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KA2 – Body for empowerment

Sharing tools Amazonas (Cro.), Association of nurturing earth and spirit (Slo.)

Tools shared from NZD, "Body for empowerment", Slovenia, 2.4. - 4.5.2025

Getting to know each other through the body

Trainer: Prija and Maria

Arriving to the space, to oneself here and now, to the group

Arriving to oneself: To arrive to us, here and now, we were putting weight from one leg to the other with the awareness of what is going on inside and outside sense perception. The invitation was to have closed eyes, and move the head from left to right. Then we slowly started a collective walking, breathing and awareness, but staying with the attention inward. Taking a breath, notice how you feel. Awareness/perceiving of the space and discovering the space. Arriving here and now.

Arriving at the group: After this grounding exercise we slowly started to perceive the environment and the other participants, like a "sponge being", with no judgments, just perceiving. We observed the feet, legs, belly, pelvis, chest and face, again with no judgments. Just empty perceiving and meeting.

Stick Dance

Tool: light, straight stick cc 0,5/0,7m long (we had bamboo, but can be other)

Aim of the exercises: can be adapted. But in general it's a good exercise to get in the moment, presence, to focus on the senses, awareness of oneself and surroundings, connection in pairs and group. A plus is that there is a **medium - stick**, which makes all the body movement less "important" and makes it easy to adapt it to youth or shy participants.

Start with one person playing with the stick, how does the person balance the stick on one finger and move.

Then go in pairs, both people put the stick between their fingers (1 finger each) so it doesn't fall down (starting point is that the stick is vertical, one is down, one is up).

1. **Leading - following.** The first one was guiding, the other followed the movements. The stick is only the start of the movement - the movement can be from the whole body. Especially with the core/pelvis (so the movement doesn't come from the finger, but from the core). Switch the guide and the follower.
2. In the end both were doing both, at the same time listening and "speaking", guiding and following.
3. Broader awareness of the surrounding (if you do it outside, it can be nature). While dancing with the stick, listening to oneself without thinking and doing the movements from presence, plus listening to the other. We also bring in the awareness to the space, our surrounding, other people, the nature (if outside), of the broader surrounding. And continued to do it for a while.

Debrief questions: How was it for me? What was hard for me? What was easy for me? How was it for me when we brought in the sensing/awareness of nature? Do I notice any comparisons with my life?

Leader – Follower (Maria)

This exercise is a great way to explore group relationship dynamics and encourage reflection on one's own behavior patterns. Here's a more detailed description of the exercise and its potential benefits:

Exercise Description:

Pairing: Participants are divided into pairs.

Leader's Instructions: The leader gives the following instructions:

Phase 1: Pairs walk around the space with their palms touching.

Phase 2: Pairs walk around the space with their shoulders touching.

Phase 3: Pairs walk around the space with their shoulders and one foot touching.

Phase 4: Pairs walk around the space with their foreheads touching.

Experience Sharing: After the exercise, each pair shares their experiences, answering questions such as:

How did they feel during each phase?

What thoughts did they have?

What frustrations did they experience?

How did they coordinate with their partner?

Can they connect these patterns to their behavior in other life situations?

Potential Benefits of the Exercise:

Development of Body Awareness: The exercise promotes awareness of one's own body and how it moves in space.

Exploration of Relationship Dynamics: The exercise allows participants to explore the dynamics of their relationship with their partner, including communication, cooperation, and adaptation.

Identification of Behavior Patterns: The exercise helps participants identify recurring behavior patterns in their relationships.

Encouragement of Reflection: The exercise encourages reflection on one's own feelings, thoughts, and reactions.

Development of Empathy: The exercise can help participants develop empathy towards others, understanding their perspectives and experiences.

Increased Group Cohesion: This exercise helps create connections between group members.

During the experience sharing, the leader can encourage participants to connect their experiences to specific situations in life.

Getting to know each other through the hand

- Find a way to mix participants, so they are paired up and don't know with who they are. What we did: Form a double circle, the inner one facing outwards and the outer facing inwards. Everyone closes their eyes. The inner one rotates a bit with eyes still closed. Then the participants in both circles stretch out their arms until they meet the hand of the person in front (with some help by the facilitator).
- Then start to feel, research, the hand, both express and feel. Take time, do it slow if its hard to express and listen at the same time.
- Then try expressing many different emotions through the hands (facilitator guides here saying these words out loud): happiness, playfulness, sadness, fear, love, content, inner peace.
- After some time, say goodbye to the hand, and once you detach, you open your eyes and discover who has been your partner / the hand owner. Thank your partner.
- Closing with a sharing circle about the experience.

Meaningful dialogs:

People walk randomly and make pairs. Try to find different ways how people make pairs – fast walking, eyes closed, eye contact, ect. Also who starts first – bigger one, darker eyes, ect. - be creative).

They sit somewhere and answer a specific question the moderator puts (cc. 2,3 minutes one is answering the other one is only listening. Then change (moderator says when to change)).

It is good to have cc 3,4 different questions talking with different pairs, they can be connected to the topic later on or not. Be creative. Better questions make a better atmosphere :) You can start with simple questions but then go deeper.

Our questions:

1. How do I feel at the moment? How did I feel in the last week? (How am I.. What is alive..?)
2. What helps you when you have difficult times or you feel bad?

Other nice questions:

- What memorable things have happened to you in the last 2 weeks? (1st question)
- What are you passionate about? What is your sparkle, fire?
- Which person influenced your life the most, why?
- What is relaxing you?
- What do you like about nature/body/art/movement/sport (can be related to the topic of the course)? Why do you like nature?

Physical theatre and games

Trainer: Kristina

Getting to know each other and the space

Walking in space.

You meet a person, introduce yourself. You pantomime what you really don't like. The other has to guess.

You use pantomime to show what you really like to do. The other has to guess.

You meet a person and say something about yourself, one statement. The other person has to work out whether it's true or false.

ABC

The topic of the exercise is personal priorities and things we want to avoid. We start the exercise by walking around the room. Think of someone in the room. This person is now person A, who is very important. You always need to be aware of where A is in the room. While you always keep A in mind, think of another person in the room. This person is now person B. B is just as important, but not as much as A. Always observe and perceive B out of the corner of your eye. Now think of a third person. This is person C. Actively push C into the background - you don't want to look at her and you don't want her to look at you. Move around the room with A, B and C in your mind for a while.

After the exercise, discuss in small groups. What does A represent in your life? What could B represent? And the most difficult but most interesting question: what does C represent? Examples of answers could be health, family, environment, self-sufficiency, financial insecurity, age, inclusion/exclusion, creativity, etc.

Louding the volume

Group in a circle. A person makes a low noise and a small gesture. the next person repeats but increases the sound and the gesture a little bit. The group continues repeating and increasing, for 2 rounds. The next person chooses a new sound and gesture, and we restart again, increasing it.

Travelling of voice and movement

The group is in the circle. One person makes one movement and sound and sends it to another person in the circle. The other person receives the movement and sound by repeating it. Then s_he adds his/her own movement and sound and sends it to another person, and so on.

The goal is to make the process smooth, without pauses. Let the body react and respond without thinking about the movement and sound. With the velocity and no “empty spaces” this letting go can be more easy.

Peruvian ball game

This game sounds much more confusing than it is – in essence it involves a chain of exchanges of mimed balls. Each participant imagines they are in possession of a ball - football, tennis ball, ping-pong ball, beach ball, any kind of ball or balloon; they imagine what material their object is made out of, and they play with it, in a repetitive rhythm, in such a way that their whole body is involved in the playing and their voice is reproducing, rhythmically, the sound of their own particular type of ball or balloon. The participants are given a couple of minutes to establish a regular, repetitive, rhythmic action and sound, which they practise while walking around the space.

After a few minutes, the facilitator says 'Find a partner'. At this point each participant finds a partner and the two of them must continue playing with their own balls, facing each other, while at the same time carefully observing the smallest details of their opposite number's ball, its motion and its sound. After a minute or so of simultaneous playing and observing, the facilitator says '1, 2, 3-exchange balls' and each partner must immediately take over the other person's ball, adopting that person's particular movements and sounds as exactly as they can. And off they go round the space, with this second ball.

After a similar interval, the facilitator again says 'Find a partner', the players find a different partner and then on 'Exchange balls' they swap balls for a second time. And off they go again, now with their third ball overall. And the whole sequence takes place once more on the fourth ball.

Finally the facilitator says 'Get your original ball back' and, from that moment on, all the participants must try to find the balls they started with, all the while continuing to play with the last ball they acquired. As soon as they have located their original ball, they go up to the person who is in possession of it at the time and say 'That's my ball out you go'. That person then goes and stands on the side and if he himself hasn't yet located his own ball, he searches for it from the sidelines - if he spots it, he goes up to the person who has it and informs her in the same manner. The game goes on until everyone has found their original ball!

If at the end of the game there are still some people who haven't found their ball, you can attempt to piece together the paths of the various balls by asking them who they first swapped with, and then asking those people who they swapped with, and so the eventual destination of the ball is established. This ball 'genealogy' is sometimes impossible to establish, but it can provide a useful illustration of the way actions and sounds have been modified, if each player in the history of a particular ball is asked to demonstrate how they played with it; then the three versions of one ball can be lined up side by side, to show the differences.

Fainting game

We counted from 1-4, each person remembering their number. We walk around the room, the joker says one number, the persons with these numbers start to faint slowly and dramatically, they make a sound and raise their hands, the rest of the group supports them, the persons who have fainted take that support for a few moments.

In the next phase, the person faints without making a sound, and in the last phase, without signalling with their hands. We found it interesting to compare what is happening in the community, how to call for help, or how to spot fainting persons who do not signal that they need help.

Variation - 2 numbers at the same time.

Game Scream/Hug

In a circle. Everybody looks down at your feet. On sign everybody looks up, directly to somebody else's eyes. If you both look at each other you decide non-verbally to either

1. scream very loud (with your body and voice) and exchange places by running outside the circle or
2. give a hug in the center of the circle and change places.

If the person you are looking at isn't looking at you, nothing happens.

You can start by practicing to scream all together at the same time.

You can make an end variation that all the people that want to scream scream and exchange places then they look up (regardless of the eye contact - but if you are motivated to do it!)

Image theatre: Images of support – peer and community support

Barbara, how are you?

The group stands in a circle.

One person begins by turning to the person directly across from them and asking:
"Barbara (the name of the person), how are you?"

The person responds — the answer can be short or detailed, sincere or playful.

The one who asked then makes an impression of what they heard — capturing the energy, tone, or emotion of the response through a frozen body posture.

The two people standing on either side of the person doing the impression join in, completing or amplifying the image to create a sculpture.

The person who originally answered observes the image and either:

Claps to confirm the image as accurate, or

Suggest how to adjust or modify it if they feel it doesn't reflect how they truly feel.

Once the image is finalized, the group releases the image and the turn moves to the next person in the circle.

The game continues until everyone has had a turn being asked and having their feeling interpreted.

Complete the image (statue dialogue)

Everyone gets into pairs and starts with a frozen image of a handshake. One partner removes himself from the image, leaving the other with his hand extended. Now what is the story? Instead of saying what he thinks this new image means, the partner who has removed himself returns to the image and completes the image, thus showing what he sees as a possible meaning for it; he puts himself in a different position, with a different relationship to the partner with the outstretched hand, changing the meaning of the image, but conveying an idea, emotion, feeling - this is a dialogue of images, not just a juxtaposition.

Then the first partner comes out of this new frozen image and looks at it. When he was inside it, he had a feeling; outside it, the remaining partner in the image staying frozen and now alone, the image will have a different meaning, evoke a different emotion, idea, etc. So, he completes it, changing its meaning again. And so on, the partners alternating, always in a dialogue of images. The players should look quickly at the half-image they are completing, arranging themselves in a complementary position as fast as they can not only to save time but to avoid thinking with words and translating them into images; like the modelling exercises, the actors should think with their bodies and their eyes. It does not matter if there is no literal meaning to the way an actor chooses to complete the image the important thing is to keep the game moving and the ideas flowing.

Playback Theatre Game

Participants are divided into groups of 4–5 and stand in a horizontal line, side by side. The joker (facilitator) assigns each person a number (1, 2, 3, etc.).

The joker then gives the groups a prompt—this could be a sentence, thought, or theme (lost in the forest, please, help me, I quit my job, the best party ever, we will save the world). The joker points to a group, and that group creates a group image or tableau representing the idea.

One by one, group members step forward in order (Person 1, then Person 2, etc.) to build the image, each adding a physical or expressive element to complete the scene.

Make an image of ... support

In the circle the leader of the game calls out a topic like “house”. The participants imagine an image of a house made by their own body. Participants create, with their bodies, a shape, a statue, in response to an idea or theme. Participants are

encouraged to respond quickly to the idea or theme, without ‘thinking too

much’. When they are ready they turn their back to the center of the circle. When everybody is ready all the group at the same time shows with her_his body their image of “the house”.

It is good to start with simple and concrete propositions. Later go to more complex or abstract ideas like family, love, hope, etc. The group in the image can observe for some seconds also other images.

If you wish to discuss some special topic, for example “support”, you stop on this image. Everybody in the image stays in the image and looks around who is in a similar image as they. Walking in silence and still in the image they find each other. When they form groups they discuss about their images and understanding of the topic in the small group. Returning in the big group, each small group first shows their images. The rest of the group observes and discusses what they see. At the end the small group in the images adds their point of view.

Make a group image of ... community support

Without arranging who and what one of the group comes on stage/in the middle of the circle and puts him_herself in a statue. The others one by one fill in the image. The image stays frozen.

The group can create multiple images of the same topic.

You can find the games of Theatre of The Oppressed and more literature here:

Boal, A. (1979). Theatre of the Oppressed. Pluto Press.

Available: <https://revolutionary-socialism.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Augusto-Boal-Theatre-of-the-Oppressed-20081.pdf>

Boal, A. (2002). Games for Actors and Non-actors. Routledge.

Available: <https://www.deepfun.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Games-for-actors-and-non-actors...Augusto-Boal.pdf>

Fritz, B. (2012). InExActArt - The Autopoietic Theatre of Augusto Boal. A Handbook of Theatre of the Oppressed Practice

<https://www.amazon.com/InExActArt-Autopoietic-Theatre-Augusto-Boal-ebook/dp/B01A04NLUG>

Translated also in slovenian: <https://kudtransformator.com/inexactart-prirocnik-za-delo-z-metodo-gledalisc-zatiranih/>

Contemporary dance practices and body awareness

Trainer: Tina

We will be exploring how we feel during different types of movement - bigger, smaller, twisted, gentle, challenging....

This is an introduction and a good starting point for exploring what we need in our body at different points in time.

WARM UP

- standing, eyes closed, feel your body and breathe
- ground through the feet as if you're sending them into the earth and growing your roots into the ground
- feel as if there's a bowl of water standing on your head, start slowly bending to your feet as if you're pouring the water down; do this three times

- now move through the space - we start by normal walking at your comfortable pace, then we walk faster and faster until we all run

- sudden stop - notice the aliveness of your body, the energy running through you

- breathe in deeply and extend your exhales to calm down the body

Small to big

Start moving the smallest bones in your body - in the hands and feet. Go slowly and try to really feel each movement. After a little bit include your lower arms and legs in the movement, but start (initiate) from the small movement. Continue gradually adding more parts of your body in the movement but still starting from the initial

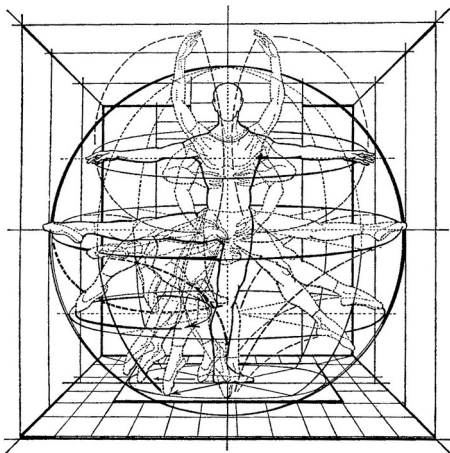
small movement. Try to follow the natural way your body would move. As the exercise progresses your movements should be bigger and include your whole body. Don't forget your neck and head (I often do haha).

Flashlight

Imagine you are in pitch black darkness and there's a flashlight on a part of your body that you need to move to explore the space around you. You can start on the "easy" part - the hands. After moving with your hand flashlight move it to somewhere more challenging - hip, chest, elbow, ear.. Try to explore the whole space, moving around the corners and the center, watching the floor and the ceiling, and also exploring the bodies of people around you as if they were some kind of foreign structures. Be as curious as you can and challenge your body in the positions it can take.

The painter

Imagine your hands covered in paint and try to paint the whole "bubble" around you - your kinesphere (look up Laban to learn more). You can move down and up, to the front and back. Try to be creative with your movements and connect them in ways that feel intuitive. When you've painted everything change the paint color and move it to your feet - now try painting everything with your feet.



Just dance

Now after all this exploration, try to let go of the constraints of the exercises and let loose. Remember some new sensations and ideas that happened while exploring and try to incorporate them into your free dancing. And have fun :)

Supporting self and others – body-touch activities

Trainer: Kristina

Intro

Walking in the space, feel the support of the ground.

Support the arms

Find a pair. You stand in front of each other. One person is supporting the arm of the other under the elbow. The supported person gives the weight of the arms and shoulder to the supporter. With breathing S_he tries to relax, let go and feel the support.

Balance and contrabalance

In pairs you look at your partner in front of you. You hold each other under the elbow. Look in the eyes. Lean back. Straighten the arms. Straighten the body. Find the balance by leaning more or less. Find the point you feel safe and comfortable – in balance.

Continuations:

Slide to holding on to each other's wrists.
Release one hand.
One goes down.
Both go down and up together.
Research other positions while keeping the balance.

Lean on the rock

In pairs you sit back on back. One is a rock and just stays still, strong and accepts the weight of the other. The other leans on the rock. Gives all the weight, releases on the rock.

Take some time. After the other goes back to sit on his/her own. You change roles.

How does it feel to be a rock? How does it feel to be supported? Did you manage to release, did you hold back?

GESTALT – GAMES AND EXERCISES

1. Identifying with the Object

Aim: Exploring projection, awareness, self-perception, and identification through an object.

Exercise

Place different objects in a large bag. Ask the participant to choose one object with their eyes closed.

First, explore the object through touch. How does it feel? What shape does it have? What texture does it have? What sounds could it make?

Then open the eyes and look at the object. Invite the participant to **become the object**. In their imagination, answer the questions below using the first person, as if they are the object.

What is your name? What are you made of? What shape are you? Are you made of different parts, materials, shapes, or colours? What are you like inside and outside? Where do you usually live? How do you feel there? What surrounds you? What is your usual movement? Can you minimise or exaggerate this movement? Find the movement that feels right for you.

What do you like most about yourself? What do you dislike about yourself? What is your function or purpose? Do you like interacting with people? How does it feel? What would you change in your life as this object? How would you make these changes? Identify three small steps. What is your power now? What would your power be after making these changes?

Sharing

Invite the participant to present themselves using “**I am...**” and the name of the object.

At the end, invite a short reflection on whether they noticed any similarities between themselves and the object, or whether anything about the object reminded them of their own life.

2. Sound and Movement

Part 1 – Sounds

Ask participants to write down 10 sounds that irritate them, for example chalk on a blackboard, a ticking clock, a siren, screaming, etc. Then write down 10 sounds that bring them joy, calm, or a sense of beauty, for example rain, wind, birds, flute, etc.

Choose five sounds from each list and rank them from 1 (least intense) to 5 (most intense). As a group, begin imitating the sounds. Start with number 5 and gradually move towards number 1. Then repeat the process in the opposite direction, from 1 to 5.

Part 2 – Words

Repeat the same exercise with words. Write down words you dislike or find unpleasant and words you like or find pleasant. Choose five from each group and rank them from 1 to 5. Explore and express the words through sound and movement.

Part 3 – Limiting Inner Messages

Ask participants to write down three sentences they sometimes hear in their heads that they do not like, particularly sentences that block, limit, or discourage them.

Choose the sentence that feels the strongest or most “stuck”. Without sharing the sentence, give it a movement. When the movement is found, make it as large and expressive as possible. Repeat it several times, gradually making the movement smaller and smaller. Finish by physically “shaking it off”.

Part 4 – Empowering Inner Messages

Ask participants to write down three sentences they hear, or would like to hear, in their heads that empower them. Choose one sentence and give it a movement.

Begin with a very small movement and gradually make it bigger. Finish with the biggest and most expressive version of the movement.

3. Strengthening the Senses

Oaklander (2006) proposed different activities for strengthening sensory awareness.

Touching

Possible activities include putting different objects in a bag and asking participants to identify them through touch; describing the sensations produced by different textures; drawing with fingers; working with wet clay; and exploring sand using the hands.

Different tactile qualities can be explored, such as bumpy, fluffy, slippery, hard, soft, smooth, sticky, warm, cold, hot, icy, rough, prickly, tingly, feathery, rubbery, thin, spongy, silky, hairy, or mushy.

Participants can also assign colours to different tactile sensations or draw pictures representing different textures and tactile experiences.

Listening

Possible activities include meditating on any sound that comes to mind; drawing while listening to music; creating loud and soft sounds and exploring high and low tones using percussion instruments; connecting different sounds and creating sound sequences; having a conversation using only sounds; playing a sound-recognition game; and matching sounds to different feelings or emotions.

Smelling

Talk about favourite and least favourite smells. Participants can pantomime different smells while another person guesses what they are. Provide experiences with different smells, such as flowers, grass, sweet or spicy smells.

Different aromas can be placed into small containers and participants can try to identify them, for example perfume, banana, onion, etc. Discuss memories connected to particular smells or draw a picture representing a memory or feeling evoked by a smell.

Tasting

Use the orange and lemon exercise. Discuss favourite and least favourite tastes. Provide different samples to taste and compare their taste and texture. Pantomime eating different foods. Explore differences between tastes, textures, and bodily sensations.

4. Holding a Glass – Stress and Adaptation

Ask the participant to hold a glass for different periods of time, for example a few minutes, three hours, or three days. The exercise can be used as a metaphor for stress and the way the organism adapts to prolonged pressure.

Connection with Gestalt

When our needs are not met, our organism's natural self-regulation can be interrupted. We may begin to adapt in different ways, including developing defensive patterns. One part of the person may become less available or “paralysed”, while other parts of the body and personality compensate. In the example of holding a glass, the hand may become tired or painful, while other parts of the body compensate for it.

Over time, we can also begin to perceive the world in a more limited way. Gestalt therapy focuses on **here-and-now awareness** and on the person as a whole, rather than focusing only on one isolated part.

Awareness is therefore important. Through different experiential and exploratory exercises, participants can become aware of themselves and give expression to parts of themselves that may have been blocked or suppressed. This can support greater integration and a more holistic way of functioning.

5. Working with Anger

Children can express anger in many different ways. They may hurt others or themselves, become overly pleasing or submissive, kick or hit, blame others, destroy things, act aggressively, withdraw, or express anger through other behaviours.

Three steps for working with anger

1. Talk about anger: What makes you angry? What situations trigger anger? How do you notice anger in your body? How do you usually show anger? Create a list of situations, bodily sensations, thoughts, and behaviours connected to anger.

2. Normalise the feeling: Help the child understand that **anger is a normal human emotion**. The focus is on distinguishing between the feeling of anger and the behaviour used to express it. Anger itself is not necessarily a problem; the way it is expressed can be harmful or helpful.

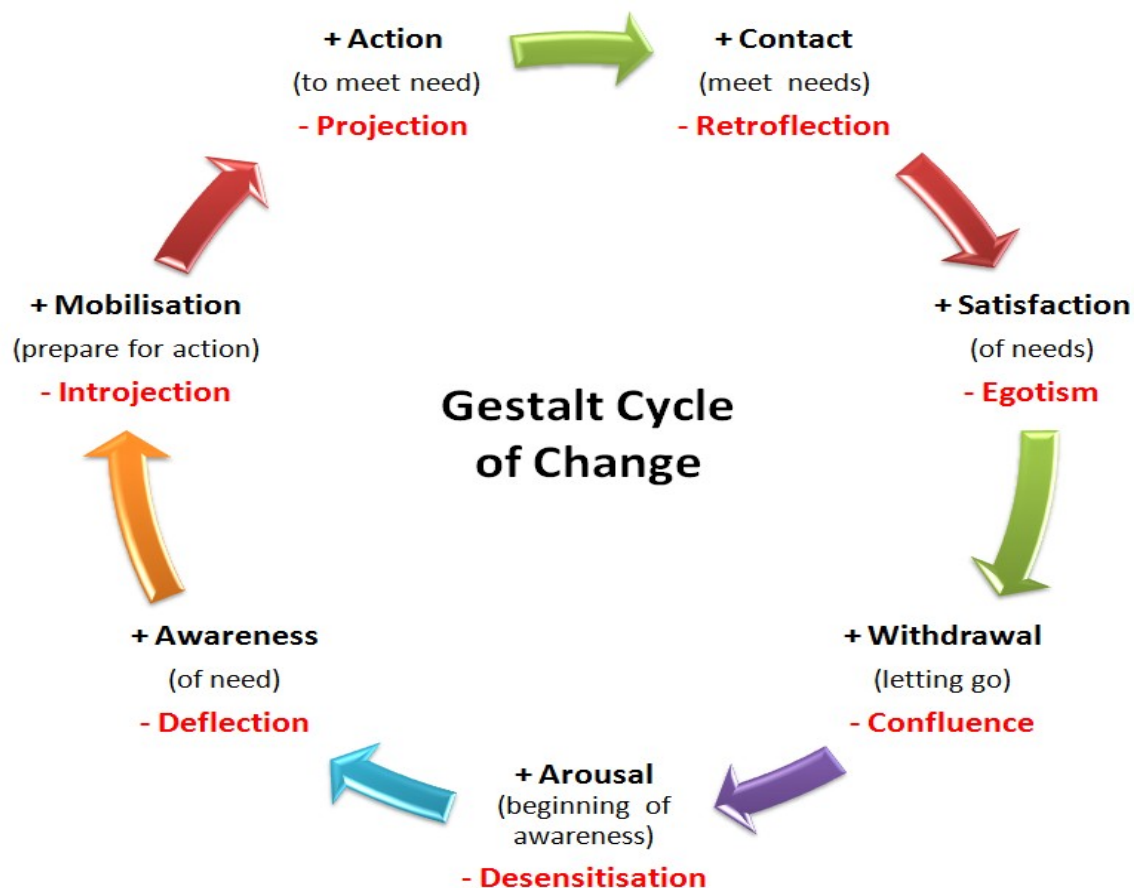
3. Explore ways of expressing anger: Help the child find safe and appropriate ways to express anger. Different techniques can be explored through movement, drawing, play, sound, storytelling, or other creative methods.

6. Contact

“The ideal contact occurs when all parts of a person are involved in a situation: the senses, the body, the emotions, the intellect.” – Oaklander

Ideal contact includes both **intimacy and withdrawal**.

Responsibility can be understood as the ability to respond to our own needs and to the environment.



For example, you notice that you are thirsty → you become aware of the need → you mobilise yourself → you get up and go to the kitchen → you take a glass → you pour some juice → you drink it → you are satisfied → you move on to another activity.

The same process can be seen with homework: you become aware that you have homework → you prepare yourself → you do the homework → the task is completed → you can move on and play.

Another example is anger: you notice that you do not feel well → you become aware that you are angry because your friend did not say hello → you contact the friend and talk about it → you feel better afterwards → you can move your attention to something else.

Contact can be interrupted at different points in this process. **The senses and awareness are particularly important**, because they help us recognise our needs and respond to them.

7. Working with Projective Techniques from a Phenomenological Perspective

1. Imaginary Experience: Imagine

The child is invited to identify or explore a feeling, experience, event, situation, or internal image through guided imagery, creative visualisation, imagination, or storytelling. The focus is on the child's subjective experience.

2. Sensory Experience: Create

The child is invited to give the imagined figure, feeling, or experience a concrete form. Possible media include drawing, clay, puppets, sand tray, cards, or other creative materials. The therapist observes not only the final product but also the process of creation.

3. Metaphorical / Narrative Articulation and Sharing

Invite the child to tell the story of the drawing, object, or creative process. They can become the image or one of the objects in the picture and speak as if they are this object. Explore what is happening, what the object wants or needs, what its role is, what it is afraid of, and what it would change.

The child can develop the perspective and story of a particular object, figure, or part of the whole.

4. Logical Application / Meaningful Articulation: Owning and Integration

Connect the creative experience with the child's own life. Ask: Does this fit with your life? Do you sometimes feel this way? Does anything in the picture remind you of yourself? Is there something here that you recognise from your own experience?

The aim is to support **awareness, ownership, and integration**.

The four steps do **not** always need to be completed. Sometimes the child may only engage in the first or second step. The process should follow the child's readiness and level of engagement.

Respect resistance.

Tools shared from NZD, "Body for empowerment", *Croatia*, 9.10. - 12.10.2025

Emotional regulation and co-regulation through somatic work

Trainer: Nayeli (NZD)

Topics:

- Nervous system regulation
- Sensorial awareness, interoception
- Attunement and Co-regulation

What is regulation?

Regulation is the ability to bring the body and nervous system back into balance after stress or activation. Somatically, we do this through the body — by slowing the breath, grounding through the feet, softening muscles, or moving gently to release tension and return to a sense of safety. We regulate to feel present, calm, and connected, allowing the body to restore equilibrium so we can respond to life rather than react from overwhelm.

“When regulating, you need to meet your system where it is first, and then slowly walk it towards regulation.”

What is resilience?

Resilience is the body and nervous system's capacity to recover from stress and return to balance. Somatically, we build resilience by gently moving between activation and rest — through breath, grounding, mindful movement, and self-awareness — teaching the body that it can experience intensity and still find safety again. We cultivate resilience to stay adaptable, present, and connected, even when life challenges us.

Thoughts for reflection:

How do I notice I am dysregulated? (How is my behaviour then?)

Warm up in our bodies:

To REGULATE

Solo regulation:

- Slowing down, Proprioception, Interoception
Using images for support, slowing down the nervous system.
- Focusing on the breath, perception of weight, spaciousness in the body, etc.)

What is resilience from the somatic sense

- Some basic self-regulation exercises
I make a breath in in stillness, and on breath out I move.
I make breath in movement and breath out on stillness.
I continue with movement and breathing, just this time I do it in a pair with another.

Task: How can I stay connected with my own breath while I am in connection with another?

Co-Regulation:

Introduction to co-regulation with the exercise:

Continuing from our solo breath exploration, we now bring awareness to the pause — using it as a moment of attunement, where we sense and respond to the movement of our partner. Through this pause, our individual rhythms begin to meet and co-create shared movement.

We are trying to find a continuation between a pause and a body response to the movement of my partner.

Why?

Co-regulation is the process by which two nervous systems help each other return to balance. It's something humans (and all mammals) do naturally — through **voice, facial expression, touch, breath, and presence**.

When you're with someone calm and grounded, your body can begin to mirror that calm. When you're with someone anxious or agitated, you may start to feel that, too. That's co-regulation — the *shared regulation* of emotional and physiological states.

So, in short:

Co-regulation = shared nervous-system safety.

It's the foundation of trust, empathy, and connection.

Why this type of practice: Co-regulation can only happen when both bodies feel **safe enough**.

Safety doesn't mean "perfect calm" — it means there's no sense of threat.

We can *only* co-regulate when our nervous systems believe,

"It's okay to connect right now."

Things that *signal* safety:

- A calm, steady presence
- Warm tone of voice
- Gentle, responsive eye contact
- Soft facial expressions
- Predictable, non-rushed movement

These cues tell the body: "You're not alone. You're safe to relax."

With the practice above, we were also exploring the topic of **attunement**.

Why?

Attunement means **noticing and matching** the other person's state — rhythm, tone, energy — without losing your own centre.

It's like saying with your whole body: "*I feel you. I'm here with you.*"

In movement or touch, this can look like:

- Matching someone's pace or weight before inviting change
- Breathing in sync
- Adjusting contact based on feedback (pressure, balance, temperature, etc.)

Reflecting:

Continue with the sharing in a small group about the session

Supportive questions for reflection:

Body awareness

- What sensations do you notice in your body right now?
- Where do you feel supported or grounded?

- What happens in your breath as you connect with your partner?

Attunement and connection

- How do you sense your partner's presence without words?
- What changes when you pause and listen before moving again?
- How does your movement respond to your partner's rhythm or weight?

Regulation and resilience

- What helps your body settle when you feel activated or uncertain?
- How do you know when your system is coming back into balance?
- What helps you stay connected to yourself while connecting with another?

Reflection and meaning

- What did you learn about giving and receiving support?
- How did the experience of pausing together influence your sense of safety or trust?
In what ways does this practice mirror connection or communication in everyday life?

Offering and receiving support, consent and somatic empowerment

Trainer: Nayeli (NZD)

Why explore the topic of support?:

Exploring the giving and receiving of support somatically is important because it turns an abstract idea into a tangible, felt experience in the body. When we sense support through touch, weight, breath, or movement, we directly experience how trust, boundaries, and connection live in our nervous system — not just in our thoughts. This embodied exploration helps us notice where we hold, resist, or soften; how we balance offering and receiving; and how safety and mutuality emerge through real, physical presence. By engaging the body, we cultivate a deeper, more authentic understanding of support — one that can translate into our relationships, communication, and everyday ways of being with others.

*Practicing self-understanding of support is essential for youth workers because it helps them **recognise their own patterns, limits, and capacities** before offering support to others. By exploring how they give and receive support — physically, emotionally, and somatically — youth workers become more **aware of their boundaries, presence, and attunement skills**. This self-awareness allows them to:*

- Offer support **authentically and sustainably**, without overextending or reacting from stress.
- Model healthy giving and receiving of care for the youth they work with.
- Co-regulate effectively, creating a safe environment where young people can learn, grow, and build resilience.

EXERCISES:

Exercise: Exploring Support and Counterbalance

1. Walking and Hand Connection

- Walk freely in the space.
- When you meet another person, hold hands and establish a **counterbalance** — gently leaning away from each other to feel each other's weight.
- Focus on sensing the partner's presence and maintaining balance together.

2. Introducing a Third Person

- A third participant now enters to **support the person in counterbalance**, helping them find stability.
Observe how the dynamics of support change when more than two people are involved.

3. Mutual Support

- In the final step, both people in counterbalance are **supported simultaneously** by others.
- Notice how shared responsibility and cooperation create stability and safety.

Intention: This exercise lets participants **experience giving and receiving support physically**, cultivating trust, attunement, and mutuality in a tangible, somatic way.

Why this exercise:

- **Walking and holding hands in counterbalance** invites participants to *feel the subtle weight and energy of another person*, developing sensitivity and presence.
- **Introducing a third person to support** expands awareness: support is no longer one-to-one, and participants experience how multiple relationships can create stability and safety.
- **Both people being supported at once** highlights the idea of **mutuality and shared responsibility** — everyone contributes and receives, creating a dynamic of cooperation rather than one-sided help.

Through this progressive structure, participants **physically experience giving and receiving support, trust, and relational balance**, which can deepen self-awareness, empathy, and the capacity to co-regulate with others.

Introduction to the small dance

"The "small dance" in contact improvisation is a foundational movement practice, developed by [Steve Paxton](#) in 1967, that explores the subtle, involuntary movements of the body to remain upright while standing still. It is a practice of "non-doing" that involves suspending intentional movement and observing the small, reflexive adjustments around the joints that prevent falling. This practice is considered the "essence" of contact improvisation by some practitioners, representing the initial physical moment of touch before intentional movement begins.

- **What it is:** A practice of observing and exploring the small, reflexive movements the body makes to maintain balance.
- **What it involves:** Standing still and suspending volitional movement to become aware of the subtle adjustments that keep you upright.

Exercise: Exploring Support Through Movement

After engaging in a small dance together, one person begins moving slowly while the other provides support by offering weight or counterbalance, sensing and responding to the partner's presence. Roles are then exchanged so that each participant experiences both giving and receiving support, noticing the differences in

perspective. In the final stage, both participants offer and receive support simultaneously, creating a shared, balanced exchange. This exercise allows participants to embody the dynamics of giving, receiving, and sharing support, cultivating presence, sensitivity, trust, and relational awareness through movement.

How is offering weight connected to the topic of support?

This exercise is connected to the topic of support because it makes the experience of **giving, receiving, and sharing support tangible and felt in the body**. When one person moves slowly while the other offers weight, participants perceive support through touch, balance, and subtle physical cues, learning to **notice and trust the partner's presence**. Exchanging roles allows each person to explore both **offering and allowing support**, highlighting how it feels to be supported versus to support someone else. In the final stage, where both participants simultaneously give and receive support, the exercise deepens the understanding of **mutuality and shared responsibility**, showing that support is not one-directional but a dynamic, reciprocal process. It cultivates an embodied awareness of **perceiving, receiving, and allowing support**, reinforcing the relational and somatic dimensions of trust, attunement, and co-regulation.

Self reflection:

It is interesting to observe how our bodies and minds respond in these exercises. We can notice what we choose to support and why, reflecting our patterns of care, control, or trust. Paying attention to whether we allow ourselves to give our weight and lean into being out of balance reveals how much we trust the other person to hold and respond to us. Observing whether it is easier to give or receive support, and which feels more comfortable, helps uncover personal tendencies, boundaries, and comfort with vulnerability.

This self-reflection deepens our awareness of how we perceive, offer, and accept support in both movement and relational contexts.

Added Reflective questions for the session:

What is my understanding of offering and receiving support, and how does it connect to what is actually happening in this moment — versus what I assume or expect?

Energiser: Catching the hands of the other

How to do it:

1. Sit or stand comfortably, keeping your **head still and facing forward**.
2. Without moving your head, **look to the right** with just your eyes.
3. Hold that gaze for about **20 seconds**, or until you feel a swallow, sigh, yawn, or a general sense of release (these are signs your vagus nerve has been activated).
4. Return your eyes to center.
5. Then **look to the left** for another **20 seconds**.

You can repeat this 1–3 times.

Why?

The vagus nerve is connected to muscles around the **eyes and inner ear**, and to **neck and facial muscles**. By holding your gaze to one side:

- You engage parts of your **oculomotor and vestibular system**, which are linked with vagal pathways.

- This sends calming signals to your brain, promoting **parasympathetic activation**.

In simpler terms, this tells your body “I’m safe,” which helps reduce anxiety, tension, and even lower heart rate.

After this exercise, we return to the working room and continue with the topic of

CONSENT:

Why explore it?

Consent is deeply connected to **attunement, support, and empowerment**.

Attunement: Consent requires listening and responding to the other person’s signals, which develops sensitivity to their needs, boundaries, and comfort — the essence of attunement.

Support: Offering or receiving support can only be fully safe and effective when both parties have agreed to participate. Consent ensures that support is **welcomed, appropriate, and mutually responsive**.

Empowerment: By honouring consent, participants maintain agency over their own bodies and choices, which fosters **self-confidence and a sense of control**, key aspects of empowerment.

In essence, practising consent in movement or relational exercises ensures that **support is mutual, attuned, and empowering**, creating a safe environment where authentic connection and trust can flourish.

Consent: introduction exercise:

- Walking around and exploring how a **NO** a **YES** or a **MBY** feels in our bodies.
EXCEMPLE: *Would you like to... (dance with me, rub my back, offer me a slap)*
- Having a sharing of what was more comfortable and why.

Introduction to the wheel of consent by Betty Martin (theory)

<https://www.artofconsent.co.uk/wheel-of-consent>

Working in couples and trying out the wheel in their own experience.

Outcome reflection on the topic of Consent:

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Saying “yes” or “no” is central to empowerment because it expresses personal boundaries and choice. By giving consent, you actively decide to engage or be vulnerable on your own terms; by declining, you protect your safety and well-being. This strengthens agency, self-confidence, and mutual respect, allowing connections to emerge from willingness rather than obligation. In somatic or relational practices, being able to say yes or no supports mindful participation, authentic presence, and a sense of control over your own body and choices.

OTHER Ideas for the session:

Consent: introduction

- Walking around and exploring how a **NO** a **YES** or a **MBY** feels in our bodies.
EXCEMPLE: *Would you like to... (dance with me, rub my back, offer me a slap)*
- Having a sharing of what was more comfortable and why.

<https://www.artofconsent.co.uk/wheel-of-consent>

Bringing this into motion:

One person offers a manipulation (a direction, an invitation, push, pull)

You have a choice to

- Follow
- Resist
- Responds or modify
- Modifies

Our ideas and perceptions of support:

- A game that we try to put each other out of balance
- One person moves, and the other tries to put me out of balance

● **Giving weight to each other:**

I modify how much weight I give. From 10% - 100%

What is my internal process in this.

Reflection prompt: "What strategies helped you regain stability? How does this connect to how we manage stress in daily life?"

- Explore: "What happens when the support shifts? How do you find stability together?"

Discussion link: Highlight how resilience is not only individual but relational.

Do I support you?

- One person lying down - The other person needs to lift him up.
Then gradually the other person starts to help him a bit more to be able to rise up.
Observe what is happening inside of you while you do this exercise.
Reflect in pair and share in circle.
- One person is moving in the space and the other is trying to offer support. What were the ways I offered and received support?
What went through my mind.

Point:

- We can be hardly lifted if we do not want to be.
- Ways how we try to lift the others. How do we do that in our lives also.

Point:

- Where is my attention when I offer support? Completely on another person?

Somatic empowerment:

We always have a choice:

- In pairs, explore gentle CI-based contact—shoulder, back, or hand.
- One person leads a movement; the other can **follow, redirect, or pause anytime**.
- Standing in a circle (every time you lay eyes with someone, you cross the room)
- Than people joining you
How can the support be felt from behind?

Walk in pairs in **counterbalance** - the task is to come to the end of the room. How will you do it. There needs to be constant extension between the arms.

What can you learn from this.

Literature:

Social skills that foster resilience (attunement, empathy, communication).
Interpersonal co-regulation (resonance, boundary, support).

Inclusion and group safety (building collective resilience).

Closing and evaluation

Trainer: Naely

15 min to self-reflect upon your journey of 3 days.

- If your learning journey were a landscape, what would it look or feel like?

Market of evaluation and reflection

Each marketplace has a set of Somatic resources cards. The group that arrives first decides to do one or two exercises from the cards. Afterwards, they reflect upon two questions that are on the table.

Each table (there are 3 tables) has 15min.

Table 1:

How do I want to embody this learning in my relationships, my work, my daily rhythm?

What happens in my body when I override my “no” — or when someone honors it?

Table 2:

What forms of support (touch, words, presence, environment) most nourish my nervous system?

How can I offer support to others without losing my own ground or center?

Table 3:

What supports me in acting from choice rather than from reaction?

How does it feel to stand in my truth — posture, breath, tone, presence?