



Emotions

- How to Cope in Learning Environments



NPAD - 2017/10076

Layout: Anna Mai Nattestad Joensen og Ásvør Højgaard
Coverphoto: Luis Galvez
retrieved from <https://unsplash/photos/l8gQVrDcXzY>
Print: Dugni 2019

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Introduction

We are all people with feelings, wishes, desires and needs. Adapting to the society is a process of perseverance, which spans the life of each individual. The same applies to the adaptation process to all changes in life. We can influence how our communication with others develops and how we work with the chain effect of communication in our lives.

The psychosocial view, defined in the 1970s, has changed the attitude of many people towards emotions. More attention is given to person's emotions, and whether there may be a chain reaction of stress factors as legacies of generations, developmental processes, upbringing and educational conditions.

The main purpose of this handbook is to utilize teachers, adult educators, trainers in managing their interaction with students, learners, trainees, to respect the person and to exercise patience in order to interact well with them, and thus, preventing misinterpretation and difficult communication which often inhibits students' success and even increases dropout.

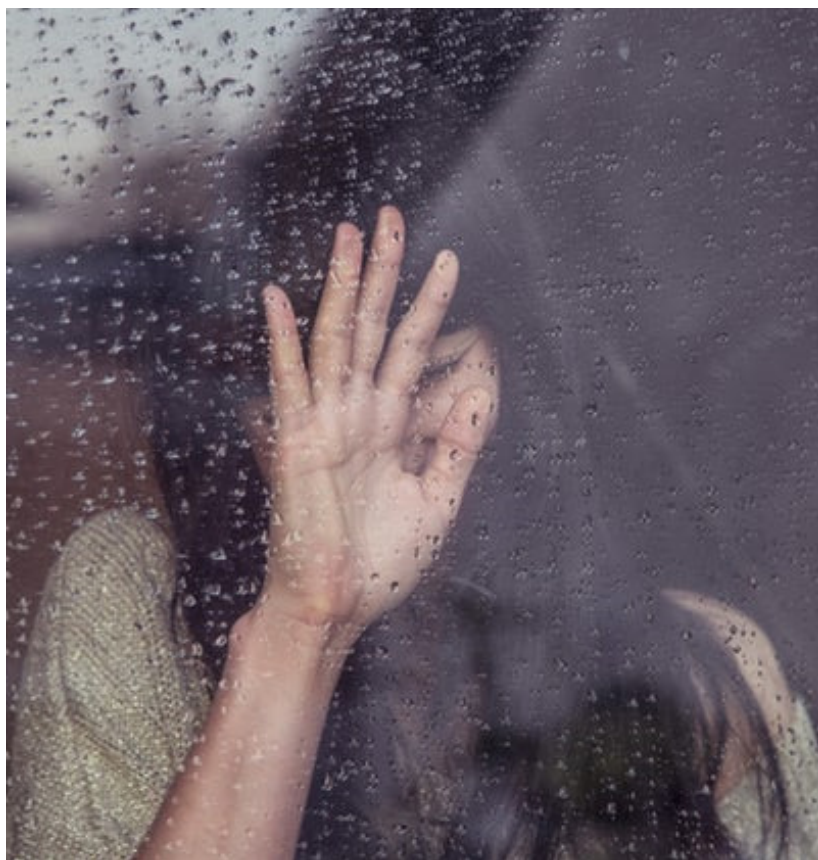
We are partners from 5 countries – Lithuania, Latvia, Faroe Islands, Denmark and Iceland – who have decided to work to help ourselves and other adult educators to face difficult situations related to negative emotions' expression and their management.

We have collected real-life situations faced by teachers, trainers and other adult educators almost on a daily basis and tried to use the best of our knowledge and research skills to suggest tools, methods, techniques and exercises that might be useful in these situations.

The handbook has been prepared with the support of **NORDPLUS ADULT programme**.

We hope that we composed a valuable resource for adult educators' everyday use and / or consultation and it will help to answer some of your questions: What could I have done differently? What should I do now? What should I do when a learner becomes too emotional?

In the handbook we chose to use the terms "adult educators" and "learners" which refer to different learning environments - in adult schools, universities, training centers, etc.



Emotions

Emotions, emotional experiences, feelings hardly fit into a formal description. In spite of it, a lot is written on emotions – we can find statements and memoirs on emotion in works from the authors of Ancient Greece and Ancient China and until modern fiction and scientific literature.

Nowadays emotions are usually described as consequent physiological, neurologic, behavioral and verbal reactions on inner or external events with special significance in one's life. American researcher of emotions, Carroll Izard, points out that the notion "emotion" is difficult to define mostly because as it is multifaceted and do not describe unitary phenomenon or process.

Classification of **emotions** is usually made by the two approaches. The first approach state that emotions are considered as discrete and fundamentally different constructs and can be classified by hierarchy or as **positive and negative**.

The second approach is more popular: all the emotions consist of basic emotions, the number may vary from 4 to 14 depending on the theorist.

We have chosen 10 unique basic emotions: **Anger, contempt, disgust, distress, fear, guilt, interest, joy, shame, surprise**.

Every adult person knows what emotions are as they have been experienced numerous times since early childhood. However, when we are asked to describe and explain any emotion, as a rule, we face some difficulties in doing it.

When we speak about emotions, another term we encounter is "**Emotional Intelligence**". Emotional intelligence is the capability of an individual to recognize his or her own as well as other people's emotions, discern between different feelings and label them appropriately, use emotional information to guide their thinking and behavior, and manage and/or adjust emotions to adapt to environments or in order to achieve one's goals. Some of the tools and methods used in this handbook are aiming at helping learners to recognize and vocalize what they feel.



Emotions vs. Feelings

Often we mix emotions with feelings when we talk about how the educator can help the learner to cope in learning environments. Being able to navigate between the two and understanding the difference is of great importance for adult educators.

Emotions refer to the physiological changes that can be measured through e.g. blood pressure and heart rate. This physical change is intrinsic and universal and can be measured in a number of ways, including through universal facial expressions. Emotions can be produced either internally by thoughts or memories and/or externally by external stimuli and might change our physical state.

Feelings are a bit more complex and more difficult to measure, as they are subjectively experienced. They reflect personal associations to emotions. For instance, some people might get uncomfortable when they experience happiness, because from their personal experiences, they might be used to something negative being linked to this emotion (e.g. they have been punished when expressing positive emotions). They might therefore experience fear in particular situations, where others usually experience happiness. Emotions are inborn, whereas feelings are shaped by our experiences and personality.

Cognitive Psychology

We have chosen to have a section of cognitive psychology in this handbook, as it is a method that clearly illustrates the highly stressful situations that teachers, trainers of young people, adults might experience. Cognitive Psychology deals with our perception and reaction to the world around us.

Our early experiences in life play a huge role in the different ways we perceive the surrounding world. That means that where we chose to pay our attention to and what parts we pick up and choose to focus on varies from person to person.

This is also true in the educational sector and some students, learners have special needs and are mentally vulnerable with a long row of various assumptions about themselves as students and about an educator.

Our clear conviction as to how the world functions is called “**schemata**” and is often unconscious. For a learner a core involvement in relation to school and learning could be: “I’m really bad at doing exams” or “I’m bad at understanding the subject” or “I’m stupid and unintelligent”.

From schemata, we make our **rules of living**, which is a form of inner language, we bring with us in relation to the world and our surroundings. Rules of living are often also unconscious; they are not something we have made our minds up for. They are just something that have arisen by drawing conclusions from our past experiences. A rule of living for a learner might be “I tell the teacher that I’m bad at doing exams” or “I cannot understand the way you teach” or “I pretend I can understand it so I do not give myself away”.

Above schemata and above our rules of living our **automatic thoughts** are located, and if somehow an incident occurs where reality puts a learner under pressure, for example in an exam situation where the student fails, the automatic thoughts could be "See, I'm stupid and not worth it" or maybe an outward reaction towards the teacher "I have not been taught the subject by the educator so therefore I failed the exam."

Everyone has schemata and rules of living and automatic thoughts about different teaching, training situations. Learners might have many different school experiences, and especially in adult education, there are many negative self-perceptions in relation to learning, teaching and training. This self-perception might be easily aroused and it might start off inadequate behavior. A mind spiral that becomes negative and which can spread to the educator's own perceptions of him/her as being a good teacher or trainer.

Many of our students often have poor self-esteem and various diagnoses. They are constantly alert and aware of the surroundings. The feeling of walking around in constant threat to schemata and ways of living can be very resilient and easily creates unhealthy situations. The well known fight/flight reaction is always just around the corner. When one feels threatened and the body cannot notice whether there is a real physical danger or whether it is psychological. Therefore, it can either result in students entering attack mode or becoming very passive. Therefore, it is important for educators to be aware that it does not necessarily have anything to do with the actual situation, but that a particular way of saying something or looking at or touching somebody can ignite a huge flame in a constantly alert person.

Cognitive psychology can help adult educators gain more awareness about their own schemata and rules of conduct and it can help them create a broader understanding of learners' schemata and rules of living. It can help educators create a distance to the current situation

and give grounds for meta reflection about the common dynamics or disharmony that has been created and may even help them get into dialogue about the situation without going too much in detail but focusing on the wider perspective.

Now we will concentrate on how **negative thoughts** about oneself, one's abilities, and one's conduct towards other people might lead to inner and outer conflicts.

There are always 4 components that interact when a conflict occurs. Often a conflict is triggered by a negative thought, either triggered within the educator or within the learner, or both parties.

1. Thoughts
2. Physical sensations (body reaction)
3. Conduct (behavior)
4. Feelings

It is called the **cognitive diamond** and by citing all four factors in an unforeseen situation, you get closer to understanding their own schemata and rules of conduct. See the illustration on the following page.

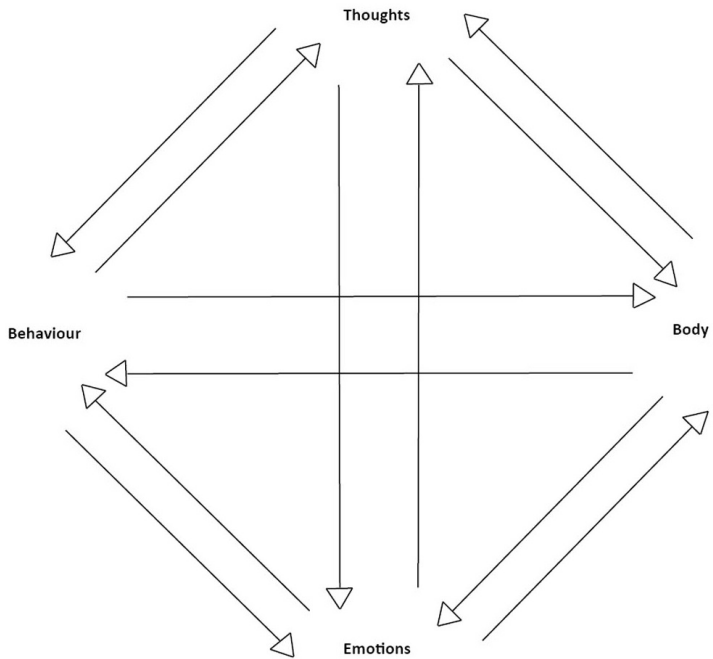


Figure 1: Illustration of the connection between behaviour, thoughts, body and emotions (Cognitive Diamond).

Let's illustrate this process with an example:

The staff have been preparing an exciting event for all the students and the agenda for the day is a surprise. You are a student struggling with social anxiety and you do not share the same happy and thrilled feeling that the others are expressing. People are laughing, giggling and talking and enjoy their social events. However, your feelings are quite far from that others express. You experience an increased heart rate, a rise in blood pressure, heavy breathing, and sweating (psychological component). From previous experiences, in similar situations, you assess the situation and appraise it as humiliating and dangerous (cognitive component). You might want to leave and even start crying (behavioural component). This situation makes you scared and the emotion is fear.

You are a student who is also present at this special event. However, unlike the other student, you enjoy social gatherings. As you walk into the room full of people, you realize that you have an opportunity to meet a lot of new people and that a special agenda with exciting activities is awaiting you (cognitive component). Just as the student in scenario 1, you might experience increased heart rate, rise in blood pressure, your breathing changes, and you might even start sweating in excitement (physiological component). However, the difference between this scenario and scenario 1, is that you interpret this situation a bit differently compared to the other student, who struggles with social anxiety, and therefore you also experience different feelings. You giggle, smile and start walking towards some friends sitting around one of the tables (behavioural component). This situation makes you feel excited, and the emotion is 'joy'.

Taken together the way that the situation is appraised determines what feeling is experienced.

The following is an example of a negative auto generated thought with a perspective from first the adult educator and then the learner.

For a long period of time there has been a lot of unrest in the classroom, Erkan and Peter are disturbing the class and playing smart.

As a teacher, you automatically have negative thoughts about, the coming tuitions the minute you enter the class room.

The teacher's automatic negativ thought:

Thought: *"I know that there will be no peace today"*

Action: "Starts to get angry and scold students straight away"

Body: Feels tense

Feeling: Frustrated, doubtful and uncertain

The pupil's automatic thought:

Thought: *"I cannot learn anything because the others are much better than I am"*

Action: "Creates unrest in class by talking to the person sitting next to you."

Body: Unmotivated

Feeling: Embarrassed and frustrated

When managing challenging emotions and situations. The tools are numbered and we refer to these throughout this session.

This episode seems very stuck and it can quickly develop into a conflict where the learner is confirmed in his/her self-perception being unable to learn anything and the educator can feel locked and unable to change the situation.

We hope that this little introduction to the basic concepts of cognitive therapy can help you pay more attention to all the factors that may be in play when interacting with the learners.

Anger Management

We have chosen to look closer at **anger** because it is an inevitable part of our daily life which gives us energy and determination to create positive changes, improvements and balance. Also it can cause destruction, pain and regress if this force is not handled in a skillful way. In our research we observed that a lot of problems in the learning environment arise due to anger.

In this busy world it is not hard to understand why people from time to time fail to have the time to process their inner emotional mess. Unfortunately, it is of no use to hide the problems and pretend they do not exist. On the contrary, this can lead to anger and bitterness. When a person experiences such anger and does not understand where it comes from, it also means that he/she does not know how to handle it. Without the right help and advice, people with uncontrollable outbursts of anger can quickly be at risk to themselves and to others. Anger management is the process of controlling anger by means of therapeutic techniques and exercises.

When you feel angry, the whole world narrows down. Your heart races, breathing becomes fast and shallow, body tense. Emotion takes over and shuts down your rational mind. So, whatever your anger is about, it gives you force to do things you would regret.

It is not wrong to feel angry. Anger is a normal emotion, a natural response to feeling wronged, offended, ignored, threatened or attacked in some way. Sometimes actual anger hides more serious problems and is driven by more complex emotions beneath anger – resentment, fear, guilt, mourning etc. The problem is that anger can lead one to irrational and illogical actions. Such consequences of anger can occur in any learning environment –both for an educator and a learner.

A simple example - navigating out is like putting your own oxygen mask on in a damaged aeroplane before helping those around you. Being angry, you lose control and you are no good to yourself or anyone else. On the other hand, if you are cool, calm and collected, you will be able to think clearly and respond appropriately.

The role of an educator may be significant in guiding a learner safely through the storm of his/ her anger.

You may ask, how not to join the state of anger of a learner? How to stay calm and untouched when observing eruption of powerful inner force in a learner? It is in our power to choose to keep ourselves calm and not let negativity in. "Change of consciousness" takes place in a person's inner world and it helps to keep emotional balance in emotional storm created by other person. Being patient, responding with kindness and without judgement and at the same time having a firm stance and strong voice will help you keep calm and teach on. So, what one needs when facing anger is to reduce the possibility of losing control and increase the ability to think clearly. There are some techniques to use in actual anger situations that slow emotional processes down and constructive ways to deal with anger.

Help your angry learner to regulate by using some of the self help methods provided in this handbook in exercise number 6 "When you are angry".

Learning Environment

You, as the educator, are most likely playing a very important role in your learner's current life situation. Therefore, you might have a positive effect on how he/ she approaches and manages the future. You could consider yourself as a facilitator/mentor for your learners. The word mentor is derived from the ancient Greek poem "The Odyssey" where Mentor was a friend and advisor of Odysseus. Mentor served as a teacher for the son of Odysseus and his role was to help and strengthen him, while his father went to fight in the Trojan War. The word mentor has evolved and is currently often referred to as an advisor, a teacher, a wise person and a friend. Mentoring is considered a fundamental form of human development, where one person invests knowledge, energy and time in order to assist in the growth of another person. From this point of view, the educator might be able to create a pleasant learning environment through, for example, encouraging and helping learners to discover and apply their abilities. When learners feel that they are in an environment where they are respected, and where they feel that someone believes in them, they are more likely to benefit from the teaching, compared to an environment where they do not feel seen and respected. The latter environment might also more likely create an environment where negative emotions and frustrations are explicitly expressed through aggressive behaviour and speech.

When the learners are active players - and not merely passive participators - in their own life, and when they feel respected and valued, they are more likely to be motivated for learning and not to engage in disrupting behaviours, which often is an indicator of frustration.

Look at two different examples of interaction and collaboration between educators and learners provided below:

Example I

Student: *Excuse me. Can I talk to you about an issue?*

Teacher: *What is the matter?*

Student: *I don't know if I can finalize and deliver my project solution in time and wanted to check if I could get the time limit extended?*

Teacher: *Why?*

Student: *I have so much anxiety. I have to deliver so many other assignments at the same time and I don't see how I can handle it.*

Teacher: *What do you mean exactly?*

Student: *This is quite devastating and increases my stress and anxiety. I always seem to run out of time.*

Teacher: *No, unfortunately, an extended deadline is not to be considered. But, I think that you should seek for some help and consider if this learning suits you.*

Student: *So, is there no way to get a few more days?*

Teacher: *No, rules are rules. The same must apply to all students.*

Comment

In this example, the student received negative attitude from the teacher and did not feel any compassion for the circumstances. The teacher was not interested in helping at all. The teacher did not bother to point at other possible solutions and did not invite the student to take contact again. On the contrary, the teacher recommended the student to consider something else than these studies.

The teacher's response largely reflects how students often are met. The focus is that the students must help themselves. There is no fair interaction or collaboration between teachers and students. Thus, the teachers target their teaching to the "normal student". They intend to see all students to be "inside the box" and do not expect any diversity in the group. This underpins the distress and anxiety of this particular student and reflects negativity in teaching methods and the faculty's organization.

Example II

Student: *Excuse me. Can I talk to you about an issue?*

Teacher: *What is it about?*

Student: *I don't know if I can finalize and deliver my project solution in time and wanted to check if I could get the time limit extended?*

Teacher: *Why?*

Student: *I have so much anxiety. I have to deliver so many other assignments at the same time.*

Teacher: *What do you mean exactly?*

Student: *This is quite devastating and increases my stress and anxiety. I always seem to run out of time.*

Teacher: *What do you think is causing you concerns?*

Student: *I have so much exam anxiety and I don't know how to handle it.*

Teacher: *I am sorry to hear of this and the causes of such anxiety. Have you been looking for any help with your problem?*

Student: *No, have not.*

Teacher: *Don't you think it would be wise to discuss your anxiety with the school psychologist and also to get provided with good advice about the organization of your studies from the student counselor?*

Student: *Sure, I've often thought about it, but never done.*

Teacher: *I can provide you with approximately one more week time, but I also want to encourage you to get help with your anxiety and advices on how to better organize your studies.*

Student: *Oh, I'm glad. Thank you. I will try to see the student counselor and get his help in organizing my studies.*

Teacher: *If there is anything causing you trouble, please contact me again.*

Comments

In this example, the student received a positive attitude right away. The teacher was interested in understanding the student's circumstances and was willing to extend the time limit for submission of a project. Then, the teacher motivated the student to address the situation and ask for consultancy and advices. The student was also encouraged to take contact again for any reason.

This example shows that it is important for the student to meet understanding of the circumstances and to have consultation, for being able to continue the studies. It is also very important for the student to occasionally get extended time limits of submission of projects to disperse stress. Stress is involved when studying which affects well-being. The teacher's response largely reflects the way students are met. The focus should be on constructive interaction and collaboration between teachers and students. Thus, reflecting teaching methods and organization within the faculty.

Reflections

Students need to be met with understanding and in a holistic way and sufficient support needs to be provided from the school. Students who struggle with learning difficulties are a vulnerable group and should be met with kindness.

In this regard, it may be assumed that pedagogical knowledge can help teachers to accommodate students who are struggling with learning difficulties. It is expected that teachers can be helped to take more account of diversity in the student group and to further meet the student's educational needs, thus contributing to their improved psychosocial well-being.

Advices:

- Rules should be obvious and for serving humans
- Rules can be changed with changing needs of students
- Communication should be explicit and straight forward
- Active listening
- Important to get a chance for discussion
- Identify problems
- Educational environment can be stressful
- Express thoughts - express circumstances - people can not feel other person's thoughts
- Attend as soon as problems arise
- Increase flexibility in delivery of projects
- Emphasis on vending education. Lectures can be repeated and at home. Thus, the teacher and the student are co-responsible for the learning

Management of physical surroundings

When working with a mixed group of learners with various challenges, it is necessary to allow some flexibility in terms of their different needs. Some considerations regarding the lay-out of e.g. the classroom might be necessary. For some learners it might be difficult to cope with too much noise. They might have difficult behaviours as a result of the stress they face when they find the situation too chaotic. They therefore may need to step back for some time. Allowing the learner to step back when needed, might make the situation more pleasant for them and thereby result in less frustration and difficult behaviours.

Facilitating a pleasant environment

In our everyday relations and communications with the people we engage in a number of dialogues – both verbal and non-verbal dialogues. Through those dialogues we both affect and are affected by other people's behaviour and state of mind. When meeting a person with a negative outlook on things, you might be familiar with situations where your mood has been affected in a negative way. You may, for instance, recall situations where you have experienced negative emotions following a conversation with an angry or a sad person. On the other hand, you might have experienced a lift in moods after a conversation with a happy person, with a positive outlook on life. Being aware of this two-way communication is very important, as this might help the educator to facilitate a good learning environment.

Being tense around your learners might create tension in them and affect their behaviour and ability to learn. Your stress and/or lack of control of the situation or emotions is more likely than not to have a negative effect and create a chaotic learning environment.



The good news is, that you as an educator might be able to make your contribution to a pleasant environment for your learners. You may e.g. find the following strategies helpful:

- Prepare and *decide* to maintain a calm state of mind before entering the classroom. Make it a habit to find your way of finding peace, through e.g. sitting at your desk quietly, take deep breaths and let your body sink into the chair.
- *Slow down*. Be conscious about your body and make your movements slow.
- *Speak calmly*: Be aware of your tone of voice. Give yourself time to speak and lower your voice. Raising your voice does not necessarily raise your message - on the contrary, the learners may react with resistance (e.g. aggression, stress).
- *Breath*. Be aware of your breath. When you are stressed or tense, your breath tends to be more shallow compared to when you are calm. When your breath goes deep into your stomach, then your body gets the oxygen needed, and your body is provided with the energy and brain power needed.
- *Prepare*. Be well prepared for the class. This might give you a greater sense of control over the situation and make you more calm.

Being aware of our own mental and physical states, and the influence that we might have on others, might help us to cope in a more beneficial way in tense and stressful situations.

Emotional Triggers

In situations where learners are handling their emotions in an inappropriate way at the expense of the educator and the other students, it is very important to sharpen the attention of the teaching on how everyone can become better at handling emotions, regulations and be aware of how people have different kind of triggers and effects on each other.

Often that kind of behaviour has to do with the learners' own self-perception. Many learners tell long stories about not fitting in and being unable to meet the requirements of the community in class and that is why adjustments to the social skills and social frames is a huge challenge. It can easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy if the educator is not aware of the underlying elements that play a role.

Therefore, it is very important for the educator to be understanding if a learner oversteps the boundaries of the rules in the classroom or oversteps the educator's integrity in an emotional outbreak. It is important that the educator has enough mental resources not to feel emotionally involved with the outbreak. What has triggered the learner's behaviour is often something he projects onto the educator and is often about a feeling like a failure because he doesn't fit in to the community or disappointment of not living up to their own expectations of fitting in once again.

The feelings that can act as a trigger:

- The feeling of not being a part of the community in class.
- To feel wrong.
- The educator discriminates against some learners and give preferential treatment to others.
- The feeling of being misunderstood.
- The feeling that the group mates don't care about oneself feeling lonely.

If any of these feelings get triggered in some way, even though it wasn't the educator's intention, it can result in the student feeling powerless, which can result in anger or other violent emotional expressions. There is an example of this below where the learner leaves the classroom in anger and scares the other students by yelling at them (page xx).

When a difficult situation occurs it is quite hard for the educator to be in with the whole class watching. Therefore, it's very important that his/hers first thought should be out of curiosity of what triggered the learner instead of blaming oneself of not doing well enough – the feeling of insufficiency will often result in defending and blaming oneself. To blame and wonder about own actions is a natural reaction for an educator, who has the responsibility for the atmosphere in the classroom. However, it is not possible for the educator to know when a learner gets triggered. And other learners who actually start or trigger a situation to get an outburst of violent emotional expressions for the desire of response and attention, that can be helpful later on or will help keeping them in their own negative self-perception as a learner.

After the outbreak the educator can offer a conversation with the learner, optionally with the student counsellor participating or another competent person. The main purpose of the conversation should be evolving around a caring curiousness. The conversation should be pointed towards how the student wants to react in a similar situation. The educator can refer to some exercises about anger management and make agreements with the learner about how he/she can react in another way here all the different exercises we in the back of this handbook should be a useful tool to rebuild a fruitful connection between the educator and the learner.

The most important thing for the educator to do, is to validate the feelings triggering the situation and show an understanding about how the behaviour was inappropriate, and show that we as a teacher and institution can help the student to realise and understand the importance of demonstrating some kind of responsibility of handling their own feelings, so the person recurred can be a part of the community or fellowship. Being part of the fellowship is very important and essential for the young person to change, to rebuild their new self-understanding.

It can feel very counterintuitive to show care and curiousness towards a learner who behaved badly and breaks the norms of consideration towards others and the community. But this kind of emotional outbreak is exactly a sign of powerlessness or anxiety of not belonging. It can be a result of a childhood with lacking empathy and misunderstood communication from the world around them. We all need to learn how to regulate emotions both in how to express emotions and how to handle them.

There are many different ways to work with regulating feelings. Some are suitable for individual use and others can be used in a class. The following assignment could be a good start-up practice in class with the purpose of the students quickly getting to know each other. Look at exercise number 8.

Questionnaire and Self-help Methods

In our work on developing the materials for this handbook, we have been committed to incorporate the educators' own experiences, with different kinds of emotions in different learning situations. Therefore, we have developed a questionnaire and sent it to all employees at the different places of education. Our aim was to find out what challenges and thoughts the educators experience in their daily practice with outwardly directed behavior and vulnerable learners.

Below we have chosen a representative extract from some of the many answers we have received. We have anonymised the identity of the participants.

A heartfelt thank you to all of you who have contributed with your experiences; they have given us a deeper insight into the need for tools, and into the difficulties educators experience in coping with learners in various learning environments.

The idea and our wish is that you will be able to mirror situations in your own way, with your learners, also making it more legitimate to bring the feeling of powerlessness into conversation with your colleagues, in your teams or to a manager.

We hope to create a constructive validation for the frustrations anyone who teaches will come across in a classroom, merely because it is often so unimaginable what might cause and trigger emotions.

At the same time, we wish that this might help to increase your individual range of actions in the classroom. Therefore, we have chosen to refer to different exercises based on the chosen examples. The idea is that you can discuss the cases with a colleague and hopefully become wiser about yourself and your colleagues.

The questionnaire consisted of several questions. Below are a few extracts from some of the responses. We have decided to look at these responses in order to both validate and

to discuss what could be done to help educators in these situation. Under the section “Self-help methods” we have gathered some tools that could be useful when managing challenging emotions and situations. The tools are numbered and we refer to these throughout this section.



Question 1

Imagine being in the middle of an educational situation where a course participant starts crying because of something you said that moved something in them. Have you ever experienced that?

Answers from different adult educators

1. We were in the middle of reading a text about violence at runaway children, when a student (a boy) ran out crying. Later, I heard that he ran away from home because of violence.

2. We had a joint conversation in class and I asked a course participant a question. The course participant got quiet and sad. I turned to the student by going to her. She cried a little bit and told about a traumatic educational situation from her home country, where violence is used. Her experience is that you can never make mistakes otherwise you will be punished. We agreed that she can answer questions when she is ready, otherwise she is allowed to listen and work independently but with the same material as the others.

3. In group work. Working together with others has created a lot of frustration in class. This is an example from the start of the school year when I did not know the students' sensitive characters. As a part of the intro process I asked the students to gather in groups of four. One student first showed anger, then started to cry and then proclaimed "No one ever wants to work with me. They will never listen to, what I have to say".

After that we had a conversation in class about the difficulties that arise, when many people, who do not know each other, must get along and about how we might cope with it.

In the three above excerpts above from the questionnaire, we can see some examples of how easily emotional reactions can be induced in teaching situations, where the teacher is unable to predict what reactions certain topics may trigger. The educators in examples 2 and 3 try in their own ways to respond to the emotions of the students

by inquiring into their reactions. This can be seen as a way to validate the learner and his/her emotions in an emotionally sensitive state.

This can be very significant for the learners as it is incredibly important to validate their behaviour, which, by the way, is not the same as to give them the right to behave the way they did. That kind of recognition can help raise the students' awareness about their own emotions and the effect that it may have on the classroom when something arise their emotions. Also, this is a way to help other learners to learn how to react in similar situation, through the educator's way of dealing with the emotions.

Self-help suggestions

In the beginning of this handbook we wrote about the different types of basic emotions and that the ways they are expressed not necessarily depend on the feelings that they manifest in the person, as it is very subjective what feelings the person is experiencing. Emotions are formable and are a result of our experiences with the world surrounding us, where emotions are universal and innate.

It gives us an indication of how common it is for educators to experience that they touch on subjects that may be very sensitive to some of their learners. As this is impossible to avoid, teachers might benefit from being prepared that these situation may well arise. As seen in one of the examples above, the educator meets the individual student who has been reminded of a previous traumatic educational situation and helps her to manage strong negative emotions that arise in current educational setting. This might give the student a positive experience of an educational situation and might also change the schema (a pattern of thought or behaviour), that she has of educational situations in the future.

In the second example, one could extend the recognition with a small challenge to the student so that he or she would want to develop skills to solve situations. One might make exposure exercises with the learners by giving them the right to respond to something that you have agreed on, so they already know in advance, what will happen. By doing this, the worry of not being heard can be reduced so that it's not all about being able to answer correctly and be the attention of the whole class.

In this way, the teacher can help the learner to take responsibility by, hopefully, giving them a hopefully good experience by saying something in plenary. See exercise no. 8, where there . Here is a task about how you can become wiser on what emotions are and what expressions they might have.

What would you do in a similar situation?

Question 2

Imagine a course participant shouting something ugly/inappropriate to you through the classroom. Have you experienced that?

Answers from different adult educators

1) The other day, a course participant left the room when I asked her for the fifth time not to speak to the other course participants. She screamed "I'm leaving now". I did nothing. Another course participant got up a while after and went out. When he came back, I said that it was nice of him to talk to her. He said he went out because he had to cough and that you cannot talk to her when she is this angry. He advised me not to talk to her. When she came back from the break, I asked if she wanted to talk to me. She refused. Next time I had the class, everything was forgotten. She is young and suffers from anxiety attacks, but I do not think it was alright to behave in that way. The other course participants got scared.

This is a common situation and it gives a good example of how emotions are handled by an educator. We should validate that the educator tries to balance all emotions in the classroom. Obviously it is very frustrating for a teacher to repeatedly ask the student not to talk during class. It shows how difficult it is to take care of both parties – an individual and other students in the class. Also the teacher validates the other student for going out and trying to solve the problem. The educator gives the learner a possibility to experience that it is ok to feel that way. Educators cannot be responsible for these triggers, but they can be aware, that it can happen at any time.

Self-help suggestions

It may be useful for educators to use self-help methods 1 & 7

What would you do in a similar situation?

Question 3

Imagine a course participant throwing something through the class room in affect. Have you ever experienced that?

Answers from different adult educators

1) *A full water bottle was thrown in frustration over a math assignment. It was not aimed at anyone and hit the floor.*

2) *The course participant was very high on cannabis and wanted to demonstrate, as a joke, that his old cell phone could not play the game kahoot, so he threw it up against the blackboard and was very close to hit me. The situation was comic in one way and another way scary and dangerous.*

3) *As I, after teaching, asked some of the remaining students to help me put the chairs back in their place, one of the students threw her chair on the floor and says, "I'm not required to do that!" Then she walked out.*

4) *A chair was thrown at me. Paper balls were thrown, probably for the purpose to get a reaction. I tried to calm the student down, it did not work. The student left the room in anger. I decided to follow him and by speaking to the student I managed to calm him down. Leaders were also called to help out.*

The four examples we have included here most likely contain many built-in conflicts where the normative perception of normal appropriate behavior in an educational situation is challenged. There are drugs involved in teaching, which is not legal, and chairs, water bottles and paper balls are thrown about in the room, which is not a prerogative behaviour. It is possible to understand how difficult it is for different educators to understand what triggered the violent actions. It is very important to stay calm in these situations and to reflect on the episode.

Self-help suggestions

Here, many of the exercises we have included might be beneficial to use. It would be a good idea to talk to the learner and to base the conversation on the cognitive diamond as we wrote about earlier in the episode about cognitive psychology. Exercise number 6 should also be helpful here.

It might be useful to give it to the student after the incident, to talk about how you can prevent such a behaviour in the future. Another beneficial method after such an episode, where you have experienced a learner who has reacted in an aggressive way, is to talk to someone so that you can ventilate your thoughts and distressed emotions (See exercise 4).

Other tools that might be helpful in similar situations:
Exercise 1

What would you do in a similar situation?

Question 4

Imagine a course participant refuses to do what you ask him/her to. Either putting the cellphone away or leaving the classroom or something else. Have you ever experienced that?

Answers from different adult educators

1) *I asked a girl to leave (I think it was because of cell phone use, which I hoped would not be the reason to ask a person to leave) but she refused. She already had a bad attitude, but I was determined. I said I wanted to get a leader, but she stayed. No leader was in their office. On my way back to class I had decided that she would be called for a conversation about the school's rules. (Whether she had left the room or not). She was still there. I said I could not get a leader now, but that she will be called in for a conversation.*

2) *Ignore them.*

3) *I said that I would call the leader / head of school when a student would not leave the classroom. Then the course participant left.*

This is an extremely difficult situation to be in as a teacher. It can easily feel and seem like losing authority, but most of the time, it is about something completely else. The educator is most likely unaware of what triggered the protest.

In the examples above we can see two different ways of reacting. Whereas some call on other colleagues or authority for help, some choose to ignore these outbursts. One can't say which way is the right way to handle these situations.

In some situations it may be good to avoid too much focus on the issue, and if possible try to stay calm and concentrate on the other learners. It may be challenging to remain calm, but it may be helpful for the educator to have a plan before entering class, as seen in one of the examples above. It may be helpful for the educator to implement some of the strategies mentioned on page 13. In some cases, the problem might be so big and consistent that you would

have to handle it differently. You may for example need to get the management of the organization to help with these persistent issues.

Self-help suggestions

- Breathing exercise (1)
- Bucket under the arm (3)

What would you do in a similar situation?

Question 5

A course participant tells you something secret that you feel gives you responsibility that goes beyond teaching. Have you ever experienced that?

Answers from different adult educators

1) *I often experience that (way too often) and the question is whether the school operates beyond what is in addition to teaching. For example, tutor conversations, etc. I have heard stories about rape, abuse, abortion, violence in the family, robbery, etc.*

2) *It happens very often that I get involved in the course participants' personal affairs. I often refer to the organization Headspace, or to a fellow course participant who is also struggling. Often, I have a conversation about being personal and private - taking care of themselves and not telling many people about their life, because it can give great vulnerability. Sometimes it is important that we have the student counsellor, because of their competences and they can also refer them to others in the system if that is the case.*

3) *Often. For example, when course participants tell me they have depression. I am a pedagogue, not a psychologist. I advise my course participants to talk to their doctor / psychologist to whom they go. For example, when they tell me they have one or many diagnoses. I do not know what these diagnoses imply and tell them again. I'm ONLY a pedagogue, not a psychologist.*

In these three examples teachers describe how they are given sensitive information from the learners whom they cannot take responsibility for. In these responses we see educators who care and show empathy towards their learner. All of them are aware of their competencies and thereby also their limitations. In their responses, they all point to this and some choose to refer their learner to other professionals. They choose, for example, to refer them to the student counselor or to other employees in the organizations, who are competent

to talk with vulnerable and diagnosed people.

It is incredibly important to have made up your mind as a teacher, how intimate you wish to be with your learners.

Self-help suggestions

It is recommended that an organization has a visible and clear policy regarding what options the educators have if they come into contact with confidential information from the students who affect them, as well as if they are subjected to physical or psychological violence or other cross-border actions. It is important that educators are prepared and know what to do, so that they they can feel confident instead of helpless when situations like these arise. Furthermore it would also be a good help for the educator to be able to get supervision and support. Exercise 4 (Power of human relationship) provides good examples of how to use other people as a helpful support, where you might have the possibility to vent out stressful feelings.

What help is there for the educator?

Where and how can different teachers refer their learners?

Visibility and openness about this on the part of the school will create respectful behaviour all around. Then all parties involved will feel treated respectfully .

What would you do in a similar situation and where are your limits?

Question 6

Do you have other examples of how it could be useful with some tools to handle the course participants' different ways to express their feelings?

Answers from different adult educators

1) *Sometimes the course participants ambition does not correspond with their ability, and it may be difficult to express "you are not good enough yet". Those days when you are just a tired teacher.*

2) *I have often had violent experiences with course participants, and the leaders and student counselors did not support me or thought that it was not fierce enough. It could be nice with a visible leadership that backs up the teachers. Basically, I do not think we should be educated in helping the students with mental problems but send them to the school psychologist or student counselor. It is not our (the educators) job to be a psychologist.*

In the examples we have included, the lack of power the teacher feels resembles the ignorance as to what might trigger students.

Self-help methods

As we can see from the answers from teachers and as we have read and heard in a few examples, an increased focus on emotions in the institution might hopefully reduce the sense of powerlessness and the sense of loneliness which is visible here for the educator, might also hopefully reduce the inner conflict and the shame about how difficult it can be to react in a calm and appropriate way when there are emotions heightened in the learning environment.

We hope that the aims in this handbook: explanation about emotions and the difference between emotions and feelings and a little insight in the cognitive psychology and anger management will help you to get a common language with your colleagues. In that case it would be a tool to help you and your colleagues to deal with emotions in the teaching situations and afterwards.

The next and last part in this handbook is a collection of tools that we have all collected wishing to inspire you in common situations where emotions need to be taken care of.

We have chosen 10 exercises where some are useful to calm down after a conflict, some are useful to reflect upon a situation and some are more bodyminded to relax and be more aware on the different emotions in the body. We hope they will be useful for you.

What would you do in similar situations?

Exercises and Activities

1. Breathing Exercise

Materials needed: A piece of paper (e.g. a Post-It note)

Aim: The purpose of this exercise is to help to release body tension, to lower the pulse and to increase the ability to concentrate. With practice, the exercise also helps educators and learners to strengthen their awareness of their emotional state and to regulate the nervous system.

Ask the participants to write the following on the piece of paper:

- Breath in
- Pause (hold)
- Breath out
- Pause
- Observe body changes

Instructions:

1. The instructor explains, that the exercise is about something we are all very good at: To breathe!
2. Discuss how we breathe in different situations (e.g. when we run, are nervous, sleep, etc.).
3. The instructor explains the purpose of this exercise, i.e. to create an awareness of body states and changes. An increased awareness of body states can help us, with practice, to change the state, to become more relaxed, focused, and to perform better in different situations.
4. The instructor writes the words on five A4 sized paper and hangs it on the wall and asks the participants to focus on their breathing for 2 minutes, using the five points. The participants can also keep their written piece of paper in front of them, if they like.
5. After two minutes, the instructor guides the exercise as follows: "Breath in (counting: 1, 2, 3), hold (1,2), Breath out (1, 2, 3), Pause, Observe". Repeat this a couple of times (e.g. for 2 minutes).
6. This exercise can be used on a regular basis. All you need is a few minutes (e.g. when sitting at your desk).

Dressler & Obel, 2017

Levine, & Kline, 2006

2. Relaxing safe place imagery

The purpose of this exercise is to help you (or your learners) to relax your mind, when you feel stressed. Some of the goals include:

- Create a sense of security and control, when needed
- To shift fixation on negative things and emotions in life to a more positive perspective.
- Strengthening neural networks. The brain can change through repetition. Just as you can learn new things and become better with practice, you can also practice to feel good and more calm in your mind. The more you practice this guided visit to a special place, the easier it will be to reach a state of calmness. With time, the mere thought of this special place might elicit feelings of relaxation, security and control - without the guided imagery script.

Safe Place imagery instructions:

- Start by getting comfortable in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed, and take a couple of minutes to focus on your breathing, close your eyes, become aware of any tension in your body, and let that tension go with each out-breath.
- Imagine a place where you can feel calm, peaceful and safe. It may be a place you've been to before, somewhere you've dreamed about going to, somewhere you've seen a picture of, or just a peaceful place you can create in your mind's eye.
- Look around you in that place, notice the colours and shapes. What else do you notice?
- Now notice the sounds that are around you, or perhaps the silence. Sounds far away and those nearer to you. Those that are more noticeable, and those that are more subtle.
- Think about any smells you notice there.
- Then focus on any skin sensations - the earth beneath you or whatever is supporting you in that place, the temperature, any movement of air, anything else you can touch.
- Notice the pleasant physical sensations in your body whilst you enjoy this safe place.
- Now, whilst you're in your peaceful and safe place, you might choose to give it a name, whether one word or a phrase that you can use to bring that image back, anytime you need to.
- You can choose to linger there a while, just enjoying the peacefulness and serenity. You can leave whenever you want to, just by opening your eyes and being aware of where you are now, and bringing yourself back to alertness in the 'here and now'.

Carol, 2009

3. Bucket under the arm

Sometimes in our meeting with others, it can be difficult to handle them and their emotional reactions - both positive and negative emotions. Say, for example, that you are dealing with a person, who is very angry and who shouts at you. Your first reaction may be to react in the same way, i.e. you want to shout back. In this scenario, you experience the same emotions and react in line with these. You are thereby unable to meet and to contain this person's needs. Now imagine, that you have a bucket under your arm, and you use this bucket to put the words and emotions, that are thrown at you, into it. Now you might find that you are more able to meet this person. This visualization may help you to stay calm and realize that the person's emotions and reactions are not yours, and you do not need to take them personal. Allow the other person to react, but put it into your bucket.

Carol, V. (2009). Relaxing Safe Place Imagery. Retrieved from: <https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/SafePlace.pdf>, August 2018.

Dressler, M. & Obel, C. (2017). Vredeshåndtering for unge: Forstå og håndter følelserne i fællesskab. Frydenlund: Balto, Lithuania

Levine, P. A. & Kline, M. (2012). Trauma Through a Child's Eyes: Awakening the Ordinary Miracle of Healing. North Atlantic Book: Berkeley, Calif.t

4. Power of human relationship

Venting out distressful feelings can take place in human relationships. It means contacts with close people whom you can trust and who can accept you without criticism, listen to you, can make time for you and give you back positive emotions.

A close person to talk to can be found in several social levels:

- Family members, relatives
- Friends, acquaintances, neighbors
- Support groups, self-support groups, like-minded groups
- Professionals (counsellors, psychologists, social workers, psychotherapists etc.)

You can help yourself talking with such a person about your problems, not looking for specific solution – a possibility to talk out is already the solution. Venting your frustrations alleviates tension and stress. You almost always feel better—and “lighter”—after sharing some perceived uncomfortable emotions and worrying thoughts. We formulated 5 steps in bringing power of human relationship into life.

1. Acknowledge your overwhelming emotion. Think if it is constructive or destructive.
2. Think of somebody whom you could contact. A friendly person who can impartially listen to your story.
3. Arrange a meeting or a phone call with your friend.
4. Speak out.
5. As you are done, it is important to spend some time alone reflecting your current feelings before you return to your activities.

Jurčenko, A. (2018). Fiziski un garīgi vesels cilvēks – laimīgs cilvēks. Semināra materiāli. Retrieved from:
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/evolution-the-self/201404/6-virtues-and-6-vices-venting>
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/evolution-the-self/201404/the-do-s-and-don-ts-emotional-ventilation>

5. Body Therapy

If you observe yourself, you can notice that any physical tension starts with emotional resistance – not being able to let out emotion you are feeling or denying current emotional state. Rigid/ blocked energy of emotional tension creates muscular tension in body; if not addressed, it may come out as a pure physical problem or symptom in long-term. That is why it is important to feel what you feel. If you find it hard to release your difficult emotions, focus on your body tension and help your body get rid of it.

We would love to offer you (or your learners) 3 body orientated exercises for relaxation. If you focus on some parts or your whole body, it might help you to move your attention from thinking and emotional distraction to your inner body energy. By practicing these exercises, you can relax, release tension and even get in touch with your inner body's resources – emotions and feelings of love, harmony and joy. With practice and time the sense of inner body will deepen and you will be able to help yourself easily.

Intensive yawning

The purpose of this exercise is to help you (or your learners) to create relaxation and calmness and overcome stress or anxiety. The benefits of yawn breathing include released muscle tension, increased oxygen, and supplying the body with more energy.

The instructions:

1. Begin by taking some slow, deep breaths.
2. Relax the jaw by stretching your mouth open.
3. Do this a few times, and then make a long, sighing “ahh” sound during exhalation.
4. Make the action of yawning. After about four or five fake yawns, some real yawns will come.
5. Pay attention what happens in your mouth, throat, chest, and belly. Don't be surprised if your eyes start watering.
6. Release the tension in the jaw. Relax and loosen all the facial muscles.
7. Repeat for ten yawns. Pause in between for a few seconds.
8. Allow yourself to stretch your arms and shoulders as you continue yawning.
9. Now just relax into your natural breath. If you feel dizzy, lightheaded, or disoriented, stop, sit down, and rest. If you've been particularly stressed or anxious, you might find yourself yawning a great deal over the next half hour. It means that your brain needs more blood circulation to improve neural performance. Enjoy the yawns, knowing that it is a special treat for your busy brain.

Spaghetti exercise

Sometimes it is easy to get tense and not even realize that we hold worries and stress in our muscles. This exercise will help you (or your learners) learn the difference between being tense and being relaxed using the concept of uncooked and cooked spaghetti. It will help you get rid of tension in the body, cool down intense emotions and put compulsive thoughts on distance.

The instructions:

1. To do this exercise, sit in a comfortable chair.
2. Now imagine that you are **a piece of uncooked spaghetti**. Tighten both your fists and arms, squeeze your legs and stomach and make your whole body as stiff as possible, so that you can't bend. Keep your whole body tense until you count to five.
3. Now relax. Pretend that you are now **a piece of cooked spaghetti**. Let your whole body become loose and floppy. Let go of all of the tension in your body. Relax your shoulders and stomach, take a deep breath, relax and let the air out. Imagine you are cooked spaghetti for a minute. Can you feel any uncooked parts?
4. Now become **a piece of uncooked spaghetti** again. Squeeze all the muscles in your body until you are as stiff as raw spaghetti. Even make your face tense – squeeze all the muscles in your mouth and forehead. Squeeze your shoulders up to your ears. Make fists with your hands. Squeeze your eyes shut and push your feet into the floor. Hold your body stiff like raw spaghetti until the count of five.
5. Now relax your whole body. Go floppy like **a piece of cooked spaghetti**. Relax your face, your shoulders, your stomach, your arms and your legs.
6. With repetition your relaxation will be deepening, so become **a piece of uncooked spaghetti** one last time and tense your whole body from head to toe. Make every part of your body as tense and stiff as you can until the count of five.
7. Now relax your body like **a piece of cooked spaghetti**. Become yourself.

It is hard work to be tense all day long. If you are tired at the end of the day, most likely you are holding too much tension. When you notice that your body is feeling stiff or tense, don't forget that you can make yourself feel like a piece of cooked spaghetti by relaxing the muscles in your body. Which feels better, being cooked or uncooked spaghetti?

Cook's Hook-Ups

This exercise connects all the energy circuits in the body at one time and gets energy in the body moving when it is blocked. It is a fast integrative intervention during times of stress or when needed to optimize ability to concentrate or express something with ease. The complex intertwining of the hands / arms / legs / tongue on roof of mouth (and if doing in a standing position – balance) stimulate large areas of the neocortex in both hemispheres of the brain.

The instructions:

1. Sit comfortably in your chair.
2. Put your left ankle over your right knee.
3. Next, hook your right hand around your left ankle.
4. Then put your left hand over the heel of the left foot. (Some people will feel better sitting with the right ankle over the left.)
5. Sit this way for one minute, breathing deeply, with your eyes closed and your tongue on the roof of your mouth.
6. Uncross your legs and put your hands fingertips together, continuing to breathe deeply for another minute.
7. Slowly open your eyes and keep some attention on your feeling. Now just relax into your natural breath.

Tolle, E. (1999). The power of now.

<https://www.healyourlife.com/5-breathing-exercises-for-instant-relaxation>

<http://www.mindfullyalive.com/blog/2016/6/16/yawning-is-the-fastest-way-to-hack-mental-stress-and-focus>

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http://www.options-center.com/education_center/education_handbook/Part%204/Cooks%20Hook%20Ups.pdf

<http://teachmeetireland.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/melissahogan.pdf>

http://www.druva.lv/files/atbalsts_visparejas__zglitibas_pedagogu_nodrosinasnai_prioritarajos_macibu_prieksmetos.doc

<https://www.audible.ca/pd/The-Power-of-Now-Audiobook/B071RX-X33T>, November 2018.

6. When you are angry...

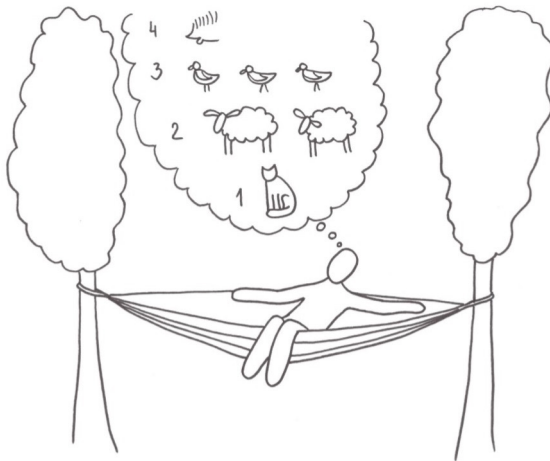
Refocus your angry learner in choosing few tips to try or suggest what you consider the best.

There are certain steps to take when you feel angry:

1. Focus your attention on yourself – try to recognize and accept the emotion you feel.
2. Know that your emotion will not do any harm to you if you pay your attention on it.
3. Decide what strategy you can use – internal transformation or external manifestation or go through the whole cycle.

Internal transformation – you change your emotional state or thoughts by yourself in your inner world

The first step is to slow down, to decrease intensity of anger you feel, not harming anyone, including yourself. Take control of yourself.



Calming down - I can...

- observe signs of anger in my body – what is going on with my breathing, jaw, heart, muscles, voice etc.
- take 3 deep breaths or simply breathe
- drink a glass of water
- draw my anger
- count backwards in odd numbers from 49: 49, 47, 45, 43 and so on.
- count animals: one cat, two sheep, three hens, four hedgehogs, five giraffes, six crocodiles...
- recite alphabet backward in my head
- recite a poem or the words of a song in my head
- visualize what I did yesterday from when I woke up until I went to bed
- repeat a calming word or phrase, for example “Take it easy...”
- remember something nice to calm down
- sing or hum
- listen soothing music or loud & fast music
- stay alone for a moment

Once anger is reduced, a look inside or positive affirmations about yourself may help to face the real situation and redirect your energy towards solution.



Thinking – I can...

- try to understand what has happened, how I feel and what exactly made me angry
- reflect my anger in writing
- think about consequences of my action “What would happen if I...”
- think positively “What good can this situation bring me?”
- think “Everyone can have such a situation.”
- think “I am in the process of positive change.”
- think about several variants how to solve this situation
- think “I can manage it.”
- think who/ what can help me
- think “It is something small comparing to the big things in the world to be worried about.”
- think “If I keep calm, it will be easier to solve the problem.”
- think “It’s only a thought and a thought can be changed.”
- think “I turn every experience in opportunity.”
- think “Every thought I think is creating my future.”

External manifestation – you change your emotional state or thinking processes with the help of other people or your surroundings.

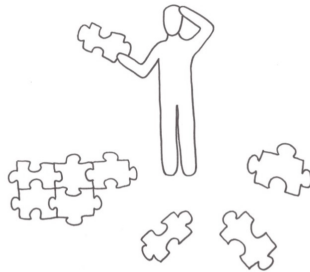
As clear thinking has started to operate, communicate and work towards solutions, if possibly discussing some details in creating a plan or resolving a conflict. Clear thinking happens when your emotions are clear.



Communicating – I can...

- tell what has happened
- tell how I feel
- try to understand how other people feel
- ask a request
- ask questions to understand what other people think
- talk out
- listen to others
- forgive
- ask how others solve such problems
- start conversation saying something good
- call a friend
- say “I am sorry”
- use “I-sentences” (describe the problem speaking about myself, explaining my feelings and expectations not blaming the other in respectful way)
- inquire how other people solve such problems

Success of your transformation will be seen in your action. Action will help you with whatever is left from your emotion, let it out with any suitable choice.



Acting - I can...

- give myself time for thinking
- collect more information
- correct the mistake done
- learn from the mistake done
- ask for help
- not pay attention to it
- accept what has happened
- solve the problem
- talk to the involved person/ people
- tell my opinion
- step back as good relationship is more important
- let out my anger by hitting a cushion and/or crying, shouting, screaming or swearing where it will not alarm anyone.
- go out for a walk, run or cycle or do any other form of exercise you enjoy
- phone a friend, tell what happened and how angry you are

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Retrieved from:

<http://www.uzvediba.lv/metodologija/dusmu-kontroles-spele>

7. Writing

Writing can be beneficial not only for writers and readers but for all of us, because it can be therapeutic. Writing helps to cultivate the ability to observe our thoughts and feelings, even more it helps us track our spinning thoughts and feelings which are not so obvious for the stressed mind. Writing is “speaking to another consciousness” — ‘the reader’ or another part of the self. Writing can lead to key insights. We come to know who we really are in the present moment.

Writing also creates a mind-body-spirit connection. When you use your hands to pen or type something directly from your brain, you are creating a powerful connection between your inner experience and your body’s movement out in the world. We hold worries, fears and memories in our bodies but when we use the body - we stay in the present moment, we inhabit our bodies, and we can heal ourselves. Writing releases stressful thoughts from our mind and linked emotions from our body. There are many ways how writing can help you:

1. **Free writing** All you have to do is write down whatever comes to mind without censoring yourself. It could be images in your mind, thoughts, events, sights, smells, or sounds. You can write what is going on now, what bothers or hurts you. There is no need to formulate your thoughts in structured sentences – just write it out off yourself. You can write on separate sheets of papers, read them again and release – burn or tear off. It is possible to keep it for later read over -you’ll likely be able to draw some knowledge or perspective.

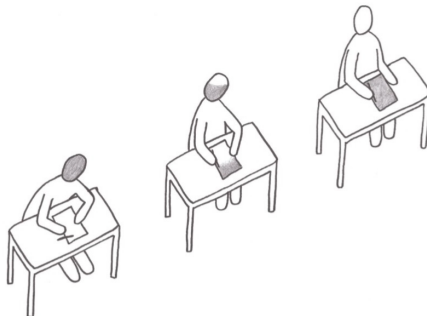
2. **Reflective journaling** Every day you write down emotions what you experience - positive or negative experiences, any associated thoughts, and what you learned from them. Putting emotions in words often helps to find solutions for different problems and tasks. Include your thoughts and ideas about what you learned and how it helped you grow as a person. It’s best to reflect as soon as possible after the event; don’t wait too long, or you won’t remember all the details! This is why you should always

have your journal nearby and make it a habit to make regular entries.

3. Gratitude journaling Slow down, take a deep breath, and ask yourself what you're grateful for. It's even better to write these things down once or twice a week. It helps purposefully to focus on the positive and gives a positive effect on the subjective well-being of a person. Start with the simple – your body, friends, family, work etc. Not to repeat oneself, it is worth every day to look for something new to be grateful for.

4. Letter writing It can be helpful when you have 'unfinished business' with someone. Perhaps you wish to fully express yourself to someone but haven't been able to or never will. You can write everything that you want to say in a letter, and you don't even have to send it. The goal is for you to gain a clearer understanding of your own thoughts and feelings about the person. It will help you release the burden you may be carrying and can be an intensely cathartic experience. Another exercise is writing a short letter to a close friend or a loved one. Imagine this person has written to you and asked you: "How are you doing, really?". It will help you reflect on your current life situation, your emotions and thoughts.

5. Five minutes text It is a good way to help yourself when you are in hurry or cannot define what is going on, what is wrong? Give yourself 5 minutes and purposefully write down everything what is associated with problematic situation – write short, specific, not thinking too much. When reading over, it is possible to pick out valuable key words.



Retrieved from:

<https://psychcentral.com/blog/the-power-of-writing-3-types-of-therapeutic-writing/>

<https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/can-you-really-use-writing-as-therapy>

http://www.delfi.lv/orakuls/liec-lieta/49677487_rakstisana-ka-terapija-11-lieliskas-metodes

8. Creating alternative thoughts

- How to create alternative thoughts after a confrontation with a learner?

Write down your thoughts about the following questions. This little exercise is useful to give the learner and the teacher to think about their automatic thoughts and renew them.

It is a good way to talk about the conflict situation afterwards.

1. What was the critical situation all about?
2. Automatic reaction and thoughts
3. What did you feel in the situation?
4. What proves that you felt that way?
5. What proves that the thoughts were wrong?
6. What could be a new and maybe more realistic thought?
How could these new thoughts affect your feeling?
8. Here you can make a wish for yourself about how to handle a situation where the emotions take over.

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9. Sculpt a feeling

The exercise is called “Sculpt a feeling” and are created and edited in inspiration from the book “vredeshåndtering for unge” (the handling of anger for young people).

The purpose of the exercise is getting awareness of how everyone expresses feelings in different ways with body language and facial expressions.

The assignment lasts for about 20 minutes.

- In pairs the students agree on who should be the sculptor and who should be the model to be created.
- The sculptor sculpts/creates the body while explaining verbally to the model how the feeling should be created in the face.
- Afterwards the sculptor should make a mirror image of the model, so the person can see what he/she looks like.
- Afterwards they change the roles around.
- Here are some questions the students should talk about after the assignment in pairs about their experience with the exercise:
- Which feelings were hard to express? Which were easy? Had the physical change in the body any impact on the feeling as the model felt and the mirror reflection. Did you get affected by the feelings?

Afterwards you can talk about it in class. Ideas of feelings to create:

- Happiness
- Anger
- Fear
- Joy
- In love
- Anxious
- Sad
- Terrified
- Jealous
- Insecure
- Proud
- Regret
- Victory
- Shame
- Loneliness

The students can also come up with other feelings or don't use the examples, but mention the different kind of feelings themselves.

Kramvig, Camilla 2018: Developed to this handbook, with inspiration from cognitive psychology: Dressler and Obel 2017 "vredeshåndtering for unge" Forlaget Frydenlund.

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Authors

Gintarė Černikienė, Researcher and Project Manager at VšĮ Žmogiškųjų išteklių stebėsenos ir plėtros biuras



Asta Jaseliūnienė, Researcher and Director of VšĮ Žmogiškųjų išteklių stebėsenos ir plėtros biuras

Hedvig Johansdóttir, CEO, Dugni



Karin Háskor, Career counsellor, Dugni

Kirsten Hundahl, MA, Vestegnen HF & VUC



Camilla Kramvig, Educator in psychology, Vestegnen HF & VUC

Jelena Lipovska, Dr.Psych., Member of the Board of Mācību centrs plus



Aija Centnere Mg.Psych., Mācību centrs plus

Dr. Sveinbjörg Júlía Svavarsdóttir, University of Iceland, Forvarnir - Streituskóli

Anna Árnadóttir, RightNow ehf. Research, Innovation and Skills (RRIS)



Thorvald Finnbjörnsson, RightNow ehf. Research, Innovation and Skills (RRIS)

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