



Strengthening resilience – Building peace from within

Training manual I
“Building peace from the inside out”
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Constructive feedback and remarks on the first edition of this manual are welcome.

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Introduction

Despite having studied in detail how to deescalate a tense situation and being familiar with nonviolent communication, our attempts to settle a conflict may sometimes not turn out as planned. In some cases, the tensions may instead even increase. When looking back, we eventually conclude that we should probably work more on our theoretical and practical skills of conflict transformation. This alone however, might still be insufficient if leaving aside our physical and mental state.

It is common knowledge that our capacity to be compassionate and compromising is higher when we are well-rested and in a good or balanced physical and mental state. But what can we do to (re-)establish balance as well as to strengthen our resilience and hence, improve our well-being?

The Berghof Foundations qualification course “Building peace from the inside out” addresses this question by adopting a holistic approach of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. In consequence, the course combines in three modules peace educational methods with exercises from theatre pedagogy, theatre therapy, self-care and mindfulness. This approach allows, on the one hand, deepening and broadening the theoretical knowledge and practical skills of participants with regard to conflict transformation and peacebuilding. On the other, it allows to foster the participants mental and physical well-being and hence, their capacities on the emotional, cognitive and behavioural level to deal with stressful situations such as conflicts.

The module “Strengthening resilience – Building peace from within” in this manual compiles some of the exercises that address the latter aspect.

Staff members of the Berghof Foundation’s programme Peace Education & Global Learning have tested and evaluated all exercises described during two nine-day qualification courses with Jordanian and Syrian (cash for work) staff members of various international organisations in the refugee camps, Azraq and Zaatari, in Jordan in 2017.

In 2016, first pilot workshops on conflict sensitive refugee assistance for different target groups, inside and outside the camp setting, had been developed and implemented in cooperation with Relief International and Terre des Hommes. These had been informed by the Berghof Foundation’s experiences with a similar format in Germany (see <http://www.berghof-foundation.org/programmes/peace-education-global-learning/completed-projects/conflict-sensitive-refugee-work/>).

All before mentioned activities were part of the project “Civic and Nonviolent Education in Jordan”, which first started in 2013. The project aims at strengthening the values of tolerance, participation and nonviolence within the Jordanian education system and since 2015/2016 also in the field of refugee assistance. In doing so, it focuses on developing and conducting qualification courses and on bringing together (educational) experts from Jordan and Germany to exchange best practices and discuss and develop peace educational curricula and learning materials for schools, universities, and people working in the context of forced migration. Furthermore, it provides a framework for networking with and between relevant Jordanian stakeholders and institutions in these sectors.

1 Qualification course and modules

Conflict sensitivity and refugee assistance

Today, conflict sensitivity is a renowned and established concept in the fields of education, development cooperation, and journalism. The concept is based on the assumption that every human action, well-intended or not, is a form of intervention in a certain context and, thus, interacts with it. In consequence, no action can be understood as neutral as it contains both; the potential to cause or intensify conflicts, but also the potential to promote and strengthen peace.

Up to now, the concept has been mainly applied in professional contexts in former and current regions of crisis and conflict. Berghof Foundation, however, perceives it as extremely valuable to apply it specifically to the field of professional and voluntary refugee assistance, where well-intended actions are often followed by misperceptions and frustrations that may culminate in the use of violence, instead of the envisioned outcome.

Beyond that conflict sensitivity in this context means, for instance, encouraging the perception of conflict as an opportunity for change and development, and the reflection of personal attitudes and conflict behaviour, including underlying norms and values. Moreover, it comprises raising the awareness for personal needs, wishes and goals but also personal limits. Lastly, respecting the principles of trauma sensitivity, a central approach for strengthening constructive interpersonal interaction (see GIZ 2017) is also an indispensable aspect of conflict sensitivity.

All these aspects constitute an integral part of the qualification course's approach, and hence, of the manual at hand. While the qualification course itself comprises three modules, one on peace education, one on resilience and one on interactive theatre, this manual focuses on the module on strengthening resilience only.

Creating spaces for joint learning: Within the educational centres of Relief International, the facilitators from Berghof Foundation create a safe space for joint learning on peacebuilding and conflict transformation.



Strengthening resilience to build peace

For a person, to be able to deal with stress, work productively and engage in constructive relationships, a positive mental state, understood as mental health is indispensable (see GIZ 2017). The same holds true for a persons' ability to deal with conflicts in a constructive and nonviolent way, no matter whether they are inner conflicts or situated in the person's surrounding.

When promoting an individual's or a group's capacities for managing conflicts and building peace, it is, hence, as relevant to support their resources and resilience as it is to provide them with access to theoretical and practical knowledge.

Activities that strengthen a person's or a group's resilience, their mental well-being as well as their capacities on the emotional, cognitive and behavioural level, without referring to medical or therapeutically models, are summarised under the umbrella term "psychosocial support". These activities are manifold, and encompass, among others, methods from self-care and mindfulness as suggested in this manual. All mental health care and psychosocial support (MHPSS) activities act on four interconnected levels, namely (1) basic services, support and security, (2) measures strengthening family and community support as well as resources, (3) social and emotional support for specific target groups, and (4) specialised services, clinical intervention, which can be divided into community focused interventions (level 1–2) and focuses support (person-to-person) (level 3–4) (see GIZ 2017, IASC 2015).

Due to its aims to contribute to both developing nonviolent structures and dynamics within individuals, families and groups as well as to ameliorating social relations between opposing groups, the peace educational qualification course can be allocated to level 2. It furthermore qualifies as non-formal education or livelihood activity (see GIZ 2017).

Strengthening resilience: Recreational activities, such as playing football in the streets are a valuable resource, not only for children and youth. They contribute to releasing stress and (re-)gaining positive energy.



2 How to use this manual

This chapter offers some guidance for facilitators to put the module “Strengthening resilience – Building peace from within” into practice.

The module begins by introducing a concept of identity, which constitutes the foundation of all subsequent practical exercises. Therefore, the practical exercises are more or less structured along its different aspects, namely the self, the body, the mind, the emotions and the roles. All subchapters follow the same structure whenever applicable, being:

- ≡ aims,
- ≡ material,
- ≡ advices for facilitators,
- ≡ instructions for implementation
including suggestions for preparing the room, and samples for introducing, reflecting and/or evaluating the exercise, and
- ≡ background information, which is structured through questions.

Formulated in direct speech, the introduction of the exercises can be directly read out by facilitators to explain the tasks to participants. This might be particularly helpful when leading them for the first times. Over time, however, it is advisable that facilitators put the explanations into their own words to increase authenticity. Furthermore, it is recommended to have prior experience in facilitating exercises of self-care and mindfulness.

Personal resources: What are our personal resources?

How can we best activate and use them to deal with inner conflicts? And how can we use them to build peace?



3 Important remarks for facilitators

Depending on the context and the target group we, as facilitators, need to be prepared that some participants might have made traumatic experiences, for instance because they were exposed to violence or war. While the exercises of this module have, on the one hand, the potential to stabilise someone and strengthen their resilience, they may, on the other, trigger feelings and images related to those experiences, so called flash backs. This is in turn nothing to be afraid of, but something we should simply take into consideration when guiding the exercises.

From a trauma sensitive perspective, facilitators should ...

encourage an atmosphere of self-care and trust that allows participants to feel comfortable to decide based on self-assessment whether they want to participate in a particular exercise. Emphasise when explaining the exercises that participation is not mandatory.

explain the exercise before actually guiding it. This allows for participants to develop a concrete idea about what will happen and enables them to decide for themselves whether to participate or not. Usually, they know best what is good for them.

reiterate that closing the eyes during a mindfulness exercise or meditation is absolutely voluntary and not needed for the method to work.

suggest keeping one part of the body or a muscle contracted throughout the exercise (e.g. clenching a fist); just like an anchor grounded in real life that prevents the feeling of losing control.

refrain from creating an atmosphere, for example through candles, dimmed light, and speaking in a gentle voice, which deepens the exercises more than necessary. Very deep relaxation may in some cases provoke the feeling of losing control. In general, it is not recommended to use candles.

speak with a calm, clear and rather loud voice, instead of a soft, gentle and meditative voice.

guide exercises only sitting or standing with the feet grounded on the floor, instead of lying down to prevent going into deep relaxation.

completely refrain from breathing technics, or doing exercises that strongly focus on breath, if someone is known for having intense fear or panic attacks.

consider working in small groups or even bilateral to have the possibility to go into dialogue if traumatic experiences come up.

be fully present and with the group to sense any developments in the emotional or mental state of participants.

4 Module. Strengthening resilience – Building peace from within

The central focus of this module lays on strengthening resilience and well-being of individuals and groups through various exercises derived, among others, from the fields of self-care and mindfulness. Resilience and well-being can be seen as constituting a human beings ultimate source for building peace and dealing with conflicts as well as for all related activities. The title of the qualification course “Building peace from the inside out” reflects this approach and understanding. Most exercises and techniques that have been applied in the qualification course and that are elaborated in this module have been developed by Didier (2003) and Didier and Sanchez (2008) and rely on the notion of identity.

4.1 Concept of identity

Aims

- ≡ Participants understand how a person’s identity influences their capacities for conflict transformation and peacebuilding.
- ≡ Participants become familiar with a concept of identity and learn to distinguish one’s roles from one’s authentic expression through body, mind, and emotions.

Material

- ≡ Flipchart and flipchart paper
- ≡ Moderation cards
- ≡ Markers or crayons
- ≡ Tape

Advice for facilitators

Identity itself is a rather complex topic. Therefore, make sure that you yourself, as facilitator, understood it well.

Furthermore, keep the session focused on why identity is relevant with regard to conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Break down complexity by providing examples from everyday life of the people you are working with (children, youth, adults, professionals, elderly people, etc.). Drawings or graphics might also help participants to better understand the concept.

Instructions for implementation

Prepare room and material:

Set up a circle of chairs and a flipchart with markers of different colours. You may draw the graphic on identity (see G1 page 8) either before the session or when explaining it.

Introduce the concept of identity. Begin by asking participants:

“What is identity?”

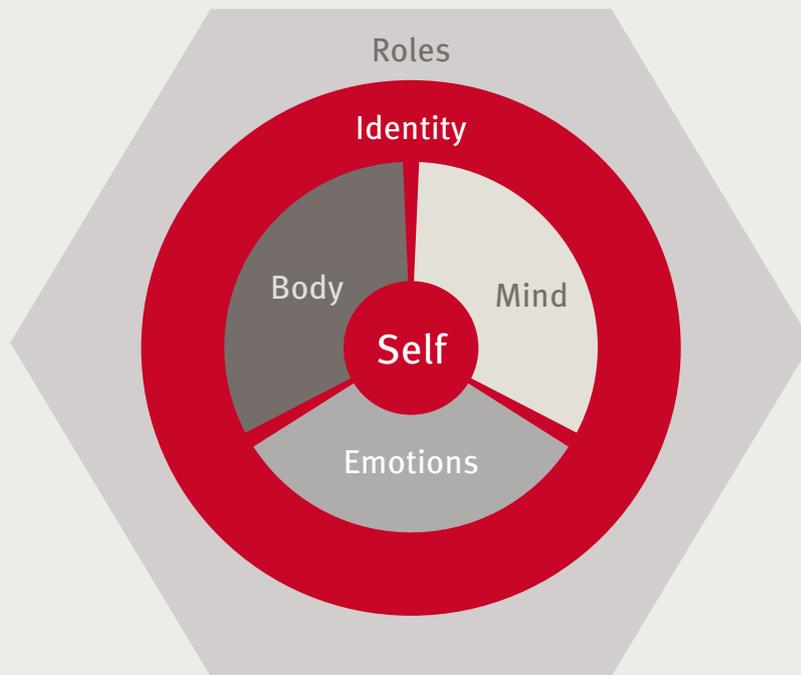
“What does it mean to you?”

“What constitutes your identity?”

Collect their answers on moderation cards and cluster them, for instance on a wall.

Then provide more in-depth explanations by referring to the graphic (G1) and the respective explanations below:

In general, identity can be understood as the expression of the self through our roles, and through body, mind and emotions. These important notions of identity can be visualised through a wheel (see G1). We can use it to better understand who we are and what might put us out of balance (see Kostić and Petrov-Jelenković, 2015).



G1: Wheel of identity. Source: own graphic after Kostić and Petrov-Jelenković (2015).

Furthermore, the graphic is beneficial for understanding the reasons for speaking about identity in connection with conflict transformation and peacebuilding (for more details see “Background”, p. 9f.).

- ≡ **Roles:** When we interact with each other we do this through different roles. Depending on the situation or the characteristics and type of a relationship we may take on various roles or we are ascribed roles by others. Just like hats that we put on depending on whether it is cold (e.g. beanie) or rainy (e.g. waterproof hat) or sunny (e.g. sun hat). “Roles” are the outmost layer of this “identity wheel” as they symbolise our exchange with others, our behaviour and social influences, as well as the recognition we receive from others.
- ≡ **Self:** An aspect that all the roles we may take on have in common is our authentic self, the most intimate feeling of who we truly are. It is at the origin of our purpose or mission in life and our place in society. The “self” constitutes the axis of the wheel.
- ≡ **Body, Mind, Emotions:** Our “self” expresses, positively and negatively, through body, mind and emotions. However, it is important to understand that we are not only our body, neither our mind, nor our emotions, but the synergy between the three of them. Body, mind and emotions are interconnected. Meaning, if we feel pain somewhere in our body this affects our emotions and might make us, for example sad, whereas our mind might for example begin circling around the causes for that pain. Therefore, the three notions revolve around the axis.

Once questions of understanding are clarified, close by asking the participants:

Why do you think it is relevant to talk about identity when actually doing a course on conflict transformation and peacebuilding? (see “Background”, p. 10)

Background

What is the difference between emotions and feelings?

Emotions and feelings are both sensations experienced by human beings, even though both words are often used interchangeably in daily language; they are actually not the same thing from a psychological or neuroscience perspective. On the one hand, feelings are temporary as they are triggered by external stimuli reacting with one or several of our five senses. Thus, they subside once the stimulus ends or is no longer present. They can include physical sensations as well as mental states. Emotions, on the other hand are produced by our mind and are thus, rather internalised. Due to that internalisation, which could be described as “being seated in the mind” emotions will stay with us for years (see Damasio 2004).

What does identity mean?

Most dictionary definitions fail to capture the meaning of the term identity as it is currently used, as they often reflect older understandings. Despite an increased and broad-ranging (research) interest, the concept of identity remains still something of an enigma, and to give an adequate and short definition that reflects its present meaning is rather challenging. Interestingly, everyone knows how to use the word properly in everyday life (see Fearon 1999).

Based on a review of meanings and definitions of the term, Fearon argues that nowadays the term has a double sense, personal and social. On the one hand, it is distinguishing characteristics that a person is either proud of or perceives as unchangeable but social consequentially. On the other hand, it refers to a social category, meaning a group of persons marked by a label and defined and distinguished by (alleged) characteristics or attributes and membership rules (see Fearon 1999).

According to Jenkins identity can only be understood as a process. While we are able to be, become or live our identity, we cannot possess it. Throughout the literature, this process is linked with the concepts of person and self. Whereas the person captures the public appearance of a human being towards the outside world, the self is linked to its private side and authenticity (see Jenkins 2004, Horowitz 2014).

Simply put, our identity is our capacity to exist as an authentic entity within a community that we are part of and that thus, allows for identifying and comparing similarities and differences between persons and things.



Identity – a complex term with various understandings: A graph helps to illustrate the different components of the concept of identity that is applied in the qualification course.

Why speaking about identity when talking about building peace and transforming conflicts?

There are many reasons for why it is relevant to speak about identity in connection with the topics of conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

First of all, when assessing the public and research discourse, different types of identity, such as national identity, ethnic identity, religious identity or gender identity are often mentioned as, or in relation to causes of (violent) conflict (see Fearon 1999). Moreover, the notion of identity seems crucial with regard to the subjects of integration or inclusion, which in turn are closely intertwined with the field of (forced) migration (see Lödén 2010).

Second, when a person is, for instance, asked by conflicting parties to mediate between them, the person takes on the role of a mediator. In that particular situation “being a mediator” becomes simply another role through which the identity of the person, and thereby the self of the person expresses.

Third, being a mediator requires particular knowledge, skills and abilities. Among the later are, for example, calmness, patience, presence and (emotional) stability. While these capacities are for most human beings easy to achieve when they feel well and balanced, it becomes quite challenging to hold them up when feeling stressed and imbalanced. Thus, for a mediator to do their job well it is helpful to take care of their inside, namely their well-being and on strengthening their resilience with regard to body, mind, and emotions, before taking action to constructively work on the conflict situation at the outside.

The same applies more or less to the conflicting parties themselves, too. But also to all those human beings who are engaged in building a peaceful living environment, who often tend to have challenges recognising and respecting their personal boundaries and acknowledging when it is time for a recreational break.

In sum, one could say, the better we feel on the inside, the better we can do what we like and want or what we are asked to do on the outside, including dealing with challenges or conflict and contributing to building peace.

Identity, conflict and peace: Why is the notion of identity relevant with regard to peacebuilding and conflict transformation? In small groups participants exchange and discuss their diverse ideas and thoughts.



4.2 Strengthening identity

The following exercises build up on the introduction of the above-mentioned concept of identity and focus on the notions of body, mind and emotions. The exercises are divided into three subchapters: (1) awareness of the body (see p. 11), (2) awareness of the mind (see p. 14), and (3) awareness of emotions (see p. 17). Through them participants learn, by focusing on body, mind, and emotions, how to strengthen their resilience and thereby, their capacity to constructively deal with conflicts and build peace within themselves as well as in their surroundings.

Even though a prior introduction of the concept of identity is advisable for the better understanding of the exercises, it is not a must and all exercises can also be done without this.

4.2.1 Awareness of the body

Aims

- ≡ Participants learn to observe their bodies and recognise positive and negative states with regard to their body.
- ≡ Participants practice methods of stress release focusing on the level of their body and elevate the feeling of inner stability, inner peace and well-being.

Material

- ≡ Flipchart and flipchart paper
- ≡ Markers or crayons

Instructions for implementation

Prepare the room and material for the exercises:

Put the chairs in a circle and prepare the flipchart. The flipchart is only needed for the introduction of the states of the body. Make sure that while doing the exercises the room is as calm as possible and that all phones are silent or in flight mode.

Begin preparing the group for the exercises on “awareness of the body” by introducing the states of the body:

“We can identify and distinguish different reactions in our body. We call these reactions also states. Some rather correspond to positive states, whereas others rather relate to negative states. It is, however, important to understand that in this context “positive” and “negative” are not considered a rating in the sense of dichotomous categories, such as right vs. wrong, or good vs. bad. They should rather be seen as two electric poles, plus and minus, that create a field of tension between them. This tension is necessary for creating a balance or an equilibrium between the different states of the body.”

Ask participants for their suggestions and collect them on a flip chart:

Possible suggestions could be, for example:

- (+) **positive:** relaxed, comfortable, light, agile, flexible, open, grounded;
- (-) **negative:** stressed, contracted, uncomfortable, heavy, numb, rigid, too hot or too cold.

Conscious breathing

Advice for facilitators

As you facilitate the method, please, keep the “important remarks for facilitators” (see p. 6) in mind.

Instructions for implementation

Explain the exercise and then do it together with the group:

“When we feel stressed, concentrating on our breath and allowing it to become deeper can help us to calm down. We deepen our breath by contracting the diaphragm. When air enters the lungs, our chest and/or our belly expand, when exhaling our chest and/or our belly contract. If your stress level is very high, begin with a long inhalation. Feel the belly expanding and exhale as slowly as possible. Once calmer move on:

1. Inhale slowly while counting from 1 to 7 with your eyeballs rising from the floor towards the ceiling.
2. Stop your breath for a short moment and relax.
3. Exhale while counting in the same rhythm from 1 to 7 with your eyes looking straight towards the horizon.
4. Stop your breath for a short moment and relax.
5. Repeat steps 1–4 for a few minutes until you feel more relaxed or better in your body.”

Slowing down

Advice for facilitators

Please, keep the “important remarks for facilitators” (see p. 6) in mind.

The four steps introduced in this exercise, namely, (1) become aware, (2) accept, (3) decide, and (4) act, are also helpful when facing challenges or stress on the level of mind (see “awareness of the mind”, p. 14) or emotions (see “awareness of emotions”, p. 17). Simply replace “state of body” by “state of mind / thoughts” or “emotions” and proceed the same way.

Instructions for implementation

Introduce the exercise and the four steps and then guide the group through it:

“When we notice that our legs shake, our fingers tap, our arms move too much, or our eyelid flaps, we can go through the following four steps to slow down the speed and reduce the movement, step by step, until our body is comfortably calm. Your eyes can be open or closed.”

1. **We become aware:** We direct all our attention towards the state of the body (as a whole or just a specific part) and simply notice all that is there.
2. **We accept:** We try neither to avoid the feeling, nor to escape or change it.
3. **We decide:** Once we accepted that this specific state is currently there, we take the decision to not identify with it or limit ourselves to it. We are a lot more than this one state of our body.
4. **We act:** We try to consciously move beyond the perceived negative state or limit, while respecting our personal rhythm and capacity.

“Fake it ‘till you make it”

Instructions for implementation

Explain the exercise and give some time for the group to try it out themselves:

“Another possibility to deal with a negative state is to intentionally imitate a body posture that corresponds to a positive state. If I, for example, realise that my foot is nervously tapping on the floor while my whole shoulder girdle is very stiff and contracted, I can actively bring down my shoulders, open my chest, and place my feet comfortably on the ground in a posture that feels open and relaxed to me. Then I move slowly through the aforementioned four basic steps, namely (1) become aware, (2) accept, (3) decide, and (4) act, until the sensations in my body change. Sometimes this might take a while. So try to be patient with yourselves.”

Close each of these three exercises with a brief round of reflection in the group, by asking for example:

“How was it for you?”

“How did you feel?”

“What changes could you sense in your body?”

“What was easy or challenging for you?”

Feeling well-grounded: Our feet are our ultimate means of transportation but also our foundation. They are the best tools for getting grounded and centered after spending time in the realm of thought. Simply by feeling the floor underneath us.



4.2.2 Awareness of the mind

Aims

- Participants learn to observe their flows of thought and recognise positive and negative states with regard to their mind.
- Participants practice methods of stress release on a mental level and elevate their feeling of inner stability, inner peace and well-being.

Material

- Flipchart and flipchart paper
- Markers or crayons

Instructions for implementation

Prepare the room and material for the exercise:

Put the chairs in a circle and prepare the flipchart. The flipchart is only needed for the introduction of the states of the mind. Make sure that while doing the exercises the room is as calm as possible and that all phones are silent or in flight mode.

Begin by introducing the states of the mind:

“Similar to the states of our body we can identify and distinguish different states of mind that correspond to positive or negative mindsets.”

Ask participants for their suggestions and collect them on a flip chart:

Possible suggestions could be, for example:

- (+) **positive:** inspiring, constructive, and uplifting thoughts, open-mindedness, freedom to choose between our thoughts;
- (-) **negative:** rigid or destructive thoughts, caught in thoughts attached to the past, the future or to an image, unable to focus thoughts to the present moment.

Thoughts like clouds: Through different exercises participants experience observing their thoughts as they pop up. They learn to let them pass by; just like clouds floating across the sky. One after the other.



Intentional questioning

Advice for facilitators

When conflict parties are very attached to their points of view and they perceive them as the ultimate truth, this exercise might be an interesting way to broaden their perception and help in changing perspective.

Instructions for implementation

Explain the exercise and guide the group through it:

“Sometimes our minds are very attached to a thought, an image, a situation or a point of view. In such moments it is challenging to concentrate or focus on anything else. To stop our mind from constantly circling around that one thought we can:

- ≡ First, take that dominant thought and find three reasons that explain why it is true – e.g. I am a bad cook:
 1. Some people do not like the meat dish I prepared,
 2. I sometimes don't like what I cook myself, especially when I am in a bad mood.
 3. The last time when people came over for dinner, I oversalted the food.
- ≡ Second, we take the thought that is exactly the opposite from the first one and find three reasons that explain why it is true, too – e.g. I am a good cook:
 1. I cook with love and passion.
 2. Cooking makes me happy.
 3. My friends XY and YX really enjoy the vegetarian dishes I prepare.
- ≡ Third, we become aware that opposite points of view can exist within us and our minds at the same time, without necessarily being contradictory.”

Close with a brief round of reflection in the group, by asking for example:

“How was it for you?”

“How did you feel?”

“What changes could you sense in your mind and body?”

“What was easy or challenging for you?”

“Do you see this method being helpful in daily life – if yes/no, why?”

Imagining a basket

Advice for facilitators

Given the focus of the exercise it is a great tool for the prevention or de-escalation of conflicts emerging in communication processes. Thus, it complements, for example, the peace educational learning unit on Nonviolent Communication (forthcoming) very well.

Instructions for implementation

Prepare the room:

Move chairs and tables to the side to create some empty space for participants to work standing and in pairs.

Begin by explaining the exercise while two participants (person A and person B) demonstrate what you explain:

“Could two people [person A and person B] please come to me to help me explain the exercise? I guess we are all familiar with situations similar to the following scenario: One of you represents an employer, the other an employee. One day the employee [person A] is welcomed by their employer [person B] shouting at them when they first arrive at the office in the morning: ‘You are always late. You never call in to inform



Communication and emotions: In an exercise participants imagine that everything someone says goes into a basket between them instead of taking it personally. Whatever someone expresses, they are expressing themselves.

me about your delay. You are simply unreliable. I am so done with this.’ What usually happens is that as employee we either, accept all the accusations, and maybe apologise, or we react upon it and shout back referring to similarly generalising accusations, which can lead to an escalation of the situation.

Now, let us imagine a big basket between the employee [person A] and the employer [person B]. **[Note for facilitators:** Instead of working with the image of a basket, person A and B can actually visualise it, for example, by holding up their arms in front of their belly in the shape of a basket or by placing a sheet of paper on the floor, which symbolises the basket.] Everything that each one of them says goes into the basket. This creates a little break for reflection. Both are now free to have a closer look at what has been said by the other. As they pause, the employee [person A] can assess whether they are really responsible for all they had been accused of and decide on an adequate reaction. The employer [person B], in contrast, can evaluate whether the outbreak is actually related to the behaviour of the employee or rather caused by the employer’s personal issues, such as negative emotions (e.g. stress) or unfulfilled needs (e.g. lack of recognition).

To sum up, this short reflection process allows them to determine whether they are actually (maybe only partially) responsible for what they had been accused of or, if they are simply the other’s scapegoat or possibility for a general stress relief. Looking beyond the accusation opens up the possibility to interrupt possible escalatory dynamics and to jointly search for the real causes beyond what became visible or had been said.”

Then the group splits into pairs of two for two rounds of the exercise:

Each couple decides on a constellation of persons and slips into the respective roles. In a first round they explore the situation without basket, in a second with basket.

Once completed, gather the group for an exchange of experiences:

“How was it for you? Did you notice any differences between the two rounds?”

“Can you think of any personal conversation in the past where such a basket would have been helpful in making you feel better or even preventing escalation? If yes, describe the situation, please.”

4.2.3 Awareness of emotions

Aim

- ≡ Participants learn to observe their emotions and recognise positive and negative states with regard to their emotions.
- ≡ Participants practice methods of stress release on an emotional level and elevate their feeling of inner stability, inner peace and well-being.

Material

- ≡ Flipchart and flipchart paper
- ≡ Markers or crayons

Instructions for implementation

Prepare the room and material for the exercise:

Put the chairs in a circle and prepare the flipchart. The flipchart is only needed for the introduction of the states of emotions. Make sure that while doing the exercises the room is as calm as possible and that all phones are silent or in flight mode.

Begin by introducing the emotional states:

“Similar to body and mind, we can also distinguish different emotions that correspond to positive or negative emotional states. Emotions can be positive in a sense that they induce inner peace, create emotional balance and stability, or energise and enhance health. They can be negative, in a sense that, if ongoing, they may cause a loss of energy, and damage the overall physical and psychological health. It is, however, essential to understand that in this context “positive” and “negative” are not considered a rating in the sense of dichotomous categories, such as good vs. bad.”

Ask participants for their suggestions and collect them on a flip chart:

Possible suggestions could be, for example:

- (+) **positive:** determination, optimism, courage, openness to exchange, respect, tolerance, love, serenity;
- (-) **negative:** powerlessness or aggression, sadness or ecstasy, cowardice or cockiness, irresponsibility or over-responsibility, criticism (self/others), hate, vanity.

Explain the exercise:

“Sit comfortably. Take a few deep breaths. Direct your awareness towards your emotions. What feelings are there right now? Decide on one that you would like to work on at this moment by following the four basic steps, namely (1) become aware, (2) accept, (3) decide, and (4) act (see p. 12). Following the steps allows for transforming negative emotions and energising yourself. Allow yourself to feel and express all your emotions in your own authentic way; not like anyone else believes you should feel or express them.”

Close the exercise with a brief round of reflection in the group by asking, for example:

- “How was it for you to work on a specific feeling?”
- “What changes could you sense?”
- “What was easy or challenging for you?”

Background

What is self-awareness?

Self-awareness is the capacity of human beings to observe and examine their personal feelings and thoughts, also called introspection (see Merriam-Webster). This capacity of becoming conscious about oneself develops gradually and in stages from infancy onwards (see Rochat 2003). “Being self-aware” means to direct attention to one’s own emotional state, personal boundaries and limitations, but also to abilities and potentials.

What is self-care?

While there is no universally accepted definition of what self-care is, it is often described as actions undertaken to improve one’s sense of well-being and to obtain positive life outcomes. As such, it is a broad concept encompassing, on the one hand, the ability of individuals or groups to promote and maintain health, and to prevent or cope with illness. On the other hand, it incorporates a person’s ability and strength to minimise conditions that limit them in their life while focusing on things that make them fulfilled and happy (see BelSalameh 2016).

Richards, Campenni and Muse-Burke identified the following four components or levels of self-care, with the objective to thereby, promote self-awareness:

1. physical (e.g. movements, exercises, breath, sense),
2. psychological and emotional (e.g. counseling, reflection of emotional state and state of mind),
3. spiritual (e.g. volunteering, religious practices, meditation), and
4. support (e.g. relationships and interactions among friends, family, staff members) (see Richards, Campenni and Muse-Burke 2010).

What is well-being?

The term well-being is closely related to mental health, yet even broader in scope. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community” (WHO 2014). Hence, (psychosocial) well-being refers to a positive physical and mental state that encourages personal growth, which in turn enables the individual to relate constructively with other people. Well-being is understood as a lifelong dynamic process (see GIZ 2017).

A look into a mirror: “Being self-aware” means to direct our attention towards our inside – our emotional state, our boundaries and our potentials; as if we take an appreciating look into a mirror to see and acknowledge all that is there.



4.3 Relieving stress

Stress has the potential to both cause conflicts and contribute to their escalation and, thus, often undermines constructive efforts of de-escalation. Therefore, relieving stress and restoring balance in body, mind and emotions is helpful, if not crucial for conflicts to unfold their positive potential as drivers for change as well as for our peace of mind.

The chapter begins by outlining variations of a simple yet efficient physical exercise for relieving stress and closes with a guided meditation.

Aims

- ≡ Participants learn methods to efficiently release the accumulated physical, cognitive and emotional stress as well as stress in their surroundings.
- ≡ Participants experience the simultaneous mobilisation of the three key aspects of identity through imagination (mind), connection to feelings (emotions) and breath, movement and a sound (body).

Material

No material needed.

Advice for facilitators

Practice with the group or silently observe participants while they practice. Only provide support when asked or when the body posture needs adjustment. Emphasise that participants remain flexible in their knees and maintain a straight back and refrain from bending forward when releasing the negative energies towards the ground.

Once a group is familiar with the exercise “su”, this is a great method for energising after lunch break, dispersing heavy atmosphere or stress in the group, or simply closing a workshop day.

Instructions for implementation

Prepare the room:

Remove all chairs and tables to create a big empty space that allows all participants to spread their arms in all directions and move them without touching.

4.3.1 Variations of “su”

Instructions for implementation

Explain the starting position of both exercises and guide participants into it:

“Find a space in the room. Stand straight, your feet shoulder-width apart. Stack your ankles, knees, hips and pelvis and relax your shoulders. Feel your feet on the ground and root yourself concentrating on pouring all your body weight into your feet. Just like a tree spreads its roots deep down towards the centre of the earth. ... Expand this feeling of being rooted upwards (through legs, hips, belly, chest, neck, head), as if following the trunk. ... Then, allow it to expand beyond your head, just like a tree reaches with its crown towards the sky in the search for sunlight. ... Open your arms horizontally on the level of your shoulders as if you would like to hug the horizon. Inhale deeply through your nose. Exhale through your mouth.”

Swinging “su”

Demonstrate and then facilitate the exercise:

“Slightly bend your knees. Keep your back straight. Inhale as you turn towards your right and lift your arms towards the ceiling. Arms and hands are straight and your gaze is directed at your fingertips. Then, as you turn back to the middle (starting position), descend your hands with determination towards the ground



Becoming facilitators: Participants move beyond simply following the guidance of facilitators as they learn to facilitate the various exercises, such as “su” themselves.

in front of you while making the sound “su”. When making the sound “su” try to release all tension and visualise that you direct it straight to the core of the earth. Now, move like a swing towards your left and lift your arms to repeat the movement eight times; four times to the right; four times to the left.”

Specific “su”

Demonstrate and then facilitate the variation of the exercise:

“Slightly bend your knees. Keep your back straight. Bring both your arms up on the level of your chest so that you have more or less a 90° angle between the right and the left arm and that you can still see your hands from the corner of your eye. Slightly bend your elbow. Move your hands back and forth as if you are collecting all the stressful feelings, and negative emotions and mindsets to make a compact heavy dark ball out of them. Once the feeling of a dark ball out of all that negativity becomes concrete between your hands, inhale and lift this “ball” above your head while looking at it consciously. Now, with the determination to release all tensions, throw the “ball” towards the core of the earth while making the sound “su”. Make sure to keep your back straight and upright while throwing. Repeat the process of collecting, forming a “ball” and releasing with “su” two more times.”

Initiate a brief round of reflection at the end of each round of “su”:

“How was it for you?”

“What did you notice?”

“Do you feel different then before (e.g. with regard to mind, feelings and emotions, or your body); if yes, please describe?”

“Do you perceive any changes in the atmosphere in the room; if yes, please elaborate?”

4.3.2 Seven body centres

Aims

- ≡ Participants learn how to balance body, mind and emotions through mindfulness practices.
- ≡ Participants strengthen their resilience and raise their energy level.

Material

- ≡ Flipchart and flipchart paper
- ≡ Markers or crayons

Advice for the facilitators

Before guiding the exercise, it is advisable to remind participants of the basics of self-care and mindfulness (see “Background” p. 18, 23f.) and to refrain from judgment of upcoming feelings or experiences throughout the process of the practice.

Instructions for implementation

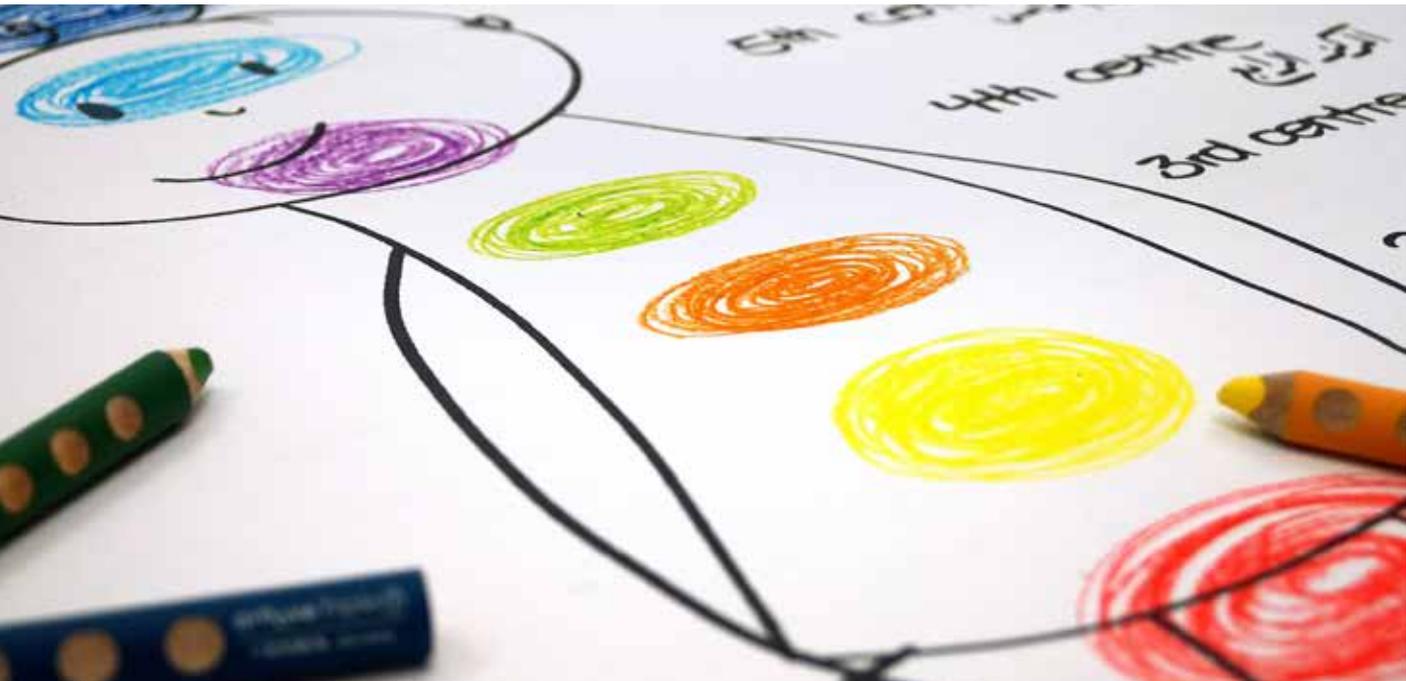
Prepare the room:

Set up chairs in a circle and prepare the flipchart by drawing G2. The flipchart is only needed to introduce the body centres. During the exercise the room should be quiet and peaceful. Remind participants to put their phones in flight mode or silent.

Introduce the concept of body regions or centres and corresponding, colours and emotions:

body centres	colours	bodyparts	qualities
1 st centre	red	legs and hips	determination, power, action
2 nd centre	yellow	belly	joy, creativity, sincerity
3 rd centre	orange	stomach	courage, motivation, clarity
4 th centre	green	chest	communication, exchange, responsibility
5 th centre	violet	throat and mouth	prayer, expression, intimacy
6 th centre	blue	head	tolerance, love, acceptance
7 th centre	indigo	above the head	unity, inspiration, peace

G2: Body centres. Source: Own table after Didler (2003)



Rising of colours: In one of the meditations, participants visualise the seven body centres as colours and attribute different qualities to them, like determination, joy or courage.

Rising of colours

Prepare the group for the meditation exercise:

“Sit comfortably with a straight back on your chair. Place your feet flat on the floor, and the hands relaxed on your legs. If you want you can close your eyes. You can also keep some tension in one part of your body, such as the right foot. Begin now to observe your breath: inhale, pause briefly, and exhale. Simply observe. When thoughts come up – try to let them pass just like clouds driven by the wind.”

Guide the meditation with a calm but clear and loud voice. Pause briefly between the sentences to allow participants to visualise:

“Feel your feet on the ground. Root yourself by letting all the weight of your body drop into your feet. As if you have roots reaching deep towards the centre of the earth. Let this feeling of being connected with the earth travel up from your feet to your legs and hips. Observe the sensations and movements in these body parts, without judging or wanting to change them. Just observe and breathe into this part of your body that is the first centre. ... Inhale and activate a positive sensation. Allow it to grow. ... With the exhalation set free all the tension that may come up. ... Begin to visualise the colour of the first centre, red. A deep warm red; like red field poppy [Note for facilitators: adapt examples to context and provide more examples, e.g. pomegranate]. ... Observe your feelings. Red. Determination, power, action. ... Relax and feel into these qualities. Inhale deeply and let the red colour expand and move up towards your belly, the second centre. Exhale and release all the tensions there. ... Imagine a bright yellow, like a ripe lemon. ...”

Continue moving through the centres, and corresponding colours and qualities as indicated in the table (see G2, p.21).

Close the meditation by guiding the participants’ awareness gently and slowly back to the room:

Once everyone is fully present with open eyes, remain briefly in silence and then open the floor for participants to share their experiences and impressions.



Correct posture is key: A facilitator shows the correct positioning and emphasises the relevance of keeping the back straight and upright when releasing the “ball of negative energies” in the exercise “su”.

Background

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a technique based on paying attention to the present moment in an accepting, compassionate and nonjudgmental manner. Being mindful is a basic, innate human ability (see Davis and Hayes 2011). Yet, we often veer away from the issue at hand, as our thoughts wander off and we lose touch with our body. This is also a normal process given that no human being can actually stop their mind from producing thoughts; introspection techniques of mindfulness offer, however, a way to direct focus and awareness and to not be caught by endless chains of thoughts (see Thrive Global 2017).

As research proves, a regular practice of mindfulness contributes to the physical and psychological health by, for example reducing restlessness and stress, improving the ability to concentrate or alleviating fear and panic (see Davis and Hayes 2011; Brown and Ryan 2003; Kabat-Zinn 1982). The techniques contributing to the cultivation of mindfulness, particularly seated, standing, walking or moving meditation can be learned and done by every human being. Their focus lies on the observation of body, sensations and feelings, mind and consciousness and objects of thought and attention (see Thich Nath Hanh 1990).

In recent decades mindfulness has emerged as a popular practice, which is taught to a broad range of people, for example, executives and employees in companies, athletes, teachers, parents and children at home or in school.

From a historic perspective, mindfulness has its origin mainly in the Buddhist teachings and meditation practice. Yet some contemplative practices familiar to other religious denominations may take a similar track. Since the 1960's the interest in the possibilities of incorporating techniques of mindfulness in the field of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis led to raise its popularity in the so called West. This was followed by an increasing amount of research on the techniques beneficial effects on psychological and physical health (see Sharf 2014).

What is meditation?

The word meditation comes from Latin “meditation”, contemplate, reflect, ponder, muse, and ancient Greek “medomai”, think, contemplate, ponder, muse. Meditation techniques are manifold. A common way bringing some clarity and order into that diversity is by differentiating two categories: (1) physically passive or contemplative meditation, such as sitting still in silence, and (2) physically active meditation, such as mindful movement or loud recitations. Both usually aim at a reaching a state of consciousness that combines clear and considerable awareness with deep relaxation. In this sense, most build on the concept of mindfulness.

Regular meditation practice is known for having a positive effect on physical (e.g. lower blood pressure, stress reduction) and psychological health (e.g. reduced mood swings, improved emotion regulation, increased life satisfaction) (see Goyal et al. 2015, Keng et al. 2011). Furthermore, it may lead to an increase in mental capacities, elevated openness to communicate and cooperate, and enhanced personal integrity, and self-awareness.

As a historically primarily spiritual practice meditation is often integrated into various ethical, religious and psychological teachings. Meditative practices, such as contemplation, are an essential part of many religions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Daoism, but also Christianity, Islam and Judaism (see Renger and Wulf 2013).

Today, meditation is often practiced beyond and independently from religious or spiritual aspects to support the overall well-being of human beings within the frameworks of, for example, psychosocial support or psychotherapy. This holds particularly true for the so called Western world. Similar to mindfulness meditation is subjected to increasing attention from researchers, among them for example neuroscientists who look into the effects of meditation on the mind (see Ulrich Ott 2010, Fox et al. 2016), or psychologists who are rather interested in the vast possibilities of its therapeutic application (see Ospina et al. 2007, Goyal et al. 2015). Overall, research corroborates the abovementioned positive effects.

**Inner peace: Meditation may contribute to physical and psychological well-being.
Our well-being is the source that nourishes us, like the fertile soil nourishes the plants.**



Berghof Foundation

Berghof Foundation is an independent, non-governmental and non-profit organisation dedicated to supporting conflict stakeholders and actors in their efforts to achieve sustainable peace through peace-building and conflict transformation.

Our Vision

Berghof Foundation's vision is a world in which people maintain peaceful relations and overcome violence as a means of political and social change.

While we consider conflict to be an integral and often necessary part of political and social life, we believe that violence in conflict is not inevitable. We are convinced that protracted violent conflicts can be transformed into sustained collaboration, when spaces for conflict transformation allow drivers of change to prosper and constructively engage with one another.

Our Mission

“Creating space for conflict transformation.”

Berghof Foundation works with like-minded partners in selected regions to enable conflict stakeholders and actors to develop non-violent responses in the face of conflict-related challenges. In doing so, we rely on the knowledge, skills and resources available in the areas of conflict research, peace support and peace education. By combining our regional experience with a thematic focus on cutting-edge issues, we aim to be a learning organisation capable of supporting sustained efforts for conflict transformation.

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