questions, to say no to unsafe tasks, to get agreed breaks.

Correct harmful beliefs gently (e.g., "No, it is not OK if someone constantly shouts at you at work; that is not part of your job.").

4. **Summarise key rules and rights (10–15 min)**
   On the flipchart, create two columns:
   - "At work I am expected to…" (rules/responsibilities)
   - "At work I have the right to…"

Fill in with input from participants. This can become a **poster** for later sessions.

Debrief and reflection

- "Which situation surprised you the most?"
- "Was there something you thought was normal, but now you see it is not OK?"
- "Who could you talk to if something unfair happens at work?"

For youth workers (note for the Toolkit):

- Encourage young people to seek support from trusted adults, not to handle serious workplace issues alone.
- Make it clear that this activity is **general awareness**, not legal advice, and that specific local rules may differ.

Adaptations

- Use **role-plays** instead of classification for some situations.
- For participants with reading difficulties, use **illustrated cards** and oral explanations.
- In more advanced groups, you can link to national or EU principles (e.g. non-discrimination, reasonable accommodation).

Activity 21 – Planning a Short Volunteering Experience

Short description

A step-by-step process where the young person (and possibly their youth worker and family) plans a **short volunteering experience** (e.g. a few hours per week for a limited period), as a safe introduction to the world of work.

Autonomy focus

Real-life participation, responsibility, testing work environments with support.

Learning outcomes

The young person will:

- explore possible volunteering options in their community,
- choose a realistic and meaningful volunteering role,
- define tasks, supports and schedule,
- participate in evaluating how the experience went.

Target group

Young people (approx. 16+) who are not yet ready for paid work but could benefit from a structured volunteering experience.

Group size

1:1 (youth worker and young person), with optional family involvement.

Duration
Planning: 60–90 minutes (possibly several shorter meetings).

Volunteering experience: e.g. 1–3 months.

Evaluation: 45–60 minutes.

Materials

- "Volunteering Plan" template with sections:
    - My goals for volunteering
    - Possible places
    - Chosen place and role
    - Tasks I will do
    - Days/times
    - Who will support me
    - How we will check how it is going
- Community Map from Activity 14 (for inspiration)
- Pens, markers

Preparation

- Identify a few **potential partner organisations** that can host volunteers with support (NGOs, community centres, animal shelters, libraries, sports clubs).
- Clarify with them what tasks are realistic, what support they can offer, and what expectations they have.

Step-by-step instructions

Step 1 – Clarify motivation and goals (20–30 min)

Ask the young person:

- "Why are you interested in volunteering?"
- "What would you like to learn or try?"

Possible goals:

- gaining experience in a specific area (e.g. animals, people, nature, arts),
- practicing punctuality and routine,
- meeting new people,
- testing how it feels to be in a work-like environment.

Write 2–3 goals in the Volunteering Plan.

Step 2 – Brainstorm possible places (15–20 min)

Using the **Community Map** and "My Skills for Work", list possible volunteering places:

- "Where could your skills be useful?"
- "Which places have a green dot (safe/positive) on your map?"

Select 2–3 top options.

Step 3 – Choose a realistic option (15–20 min)

Discuss each option in terms of:

- distance and transport,
- tasks available,
- environment (noise, pace, people),
- level of support possible.

If needed, **visit** one or two places with the young person before deciding. Choose one volunteering place together.

Step 4 – Define tasks, schedule and support (20–30 min)

Meet (if possible) with a contact person at the hosting organisation and discuss:

- specific tasks the young person can do (e.g. arranging books, simple cleaning, preparing materials, feeding animals, helping staff, etc.),
- days and times (e.g. 2 hours on Tuesday afternoons),
- who will support them on site,
- what to do if they feel unwell or overwhelmed (link to "safe words/signals").

Fill in these details in the Volunteering Plan.

Step 5 – Agree on duration and evaluation (10–15 min)

Define:

- trial period (e.g. 4–8 weeks),
- how you will evaluate (short meetings every 2 weeks; simple feedback form from host and young person),
- what happens after the trial (continue, adjust, end, try something else).

Make sure expectations are realistic and clearly communicated.

During the volunteering experience

- The youth worker (or another support person) checks in periodically, especially at the beginning.
- Encourage the host organisation to provide simple, specific feedback (what the young person does well, what can improve, what tasks fit best).

Evaluation and reflection

After the agreed period:

1. **Individual reflection with the young person (20–30 min)**
   Use simple questions and a rating scale:

- "What did you like about volunteering there?"
- "What was hard?"
- "Which tasks did you enjoy most/least?"
- "How did you feel before going? How did you feel after?"
- "Would you like to continue, change something, or try something new?"

2. **Feedback from the host organisation (10–15 min)**
   Collect short feedback (written or verbal) on:
   - punctuality,
   - task performance,
   - behaviour with others,
   - suggested next steps.
3. **Update autonomy/employment goals (10–15 min)**

   Integrate what was learned into the young person's **Autonomy Plan** (Chapter 5):
   - new skills developed,
   - areas needing more support,
   - ideas for next experiences (longer volunteering, supported employment, training).

Adaptations

- For those with high anxiety, start with an **internal volunteering** role (within the youth centre or project) before going external.
- Consider buddy systems: two young people volunteer together if appropriate.
- If the experience is not positive, frame it as **learning**, not failure, and adjust the plan.

Example
A young man who loves animals and has good routine skills starts volunteering at a small animal shelter for 2 hours per week. Tasks are simple and repetitive (refilling water, cleaning cages with supervision). Over time, he gains confidence, becomes a reliable volunteer, and considers applying for more formal training in animal care.

4.3 Embedded Case Examples from the PASSI Project

The following case examples are inspired by situations and practices shared during the PASSI training course and by the experience of organisations working with young people with autism and mental disabilities. They show how the Toolkit activities can be combined and adapted in real-life contexts.

Case Example A – Using Visual Recipes in a Group Activity

1. Context and participants

A youth centre linked to the PASSI network runs a weekly "Independent Living" group for six young people aged 16–20, four of whom are autistic and two have mild intellectual disabilities. Most live with their families and have limited experience with cooking.

The group has already worked on **Emotion Thermometer** and **Visual Daily Planner**. The next goal is to practice **simple food preparation** to support autonomy at home.

2. Preparation

The youth worker chooses a **no-bake fruit and yogurt dessert** as the first recipe because:

- it requires no use of oven or stove,
- involves several distinct steps (washing, cutting soft fruit, mixing, serving),
- is relatively safe and quick.

They prepare:

- a **visual recipe** with 8 steps (photos + short text) as in **Activity 11 – Visual Recipe: Cooking Together**,
- colour-coded cutting boards and safe knives (including adapted knives for reduced strength),
- a simple kitchen safety poster (wash hands, handle knives carefully, clean as you go),
- role cards: "washer", "cutter", "mixer", "decorator", "clean-up team".

3. Implementation

1. **Introduction and safety**

   The youth worker gathers the group, shows the visual recipe and safety poster and explains that everyone will have a role. They check understanding of key rules

using yes/no questions and short examples ("Is it OK to run with a knife? Why not?")

2. **Role choice**

   Participants choose or are gently guided towards roles that fit their comfort and skills:

   - one participant who enjoys water tasks becomes "washer",
   - another with good fine motor skills chooses "cutter" (with close supervision),
   - a young woman who likes mixing and textures chooses "mixer",
   - others take roles in decorating and cleaning.

3. **Following the visual recipe**
   The group works step by step:

   - Step card is shown and read aloud,
   - the assigned person carries out the action,
   - the group ticks or moves the card to a "done" column.

The youth worker repeats each step briefly and provides prompts ("What comes next?") to encourage **sequencing skills**.

4. **Tasting and sharing**

   When the dessert is ready, everyone tastes it. Two participants volunteer to bring a small tray to staff as a way to practice **social interaction** and pride in their work.

5. **Cleaning and closure**

   The "clean-up team" follows a short visual checklist (put rubbish in the bin, wash bowls, wipe table). The youth worker leads a quick reflection circle: one thing they liked, one thing they found difficult.

4. Outcomes

- Young people report feeling **proud** of having made "real food", not just a symbolic exercise.
- Two participants who are usually reluctant to join group activities stayed engaged from start to finish.
- Parents later report that their children asked to repeat the recipe at home, using the same visuals.

- The staff notice that clearly defined roles reduced conflict and confusion during the activity.

5. Key learning points for practitioners

- Start with **very simple, safe recipes** and add complexity later.
- The **visual recipe** is crucial: it reduces anxiety and gives a clear structure.
- Assigning roles based on **strengths and preferences** increases motivation and participation.
- Cleaning up must be treated as part of autonomy, not an optional extra.
- Sharing the food (with other groups or family) reinforces **self-esteem and social inclusion**.

Case Example B – Supporting a First Work Experience through Coaching

1. Context and participants

Marco, 19, is autistic and has an intellectual disability. He finished school with a special support programme but has never had any work experience. He spends most days at home, playing video games. His parents worry about his future.

A local organisation proposes a **supported volunteering experience** at a community library, two mornings per week. Before starting, Marco and a youth worker use several Toolkit activities to prepare.

2. Preparation using Toolkit activities

- **My Skills for Work (Activity 18)**

  Marco identifies that he likes books, is careful with objects and enjoys arranging things in order. He also notes difficulties: noise, sudden changes and talking to strangers.

- **Workplace Rules & Rights (Activity 20)**

  In a small group, Marco participates in the card game and learns that:

  - being on time and following instructions are expected,
  - it is OK to ask for help when he does not understand,
  - being shouted at or mocked is **not acceptable**.

- **Emotion Thermometer (Activity 5)**

Together with the youth worker, Marco identifies early signs of stress (fidgeting, sweating, head down) and chooses coping strategies (short break, deep breathing, asking to step outside).

- **Planning a Short Volunteering Experience (Activity 21)**

  They create a "Volunteering Plan":

  - Place: community library
  - Tasks: shelving returned books, tidying reading area, checking that books are in order on shelves (with a mentor), packing books for inter-library loans
  - Schedule: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30–11:30, for an initial period of 8 weeks
  - Support: library staff member as on-site mentor + youth worker as external coach

3. Implementation – coaching in practice

1. **First visit (accompanied)**

   Marco visits the library with the youth worker before starting. They meet the mentor, see where things are and check noise levels and possible quiet areas. This reduces fear of the unknown.

2. **First volunteering day**

   The youth worker accompanies Marco for the entire first session, but stays slightly in the background. They use a small **visual task list**:

   - "1. Put returned books on trolley"
   - "2. Shelve books in section A"
   - "3. Check reading room chairs and tables"

After each task, they tick the list together.

3. **Coaching moments**
   At agreed times (midway and at the end), the youth worker checks in:

   - "How is your stress thermometer now?"
   - "Which task did you like most?"
   - "Was something confusing?"

When Marco shows signs of stress (many people entering, increased noise), the youth worker prompts him to use his coping strategies and, with the mentor, arranges a short break in a quieter space.

4. **Gradual fade-out of support**
   Over the following weeks, the youth worker reduces their presence:
   - first staying in another room of the library,
   - later staying nearby but outside the building,
   - occasionally checking in after sessions.

The library mentor becomes the main daily support.

4. Outcomes

After 8 weeks:

- Marco is able to complete most tasks **with minimal prompting** from the mentor.
- He reports feeling "useful" and likes that "books are in order because of me".
- His parents notice that he seems more motivated in the mornings and talks about people at the library.
- The library staff appreciate his attention to detail and are open to extending the volunteering period.

5. Key learning points for practitioners

- Combining several Toolkit activities (skills inventory, rules & rights, emotion tools, volunteering plan) creates a **coherent support pathway**.
- **Gradual introduction** (pre-visit, supported first shifts) reduces anxiety and increases the chance of success.
- Coaching should focus on **problem-solving together**, not doing things for the young person.
- Clear communication with the host organisation about tasks, boundaries and support needs is essential.
- Evaluation after a trial period allows decisions on whether to continue, adapt or try another context.

Case Example C – Community Outing and Accessibility Check

1. Context and participants

During the PASSI training, a mixed group of youth workers and young people from partner organisations plans a **community outing** to a local cultural site (e.g. a museum or historical park). Among the group are several young people with autism and mental disabilities who are sensitive to noise, crowds and complex information.

The trainers decide to use Toolkit methods to both **prepare** the outing and to perform an **accessibility check** together with participants.

2. Preparation using Toolkit activities

- **Community Map (Activity 14)**
  The group identifies the museum as a meaningful place that some have visited before and others would like to discover.
- **Planning a Group Outing (Activity 16)**
  Together, they:
    - choose the date,
    - check transport options,
    - allocate roles (route guide, time-keeper, photo/documentation, "accessibility observers").
- **Safe Words and Signals (Activity 7)**
  For the outing, they agree on one safe word ("pause") and one gesture (raising a coloured card) to signal that someone needs a break or feels overwhelmed.
- **Emotion Thermometer (Activity 5)**
  Participants quickly review their early signs of stress and coping strategies.

3. Implementation – the outing

1. **Travel to the site**
    - The route guide and a trainer navigate the journey using a printed map and smartphone app.
    - The time-keeper reminds the group of schedule checkpoints (arrival, start of guided tour, break).
2. **Accessibility observers' task**
   Two participants with lived experience of sensory overwhelm volunteer to be **accessibility observers**. They receive a simple checklist with prompts:
    - "Is it easy to find the entrance and information?"
    - "How is the noise level?"
    - "Are there places to sit and rest?"

- "Are signs easy to understand?"
- "What could be difficult for autistic visitors?"

3. **Use of safe words and breaks**
   During a noisy part of the visit (crowded room, loud video installation), one participant raises the card and says "pause". The group stops in a quieter corner; the guide is informed and briefly lowers the pace and volume of explanations.

The youth workers highlight this as a **real-life use** of the agreed safety system.

4. **Debrief on site**
   At the end of the visit, in a nearby quiet space, a short debrief takes place:
   - "What did you like about this place?"
   - "What was difficult?"
   - "If you were in charge of this museum, what would you change to make it more accessible?"

Accessibility observers share their findings, supported by photos.

4. Outcomes

- Participants report feeling **more in control** during the outing because they knew the plan and had a clear way to signal distress.
- Young people with autism pointed out specific barriers that others had not noticed (e.g. flickering lights, echoing corridors, unclear signage).
- The group co-creates a short **accessibility feedback document** that can be shared with the museum and used as an example in the Toolkit.

5. Key learning points for practitioners

- Community outings can be powerful opportunities not only for leisure but also for **participatory accessibility audits**, valuing the expertise of neurodivergent young people.
- Planning roles (route guide, time-keeper, accessibility observer) increases **participation and ownership**.
- Safe words and signals from the Toolkit are highly applicable in real environments, not just classrooms.
- Feedback to community institutions can raise awareness and encourage small changes that benefit many visitors.

Chapter 5 – Planning, Monitoring and Reflecting on Autonomy Pathways

This chapter focuses on how to **connect all the tools and activities** in the Toolkit into coherent autonomy pathways:

- at the level of **programmes/projects**,
- at the level of **individual young people**,
- and at the level of **each single session**.

It provides practical guidance and simple templates for:

- planning and monitoring an **Individual Autonomy Plan**,
- creating a **Weekly Independence Plan**,
- planning and evaluating workshops and activities,
- collecting observations and feedback in a structured way.

The goal is not to add bureaucracy but to give youth workers **clear, light-weight tools** to document and improve their practice.

5.1 Using the Toolkit in Programmes and Projects

The Toolkit for Autonomy can be integrated into programmes and projects in different ways, depending on context and resources. It is not meant to replace existing methods, but to **complement and enrich** them.

Below are some typical ways to use the Toolkit at programme level.

a) As a core framework for an "Autonomy and Inclusion" course

An organisation might design a 6–10 week course around autonomy, using:

- Chapter 3 activities for daily living, communication and emotional regulation,
- Chapter 4 activities for social participation and first steps towards work,
- Chapter 5 templates for individual planning and evaluation.

In this case, the Toolkit becomes the **main curriculum backbone**, adapted to local needs.

b) As a toolbox integrated into existing services

In many contexts (youth centres, schools, supported living, day programmes), the Toolkit will be used more selectively:

- taking one or two activities at a time to support specific goals (e.g. “Emotion Thermometer” for crisis prevention, “Visual Recipe” for a cooking project);
- using the **Simple Autonomy Plan** template to structure individual work;
- borrowing **session planning and observation** templates to improve quality and consistency.

Here, the Toolkit functions as a **resource bank**, not a rigid programme.

c) As a training resource for youth workers and volunteers

The Toolkit can also be used to train staff and volunteers:

- Trainers can run sessions where youth workers **experience activities as participants** and then debrief from a professional point of view.
- The templates can be used in training to introduce concepts such as person-centred planning, accessible communication, and monitoring learning outcomes (including Youthpass for youth workers).

d) Principles for programme-level use

Whichever way the Toolkit is used, a few principles are recommended:

- **Start from needs and context**

  Analyse the young people’s needs, local services, cultural context and available resources. Decide which activities and tools fit best.

- **Plan on multiple levels**

  Combine:

  - a **Programme Plan** (overall goals, timeline, partners),
  - **Individual Autonomy Plans** for participants with more intensive support needs,
  - **Session Plans** for each workshop or activity.

- **Co-create with young people**

  Involve participants in choosing topics, activities and goals as much as possible; this increases relevance and ownership.

- **Document lightly but consistently**

  Use short, practical forms rather than long reports. The templates in this chapter are designed to be quick to fill in and useful for decision-making.

- **Reflect and adapt**

Build in regular moments to reflect with the team and with participants. Adjust the programme according to feedback and observed outcomes.

5.2 Co-Creating an Individual Autonomy Pathway

An **Individual Autonomy Pathway** is a simple plan that describes:

- what the young person wants to work on,
- why it matters,
- which steps will be taken,
- who will support them,
- when progress will be reviewed.

It should be **co-created** with the young person, and where appropriate, with family and other professionals, using the person-centred, rights-based and strengths-based principles described in Chapter 2.

Two core tools are provided:

- **Template: Simple Autonomy Plan** – overview of medium-term goals and steps.
- **Template: Weekly Independence Plan** – translation of those goals into concrete weekly actions.

You can adapt these templates to your own format (Word, Google Docs, printed forms, digital systems), but the **logic** should remain: clear goals, small steps, supports, timeline, and review.

5.2.1 Template: Simple Autonomy Plan

Purpose
To summarise, in 1–2 pages, the key autonomy goals and steps for one young person over a defined period (e.g. 3–6 months).

Below is a textual version you can turn into a table or form layout:

Simple Autonomy Plan

1. **Basic information**

- Name of young person:

- Date of birth (optional):
- Date of plan:
- Names/roles of people involved in the plan (youth worker, family member, teacher, etc.):

2. **Short personal profile**

- What is important *to* me (things I like, people, interests):
- What is important *for* me (health, safety, routines):
- My strengths and resources (skills, qualities, supports I already have):

3. **Main autonomy areas to focus on**

Tick or highlight 1–3 priority areas (based on the Autonomy Map, strengths, needs):

- Daily living (self-care, home tasks, cooking, organisation)
- Communication and relationships
- Emotional regulation and coping
- Community participation (using services, leisure, mobility)
- Education and training
- Work or volunteering
- Other: _____

4. **Autonomy Goal 1**

- Area:
- Goal (in young person's words, if possible):

Example: "I want to go to the corner shop and buy bread by myself."

- Why this goal is important (for the young person, family, programme):
- **Small steps to reach this goal**
  Step 1:
  Step 2:
  Step 3:
  Step 4 (if needed):
- **Who will support each step?**
  Youth worker, family, peer, teacher, etc. (list).

- **Resources needed**
  e.g. visual schedule, transport card, money, telephone, etc.
- **Target timeline**
  - Start date:
  - Review date:

5. **Autonomy Goal 2** (if applicable)

Same structure as Goal 1.

6. **Autonomy Goal 3** (if applicable)

Same structure as Goal 1.

7. **Monitoring and review**

- How often will we review this plan? (e.g. every 4 weeks)
- How will we check progress? (observation, self-report, family feedback, specific indicators)
- Place for short review notes and decisions (continue, adapt, add new goal, close goal).

8. **Agreement / shared commitment**

- Young person's comment or signature/symbol (if appropriate):
- Youth worker's name and signature:
- Other key person's name and signature (if appropriate):

You can integrate icons (e.g. house, heart, book, handshake) to make the form more accessible.

5.2.2 Template: Weekly Independence Plan

Purpose
To translate autonomy goals into **concrete weekly actions** that can be tracked and adjusted. This is especially helpful for young people who benefit from visual structure and for teams/families coordinating around the same goals.

Weekly Independence Plan

1. **Basic information**

- Name:
- Week of: ___ / ___ / _____ to ___ / ___ / _____
- Main autonomy goals this week (short reminders):
    - Goal 1:
    - Goal 2:

2. **Weekly overview (example structure)**

You can create a table with days of the week and relevant times (morning/afternoon/evening, or specific times if helpful).

For each day, include:

- **Planned autonomy actions**
  e.g.
    - Monday afternoon: practice using the daily planner;
    - Wednesday afternoon: cook with visual recipe;
    - Friday morning: travel to library with support.
- **Who supports** (initials or role)
- **Check box for completion** (✓)
- **Short comment** (optional)

Example (textual):

- **Monday**
    - Action: Pack school bag independently using checklist.
    - Support: Mother at home.
    - Done: [ ]
    - Comment:
- **Wednesday**
    - Action: Prepare a simple snack using visual recipe.
    - Support: Youth worker at centre.
    - Done: [ ]
    - Comment:

- **Friday**
    - Action: Take bus with youth worker to local shop; buy one item.
    - Support: Youth worker.
    - Done: [ ]
    - Comment:

3. **End-of-week mini-reflection**

Short, accessible questions for the young person (with support if needed):

- "What went well this week?"
- "What was difficult?"
- "Is there something you want to change for next week?"

And for the youth worker / family:

- "Any important observations?"
- "Do we need to adjust goals or supports?"

The Weekly Independence Plan should be **visible** (on a wall, folder, digital app) and used consistently, not just filled out once and forgotten.

5.3 Planning and Evaluating Sessions

Even the best autonomy plans can fail if individual sessions and activities are **poorly planned or not reflected upon**. This section offers three simple templates to support a cycle of:

- **planning** – what we want to do and why,
- **observing** – what actually happens,
- **evaluating** – what we learned and what we will change.

Templates:

- Activity / Workshop Planning Sheet
- Observation and Progress Notes
- Participant Feedback Questions

5.3.1 Template: Activity / Workshop Planning Sheet

Purpose

To help youth workers plan each session clearly and realistically, linking it to autonomy goals and ensuring accessibility.

Activity / Workshop Planning Sheet

1. **Basic information**

- Title of activity/workshop:
- Date:
- Duration:
- Facilitator(s):
- Group: (name/description, number of participants)

2. **Objectives**

- What are the 1–3 main objectives for this session? (Be specific and realistic.)
    - Objective 1:
    - Objective 2:
    - Objective 3 (optional):

3. **Links to autonomy goals and Toolkit**

- Which autonomy area(s) does this support? (daily living, communication, work, etc.)
- Which Toolkit activity/section is being used or adapted?

4. **Session outline**

A simple structure, for example:

- Opening / warm-up (time, method):
- Main activity steps (time, methods, materials):
- Breaks (if any):
- Closing / reflection (time, method):

5. **Methods and accessibility**

- Which methods will you use? (group work, role-play, visual work, etc.)

- How will you make the session accessible for autistic and neurodivergent participants?
    - Visual supports:
    - Clear instructions / step-by-step:
    - Planned break options:
    - Safe words/signals:

6. **Materials needed**

List all materials (flipchart, markers, icons, recipe sheets, money for role-play, etc.).

7. **Risks and safety considerations**

- Are there any potential triggers (noise, crowding, sensitive topics)?
- How will you manage them?
- Who is responsible for safety (e.g. medication, health issues, crisis plan)?

8. **How will you know if the session was successful?**

- 2–3 indicators (e.g. level of participation, completion of tasks, feedback comments, observed skills).

This form should be concise enough to fill in quickly, but detailed enough to clarify your intentions.

5.3.2 Template: Observation and Progress Notes

Purpose

To capture key observations about how a young person is progressing in autonomy-related activities, without writing long reports.

This template can be used immediately after an activity, or at the end of a week.

Observation and Progress Notes

1. **Basic information**

- Name of young person:
- Date:
- Name of observer (youth worker, educator, etc.):
- Activity/Context (e.g. Visual Recipe session, library volunteering, group outing):

2. **Brief description of what happened**

1–3 sentences:

Example: “Today Maria used the bus with me to reach the youth centre. She bought a ticket and scanned it herself.”

3. **What the young person did independently**

- Skills/behaviours they performed by themselves:
    - e.g. “started the task without being prompted”,
    - “used the safe word to ask for a break”,
    - “followed 3-step instruction with visual support”.

4. **What they did with support**

- Skills/behaviours performed with prompts or assistance:
    - e.g. “needed verbal prompts to stay on task”,
    - “needed physical guidance to use the ticket machine”.

5. **What was difficult / signs of stress**

- Situations where the young person seemed confused, anxious or overwhelmed.
- Early signs (e.g. fidgeting, going quiet) and how they were handled.

6. **Strategies that helped**

- Supports that worked well (visuals, breaks, choice, peer support, etc.).

7. **Next steps**

- 1–2 concrete ideas for the next session:
    - “Repeat same task with less prompting”,
    - “Add clearer instructions for step 2”,
    - “Introduce a coping tool before the hardest part”.

This format helps keep observations **action-oriented**: not just describing, but informing what to do differently next time.

5.3.3 Template: Participant Feedback Questions

Purpose
To collect feedback from young people in accessible ways, so you can improve activities and understand what they perceive as helpful or difficult.

Feedback can be:

- **oral** (in a circle, with notes by the facilitator),
- **written** (simple forms),
- **visual** (smiley faces, colours, symbols).

Below is a simple set of questions you can adapt.

Participant Feedback – Short Form

1. **About today's activity**

- "How did you feel about today's activity?"
  Options: 😀 liked it / 😐 it was OK / ☹ didn't like it
  (Participants can circle or tick one.)

2. **Best part**

- "What did you like the most?"
  (Open question – can be answered with words, drawing or choosing a picture.)

3. **Difficult part**

- "Was there anything you didn't like or found difficult?"
  (Open question; encourage concrete examples.)

4. **Learning**

- "Did you learn or practice something new today?"
  - Yes
  - Not sure
  - No
    If yes: "What?"

5. **Suggestions**

- "What should we keep the same next time?"
- "What should we change to make it better for you?"

Optional extended questions for older/higher-support participants

- "Did you feel safe and respected?" (Yes / No / Not sure – with space for comment.)
- "Did you feel you could participate in a way that was comfortable for you?" (Yes / No / Sometimes.)

5.4 Reflection, Learning and Youthpass

Reflection is a central part of **non-formal education** and of the PASSI project. It allows young people and youth workers to:

- make sense of what happened,
- identify what they learned,
- connect activities to real life,
- document learning in **Youthpass**.

This section offers four tools:

- **Activity 22 – Feedback Circle (daily/weekly reflection)**
- **Activity 23 – Learning Diary (simple format)**
- **Activity 24 – Youthpass Competence Map for youth workers**
- **Activity 25 – Letter to My Future Self**

These tools can be combined across the project timeline: Feedback Circles and Learning Diaries on a daily/weekly basis, Youthpass mapping towards the end, and Letter to My Future Self as a closing activity.

Activity 22 – Feedback Circle (daily/weekly reflection)

Purpose
To create a structured but informal space where participants can **share impressions, feelings and learning** about the day or week, and give input for improvements.

Autonomy focus

Self-expression, listening to others, collective sense-making.

When to use
At the end of:

- each day (short version, 10–20 minutes),
- each week or project phase (longer version, 30–45 minutes).

Target group & group size

- Young people and/or youth workers in groups of 4–20.
- For larger groups, split into smaller circles.

Materials

- Chairs in a circle
- Talking object (ball, small toy, etc.) – optional
- Flipchart or paper for notes (for facilitators)
- Optional: set of visual support cards (emotions, weather icons, traffic lights, etc.)

Step-by-step instructions

1. **Set the frame (3–5 minutes)**
   Explain:

"This is a short feedback circle. Everyone can share something about today/this week. You can pass if you don't want to speak. There are no 'wrong' answers – we use your feedback to improve."

2. **Choose a simple guiding question (or two)**
   Examples:
   - "One thing I liked today…"
   - "One thing that was difficult today…"
   - "One thing I learned or realised…"
   - "One thing I would change for next time…"

For a very short daily circle, you can use:

- "Highlight & Challenge" – one thing that was a highlight, one challenge.
- "Weather of the day" – choose a weather image that represents your day (sun, clouds, storm, etc.) and say why.

3. **Use a talking object (optional)**

   Pass an object around the circle. The person holding it may speak or say "pass". This:
   - slows down the pace,
   - reinforces turn-taking,
   - gives structure.

4. **Ensure psychological safety**
   - Remind the group to listen without judgement or interruption.

- Emphasise confidentiality (what is shared in the circle stays in the circle, except serious concerns about safety).
- Normalise mixed feelings (it is acceptable to say "I didn't like this part").

5. **Facilitator's role**
   - Model **honest but balanced sharing** ("I enjoyed..., I was also a bit stressed about...").
   - Avoid defending yourself or the programme when hearing criticism; instead say, "Thank you, this helps us improve."
   - Note **recurring themes** on a flipchart (e.g. "too noisy", "liked group work", "wanted more breaks").
6. **Closing the circle (5 minutes)**
   - Summarise 2–3 key messages from the group.
   - Explain what will be done with the feedback ("Tomorrow we will try to...").
   - End with a simple positive ritual (e.g. everyone says one word for the day).

Adaptations

- For participants with limited verbal communication, allow:
  - pointing at visual icons,
  - showing a card (happy/neutral/sad),
  - drawing instead of speaking.
- If some people feel anxious in large group circles, create **smaller circles** or offer 1:1 reflection separately.

Activity 23 – Learning Diary (simple format)

Purpose

To help participants **record and reflect** on what they are learning over time, in an accessible way. The diary can support Youthpass and evaluation.

Autonomy focus

Self-reflection, recognising one's own learning, planning next steps.

When to use

- At the end of each day during a training course,
- After specific key activities,
- Weekly in long-term programmes.

Target group

- Young people and/or youth workers; adapt complexity to the group.

Materials

- A small notebook or stapled sheets per person, or digital version
- Pens, coloured pencils
- Optional: icons/pictures for easy-read version

Suggested structure – Learning Diary (one page per day)

Keep it **short and repetitive**, so participants get used to it.

1. **Date and activity**
    - "Date: _____"
    - "Today we did…" (participants can write or draw main activity/activities)
2. **What I did**
    - "Something I did today (an action):"
    - Example prompts: "I took part in…", "I helped with…", "I tried…"
3. **What I learned / what I realised**
    - "One thing I learned or realised today:"
    - For those who struggle, provide options:
        - a new skill
        - something about myself
        - something about other people
        - something about the topic
4. **How I felt**
    - Simple scale or icons (🙂 😐 🙁) with the phrase:

        - "Today I felt mostly…"
    - Participants circle or colour the icon and can add one word (e.g. "tired", "proud").

5. **Next time / future**
    - "Next time, I would like to…"
    - or "I want to practice more…"

This structure can be printed as a repeated template for each day.

Using the Learning Diary with Youthpass

- At the end of the project, ask participants to **look back** through their diaries:
    - highlight 3–5 moments where they learned something important,
    - connect those moments to the **Erasmus+ key competences** (with support).

This makes the Youthpass process more grounded and concrete.

Adaptations

- For participants with low literacy, allow:
    - drawing or collage instead of writing,
    - dictating to a supporter,
    - using stickers (e.g. "skills" icons) they can place on the page.
- For youth workers, add an extra question:
    - "What did I learn as a youth worker today?"

Activity 24 – Youthpass Competence Map for Youth Workers

Purpose

To support youth workers (participants in a mobility like PASSI) in identifying and documenting their learning in terms of the **eight key competences** recognised in Youthpass, using experiences from the Toolkit and from the training course.

Autonomy focus

Professional self-reflection, recognition of non-formal learning.

Target group

Youth workers and other participants eligible for Youthpass.

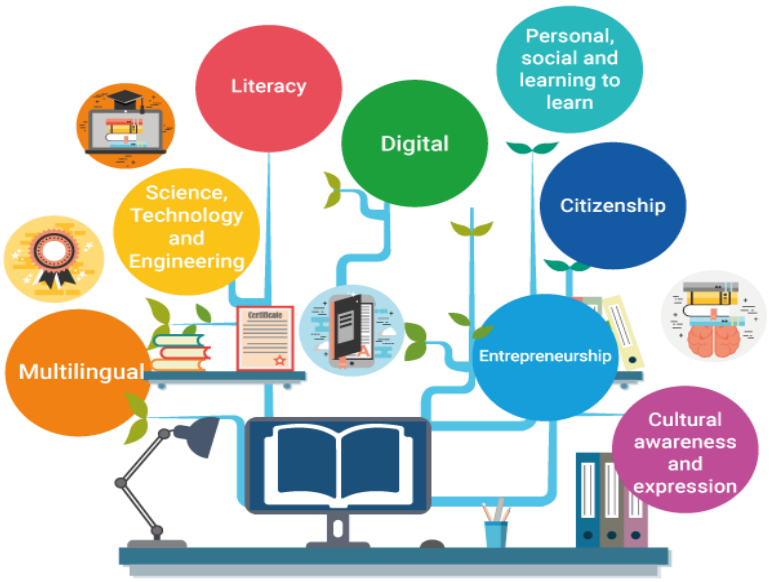
When to use

- In the second half or towards the end of a training course,
- As preparation for completing the Youthpass certificates.

Background: the eight key competences in Youthpass / Erasmus+

1. Literacy competence
2. Multilingual competence
3. Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering
4. Digital competence
5. Personal, social and learning to learn competence
6. Citizenship competence
7. Entrepreneurship competence
8. Cultural awareness and expression competence

Youth workers do not need to cover all eight in depth, but mapping concrete experiences to these categories helps them fill in Youthpass meaningfully.



Suggested structure – Youthpass Competence Map for Youth Workers

You can use a table with:

- one row per competence,
- three columns: "Examples of my experience", "What I learned", "Evidence / how I know".

Example outline:

Key competence	Examples of my experience during PASSI / using the Toolkit	What I learned (skills, knowledge, attitudes)	Evidence / How I know
Personal, social & learning to learn	e.g. facilitating feedback circles, managing group dynamics, reflecting in diary	…	…
Citizenship	e.g. discussing inclusion rights, accessibility checks in community outing	…	…
Entrepreneurship	e.g. planning follow-up workshops, co-creating Toolkit activities	…	…
Cultural awareness & expression	e.g. preparing intercultural evening, adapting methods for different cultures	…	…
etc.			

Step-by-step

1. **Introduce the map (10–15 minutes)**
    - Explain the goal: to collect **concrete examples** of learning linked to Youthpass competences.
    - Reassure participants that not all competences must be covered equally.
2. **Brainstorm experiences (15–20 minutes)**
    - Ask participants to recall key moments during PASSI or while applying the Toolkit:
        - leading or co-facilitating an activity,

- adapting a method for inclusion,
- dealing with a challenge or conflict,
- creating a new tool or activity,
- networking with other organisations.

- Write examples on a board without yet assigning competences.

3. **Fill in the map in small groups or individually (30–45 minutes)**
   - Distribute the template.
   - Ask each youth worker to choose **3–5 competences** that feel most relevant.
   - For each chosen competence, they:
     - pick 1–2 experiences,
     - write what they learned,
     - add "evidence" (e.g. feedback received, change in their behaviour, outcomes with participants).
4. **Peer discussion (optional, 20–30 minutes)**
   - In pairs, youth workers share their maps and help each other clarify sentences.
   - This often generates better wording for Youthpass ("Instead of 'I did…', say 'I learned to…'").
5. **Using the map for Youthpass**
   - The map becomes a **source of material** for the learning section of Youthpass.
   - Trainers can provide a simple guide on how to transform bullet points into Youthpass statements.

Activity 25 – Letter to My Future Self

Purpose

A closing reflection activity where participants write a **letter to themselves in the future**, summarising what they learned, what they want to remember, and what they hope to do with this learning.

Autonomy focus

Future orientation, ownership of learning, motivation.

Target group

Young people and/or youth workers; can be used with mixed groups.

When to use

- At the end of a project, training course or autonomy programme.
- As part of final reflection and Youthpass process.

Materials

- Paper and envelopes (one set per participant)
- Pens, coloured markers
- Stickers/decorations (optional)

Step-by-step instructions

1. **Set the frame (5–10 minutes)**

Explain:

"You will write a letter to your future self. Imagine you will read it in 6 or 12 months. What would you like to remind yourself of? What do you hope you will keep doing or trying?"

Decide and communicate when the letter will be opened (e.g. "in 6 months").

2. **Provide guiding questions (10–15 minutes)**

To make writing easier, give prompts such as:

- "Dear future me, right now I am..." (describe where you are, what you are doing, how you feel).
- "During this project, I discovered that I can..."
- "One or two things I want to remember from this experience are..."
- "I hope that you, future me, will continue to..."
- "If things are difficult, I want to remind you that..."

For youth workers, add:

- "As a youth worker, I want to keep paying attention to..."
- "I would like to develop more in..."

3. **Writing time (20–30 minutes)**
    - Allow quiet time for writing or drawing.
    - Participants can decorate the letter if they wish.
    - Provide assistance for those who have difficulty writing (they can dictate, use keywords, draw, or record an audio message if appropriate).
4. **Sealing and storing (5–10 minutes)**
    - Ask participants to put their letters in envelopes and seal them.
    - Options:
        - They keep their own envelope, with a reminder date written on it.
        - Or, if they agree, the organisation keeps the letters and posts or emails photos/scans of them after 6–12 months.
5. **Optional group sharing (10–15 minutes)**
    - Participants can share one sentence from their letter, if they want, but sharing is **not mandatory**.
    - End with a positive closing circle.

Adaptations

- For some participants, use a **simple form** with sentence starters instead of an open letter.
- For those who prefer not to write, they can make a **visual letter** (collage, drawing) or record a message.

5.5 Monitoring Impact and Next Steps

Beyond individual learning and reflection, organisations and projects using the Toolkit for Autonomy benefit from monitoring **overall impact** and planning **next steps**. This supports quality development, accountability, and new project ideas (including Erasmus+).

This section offers:

- suggestions on how to collect **stories, results and lessons learned**,
- ideas for **follow-up workshops** and **future Erasmus+ projects**.

5.5.1 How to Collect Stories, Results and Lessons Learned

Monitoring impact does not have to mean long, technical reports. The most useful information is often:

- simple **quantitative data** (numbers), and
- rich **qualitative stories** (experiences, changes, lessons).

a) Quantitative information – "How much, who, what"

Examples:

- Number of young people involved in autonomy activities,
- Number of sessions/workshops delivered,
- Number of staff/youth workers trained,
- Number of volunteering/work experiences created,
- Number of families or partners involved.

Keep this information basic but consistent.

b) Qualitative information – "What changed, how, why"

Useful sources:

- Short **case examples** like those in Chapter 4.3,
- Quotes from young people ("Before, I... now I..."),
- Feedback from families ("We saw that... at home"),
- Reflections from youth workers (what worked, what didn't),
- Observations of behavioural change (e.g. increased initiative or participation).

Practical tools and methods:

- **Short reflection meetings** with staff every month:
    - What successes did we see?
    - What challenges?
    - What do we want to keep / change?
- **Most Significant Change stories**:
    - Ask stakeholders: "What is the most significant change you have seen as a result of these autonomy activities?"
    - Collect 2–3 stories per year; keep them short and anonymous if needed.

- **Photo or video documentation** with consent:
    - Before/after of spaces (e.g. organised room),
    - Snapshots of activities (without exposing anyone who does not consent),
    - Visual evidence of inclusion (e.g. group outings, workshops).
- **Simple pre/post questions** for participants:
    - "At the beginning, how confident were you about [cooking / using transport / asking for help]? And now?"
    - Use scales or icons.

c) Capturing lessons learned

For each phase of your use of the Toolkit, ask:

- "What did we learn about what works in our context?"
- "What did not work as expected, and why?"
- "What would we do differently next time?"

Recording lessons learned can be as simple as:

- a shared Google Doc or paper logbook,
- a short internal "learning report" at the end of the project,
- internal workshops where staff present key lessons to colleagues.

5.5.2 Ideas for Follow-Up Workshops and Future Erasmus+ Projects

The work on autonomy and inclusion does not end with one project. The Toolkit can serve as a base for **follow-up activities** locally and for **new Erasmus+ initiatives**.

a) Follow-up workshops and local initiatives

Possible directions:

- **Family workshops**
    - Sessions where families learn about autonomy tools (e.g. Visual Planner, Emotion Thermometer) and how to use them at home.
    - Spaces for families to share their own strategies and needs.
- **Peer support groups**

- Groups of young people who meet regularly to practice social and autonomy skills, share experiences, and support each other using the Toolkit activities.

- **Training for school staff and social services**
  - Short trainings where youth workers present selected Toolkit activities and case examples, encouraging a common approach across services.
- **Community awareness events**
  - Presentations, exhibitions, or open days showing how autonomy and inclusion can be supported, including contributions from young people (photos, stories, toolkit excerpts).
- **Accessibility walks and audits**
  - Outings where young people and staff evaluate local spaces (parks, cultural sites, services) and provide feedback to municipalities or organisations.

b) Erasmus+ follow-up opportunities

Based on the experience with PASSI and the Toolkit, partners may consider:

- **KA152 – Youth Exchanges**
  - Exchanges where mixed groups of young people (with and without disabilities) use parts of the Toolkit to work on autonomy, life skills and inclusion together.
- **KA153 – Further mobility of youth workers**
  - Training courses or job shadowings where youth workers deepen specific aspects (e.g. coaching skills for autonomy, employment support, collaboration with families).
- **KA210 / KA220 – Cooperation partnerships**
  - Projects focused on:
    - further developing the Toolkit (e.g. digital version, translations, country-specific add-ons),
    - piloting it in different countries and evaluating impact,
    - building networks of organisations committed to autonomy and inclusion.
- **European Solidarity Corps (ESC)**

- Volunteering projects where young people (with appropriate support) can contribute to community initiatives, using autonomy tools to prepare and support them.

c) Strategic considerations

When designing follow-up projects, reflect on:

- Which parts of the Toolkit worked **particularly well** and could be scaled?
- Which target groups are still **under-served** (e.g. rural areas, specific age groups, families)?
- Which partnerships were **most fruitful** (schools, municipalities, NGOs, companies) and could be strengthened?
- How to ensure that young people and families are not only beneficiaries, but **active co-creators** and decision-makers in new projects?